The Political Clubs of United Russia: Incubators of Ideology or Internal Dissent?

Thesis

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Abstract

In 2008, three political clubs were officially formed within the United Russia party structure: the Social-Conservative Club, the Liberal-Conservative Club, and the State-Patriotic Club. Membership of these clubs includes many powerful Duma representatives. Officially, their function is to help develop strategies for implementing the government’s Strategy 2020. However, a closer examination of these clubs suggests that they also may function as an ideology incubator for the larger party and as a safety valve for internal party dissent. To answer the question of what the true function of these clubs is an attempt will be made to give: a brief overview of Unity’s and Fatherland-All Russia’s formation; a description of how United Russia formed; a summary of the ideological currents within United Russia from 2001-2009; a discussion of the three clubs; and a comparative analysis of these clubs to the Christian Democratic party of Italy and the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan. Based on this evidence, it will be argued that primary purpose of these clubs is to contain intra-party conflict.
Dedication

Dedicated to my family and friends
Acknowledgements

I wish to thank my adviser, Goldie Shabad, for all of her help, advice, and patience in working on this project with me. Without her help, my thesis would not have been possible. I would also like to thank Trevor Brown for serving on my thesis defense committee and helping me through this process.

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Chapter 1
Introduction

Since its formation in 2001, United Russia has frequently been referred to as a party of power, a dominant party, or simply as the party of Putin. Whichever way it is described, United Russia clearly has become one of the strongest political parties to exist in Russia since the collapse of the Soviet Union. United Russia is the only party since 1991 to receive a parliamentary majority. At both the regional and federal level it has a strong presence. Also, it is one of the few parties to have survived successive elections. However, previous research that has focused on United Russia’s electoral success and ties to Putin has quickly dismissed the question of party ideology. Most previous analyses of United Russia have criticized the party for lacking substance, arguing that the party is simply a rubber stamp for Putin’s policies. It is the aim of this paper to give a more in-depth analysis of the ideology of United Russia, to see why and how it has developed over the past nine years. For the purposes of this research, UR’s ideology will be defined as its programmatic policies.

United Russia’s programmatic policies are an important question for the party because it not only helps to explain how United Russia formed in 2001, how it has developed throughout the 2000s, but also how it will develop in the future. In particular, theories on parties of power and what can affect their success lend a useful perspective to
this discussion. One of the parties that would later come to form part of United Russia, Unity, is an example of this. Unity’s early move to the center of the political spectrum was of crucial importance for its early success. Parties that are able to put forth moderate policy platforms and that avoid polarization during elections then become more able to coordinate or merge with different groups because they have fewer radical issue stances that constrain with whom they can work. Evidence of this can be found throughout the history of United Russia, from Unity’s first electoral victory, to its forming a coalition with the Communists, and to its ability to merge with very different parties in the early 2000s to form United Russia.

Furthermore, what platform the party develops impacts how both elites, meaning politicians who are not formally part of the president’s administration or members of Kremlin insiders, and the public orient themselves to the party, an important consideration in the post-Soviet political environment. The color revolutions of the mid-2000s poignantly demonstrate this, showing that post-Soviet politics are not immune to sudden calls for political reform. In this regard, theories on dominant parties and their uses come into play. Dominant parties help leaders to win elections, control legislatures, and to manage elite conflict. However, for a dominant party to work, subordinate elites must buy into the dominant party or at least believe in its potential to bring them electoral success or to give them access to resources. To this end, what platform or ideology the dominant party puts forth shapes how elites and the public connect to the party. Elite conflict theory then adds to this discussion of elites and political parties by arguing that political parties are an important institution in terms of a regime’s ability to control
political elites.\textsuperscript{1} Political parties help to regulate elite relations and decision making. Put another way, political parties function as a platform for controlled or regulated exchanges between government leaders and political elites. The extent to which a regime can get elites to remain part of a pro-government party and not join the opposition strengthens regime stability.

Thus, ideology becomes important for United Russia because as dominant party theory suggests, it shapes how elites orient themselves to the party and government. However, at the same time, according to elite conflict theory, the strength of the political party itself determines the extent to which political elites can be controlled. What ideology ruling elites have defined for United Russia becomes important in this light because ideology influences the shape of the party. Recent developments within United Russia demonstrate this point. In 2008, three political clubs were formally organized within United Russia’s party structure: the Social-Conservative Club, 4\textsuperscript{th} of November, and the State-Patriotic Club. Membership of these clubs includes many influential and powerful State Duma representatives. Officially, their function is to help develop ideas and strategies for implementing and fulfilling the government’s Strategy 2020. However, a closer examination of these clubs suggests that they have two functions. One is to serve as an incubator of ideology for the larger party. A second function is to serve as a safety valve for internal party dissent. Using elite conflict theory, it will be argued that these

\textsuperscript{1} Brownlee, Jason, \textit{Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization}, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 2.
clubs help ruling elites to control different groups of party members by creating structures that allow for more moderated debate about party objectives.

To answer the question of what is the true function of these clubs, an attempt will be made to give: first, a brief overview of both Unity’s and Fatherland-All Russia’s formation; second, a description of how United Russia formed; third, a summary of the ideological currents that have taken place within United Russia from 2001-2009; fourth, a discussion of the three clubs, from their formation to their different platforms; and fifth, a comparative analysis of these clubs in reference to both Italy’s Christian Democratic Party and Japan’s Liberal Democratic Party. Based on the evidence provided, it will ultimately be argued that ideology has in fact been an important question within the party because United Russia has evolved by absorbing parties with diverse policy stances, and, as a result of this, that the primary function of the clubs is to moderate conflict within UR.
Chapter 2
The Roots of United Russia: Fatherland-All Russia and Unity

To understand what role ideology plays within United Russia, it is first important to understand the political environment of the late 1990s and the two antecedents to what would become United Russia, the political parties Fatherland-All Russia and Unity. In terms of political environment, as president Boris Yeltsin’s second term came to an end, there was an element of uncertainty in Russian politics because of a lack of a clear presidential candidate for the 2000 presidential election. Furthermore, the 1999 Duma elections were seen almost as a primary for the presidential election, with the party taking the most seats in the Duma then having the best odds at winning the presidency. Due to this fact, political elites at both the regional and federal level initially were uncertain about with what parties they should align themselves for the 1999 Duma elections and then, who they should support as a presidential candidate. This resulted in various regional elites trying to form new parties for the 1999 Duma elections. Political

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4 Reuter 515
5 Reuter 515
uncertainty became an impetus for Russian elites to form new parties and sources of power as they struggled to make sense of who might be the next leader of the county.

One example of a party that formed because of this uncertainty was Fatherland, a party founded by Moscow mayor Yuri Luzhkov in 1998. Fatherland was an anti-Yeltsin party created by Luzhkov in an attempt to create a new source of power in Russian politics. In terms of policy platform, Luzhkov tried to position the party as being in the left-center of the political spectrum, between the Communists on the left and Yabloko, the Union of Right Forces, and Yeltsin on the right. Many of the party’s slogans had very nationalist overtones and directly criticized Yeltsin and his policies. One of Luzhkov’s main policy positions was the limiting of the power of the presidency and the empowerment of the parliament. The party quickly was able to gain the support of different groups of elites throughout Russia because, as mayor of Moscow, Luzhkov had great political and financial clout within the country and already had close contacts with many regions. However, one weakness for Fatherland was its inability to get the support of regional governors. Even though many of them attended the December 1998 founding congress, none of them officially joined the party. Despite its inability to gain the support of regional governors however, by the end of 1998 Fatherland had emerged as a strong opposition party and a likely contender for the 1999 Duma elections.

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6 Ivanov, Vitaliy, “Yedinaya Rossiya”: Kratkaya Istoriya Partii (Moscow, Russia: Evropa, 2009) 8.
7 Ivanov Edinaya 8
9 Hale Origins 171
10 Hale Origins 172
11 Hale Origins 171
12 Ivanov Edinaya 11
A second party to emerge from this uncertainty was All Russia. In 1998, rumors began that regional governors were trying to form a governors’ block for the next election. In April 1999 this union of governors took the shape of the political block All Russia and was started by president of Ingushetia, Ruslan Aushev. The block was able to enlist the leaders of Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Saint-Petersburg, Irkutskaya, Astrakhanskaya, Khabarovskiy Kray, Omsk, Chelyabinskaya, and Khanty-Mansiyskiy. Later, it would be led by Tatarstan president Minitmer Shaymiev. Based on All Russia’s genesis at the regional level, it can be considered an attempt by regional elites to establish a national party. However, All Russia’s existence as an independent entity was short lived. In August of 1999, All Russia officially made an alliance with Fatherland, creating the block Fatherland-All Russia (OVR).

Fatherland united with All Russia for strategic reasons. As already noted, despite Luzhkov’s far reaching connections, Fatherland still could not be considered a national party because of its inability to get the backing of regional governors. This gave Fatherland two main options for expansion. The first option was to unite with All Russia and thus benefit from its strong regional connections, which Fatherland did in August of 1999. The second option was to get ex-prime minister Yevgeniy Primakov to join the

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13 Ivanov Edinaya 11
14 Ivanov Edinaya 12
15 Ivanov Edinaya 12
17 Kempton 225
18 Ivanov Edinaya 15
19 Ivanov Edinaya 13
Primakov had served as prime minister for several months in the fall of 1998 and spring of 1999 and was widely credited with helping Russia to emerge from the 1998 financial crisis. Even though he was eventually fired by Yeltsin in the spring of 1999, he was still a widely popular politician and was seen as a potential presidential candidate. Luzhkov wanted to bring Primakov into the party in order to capitalize on Primakov’s popularity, strengthening Fatherland’s chances at the polls. On August 17, 1999, Primakov officially announced that he would lead the OVR block and be its candidate for president. Once Fatherland joined with All Russia in the August of 1999, OVR became a very strong political competitor for the Kremlin and few doubted its ability to do well in the December polls.

In terms of ideology, OVR espoused a policy line very similar to that of Fatherland’s. Like Fatherland, OVR tried to position itself on the center-left of the spectrum. However, its policy positions were fairly vague. Often, they were very leftist and resembled those of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF). Officially, OVR supported social-democratic values. With regards to foreign policy, OVR said that it would defend the rights of Russians abroad while trying to form a new foreign policy path for Russia. Russia should project a strong image abroad by

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20 Ivanov Edinaya 13
21 Ivanov Edinaya 13
22 Ivanov Edinaya 13
23 Ivanov Edinaya 16
24 Hale Origins 172
25 Hale Origins 184
27 1999 227
28 1999 60
focusing on its relationship with former Soviet republics and Asian neighbors, but at the same time, it should avoid confrontations with NATO or the U.S. This made the party relatively pro-Western. Economically, OVR supported the reallocation of property rights granted under the Yeltsin administration, indicating that it was not completely pro-market. Supporters of OVR tended to come from the wealthier regions of Russia. In sum, by the summer of 1999, OVR had emerged as a strong competitor for the Kremlin despite its rather diffuse ideology.

The third and final important party to emerge in the run up to the 1999 elections was Unity. In response to the growing threat from OVR, in the fall of 1999 the Kremlin hastily decided to create a party, which it originally called Bear, to counterbalance the growing powers of OVR. One of the main reasons Kremlin leaders created this party was because they feared having a parliament led by Luzhkov. Furthermore, they believed that a strong showing for OVR in December would then mean a sure victory for Primakov in the presidential election. To create Unity, the Kremlin specifically tried to recruit politicians that were relatively new to politics; they had to hold positions of power but not be professional politicians that had already acquired reputations. In addition to this, the Kremlin realized that it needed to recruit other regional governors in order to

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29 1999 60
31 1999 226
32 Ivanov Edinaya 36
33 Hale Origins 174
34 Hale Origins 180
35 Hale Origins 183
limit OVR’s power at the regional level. Many of the regional leaders that the Kremlin recruited were thus much less well known than those in OVR and this was the first time that these leaders had become involved in federal politics.37

Unity also needed to find a figure to counter the prominence of OVR’s two leaders, Luzhkov and Primakov.38 At first the party struggled to find someone but after the September 1999 Moscow apartment bombings, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin emerged as the strong figure that the party needed.39 Putin had been named prime minister in August 1999 in one of Yeltsin’s frequent cabinet changes.40 Following the apartment bombings, Putin announced that Russia would start a military-police action in Chechnya and Dagestan to fight the terrorist groups that were responsible for these bombings.41 The public responded very positively, seeing Putin as a young, decisive politician who believed in the greatness of Russia, a total opposite to President Yeltsin.42 As Putin’s popularity began to rise the question emerged of how Putin should be affiliated with the party, whether he should become a member or be a leader with indirect ties to it.43 Eventually it was decided that Putin would not join the party. However, in November 1999 when Putin said that as a citizen he would vote for Unity, Unity’s ratings

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36 Ivanov Edinaya 20
37 Kempton 226
38 Hale Origins 175
39 Hale Origins 177
40 Ivanov Edinaya 19
41 Ivanov Edinaya 20
43 Ivanov Edinaya 29
Thus, despite the fact that Putin had not formally joined the party, within a few short months Putin had become inextricably linked with Unity.

Much like OVR, Unity also lacked a concrete ideology. As one Unity member put it, “the ideology of Unity is the lack of any kind of ideology.” However, the few ideological stances that Unity did elucidate were often strikingly similar to those of OVR. Some have suggested that Unity was intentionally vague as it tried to brand itself as a non-ideological party, a strategy to evoke a comparison between it and the KPRF and its strong communist ideological overtones. Domestically, Unity supported using force to control the situation in Chechnya. Unity also tried to evoke a sentiment of national pride and promised to restore Russia to a position of greatness after the period of chaos and decline that the country had gone through in the 1990s. The party also capitalized on its relationship with Putin; to some extent Putin’s youth and strength translated over to the party. With regard to foreign policy, Unity proposed a much less pro-Western policy, suggesting that Russia should not just blindly copy the West. Furthermore, Russia should be willing to partner with any country that could further its national interests. In terms of economic policy, Unity was more pro-free market. Unlike

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44 Hale Origins 185
45 Ivanov Edinaya 28
46 Hale Origins 184
47 Hale Origins 184
48 Riggs Russia’s 277
49 Hale Origins 184
50 Riggs Russia’s 278
51 Riggs Russia’s 278
52 1999 59
53 1999 59
54 Hale Origins 184
OVR, it did not support the reallocation of property rights made under Yeltsin. Based on these policy stances, Unity positioned itself as a center-right party in contrast to OVR’s center-left stances.

Consequently, going into the 1999 Duma elections there were two main contenders, the anti-Kremlin block Fatherland-All Russia, and the pro-Kremlin party Unity. However, an important distinction existed between the two groups. Unity was a party formed by central authorities, making it what Regina Smyth calls a central party of power unlike OVR, which was a regional party of power. Even though Unity did eventually gain the support of regional governors, Kremlin leaders only brought these officials into the party as a strategic move to limit OVR. Furthermore, regional elites at first were very reluctant to join the party; they waited to see what chances the party had for victory. This meant that at first, Kremlin elites were only able to create a loose alliance of a few governors who were not formal members of the party. It was only after Prime Minister Putin attended a regional meeting of Siberian governors, which demonstrated that Unity had the backing of both Kremlin elites and Putin, that governors started to officially become members. In short, Unity and Fatherland-All Russia had evolved very differently and had radically different power structures, both of which would have lasting implications for Unity.

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55 Smyth 563
56 Hale Origins 184
57 Smyth 557
58 1999 224
59 1999 224
60 1999 224
61 1999 224
At the time of the 1999 Duma elections, Russia used a parallel electoral system to divide up the 450 parliamentary seats. One-half of the seats were elected using a single-member district (SMD) plurality system while the other half were elected on a strictly proportional representation basis. Most SMD candidates ran as independents. Once the votes were counted, KPRF ended up getting the largest share of the votes with 24.3%. The surprise of the election occurred when OVR, the party that many had picked to be the front runner, received only 13.3% of the vote. It came in third behind Unity, which received a shocking 23.3%. This worked out to Unity receiving 64 seats in the Duma while OVR got only 37. Shortly after the election, Primakov announced that he would drop out of the presidential race, clearing the way for Putin’s victory. Putin went on to win the March 2000 presidential elections with 52.9% of the vote. Thus Unity, a party created only months before the election, not only was able to fulfill its objective of ruining the electoral chances of OVR, but also emerged as the second largest party in the Duma.

Analyzing the political events of 1998 and 1999, the emergence of OVR and Unity, and the election results of 1999 reveal several key points for the larger discussion of United Russia and ideology. First, why the political party Unity was formed is of

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62 Clark 1999 102
63 Clark 1999 102
64 Ivanov Edinaya 27
65 Ivanov Edinaya 26
66 Ivanov Edinaya 27
67 Ivanov Edinaya 31
68 Hale Origins 185
crucial importance. As has already been mentioned, Unity was formed in response to the growth in stature of OVR; the Kremlin wanted to limit the ability of rival sources of power developing due to the pending change in leadership brought about by Yeltsin’s term coming to an end. This resulted in Unity being dubbed a party of power. However, Unity was unlike many of the previous parties of power in Russia. Previous parties of power, such as Our Home is Russia or Russia’s Choice, had been created by Kremlin elites in order to assure the loyalty of Duma deputies to get the president’s legislation passed.\(^70\) Unity was not created for this purpose; at the time of creation Kremlin leaders seemed to have few plans or uses for Unity beyond the immediate concern of foiling OVR’s success. Their main objective in creating Unity was to limit the chances of anti-Yeltsin politicians in OVR from coming to power who wanted to reverse many of the reforms of the 1990s implemented by the Yeltsin administration and who might even call for judicial action to be taken against Yeltsin and his circle.\(^71\) Thus, when Unity ended up doing quite well in the December elections, Kremlin leaders then had to come up with a plan for Unity. Developing Unity as a national party of power was only thought of after the fact. In conjunction with this, party leaders were left with the decision of how to market Unity.

Second, this election was notable because of the change in political discourse that took place. As has already been mentioned, ideology was not a defining characteristic for either Unity or OVR. Both parties tried to market themselves as moderate, centrist

\(^{70}\) Hale Origins 169

\(^{71}\) Hale Origins 172
parties. This was in contrast to the highly polarized elections that had occurred earlier in the 1990s when the Communists were pitted against radical rightist parties, such as the Union of Right Forces. Shifting to the center was also important, because as Regina Smyth has suggested, the success of a party of power is dependent upon the degree to which the party system is polarized and if the party is able to move to the center of the political spectrum. This is because one of the main duties of a party of power is to get the executive’s legislation passed and to do this, the party needs to be able to partner with different groups and if the party is positioned on the extreme left or right, its ability to form alliances is limited.

By shifting to the center, Unity was in a better position for making alliances with different groups. It was less constrained by fundamental points of ideology and was thus freer to partner with more radical groups without fear of a backlash. This is clearly evident in the coalitions that it formed after the elections. Unity was able to form a coalition with National Deputy, Union of Right Forces, and the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, parties that held very different views on questions of economics, government, and national identity. In summary, after the 1999 elections, Unity unexpectedly found itself as one of the strongest parties in the Duma. Furthermore, because of its more diffuse, centrist ideology, Unity was able to cement its success by allyng with diverse groups within the Duma. However, Unity’s role within the political establishment was still unclear and one that Kremlin elites would soon have to clarify.

72 Smyth 561
73 Smyth 561
74 Smyth 558
75 Ivanov Edinaya 197
Chapter 3
The Founding of United Russia

Following the 1999 Duma elections, Unity went through a period of rapid transformation. Even though Unity had started as an ad hoc party, a place for Unity was quickly found within the new president’s first term policy proposals. Upon taking office, President Putin announced that one of his key policy initiatives would be the recentralization of power. Unity fit into this objective because Kremlin leaders soon realized that it could use Unity to create a national party. In order to create this national party, Unity evolved from the small, central party of power that it was in the 1999 elections into the much larger and diverse party, United Russia that would come to dominate Russian politics throughout much of the 2000s. First, a brief overview of United Russia’s electoral results will be provided that clearly demonstrates this dominance. Then, using theories on dominant parties, it will be argued that this transformation into a dominant party has come about through two main mechanisms: changing electoral laws to cement the party’s power in the Duma and absorbing many of its opponents.

United Russia’s development into a dominant party of power is evident in its ability to win at the polls in the 2003 and 2007 Duma elections. In the 3rd Russian Duma, from 1999 to 2003, Unity became one of the largest political players. During this time, it
also merged with OVR, its former rival, to create the new party Unity and Fatherland-All Russia.\textsuperscript{76} Going into the next round of elections in 2003, Unity and Fatherland-All Russia hoped to keep its position of power. It was hugely successful in this goal. In regional legislative elections, the party came in first in seven regions.\textsuperscript{77} At the federal level, the party came in first, receiving 37.5\% of the proportional representation vote.\textsuperscript{78} This gave it 120 seats.\textsuperscript{79} It picked up a further 106 seats through the SMD portion of the election, giving it 226 seats total.\textsuperscript{80} This result was notable because it was the first time in Russia’s post-communist history that a party had won a constitutional majority.\textsuperscript{81}

Following this election, the party changed its name to its final incantation, United Russia.\textsuperscript{82} Shortly after this, in March 2004, Putin won a second term as president, receiving 71.3\% of the vote.\textsuperscript{83} United Russia was able to replicate its strong results in the 2007 Duma elections. UR won 315 Duma seats with 64.2\% of votes.\textsuperscript{84} In the 2008

\textsuperscript{76} Ivanov Edinaya 52
\textsuperscript{77} Ivanov Edinaya 73
\textsuperscript{78} Ivanov Edinaya 81
\textsuperscript{80} Clark Russian 514
\textsuperscript{81} Ivanov Edinaya 87
\textsuperscript{82} Ivanov Edinaya 87
\textsuperscript{83} Clark Russian 518
\textsuperscript{84} White 172
presidential election, Putin’s successor, Dmitri Medvedev received 70.3% of the vote.\textsuperscript{85} Thus there is little room to dispute UR’s dominance in the 2000s.

However, while it is clear that UR became a dominant party in the 2000s, it is less clear why the Kremlin decided to invest the resources needed to change the small, centralized party Unity into the large, dominant party United Russia. To answer this question it is necessary to look at the literature on dominant parties and their role in Russia prior to 1999. Literature on dominant party theory suggests that dominant parties serve several purposes for a regime; dominant parties help regimes to win elections, control legislatures, and manage elite conflict.\textsuperscript{86} In other words, the benefits of having a dominant party include, “…coordinating electoral expectations, ensuring reliable legislative majorities, co-opting potential opponents, and managing political recruitment.”\textsuperscript{87} However, in order for a regime to establish a dominant party, it must overcome the commitment problem that exists between the regime’s rulers and its other elites.\textsuperscript{88} On the one hand, regime leaders want to tie other elites to the party in order to assure their loyalty.\textsuperscript{89} Elites, on the other hand, do not want to bind themselves to the party without the assurance that they will get greater access to careers and resources by

\textsuperscript{86} Reuter 501
\textsuperscript{87} Reuter 506
\textsuperscript{88} Reuter 501
\textsuperscript{89} Reuter 505
Leaders and elites thus must come to some kind of consensus and agree on the rules surrounding the dominant party in order to overcome this commitment problem and to make the party strong. Dominant parties, in short serve as a mechanism for leaders to establish control over elites in a political system.

In the Russian context this is particularly important because of the structure of the Russian government. While Russian presidents do have the power either to initiate legislation in the Duma or to issue legislative decrees, the power of the president is limited because the president does not have the power to control the legislative agenda. Presidential power is further limited by the fact that a presidential decree carries less weight judicially than a statute passed by parliament. In practice this means that the president needs a loyal parliament in order to get his legislation passed. Clearly, dominant parties could be an important tool for leaders in Russia in a situation where the president has limited legislative power or oversight. Despite this fact, prior to UR most attempts at creating a dominant party in Russia were unsuccessful. Specifically, a previous party of power, Our Home is Russia, failed to develop into a dominant party because Yeltsin did not want other elites to rise to positions of prominence through the

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party.\textsuperscript{95} Then, because Yeltsin failed to empower the party and support it, elites refused to join because they did not want to tie their political careers to a weak party.\textsuperscript{96} In sum, despite their perceived usefulness in the Russian context, dominant parties have failed to develop in Russia because of the perception that they could empower elites or create rival leading political figures.

In 1999, this perception changed radically. With the impending exit of Yeltsin from the political scene, elites struggled to find a successor to the president.\textsuperscript{97} The lack of a clear dominant party meant that there was no clear person or political entity to fill the void. Regional leaders scrambled to create new parties or to coalesce around new figures. As already mentioned, this led to the development of the new parties Fatherland, All Russia, and subsequently, Unity. Primakov and Putin became the two rival figures around which elites grouped. After becoming president in 2000, Putin made the creation of a stable government one of his main policy priorities partially as a way of preventing ambiguity in future leadership transitions. Party development became a strategic decision.\textsuperscript{98} To avoid the personalistic politics of Yeltsin and his divide-and-rule strategies, Putin wanted to develop a strong, stable regime not based on personalities.\textsuperscript{99}

The first step in achieving this was to reassert executive or federal control over elites, in
particular at the regional level. Ensuring elite loyalty to the government became one of the most important questions of Putin’s first term in office. However, this would not be a quick or easy process. In the end it took six years for United Russia to establish its dominance.  

The first way in which United Russia became a dominant party was through taking advantage of the policy and electoral reforms implemented by Putin. Recentralizing power, establishing a new political discourse not focused on questions of Russian identity, bringing the media under control, and restructuring political competition were the four cornerstones of Putin’s attempt to establish a stable regime. Political parties could potentially play an important role in three of these: recentralizing power, a new political discourse, and political competition. Due to this fact, Putin initially emphasized that parties needed to work on recruiting more members from a larger section of society and to become more responsive to the electorate. Forming national political parties became a means for Putin to accomplish his priorities of recentralizing power and creating a new environment for Russian politics, all to achieve the larger goal of creating regime stability. Developing parties was once again a response to the personalized politics of the 1990s. Prior to this, few parties had a national presence. Instead many

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100 Gel’man Party 917
101 Gel’man Party 918
103 Fish 77
formed around regional leaders and only served their interests.¹⁰⁴ The ability of regional governors to create their own spheres of influence has led some scholars to call regional governors party substitutes.¹⁰⁵ Due to this fact, prior to 2003 few parties in the Duma had nationwide organizations, which in turn helped to undermine the central authority of the government.¹⁰⁶ Further reinforcing this trend, many of these elites would then abandon these small parties that they had created or joined when they failed to provide them with benefits.¹⁰⁷

To further support his initiative to build national parties, Putin unveiled a series of political and electoral reforms from 2001 to 2005. One of the main objectives of these reforms was to weaken the party substitutes that had existed in the 1990s.¹⁰⁸ The first of these reforms occurred in 2001. Prior to 2001, the Federation Council was formed by the heads of each region’s executive and legislative branches.¹⁰⁹ Federation Council members were not directly elected and were not appointed.¹¹⁰ After the reform, regional leaders lost their membership to the council and instead were only given the power to appoint two representatives to the council, one each from the region’s executive and

¹⁰⁴Kempton 225
¹⁰⁸Hale Why 19
¹⁰⁹Hale Why 32
¹¹⁰Hale Why 32
legislative branches. This in effect reduced the power of regional leaders, limiting their influence at the federal level. A second reform was the 2002 “Law on Parties” that limited the number of parties that would be able to take part in elections. Based on this new law, parties had to have a nationwide membership of 10,000, with at least 100 members in 45 of Russia’s 89 regions. To fulfill this requirement, parties had to respond to Putin’s call to increase recruitment.

The federal government increased its pressure on regional sources of power by passing another law that required all regions to adopt the same electoral instrument as the federal government. Previously, different regions had had different electoral systems with some having legislatures entirely elected using an SMD system. This inhibited the development of national level parties because SMD seats make it easier for candidates to run as independents. Historically, most candidates in SMD races ran as independents. They were able to do this because by law, parties could either gather signatures and once they had enough, have candidates run in SMD races, or they could pay a deposit. Many candidates preferred to pay the deposit, forgoing party affiliation, but one drawback to this was that many candidates paid the deposit by receiving

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111 Hale Why 32
112 Clark Russian 512
113 Hale Why 512
115 Moraski 548
116 Clark 1999 102
117 Riggs Russia’s 273
donations from local elites. Regional SMD candidates could thus avoid becoming dependent on parties but at the same time they became dependent on regional elites. By reducing the use of SMD races at the regional level, the Kremlin was trying to curtail both regional elite influence and the ability of candidates to run as independents, encouraging them to join parties.

More specifically, the Kremlin was not only trying to foster the development of national parties, but to have that national party become United Russia. Going into the 2003 Duma elections, the Kremlin increased pressure on regional elites to join the party. Even after Putin became president in 2000, regional elites were at first reluctant to accept a subordinate position to the Kremlin. At the same time, Kremlin leaders remained unsure of what role United Russia should play in Putin’s plan to recentralize power. However, as the 2003 elections approached the Kremlin finally decided that United Russia would be the main vehicle for uniting and controlling elites. It did this because the Kremlin realized that in order to ensure another victory for its party in 2003 it had to get more support from governors. Furthermore, it actively recruited other regional politicians to run on its ticket. This was in contrast to 1999 when Unity had

118 Riggs Russia’s 273
119 Reuter 502
120 Reuter 502
121 Reuter 502
122 Reuter 517
123 Moraski 556
paid little attention to SMD races. Based on the 2003 election results, this strategy seems to have paid off. Unity and Fatherland-All Russia received 106 SMD seats in 2003 in contrast to the nine Unity received in 1999. United Russia thus emerged by 2002-2003 as the Kremlin’s leading candidate for its campaign to create national political parties.

Reforms continued in 2004 and 2005. In 2004, a law was passed that eliminated the direct election of regional governors. Instead, they would be picked by the president, though the president’s choice would still have to be approved by the region’s legislature. Then in 2005, the electoral rules for the federal legislature were changed. Most importantly, SMD seats were eliminated, meaning all candidates would now be elected using a PR system. Also the threshold for PR seats was raised from 5% to 7%. Some other reforms included prohibiting elected deputies from switching to another legislative faction after the election and prohibiting electoral blocks from running in elections. As several scholars have suggested, these reforms were mainly an attempt to recentralize power and to strengthen the party system by reducing the number of

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124 Smyth 566
125 Clark 1999 103
126 Ross 360
127 Ross 360
128 Moraski 537
129 Moraski 537
130 Moraski 537
political players.\textsuperscript{131} It did this because like the earlier reforms at the regional level, SMD seats were believed to reduce parties’ ability to develop support at the grassroots level since politicians had few incentives to join a party. However, some of these earlier reforms were less successful than expected, which is the reason why some argue this second attempt at reforming electoral rules was made.\textsuperscript{132} Overall, these reforms from 2001 to 2005 show the Kremlin’s pursuit of establishing a national party, more specifically turning United Russia into a dominant party.

A second way that United Russia became a dominant party was by merging with other small parties. United Russia developed in the 2000s, leaving its roots as the small, central party Unity behind. It did this by absorbing several different political parties that had formerly been in opposition to it. In 2000, even though the Kremlin had still not completely decided what it would do with Unity, prominent members of the party started to propose the idea of merging with OVR. Vladislav Surkov, a Kremlin elite who has had staff positions in both Vladimir Putin’s and Dmitri Medvedev’s presidential administrations, argued that uniting with OVR would bring more elites under the Kremlin’s control and help the party ensure its victory in the 2003 elections.\textsuperscript{133} The two

\textsuperscript{131} Wilson, Kenneth, “Party-System Reform in Democracy’s Grey Zone: A Response to Moraski,” Government and Opposition 44.2 (2009): 188.

\textsuperscript{132} Gel’man Party 919

\textsuperscript{133} Ivanov Edinaya 47
parties officially merged in December 2001 following almost a year of negotiations, creating the party Unity and Fatherland-All Russia.\textsuperscript{134}

Two other parties also joined at this time: Russia’s Regions and People’s Deputy.\textsuperscript{135} Some have suggested that Unity was able to unite these parties because of the lure of resources; Unity, due to its close connections to the Kremlin could promise a level of access unlike other parties.\textsuperscript{136} OVR’s poorer than expected finish in the 1999 Duma elections led to the party quickly falling apart due to internal tensions and dissent, also helping Unity to pick up the pieces of what remained of the party.\textsuperscript{137} Later in 2003, the party’s name was officially changed to United Russia (UR).\textsuperscript{138} These mergers greatly helped Unity to expand at the regional level. By merging with OVR, Unity and Fatherland-All Russia combined elements of both a central party of power and a regional one.\textsuperscript{139} In less than a year, Unity and Fatherland-All Russia had 87 regional units, giving the party a strong presence at both the federal and regional level.\textsuperscript{140} Expansions also

\textsuperscript{134} Ivanov Edinaya 52
\textsuperscript{135} Chaisty Legislative 435
\textsuperscript{137} Smyth 569
\textsuperscript{138} Ivanov Edinaya 87
\textsuperscript{139} Smyth 570
\textsuperscript{140} Ivanov Edinaya 86
occurred later on in the history of the party. In October 2008, the Agrarian Party, a party holding policy stances very similar to the Communists, merged with UR.¹⁴¹

This regional expansion fit nicely into the other electoral and political initiatives that Putin was implementing at the time. Putin’s electoral reforms were meant to recentralize power and to break the independence of regional elites. United Russia was meant to become the government’s dominant party. While Putin’s reforms, in particular eliminating SMD elections and assuming the power of appointing regional governors, diminished the ability of independent politicians to amass much political capital, Unity’s ultimate development into the party United Russia became the vehicle for controlling elites. Even though Unity did not start out as a dominant party, by the time it morphed into United Russia in 2003 a place had been found for it within Putin’s larger policy objectives. United Russia became the primary mechanism for not only getting popular support, but also for the Kremlin regaining dominance over political elites. This is particularly important when put in the context of the Russian system where the president has little ability to control the legislative agenda; struggles between the legislative and executive branches of government incentivize the creation of a majority in the legislature that is loyal to the president in order to get his legislation passed.

Thus far it has been argued that United Russia has become a dominant party as a way for the Kremlin to control political elites. While the party has been successful electorally, evidence also suggests that the Kremlin’s objective of controlling elites through the party has also been successful within the Duma. The ability to control elites is of particular importance in the case of Russia because of its semi-presidential system, where conflicts between the legislative and executive branches often arise. Scholars have argued that mixed systems such as Russia’s provide fertile ground for the growth of strong, executive supported parties because the executive branch needs these parties to help it get support for its policy proposals.\textsuperscript{142} The party becomes the main instrument for coordinating policies within the legislature. On this count, Unity from 1999 to 2003 was quite successful and since 2004, UR has continued to provide the executive branch with a high degree of support.\textsuperscript{143}

Research on the effects of Russia’s mixed system suggests that party cohesion and attendance has risen over time for UR.\textsuperscript{144} Furthermore, with the new Duma of 2003, Putin benefited from having a strong majority.\textsuperscript{145} Prior to that, even though Unity and then Unity and Fatherland-All Russia were highly supportive of the President’s legislation, they often had to rely on other outside parties to get enough support to pass

\textsuperscript{142} Smyth 556
\textsuperscript{143} Smyth 570
\textsuperscript{144} Chaisty Legislative 439
\textsuperscript{145} Chaisty Legislative 441
the legislature. Evidence also suggests that SMD deputies in the 2nd (1996-1999) and 3rd (1999-2003) Dumas were much more likely to dissent from the faction line when voting than PR representatives. Starting in the 3rd Duma, deputies also became less likely to abandon their party to serve as independent deputies or to run as independents in the first place, even though they retained the right to do so until 2005.

This evidence largely confirms what has been argued so far. The electoral reforms of Putin enabled UR to win enough seats in the Duma to have a strong majority that has then rarely dissented from the Kremlin’s line. Furthermore, these reforms have minimized the role that independents have played in the legislature since 2003. Unity’s merger with OVR and several other small parties has also enhanced the party’s ability to ensure legislative majorities by diminishing the number of parties in opposition to the Kremlin. UR has thus been able to assure the Kremlin of having a broadly supportive legislative majority in the Duma, enabling it to pass its legislation while also minimizing the role of regional elites, and strengthening the power and control of the central government.

146 Chaisty Legislative 439
Chapter 4

The Ideological Currents in United Russia since 2001

As United Russia morphed from a small, ad hoc party into a more stable, dominant party its ideology also changed. Originally Unity was criticized for having little to no ideology. However, ideology became a more interesting question for Unity in the 2000s. First, its union with OVR raises the question of how Unity was able to reconcile the diverse stances of its opponent. Despite the fact that Unity lacked a specific ideology, the few policy stances that it did put forth were clearly at odds with those of OVR. This meant that Unity and then United Russia at first had to decide at some basic level how large a role ideology would play in the party: whether it would continue to minimize the importance of ideology or try to create a more defined ideology.

Second, based on this necessity for deciding ideology’s role, the party would have to decide how to deal with and combine its different constituent ideological parts. To answer this question of ideology, a brief review of literature on ideology and its role in political parties will be given as a foundation for discussing the specific case of ideology within United Russia. Then a synopsis of United Russia’s ideology and its changes since 2001 will be given. For the purposes of this analysis, ideology will be defined as UR’s programmatic policies. Based on this, it will be argued that UR has tried to find a
balance between enumerating too little or too much ideology, attempting to control elites without alienating its different internal divisions.

Before looking at what ideology UR has officially elucidated, a review of the pertinent literature on party ideology will help to contextualize the discussion of UR. Previous scholars that have looked at elite settlements and how they lead to democratization have primarily focused on elite institutions and how they shape elite-regime relations based on cooperation and consensus.\footnote{Gel’man, Vladimir, “Russia’s Elites in Search of Consensus: What Kind of Consolidation?” \textit{Demokratizatsiya} 10.3 (Summer 2002): 344.} In general, regimes tend to evolve from a system where there is little cooperation amongst elites and there is no value consensus to a system where elites cooperate and reach a consensus. Political conflict changes from being perceived as a zero-sum game to a positive-sum game.\footnote{Gel’man Russia’s 344} This usually happens in two ways; either elites come to some type of settlement in a very short amount of time, much like a pact, or a consensus amongst elites slowly emerges over a longer period of time.\footnote{Gel’man Russia’s 344} However, some scholars have argued that traditional elite settlement theories should not be applied wholesale to the analysis of Russia’s transition following the collapse of the Soviet Union. This is because in Russia the Soviet government collapsed because of intra-elite conflict and is an example of an imposed transition.\footnote{Gel’man Russia’s 344}

This distinction is important because one scholar, Vladimir Gel’man, has argued that it should not be assumed that all elites use pacts or settlements to achieve democratic
reforms. Gel’man argues that elites also have incentives to participate in settlements in order to maintain access to resources. Evidence for Gel’man’s argument comes from a case study of the city Nizhniy Novgorod following the collapse of its local communist government in 1991. Local communist leaders who had supported the August 1991 putsch were removed from power and replaced by democrats. Yeltsin also appointed a representative to the region. According to Gel’man, this is an example of an imposed consensus; federal authorities intervened to change the local leadership.

Then after 1991, this representative came to dominate Nizhniy Novgorod politics throughout the 1990s because of his ability to make pacts with other local elites. Informal institutions were used to establish elite consensus and cooperation, mainly in regards to resource allocation. Using resources, certain elites were able to buy the loyalty of other elites and minimize the power of their opponents. Based on this case study, an imposed consensus inhibits a large group of elites coming to a mutual consensus about politics. In this example, elite consensus focused on establishing the rules of the game, not on coming to a value or ideological consensus. This has several possible side effects. First, as has been described in the case of Nizhniy Novgorod, access to resources can become a very important motivating factor. The Communists were quickly sidelined and as Yeltsin’s representative acquired power, local elites had few choices other than to work with him if they wanted to stay in positions of power. A

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153 Gel’man Russia’s 345
154 Gel’man Russia’s 345
155 Gel’man Russia’s 346
156 Gel’man Russia’s 346
157 Gel’man Russia’s 347
158 Gel’man Russia’s 347
159 Gel’man Russia’s 350
second side effect related to this is that even though a stable political system developed in Nizhniy Novgorod, politics were not based on the competition of political parties because local elites did not join parties. Parties were not seen as being useful institutions. Third, an imposed consensus means that elites saw little value in compromise; more was to be gained by dominating another group of elites than working with them. This has the potential to reinforce the continued presence of zero-sum politics.

Using this framework and applying it to the Russian political system of the 1990s, it can be argued that the 1991 transition was an imposed consensus and that following this, an elite consensus failed to emerge during Yeltsin’s rule. This occurred because neither Yeltsin nor his opponents became a dominant actor. Additionally, each side perceived politics as a zero-sum game. Political parties were also of minimal importance during this period, like in the Nizhniy Novgorod case study, since Yeltsin himself never joined one. Political elites competed with each other not on the basis of parties or ideology, but by competing for access to resources. As a consequence of the limited role of political parties, ideology was downplayed. However, upon coming to power Putin made it a priority to minimize elite conflict. He did this by imposing a consensus, establishing himself as the dominant actor in the political system, and taking charge of the resource exchange system. Put another way, Putin established the rules of the game. Gaining the power to name regional governors is thus an example of

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160 Gel’man Russia’s 350
161 Gel’man Russia’s 350
162 Gel’man Russia’s 356
163 Gel’man Russia’s 356
164 Gel’man Russia’s 356
165 Gel’man Russia’s 345
166 Gel’man Russia’s 357
exerting control over resource allocation by minimizing the influence of other elites. In turn, this then strengthened his ability to impose a consensus on elites.\textsuperscript{167} Furthermore, the executive branch took a very active role in coordinating the activities of deputies, building consensus within the party before a bill was voted on.\textsuperscript{168}

To further develop the context of ideology in Russia, a second avenue of exploration is the consequences of 74 years of communist rule. With the collapse of the Soviet government, many scholars believed that post-communist society in Russia would be devoid of definable cleavages.\textsuperscript{169} Society would shun heavily ideological parties and civil society would remain relatively weak.\textsuperscript{170} This has not turned out to be entirely true. While Russian society does not divide along traditional western historical-social cleavages, it does to some extent divide along attitudes towards the communist past.\textsuperscript{171} Cleavages have emerged in society, with some having more liberal leanings, while others call for more state intervention.\textsuperscript{172} Patriotism has also become a main rallying point.\textsuperscript{173} UR has thus built its image not around the more traditional issues of class, ethnicity, or religion but instead focused on crafting its image around more diffuse points, such as patriotism and the role of the government in the economy. Based on this, some have labeled UR a catch-all party.\textsuperscript{174} Diverse groups have been brought together under the

\textsuperscript{167} Gel'man Russia’s 358
\textsuperscript{168} Chaisty Party 315
\textsuperscript{169} Bader 103
\textsuperscript{170} Bader 103
\textsuperscript{172} Laverty 369
\textsuperscript{173} Laverty 369
\textsuperscript{174} Laverty 374
umbrella of UR and ideology has not been emphasized, while the strength of the party’s leaders has been.\textsuperscript{175}

In summary, UR has imposed a consensus on political elites in the 2000s by establishing the rules of political competition, in contrast to the 1990s when Yeltsin failed to establish dominance over regional elites. This has given the Kremlin the needed majority in the legislature to enact its reforms and policy proposals. At the same time, even though UR has established its dominance, it has not done this by creating a dominant ideology. Instead, UR has brought together different groups based more on its connections to the Kremlin and the popular figure of Putin. Not having a distinct ideology has had it benefits for UR. Lacking a distinctive or strong ideological foundation has enabled it to join or work with many diverse groups, even the Communist Party; since it has no ideology, it does not have to worry about conflicts of interest when allying with different parties.\textsuperscript{176} In sum, a diffuse ideology has allowed UR to be more nimble politically.

Even though it is diffuse, several themes and ideas have been constant in the statements and proposals that Unity and UR have given since 2001. In general, most of UR’s ideological positions have focused on programmatic questions, such as how to modernize the economy or the state. Many of Unity’s earlier statements concentrated on the idea of creating a new political system or future. In April 2000 the political council of Unity said that, “Russia needs a party of the future, a party of national unity, against all

\textsuperscript{175} Laverty 374
\textsuperscript{176} Ross 227
the parties of the past. A party such as this needs to become one of the bases of a new political system.”177 Later in 2000, Unity described itself as: a party of thought, rights, justice, and stability; a party of the present and future; a party of presidential power; and as an all national party.178 Building upon this idea that Unity was a new step in the development of Russian politics, in 2002 Unity and Fatherland-All Russia took this idea further by critiquing the parties of the past for not having improved the lives of average Russians. Furthermore, it began to promote itself as a centrist party.

The ideological foundation of our party is political centrisms. In our understanding centrisms is not the arithmetical middle between ‘left’ and ‘right’, and what is more centrisms is not the mechanical blending of left and right ideas. At the base of centrisms is the aspiration to solve the real problems, but not to create the mythical ‘bright future’ for future descendents.179

Centrisms is oriented on actual problems and refuses abstract plans, cut off from life. Centrisms departs from formed practice. Centrisms is against senseless experiments, against any radicalism and revolutionary, thoughtless, and hasty steps. And the right, and left often advance with utopian positions, we cannot allow ourselves this. ‘United Russia’ is an

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177 Ivanov, Vitaliy, _Partiya Putina: Istoriya “Edinoy Rossii”_ (Moscow, Russia: Olma Media Group, 2008) 63. Translated by author.
178 Ivanov Partiya 68
179 Ivanov Partiya 95 Translated by author
organized call to unite all constructive forces of society, aimed at real work, but not empty discussions.\textsuperscript{180}

The idea of centrism again brought up a comparison between former parties that were perceived to have overlooked the problems of the average Russian. By doing this, the party evoked the image that it was a strong force willing to deal with the real issues of the country.

This rhetoric about helping ordinary people is demonstrated in the following quote:

Our ideology is the ideology of national success. In the understanding of the party national success means the success of every Russian family, every separate Russian citizen. Success in the same custom, by the everyday understanding of this word, is the ability to realize oneself in any activity, to raise children without fear for their future, to know that a worthy and secure life awaits a person. Just the task of national success makes us not only a union of the crucial political powers of the country, but of the parties of the majority of the citizens of Russia (translation by author).\textsuperscript{181}

This became an important selling point for the party as time progressed. By 2003, the party had become closely associated with Putin. As the economy improved and Putin’s government performed better, UR came to be increasingly tied to the government and its

\textsuperscript{180} Ivanov Partiya 95 Translated by author
\textsuperscript{181} Ivanov Partiya 96 Translated by author
policies. Surveys conducted in 2007 and 2008 confirm this but with the caveat that the electorate can to some extent differentiate between the popularity and performance of Putin and of the party.\textsuperscript{182} Supporters of the party share, “…a certain set of values, perceptions of policymaking success, and even emerging party loyalties that are distinct from loyalties to Putin personally.”\textsuperscript{183} Respondents in the survey placed the party on the right side of the political spectrum for its pro-market stances, implementation of a flat income tax, and anti-socialist rhetoric.\textsuperscript{184} Thus the party’s, society’s, and Putin’s policy stances largely overlap; all of these groups claim to support a more stable country with pro-market reforms. However, those surveyed did say that Putin’s support of the party was important to them.\textsuperscript{185} These two points, that Putin’s and the party’s policy positions are almost exactly alike and that Putin’s support of the party is important to the electorate, show that while the party’s popularity is not solely based on that of Putin, it benefits from being perceived as one of the main tools that Putin uses to reform the country.

Other survey data also indicates the paramount importance of economics to the Russian electorate. In surveys conducted in 2000 and in 2004, more than 30% of respondents believed that economic prosperity is part of democracy.\textsuperscript{186} However, despite UR’s ability to create the image that it is a party dedicated to solving the practical problems of the country both scholars and political opponents have criticized it for being

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{182} Hale, Henry, “What Makes Dominant Parties Dominant in Hybrid Regimes? The Unlikely Importance of Ideas in United Russia,” Annual Meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, Boston, November 12-15, 2009: 3.} \\
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{183} Hale What 3} \\
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{184} Hale What 5} \\
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{185} Hale What 7} \\
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{186} Levada, Yuri, “What the Polls Tell Us,” Journal of Democracy 15.3 (2004): 45.}
The party has appropriated many of the ideas of its opponents in a tactical move to take votes away from them. Starting in 2004, in answer to this lack of ideology, a movement started within the party to develop more of a cohesive platform. Vladislav Surkov became the biggest proponent of this movement. In 2005, Surkov said that the party had become strong enough electorally and organizationally that it could now start to focus on forming an ideology. Surkov also emphasized that this process was important because the party had absorbed many different groups in its three years of existence, from the far left and right, and had expanded very rapidly. The only thing that unified these groups was their commitment to Putin and his policy agenda. This agenda had two main parts: the principle of supporting the majority and the importance of legalism.

To counteract this lack of ideology, Surkov developed the idea of sovereign democracy and tried to promote it as the official ideology of UR. According to his idea of sovereign democracy, Russia should develop its own democratic institutions based on its own experience and history; it should not feel pressured to follow wholesale the standards and achievements of the West. Society needed to be open and democratic in order for the country to modernize but again, it should avoid copying the West. Sovereign democracy would later be accepted in the December 2006 party congress as

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187 Levada 48
188 Levada 48
189 Ivanov Edinaya 107
190 Ivanov Edinaya 107
191 Ivanov Edinaya 107
192 Ivanov Edinaya 112
193 Ivanov Edinaya 110
194 Ivanov Edinaya 114
part of United Russia’s program.\textsuperscript{195} Then, at the 7\textsuperscript{th} Party Congress, the idea of sovereign
democracy was further defined as the right of the people to make choices, safety and
security for the country internally and externally, and the right to defend national
interests.\textsuperscript{196} Once again, it was emphasized that there are different ways to realize
democratic values.\textsuperscript{197} However, following this congress, the idea of sovereign democracy
never really took root. Internal divisions prevented the party as a whole from adopting
one ideology.\textsuperscript{198}

After sovereign democracy failed to take root and with the 2007 Duma and 2008
presidential elections approaching, a new discourse emerged within the party. In October
of 2007, Putin announced that he would not run for a third term as president but said that
he would officially become a member of United Russia.\textsuperscript{199} Then in October of 2007, a
variety of ideas were brought together in what became known as Putin’s Plan.\textsuperscript{200} Putin’s
Plan was not a radical departure from the ideas and positions that the party had
enumerated earlier. Instead, it simply brought together many of the earlier ideas about
Russia’s national success. Specifically, Putin’s Plan focused on the following: protection
and promotion of Russian culture; economic development and innovation; bettering the
standard of living of citizens; supporting civil society; and increasing Russia’s
sovereignty. By law, all parties are required to publish their manifestos in at least one national newspaper 20 days before the election and Putin’s Plan became the basis for UR’s manifesto. UR’s manifesto, “Putin’s Plan: A Worthy Future for a Great County,” again focused on rhetoric describing the development of Russia into a country with great political, economic, and culture influence throughout the world. The party also promised to initiate health, education, and agriculture programs if it was elected.

During the campaign, Putin also attacked opposition parties and politicians for having too close relations with Western officials. The idea of sovereign democracy and protecting Russia’s heritage was thus still an important component of this new discourse. Putin emphasized that Russia’s political choices should not be critiqued by the West and that Western officials should stay out of Russia’s domestic affairs. Within Putin’s criticism of Western influence was an implicit fear and critique of the perceived role the West had played in the color revolutions that happened throughout Eastern Europe several years before. Some measure of reform was seen as desirable by UR but this reform had to be tightly managed and controlled to prevent it from getting out of control and either leading to a deterioration of the people’s quality of life like in the 1990s or to a wholesale revolution. This concern was echoed by the official head of

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203 McAllister 939

204 McAllister 939

205 White Duma 172

206 McAllister 938

207 White Duma 172

208 White Duma 172

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the party and Speaker of the Duma, Boris Gryzlov. Gryzlov reiterated the idea that Russia should be careful of what aspects of the West it chooses to follow, that Russia needs to become a strong state in order to protect its citizens.\textsuperscript{209} He also described UR’s conservative base as being conservative in the sense that UR wants to protect Russia’s culture and traditions while at the same time turning Russia into a global power.\textsuperscript{210}

Furthermore, Gryzlov wrote that citizen unity is very important for the country and thus both citizens and political parties should avoid extremist views.\textsuperscript{211} This is the reason Gryzlov provided for why Russia moved to a fully PR system, arguing that this helped to eliminate small racist, xenophobic parties from gaining representation.\textsuperscript{212} Gryzlov also emphasized that UR is a unified party that shares a certain set of values.\textsuperscript{213} He then added that it is important for parties to have some ideological aspect and that UR’s groups are mainly responsible for contributing to this process within the party.\textsuperscript{214} Strengthening civil society, the mass media, and the party system also is mentioned as being part of UR’s objectives.\textsuperscript{215} However, strengthening civil society is seen as a way to limit foreign intervention by supplanting foreign funding with domestic funds while strengthening the media is seen as limiting the ownership of media outlets by oligarchs.\textsuperscript{216} These last two policies thus seem to be aimed more at eliminating rival

\textsuperscript{210} Gryzlov 84
\textsuperscript{211} Gryzlov 84
\textsuperscript{212} Gryzlov 87
\textsuperscript{213} Gryzlov 87
\textsuperscript{214} Gryzlov 88
\textsuperscript{215} Gryzlov 84
\textsuperscript{216} Gryzlov 85
sources of power and exerting more federal control. In terms of economic policy, Gryzlov criticized leftist parties for their promotion of state economic planning.\(^{217}\)

UR’s ideology thus can be categorized as being focused on the broad goals of bettering the country, economy, and lives of its citizens but lacking in definite policy proposals to achieve these goals. In a comparative perspective, this is a problem that afflicts many parties in post-Soviet Russia. Even the Communist Party of Russia sticks to these formulaic policy pronouncements. The party’s program largely focuses on the struggle between capitalism and socialism.\(^{218}\) The Communist Party’s Minimum Program, while espousing different goals from those of UR, is similarly vague. The Minimum Program calls for increasing the power of workers, helping families, nationalizing the country’s resources, stopping electoral fraud, and reaffirming the independence of the judiciary.\(^{219}\) Additionally, the Communist Party organizes strikes, protests, and other forms of civil resistance.\(^{220}\) Thus, despite the Communist Party’s strong ideological inclinations based on the struggles between capitalism and socialism, the Communist Party has elaborated very few concrete policy proposals to achieve its goal of developing a socialist country.

Clearly, UR’s attempts at developing a party platform have been less than successful. In addition to this, most of the proposed platforms have lacked a large amount of detail or clear policy statements and commitments other than the vague goal of

\(^{217}\) Gryzlov 87

\(^{218}\) Kommunisticheskaya partiya Rossii skoy Federatsii, Programma Partii, N.D., 15 April 2010 <http://kprf.ru/party/program/>\(^{219}\) Kommunisticheskaya partiya Rossii skoy Federatsii, Programma Partii

\(^{220}\) Kommunisticheskaya partiya Rossii skoy Federatsii, Programma Partii
bettering the country. Why then has UR invested time and money in answering this question, bringing it up over successive years? Some have argued that UR is trying to promote elite cohesion.221 Another reason offered is that it is trying to get the support of citizens.222 Yet a different reason offered is that it is a response to the fears of some within the party, including Putin, that an indirect consequence of an absence of an ideology has been the proliferation of extremist views.223 While these reasons all make sense, theories on elite cohesion seem to offer the best explanation for UR’s push to develop some type of ideology. As Jason Brownlee has argued, political parties allow a government to control political elites and can help prevent elites from joining opposition groups.224 In this light, what ideology a party promulgates can impact the way in which political elites associate with that party.

Based on Russia’s history in the 1990s when there was little elite cohesion, it seems likely that UR is signaling to its elites through a broad set of policy proposals what it wants to achieve for the country. To this end, while it still has not outlined a concrete plan, it is trying to dominate the discourse within the country in regards to economic and foreign policy matters at a minimum level by establishing Russia’s pro-market stance and foreign policy oriented more towards its neighbors than the West. This is in distinction to the 1990s when there was still wide debate amongst the elites about what course Russia

222 Remington 2
223 Remington 3
224 Brownlee 2
should take. However, it is also trying to avoid the shadow of the Soviet past. UR does not want to be perceived as having a strong ideology like the Communists, an ideology which subsumed the whole state and private life. Thus, UR is forced to walk a fine line between developing too much or too little ideology; it wants to maintain control both within the party and in the larger political arena by asserting dominance in the political discourse of the country, yet it wants to refrain from becoming seen as too ideological or rooted in one spot on the political spectrum. This dilemma is exacerbated by the fact that the party has taken shape by merging with other parties regardless of ideology. Ideology, in sum, has both great potential for the party but also great danger.

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225 Remington 2
Chapter 5
The Three Political Clubs of United Russia

As has been described, United Russia has attempted to create some form of party platform several times. It has done this to help control elites, but at the same time it has tried to avoid alienating the different political groups that have joined the party over the years. Reviewing the different ideological currents that have broken within United Russia suggests that the party has been unsuccessful at formulating a concrete ideology. However, one area that has been little researched that might add to the discussion of United Russia’s ideology is the topic of United Russia’s political clubs. Much like the larger question of ideology within the party, the issue of political clubs has been brought up several times. The debate about political clubs first emerged in 2005 but was shut down after only a few weeks. However, the question of clubs emerged a second time in 2008.

In terms of ideology, these clubs add an interesting aspect to the discussion of UR not only because they have reemerged several times, but also because they directly relate to the party’s ability to control the diverse groups within it. To demonstrate this point, first a history and description of the emergence of these clubs will be given, followed by an in-depth analysis of each of the clubs. Ultimately, it will be argued that while these clubs do play a role in the genesis of ideology, their
more important function is to alleviate internal pressure within the party caused by the diverging objectives and ideologies of different elites within the party.

Currently, there are three political clubs affiliated with United Russia: the Social-Conservative Club, 4th of November, and the State-Patriotic Club. While comprehensive membership lists were not available for all clubs, the State-Patriotic Club currently has 22 Duma deputies that are members.226 4th of November also has approximately 20 members that are Duma deputies.227 Membership information was not available for the Social-Conservative Club. The development of today’s clubs has occurred in stages. The roots of the current political clubs can be traced back to 2005 when a movement started within the party to develop party wings. The impetus for this movement came from Vladislav Surkov in his push to develop some sort of ideology after the party had consolidated itself electorally. At first only two wings developed.

The first wing, which was the social-conservative wing, was led by Andrei Isaev and was the left wing of the party.228 Previously, in 2003 UR had called itself a party of social-conservatism and this wing continued to promote many of the larger party’s main ideas, such as raising living standards and taking a slower course towards democratic development.229 At the base of this wing was the idea that

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228 Ivanov Edinaya 108
229 Ivanov Edinaya 66
progress should not come at the expense of the well being of the majority.\footnote{Tsentr sosial’no-konservativnnoy politiki, “Manifest: predlozheniya k platforme rossiyskogo sotsial’no konservativizma,” N.D., 1 March 2010 <http://www.cscp.ru/about/manifest/41/>}

Most of the people associated with this wing had formerly been part of OVR.\footnote{Laruelle, Marlene, “Inside and Around the Kremlin’s Black Box: The New Nationalist Think Tanks in Russia,” Stockholm Paper (Washington D.C.: Institute for Security and Development Policy, 2009) 27.} Andrei Isaev had been an early member of Luzhkov’s Fatherland party, served as the deputy leader of OVR in the Duma, and helped in the negotiations leading up to the merger of OVR and Unity.\footnote{Pribylovskiy, Vladimir, antikompromat.org, Andrei Isaev, N.D., 3 March 2010 <http://www.antikompromat.org/isaev/isaevbio.html>}

He also was one of the first proponents of developing wings, saying in 2004 that left and right platforms would inevitably develop within the party.\footnote{Farizova, Syuzanna, “‘Edinoy Rossii’ podrezali kryl’ya,” Kommersant, 26 May 2004.}

A second, right wing also emerged at this time, the liberal-conservative wing led by Vladimir Pligin.\footnote{Ivanov Edinaya 108} Pligin had been elected as a deputy for United Russia in the 2003 Duma elections.\footnote{Pribylovskiy, Vladimir, antikompromat.org, Vladimir Pligin, N.D., 3 March 2010 <http://www.antikompromat.org/pligin/pligbio.html>}

The liberal-conservative wing was mainly concerned with the economic development of the country.\footnote{Institut obshchestvennogo proektirovaniya Pervoe zasedanie} Establishing and observing property rights were part of the wing’s economic platform.\footnote{Polit.ru, polit.ru, “S kakoy ideologii vyidyot ‘Edinaya Rossiya?’” 22 April 2005, 3 March 2010 <http://www.polit.ru/dossie/2005/04/22/lib.html>}

Liberal-conservatives also focused on the rights of the people, advocating for an independent judiciary and free media.\footnote{Institut obshchestvennogo proektirovaniya Pervoe zasedanie} However, the group also said that it was trying to define a new liberalism, distancing itself from the liberalism of the 1990s that was blindly copied
from the West and led to the economic decline of the country.\footnote{Polit.ru} Many of the people that were associated with this wing had had close connections with the Union of Right Forces in the late 1990s.\footnote{Laruelle 26} These two wings thus largely represented the two antecedents to United Russia, Unity and OVR, in their ideological stances.

Soon after their emergence, much debate started to surround the wings as the party tried to figure out what their official function would be.\footnote{Ivanov Edinaya 108} Within the party there was a fear that the emergence of wings would undermine the party, eroding its base of support.\footnote{Ivanov Edinaya 108} Members of both wings tried to reassure party members that this would not happen. A group from the liberal-conservative wing said that the development of wings did not mean that the party was splitting into fractions.\footnote{Polit.ru} Isaev emphasized that the wings worked within the party.\footnote{Ivanov Partiya 199} Kremlin elites also had negative feelings towards the emergence of party wings. In 2004 when Isaev first hinted that wings might emerge within the party, the Kremlin quickly tried to minimize the importance of this pronouncement, arguing that wings would not emerge within the party anytime soon.\footnote{Farizova} Further confusion arose because not everyone was a member of the clubs. For example, Boris Gryzlov refrained from joining either wing. Even though many thought he leaned towards the ideals of the

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\footnote{Polit.ru} Polit.ru
\footnote{Laruelle 26} Laruelle 26
\footnote{Ivanov Edinaya 108} Ivanov Edinaya 108
\footnote{Ivanov Edinaya 108} Ivanov Edinaya 108
\footnote{Polit.ru} Polit.ru
\footnote{Ivanov Partiya 199} Ivanov Partiya 199
\footnote{Farizova} Farizova
\end{thebibliography}
social-conservative group and often denounced liberal ideas as being anti-national, he was very strongly against the development of party wings.\textsuperscript{246}

Gryzlov argued against the wings because he thought that UR had only one platform, which was to defend the interests of the majority.\textsuperscript{247} Furthermore, he argued that voters had voted for the whole of the party, not for different wings and therefore the party needed to maintain unity.\textsuperscript{248} Later in April, only a few weeks after the project had been announced by Surkov, it was shut down after Gryzlov convinced him that the party should not have wings. However, this did not spell the end of the debate. During the summer of 2005, the supporters of the wings decided to form political clubs that were outside of the formal party structure but that reflected the original groupings of the failed wings.\textsuperscript{249} Andrei Isaev had founded the think tank Center for Social-Conservative Policy (TsSKP) independent of the party in January 2005.\textsuperscript{250} As political wings were banned, TsSKP became a host for the Social-Conservative Club.\textsuperscript{251} In addition to TsSKP, a second think tank emerged, the Institute of Public Planning (InOP) and it also had an associated political club, the liberal-conservative club, which goes by the name of 4\textsuperscript{th} of November.\textsuperscript{252} Many of the original wing members continued their associations with the clubs, even though the clubs were not officially part of the party.
For the next three years, these two clubs and associated think tanks continued to exist outside of the party. However, by 2008 the question of political clubs officially sanctioned by and part of the party reemerged. Following the 2007 elections, a third club external to the party emerged called the State-Patriotic Club. The rhetoric of this club largely focuses on Russia’s uniqueness as a mixture of both east and west. It also focuses on building a strong state, without which Russia cannot achieve economic or social development. Patriotism is another distinguishing feature of the club. Unlike the other clubs, it does not have a think tank directly linked to it.

With the development of this third club, the Kremlin’s and UR’s attitudes towards these clubs took a surprising turn. In April 2008, during the 9th Party Congress, all three clubs signed the “Charter of the Political Clubs of the Party ‘United Russia’.” In the charter the three clubs promised to help the party achieve its goals of developing a middle class, increasing the welfare of Russian citizens, protecting the country’s national heritage, and guaranteeing the rights of citizens. In turn, the clubs requested that the party support research to address these goals, to be conscious of the different ideological views party members have in regards to

253 Ivanov Edinaya 167
254 Gosudarstvenno-patrioticheskiy Klub, “Politicheskaya deklaratsiya,” N.D., 3 March 2010
255 Gosudarstvenno-patrioticheskiy Klub Politicheskaya deklaratsiya
256 Gosudarstvenno-patrioticheskiy Klub Politicheskaya deklaratsiya
258 Gosudarstvenno-patrioticheskiy Klub Khartiya politicheskikh klubov Partii ‘Edinaya Rossiya’
solving the country’s problems, and to allow the clubs to take an active role in the
discussion of these problems and their solutions.259

This new focus on the clubs serving as a discussion platform largely came out
of UR’s latest political movement, Strategy 2020. Strategy 2020 was first elucidated
in February 2008 by Putin in an address to the State Council.260 Overall, it again
focused on the ideas of economic development, building a strong future for Russia,
and helping Russians to achieve a better life.261 As Putin’s plan of Strategy 2020 was
adopted in 2008, the clubs were designated as the main discussions platform for it.262
The clubs were to start a discussion of the initiatives and projects outlined within
Strategy 2020.263 More precisely, the clubs were supposed to bring in experts and
businessman from outside the government.264 To coordinate the efforts of the clubs,
the Center for Social-Conservative Policy was given the task of organizing the
different projects of the clubs and to serve as the main communication mechanism
between them.265 By 2008, the party had started, perhaps reluctantly, an initiative to
open up discussion within the party and between the party and the broader
community.

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259 Gosudarstvenno-patrioticheskiy Klub Khartiya politicheskikh klubov Partii ‘Edinaya
Rossiya’
260 Administratsiya Presidenta RF, “Vystuplenie na rashhirenom zasedanii
Gosudarstvennogo soveta ‘O strategii razvitiya Rossii do 2020 goda’,” 8 February 2008, 12 March
261 Administratsiya
262 Ivanov Edinaya
264 Edinaya Rossiya Resheniya prezidiuma general’nogo soveta Partii
This theme of openness became increasingly evident in official party meetings in 2008. During discussions at its 9th Party Congress in the spring of 2008, UR stressed that it wanted to develop an open forum, an open discussion of Strategy 2020 and its goals mainly through these clubs.266 This focus on openness was also reflected in discussions that occurred later in 2008 in the Presidium of the General Council of the Party. During this session, party members emphasized that the party needed to serve as a communication mechanism between the people and those in power.267 It was stressed further that the party needed to be open and democratic.268 In accordance with this, starting in 2008 a movement to develop clubs at the regional level was started.269 The clubs’ existence as an official part of the party structure was further codified by amendments made to the party’s official charter during its 10th Congress in the fall of 2008.270 Following this congress the clubs issued a joint statement, saying that they would work together to achieve the basic goal of improving the country.271 All three of the clubs’ different platforms, conservatism, liberalism, and patriotism, could and should be utilized to achieve this goal.272 In sum, the clubs have evolved into organizations officially linked to the party and have

268 Edinaya Rossiya Partiya dolzhna bit’ kommunikatorom mezhdun grazhdanskim obshchestvom i vlast’yu
272 Edinaya Rossiya Sovmestnoe zayavlenie politicheskikh klubov Partii
been given the mission of helping the party to achieve the goals of Strategy 2020. Additionally, their emergence is also linked to a call by several party members to make the party more open.

Despite the clubs’ shared mission of Strategy 2020, the clubs still have fairly diverse perspectives. This is reflected in the fact that within the larger project of Strategy 2020 each club focuses on different priorities. Ofﬁcially, according to party documents the Social-Conservative Club focuses on consumer prices, wages, health and education systems, and technological innovation. A review of its website largely conﬁrms this. First, in regards to how it developed, the Center for Social-Conservative Politics (TsSKP) describes itself as having formed in 2005 as an “anti-crisis” center to help the party develop policies for the social-economic development of the country. It describes its current mission as being founded on the ideas of, “…the principles of consistency of social and economic aims, the realization of reform based on traditional Russian social values, and the inadmissibility of the development of any form of extremism…” Regional branches of the Center for Social and Conservative Policy work on social-economic development at the regional level by bringing together expert associations and different governmental bodies.
Second, through its manifestos TsSKP more clearly spells out its definition of social-conservatism. In “Proposals to the Platform of Russian Social Conservatism,” Lev Sigal argues that during the 1990s and early 2000s a vacuum developed in Russian politics. To fill this vacuum, intellectuals need to once again participate in the process of policy development. Social-conservatism is a theory of social development focused on centrist ideology. Sigal then analyzes how the state and its relationship to its citizens have been viewed over time. In the time of Aristotle, the state was seen as an aggregate of citizens and was supposed to work for the good of all. During the Enlightenment, the ideas of equality, freedom, and brotherhood became the cornerstones of many governments. However, Sigal warns against absolutism. “Absolutism is the way to collapse. Full freedom is the endless war of all against all. Full equality is equality in poverty as in ancient Sparta. Full brotherhood is redundant paternalism. An older brother like in the Stalinist U.S.S.R.”

The next period of history that Sigal criticizes is the 1980s and 1990s in Russia. Too many reforms were carried out too quickly; citizens were given too much freedom at the expense of equality and brotherhood. To correct the chaos and discord that has arisen since the 1980s, the state needs to fundamentally
Order needs to be reestablished by reasserting the rule of law and establishing a vertical of power. Furthermore, the government needs to address the distrust and breakdown of the relationship between state and citizen. Communism and the reforms of the 1980s and 1990s caused many citizens to see the state as an enemy. Democratic institutions need to be developed and citizens need to once again participate in the political arena. However, the government must not forget about the less well off. To help reaffirm this relationship between state and citizen, the state needs to provide a minimum level of help to poorer segments of society. Moreover, Sigal argues that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has failed to coalesce around a unified or single national identity. Many people still feel stronger connections to the Soviet past than to the present. Xenophobia and nationalism have also been on the rise and this must be stopped. The manifesto ends by arguing that the media also needs to be diversified in order to support a broader political dialogue.

Based on the policy proposals in “Proposals to the Platform of Russian Social Conservatism”, social-conservatism seems to echo the policy proposals of the larger party. The rhetoric in the manifesto reiterates the need to find a balance between democratizing and reforming the country and providing a basic standard of living for
its citizens. Citizens need to participate in politics but order must be maintained. Sigal’s mention of reestablishing the rule of law and creating a vertical of power seem to be pointed at the disconnect that occurred in the 1990s between federal and regional governments. Related to this is the idea of developing a larger sense of Russian identity not based on ethnicity. Russians need to come together as a single body to help the country move forward.

A second manifesto of TsSKP written in 2005, “The Center of Social-Conservative Policy becomes the Nutrient Medium for Both Wings of United Russia”, focused more on the role of ideology development within the party. Specifically, the manifesto said that the party should not stop working or progressing just because of its victory in the 2003 parliamentary elections. Furthermore, the party needs to develop outside of the context of Putin and to do this, the party needs to develop more of an ideology. Party members have not actively proposed new ideas; instead, they have just approved the laws proposed by the Kremlin. This manifesto also paints a much starker portrait of Russia in the 2000s. It says that the liberal values within the country are being attacked by unnamed strong political forces. The country’s overall economic situation is worsening; less investment is happening, businesses are being put under pressure, and attempts have been made to

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294 Tsentr sotsial’no-konservativnoy politiki Tsentr
295 Tsentr sotsial’no-konservativnoy politiki Tsentr
296 Tsentr sotsial’no-konservativnoy politiki Tsentr
reverse privatization.\footnote{297} Neither the judiciary nor the media is fully independent.\footnote{298} Civil society is still weak.\footnote{299} However, the most striking part of this manifesto is that it partially lays the blame for the poor state of affairs on United Russia.

The manifesto specifically blames current UR Duma members for proposing bills that are limiting the rights and freedom of ordinary citizens in the name of the fight against terrorism or state consolidation.\footnote{300} According to the manifesto, UR needs to make democratic freedoms, civil freedoms, and sovereignty the core principles of its ideology.\footnote{301} In addition to this, UR needs to allow for open discussion within the party about ideology formation.\footnote{302} These pointed criticisms seem to indicate that UR’s heavy-handed tactics are causing discord within the party and have led party members to seek other ways to air their opinions, in this case through political clubs.

However, the manifesto ends by warning against liberalism, much like the first manifesto. Liberalism is once again associated with the chaos and decline of the 1990s. So called democratic or social progress has come at the expense of average people who have seen a decline in their living standards.\footnote{303} In contrast to liberalism, UR needs to adopt a policy of social-conservatism. Social-conservatism in this manifesto is defined as a strong state with a market economy but one that does not
forget about promoting the well-being of all segments of society.\textsuperscript{304} To this end, UR should have a dialogue with other parties and open up discussion within the party as long as this does not undermine the ultimate power or stability of the state.\textsuperscript{305}

Within this manifesto, many of the same values and goals of the first manifesto are discussed. However, this manifesto is different from the first in the fact that it is much more critical of United Russia. It directly critiques the party for not taking an active role in developing ideas for the country’s future. It simply goes along with what the ruling elite wants. In turn, the ruling elite are criticized for having authoritarian tendencies. However, even though there are slight differences in the two manifestos, an overall definition of social-conservatism can be derived from them. Social-conservatism is the belief in building a strong state and market economy. A strong state should be built by reasserting the rule of law. Economic development should continue along the path of privatization started in the 1990s, but at the same time the economy should have some social aspect. Proponents of social-conservatism want to adapt parts of a socialist system onto a market economy.\textsuperscript{306} Protecting the people from chaos and decline is also a central part of social-conservatism. Civil society and democratic institutions should be strengthened and people should participate in politics, but again democratic reforms should not undermine the stability of the state. In sum, social-conservatism focuses on carefully

\textsuperscript{304} Tsentr sotsial’no-konservativnoy politiki Tsentr
\textsuperscript{305} Tsentr sotsial’no-konservativnoy politiki Tsentr
\textsuperscript{306} Laruelle 28
implementing reforms to better the lives of people by reasserting the strength and protection of the state.

Both manifestos of TsSKP called on the party to hold a wider, open discussion of ideology. Due to this fact, the charter of TsSKP describes the aim of the organization as being to direct research and analysis on the socio-economic conditions of society and to develop programs that focus on protecting citizens’ rights.307 To conduct its research and analysis, TsSKP has the authority to conduct surveys, polls, and other public events to open up a dialogue with the general population.308 In addition to this, it is supposed to cooperate with governmental agencies at both the federal and regional level to help them evaluate the impact of policies that have already been implemented and those that are planned for the future.309 In turn, the government can use the results from TsSKP’s research to help guide its policies and proposals.310 Looking at the different round tables that the Social-Conservative Club has organized, the themes of these meetings have reflected the priorities of the social-conservative movement.311 Most discussions have looked at the questions of economic and political development within the country.

In addition to organizing round tables and conducting research, TsSKP and the Social-Conservative Club are involved in a variety of activities to promote social-

308 Tsentr sotsial’no-konservativnoy politiki Ustav
309 Tsentr sotsial’no-konservativnoy politiki Ustav
310 Tsentr sotsial’no-konservativnoy politiki Ustav
conservative ideology. First, TsSKP sponsors the School of Russian Policy.\textsuperscript{312} The goal of this school is to get younger people involved in politics and educate them so that they can become the political class of Russia in the future.\textsuperscript{313} Second, through its position as coordinator of the clubs’ efforts in regards to Strategy 2020, TsSKP has published several policy proposals. Strategy 2020 has been broken down into four larger policy categories that then have several sub-categories. These four main categories are: government building, social policy, finance-economic policy, and Russia in the global world.\textsuperscript{314} For each of these sub-categories, TsSKP has published policy proposals that have been developed by experts or that are the result of discussion amongst the clubs.\textsuperscript{315} Based on this analysis of all the different activities and functions of TsSKP and its political clubs it can be argued that TsSKP serves as the primary think tank for the social-conservative movement and uses its political club to disseminate its research amongst political elites within UR.

The second political club of United Russia is the club 4\textsuperscript{th} of November, which is associated with the think-tank Institute of Public Planning (InOP). In the parameters of Strategy 2020, 4\textsuperscript{th} of November is suppose to focus on the questions of anti-monopoly policies, the justice system, and the media and its role in democracy.\textsuperscript{316} More broadly, InOP and 4\textsuperscript{th} of November focus on the economic development of Russia and personal freedoms. InOP describes itself as focusing on,

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\item \textsuperscript{313} Tsentr sotsial’no-konservativnoy politiki Shkola Rossiyskoy Politiki
\item \textsuperscript{314} Tsentr sotsial’no-konservativnoy politiki, “Zakonodatel’nye initsiativi dlya Strategii-2020,” N.D., 14 March 2010 <http://www.cscp.ru/clauses/47/>
\item \textsuperscript{315} Tsentr sotsial’no-konservativnoy politiki Zakonodatel’nye initsiativi dlya Strategii-2020
\item \textsuperscript{316} Shuvalov
\end{itemize}
…complex political, sociological, and economic research, lecture and organizational work, but also publication activities, creating the ideology of liberal-conservatism, and forming the structures to support it.”

Through the research conducted by InOP the liberal-conservative ideology has evolved. Two of the most important projects for the development of the liberal-conservative ideology have been “The Stratification of Russian Society” and “The Economic Doctrine of Russia.” Both of these projects have researched the economic situation existing in Russia since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The first project, “The Stratification of Russian Society,” argued that a new social structure has formed in Russian society and that most people have adapted to a market economy.

The second project, “The Economic Doctrine of Russia,” was an attempt by InOP to research Russia’s current economy and then to analyze its potential for the future. According to the report, Russia has great potential to become a world economic power. However, the report does point out that Russia needs to implement reforms. The report highlights that businesses need to have greater access to loans and financing, the industrial base of the economy needs to innovate and expand, there is a lack of clear leadership from the government on how the economy should modernize, economic development across the country has not been evenly distributed, and that there has not been enough investment in the economy.

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318 Institut obshchestvennogo proektirovaniya Ob institute
320 Institut obshchestvennogo proektirovaniya Ekonomicheskaya Doktrina: Vernut’ Liderstvo
Furthermore, the transportation infrastructure of the country needs to be modernized, as does the infrastructure for the energy sector. Foreign trade needs to be encouraged more, as does the domestic financial sector. Finally, clear guidelines and laws need to be created for intellectual property rights. The report goes on to suggest several specific policy proposals to correct these deficiencies. Based on these two reports, the economic development of Russia is a main part of the liberal-conservative ideology.

While InOP operates as a think-tank that mainly researches the economy of Russia, its club 4th of November seems to focus on a mixture of both the economic aspects of the liberal-conservative ideology and ideas of social freedom, which makes up the second concentration of liberal-conservatism. Much like the TsSKP’s Social-Conservative Club, 4th of November is supposed to function as a discussion platform for the ideas coming out of InOP’s research. 4th of November is specifically interested in building an ideology for Russia based on the values of freedom, sovereignty, private property, and justice. To achieve this, one of its main tasks is to conduct meetings in which regional political leaders, public figures, entrepreneurs, intellectuals, and representatives from the media take part. Round tables, seminars, and conferences organized by the club allow the scholarly community to discuss and

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321 Institut obshchestvennogo proektirovaniya Ekonomicheskaya Doktrina: Vernut’ Liderstvo
322 Institut obshchestvennogo proektirovaniya Ekonomicheskaya Doktrina: Vernut’ Liderstvo
323 Institut obshchestvennogo proektirovaniya Ekonomicheskaya Doktrina: Vernut’ Liderstvo
324 Institut obshchestvennogo proektirovaniya Ob institute
326 Institut obshchestvennogo proektirovaniya Ob institute
analyze the documents being produced by InOP. For example, 4th of November worked with the Public Chamber to hold a series of events that discussed Russia’s economic and energy situation. Furthermore, most of the round tables of the clubs since 2005 have focused on economic development and helping Russia to emerge from the financial crisis. The club has thus played a very active role in helping to spread the liberal-conservative ideology.

A review of the Club’s first meeting in September 2005 shows that the discussions that have been held largely focus on the economic condition of the country. However, the political environment of Russia has also been an important topic of discussion. Several members expressed concern about the development of political and democratic institutions within the country, arguing that there were not enough of them. Governmental, entrepreneurial, and social institutions need to be developed as well as institutions that support the rights of private property. This includes the need for more organizations working in the field of civil society and the justice system. This concentration on both economic and political development reflects one of the main differences between the social-conservatives and liberal-conservatives. Social-conservatives focus on creating a strong government that can help the economy to develop, but at the same time the government must look after the well-being of the people. On the other hand, liberal-conservatives focus more on

327 Institut obshchestvennogo proektirovaniya Ob institute
328 Institut obshchestvennogo proektirovaniya Ob institute
329 Institut obshchestvennogo proektirovaniya, “Moskovskie zasedaniya Kluba ‘4 Noyabrya’,”
330 Institut obshchestvennogo proektirovaniya Pervoe zasedanie
331 Institut obshchestvennogo proektirovaniya Pervoe zasedanie
332 Institut obshchestvennogo proektirovaniya Pervoe zasedanie
economic development by empowering people and sectors of the economy through limited government intervention. To this end, liberal-conservatives espouse the importance of civil society and political institutions that protect the rights of the people.

One last area of analysis for InOP and the club 4th of November is the other activities in which they are involved. First, InOP runs a publishing house, publishing books on political science, economics, and democratic theory.333 Second, InOP hosts a series of lectures called Russian Debates.334 Leading experts from around the world are invited to give lectures on selected topics.335 These debates are then published by the Institute’s publishing arm.336 Third, InOP maintains close contact with Russia’s Public Chamber.337 Fourth, InOP also maintains relationships and holds conferences with a variety of international organizations, such as Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government.338 It also sponsors yearly awards for best political journalist and best social-science literature.339 In sum, the liberal-conservative ideology has largely been articulated by the think tank InOP and then spread by 4th of November. Liberal-conservatism has developed as an ideology that focuses on the


335 Institut obshchestvennogo proektirovaniya Russkie Chteniya

336 Institut obshchestvennogo proektirovaniya Izdatel’skaya deyatelnost’


intensive economic development of Russia by strengthening the human capital of the country.

The third political club of United Russia is the State-Patriotic Club. It is led by Irina Yarovaya, a Duma deputy for United Russia since 2007.³⁴⁰ Officially, the State-Patriotic Club focuses on modern state management and national sovereignty.³⁴¹ Unlike the other clubs, the State-Patriotic Club does not have an associated think tank. However, it has published manifestos and led round tables and seminars much like the other two clubs. In its “Political Declaration”, the State-Patriotic Club emphasizes the uniqueness of Russia as a country neither purely western nor eastern.³⁴² One of the central tenets of the state-patriotic ideology is that a strong and responsible state is a necessary precondition for democracy, the development of public institutions, and a competitive economy.³⁴³ Other important parts of the state-patriotic ideology are: patriotism, stability, tradition, and development.³⁴⁴ Patriotism according to the club is closely connected to the ideas of Russian conservatism and the preservation of Russian culture and values.³⁴⁵ However, the club tries to emphasize the difference between patriotism and nationalism and warns against ethnic nationalism or xenophobia.³⁴⁶ At the same time, the club does talk about a Russian nation or brotherhood existing beyond the state boundaries of Russia and

³⁴¹ Shuvalov
³⁴² Gosudarstvenno-patrioticheskiy Klub Politicheskaya deklaratsiya
³⁴³ Gosudarstvenno-patrioticheskiy Klub Politicheskaya deklaratsiya
³⁴⁴ Gosudarstvenno-patrioticheskiy Klub Politicheskaya deklaratsiya
³⁴⁵ Gosudarstvenno-patrioticheskiy Klub Politicheskaya deklaratsiya
³⁴⁶ Gosudarstvenno-patrioticheskiy Klub Politicheskaya deklaratsiya
because of this, the club emphasizes the importance of relationships with other countries of the former Soviet Union.\(^{347}\)

Like the other clubs, the State-Patriotic Club asserts the importance of the economic development of the country and reforming certain sectors of the economy, focusing more on the agriculture sector than the other two clubs.\(^{348}\) The last two distinguishing features of the club’s ideology are its support for the Russian Orthodox Church and expanding its role in the country and starting education programs that focus on teaching youth about Russian culture and patriotism.\(^{349}\) The topics of its round tables largely focus on the ideas of patriotism, education, and economic development.\(^{350}\) Additionally, the club has taken a large role in developing and introducing several bills into the State Duma that reflect its ideological stances on the economy and youth.\(^{351}\) In summary, the State-Patriotic Club is the newest club but it still has its own distinct ideology. While all three clubs to some extent focus on economic development, the State-Patriotic Club’s stance is different because it says the centralization of power is a necessary precondition for economic growth. Further, the club also focuses to a larger degree on patriotism and tradition than the other two clubs.

\(^{347}\) Gosudarstvenno-patrioticheskii Klub Politicheskaya deklaratsiya

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Based on this analysis, three distinct political groupings within UR have developed. These groups are mainly delineated by their stances on the role of the state in the economy, emphasis on tradition and culture, and concern about commitment to democratic values. Through the political clubs, these three groups have very actively created and then promoted their respective ideologies. By holding round tables, seminars, and conferences these clubs have established dialogues both with politicians within UR and with experts outside the party, helping them to disseminate their ideologies. While it was not possible to obtain Duma voting records to see if clubs members exhibited any noticeable voting patterns in comparison to other members of UR who are not part of one of the clubs, based on the discussions that the clubs have conducted, their role in Strategy 2020, and the laws that club members have proposed in the Duma, it does seem that these clubs have successfully articulated distinct, concrete ideologies and that these clubs have then pursued discussions and policies based on them. This is in distinction to UR that as a party has failed to establish a united or concrete policy platform.

Why then has UR allowed these clubs to emerge? Why did UR at first ban the formation of clubs in 2005 only to allow them in 2008? What are the associated costs or benefits of doing so? Three main reasons have been offered for why UR eventually decided to allow the clubs to form. They are: to incorporate the ideas coming out of these groups into the party’s overall goals and strategy, to inhibit radicalism, and to keep the party together. As has already been discussed, UR has

\footnote{Laruelle 5}
failed to develop a specific ideology and instead has only enunciated vague policy goals such as bettering the country and the economic condition of the people. In the past, this has helped UR in two main ways. First, during the 3rd Duma, this allowed Unity to ally with Communists and other diverse parties to minimize the power of OVR and to get legislation passed. In short, it has allowed UR to be more effective in the legislature in terms of its ability to get the president’s and its legislation passed. Second, it can be argued that trying to sell itself as a party not based on ideology has also given UR more ability to eliminate rival sources of power, such as regional governors, that were common in the 1990s. Similar to its ability to ally with diverse parties, deemphasizing ideology allowed more political elites at both the federal and regional level to join the party after the Kremlin decided to empower the party. These elites were less constrained by questions of ideology and were able to join the party without appearing to have abandoned their previous stances or supporters.

However, as time has gone on, this lack of ideology has posed several challenges for UR. Several scholars have argued that UR is still trying to figure out what Russia’s national identity is and should be. Questions of identity are extremely important in Russia because this is the main cleavage dividing society, forming around attitudes towards the Soviet past and the role of the state in the economy. In this environment, what ideology UR elucidates in terms of the economy or the role of the state can impact both how the general population and political elites relate to the party. Survey evidence suggests that voters want Russia to continue on a

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353 Laruelle 7
pro-market path.\footnote{Hale What 22} According to survey data, the Russian electorate even associates democracy with economic prosperity and believes that economic prosperity is a more important factor of democracy than political pluralism.\footnote{Levada 45} Based on this, economic policy positions are key factors for the electorate and UR’s ability to develop policies that fit into line with the ideals of the general population can greatly impact how much support the party gets from voters. In turn, this impacts how political elites interact with the party because based on dominant party theory, elites only want to tie themselves to a party when they believe that they will receive benefits from doing so. UR’s ability to maintain the support of the electorate based on its ideology can thus impact political elites’ willingness to join or support the party.

Additionally, scholars have observed that UR is an extremely factionalized party and due to this, the party prefers to see itself as a discussion platform for diverse views rather than an ideologically united group.\footnote{Laruelle 8} This is largely a result of the way in which UR developed. UR developed by Unity merging first with its main opponent from the 1999 election, and then other smaller parties later on in its history. Most of the parties that UR has united with have held very different views on the questions of what role the state should play in the economy, what type of economy Russia should have, and how important democratic values are to Russia. Uniting with different parties has allowed UR to become larger and obtain a majority in the Duma while also allowing the Kremlin to control more elites. UR has thus benefited
from this diversity on one level, helping the party to fulfill many of the functions of a dominant party, winning elections and controlling the legislature. However, it is unclear how successful UR has been at managing elite conflict. Certainly, the Kremlin has been able to bring regional elites under the control of the federal government to a greater extent than during the time of Yeltsin. Questions still remain though about how well UR has managed to contain elite conflict within the party.

Even though it is hard to analyze the inner workings of the Kremlin or the party United Russia, several examples of both internal and external conflict have surfaced over the years that suggest that there is a fair amount of conflict within the party. First, from the beginning there has been competing views of what role ideology should play in UR and whether UR should allow political clubs to form. This can be seen in the different attempts over the years that the party has made to form an ideology. Unity from its inception was a party based more on conservative ideals and was a very strong supporter of Russian patriotism and national traditions. However, as the party came to be associated with Putin, these ideas were downplayed as Putin preferred to cast himself as an a-political figure. After the color revolutions of the early 2000s, both Kremlin and UR elites changed tactics, fearing that these revolutions could translate over to the Russian sphere. UR thus tried to give itself more of an ideological image so that it could remain in control in a

357 Laruelle 19
358 Laruelle 19
359 Laruelle 20
more ideological environment. It was at this time that the clubs started to develop proposals for UR’s ideology. One of the first concrete attempts at forming an ideology was sovereign democracy. This was not successful though because while many within the party supported the ideology of sovereign democracy, others did not. In this instance, UR failed to establish a new political discourse. Putin then started to criticize the party for lacking an ideology and its members for not having a commitment to any particular principle.

The development of clubs can partially be seen as a result of this quest for an ideology. As already described, much of the original debate about whether clubs should be allowed to form or not centered on whether party members should have different ideological stances. Boris Gryzlov argued against clubs, saying that the party’s sole ideology was that of the principle of the majority. As the debate about clubs and ideology continued, Gryzlov argued for a simple platform of conservatism, maintaining that UR was a centrist party that would increase the stability of Russia. At the 10th Party Congress in November 2008, Gryzlov said that the party should follow the principles of conservatism, meaning stability and observance of Russian traditions. He reiterated this again in 2009. Yet the question of political clubs reemerged and while one of these clubs adopted the basic principles of conservatism,
two other ideological groups developed that did not fully follow conservatism. Based on this continued debate about ideology, UR has not succeeded in defining its ideology or even achieved a basic consensus about what its ideology should be.

Second, conflict has emerged because of the party’s perceived unwillingness to accept dissent or differences of opinion. Examples of dissent can be found as far back as 2003 and 2004. As UR become more powerful after the 2003 elections, many party members wanted this to translate into government positions; they wanted more people from the party to be placed in ministries or other influential governmental posts.366 Before this, posts normally would be filled by leading academics, civil servants, or frequently, former colleagues. While the Kremlin at first seemed to accept the idea that party members should be incorporated into the government more, eventually the party decided to limit severely the number of such appointments.367 The Kremlin seems very wary of party members gaining too much power or too much public attention. Some have argued that this is because UR leaders do not want the party to become too independent or gain too much credibility on their own.368 Additionally, Kremlin leaders take very large roles in managing the party and still see the party primarily as a tool to control elites, not for elites to start promoting policy.369 Thus they are not interested in the party creating a strong

366 Reuter 510  
367 Reuter 510  
368 Reuter 510  
369 Gel’man Party 920
ideology or in having party members becoming leading governmental figures. This had important repercussions for the party starting in 2005.

Third, in 2005, dissent seemed to increase, which was a direct impetus for the development of the clubs. Specifically, in April 2005 Vladimir Pligin, founder of the liberal-conservative movement, headed a group of 30 other Duma deputies that very publicly criticized UR for stifling internal debate. The group called on the party to allow for organized debate. Within a few weeks, Pligin went on to establish the second of the first two political clubs, 4th of November. At the time, this was a bold move since there was still so much uncertainty within the party about what ideology UR should develop and how. As one member of the first club, the Social-Conservative Club, said, “The Social-Conservative Club was the first club to be created in ‘United Russia’, this was in January 2005. At that time the work of the clubs strongly differed from that of today, to some degree it was a rebellious project within our party.”

As has already been mentioned this first attempt at creating clubs and opening up debate within the party was short-lived since the leader of the party, Boris Gryzlov, said a few weeks later that debate should not come at the expense of party discipline. However, in 2008 the clubs were reestablished and were welcomed as being part of the party, partially for strategic reasons. Party members were given the

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370 Gel’man Party 921
371 Laruelle 25
372 Laruelle 25
reports and analyses that the clubs had undertaken, hoping to stimulate more debate.\textsuperscript{374} With elections coming up at the end of 2007, party leaders wanted to show the public that they supported a variety of stances and issues, trying to pull voters away from other parties.\textsuperscript{375} Then in 2008, there was even an aborted attempt to create a fourth club, Club-2020, that was supposed to be the center of ideology for the party.\textsuperscript{376} Club-2020 ultimately failed because the new president of Russia, Dmitri Medvedev, did not strongly support its creation and thus, the club failed to gain much traction or membership.\textsuperscript{377} It is important to note that despite Medvedev’s hesitation to back the new club, clubs still continued to exist within UR and were not shutdown like in 2005. In sum, since 2003 UR has to some extent struggled to contain the difference of opinions within the party and the discontent of elites. This directly led to the rise of the political clubs.

Based on this analysis of how the political clubs of United Russia have developed and their respective ideologies, it is clear that ideology is quite important to UR. UR is trying to find a delicate balance between keeping control and keeping its constituent parts happy. This is largely a result of how UR developed. Over the years, UR has absorbed several different parties that have had quite opposite ideological stances. Furthermore, these differences have tended to be on the questions that are most pertinent to the electorate, questions about the role of the state, Russian tradition, and the economy. To some extent UR does want to develop a
modicum of ideology so that it can stay relevant to the electorate and avoid other parties from taking advantage of UR’s diffuse ideology.

Developing political clubs also has a second, more important purpose: the clubs help the party to regulate elite conflict. They accomplish this by allowing different groups within the party to express their different opinions, letting internal party dissent to be released in a useful form. In this way, political clubs allow UR to maintain its dominance over elites. As Jason Brownlee has suggested, political parties help a regime to control elites because they allow for mediation of differences. Instead of joining the opposition, political elites can use the political clubs to represent their different policy positions. Furthermore, allowing club members to debate policy and to express dissent internally keeps the party from splintering apart.

However, having clubs lets these differences between party members solidify and take a specific shape. It also allows club members to work more independently from the party. One risk from this is that these different parts of the party might become too independent, leading the party to splinter. While these clubs are still relatively new and it is unclear how they will evolve in the future, it is clear that these clubs have played an important role in the ideological debate of the party. The political clubs of United Russia thus help the party to maintain elite control by mediating differences but at the same time, they potentially allow for the different groups within UR to become more independent, leading to the party’s downfall.

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Chapter 6

A Comparative Perspective: Italy’s Christian Democrats and Japan’s Liberal Democratic Party

In a larger perspective, Russia is not alone in its attempt to use dominant parties to control the legislature, ensure electoral victory, and contain elite conflict. Historically, finding a balance where elite conflict is minimized and controlled but where elites are not completely suppressed has been difficult. This has been especially difficult during transition periods in a country’s history, such as Russia’s transition after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Two other examples from history, Italy’s Christian Democratic Party and Japan’s Liberal Democratic Party, add a useful comparative perspective to the discussion of UR’s dominant party status and its attempts at controlling elite conflict through political clubs. After WWII, for almost 50 years Italian politics was essentially dominated by one party, the Christian Democrats. However, events took a dramatic turn in 1992 when the party fell apart. Similarly, in Japan the Liberal Democrats ruled almost continuously from 1955 to 1993, only to face a sudden implosion. Looking at these two case studies demonstrates the precarious situation in which UR finds itself. Both of these examples reveal the difficulties parties face as they become larger and assert their dominance by absorbing smaller parties that have ideologies at odds with the larger party. In this light, UR’s attempt at forming a more concrete ideology takes on renewed
importance since it can either help the party to control elites or limit the political discourse of the party, causing more dissent.

The Christian Democratic Party (DC) was the dominant political actor in post-WWII Italy. The party formed in 1944 from the remnants of several Catholic organizations.\textsuperscript{379} It was a large, centrist party.\textsuperscript{380} Ideologically, the party was strongly Catholic and was anti-communist, but it did not have any specific policies in terms of what shape the Italian state should take and it was not firmly pro-private property.\textsuperscript{381} Much of the party’s early rhetoric focused on attacking the Communist Party of Italy (PCI) or other left-wing parties.\textsuperscript{382} In the 1948 election, DC received 48.5% of the vote or 305 seats, giving it a majority in the parliament.\textsuperscript{383} However, DC never again received a legislative majority. From 1953 to 1992, DC was forced to form coalitional governments.\textsuperscript{384} In 1953 it formed a coalition with the Social Democrats (PSDI), the Italian Republican Party (PRI), and the Italian Liberal Party (PLI) and these three parties became the DC’s primary coalitional allies until 1992.\textsuperscript{385} From 1948 until the early 1970s, ideology was important as the DC used it to form the dominant political discourse in the country so that it could exclude certain parties. It tried to exclude radical parties from the right and left, while allying with centrist parties regardless of ideology.

Another characteristic of the DC at this time was its policy from 1948 to the mid-1970s of integrating elites and parties from the left into mainstream politics, attempting to break up the opposition.\textsuperscript{386} One of the first parties from the left that it started to work with was the Italian Socialist Party (PSI); it tried to build relationships with its more moderate members.\textsuperscript{387} By the 1960s, the PSI had become an important coalitional partner.\textsuperscript{388} This policy continued as DC changed tactics in the 1960s, trying to form a relationship with the PCI as the polarity between the two parties became less and less.\textsuperscript{389}

As the PCI throughout the 1960s lessened its ultra-Marxist rhetoric and proved its commitment to democracy, the DC came to accept it as a possible coalition partner.\textsuperscript{390} DC was forced to do this because the PCI was still a fairly strong party, getting at least 20% of the vote or 140 seats in every election after 1953.\textsuperscript{391} Furthermore, even though the DC had been able to form a coalitional government, it often had to get the support of parties outside the coalition in order to get legislation passed.\textsuperscript{392} Then in 1976, the PCI, though not officially part of the government, became a crucial partner for the DC when the two parties agreed to cooperate with each other so that DC could form a government.\textsuperscript{393} During the 1950s and 1960s, a pattern emerges in which the DC used its fairly centrist policy stances to form alliances with other parties. It could do this because it had few concrete or major policy stances that it needed to support or from which it could not back away.

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\textsuperscript{393} Elites 170
During the 1970s, the electoral prospects of the DC and PCI changed. Support for the PCI peaked in 1976 when it won 34.4% of the vote or 227 seats but then waned, reaching a low of 16.1% in 1992. Consequently, as the popularity of PCI declined, the party once again became relegated to the outskirts of the political system. DC remained popular in the 1970s but its support fell below 40% in the 1980s and to a low of 29.7% in 1992. After the 1970s, DC once again relied on the PSI and PRI to form coalitions. However, its popularity started to fall because it had failed to establish a new political discourse; opposition to the Communists seemed much less relevant to voters in the 1980s than it had in the 1950s. Then in the early 1990s, DC was struck by a large corruption scandal that came to light in early 1992, causing it to do badly at the polls. Some members split off from the party in 1993. Finally in 1994, the party was dissolved.

A last important characteristic of the DC was its factionalization. The party’s internal factions often had quite different ideological stances. Furthermore, these factions were frequently formed around specific persons or regions of the country. The only unifying belief for all of these different groups was Catholicism. However, the

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394 Sassoon 177
395 Sassoon 177
396 Sassoon 200
397 Sassoon 242
398 Sassoon 186
399 Sassoon 244
400 Sassoon 244
402 LaPalombara 124
403 LaPalombara 121
party had enough elite and mass support to keep it from splitting. Positions and jobs in the government and in the party were distributed based on agreements between factions and their relative strength. On a more practical level, the party’s ability to stay in power helped it to keep these different factions together because politicians wanted to be part of the government.

Based on this history, the DC party started a slow process of implosion as it failed to create a new discourse that reflected the political reality of the 1970s and 1980s, one in which opposition to the Communists was increasingly irrelevant. Failing to develop a new, relevant ideology meant that the party got a smaller and smaller share of the vote in each election. While it was still the largest party, it no longer seemed to be the indomitable political force that it once was. Then, once the party became embroiled in scandals members left. In the case of Italy, factions did not directly lead to the party’s downfall. However, they were indicative of the fact that allegiance to the party was mainly based on the party’s ability to stay in power. Once its power waned, there was little control over elites.

The Liberal Democratic Party of Japan (LDP) was formed in 1955 when the Liberal Party merged with the Democratic Party. Previously, these parties had been opponents and had had quite different policy platforms, which meant that when the two parties merged the new LDP contained many different personalities and policy.

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404 Elites 167  
405 Sassoon 239  
406 LaPalombara 121  
In the case of the LDP, the party was able to hold elites together by having a stance against both communism and socialism and like the DC in Italy, because it was able to maintain power. The party ended up ruling almost continuously from 1955 to 1993. There were only a few instances of defections or internal revolt, one occurring in 1976. Factions also have existed within the party from its beginning in 1955. This was because factions formed around the eight most prominent politicians from the two parties, or four politicians from the Liberal Party and four from the Democratic Party. In the late 1960s, the number of factions shrank to five. Additionally the size of the factions became larger as they absorbed smaller groups.

Factions were an important part of Japanese politics in the post-war period for four reasons. First, from 1947 to 1994, voters were able to vote for one deputy in each district and then the top 3-5 candidates in each district would get seats. In practice, this often meant that candidates from the same party would run against each other. Due to this fact, factions became important because candidates would often look to them for the resources necessary to ensure their electoral success. Second, factions also determined how key government positions were allocated. The prime minister of the country since

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408 Reed 472
409 Reed 472
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412 Kohno 371
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415 Cox 35
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1975 has always been selected from one of the five factions.\textsuperscript{418} Third, important positions within the party such as the president, secretary-general, the chairman of the Executive Council, and the chairman of the Policy Affairs Research Council were distributed amongst these factions.\textsuperscript{419} Thus, in order to win at the polls, serve in powerful positions within the government, and attain powerful posts within the party, LDP politicians needed to join one of the factions. Fourth, as factions became more institutionalized they developed a set of rules and norms for regulating elite conflict within the faction.\textsuperscript{420}

Eventually, the LDP broke up in 1993. Scholars that have studied Japanese politics argue that the party did not break up for electoral reasons; the opposition at the time was weak and fragmented.\textsuperscript{421} Instead, scholars argue that the party broke up because of a lack of discipline.\textsuperscript{422} Prior to this split, the LDP had overseen 38 years of socio-economic development within Japan, which resulted in the party being very popular despite repeated corruption scandals.\textsuperscript{423} The first sign of problems emerged in 1992 when the Takeshita faction, the largest in the party, split in two.\textsuperscript{424} This split occurred because of a corruption scandal involving Prime Minister Takeshita and a string of electoral defeats for the party at the local level.\textsuperscript{425}

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\textsuperscript{425} Reed 472
One of the groups that emerged from the split became associated with younger, more pro-reform party members and was led by Tsutomu Hata and Ichiro Ozawa.426 Then in 1993, 39 members of the party left the LDP and formed two new parties, the Renewal Party and New Party Harbinger.427 Most of these defectors came from the Hata group who were disappointed with the pace of reform being implemented by the party.428 Many members of the Hata group had been members of a 1991 committee that had developed reform plans.429 After this string of defections, the LDP lost power. The two new parties that developed in 1993 did well in the following election and these two parties were then able to form a coalitional government that excluded the LDP.430 Scholars have argued that members of the LDP decided to defect from the party in 1993 because they wanted reform but they also had strategic reasons. One study has suggested that younger politicians from rural distracts were much more like to defect and follow their pro-reform inclinations.431 This is because younger politicians felt that they had more to gain in the short-term by responding to the popular demand for reform.432

Based on this analysis of the LDP’s disintegration, it is clear that ideology, resources, and factions all played a role in the party’s demise. While the LDP had originally lacked much of an ideology outside of being against communism or socialism, by the 1990s party members had come to value reform and accusations of corruption differently. Resources, the access to which had previously ensured the loyalty of party

426 Reed 472
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members, no longer were such a powerful force. Politicians perceived that they could make a short-term bid for power outside of the party based on the call for reforms, not having to rely on the resources of the LDP to win. Factions played a role in this process. Even though factions in the past had managed elite conflict, as the values of party members started to change, the role of factions started to change. Factions allowed politicians to form groups with politicians that held similar values, slowly eroding their support or commitment to the larger party.

By analyzing the history of Italy’s Christian Democratic Party and Japan’s Liberal Democratic Party, several trends can be found in these two case studies that are relevant to UR and its political clubs. First, both parties were fragmented internally. The DC formed from a variety of diverse groups that were unified in their belief of Catholicism. The LDP formed when two parties that had previously been antagonists merged. This had lasting effects for both parties. In order to get legislation passed, the DC often had to ally with groups outside of its coalition with which it shared no similar ideological positions. Factionalism was a characteristic of the LDP from the beginning; groups formed around politicians and continued to exist as they became a way of regulating the flow of resources. Second, both the DC and the LDP during their rule showed a propensity to absorb other groups. In the Italian context the DC brought different parties into its coalition and in Japan, the dominant factions of the LDP absorbed smaller groups of LDP deputies. For the DC, this was a strategic move; the party wanted to limit the power of the opposition but it had the side-effect of making the coalition unstable. As factions became bigger for the LDP, they also became more diverse.
Third, neither the DC nor the LDP had a strong ideological platform. Rhetoric of both parties originally focused on anti-communism. By the 1960s in the DC example, this polarization became less useful as the DC realized that the PCI was a valuable coalition partner. During the reign of the LDP, no strong unifying ideology emerged other than Japan’s growing economic success. Instead of ideology, resource access and continued political success became the biggest unifying factor for members of these two parties. As the political prospects of these two parties deteriorated, members of the party were willing to leave in an attempt to ensure their own political success. In essence, these three trends show that ideology and factions can both help and hinder parties. Diminishing the role of ideology increased the dexterity of both parties and allowed them to become large bodies able to obtain a strong electoral mandate. At the same time, having a weak ideology minimized the extent to which party members were really able to unify into one body. When times got rough and the ability of the party to stay in power became questionable, party members saw little reason to stay. Related to this is the role of factions. Factions were part of both parties because they were a means to allow different groups with different policy platforms to coexist in one body. For awhile, this led to some amount of internal harmony but then when the party’s strength began to weaken, these factions quickly split off. In summary, downplaying the role of ideology and having internal factions has had both pluses and minuses for the DC and the LDP.

In the context of UR, these three trends are quite applicable. Like the LDP and the DC, UR has merged with smaller, diverse groups, many of whom were once in opposition to it. It has done this to subvert the opposition and to bring a larger portion of
elites under the Kremlin’s control. Similarly, ideology has always been a sticking point for UR. While originally Unity was able to establish itself successfully as a party of power because it positioned itself as a centrist party, as the party has merged with other groups it has felt the stress of trying to satisfy the politically diverse groups within it. Based on the party documents and transcripts that have been reviewed, it seems the party leaders themselves cannot agree on what path United Russia should follow. As UR has evolved it also has become factionalized. When looking at the political clubs, party members still largely form groups around the precursor parties of Unity and OVR. Furthermore, these clubs espouse different ideologies, especially in regards to the economy. Additionally, evidence suggests that politicians have been mainly attracted to UR by the lure of resources. Yet the actions of the Kremlin in 2004 and 2005 suggest that the government is willing to give only so much power or political concessions to elites.

The case studies of the DC and LDP also demonstrate the importance of ideology and elite control. Parties can use resources or ideology to unite elites. In the examples of the DC and LDP, resources were the primary unifying factor for party members. However, ideology still played a role in the lives of these two parties. The DC billed itself as an anti-Communist party and this was how it got electoral support. As the party moved away from this stance, it saw its political stock decline as it failed to elucidate a new ideology to maintain its connection to the electorate. As its electoral prospects diminished, so did elite loyalty. Then as the issue of corruption gained political salience, elite loyalty to the DC completely collapsed in the face of repeated corruption scandals.
Factions became important because as lack of ideology led to lower election results, the party became less cohesive and faction membership more important. Then when the party’s prospects for the future seemed completely ruined, factions split off. The LDP was victim of a similar pitfall, downplaying the importance of ideology only to succumb to corruption accusations later, resulting in the break-up of the party.

UR faces a similar challenge. It must balance both the pros and cons of developing an ideology. As already noted, UR’s vague ideology, focusing on programmatic concerns, has allowed it to merge with different groups, a situation similar to that of the DC and LDP. This has directly led to its electoral success. However, these two case studies demonstrate that if the party’s electoral prospects fall, elites may not stick to the party out of loyalty. If UR bases its relationship with political elites on access to resources, once it is no longer able to provide those resources or its ability to do so is called into question, elites will be reluctant to tie themselves to a weakening organization. Also, if new political issues pick up salience, such as corruption, and the party fails to respond, this could add to the party’s diminishing popularity.

In terms of factionalization, while UR does not have party factions, the political clubs can be viewed as the development of internal groupings within the party that are based on specific ideological stances. Club members now have loyalties to both their club and the larger party. While the waters of elite loyalty have yet to be tested, if events emerge in the future that reduce the party’s power or ability to provide resources, elites may abandon ship. Political clubs may contribute to this phenomenon because if UR’s dominance weakens, the party structure and leaders may no longer be able to control
these different groups. While it is still too early to tell whether these clubs will lead to
the party splitting, the case of UR has many similarities to the LDP and DC.
Chapter 7

Conclusion

United Russia is a relatively new party but it has quickly become the dominant party in Russia. What started as a simple attempt to diminish the electoral chances of an opposition party has morphed over the years into a large party with a strong electoral mandate and the backing of the Kremlin. During this time it has absorbed a variety of smaller parties. From the beginning, the party has failed to elucidate a concrete policy platform outside of the desire to turn Russia into a great country once again after the decline of the 1990s. During the 2000s, this strategy seems to have paid off electorally. Yet a closer look at both how UR and its political clubs developed suggests that these clubs are an important development.

First, because of how Unity was created and then evolved into United Russia, ideology has never been an important characteristic of the party. It has focused on programmatic policies in regards to the economy and role of the state, but has said little about larger ideological questions such as defining citizenship and has avoided setting out a firm, definitive ideological program. As the years have gone by, the party has incorporated more and more diverse personalities and policy stances. Based on the lessons learned from the LDP and DC case studies, there is strong reason to think that politicians are lured to the party by access to resources and the power that it affords.
Furthermore, the lack of a strong or cohesive opposition also begs the question of whether the party needs to develop an ideology in light of the uncompetitive political environment.

Second, Unity was created only for tactical reasons. This meant that its founders had no long-term goals for the party; they only thought of it originally as a tool to impair the victory of OVR at the polls. However, once Unity unexpectedly ended up doing well in the elections, leaders realized that the party could have other useful purposes. It is at this point in 2000 and 2001 that the Kremlin decided to incorporate the party into its larger policy goal of reducing elite independence and increasing government stability. As the Kremlin implemented reforms to cut back the independence and power of regional elites, UR became a more powerful and dominant party as elites were forced to join it in order to have access to federal resources and positions of power. The party thus became a mechanism for controlling elites.

However, based on the emergence of the political clubs, the debate they have caused, and the dissent that has ensued, it appears that ideology is not completely irrelevant to politicians. This is particularly important as the party struggles with the basic questions of Russian identity and what path Russia should take for the future. While the Kremlin wants UR to maintain its dominance so that it can win elections, control the legislature, and minimize elite conflict, it is questionable if the party will be able to do that if it does not first resolve the issue of ideology. Few would argue that Russia is a stellar example of a democracy but it is not a totalitarian regime either. This
means its ability to dominate the political discourse or impose it on others will largely determine its ability to control elites.

The biggest question, thus, is whether the Kremlin will be able to dominate the political discourse. There is little doubt that United Russia has marginalized all other political parties. Political discourse within the country is dominated by questions of Russian greatness, economic reform, and state intervention. Yet the party itself has not developed or succinctly answered any of these issues. If one were to look at the different platforms of each of the three political clubs of UR, one would find three answers, all different. Based on this, it is hard to answer firmly whether the Kremlin is dominating the political discourse of the country. As the political clubs of United Russia have developed, they have added to the party’s larger discussion of ideology, they have influenced policy, and they have gotten the attention of Kremlin elites. More importantly, these clubs have helped party leadership to contain intra-party conflict. It remains to be seen whether these clubs lead to the party developing one concise ideology or lead to its eventual break up, but clearly these clubs have thus far played an important role in the party’s ability to manage elite conflict.

Looking to the future, while this research has focused on reviewing the evolution of UR and its policy positions over the years to see how the political clubs have impacted the party and how they might do so in the future, there are several other potential avenues for further research. Access to club materials and members was limited for this project, but one possible avenue for future endeavors would be to interview club members and party leaders to hear their opinions about the roles of the clubs and how they function
within the party. Talking with members would diversify information sources and allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the clubs. Another interesting line of research would be to do an exhaustive and in-depth analysis of club materials: their manifestos, meeting transcripts, and publications. This would help to explore more closely the differences between club platforms. Within this paper, several times it has been mentioned that UR functions as a means of distributing resources. A last interesting route of research would be to investigate whether club members also serve as heads of important Russian companies or members of other organizations; this could shed light on whether the clubs have simply become yet another means of distributing resources. These possible avenues of future research will help to shed more light on the clubs and their function within the party.

In conclusion, United Russia is a party that has developed by uniting with different parties, many of which have espoused opposing policy stances. This has had an important impact on UR as it has tried to develop a united party platform. Over the years, UR has proposed several different ideologies but few of these have gained traction within the party. At the same time, several party members have expressed dissatisfaction with party leadership and how the party is run. As a direct result of this, the political clubs were formed. Evidence suggests that these clubs have allowed party members to have a slightly higher degree of freedom; they have used these clubs to pursue their own areas of policy interest. However, as has been argued, these clubs should not be viewed just as a way for the party to discuss questions of ideology, but more as a way for UR to control conflict. Controlling elite conflict is important for UR because it formed by
absorbing parties regardless of their policy stances. The clubs serve as a mechanism for controlling conflict by giving different groups within the party the ability to discuss policy more openly but still within the auspices of the party. Thus conflict is regulated and the party’s internal stability is preserved. Though it is unclear what path UR will take in the future and whether the party will be able to maintain its dominance in Russian politics, the political clubs of United Russia are an important aspect of the party that need to be taken into consideration.
References


