Russia

I. Critical Historical Junctures
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VI. Russian Politics in Transition

Geographic Setting:

1. Big Country:
   ⇒ 142m people (about 1/2 US) and 17 million square miles (~1.8 times US)
   ⇒ rich with natural resources (minerals; forests, etc.), BUT....much in Siberia
      (inaccessible; permafrost)
2. Ethnically Diverse: lots of people who are not Russians in Russia!
   ⇒ used Soviet Union and Russia interchangably, but reality -- multi ethnic
   ⇒ current Russian Federation more homogenous, but still big ethnic mix (only
      80% ethnically Russian)
   ⇒ also lots of ethnic Russians on OTHER former republics (Baltic; Ukraine;
      Belarus)
3. Comparatively Poor
   GDP per capita (PPP) = $15,800 (US = $40,100)
   Grew rapidly since 1999, esp. with rising cost of oil – around 8% per year
   But now caught in same economic Tsunami as others, esp. with declining
   commodity prices; economy expected to fall by 3% this year and rubble under
   pressure
   ⇒ but still a prominent country b/c successor to USSR (UN sec council seat; nukes)

HISTORY matters for shaping development of all of these states, but GEOGRAPHY particularly
important for Russia
   ⇒ Russia on periphery of Europe (geographically, as much an Asian as European state)
   ⇒ so many of the great religious and intellectual movements of Europe passed Russia by
      (Reformation; Enlightenment)
   ⇒ pressed by invaders from the east in earlier periods (Mongols; Tartars) and west in
      later (Swedes, French, Germans, Poles, etc.)
   ➔ geography especially shaped political development

I. Critical Historical Junctures

A. Tsarist Russia

Modern Russia developed out of the Duchy of Moscow and really united under Ivan the Terrible
(1530-84)
   ⇒ drove out Tartar invaders and established absolute control
Developed sense of NECESSITY of autocracy (a strong hand)
Russia a big, open country...few natural barriers
⇒ NEED strong leaders and government to fend off outside forces

Theme from Tsars through communism and today (although less so)

Succession after Ivan a disputed and violent affair; finally settled with selection of Michael Romanov in 1613
⇒ Romanov dynasty would rule Russia for three centuries until 1917

A. Peter the Great: change came with reign (1695-1725)

1. Expansion: would see spread of Russia to border roughly same as 20th century
⇒ winning wars against Ottomans and Swedes

2. Westernization: early in reign Peter had traveled throughout Western Europe
⇒ decided Russia needed to copy, both society (Boyars and beards) and govt/military
⇒ need for NAVY, but not port
Solution: picked a swampy site on the Neva River and BUILD ONE!
⇒ by forcing peasants to build/nobles to live in, WILLED St. Petersburg into existence!!

Building a Western style city w/ western style architecture on the Western edge of the Empire

Tsarist Empire established by Peter survives and is solidified through 1917
⇒ surviving invasion of Napoleon in 1812

Problems of Tsarist Empire:

Russia stands as most politically, economically, in some respects culturally less developed part of Europe in 1800s

1. Feudalism: Largely gone from UK by 1700; rest of Europe by 1800
   Alexander II: Edict of Emancipation in 1861 (UK expanding democratic franchise!)
⇒ a reformer...but assassinated in 1881
LESSON: Reforms gain you nothing! better to rule with a strong hand!

2. Politics: Russia an absolutist monarchy to the very end
⇒ country controlled often by FORCE (secret police; Cossacks)
⇒ Legislative body in Duma comes to be in late 1800s, but essentially IGNORED

3. Economics: Russia well behind other states in industrialization
⇒ still agro economy in mid-1800s; Even by WW I, STILL largely an agro society

4. Ethnicity: large, sprawling, multiethnic empire kept in place by FORCE

1905: To try to quell domestic unrest at home, pick fight with Japan...LOSE
⇒ REvolution: ultimately suppressed by Tsarist government...sets the stage
World War I: Russia enters the war eagerly
⇒ Russian Army MUCH larger than other countries, but poorly trained/equipped/led
⇒ easily ROUTED by Germans
⇒ only thing that prevents Germans/Austrians from totally defeating them is focus on Western Front
⇒ as war drags on, loses mount, discontent back home rises
⇒ Tsar Nicholas II head to front himself (bad idea...he’s an idiot)

REVOLUTION in St. Peterburg...Tsar overthrown

II. Communist Russia

A. Revolution
⇒ what we classify as the Russian Revolution really a revolution followed by a coup d’etat by Bolsheviks under Lenin

March 1917: Tsarist government deposed and replaced by Provisional Government under Alexander Kerensky (socialist, but a democrat...not a communist)
PROBLEM: stayed in the War (indeed, new offensive...failed)…. people wanted OUT

Germany: wanting to knock Russia out of war by stirring up trouble at home shipped LENIN from Switzerland (since 1900) to St. Petersburg on a ‘sealed train’ in April 1917
⇒ Lenin Leader of Bolshevik faction of Russian Social Democratic Party (communist) (‘Bolshevik’ just means ‘majority’)

Under provisional government, had the establishment of SOVIETS (councils of workers/peasants/soldiers) in major cities
⇒ competing centers of power w/provisional government

Petrograd: Provisional Government AND Petrograd Soviet

Bolshevik strategy for gaining power simple:
1. Focus on getting control of the Soviets rather than Provisional Govt.
2. Give people what they want -- ‘Bread, land, and Peace’
Plus, when others disunited, Bolsheviks disciplined and unified behind principle of ‘democratic centralism’ (democracy within party; total unity once decisions made)

October Revolution (November 1917) [Old Julian Calender]
⇒ Bolsheviks seize Winter Palace and take control of Provisional Govt. -- Coup!!
⇒ did allow for elections/meeting of a ‘Constituent Assembly’ (dominated by Kerensky’s Social Revolutionaries)
⇒ after one meeting...SHUT IT DOWN! Ruled as a ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’
⇒ signed separate peace w/Germany (cede much of Ukraine)

Russian Civil War (1918-21): Somewhat confusing b/c multiple forces fighting on multiple fronts at different times
⇒ Bolsheviks had advantage in that unified (Leon Trotsky at head of Red Army) and
controlled center (interior supply lines)

Experience of Civil War shows two traits used by Commies through entire rule:
1. Image of protectors against outside forces
2. Repression against internal enemies

Felix Derzinsky: Cheka ⇒ KGB

1922: **Union of Soviet Socialist Republics** with Lenin in charge
⇒ set about creating proper ‘socialist paradise’
⇒ Communist ideal was a ‘command economy’ (decisions made by state would allocate resources rather than prices in markets)

Initial attempts at this FAILED...and people starved
⇒ hard to set up socialism in a technologically backward and war ravaged country!

**New Economic Policy (NEP -- 1921-28):** allowed for some small scale private ownership (esp. for farms) in order to get economy back on its feet

1924: Lenin dies with no clear successor
Two obvious candidates: Leon Trotsky and Josef Stalin

Trotsky controlled the government, but Stalin controlled the Party
⇒ used this to isolated other key Bolsheviks... By 1928, Stalin firmly in charge
⇒ Trotsky fled USSR, eventually being assassinated in Mexico City in 1940

**B. Stalinism**
⇒ in a century filled with murderous, horrible leaders, Stalin was perhaps the worst
⇒ no way to know exactly how many Russians died as a result of his brutal rule
⇒ No clear estimate on how many dies as a result of policies, but certainly in the 10s of millions (plus 27 million died in German invasion)

**Q: So what exactly did Stalin DO?**

**A. Collectivization:** the period of the NEP was a ‘half-hearted’ socialism that still kept a great deal of private enterprise (particularly in agriculture)
⇒ decided need to create ‘socialism in one country’

Done two ways:

1. **Centralized Industrial Planning:** based on Five Year Plans set by central planning agency in Moscow (Gosplan)
⇒ goal was to rapidly industrialize (since so far behind and so many enemies)
⇒ 5 year plans set targets for economy and individual factories
⇒ managers/workers who failed were executed or sent to the Gulags (slave labor camps)

BRUTAL...but did significantly increase industrial production by late 1930s

2. **Collectivization of Agriculture:** Force farmers into Collective Farms (w/Soviets thought would be more productive)
⇒ which would allow workers from agro to industry (help industrialization)
NEP allowed private farming and many (particularly ‘Kulaks’ in Ukraine) doing well
⇒ did not want to join big collective and work for wages

Stalin was not concerned with what these people may have wanted
⇒ sent army in to force people into collectives; those who resisted were killed
⇒ many farmers burned their crops rather than turn them over
⇒ Stalin basically confiscated what was left and closed off the Ukraine

In the breadbasket of Europe, somewhere around 5 million were starved to death in 1934-36

By the end of the 1930s, USSR was a completely COMMAND ECONOMY

B. Purges: Such policies created enemies and Stalin was bent on absolute control

1934: Great Purges began after murder of Leningrad (St. Petersburg) communist leader Sergei Kirov (probably on Stalin’s orders)
⇒ used this as a pretext to round up, jail, send to Gulags, kill MILLIONS
⇒ the slightest pretext could be used for this

From Alexander Solzhenitsyn, The Gulag Archipelago (vol. 2, p. 293.)
"A tailor laying aside his needle stuck it into a newspaper on the wall so it wouldn't get lost and happened to stick it in the eye of a portrait of Kaganovich [a member of the Soviet Politburo]. A customer observed this. Article 58, ten years (terrorism). A saleswoman accepting merchandise.....noted it down on a sheet of newspaper. There was no other paper. The number of pieces of soap happened to fall on the forehead of Comrade Stalin. Article 58, ten years."
⇒ the secret police (NKVD) were everywhere, and ANY hint of disloyalty to regime (Stalin) was enough
⇒ everyone encouraged to rat on ‘enemies of the state’ (corrosive to entire culture)
⇒ Major figures were given ‘Show Trials’ were forced to confess to fake crimes

Not only to eliminate all opposition (and prevent new enemies), but also to establish Stalin as the one, true defender of communism (in which he ESPECIALLY included Trotsky)

By end of the 1930s
5 out of 9 Politburo members
98 out of 138 Central Committee Members
1108 of 1966 of 1933 Party Congress
Most of the senior officers of Red Army and Navy
All were killed in the purges

OVERALL: Stalinist Russia is a place of absolutely centralized control of all aspects of life that was brutally enforced!

3. Foreign Affairs: Lenin and original communists had assumed (as Marx told them) that once revolution came it would sweep across the globe
⇒ problem of course was that it did not!
⇒ Thus USSR stood as the ONLY communist state until after WW II
So during the 1920s-30s, USSR almost completely cut off/isolated from the rest of the world
⇒ only started to draw more in with rise of fascism and desire to aid anti-fascist
coalitions in Europe (i.e., Spain)
⇒ Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939 (divided up Poland)
⇒ after Germans had destroyed Polish Army, Soviets swept in from East

**German Invasion of 1941**: Soviets ALMOST lost (not such a good idea to kill all the officers!)
⇒ Initial invasion pushes DEEP into Russia (gates of Moscow and Leningrad)
⇒ but ran into same problems as Napoleon (size of Russia and WINTER)
Next year swung south to seize Caspian oil fields...STALINGRAD (turning point of war)

Russian Front in WW II perhaps the most brutal war ever fought
⇒ two totalitarian systems with little concern on fate of people
⇒ approximately 27 million Soviet soldiers and civilians killed

USSR emerges not only as victorious, but in control of most of Eastern Europe…a superpower!

**C. Krushchev and De-Stalinization**
⇒ in terms of domestic rule, Russia largely unchanged from war

Stalin has a stroke and died in 1953
⇒ again, no clear successor BUT...major figures agreed that CANNOT have someone
with same power/control as Stalin again
⇒ struggle for power, ultimately NIKITA KRUSHCHEV emerges as Party General
Secretary (in charge, but more collective control -- within party -- than in past)

a. **Secret Speech**: at a speech to Party Congress in 1956, Khrushchev denounced Stalin and
openly laid out the crimes committed during that period
⇒ word leaked quickly around the world

b. **Establishment of ‘Party State’**: Stalin was a dictator; what he said went
⇒ system developed under Khrushchev more one of party rule

1. **Centralized**: Still a command economy with decisions made in Moscow (although not nec.
killed if missed!)
2. **Gigantic Bureaucracy**: ran everything!
⇒ so-called ‘apparatchiks’ (members of the apparatus of govt.)
3. **Dual Party/Government Structure**: Party (CPSU) was key;
⇒ all key decisions ran through the party
⇒ party organization mirrored government departments
⇒ Party side in Charge, although often staffed by same people

IF you wanted to advance in system, had to member of the party
⇒ part of the NOMEKLATURA (list of people who were approved to fill various
positions)
⇒ essentially party members
About 10% of adult population was in the party

4. **Police State**: things loosened up under Khrushchev, but still no free speech, civil liberties
   ⇒ still had Gulags, censorship, suppression of free expression, political indoctrination
   ⇒ system ultimately ruled by FORCE!!!
   ⇒ forcibly suppressed Hungarian Revolution in October 1956

Khruschev seen as a bit of a loose cannon (banging shoe on table in UN)
   ⇒ brought down b/c of putting missiles into Cuba, prompting Cuban Missile Crisis
   ⇒ deposed in 1964 and repaced by

**Leonid Brezhnev**: Ruled until 1982
   ⇒ the ultimate apparatchik…. a dull, narrow-minded bureaucrat
After horrors of Stalin and loose policy of Khrushchev, focus was on stability, status quo
   ⇒ Brezhnev’s whole deal was to maintain the status quo of the party state

Didn’t seem like such a bad idea...
   ⇒ USSR was one of the two superpowers in the world
   ⇒ industrialization meant standard of living rising for most people
   ⇒ matched the west in some areas of production (i.e., steel)
   ⇒ could make plausible claims (often accepted in West) of economic equivalence,

BUT… Soviet economy had peaked at the time Brezhnev took office
   ⇒ centralization did allow for development of big, heavy industries
   ⇒ not so useful when move to a more technological period (computer age)

Thus relative performance of Soviet economy declined AND still in MILITARY competition w/West in Cold War
   ⇒ meant a higher and higher percentage of economy going into military
US at peak of CW = 10% of GDP          USSR = 25%

Brezhnev dies in 1982; replaced by former KGB Head Yuri Andropov (dies in 15 months)
Replaced by Konstantin Chernenko in 1984 (dies in a year)
Need someone younger leader...

D. **Mikhail Gorbachev**

enters office with a clear sense that Soviet system not working, needs to be fixed
   ⇒ NOTE: Goal was to REFORM communist system NOT end it (although did)

1. **New Thinking in Foreign Policy**: work to lessen tension of CW
2. **Glasnost**: openness
   ⇒ if allowed more free discussion, could point out problems in system and fix them
   ⇒ ultimately would allow for some free (but controlled elections)
   ⇒ Eliminate monopoly of power for CPSU that was enshrined in Soviet Constitution
3. **Perestroika**: Restructuring
   ⇒ economic restructuring of the command economy and Soviet bureaucracy

REALITY: much more Glasnost and not much Perestroika
⇒ greater openness just allowed people to vent (not always constructively) and served to undermine the legitimacy of the system
⇒ there were entrenched interests in the bureaucracy and economy that did not want any fundamental change
Not clear at the time, but system starting to crumble

Fall 1989: life is loosening in Russia, which encourages the same in Eastern Europe
⇒ Hungary opens up border
⇒ result is E. Germans flood in trying to get the W. Germany or German embassy
⇒ protest movements being both in E. Germany and Poland
NOTE: Everyone is waiting for Tiennenman-style crackdown
⇒ did in Hungary in 1956; Czechoslovakia in 1968
⇒ Chinese communists just did a few months before
⇒ so when protesters surge on to Berlin Wall soldiers, E. German leaders, Soviet leaders all waiting for command for crackdown

NEVER CAME

In an INSTANT the Berlin Wall came down and communist control over Eastern Europe DISSOLVED!!!

Gorbachev had unleashed forces beyond his control
⇒ to his credit, when faced with choice to allow process to play out or try to hold on through brute power, demurred
⇒ but also unleashing forces beyond control in USSR, mainly SEPERATISM
⇒ reforms continue in Russia, including allowing for some (fairly) free elections
⇒ Boris Yeltsin is elected President of the Russian Republic
⇒ moving to a structure with more democracy and autonomy for individual republics

Hardliners in Govt. and Military oppose…August1991: Coup attempt
⇒ Gorbachev seized in dacha in Crimea; smuggles video tape message out
⇒ Yeltsin up on tank in front of Russian Parliament denouncing coup

WHOLE THING COLLAPSES

Spells death knell for USSR
⇒ various republics (including Russian Federation) declare independence from the USSR
⇒ Gorbachev resigns and Soviet Union ceases to be in December 25, 1991

III. Democratic Russia

Having gotten rid of Communism, now had to build a new system
⇒ Initially started out with an ad hoc constitution based on previous system
   Directly elected Pres and VP (Yeltsin)
   Parliament: Congress of People’s Deputies and Supreme Soviet (smaller -- drawn from C of PD)
NOT clear WHO had dominant authority AND… Yeltsin was a reformer BUT legislature dominated by hardliners/anti-reformers (Communists)

Ran pretty quickly into problems
 ⇒ Yeltsin appointed Yegor Gaidar (reforming economist), who cut loose prices and wages (‘shock therapy’)
 ⇒ value of rubble plummeted/inflation shot up

Saw real decline in standard of living AND life expectancy in Russia
 ⇒ Legislature RESISTED the continuation of these polices AND were at loggerheads with Yeltsin over a new constitution

**Sept. 1993:** Yeltsin declared he was suspending both houses of parliament
 ⇒ in turn Parliament voted to remove Yeltsin from office and to replace him with his VP (now opposing him in reforms) Alexander Rutskoi

Standoff!!
 Parliamentary forces holed up in Russian White House (parliament building)

**October 4 1993:** Yeltsin orders troops in to shell, take over White House
 ⇒ about 150 people were killed; about 1000 wounded, BUT established Presidential control
 ⇒ new constitution (w/tilts power toward Prez. approved), BUT…
 ⇒ anti-reform groups of communists or Russian nationalists still dominate parliament

Through the mid-1990s, very little reforms undertaken b/c of fundamental political stalemate!!!!

**Chechnya:** More serious challenge came in conflict in break-away region of Chechnya
 ⇒ on paper at least, USSR was a federation of independent republics
 ⇒ when Soviet system collapsed, most b/c formally independent

HOWEVER, area of ‘Russian Republic’ within former Soviet Union (now independent Russian Federation) NOT terribly ethnically homogeneous
 ⇒ Russian leaders going back to Tsars had conquered large swathes of territory including millions of non-Russian peoples
 ⇒ part of long history of centralization/strong control about keeping all this together!

1994: Rebellion in Chechnya (region WITHIN Russia) breaks out
 ⇒ Chechens ethnically and religiously separate from Russians (Muslins)
 ⇒ but one of MYRIAD ethnic groups in Caucasus region

[Caucassus Map]

From Russian perspective, if let one go, then more will follow….no more Russia
 ⇒ so when Chechnya tried to break-away, felt had to put down!

But did so BRUTALLY, essentially unleashed army and air force on rebels and civilians
 ⇒ bombed capital (Grozny) into the ground
 ⇒ but for all that, two years later still faced heavy Russian casualties and significant pockets of resistance
1996 signed a cease-fire…but not finished….

1996 Election: by mid-1990s Russia remained polarized between reformers and those resisting reform (Communists led by Gennady Zyugonov; same as from 1993)
- Going into 1996 election, things looked shaky for Yeltsin
- despite health and personal problems for Yeltsin, sense in West that he is best hope for democratic reform in Russia
- Yeltsin will ultimately win, but does so through some somewhat shady alliances through newly wealthy post-communist business tycoons (OLIGARCHS)
- they bankroll his campaign and tip TV coverage in his favor

Unfortunately, election does little to resolve fundamental divisions in Russian politics, so economic and political reform continues to stagnate

Situation not aided by 1998 financial crisis that sees govt. default on debt and decline in economy
- Yeltsin years seen as sort of a grand ‘missed opportunity’
- Russia in late 1990s stabilizes, settles into a normal, poorly run place

August 1999: appoints a former KGB agent and St. Petersburg politician Vladimír Putin

Putin quickly gains popularity by re-initiating the war in Chechnya
- responding to incursions by Chechen rebels outside of province
- bombings in Moscow apartment complexes purportedly by Chechen terrorists

Putin sends army back into Chechnya, apparently successfully (at time)
- since then still troops being killed and major bombing at Russia government HQ in Grozny

New Year’s Eve 1999 – Yeltsin surprises everyone by resigning, which makes Putin acting President
- Putin was a former KGB operative from the Soviet days
- And had been a figure in St. Petersburg (but not national) politics when picked

Uses status, success in Chechnya to EASILY win election on his own in 2000
- over the years Putin has increasingly concentrated power in the Kremlin and suppressed dissident voices, controlling the media and manipulating elections
- Russia increasingly seen as a ‘soft authoritarian’ state (more on this later)
- on the international front, has been less then cooperative on key issue, such as transport of oil/gas to Europe and imposing sanctions in Iran

The era of Putin’s rule is seen as one of backsliding of democracy, where he used the power of the state to advance his political interests and suppress dissent

However, Russian constitution only allows the president to serve two terms
- Putin declined to try and change the constitution to give a second term, BUT…
He handpicked his successor – Dmitry Medvedev, who won election in a landslide in 2008
In turn, Medvedev then picked Putin to be his PM (constitutionally valid)
But this has left it an open question of who is really in charge in Russia…not at all clear

II. Governance and Policy-Making

A. The Constitution
⇒ current constitution introduced in the wake of struggle against hardliners
Again: new constitution fixes old
Problem for Old: balance of power btwn Exec and legislature
1993 Constitution in many respects similar to French Fifth Republic Constitution in granting a good deal of power to the President

A. Basic Institutions
President: head of state
PM (appointed by Prez): Head of Government
Legislature (Duma) approves PM

However, President can:
⇒ not only VETO legislation (only overturned w/ 2/3 majority)
⇒ but can issue decrees in lieu of legislation if nothing passed and/or operate on a ‘continuation budget’ if not passed
⇒ presides over cabinet meetings
Prez can also can call new elections if (a) reject PM choice 3 times
Duma can only prompt elections with a vote of no confidence passed 2 times in 3 months

IN SHORT: system set up to allow Pres to override legislature of they run into an impasse!!! ‘Superpresidentialism’

B. Popular Sovereignty: power to/from the people
⇒ Chapter 2 lays out full list of rights/liberties, BUT...
⇒ Note old Soviet Constitution and Helsinki Accords!!!
⇒ problem of corruption and manipulation of institutions by those in power
⇒ judiciary not yet established as an independent force to check political authority and prevent police abuses (trial of Mikhail Khodorkovsky of Yukos Oil)

C. Federal System: RF a system of republics, regions, and autonomous territories
⇒ recognition that Russia is NOT a unitary, ethnic Russian entity

Starts of: “We, the multinational people of the Russian Federation…..”
⇒ so have a system of regional autonomy
⇒ Russia is a federal system, and significant amount of control and authority rests constituent parts

Have:
49 regions (oblasts) (largely subsets of Russian parts of Russia)
21 republics (eg, Chechnya, Ingushetia, Tartarstan -- generally ethnically based)
10 autonomous regions
2 federal cities (Moscow and St. Petersburg)
7 other territorial entities
So hardly uniform in either size or form or rule – asymmetrical federalism

Post 1993: in practice a very DECENTRALIZED system in terms of the locus of REAL political power

Putin: broad push to concentrated power again more back in Moscow
⇒ May 2000 appointed “Presidential Representatives’ to oversee implementation of national law in regions
⇒ divided country into seven larger ‘Federal Districts’ to oversee implementation of national policy within those regions covered
⇒ changed method of selecting representatives to Federation Council (were Governor and heads of regional assemblies; changed to separate figures appointed by them..
Problem: balance between ‘region’ and ‘autonomy’ (Chechnya)
⇒ places viewed as clearly separate republics broke off from USSR
⇒ areas in current Russian Federation part of the Russian Republic of USSR
⇒ often level of autonomy a Q of what area can get away with
  Chechnya: bid for independence has so far failed
  North Ossetia has its own army, which Moscow tolerates
Built in tension between federalism/autonomy and control from the center

III. Institutions
Russia’s governing institutions are similar to those of France, having a semi-presidential structure with a directly elected president who appoints a PM, but with much more power concentrated in the President

Equally Russia IS a democracy of sorts, but really only an ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY, not a LIBERAL DEMOCRACY (w/full civil rights and liberties)

In setting up democratic institutions in Russia, they had no real experience from which to draw
⇒ Tsarists and Communists both authoritarian

A. Executive:
⇒ main player is the Pres (currently Dmitry Medvedev)

Elected for a four year term in a 2 round voting system like in France
⇒ also like France, can win on first round IF get more than 50%
⇒ Medvedev won with 71% in 2008
  (next closest was Communist candidate with 18%)
⇒ 2004 Elections, won 71.2% in first round (Communists w/13.7%)

Constitution of 1993 gives a great deal of power
⇒ he is formally head of state
⇒ in charge of Foreign policy and national security
⇒ he picks the PM that is at the head of govt. [Currently Vladimir Putin]
⇒ he can issue decrees that have the force of law
In some respects he is almost in a position to rule as a DICTATOR
⇒ can make a great deal of decisions INDEPENDENTLY of Duma
(b/c of power struggle from 1993)

However:
⇒ Duma can turn around and pass laws contrary to decrees
⇒ Constitutional Court can overturn (and has) presidential decrees

Only works as long as President has POLITICAL ability to make decisions stick…since Putin HAS had this!!!

BIG Q: Who is REALLY in charge of the executive branch, Medvedev or Putin?

B. Legislature

State Duma: 450 members
⇒ through 2003 election, half elected in single member districts; half by proportional representation with a 5% rule (just like in Germany)
⇒ changed electoral law so that elections scheduled since 2007 will be ALL PR (based on national party lists) with a 7% threshold

Q: What might be the likely outcome of such a change?? Why would Putin and his allies push this?

Federation Council: 178 deputies
⇒ 2 each from Russia’s 89 republics and regions
⇒ originally consisted of heads of regional legislatures and elected governors of each District, so similar in structure/form to German Bundesrat
⇒ NOW consists of 2 members for each district appointed by regional legislatures and Governors

Legislation: bicameral system, so legislation has to go through both houses
⇒ Duma is main body, but legislation passed by Duma can be voted down in Fed Council or vetoed by President
⇒ can override, but only w/a 2/3 majority
⇒ legislation that effects the constitution requires a 3/4 majority
MUCH like US

Doesn’t happen now b/c have DOMINANT pro-Kremlin majority in Duma!

III. Representation and Participation
A. Parties

- Political parties in Russia have not yet formed into western style parties
- Rather than ideological grouping they are defined in many respects more by their relationship for or against the Kremlin
- Only the pro-Western Yabloko and CPRF have coherent ideological programs
- Political parties in Russia have trait found in France – tend to be tied to a particular individual rather than political ideology

**LEFT: Communists** (Gennady Zyganov)

- Best organized of parties (500K members and 20K organizational bodies)
- Not so much a strictly Marxist party, but an incoherent mix of social democrats, Stalinists, and nationalists
- Generally opposed to economic reforms; want more state control of economy
- Want Russia to be more aggressive on FP, less friendly to West
- Association w/old order keeps their appeal limited (but also core constituency)
- Gone back and forth under Putin between cooperation and full opposition (like policy in Chechnya, for example)
- Also facing demographic problem – mostly AGING constituency!
- Have seen a steady decline in vote in last three elections (only 11.5% and 58 seats)

**Just Russia** (Sergei Mirinov)

- This party was a combination of a party formed in 2003 known as Motherland and some other, smaller parties
- The party's ideology combines nationalist, agrarian and socialist ideas, HOWEVER...
  - Accused by CPRF of being a ‘Potemkin Party’ formed w/the secret backing of Putin to steal votes away from the Communists
- Won 38 seats in Duma and has largely backed Putin in votes

**CENTER/ESTABLISHMENT: United Russia** (Mevedev/Putin)

- Formed in 2002 with the merger of pro-Kremlin Unity and Fatherland-All Russia movement
  - Loose organization put together before last election to support Putin
  - No other major national figures (part of appeal)
  - No strong ideology (besides supporting President)
  - But Putin’s coattails and media support (via state run TV) gave huge boost

They won OVERWELMINGLY in last Duma election, gaining 64% of the vote and 315 seats Combined with Just Russia and have an unstoppable majority

**RIGHT: Yabloko [Apple]** (Grigory Yavlinsky) and **Union of Right Forces** (Nikita Belykh)

**Yabloko (Apple):** led by former economic advisor to Gorbachev Grigory Yavlinsky
**Union of Right Forces:**

- Both of these parties are clearly pro-democracy, pro-reform, pro-West
- As a result tend to be the choices of cosmopolitan, urban intellectuals

**PROBLEM:** Liberal parties MINOR players in Russian politics
Received 1.5% and 1% of the vote respectively in 2007 (no seats)

**FAR/NATIONALIST RIGHT: Liberal Democrats (Vladimir Zhirinovsky)**
- neither liberal nor democrats
- led by radical populist firebrand Zhirinovsky
- xenophobic and extreme nationalists (praised Hitler; called for re-annexation of now independent republics)
- greater support in early 1990s (23%)
- still got 8.1% and 40 seats in Duma

Really what you’ve seen in terms of representation is the pro-Kremlin United Russia forces driving out all other political competition, effectively establishing a monopoly of power in the Duma

**B. Corruption**
- major problem for post-communist system is lack of authority and corruption
- much of Moscow business effectively controlled by or run by mafia
- tons of crime, hits, payoffs, etc.
- government corruption is rampant (bribes to do anything)
- Especially a problem in major business structure

Privatization of Soviet industry largely allowed former managers to buy controlling shares at dirt cheap prices
- they now make HUGE amounts of money and control large conglomerations of businesses

Dubbed Oligarchs

Not only control large segments of economy, but treat as personal fiefdoms
- effectively have been able to avoid taxation and govt. regulation
- ship a lot of the profits to private bank accounts offshore rather than pump into rebuilding Russian economy

So while standard of living fell for millions of Russians, these guys making a fortune!

Point: Can’t build and effective free market economy when a few major players able to control/manipulate the market (lesson from Enron)

Putin has moved to try to reduce power of oligarchs
- pushing for more effective tax collection (Russian tax police becoming one of the largest and most highly trained police forces in world)
- closing down businesses
- putting major business leaders in jail

Mikhail Khodorovsky: head of Yukos oil
- purchased in 1995-6 sell-off and turned it into a fortune
- openly highlighted in Forbes, etc as one of world’s wealthiest men
- arrested for fraud and tax evasion
Comparative Politics (GS 161)  
Fall 2009

- supporters see as punishment for getting involved in anti-govt. politics
- long-drawn out and heavily publicized trial
- sentenced to eight years, much of it served in a tough Siberian prison camp
- NOW back in Moscow for a second trial, on different charges but covering many of the same activities for which he was convicted in the first trial

PROBLEM: State prosecutions against Khodokovsky and other major business figures (like Vladimir Gusinsky and Boris Berezovsky) perhaps not entirely without justification
- They were involved in lots of shaky dealings, BUT…
- lots of other major business figures are also…only the ones that speak out against Putin ever seem to get prosecuted!!!
- The laws appears to be being perverted as a tool of political repression – which has a nasty historic resonance in Russia

IV. Political Economy of Russia

Problems of a Command Economy: structure of Soviet economy created problems for post-communist Russia
- command economy led to inefficient use of resources
- skewed industrial base toward heavy industry and military production and away from consumer goods
- persistent shortages and long lines
- “We pretend to work and they pretend to pay us”
- put industrialization above environmental concerns
- enormous environmental damage, not least of which was Chernobyl disaster

MAJOR CHALLENGE!!!

Shock Therapy and Economic Dislocation: sudden switch to capitalism had a devastating effect on Russia’s economy
⇒ tough to know exactly what occurred b/c when co’s b/c private (and liable to taxation), had major incentive to UNDERESTIMATE production
⇒ plus major parts of economy off books (black market)
  (US might be 1-2%...Russia more like 25%)
⇒ many of those big industrial enterprises not profitable by market standards
⇒ but tough to close big industries (part. in Siberia) when no other work

Economy is heavily concentrated in energy (oil and natural gas), chemicals, heavy machinery, and natural resources (eg timber)
⇒ long-term problem is that many are commodities subject to significant price fluctuations on international markets, not steady source of export earnings
⇒ short-term the price of these commodities has been UP, so Russia has been reapign the benefit

And major reform IS Needed:
⇒ Average monthly earnings low compared to much of eastern Europe (used to be reverse in communist days)
Life expectancy down to 59 years for men (73 for women; 66 overall)

**Privatization, Oligarchs and Organized Crime:** while many countries in eastern Europe have started to flourish under market economy,

**Economy:**
1. FDI dropped off b/c of uncertainties of economic situation and political oppression under Putin
2. Business expansion hindered b/c of rampant corruption and crime

Lots of small Western entrepreneurs flooded East after Berlin Wall
⇒ lots in places like Prague have done well
⇒ many who went to Moscow now gone

Might be helped if let in lots of Western companies to take over, but hindered by control of major industries by oligarchs and nationalistic concerns (nationalists control Duma)

Fundamental problem for Russia is freed markets, but lack the basic political, legal, and cultural institutions to make free markets work productively
⇒ need to clearly establish rule of law (contracts)
⇒ more transparent and stable political system
⇒ capitalists that actually invest capital back into enterprises (rather than offshore bank accounts)
⇒ legal and political system open to FDI
⇒ problems of lack of trust of businessmen (all crooks)

**The Curse of Oil:** One ironic lesson of CP is that countries that are well endowed with oil resources generally develop either corrupt or authoritarian political systems and skewed economic systems
⇒ one would think that such wealth would be a benefit to a country and would allow them to invest in improving other areas
⇒ however, since involves huge amounts of wealth that are usually controlled by the state, increases incentive to control reins of state power and focus on distributing largess rather than investing
⇒ in essence this is what is going on in Russia with state in complicity with some Oligarchs and prosecution of Yukos figures

**V. Political Culture**
⇒ there are some traits about Russian political culture that are not especially conducive to advancing either democracy or capitalism
⇒ part of this stems from longer Russian tendencies, some specifically from Soviet era

**Lack of Civil Society:** Soviet Union was a totalitarian state, meaning ALL aspects of society were subordinated to the control of the Communist Party
⇒ as such, independent organizations and associations – civil society – were excluded
⇒ these are seen as foundation for successful democracy

**Weak Support for Democracy:** while supportive of personal freedoms, NOT a strong base of support for democracy
tend to favor economic rights (stability/welfare) over political rights
support of democracy is qualified…only if produce positive outcomes
as has NOT in many respects for average person, tend

Support for ‘Strong Leadership’: long-term trait of Russian culture
sense of a need for a leader with an ‘iron hand’ to make things run properly
EX: polls in 2003-2004 – Asked if STALIN were to run again, would you vote for him?
26% said ‘Definitely’ or ‘Probably’

Minimal Support for Free Markets: same is true in terms of free markets
WE tend to see wealthy business types as role models
both under communism and post-communist era, sense that those who got wealthy
tended to do so by shading dealing and outright theft
so even when ARE legit businesses, presumption that it is all ill-gotten gain
so ‘free markets’ in Russia equated with illegality by many!!!

Overall: Continued tradition of a strong state and weak society
conflicts with Western desires for full-fledged democracy and capitalism
NOTE Figure1.6 in your textbook shows levels of trust in various figures and institutions
Russians have high levels of trust in the president and churches…but nothing else,
including army, government, political parties, the Duma, etc.

Nationalism: Russian nationalism less tied to cultural identity than in other places
“We, the multinational people of the Russian Federation…..”
more a political identity w/Russian state
still is division of WHERE Russia stands in the world (West or Slavic of Other?)

VI. Russian Politics in Transition

The Erosion of Democracy
Putin has steadily increased control of Kremlin over Russian politics
used powers to quell dissent and independent press
won 2004 election, but almost ALL media coverage was pro-Putin
Same was true in 2008 election of Medvedev – little truly free media
has altered relations with regions to centralize control in the Kremlin
greater cooperation with the Duma

Of greater concern, critics of the regime have a bad tendency to come up all DEAD
Anna Politkovskaya (investigative journalist, about to publish expose on war in Chechnya, gunned down in elevator of apartment)
Alexander Litvenenko (former Russian Security Service operative who accused Putin of using FSB to stage a coup d’état, poised with polonium 210 – highly toxic and very rare)
The Bleeding Wound of Chechnya: many Russians supportive of Putting b/c of ‘iron hand’ in Chechnya

- Really two Chechen Wars (First from 1994-96; Second from 1999- ~2005)
- Russian Army has gone in both times pretty heavily
- But got much less criticism on it post-9/11
  - capital of Grozny leveled twice; rebels have been beaten back, but not fully defeated
  - resorted to terrorist tactics instead (Moscow theater attack in December 2003; Beslan School attack in September 2004)
- Moscow has been able to kill main rebel leaders and establish a pro-Russian government in power
- Now focus on rebuilding projects for region
- CALM for now but not 100% settled

Russian Foreign Relations:

- many of the other former communist countries have slipped fairly easily into institutions of EU and West
- hope has always been for Moscow to do the same
- still real division between Western v. Slavophile orientation, and whether cooperative with other major powers

The Near Abroad: Putin portrayed collapse of Soviet Union as an ‘historical disaster’ for Russia

- not content to see area of previous imperial control slip so quietly away
- Russians HAVE acquiesced to some significant change (Balts in NATO)
- but still tries to assert some influence in the ‘Near Abroad’

UKRAINE: interfered in contested Ukrainian election/orange Revolution of 2004 in support of (authoritarian) government candidate (Victor Yanuchovyk) over (ultimately victorious) Victor Yushenko (himself a victim of a poisoning plot)

ALSO got in to a dispute with Ukraine over natural gas shipments this winter

- Russia raised prices, claiming had been shipping to Ukraine at well below market value
- Ukraine saw as a breach of contract and refused to pay
- Russia cut off gas shipments in winter – which also cut off gas to other parts of Europe
- Compromise finally reached with intersession of EU negotiators
- Episode seen as Russia flexing its ‘resources muscle’

BELARUS/UKRAINE: Had been providing oil/gas to former Soviet states at below market prices…suddenly demanded price increases and shot off taps (literally in case of Belarus) when didn’t get

In broader areas, Russia has been less than supportive, even downright hostile, in attempts to curb nuclear ambitions of Iran and North Korea

- Russia still an exporter of both nuclear technology AND weaponry

ALL TOLD…18 years after collapse of communism, Russia not explicitly an enemy of the West, but clearly not an ally and increasingly belligerent

Q’s???????????