EVOLUTION AND CONSOLIDATION OF UNITED RUSSIA PARTY, 2001-2011

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DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation entitled "**Evolution and Consolidation of United Russia Party, 2001-2011**" submitted by me for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.

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CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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Chapter 1:

Introduction

BACKGROUND

The essence of democracy lies in Aristotle's famous dictum 'To rule and being ruled in turn'. Therefore, in order to realize this, elections have become the structural pillar of democracy throughout the history. In this way political parties are integral part of democratic political system. Sartori (1976) argues that partnership, separation, partnership in decision making, unity in diversity and national interest are common characteristics of all the political parties. In other words, a political party constitutes such a group who organize themselves influenced by a particular ideology. It participates in election to acquire power in order to achieve their desired goals in constitutional and democratic manner. A political party conducts its affairs of interest articulation and aggregation, political communication and socialization by participating in elections and finally acquiring decision making power to allocate values in authoritative manner.

The conglomeration of political parties forms a party system in a polity. According to Caramani (2012) a party system is set of parties that compete and cooperate with the aim of increasing their power in controlling government. In other words, the party system refers to complex social and political process which is an outcome of the intricate pattern of the interactions and interrelationship among the parties. These interaction patterns are governed chiefly by constitutions, statutes, Rules, Regulations and Institution. Moreover, the patterns of interactions is reflected in ideologies and personalities, party building and fragmentation, cooperation and opposition, support and protest, voter mobilization and electoral competition.

Sartori (1976) classified party system in two variants namely single party system and Multi-party system. He adds that on the one hand single party system includes sub variants like hegemonic single party system and predominant party system while on the other multi party includes Bi – Party system. It is an established fact that parties are the constituent unit of a party system. Since parties have an interdependent relationship vis–a–vis each other, a glance over individual parties becomes vital while conducting research over party system in a political system. Besides, since Soviet state was precursor of the Russian state, it is imperative to have knowledge about the status of political parties during Soviet era. However, due to spatial compulsion only broad contours of Russian political parties have been discussed here.

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The Soviet political system was the classic example of a single party system which was highly inspired and influenced by the Bolshevik revolution in 1917.In 1918, the Bolsheviks formed the Russian Communist Party which later transformed into the Communist Party of Soviet Union (CPSU) in 1952. CPSU's functioning was based on the core principle of 'Democratic Centralism' given in detail by Lenin in his famous treatise – "what is to be done? (1902).Gradually, it established herself as 'Dominant Party' during the Stalin's regime and subsequent periods of Kursuchev and Breznnev till the first half of 1980s.The ideological base of CPSU and of entire single party system began to shrink when Mikhaiel Gorbachev assumed the post of General Secretary in 1985. He shook the functional premise of single party rule by introducing his 'De-Idealization' and 'New–Thinking' programme including 'Glasnost' and 'Perestroika'. This was aimed to shed the ideological baggage of Marxism - Leninism by reforming the socio-economic and political sphere of Soviet system on the foundational tenets of liberal Democracy. Gorbachev's this particular move along with other 'Structural' & 'accumulated' factor played the catalytic role in collapse of Soviet Union (Chenoy 2001). The ultimate outcome was disintegration & dissolution of USSR into 15 new sovereign republics. On August 1991, the Russian Federation (RF) under Boris Yeltsin emerged as the 'natural heir' of USSR after Soviet Union's disintegration.

The period of 1991-1993 was the watershed in the Russian political history in terms of transition from a single party rule to a multiparty system. With a single stroke, an amendment to article 6 of the Soviet constitution ended the dominant position of CPSU in all spheres of Soviet system. A new Chapter was introduced in 1993 which ushered Post – Soviet Russia into the era of multi - party system. The new constitution of Russian Federation in 1993 enshrined the provision for multi-party system by declaring election as a single process through which people can raise their aspirations and decide their fate.

This constitutional amendment also led to proliferation of parties in post – Soviet Russian party system. However, most of them were largely non – influential for most of the period. Transition from one system to another may be painful too (Vanaik 1990) but here it appeared that it was not the case. In real terms, The Russian party system emerged substantially from 1999 – 2000. In midst of this, from 1993-1999, CRPF or KPRF (Communist Party of Russian Federation) led by Boris Yeltsin

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consolidated itself as a dominant party. It was backed with a nationwide existence and supported by robust ideological affiliation. Moreover, it was equipped with a well-articulated program for future Russia which kept it at elevated position among all his rival counterparts. Nevertheless, CPRF emerged from the vestiges of CPSU but it demonstrated a gradual ideological shift from orthodox Marxism – Leninism to social democracy and moderate nationalism.

Another important party Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) came into being in 1991. It believes in galvanizing popular mass support through articulation of ultra – nationalistic ideology. Party brands itself a centrist and calls for a mixed economy with state regulation and an expansionist foreign policy.

The Russian Democratic Yabloko Party was founded in January 1995 through a coalition created for parliamentary elections. Its main goal is to build the country via peaceful and constitutional methods a modern law – based democratic and socially oriented state serving the needs of the people and ensuring Russia's economic development. It justifies its participation in electoral politics in order to represent the interests of Russian citizens to adopt laws that will ensure a law based democratic socially oriented state by abolishing all legislations that obstruct such a goal.

Right Causes-a leading political party was established in November 2008 after the merger of three smaller parties namely- Union of Right Forces, Civil Force and the Democratic Party of Russia. Party declares its aim to lead Russia to the affairs of human state based on free market economic principles and democratic principles. Moreover, it also pledges to preserve solid moral principles emanating from Russian traditional values. It authored "Freedom, Private, Property, order!" as chief slogan of the party.

'Just Russia' party also Known as 'Fair Russia' was created in 2006 with the merger of three smaller parties namely- Rodina, The Russian Pensioner's Party and the Russian Party of Life. It also incorporated two other parties with nationalist leaning in its Fold. Party believes in values of fairness, freedom and solidarity. Its party platform is dominated by self-defined term 'New Socialism' i.e. to implement universal and national values in real social practice. Party states the purpose for entering politics to construct a free fair and united society in Russia, to provide for people's social security and to make authority properly accountable to people.

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One of the influential political party 'Patriots of Russia' was founded in April 2005 by Gennady Semigin's after breaking away from G. Zyuganov's leadership of CPRF. Party's ideological stand is blend of the communist ideology with the nationalistic ideas. However, on the one hand, it judiciously endorsed with patriotic sentiments while on the other hand keep a bay with ultra-nationalistic rhetoric. Besides, it actively take positions against NATO and hawkish – expansionist attitude of US.

Finally, United Russia (UR) Party was carved out in April 2001 after the merger of Fatherland – All Russia and the Unity Party of Russia. Party Manifesto titled as "The Path of National Success" manifests 'conservatism' as the leading ideology. It declares its aim to unite all political forces and to support the president in order to enhance national unity. Therefore, it categorically rejects the ideological binary oppositions expressed in terms of Left vs. Right. To achieve this goal it endorses 'political centrism' as principle ideological tool. United Russia as a party platform supports a mixed economy where existence of free market would be balanced with redistribution of most part of economic benefits to the poor people.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There is an abundance of literature on party system in Post–Soviet Russia. However, there is a dearth of concise and credible literature dedicated to the study of 'United Russia' party in particular. Some of the major works explaining different dimension of party system in general and Russian party politics in particular could be attributed to the works of Daniel Carameni, Maurice Duverger and Richard Sakwa. A set of major and influential scholarly writing on 'United Russia' Party can be traced to the works of Sean P. Roberts, Stephen White, Ora John Reuter, Alexey Chadayev, Henry Hale and others. For explicit understanding of the evolution and consolidation of political party system in general and United Russia in particular, it is essential to study the historical background and party system in Russian polity. In this context, Duverger (1967) theorises the structure and organization of party providing detailed outline and classification of parties in terms of cadre party, Mass party and catch all party. He also discussed essential elements of a party in term of cell, branch and militia. He goes on by describing characteristics of a party system in a political system.

Sakwa (2008) argues that post–Soviet Russian Party system is characterized by three types of parties on the basis of their relations with regime. Firstly, 'Programme' parties are the party who have adopted a clear policy which is pursued by the leadership and constantly presented to the public. Secondly, 'Project Parties' which have been created not long before the elections as a part of hidden plans of competing elites. Lastly, 'Regime Parties' are sponsored and established by the ruling group to manipulate and shape political environment and in some cases to act as 'party of power'. Thus he defines a 'Party of Power' as a political organization established with the support of the executive to take part in elections and legislature process.

United Russia Party has been carved out in April 2001 after the merger of the parties namely, Fatherland – All Russia and the Unity Party of Russia. Party declares its main objective to make sure that all policy decision by government is in the interest of people of Russia (party charter 2003). It also aims to educate and aware people of Russia on issues of public importance through the strategies and programs of the party (Party Charter 2003). Party election programs (March 2012) states that it is committed to give priority to innovation and infrastructure development along with an aim to introduce a fair and efficient tax policy regime. These all, they claim, will immensely help Russia to regain the influential position in a complex global world.

According to party platform (2006) in initial 3 years of its existence, United Russia's key objectives was to support the restoration of unity and territorial integrity of the country, the formation of a single legal space, ensuring the consolidation of society and stability – both in politics and the economy. In its initial years, United Russia Party was determined to appeal 'universal electorates' like a 'catch all party' without binding itself to any particular ideology but later party platform (2007) launched the concept of the 'Sovereign Democracy' and 'Putins Plan' as the core of the party's ideological foundational framework. This was the maiden chance when party manifested shift in emphasis on its socio- electoral base.

Literature dealing with the relationship between social class and political parties are very few in the domain of party system in Russia. A plausible explanation has been presented by Perepechko et al. (2007) arguing that contemporary Russian parties are expression of rediscovered cleavage as well as conflicts engendered by the Tsarist, Soviet and post–Soviet periods of development. They marked centre/periphery,

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market economy/socialist model, authoritarian rule/ civil society and integration/disintegration as significant cleavages playing an important role in Russian politics (Perepechko et al. 2007).

Apart from other objectives, political and economic modernisation has been the central goal of United Russian Party since its inception. In order to achieve this aforementioned target, Russia is perceived to need an active, effective and responsible citizen i.e. a new middle class (Makinen 2012). Although the new program (2009) first appeals to a universal electorate later, it explicitly argues for the importance of the middle class. United Russian Party perceives middle class primarily as a guarantee to political stability (party program 2009) similar to what was identified by Remington (2010). The middle class is also defined by the United Russia through its 'way of life' and 'moral values'. In a competitive electoral politics, a political party has to adopt an expansionist approach to widen its electoral base. Therefore, United Russia has not been exception to this fact. Hale (2009) in his study found that United Russia's voter in 2007 parliamentary elections is largely drawn from youths and more market oriented Russians. According to Reuter (2011), dependent voters consisting rural inhabitants, pensioners, state employees have more positively responded to United Russian patronage appeals. A party has to follow a dynamic and sustainable path to consolidate itself in ever increasing competition in electoral politics. Besides, its basic responsibility is to prepare a consistent platform to establish dialogue with the electorates. Therefore, a party has to chalk out set of programs and strategies driven by a basic ideology along with other important factors.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the party stressed its pragmatic focus and was opposed to any ideologies. However, party program (2009) declares 'Russian Conservation'- a self defined variant of conservative ideology- as its guiding principle. Even before, party announced the two – pronged 'Sovereign Democracy' and 'Putin's Plan' as the driving ideology of the organization (party platform 2007).

To accomplish the above mentioned task, party think-tank has formulated a 10- point strategic programme (2011). It pledges to make incessant endeavour for modernization of the economy, education, industry, and healthcare. Secondly, to fulfil all kind of social obligation by expanding social security net in diverse areas. Thirdly, to ensure minimum level of corruption at every level of governance. Fourthly, to

strengthen the judicial system on the basis of fundamental principles of independence, transparency and fairness along with humanization of criminal legislation. Fifthly, to maintain inter-ethnic and inter religions peace despite continuing fifth against illegal migration, ethnic crime, xenophobia and separatism. Sixthly, to make sure the development of a modern political system where defenceless and powerless too are heard. Seventhly, to ensure internal and external security through strengthened police system and powerful ultra-modern armed forces. Eighthly, to pursue an independent and rational foreign police guarantying the safety and welfare of the people of Russia. Ninthly, to build healthy and robust economy which will bring advancement in living standards of Russian citizen. Finally, to provide just and fair administration along with ensuring consolidation of federalism and local self governance to make decent life accessible to all including rural and town residents as well. Election Programme (March 2012) expanded this wish list with inclusion of renewed emphasis on spiritual richness of Russian civilization, renewed public support for family size, creation of favourable environment for people with disability, refreshed impetus on infrastructure building and remodelling of education system. A political party needs a continuous flowing fund mechanism to accomplish its goal and remain in existence. United Russia's finance and fund availability can be located at two levels namely- cash property and estate property. Main source of party income is membership fee, donation from individual and corporate houses along with income generated from various commercial activities of party through its estate. State funding too is available to all political parties including United Russia subject to certain viable statutory restrictions (Federal law no. 95 on political parties 2001).

During its decade over existence United Russia has established itself as dominant party of power. Its electoral success reveals much more than anything else. In Duma election of Dec 2003, for the first time, after winning 246 seats, it became parliamentary party with constitutional majority. In 2004 presidential election, party candidate Vladimir Putin emerged victorious with huge margin. Party secured 37.5 per cent with 315 seats keeping its constitutional majority unchallenged for the second consecutive time in Dec 2007 election. Its presidential nominee Dmitri Medvedev clinched 70.28 per cent of the total votes polled in 2008. In 2011 parliamentary election, it managed to secure 49.32 per cent share of votes. In contrary to past trends, party managed to get 238 seats i.e., 52.88 per cent of Duma seat down from 64.30

percent of vote share and 70 per cent of the seats occupied in 2007 election. In May 2012 presidential election, Putin re-emerged from his self-imposed law abided exile to sworn-in as president. He got elected with 63.64 per cent of the vote with almost 100 percent of the votes counted.

Roberts (2012) analyses United Russia's electoral success by creating a model understanding the role of political parties in electoral politics. He concludes that United Russia Party has some unique features that help it in consolidating its unique place in the Post-Soviet Russia political system (Roberts 2012). He adds that United Russia has emerged as organizationally complex political party but gradually it became hugely successful as it provides source of regime stability instead of instability. Attributing 'more stability' to the Putin's regime has attracted most of the scholars to agree or disagree with this idea. Chadaev (2005) argues that enduring sovereignty and democracy, fine-tuned administration and above all raising the quality of citizen's life became the foundational principle of president Putin's policy and his leading element of popularity among electorates as well.

White and McAllister (2008) state that the United Russia's electoral success has been largely based on Putin's personal popularity in turn stems from the recent economic growth and concomitant rising standard of living amongst the population. Reuter (2011) explains how United Russia Party became dominant at all levels of the Government in Russia. Moreover, he gives different reason for party's constant electoral success stating that United Russia's great success story is largely due to the remarkable lack of defections that occurred during the economic crisis. To date, the party has experienced almost no high level of defections. Goslov (2011) analyses the regional dimension of United Russia Party's electoral performance. He argues that in regional elections from 2003-2007, the party performed much better in regions where the Governor headed the list and the party victory in 2007 Duma election owed as much to governor's machinery as it did to Putin's popularity. Thus, it appears that United Russia Party's electoral success has been cast in shadow by writings regarding its 'management' and rigging of electoral process. White (2011) in his work shows how the media, electoral and administrative machineries have been used to ensure United Russia Party's continuous victory. Bacon (2012) concludes that grave magnitudes of allegations of electoral manipulations were made on ruling United Russia Party by almost all the opposition parties. Moreover, protest demonstration

were organised on large scale across Russia to register the people's dissatisfaction over rigged electoral results. However, he emphasises that these protests were largely concentrated in capital Moscow alone.

RATIONALE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

After reviewing the entire available literature on political parties in Russia and particularly on United Russia (UR) one can infer that study of United Russia has not been conducted yet in a well-knit manner where one can get wholesome information at a glance. Besides, other pertinent strands in multilevel success of a political party too needs immediate and proper attention, therefore, it has been an imperative for me to take this as a topic of my research. The period of a decade (2001-2011) undertaken for the present study can be justified on several grounds. First, a party must be studied through its inception so that its trajectory could be mapped properly and more accurately. Second, a party emerges and makes incessant endeavour to widen its social base among the electorates throughout its existence. Therefore, it becomes inevitable to track its phases of evolution and consolidation process. Third, a decade is sufficient enough to evaluate and assess a political party's growth trajectory essentially in a Neo-natal Political System like Russia. Fourthly, above all the temporal dimension of United Russia Party's existence (2001 - 2011) doesn't permit us to go beyond this period. Present study is nothing but a modest attempt to fill these lacunas of existing scholarship on Russian Party System.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the present study are as follows:

- To conceptualise the organisational structure of a political party and party system.
- To examine the evolution of party system in Post-Soviet Russia.
- To contextualise and discuss the evolution of United Russia Party till the date.
- To explain the reasons for phenomenal electoral success of United Russia Party since its inception.

Research problem and question

This study deals with the following important research question:

- How did the current status of political parties and party system in Russia evolve?

- What were the enabling factors to the emergence of United Russia Party?
- What are the reasons behind United Russia Party's virtual 'power hegemony'?
- What is the social base of United Russia Party?
- What is the role of Putin in consolidating the United Russia Party?

Hypotheses

- Vladimir Putin's individual popularity coupled with weak opposition contributed towards the success of United Russia Party.
- Conservative ideology and programs of United Russia Party have wide appeal among the Russian youth.

Research methodology

The present study is based on the thorough examination of the evolution and consolidation of United Russia Party since its inception. Therefore, research design for the study is case study based on primarily sources like government documents, departmental archives, reports, electoral results, party's manifesto & pamphlets etc.

The study has attempted to explore and analyse all known reasons behind the party's splendid electoral success throughout its existence. In this context research articles, books, scholarly journals, magazines, newspaper clippings, media reports and so on like secondary sources has been helpful with its detailed commentary and vivid description.

More importantly, a political party's success generally is measured in quantitative terms. Therefore, quantitative analysis of electoral outcome and measurement of voting pattern is indispensable tool to conduct this research.

Chapterisation

This study consists of five chapters including the introduction and the conclusion.

The **present chapter** provided an overview of the evolution of united Russia Party as a dominant party of power. Besides, this chapter also traced the factors related to party system and political parties and their usefulness in the content of Russian political context.

Second chapter of the study titled as **Party System in Russia** examines the development of party system in Russia. While tracing the evolution and mapping the development, it uses social cleavages as a structural premise of the Russian political system. This chapter also demonstrates how different parties shaped the political spectrum of post-Soviet Russia. This chapter also makes a conscious attempt not only to trace the phases of development and types of political parties but also tries to predict the future of Russian party system by analysing different aspects of it.

The third one titled as **Ideology, Program and Strategy of United Russia Party** deals with the fundamental ideology of United Russia. It also analyses in detail the program and strategies of this pro-Kremlin party. Besides, it also captures the changes that occurred in the above-mentioned spheres related to United Russia. This chapter more distinctly provides us the conceptual background of aforementioned domain of United Russia.

The fourth chapter titled as **Social and Electoral Base of United Russia Party** summarises this study after identifying and explaining the importance of diverse nature of social, electoral and financial bases enjoyed by the United Russia as the title suggests. This chapter vividly captures the relevant changes in the social, electoral and financial bases by giving plausible reason and well-articulated explanation of the aforementioned aspects of Putin's United Russia Party. This chapter also sheds light on the electoral success of United Russia party and establishment of a virtual "power hegemony".

The fifth chapter is the **Conclusion,** which has focussed basically on the findings of the study. More importantly, it outlines the challenges and prospects of United Russia Party.

Chapter 2:

Party System in Russia

BACKGROUND

Democracy is to establish and manage a kind of Institutional arrangement to arrive at political decisions where power of decision making is acquired by individuals through competitive elections (Schumpeter 1950: 269).

A multi party system is an inevitable part of a democratic political system since political party functions as buffer between civil society and the state (Chenoy 2001). Though the arrival of procedural multi-party system is purely a post-communist phenomenon yet the history of party system in Russia is almost incomplete without taking into account the historical underpinnings of the developments in final years of erstwhile USSR. Soviet Union was dominated by a monolithic party under CPSU. A single party dominated the political system since 1917 revolution which was later renamed as CPSU in 1952 (Hill 1997). Its management was based on democratic centralism[1] where by the 1977 onward constitution imposed it as the organisational principle of all other state institutions. Besides, a system of *Nomenklatura*[2] was also used for the purpose of official level of appointment. The 'Thaw'[3] introduced by Nikita Khrushchev in 1950s after the harsh ruling period of Joseph Stalin generated a new thinking among citizens of Russia due to rising aspirations for possible change in society an political system. With the arrival of Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985 the fate of soviet system was about to alter.

Gorbachev introduced his 'new thinking' and 'de-idealisation' consist of '*Glasnost*' i.e. openness and '*Perestroika*' i.e. restructuring. Gorbachev through this programme attempted to introduce elements of democratic laws and rights into the soviet system. These new laws included freedom of consciousness, religion and press (Chenoy 2001). Under this, he did attempt to shift power from party to the state. He also tried to establish an independent judicial system. Likewise he passed presidential decrees for autonomy of enterprises and collectives. Hence, through his presidential decrees,

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[1] As a concept connotes to a process where debate and discussion generally take place only at upper echelons of party organization. Once it is passed it will be binding for all at every level in the party hierarchy.

[2] This was used to ensure that all responsible and authorized position were only to be filled by individuals approved by the party's hierarchy.

[3] It refers to a concept introduced by then President of USSR Nikita Khrushchev's period from 1950s to the early 1960s. Under his de-Stalinization programme and peaceful co-existence programme with other nations Khrushchev halted all the repressions and censorships in Soviet Union.

especially in the sphere of economy, he strived to make a tectonic shift from 'command and control economy' of soviet era to private enterprises based liberal economy (Chenoy 2001). His incessant desire to introduce elements of pluralism in the domain of political system got air when monolithic party system under the hegemony of CPSU came to an end with the advent of multiparty election in late 1980s and with the emergence of a nascent civil society in post-Soviet Russia (Chenoy 2001)

Gorbachev's attempt to reshape and reform the party under his reform programme significantly contributed the collapse of Soviet Union and its disintegration into fifteen new sovereign republics. However Soviet collapse and its reasons have been viewed through various perspectives. Sakwa (1997) categorises the approaches to the fall of Soviet system broadly in three ways. Firstly, he talks of 'Ontological or Structural' failure of Soviet politics. According to him, the proponents of this school of thought argue that Soviet system dissolved because of some inherent short comings of the system itself in economic system despite of huge competitive success it locked in a primitive model of and industrial society while western society gradually shifted towards post-Industrialist society. Likewise in political sphere, there was a lack of a dynamic and open ended society-regime relationship which prevented the evolution of societal development. Secondly, 'Conjuncturalists' suggest that the system did have potential to evolve had it been provided the required time to adapt the changing economic and political circumstances. They attribute the fall of Soviet empire to the contingent factors like strong internal party opposition, the alleged opportunism of the Russian leadership under Yeltsin and the failure of west to offer sufficient will and the resource to support Soviet reforms (Matlock 1995). Third approach called 'decisional' as it emphasises that some particular decisions at particular time did cause unexpectedly the collapse. However, if these political choices could have been taken after the thorough transformation of socio- economic and political relations, it could have brought some constructive result by adapting to the middle path of the two extreme.

The electoral reforms initiated by Gorbachev led to the March 1989 election to the concerns of people deputies of the Soviet Union. Thus, despite of its many limitations, it increased the space for new political formations and other parties. Further after the break away from USSR the emergence of Russian Federation provided the space for the multi-party

system (Chenoy 2001). However the policy of *glasnost* resulted in proliferation of different platforms of free expression, demonstration and political opinion through the press. This activity along with other factors also gave birth to large number of political groups and movements in the Soviet Union (Chenoy 2001).

Political Parties – A Conceptual Formulation

For Duverger (1954) party is a collection of communities where a union of small groups are dispersed throughout the country and interlinked by co-ordinating institutions. Once the mother cells, parliamentary groups and electoral committees come into being than along with the coordination and regular connections among themselves unite them as a political party. According to Sartori (1976) party is a political group which is capable enough of placing candidates for public office through elections and also identified for this purpose at competent official level. It presupposes diversity and institutionalizes dissent among the electorates and among its counterparts too.

The basic elements of each party have their own peculiar form but still there are four main types of element of a political party (Duverger 1954). First, Caucus is of limited nature as it consists of a small number of members which seeks no expansion. It functions in a large geographical area generally to the chief electoral division. Its semi-permanent in nature because its activity is seasonal which usually ends with the single electoral campaign, however, it does not get completely end rather it reaches its peak at election times and contracts itself between the time-period of two elections. It is also referred as a committee, a clique, or a coterie. There are different types of caucuses. Cadre parties correspond to the caucus because of their decentralized and weakly knit structure

Second, 'Branch' is less centralised than caucus as it's an only part of the whole; therefore, its separate existence is inconceivable. It strives to increase its overall strength by multiplying their number count by enrolment of more members in their fold. Thus, branch is more extensive than the caucus. It is wider, open and appeals always to the masses. Moreover, its geographical base is less extensive than that of the caucus. As its more numerous groups than the caucus therefore it possesses a more perfect internal organization. Since it's a socialist invention hence the hierarchy

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of the branch is more definite and the division of duties more precise. Mass parties based on branches are more centralized and well-knit.

Third is being termed as the 'Cell'. It has an occupational basis as it unites all party members who work at the same places like the factory, workshop, shop, office and administrations etc. The cell is a much smaller group than the branch as the membership of the former must never reach a hundred. The unique nature and limited size of the cell give it a greater hold and control on its members than has the branch. Cell as an element of political party were invented by the communist party of Russia and was imposed on all communist parties throughout the world by the Third International in 1924.

Fourth can be mentioned as 'Militia'. It's a kind of private army whose members are enrolled on military lines. For examples, Hitler's body of Storm Troops, Mussolini's army troop etc. They are subjected to the same set of discipline and training as the soldiers. However, these members remain civilians as they are not permanently mobilized and nor maintained by the organization rather they are simply obliged to meet and drill frequently. Militia can be of two kinds one could be an active army while other can be a 'reserve'. It is based on very small groups build up into pyramids to form larger units. Militia is a fascist creation as it is highly influenced by the doctrine of Fascism. While shedding light on origin of political parties, La Palombara and Weiner (1966) argue that political parties emerge in a political system "whenever the notion of political power comes to include the idea that the mass public must participate or be controlled". Thus, participation is the crucial value enabling the emergence of political parties in a political system.

Famous classical theorist Sartori (1976) outlines some functions of political parties. Foremost of all parties are channels of expression - as parties developed throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century as well they tend to convey to the authorities the wishes of the people rather than to convey to the people the wishes of the authorities. Second, parties play an instrumental role in the process of democratization of the politics. Now parties under the banner of responsible government became more responsive since they were increasingly became more articulate, communicative and implementative regarding demand of the masses. Thirdly, parties function as expressive instruments for the masses as they give effective voice to the people's

hope, aspiration and desire. Lastly, Parties transmit demands backed by public pressure by educating them continuously.

A political party has different dimensions which have been viewed by various scholars. For instance, party organization is very important for modern party and it is functioning because not only it constitutes the general setting for the activity of members but also imposes solidarity on them. Besides, it determines the machinery for selection of leaders and decides their powers too. The strength and efficiency of a political party is being assessed on its organizational efficacy which has certain dimensions as discussed in next section (Duverger 1954)

First of all comes the party membership as members are the constituent unit of the party while supporters, adherents, militants, propagandists are chief expresser of solidarity for a political party. A supporter declares his agreement with the doctrine of party and sometimes ends it his support. However he remains outside party's organisation and the other communities. The concept of membership is a result of the evolution which led the cadre party to the mass party. The difference between cadre and mass parties is regarding their respective structures. Second is the Party leadership whereas the leadership of political parties present dual characteristics as on the one hand it appears democratic while in reality it's oligarchic in nature. Officially the party leaders are almost always elected by the members and given a fairly short period of office in accordance with democratic rule in practice the democratic system of election is replaced by autocratic methods of recruitment viz. co-option, appointment by the central body, nomination, and so on. Naturally the leadership of parties tends to become oligarchic in nature a 'ruling class' in the form of 'inner circle' comes into being which is difficult to penetrate in general. Principally, it has been seen that elections have favoured the formation of an oligarchy rather than preventing it therefore election process has to be strengthened. Since the political party has the tendency to gain oligarchic nature therefore, twin problems of the composition of the "inner circle" which has decisive influence over decision making process and also of its renewal arise due to aged oligarchs. Michels (1962) agrees with Duverger by stating that political parties irrespective of their organizational setup and programmatic aspiration have inherent tendency towards oligarchic tendencies. Third one is the authority of the leaders as tendency of increased authorization of the leaders and tendency of personalisation of power have dominated

the entire phases of evolution of political party. In preliminary phase of personalization of power the change occurs from personal government to institutional government while in secondary phase personalization of authority takes place while retaining the framework of the institutions. Fourth is the relationship between party leaders and the parliamentary representatives as electorates are represented by their elected representatives while the leaders are merely the heads of the party community. Practically many parties manifest the tendency of party leaders giving order to the parliamentary representatives in the name of militant members. Fifth, political parties also have tendency to make alliances which can vary in form and degree. The number of parties plays a decisive role in the process of formation of alliance. Alliances between the two parties are quite rare in two-party regime but it's quiet often in multi-party regime. When none of the party is able to win the required number of seats to form the government than they form alliances or coalition with the like minded parties (Duverger 1954).

There is also a concomitant relationship between parties and political regimes because before being chosen by his electors the deputy is chosen by the party the electors only ratify this choice. The elector may choose between several candidates but each of them is nominated by a party (Duverger 1954).

Duverger (1954) emphasises that nature of party system largely determines the degree of separation of powers. Constitutional provisions in this regard are mere artefact in this aspect. Single party regimes tend to leads to more concentration of power in very few hands even though constitution provides for the separation of powers. The influence of parties on the separation of powers is largely being determined by their numerical figures, internal structure and even b their respective strengths. For instances, decentralized and weak organization increases separation except some cases while strong and centralized organization decreases separation. However, the two-party system has tendency towards accumulation of power. Besides, this concentration is significantly shaped by the nature of prevalent nature of constitutional structure. In other words, in presidential system of governments, the parliamentary group and government set up is in total isolation while in parliamentary form of governance there is existence of a low degree of separation of powers. The internal structure of parties determines the degree of concentration of powers or degree of separation

The two-party system strives to make the opposition into a real institution in a manner that the interflow of transfer of power must go on without any interruption in a long run. In bi-party system the unified oppositions remains a moderate opposition as they are aware of the games of the rules that today's opposition will assume the sole responsibility of office tomorrow. However in the case of multiparty system, there are different dimensions of opposition. They can be opposed by both external opposition provided by the parties of the minority and an internal opposition existing amongst the majority parties themselves. Thus, multi-party system and bi-party system enable the emergence of two distinct structures of opposition. The very existence of the phenomena of dominant party system could have the great impact over the functioning of a party system. If the domination of a party continues for a long then the opposition is reduced to incapable of doing anything. Further, especially in a bi-party system, the country gradually loses interest in political propagandas and elections as they have lost the meaning by the time. A multi-party system with strengthened homogenous coalitions can produce a coherent, moderate and distinct opposition which is also the hallmark of the two-party system (Duverger 1954).

Political parties can be of different kinds. Firstly, those parties which are not solely interested in maximizing votes are called Witness parties. Secondly, ideological parties use the method of indoctrination to gain votes which are their prime interest. Thirdly, parties which are not in favour of submitting and surrendering policies to maximize votes are called responsible parties. Fourthly, responsive parties give priority to maximizing votes and winning elections. Fifthly, those parties which are only interested in maximizing vote are called irresponsible parties. (Sartori 1976)

Classification of political parties

Political parties have been classified in different types and categories on the basis of varied degree of organisation[4]. It could be electorate parties and membership parties on this criterion. Electoral parties are those parties which attach less importance to a large membership but are highly active in the scope of elections. The voter- party bond is usually weak in such parties. Hence it can switch over to any other if it seems necessary (Hofmeister and Grabow 2011).

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[4] For more details see:
Arend Lijphart, Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries (New Haven And London :Yale University Press, 1999).

Some parties seek country-wide membership to get robust party financing through membership fees. These parties can be termed as membership parties. Traditionally, it is usually the popular parties and labour parties which have strived for a well-organised party apparatus with huge membership. Sometimes it is also referred as 'mass party'.

Political parties can also be classified on the basis of their pre-determined socio-political objectives. For instance, political groups like conservative socio-political orders are highly sceptic about any changes and innovations to be made. Though they want to maintain states-quo but they do acknowledge that traditional ideas, values and principles cannot be sustain for long without moderate but necessary reforms. Secondly, there are some parties which are staunch believer in rights of individual freedom and rationality of the individual. Hence, they emphasise on constitutional democracy and adoption of free-market economy. Thirdly, Social democrats and its adherents are highly involved in social and labour movement across the world. They also believe in social equality of people which or they argue, can only be ensured by strong regulatory state in economy and society as well. Thus, Social democracy party emerges on the ideological ground of issues related to labour and social movements. Fourthly, Socialist parties have central aims like to achieve social equality, the abolition of private ownership of the means of production and a State-driven economy. Thus, they too have close association with labour movements but tinge toward more radical approach on central objectives. Fifthly, some parties functions on their socio-religious convictions e.g. Christian Democratic Party. They have party-programmes based on the values and standards of religion. Sixthly, some parties believe in nationalistic ideologies often blended with broad ethnic ideology and racist in ages. Such parties are referred as extreme right-wing parties. Seventhly, Communist parties propagate the idea of dictatorship of the proletariat based Marxian conception of base and superstructure. It favours state-control over and ultimately envisages a classless and stateless society.

Political parties can be differentiated according to their intention to approach various different classes. Firstly, power parties attempt to consider the interests and heeds of more social groups as possible and hence try to integrate all of them within the party work and profile to aggregate myriad socio- political aspirations in their party-programme. Secondly, some parties are only concerned with advertising the interest

of particular group/groups. Individually they are not worried about taking all the interest or board. These are known as 'Party of special interest'.

Political parties can also be clarified on the basis of their positioning towards the political system. First, some parties conform to the system by accepting the status-quo and wish to either stabilise or strive to reform it gradually without any drastic change. Secondly, some parties are not satisfied with the existing form of current political system. Therefore, they opt for some sort of radical measures to bring systemic and structural changes thus, they are in opposition to the existing political system.

However, it's rare that a political party is solely based on any of the above lines of demarcation. Rather, they are mixture of one or two form of above distinction. . To become successful in the competitive elected contest a political party heeds a well-structured party organisation which must be well-knit from top to bottom. This will also help to form a favourable political opinion required for its electoral success.

Party System – A Theoretical Conceptualization

Sartori (1976) argues that parties make for a "system" then, only when they are parts. Thus, party system is the system of interactions resulting from inter-party competition. For Sartori (1976), the party system in modern world can be broadly of three types namely single party system, bi-party system and competitive party system .he enumerates sub-variants of single party system into one party, hegemonic party and predominant party rule. He argues that the political system where there is monopoly of one party only and no other party is permitted to exist should be termed as one party system. Under the hegemonic party rule, the hegemony of the ruling party cannot challenge and other parties are just subordinate to a single hegemonic party. Under predominant party rule a single party governs alone without abdication and alteration of power as long as it continues to win with an absolute electoral majority.

Bi-party system refers to a system where two political parties compete with each other to obtain absolute majority. The other party often plays the role of a constructive opposition. Here many minor political parties can exist.

Competitive or multi-party system is a kind of party system where multiple parties compete with each other on legitimate grounds to gain electoral mandate of whom

they are going to represent in legislative bodies. Sartori (1976) classifies it into three different variants namely limited, extreme and atomized competitive party system.

According to Sartori, a multi-party system has some chief attributes. Firstly, there must be the existence of relevant opposition party/parties. Secondly, the presence of the opposition could not only unilateral rather it can be bi-lateral or multi-lateral. Thirdly, a variety of principle and philosophy based groups should exist who believe in adherence to fundamentals. Finally, to outbid each other, there is tendency of overpromising widespread among the parties. Thus, in a nutshell, party system recognizes dissent and institutionalizes opposition (Sartori 1976).

.Duverger (1954) states that a number of parties coexist in a particular political system where the forms and modes of their coexistence characterises the party system of that political system. party systems are largely the product of many complex factors which shape them substantially. Some of them are history, tradition, socio-economic structure, religious beliefs, racial composition, and national rivalries and so on. Single-party, two-party and multi-party are some of the variants of party systems. However it is not so clear cut demarcation regarding two party-system as there can number of small parties exist alongside two major parties as it's the case in US and UK in 19th century first half of it. Aim of the single party is to form new elites, create new ruling classes, to unite and to shape the political leaders capable of organizing the country, for the masses cannot themselves govern. Even in Soviet-Russia, the CPSU monopoly received legal sanctions with article 126 of 1936 constitution of USSR. Multi-partism is a phenomenon which results due to internal divisions of opinion and their overlapping[5] within a political party. There are different forms of multi party system including tri-partism and polypartism[6] (Duverger 1954).

Party system can be classified on different lines/number of factors. Firstly, on the basis of presence of number of parties in the political system it could vary with each other, for instance, in a single party system there is no any political competition as only a particular party dominates over the party system. In a two party-system, two

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[5] Overlapping is a phenomenon which is broader than the 'split'. It consists in the non-coincidence of a number of different dualisms of opinion with the result that their combinations produce a multi-party division.

[6] It has the tendency of extreme multiplication of parties.

parties primarily dominate the political competition while smaller parties have no any influential role in electoral outcome. Thus, they are reduced to a subordinate status. Finally, when in a political system if more than two parties have decisive impact or fate of electoral competition than it is referred as "multi-party system" (Lijphart 1999).

Mehra and *et al.* (2003) argues that party system acquires a special connotation in multi-cultural societies where parties tend to represent multiple interests and identities as they feel necessary to build coalitions at social and political level in multicultural societies. For instance, in India different levels of interaction, inter-party competition and interaction of parties make more than one system of interaction. Even in Russia, political parties have different level of interaction viz. at federal, parliamentary and regional level.

There are some processes and interrelationships at least at two levels which creates the base of political parties. Thus, it largely shapes the structure of a party system. This is applicable over all political system including Russia to a large extent. Firstly, driven by their ever-expanding personal ambitions of the leaders, the elections started to become more and more competitive and thus different political groups began to take the shape of variety of parties. Secondly, with the emergence of conflicting interests at the intra-party and inter-party level the activities of the political activists increase to resolve the conflicts. Thus, the model of their co-existence has a significant bearing over parties and therefore on a party system. (La Palombara and Weiner 1966).

Lipset and Rokkan (1967) emphasise that the party system of a country is a result of a historical development of prevailing social cleavages in the country.[7] We will discuss in length about the cleavages in society including the perspective of Lipset and Rokkan in our next section which is exclusively devoted to study the party system from this aspect.

Party System in Russia – Cleavage Perspective

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[7] For details S. M Lipset and S. Rokkan (eds.), *Party systems and voter alignments: cross national perspectives*, New York : The Free Press, 1967.

Shastri (2003) explains that support bases of political parties in a democratic political system chiefly consists of scores of socio-cultural and economic indicators namely- Gender voting behaviour, locality urban support base vs. rural support base, educational levels of voters, occupational group, religion, economic class and so on. He adds that some of the categories e.g. caste in India and other South Asian countries are purely specific to certain particular countries and their political system. These all can be counted as basic fault lines- the electoral support base- of the political system, which also reflects the existence of social cleavages in the plural Russian society along the fault lines of religion, locality, educational Economic status etc.

Perepechko and *et al.* (2007) explicitly argue that in Russia major cleavage structures are centre/ periphery, urban/ rural, libertarian cosmopolitism/ authoritarian socialism and so on. Theory of cleavage structure was initially applied to western European society (Lipset and Rokkan: 1967; see also Perepechko: 1990). They broadly categorized the existing fault lines of western European society in terms of landed interest/ industrial interest of employers, capitalists, entrepreneurs on the one hand with the interest of worker, labourers, and socialists on the other.

Kitschet (1992) specifically theorized a twofold cleavage model for post-communist Eastern Europe namely free market-oriented region vs. economic redistribution favouring regions and libertarian/cosmopolitan-oriented regions vs. communitarian/particularistic ones. Similarly, Seiler (1996) demonstrates that political landscape in central Europe is the result of two overlapping cleavages namely pre-socialist cleavages and post-totalitarian/post-socialist cleavages. However, post-socialist societies are characterized by numerous conflicts along several axes e.g. Right/left, Market-economy parties/socialist parties and so on. Thus, the theory of social cleavages assumes that normally these conflicts are translated into party-structures and party- platforms. It is also used to classify political parties as La Palombara and Weiner (1966) came up with the historical and developmental dimension based classifications. Similarly, Duverger's (1981) analysis of classification of political parties is based on the probe of their origin and organization.

Perepechko (2007) illustrates his perspective on cleavages in Russian society by analyzing the nature of political parties contesting in Duma elections of 1995. He goes on arguing that elements of parliamentary and institutionalized parties can be

seen in political parties like CPRF, Yabloko and LDPR while there were some Parties representing special corporatist interest e.g. The Agrarian party. Some personal parties too emerged just before election to promote political leaders for instance LDPR in initial days surfaced to promote Zhirinovsky which later transformed into a parliamentary party. Besides, Small groups of incumbent deputies elected and running for re-election too emerged on the political scene. "Democracy" like parties was representing parties of activist. Further he locate DCR party i.e. Democratic Choice of Russia-a liberal and pro-market and Yabloko party-a liberal and moderately pro-market along with Our Home is Russia-a centrist party on the libertarian segment of political axis while CRPF on the authoritarian socialist segment.

Different social cleavages emerged at different periods of political history in Russia and paved the way for formation of different parties (Perepechko *et* al. 2007). First among them is the historical cleavage in terms of pre-socialist/post-socialist cleavages which includes a regional dimension and are certainly applicable to contemporary Russia. Second, Centre-periphery cleavage originates from deep structural and territorial disparities in social and economic development between capital Moscow, St. Petersburg and other advance cities and other large urban areas, large-small towns and country sides. The existing gap has still not been filled. This difference results in dissimilar political behaviour between the two different geographical regions of Russia. Third can be termed as Workers/employers cleavage as this particular cleavage was strong during the constituent assembly election of 1917. Though it is largely associated with left groups in Russia but still it is weak and cannot be consider as a major source of influence of left parties. Fourth, Market economy/ Socialist economy as a significant cleavage was in its strongest ever form in 1995 when the politics and economics of Russia were passing trough tumultuous events on the verge of transition. Fifth, Church/state and Urban/rural like pre-socialist cleavages are not so important in political system of post-Soviet Russia. Though earlier they were significant identities but now they are being given nominal preference. Religion has never been so important for Russians while deciding their political preference. Sixth, Authoritarian rule/ civil society cleavage is rather old kind of fault line and therefore can be termed as pre- revolutionary. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union. this cleavage has created the divide among parties which hoped to restore the old Soviet regime one the one side and those wants to establish democracy with strong civil

society on the other side. Sometimes it is also referred as Occidentalism vs. Orientalism. Apart from these, pro-market parties and pro-integration to world economy vs. pro-national capitalism and governmental and system opposition parties vs. radical opposition parties were some cleavages along which the voters were mobilized in early 1990s.

"Party has throughout the history of western government stood for division, conflict, opposition within a body politic" (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). Thus, it behaves like an agent of conflict and instrument of integration. In their book the author duo have dealt in length upon various issues thereby drawing two valid conclusions. Firstly, in a national community life there is existence of the system of contrasts and cleavage which develops in a stable system of cleavage and oppositions. Secondly, to the aforementioned process brought some changes in socio-economic and cultural conditions which eventually changes in the strength and strategies of the parties. They believe that parties have served as essential agencies of mobilization and immensely help in integrating local communities (Lipset and Rokkan 1967)

Ware (1987) believes it is necessary for a political party to respond to a mass electorate which entirely depends upon how the party has organized itself, the way its internal affairs are conducted, how it manages relations with its supporters and voters and above all the financing model of its activities. Ware (1987) asserts that Classification of party structure in competitive system especially in 'Hybrid System' is very difficult as it is the case with post-Soviet Russia.

Party System in Russia – Phases of Development

Kolossov (1993) reminds us that development of the party system in Russia was largely impacted by major political crises e.g. disintegration of the USSR in December 1991 and the constitutional crisis of September-October 1993. Then Russians were largely transformed into bipolar structure of voters divided between "us" and "they" and thus, reflects a continuous period of 'black and white politics in Russia.

White and *et. al* (1995) observe that by the early 1990s the soviet system had ended and with this the predominance of a single party got eliminated from the Russian Political System. The Russian Constitution after amendment in 1992 directed the post-communist state to recognize freedom of speech, conscience, assembly and movement (chapter 5). The constitution of 1993 added a commitment to promote "ideological diversity" and "multi-partism"(Article 13). And the first post-communist elections took place in 1993 with 3700 individual candidates and 130 parties and movements as well (White and *et. al* 1995)

Party Formation in Russian Federation was still in its infancy period by the early 1990s as there was no clear association between candidate's personal values, his political programme, his organizational affiliation and his subsequent behaviour in the legislature (White and *et. al* 1995). Membership figure were difficult to establish at that time. The emergences of new parties were of two main types namely 'Vanguard Parties'[8] and 'Movement Parties'[9].

The Parties emerge by this time were representing various spectrum of interests. Some of the business parties including the conservative party and the party of Economic Freedom were promoting the interests of capital and private ownership. Besides order of orthodox monarchists and several Christian democratic parties also came on the forefront democratic Russian was formed to contest the 1990 Russian elections. The same year, the Liberal Democratic Party under Vladimir Zhirinovsky emerged supporting the idea of a state based on law and a market economy. Similarly about 20 various parties and movements can be identical with the "centre" of the political spectrum including the Agrarian Party, the Constitutional Democratic Party and the Democratic Party of Russia led by Former CPSU member Nikolai Travkin. Finally there were 'left' groups consist with the socialist and Social Democratic parties, the Greens and an Anarcho-Syndicalist confederation. Further to the left were the political groups claiming to inherit the legacy of CPSU including the communist party of Bolsheviks, the Russian Party of Communists, the socialist workers Party and re-established Menshevik Party.

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[8] These parties were inheritors of communist party's legacies as they adopted some of the organizational forms of the CPSU. e.g. the Democratic Party

[9] These parties bear many similarities to the broad based coalition formed in eastern Europe in the late 1980s e.g. the Democratic union

White and *et. al* (1995) suggest that people believe that political parties are not playing significant role in Russian politics therefore they have little interest in their activities. The outcome is a "Party system without Parties" with an electorate divided socially and attitudinally but those difference do not suggests , as authors claim, that the electorates show a stable pattern of attachments to the political parties. Thus. authors believe that there has been weak development of political parties in post-communist Russia (White and et. al 1995).This was not only the single obstacle in the formation of party system without parties. They add that there were still formidable obstacles to the development of a more coherent party system that could actively engage a wider section of the Russian masses. Authors further argue that very weak civil society along with other difficulties like persistent high inflation, falling newspaper circulations, and a television service dominated by the president and his administration aggravate the situation. Mainwaring (1993) believes that even the functioning style of system of presidential government itself was one of the obstacles.

White (1997) argues that Presidents in other system are limited by the constitutionalism and its institutions like political parties and the judiciary and certainly by and informed an aware public. In post-communist Russia, both these weaknesses were present, particularly political parties were lacking both the sufficient numerical strength than very little public support as well. Article 6 of the soviet constitution was abolished in 1990 to encourage the development of political parties advocating the leading role for the communist party in Soviet era. However no focused political party emerged having capability to challenge the influence of CPSU and latter it transformed itself as functionary of CPRF (Chenoy 2001)

Hence, a viable political alternative to CPSU in term of political parties or formation could not take root in early days of the existence of Russian political system. Chenoy (2001) summarises some possible reasons stating that primarily the hegemonic control of CPSU over the political, economic and spiritual life of Russians was probably the most responsible for this phenomena. This inhibited the consolidation of unified Soviet Union under CPSU. Later with the decline of KPRF this fact became clearer. Secondly, there was a lack of communication between people of different republic which not only prevented the creation of any all-encouraging political organization but also added to the existing difficulties for the emergence of a political party equal to the status of the CPSU. Thirdly, the space for an organised opposition was reduced

to the negligible state due to the age-long monolithic political culture and a lack of vibrant civil society. Fourthly, the democratic movement of post-Soviet Russia remained weak, fragile and unstructured as it supported even non-democratic action like the ban on the CPSU. Hence, in such circumstances a democratic opposition can't shape where people themselves trust in undemocratic norms. Thus, over all, each and every political party was lacking public trust (Rose: 1996).

Remington (1997) argues that Russia's political system is an example of a hybrid or mixed system combing presidential and parliamentary elements. Therefore, the immense constitutional and extra-constitutional powers of the president can be attributed to the continued presence of authoritarian elements in the Russian political system. However, there is a discernible pattern in the direction of pluralistic democracy as political parties have frequently used the parliament for their political interest. Remington (1997) expresses hope arguing that diverse political forces represented in parliament are not only able but also capable to agree on policy decisions. They could certainly make parliament an institution which must be taken into account by president and government in final decision making. This will bring both substance and more legitimacy to the democratic setup in Russia.

A number of theoretical studies have been used to shed light over the fragmented nature of Russian Political Parties. Some of them have stressed over systematic factors like recognizable Social base of new political parties, the absence of Mezzo structures, and lack of civic organisation among the people. Analysts like Richard Sakwa to use the systematic perspective by identifying the country specific factor like the emergence of a strong presidency in Russia. However, Golosov (1998) divides the Russian parties into two types of formations namely Communities of Fate[10] and Communities of Fortune[11].

Political parties in Russian Federation: Major initial trends

In the 1990s, political parties of Russia associated themselves with a particular ideology of three main strands which can be discerned after thorough examination of available literature namely democratic communist and nationalist. Thus, the entire

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[10] The Communities of Fate are those parties whose members are inspired by collective incentives . Therefore are commited to a particular common goal.
[11] The Communities of Fortune are those parties where commitment and motive of the members are driven by their personal but selective and limited goals.

political spectrum of Russia can be located on these three main categories. However, the different number of political parties with this has changed time to time by addition or deletion but remained within this framework. However with the advent of another category i.e. 'parties of power' has added another colour in its fold with united Russia as its most eligible representative. These categories can be clubbed under party families of Russia for the purpose of more detail examination (Remington 2012). Political parties in Russia like elsewhere are divided along ideological lines. The swift process of socio-political and economic change in Russia fragmented the nascent Russian civil society (Chenoy 2001). Consequently, variety of political parties and groups emerged on political scene of Russia. For analytical purpose they can be broadly categorised in terms of centrist parties, the communists and the right-wing nationalist parties. Majority of centrist parties emerged in initial days as they were not engaged in any long term or sustained movement for democracy. Besides, rejection of the Soviet order was also basis for centrist party building (Chenoy 2001)

The Communist Party of Russian Federation (CPRF) led the left groups in post-Soviet Russia. Its ideology was basically drawn from social democratic ideas moving away from Soviet type Marxist-Leninist ideology. They pitched for a 'left centre coalition' with Agrarians, communists, industrialists and the national oriented capitals. They blended nationalistic emotions to a social welfare system by expending commitment to election and democratic setup. Thus, they were not in mood to return to the old Soviet system. Right wing nationalist parties too carved a space for themselves in Russian political system in early years. They attempted to build a superior Russian/ slave nationality in contrast to the "other" inferior nationalities of erstwhile Soviet Union. Thus, they were committed to the ideology of great power chauvinism.

Duma elections were held in 1993, where most of the new deputies were committed to slower economic reforms, a larger role for state and continuation of state-subsidies in selected areas. The 1993 Duma demonstrated itself as capable of challenging Yeltsin on economic, social and regional issues. Thus, by the 1995 Duma started to capitalize on gained power through the electoral mandate. Duma election of 1995 witnessed the formation of coalition to facilitate their election. Ultimately, the election result demonstrated that voter had rejected the Government course of action. Political party theorists like Maurice Durverger (1954) argue that existent party

system in a democracy largely depends upon the kind of electoral system prevalent in the country.

Chenoy (2001) argues that third Duma election held in 1999 came with very surprising result where not only the Communist Party of Russian Federation (CPRF) emerged as the largest party in the parliament but also the new centrist party of Prime Minister Vladimir Putin- The Unity Bloc-Capture the second position. Besides, the votes were divided between six parties in a hung parliament. More significantly, Putin and the Kremlin leadership perceived the electoral result as the endorsement of their policies in Chechnya which had considerable impact on Russia's regional politics in future. Despite of its various short comings democratic base for a for a multi party system has been established by the end of the 1990s. A new political culture emerged from the scratch of emerging political behaviour. The Russian electorate against the parties identified with the govt. Thus they not only rejected the shock-therapy therefore model of economic-reform but also the ideology of ultra nationalism. Besides, they too voted against violence and corruption.(Chinoy 2001)

Sartori (1976) asserts that a political party has numerous functions to perform in a political system. Some of them are to connect civil and political society, to advance the perceived interest of individuals and groups and to provide a link between civil society and the state. However, in post-Communist Russia parties only marginally fulfilled these functions (Sakwa 2008). Here regime itself tended to initiate the party formation rather than party themselves generating dynamic politics Where political party rule in turn. He strongly believes that the party-system development in Russia has been a tortuous process and mere existence of multiple parties does not itself demonstrate the healthy functioning of party system within a democracy.

Stages of party development

Sakwa (2008) argues that party development in Russia evolved through four main phases. To overcome the communist party's legacy has been a major factor in Russia's transition from communism to democracy (Hill 1997). However this burden has been eased after the developments of 2000s.

First phase can be termed as the 'insurgency stage' (1985-91) of movements and informal organisations in the aftermath of dissolution of the monolithic party system

under CPSU. The establishment of a Democratic Union (DU) on 9th May 1988 can be termed as the beginning of the arrival of multi-party politics in Russia. However in Russia there was absence of a pan-Russian national issue which meant that popular fronts were weak and no single movement for the whole nation came to the forefront. However, Democratic Russia came the closest in covering entire Russia. This phase was shorter and more anarchic in Russia that most of other post-Soviet states. This phase also witnessed the phenomena of 'over-participation'[12]. In this phase, many parties where formed en-route to the single route of informal movement manifested in groups emerging within the CPSU itself, openly anti-communist alliances and the revolutionary movement represented by Democratic Union and Democratic Russia like parties. Overall they facilitated the emergence of multitude of pseudo-parties during this period. By the end of the phage the emerging multi party system was highly fragmented.

Second phase can be attributed as the 'phoney democracy' corresponding to the period of August 1991 to October 1993. The electoral process provided a major but necessary stimulus for the development of parties and party-system and the absence of a General election up to December 1993 inhabited future democratization as elections etc. were delayed due to ongoing constitutional crisis under Yeltsin's presidency. By the April 1992, around 820 registered public organization including 25 political parties connected with over 300,000 people were on the forefront. However new party did not succeed to become the basis of new political system which compelled Russia to move from one- party to a non-party state (Sakwa 2008). Thus the arrival of pluralism in Russia was not like establishment of multi-party system. Besides, politics became focussed on the struggle between institutions particularly between Parliament and President rather than between parties in parliament. The period also witnessed a distinct 'dual-power' mechanism where a strong Presidential apparatus was imposed from the above over the nascent parliamentary system with little co-ordination between the two. Parties were left hanging in the air with little constructive purposes.

Third, the 'dual adaptation' stage was marked by the adoption of the new constitution and the first genuine national multi party election of December 1993. Thirteen parties

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[12] In this situation there is no dearth of parties but hundred of small group mushrooms in every known and even newly-discovered area and some of them on several occasions cover the area across the political and social spectrum of the country.

and blocks were into the fray out of which only eight cleared the 5 percent threshold. The election significantly contributed to the development of parties by enabling the development of organizations and alliances while the newly adopted constitution finally provided a stable institutional framework in which parties could operate. The characteristic feature of this period was the adaptation of political parties to the conventions of democratic, electoral and parliamentary politics. It did initiate the new era in Russian politics. With the establishment of viable parliamentary system, a forum was created to flourish the party politics with sincere hope that the elections would initiate the new forum of party-system in Russia (Sakwa 2002). However these objectives were partially fulfilled. Moreover, the lack of the correspondence between the composition of parliament and the formation of the government made more noticeable the fragmentation of the Russian party system. Various personalities were the major centre of power many of whom were outside the parliamentary and party system altogether, and within parties links between the leadership and membership were not so strong. Parties were virtually trapped between strong executive authority and amorphous civil-society. With the arrival of parliamentary election of December 1995, Russia's already fragmented party system became more atomized than ever. By the time of December 1999 election, the situation had somehow stabilised with twenty six blocs contesting the election while six were entering Parliament including the newly-formed pro-Putin Unity. Overall this phase could not do away with the weakness of the party-system and all reform of social representation.

Fourth comes the 'formalization stage' (2000-onwards) which can be associated with something approaching the emergence of the party system with effective parties, differentiated programs and stable electorates. Putin's arrival and domination throughout this period was marked by differentiation in three ways. Firstly, though the 1995 and 1999 election distinguished between the representation of small groups and pseudo-mass parties in Duma but still frenetic party formation and reformation continued. Secondly, the programmes and policies of this insurgent small group were now far more clearly differentiated along the classical political spectrum. Though alliances too were formed based on cross cutting issues. Thirdly, Russian society itself begun to develop a contoured political structure as class, society and institutional interests now asserted their positions by employing the classical gamut of democratic institutions, including all parties.

The key point of law and political parties was to reduce the number of parties by several orders of magnitude and indeed it was achieved too when about three quarters of 197 political parties were de-registered by leaving only about 50 parties to fight national and regional elections and even this number was later reduced (Sakwa 2008). The Putin's attempt to create a national level of party system representing distinct interests, values and programmes to be put before the electorate was nothing but a rational response to political fragmentation. Equally it was an attempt to form a national party system as an integrative force for the country (Sakwa 2008). Thus, in other words, there is a discernible positive pattern in response to the fragmentation of political system by the consequent regimes. Majority of them attempted to resurrect the course of Russian political system and interestingly, Putin scored well among his counterparts on aforementioned ground. President Putin made serious bid to form stable party system in Russia. The law and political parties in 2001 is designed to create a system consisting of fewer parties with all of them becoming national in scale and magnitude as well (Mohanty 2010). Collective membership was banned throughout Russia. Funding of political parties was placed under control of various guidelines. Likewise the law on political parties, modified in October2004, stipulated further restrictions for smaller parties to make arena of competitive elections free from non serious political parties. Above all, to overcome the communist party's legacy has been a major factor in Russia's transition from communism to democracy (Hill 1997)

Regionalism and party politics

The Russian party system is not only highly fragmented but its reach to different regions is also partial (Sakwa 2008). In Russia parties emerged initially as the alignment of societal interest at local and regional level and eventually spread up to national level. Besides Region based parties are not only weak and fragile but also have minimal impact on national politics in post-communist Russia until they have been phased out by Putin. There is gulf and trust deficit that exist between ordinary Russian and the political parties of Russia This also causes the negligible presence of political parties in most of the parts in the country (White 2005). However, during

Yeltsin's regime there was a rich variety of political system existing in regions of Russia. No single party could work to encompass the all existing identities/cleavage in society of Russia due to its varied nature. There are some limitations for political parties to reach every regions of the country. Sheer size of the country makes it very difficult to constitute a genuine national party penetrating not only into major cities but also in provincial towns, rural areas and the national capital. Putin's attempts to homogenize Russia's political and legal space created a more conducive environment for emergence and development of a national party system (Sakwa 2008).

While analyzing Russian political system he argues that above all the current Russian political system is ridden with an authoritarian regime since it seeks to control all of the key political institutions. Second, defining feature is the clear lack of a viable opposition with access to the political system through which people can articulate and consolidate their policy desires. Third distinct feature is the difficulty of the current leadership to review itself and therefore to rely on very few old faces. Election serves the purpose of helping to identify and promote new leaders which is not taking place in free and fair manner in Russia. Consequently, the Russian authorities are bound to rely on other forms of leadership recruitment which usually advances the bureaucratic-managers and the old soviet style of *Nomenklatura* system. Finally, any absence of free and fair election Russian authorities are in dire need of true and authentic information gathering given the absence of controlled nature of elections and limited nature of political discussion in the broadcast and print media (Orttung 2010). Chenoy (2001) argues that the political development in early post- communist Russia has much bearing on its regional politics. The process of the development of the federal institution, the tug-war over the constitution making, the discernible pattern of ambiguity in separation of power between federal institution and the consolidation of the regional elite structure has significantly shaped the making of regional politics in post-Soviet Russia. Thus the necessary institutions for healthy development of federal system did not take place. Additionally, political parties especially the centrist parties have fragile base in the regions. Besides, Institutional structure for implementation of central policies have not been built in the region rather it has been provided either through administrative or through the party structures. Different region adopted different political choices as some supported then ruling Boris Yeltsin While some region became 'opposition' region. The phenomenal

growth of regionalization and growth of opposition regions took place due to two main factors namely on the question of Sovereignty and highly uneven nature of transition process in post-communist Russia. Several regions started to promote ethnic aspirations while some where opposed to Yeltsin's style of unitary state and imperial policy. Also to deal with the situation of virtual autonomy, then President Yeltsin strengthened the institution of the Presidential representatives in the regions (Chenoy 2001). While doing this his only intention was to tighten the federal control over the regions. However economic reforms and regionalization along with escalated ethnic conflict in the regions of Russia placed a daunting task for rulers in subsequent periods. However, the legislation on political parties essentially destroyed regional political parties (Sakwa 2008).

Party Families in Russia

Remington (2012) states that Russian party system has regularly witnessed the arrival and disappearance of political parties which can be grouped under three different categories. Firstly category could be clubbed under the 'Democratic parties' which were highly influence with the western ideas. Hence, they all agreed collectively that Russia must guarantee political and economic freedoms for its citizens protect private property rights and strengthen the rule of law. They also vowed to fight against socialist and collectivist tendencies in the political and economic spheres. Russia's democrats first mobilized themselves in the *glasnost* era then by the 1999 they formed an electoral alliance called the union of right forces. After witnessing rounds of highs and up, they dissolved the party and re-formed a new business oriented party called Right Cause. Party was ripped with internal conflicts because of its pro-Kremlin sentiment. Yabloko under its leader Grigorii Yavlinsky presents itself as the 'democratic opposition' to the government. It adheres to the themes of socialist-oriented economy and a pro-western external policy as well as to champion issues like environmental conservation anti-competition and effective local self government. They ran for presidential elections in 1996 and 2000 but not in 2004 and 2008. Besides, it has consistently refused to form any alliance with any like minded political groups. However, it has some representation in regional and local assemblies was also represented in first, second, and third Dumas but not cleared the electoral threshold in the fourth and fifth Dumas. Secondly comes the Communist parties represented by

CPRF-major successor and heir of old CPSU. It ideologically embraces some elements of market economy while negating it parental party's belief in hardcore Marxist-Leninist methods to achieve its policy goals. It has a substantial organizational base, a well-defines electoral following, a large but declining membership with a large network of local party news papers and most importantly, the traditional communist party discipline. These all factors have largely contributed to elevate its structure as a main opposition party. However it too has several weaknesses. Firstly, Party's main leader Ziuganov lacks broad personal appeal but no other communist leader has much wider support than him in the party. Secondly, CPRF voters based is largely drawn from older generation. Thirdly, it has been stucked into ideological deadlock as if it will push too much to the centre it will lose its place as viable alternative and if it moves further to the left, it will marginalize itself in changed political realities of post-Soviet era. Finally, its share of the electorate is declining; therefore, the party has been unable to mobilize new groups of voter and followers. Nationalist Parties are the group of parties which frequently appeal to the feeling of injured ethnic and state pride. The most influential party under this category can be outlined as Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) – led by Zhirinovsky- calls for aggressive foreign policy and harsh treatment of non-Russian ethnic minorities. In economic sphere, they reject both the older version of socialist economy and the new order of market reforms. Thus, they advocate a 'Third Force' which is in contrast of both the above mentioned categories. It has been the most successful of the parties competing for the nationalist's share or vote. Many other parties under this group have to expressed the need to restore the soviet union or to make Russia a world super power again or to cleanse Russia of ethnic 'outsiders' etc. In this category there are number of small militant group that have adopt proto-Fascist ideologies and organization model (Remington 2012). One of them is the National Bolshevik Party (NBP). It blends extreme leftist and extreme nationalist themes in their policy objectives therefore is not only hostile to capitalism and the west but also to the authorities and also to the immigrants. A majority of serious mass does not follow the NBP's line of thought but it has been effective in attracting people's attention with their publicity stunts. Some nationalist groups exhibit variety of ideological tendencies viz. to see Russia as a pioneer in forming a great Eurasian Union and also ridding Russia of ethnic alien population. This group of parties is no exception to the weaknesses. Firstly, they have never been united due to lack of a

common nation programme. Secondly, they have tended to channelize their energy in organizing street protests rather than party building (Remington 2012). Apart from these, Centrist parties usually lack any distinct policy position that they could be held accountable for. Therefore, in some cases, they are closely aligned with the authorities and thus called 'Parties in Power. United Russia (UR) can be termed as the most successful party of power in the history of modern Russia. It terms itself as the "right-centrist" because it supports market oriented and pro-business policies such as cutting taxes and reducing regulation as it expresses its faith in other variant of ideology called "Social Conservatism". Interestingly, without being the member of UR, Vladimir Putin is the most powerful leader of UR. United Russia uses variety of methods to maintain its dominant 'party of power' positions on the political scene of Russia.

The forerunner of UR as a party of power was "Our Home is Russia". It emerged on the political field in the run up to 1995 parliamentary elections to the Duma. It never had a clear and defined programmatic position and was mostly a rainbow coalition of officeholders ranging from big-city majors, region governors and presidents of ethnic republics. For this reason, it soon became the 'party of power'. However, it dissolved soon after dismissal of its leader Chenomyrdin from the government and its poor performance in 1999 elections.

In 1999, three other parties namely Fatherland-All Russia, The Unity emerged as 'Party of power' to some extent. The Fatherland- All Russia alliance united several powerful regional leaders and its list was headed by former Prime minister Evgenii Primakov. The Unity was formed only three months before the elections with the encouragement of Kremlin under president Yeltsin. The same year Putin expressed his support for Unity and thus it emerge as triumphant winner in November 1999 elections. The governors and other elites quickly switched their allegiance to it once they saw everything in 'Unity' to become the real party of power very soon. In December 2001, Fatherland (Moscow's mayor Yuri Luzhkov's party) merged with Unity to form "United Russia" .The result was landslide victory for UR with overwhelming majority in Duma election of 2003. In 2006, the Kremlin formed another party of power to weaken the opposition to UR from left groups headed by Sergei Mironov and was named as "Just Russia". Party considers itself a left-centrist party with the inclination towards broad social democratic orientation. It stresses the

need for improved pay for workers assistance to the poor and higher permissions for the elderly. However it is not an opposition party in any substantial term. The EU-Russia centre review (2011) report claims that the Russian media has played a large role in political persuasion among voters as the unstable party system and weak partition attachment provided the media more space for this kind of persuasion. United Russia's success as a dominant party power has come via this route as UR has always been dominating the air-waves, TV channels, debates and media platform prior to elections. Thus, the media has a major role in consolidating and stabilizing the Russian party system in future. Hence, it is up to media groups now that whether they choose to sustain with the functioning style of current regime or chart out a different path for itself by spearheading the change.

Parties and elections

Parties and elections have interdependent relations in the case of Russia. Historically, the development of parties in Russia in the past two decades has been stimulated by parliamentary elections more than the presidential elections. Since the first competitive election held in early 1990s the greatest impetus has been provided by the each Duma elections of 1993, 1995, 1999, 2003, 2007 (Remington 2012). Presidential elections held in 1991, 1996, 2000, 2004, and 2008 have not had a similar effect. This Phenomenon can be attributed to the fact that because Russia's presidential system encourages the president to avoid making commitment to parties, presidential elections have tended to concentrate attention on the candidates personalities rather than their policy programs and therefore have undermined party development in post-Soviet Russia. Similarly it has been true with the gubernatorial elections. Some other factors too inhibited the development of a competitive party system in the 1990s including the trend for big businesses to sponsor candidates directly, the rise of governor's political machines and tendency of Kremlin to intervene in the electoral system both by sponsoring parties of power and by selective backings of individual gubernatorial and mayoral candidates (Remington 2012).

The 1993 election to the new state Duma gave another impetus after 1989 elections of the deputies to the new USSR congress of people's Deputies under Gorbachev in 1989. 1993 election brought a new wave of party formulation, 13 parties registered

themselves and competed for seat. In 1995, 43 parties competed in the December Duma election through the same five percent threshold rule was kept.

Until the mid 2000s, there was a great deal of turnover in the parties. Politicians were not hesitant enough to start new parties, only to abandon them after the election. Voters too had shallow attachments to parties an often relate themselves more with political personalities rather than specific ideologies. Each new election presented voters with a substantially new set of party choices making hard for voters to develop any lasting attachment to parties or to make sensible judgments about parties' past, present or future performance. This was termed as a 'floating party system' in Russia (Rose and Munro 2002, pg-119). However, the electoral cycle of 2007-2008 onward suggests that this pattern perhaps is on its end with the apparent arrival of a long lasting, stable, and dominant party of power – United Russia.

Distinctive features of party system in Russia

White (2005) expresses the hope in emphatic manner asserting that all experts would agree with his premise that level of trust and partisan identification are low. According to the survey by White and others (2005), levels of party membership are too low just 1 percent of adult population. Gel'man (2006) argues that Russian party system in 1990s was a part of the story of the country's protracted regime transition. This process consists with multiple economic and political crises and intra- elite conflicts. It has deeply affected the major feature of Russia's Party-System namely Party fragmentation and electoral volatility. On the basis of several studies we can conclude some distinctive feature of Russian party system in comparison with other post-communist party system. Firstly, party system in Russia has been greatly fragmented because all segments of Russia's electoral market were over supplied. Secondly, the high level of electoral volatility demonstrated greater level of elasticity in voter demands, despite some trends towards formation of clear party identification. Thirdly, non-partisan politicians who possessed resources other than party support also play a major role in national and especially sub-national electoral markets (Gel'man 2006). Therefore due to above reasons Russian party system is regarded as unconsolidated. After 2003-04 Parliamentary and Presidential elections, party fragmentation in Russia actually decreased. Consequently, hyper- fragmentation and

high competition on Russia's electoral market were replaced by trends towards a monopoly of the ruling elite.

Thus the drawing an analogy of oscillation of the pendulum, Gel'man (2006) attributes the change in the party system of Russia from 'feckless pluralism' to 'dominant power politics'. While making the distinction between two he explicitly argues that feckless pluralism is a system which is highly competitive but its institutions are inefficient with lacking of mass support, consequently outcome is an unstable regime. While in the later, political competition is low, and the ruling group permits electoral contest as long as it does not challenge the position of the dominant actor. Therefore entire election process in the country is unfair. In this way, the transformation of post – communist Russia's party – system is typical way of transformation 'feckless pluralism' of 1990s to the "dominant power politics of 2000s". (Gel'man 2006). After considering all the variables Makinen (2009) goes a step further and emphasizes that the Russian party system should be classified as a "pseudo-party system".

Future of Party System in Russia

Remington (2012) argues that majority of Russian parties that surfaced in the 1990 had hallow roots as they were just pre-election phenomena and got disappeared soon after the elections. Since the end of the communist era, Russian political system has witnessed the rise of number of parties but there is still lack of stable and competitive party system. With the establishment of United Russia's dominance in the 2000s Russia is again returning to a new form of single party rule (Remington 2012). Both voters and politicians failed to develop long lasting ties with the political parties. In the 2000s, the regime attempted to bring about greater stabilities to the party system but placed it under tight state control. This enabled the pro-Kremlin party, United Russia, to acquire a dominant position among her counterparts as it reduced the rival parties into clearly a marginal role (Reuter and Remington 2009).

Since then, the regime has taken a number of steps to accomplish the goal of stabilizing the political system by reforming it. Legislations on political parties passed in 2001 and 2004 raised the bar for registration of parties: A party must have 50,000 members and branches in at least half of the regions of the country to be legally

registered. Moreover, only registered parties are allowed to place candidates for electoral contest. The outcome of new legislations was finishing out of non serious entities. There were over 40 registered parties in 2003 in Russian Federation. By 2010 only seven parties were still in registered with the ministry of justice [Russian ministry of justice website].

Additionally, Duma legislation in 2005 eliminated single-member district seats from the Duma, so that all 450 seats in the 2007 election were filled by party lists. Parties had to win at least 7 percent of the vote to win seats. All these provision added in hardships for smaller parties to compete in elections. The tough registration requirements gave federal and local authorities an upper hand in denying parties access to the ballot on the legal grounds.

Mäkinen (2009) argues that still the key player in the Russian party system is the executive power and the presidential administration. UR- The party of Power – is its massive instrument. Political parties in the state Duma are not political actors. Opposition outside the state duma is still marginal, supported by very few Russians. They all are united to the single agenda of being against the current political system by being an anti-regime. Stability has never been the characteristic of Russian party system as political parties have appeared and disappeared between the elections (Makinen 2009). Thus United Russia is the Single dominant party of power. In reality, the party system is controlled by the executive power and no existence of real free competitive elections. Remington (2012) enumerates several factors which he believes were responsible to act as the impediments in the development of a competitive party system in post-Soviet Russia. Firstly, Existence of a powerful presidency backed by the constitutional provision and hybrid system of parties. Secondly, due to the tortuous development of political system in Russia the civil society never became healthy and robust rather remain weak and fragile always. Thirdly, Ideological cleavages are produce time and again corresponding to the regime change but in the case of Russia it faded regularly. Fourthly, the biggest obstacle in party development was the success of authorities, basically Kremlin with the help of other machineries, in building a single dominant party of power-United Russia in 2000's. It eclipsed over the growth of other parties eventually transformed in newer form of one party system in Russia. Strong Presidentialism undermines the ability of parties to promise that electoral success will translate into policy influence

since the president can chose the government of own linking (Remington 2012). Much will depend on whether future Leaders will believe continuously to rule with using authoritarian methods. If they find it convenient to use dominant party framework to mobilize voters in elections, build majority in legislature and to manage the carriers ambition of politician then this does not seems to come to an end. A multi party system is essential for a parliamentary democracy as political parties' functions of a buffer between civil society and the states. Through its bears little responsible to the multi-party system existing in developed western nations but the emerging multi-party system in post Soviet Russia is a distinct future of the Russia political system (Mohanty 2010). Similarly, President Dmitry Medvedev's political reform agenda have changed the course of political system in Russia. Medvedev's political reform includes three main elements namely prolongation of president's tenure from 4 years to 6 years, prolongation of state Duma's tenure from 4 years to 5 years and provision for presentation of smaller parties which have failed to cross seven percent barrier in the state Duma . These reforms are said to have design to strengthen stability in the country by making the political system more democratic and transparent (Mohanty 2010) Chief attraction of Medvedev's proposal is lowering of threshold in the parliamentary elections in order to facilitate representation of smaller parties. The provision provides that smaller Parties polling between five percent to seven percent can have 2-3 seats in the Duma. This will definitely broaden the base of Russian Party system (Mohanty 2010).

He also proposed for removal of monetary deposit by candidates and political Parties taking part in the election. The provision of having at least 40,000 members to get registered as a political party instead of having at least 50,000 as per earlier norms will definitely lead to proliferation of Parties. Besides, it will also brighten their electoral chances.

Makinen (2009) predicts that at least after the election in 2016, Russians might have a more fragmented state Duma with the representation of few small parties as well. She concedes that it is extremely difficult to predict which political party will play more significant role in the future party-system. However, it might possible that none of the existing party may make or if they aspire to do so than they have to modernize themselves very effectively. Party system cannot be adapted unless the whole political system changes. The current system in Russia i.e. the power vertical and 'pseudo

party-system' go hand in hand and if a serious change has to be brought in the current political system should be replaced by another legitimate one. Russian politics is heavily influenced by the regime itself therefore parties are a part of Putin's "managed democracy" to a large extent. White (2005) takes rather a cautionary approach arguing if Russia seriously wants to develop a citizen-participant authentic party system than it has to do away with this 'managed democracy'[13] like tendencies.

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[13] It is used for both Yeltsin and Putin as both of have the same objective of a manageable and 'streamlined' party system and a compliant legislature.

Chapter 3:

Ideology, program and strategy of United Russia Party

Historical Background

United Russia Party was founded in April 2001 after the merger of Fatherland- All Russia party led by Moscow mayor Yuri Luzhkov and the pro-government Unity Party of Russia led by a Serey Shoigu (Russian Political Parties and organisations Directory 2011).The party officially is known as "Unity and Fatherland – United Russia" (party charter). It is called *Yedinaya Rossiya* in Russian language. United Russia party was registered on December 18, 2011 with 19,579 members. It came into being through merger of the Unity, Fatherland and All- Russia movements. The party has branches in all 89 constituent federation members (English Pravda 2003). The Unity was founded by the Kremlin to the counter the influence of Fatherland-All Russia led by then Moscow Mayor (Wilson and Decker 2010).Originally it was founded to support Vladimir Putin who succeeded Boris Yeltsin as the president of Russia on Jan 1, 2000. The party becomes more powerful with the solidification of Putin's elections. It gained 38% of votes and then won nearly 68% of total poll in 2007 Dumas elections. More interestingly, this victory came in the backdrop of having less membership than her nearest rivals CPRF and LDPR. Officially United Russia had 2, 57,000 members only in comparison to the membership strength of CPRF (500000) and LDPR (600000) (Wilson and Decker 2010).United Russia has set up its branches in all regions of Russia. Besides, it has established around 2,595 local branches of the party office (United Russia Party Website). Russian Political Parties and Organisations Directory (2011) dwells upon different perception of United Russia among different sections. It argues that some analysts term United Russia as populist and nationalist while many consider it as a 'party of power'. Some analysts also term the party as a 'presidential party' having only one goal of securing the power. It is also called public official party or administration party since majority of its members are the public officials across Russia. A certain section of foreign media-house considers it as 'presidential party' as they believe that the party has single-minded goal to first capture presidential power than to occupy the parliamentary majority (Russian Political Parties and their organisations Directory 2011).In April 2008, though he was never the primary member of United Russia, he became party's Chairman (Wilson and Decker 2010). Former interior minister Boris Gryzlov was elected party leader in November 2002 and retained the post for long period. Putin accepted the nomination for party chairmanship in April 2008.

Party charter outlines the main aims and objective of the party. Firstly, it would ensure that the public policy decision taken at all the three levels of government i.e. federal, regional and local level are in the interest of the majority of citizen of Russia. Secondly, it would make incessant attempts to educate and make people aware of Russia on issues of public importance. Besides, it would bring the matters of poor attention and neglect by the authorities to the latter's cognizance. Thirdly, both the abovementioned tasks must be accomplished through conducting mass propaganda, agitation, dissemination of information and political socialization in accordance with the strategies and program of the party (Section 2, party charter).

Organisational Structure: Theoretical Conceptualisation

According to Hofmeister and Grabow (2011), to become successful in the competitive elected contest a political party needs a well-structured party organisation which must be well-knit from top to bottom. This will also help in forming a favourable political opinion required for its electoral success. Majority of modern political parties have decentralised four-fold levels of party organisation (Hofmeister and Grabow 2011). First, Base or municipal communities divided on the basis of traditional area or municipality constitutes the bottom level in organisational structure of a party. Second is the district association in every electoral constituency. Third is considered as regional level association in terms of federal, regional or development type of division. Finally, the national association constitutes the topmost level of organisational hierarchy of a political party. The local or regional party organisation should have own activities throughout the year. Additionally, the members of the local level should conduct the campaigns for subsequent local, regional and national elections periodically. Besides, the structure of the party at district or country level should normally correspond to its structure at the higher party levels. There must be a sustained cooperation, continued collaboration and high level of coordination of party organisation at every level.

Every level in organisational structure of a political party is constituted with number of people along with its divisional head chosen among them (Hofmeister and Grabow 2011). For instance, at the district or country levels, there is usually an elected

executive council comprised of the chairperson, one or two vice chairperson and a treasurer. The next level i.e. regional or national usually has a secretary or general secretary elected by the respective party convention. Thus, general secretary is the most active and efficient post of a political party. He runs the party headquarters and the everyday party business. Besides, he is responsible for all kind of inside as well as outside communication. He is also responsible for the promotion of party programs. He along with other responsible colleagues discusses and formulates the modalities of electoral campaigns. However, many parties across the globe have post of president who works as a customary head.

A well organised modern party should have a better arrangement for internal and external communication. The internal communication involves the communication of intra-party level while external communication refers to the dialogue mechanism of party vis-à-vis voters and the society as whole. Now, a political party must effectively reach masses with the help of extensive means of mass-communication with increased access to TV, Radio, and Newspaper. People are more easily active for political parties with the proliferation of new social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter and others. Now political parties can get in touch with millions of voters of virtual space directly. However, with the help of excessive media hype any extra-ambitions persons can get unnecessary coverage on media and other communication network. Regular press releases and press conferences, and publication of bulletins and the position are the basic element to party's external communication (Hofmeister and Grabow 2011).

Organisational structure of United Russia Party

Section 6 of the party-charter is entirely devoted to outline the structural contours of the party. It describes the regional, local and primary branch of the party as it structural and operational unit. Section 7 of the charter of United Russia Party sheds ample amount of light over structural hierarchy in the party-organisation. It declares that chairman of the party is the highest elected official who is elected for the period of five years with an open vote by two thirds of the registered delegates of the congress in the presence of a quorum. It further clarifies about the eligibility criterion of the chairman along with its power and functions. Section 7.2 makes it explicitly

clear that chairman of the supreme council of the party is the highest elected official of the party. The chairman of the supreme council is elected for a five year term by majority-voting of the registered delegates of the congress in the presence of quorum.

According to section 7.3 of the party-charter, the supreme council of the party is the body that determines the development strategy of the party. It has been assigned the task of contributing to the program and constitution of the party. It has also been assigned to strengthen the authority and growing influence of the party of the Russian society.

Further this Section 7.3.5 talks about the functions of the supreme council of the party while section 7.4 terms 'bureau of the supreme council' of the party as the general council which recommends for the convening of the party-congress. Further, presidium of the general council makes proposal for further extension by congress of the party.

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Section 8.2 stipulates the party congress and the general council as the governing body of the party. Further, the central authorities of the party is the party congress, the supreme council, the general council, the presidency of the general council. the central executive committee and the central auditing commission (Section 8.2.1 of the Party Charter). Besides, it says that the highest governing body of the party is the congress.

Section 9 is devoted to the permanent collegial governing body of the party known as the general council of the party. It is elected by the party-congress for a period of five years of secret ballot with majority vote of the registered delegates of the party-congress.

The central executive committee (CEC) is the permanent executive body of the party and is accountable to the presidium of the general council of the party (Section11, charter of the party).

Central auditing commission of the party as a central body has been entrusted with the task of supervision and observation of the party-constitution, the execution of decisions of the central organs of the party and the financial and economic activities of the party and its business units. An important section 20 is attributed to the amendment and changes to the articles of association and party program. It stipulates

that the decisions regarding aforementioned matters will be taken with the majority of registered delegates. It explicitly provides that changes and additions to the programs of the parties shall be submitted to the authorized federal agency for further approval subject to the legislation of the Russian federation. Party charter also provides for an inter-regional coordinating council to ensure optimal coordination among the regional units of the party. It operates within several regions of the Russian federation (Section 13, Party charter).

Party Membership

Hofmeister and Grabow (2011) argue that party membership is the most fundamental and basic unit of a political party as a connecting link between party and the society. The strength of the membership is the most suitable scale to measure the electoral success and popularity among masses. Therefore, all political parties highly emphasise over multiplying membership strength without any exception. Majority of party strives for widening its membership base by integrating different socio-cultural and economic groups. Giving a direct or indirect membership is the available modes of political party membership in contemporary era among which direct membership is the most common mode of political-party membership. For instance until the 1990s, the British Labour party has approximately 3, 50,000 direct members (Hofmeister and Grabow 2011). The party members have greater influence on political opinion of the party concerned. Apart from this, they can also participate in crucial decision making of the party by exercising the voting rights as a party member. Parliamentarians and political appointees/ public officials exert a sizeable influence in most of the parties (Hofmeister and Grabow 2011). Party charter of United Russia (Section 4) enumerates number of provision regarding conferment of party-membership. Any Russian citizen above the age of eighteen who is willing to be a member of the party is welcome to the party fold. However, it is not available for stateless people and foreign nationals.

Parties having large numerical strength have stronger chances to win more parliamentary seats. Thus, it is very important to exert influence on the formation of political opinion. There are some ways to increase party membership (Hofmeister and Grabow 2011). Personal contact through people- to- people campaign is the best successful way to reach out to every nook and corner of the electoral constituencies.

Secondly, scores of public events could be organised at regional and local levels to attract new members. Thirdly, public presentation also attracts people in large number and finally, public celebrations of local festivals and folklores, local topics based on public hearings have large potential to attract electorates. Therefore, party must organize it at regular interval to increase party membership. In a democracy, the electorates are above all as modern democracy is entirely based on people's sovereignty (Hofmeister and Grabow 2011). Therefore, modern democracies have to face many new challenges. Constantly the new issues and question are emerging before them. Hence to tackle all these successfully a political party should educate and train their members continuously. This can be within and outside the party as well. The political training must comprise three basic elements. They are, in basic value and principle of the party, to understand and critically analyze the socio-political and cultural issues and to prepare for intra-party political work and conduct the political function in parliament and legislatures. In various countries, parties have established specific facilities for political education e.g. in India the voluminous History of Indian National Congress has been written to equip the members with the knowledge of evolution of congress party (Mukherjee, Pranab and Mukherjee, Aditya 2011).

Membership drive is conducted to recruit the new supporters at the primary branch, local and in some cases the general council of the party or its bureau. On the basis of written application, membership to party is subject to the performance in interview, participation of the candidate in the inner life and the recommendation of the board of the party. In some extraordinary circumstance, party can be terminated and suspended as well (Section 4.3 and Section 4.4, party charter United Russia Party). Khabele and Shale (2008) argue that in terms of recruitment drives, "there's a sense of laxity" within the parties, especially in between elections. In general, parties do not place enough emphasis on retaining existing members and recruiting new members. These activities need to be undertaken, given the trend of declining party membership and dwindling public trust. Thus, the author duo concern regarding dwindling membership of party is legitimate one and call for an urgent attention.

Intra-party Democracy

A politically active citizen can significantly contribute to the development of a political party. Their representation can only be ensured with the high level of intra-party democracy. Besides, a democratic state can be governed only by parties with democratic structures. Hence, in many countries, there are scores of legal provisions and constitutional enactments to ensure intra party democracy. There is tendency of "Iron law of oligarchy"[1] in every organization including political party. However, there is lack of sterns and vibrant intra-party democracy across the modern democracies. Hence there is need to strengthen all the aspect of intra -party democracy. First of all is to ensure participation of all members in the internal matter of the party. Second is to provide maximum opposition to members of all voice of their opinions within the party. Third, proportional representation of all specific socio-cultural, religious and ethnic group within in a party for instance, women, youth, minorities, depressed classes and others should be ensured. Fourth, tolerance should be observed towards different opinions within the basic framework of party program. Fifth, compliance must be ensured with the rules and regulations of party's code of conduct and constitution. Sixth, there must be a mutual relationship between the party leadership and the ordinary party membership.

To ensure intra party-democracy the party charter of United Russia (Section 5) bestows its member with some individual rights and liberties corresponding with some legitimate obligations. It confers almost entire gamut of individual liberties like right to participation, right to be elected and to elect, to vote on all matters of party life, freedom to express their views on any party-related matters, right to information and so on. Above all, it also appeals to its members not to act in any manner which discredits the party's image and reputation. Thus, the last one is all about the balancing act between the rights and liberties on obligation on the other. Party charter section 8 of United Russia Party charter dwells in length upon the functioning of intra-party democracy. It provides that to conduct preliminary internal party voting is compulsory for procedures regarding the identification of candidates for subsequent

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[1] Iron law of oligarchy as a concept means that in any organizational hierarchical structure eventually elites establishes their control in decision making process and thus the control in their decision making process is reduced to the level of oligarchy i.e. Rule of few

nomination as candidates for elective positions in government agencies and local government bodies. It further proposes that the result of the preliminary internal party voting by members shall be compulsory taken into account while deciding the candidates for elections and appointment in government agencies and local authorities. In sum, it could be said that United Russia Party has well chalked provisions to ensure intra-party democracy within it.

Intra-party conflict

Inner party conflicts and conflict resolution-existence of diversity of opinions is the hallmark of Intra-party democracy. This may be due to personal rivalries and increased influence of extra ambitions persons. This is not good for the bright future of any political party; therefore, it must be resolved quickly as much as possible within the democratic and transparent manner. In some democracies, prominent members of party resign if the deadlock persists long time or the issues are not resolved in favour of them. Hence, to avoid this kind of unwarranted incidents, intra party conflict-resolution should be very strong, effective and transparent. Usually, intra-party conflicts and disputes are settled at the party meetings and conventions. Besides, party court and internal review system is also used for this purpose. Apart from these, 'soft-forms' of conflict mediation between rivals groups and individuals could also be used to resolve the conflicts. Sometimes rival intra-party groups can be pacified by conferring key positions at management levels as well as outside parliamentary groups. A specified portion of total seats can be reserved at all levels for women and other minority segments of the society or they have been always underrepresented in most of the societies (Hofmeister and Grabow 2011). In the case of United Russia, Slider (2010) questions the unity of the party by tracing the source of intra-party conflict to the regions. He argues that the dynamics of politics in region dominated by the regional elites is the biggest source of intra-party conflict in United Russia Party.

Ideology of the Party

The official party platform explicitly argues that the United Russia will follow a centrist, pragmatic and conservative ideology in contrast to radicalism. It considers itself as conservative and regards itself as one of the legitimate heirs of Russian tradition of statehood, both Tsarist and the Communist (Russian Political Parties and organisations Directory 2011). Party declares it ideology as " Russian Conservatism" which it claims to be stable and social- rejuvenatory in spirit without being stagnant and revolutionary (United Russia Party Website). It calls for liberating Russian society from all chronic social troubles. It resolves to construct a new, healthy and free Russia which cheers the values like love for motherland, a strong family, a healthy lifestyle, professionalism and civic solidarity (United Russia Party website).

Evans Jr. (2008) argues that though Vladimir Putin has said that Russia does not need a state ideology, but his most trusted official Vladislav Surkov have expressed the need for an ideology for the United Russia Party. They emphasized that Putin's speeches provide the core of the ideology. Evans Jr. (2008) states that though Putin believes that Russia has made an irrevocable choice in favor of democracy yet he insists that the democratic institutions must not be adopted at the cost of the order and stability. He believes, according to Evans Jr. that Russia has chosen an independent character of the democratic path in the combination of 'democracy with order'. Evans Jr. (2008) argues that Putin's idea of the values of Russian society is highly influenced with the necessity of unity in the state and the nation.

Putin attaches great importance to achieve a solid consensus on goals in Russian society since he believes that internal moral and ideological divisions could undermine national strength and thereby block the solution of major problems (Evans Jr. 2008). Thus, for Putin finding the stumbling blocks and blocking elements to the solution of major problems is chief method to analyze the problems and prospects of contemporary Russia.

According to Evans Jr. (2008) Vladislav Surkov asserted that the successful resolution of the tasks facing Russia would result in Russia becoming a "Sovereign Democracy" For Surkov, Sovereign Democracy as a concept is different from managed democracy where later is a political regime controlled from outside the nation. That it governs. He believes that this type of political regime could be manipulated by certain global forces.

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Then Russian Defence minister Sergei Ivanov explicitly defines the term "Sovereign Democracy" as a concept which asserts the right of Russians to determine the direction of development of their own country while being protected from external pressures (Evans Jr 2008). Surkov makes it clear that the principal features of sovereign democracy in Russia will not defer from democracy in the west but in building democracy, a country's own culture and the pace of implementing new reforms might vary with the countries (Evans Jr. 2008). Some analysts have the view that there was a need of Russia's own version of democracy. Chadev (2005) claims that the idea of a "global democratic revolution" had became pretext for the 'liquidation of sovereignity'.

Thus, it implies that the concept of sovereign democracy came in response of Russian leadership's threat perception emanating from western nation's attempt to establish universal standards from democracy especially in non-western countries. Hence, it can be said that the introduction of the concept of sovereign democracy was also an integral part of the increasingly open opposition of Russian leadership to the trend of America's hegemonic superpower Dom. Another factor was the uncomfortability of Russians with the west-assisted democratization process in Georgia first in 2003 and in Ukraine in 2004 after the toppling's of the respective regimes.(Evans Jr. 2008) In other words, Russians were not happy with the way West-European powers led the democratization process in Ukraine and Georgia. They viewed it not only a looming threat over the other nation's sovereignty but also a manifestation of western nation's ever increasing sphere of dominance in non-western world.

However this does not mean that everyone was supportive of this concept of democracy. Dmitry Medvedev echoed his skepticism about the values of this concept mentioning that though sovereignty and democracy both are important for a country but they belong to separate categories in the political sphere and they should not be allowed to suppress each other. The draft of the party program of United Russia published in early October 2006 was equipped with the term "Sovereign Democracy". (Party Program 2006). This also substantiates the much noticed claim that, this is only Putin who is decisive in drafting United Russia Party program and party platform as it was seen that Putin had earlier stressed over the need of Russia's own distinctive form of government (Evans Jr. 2008). Hence, in sum, Putin's idea and 'Sovereign Democracy' both suggested that Russia does commit for the democracy but only on

his own terms.

Putin repeatedly emphasized over the urgent necessity of strengthening the Russian state. He maintains that it is not possible to meet the pressing challenges before the country. This is because; Putin believes that basic cause of all Russia's great problem is the "weakness of state institutions" (Evans Jr. 2008).

One of the principal goals of the Putin is bring Russia back to world's great power states (Putin's Plan 2007). In February 2006, Vladislav Surkov, Putin's deputy chief of staff and chief political strategist delivered an extensive speech at United Russia seminar. For the first time he outlined the underlying ideology, goals and aspirations of the Russian federations largest political party (Cohen 2006).

His speech was a ubiquitous blend of democratic and market rhetoric with deliberate actions of power centralization and ideological and economic nationalism bordering on protectionism (Cohen 2006). Interestingly the language of the speech and timing of its delivery was woven in such a manner to make Russia aspire for single-party rule, energy super power status and geopolitical conflicts and alliances. This was cleverly designed, as Cohen believes, to legitimize the then prevailing social, political and economic realities. This is why Cohen (2006) terms the "single party rule" in Russia as a 'democratic deficit'. In 2006 United Russia had an estimated 1, 00,000 members (Cohen 2006). At this juncture no opposition group in Russia is capable enough to contain his victory. At present the majority of United Russia popular support is derived from the popularity and charisma of president Putin, whose approval ratings fluctuate between 65 percent and 75 percent (Cohen 2006).

Surkov stressed in his speech that the nationalization of strategic resources will pave the way for redistributing wealth among Russian population. Cohen (2006) explains that the key to Russia's future is to achieve energy superpower status under the leadership of United Russia. Hence anyone who would attempt to thwart Russia's hope-oligarchs, opposition groups, terrorists, foreign powers and so on- is an enemy of the country. Thus this particular strategy brought many into party's fold as they too believed that these aforementioned groups are opposing United Russia's grand strategy just for their own vested interest (Cohen 2006). This document also identified Russia's goal in both domestic and foreign policy.

Party Program

Hofmeister and Grabow (2011) argue that a party should educate and aware the electorates about their views on all relevant issue including policies of government. To serve this purpose, political parties formulate their party-program. In this document party reflect their views on almost all contemporary issues. Besides, it proposes their stand on domestic and foreign policy, socio-economic policies and so-on. Through this they express their fundamental position on all issue which are revised through drafting subsequent party-programs according to desirable circumstances. Thus, the party manifesto contains all the above mentioned elements (Hofmeister and Grabow 2011).

A political party articulate its ideological preferences through formation of various party programs. The basic party program signifies its identity of the party by providing a general introduction to the election to the guiding principle and ideology of the party. The party program extensively illustrates the political ambition, basic values, demand and suggestion of political party (Hofmeister and Grabow 2011). It also makes clear what stand does party take on scores of issue by justifying the standby taken with making difference from others. Hence, a party should give much more importance to the charting out of basic party program as it works as a mirror of their identity. Therefore a much detailed discussion while preparation of party program. The more the number of participant will be the deliberation on party program will be more intense and detailed. Thus, in truth, will prove more attractive to convince they would be voters. A draft of party program is generally prepared and presented to expert committee which ultimately is being discussed among party-members. Then it is approved by a national party convention. Hence, a party–program has long-time character. Besides the general program, general parties do have special programs to define their political view with regard to specific policies.

Election program

Hofmeister and Grabow (2011) argue that it is a specific document which is designed for upcoming election containing attractive proposal and assurance with intention to garner large number of support from electorates. This is basically prepared to woo voters in large number. Thus it's like an appeal from voters to support the political party cover in large number to form the Government and after coming into power they will translate all the promises into policy decisions. Sometime it's popularly referred as 'party-manifesto' or 'election manifesto'. This has to be written prior to every election. Therefore it's the most dynamic party document which keeps changing election-to-election. Hence, its life span is just till the completion of the election. However, no party is legally bound to fulfil all the promises made through the election manifesto. But they are morally responsible to do so, otherwise they will be in precarious situation while facing the same electorate in the next elections. Thus, this is the element of moral commitment which confers peculiar position to 'electoral program' among all other party documents. Usually it is prepared by taking into account all these factors like prevailing socio-political scenario, mood of the electorates. Opposition parties strategy, populist demand and so forth. The role of leading party candidate facing that election along with other expertise instrument is preparing the electoral program of the party. Since important document revels the intention and willing to formulate policy decision relevant for the masses therefore, its election must be given almost importance. Besides, it must be explicit in articulation so that it could be easy for electorates to understand the substance of election manifesto. Last but not the least, is its dissemination to the interior level of electoral constituencies. It must be properly advertised as free of cost or with negligible price to ensure it reach to every electorate.

The party Congress of United Russia adopted the election program of the Party - "Putin's Plan - a worthy future of a great country" in 2007 (Election Program 2007). This document is an amalgamation of ideas and priorities enumerated to move further in area of development for the next four years (United Russia Party website). Putin's Plan outlines some of the objectives for United Russia in upcoming four years. First, It would strive towards further development of Russia as a unique civilization by working tirelessly to protect the common cultural space, language and historical tradition of Russia .Second, It will work for enhancement of economic competitiveness of the Russian economy through access to innovative

development, support of science, infrastructure development, increasing investment primarily in high technology whereby the industrial sector will be the major engine of growth the engines of economic growth. Third, it will work relentlessly to provide a new quality of life with the continued implementation of priority national projects. Party will seek further substantial increase in wages, pensions and scholarships to help citizens in solving the housing problem so that people would enjoy a descent life. Fourth, party will seek tremendous support of civil society thereby promoting social mobility and activity by promoting community initiatives. Fifth, it would work to strengthen the sovereignty of Russia by cementing country's defence power to ultimately get an established place in multi polar world (Putin's Plan 2007).

9th Congress of the Party was held on April 14-15, 2008 in Moscow. The congress was held in the period when the results of the federal election campaign of 2007-2008 to ensure the continuity and stability of the current policy of socio-economic development. The most important goals of this stage was to prepare the population of Russian Federation to get ready for implementing certain socio-economic goal until the unveiling the "Strategy 2020" and the modernization of "United Russia". A new version of Party program was launched with new format in 9th Congress of the "United Russia". Its opening on April 14, 2008 was preceded by a forum "Strategy 2020", which was attended by 609 prominent representatives of scientific and expert community, economists, political scientists, representatives of key social groups, institutions and civil society organizations, regardless of their party affiliation.

Following a discussion of the results of the Forum "Strategy 2020", Congress decided to establish it as a permanent feature. It was also agreed that suggestions and recommendations of the Forum must be considered while formulating and implementing the party's strategy of socio-economic development of Russia until 2020. The document outlines priorities in terms of technological development, modernization of the political system, strengthen judiciary and to fight against corruption. It also identifies five strategic vectors of economic modernization, leading countries in production, energy and transportation. It also believes that nuclear technology is very essential for the country while improved information technology

will have major impact on supercomputers, ground and space infrastructure transmitting all kinds of information (Party Program 2008).

Strategy of the Party

Alexandrova (2012) sheds light over party's strategy stating that the party's strategy is based on the modernization of the economy, on uprooting corruption and strengthening the judicial system, on the maintenance of international and inter-religious peace, and on the further development of the country's political system. It is also going to take care of both internal and external security of the country and would work on an "independent, sensible foreign policy" in near future.

Apart from this, party has also devised many other strategies to connect with the large population of Russia. United Russia decided to launch 'party projects' in 2006. This was an attempt to reach the population of Russia through certain constructive works (United Russia Party Website). Party defines it as a key element of work. It claims that they originate where the situation calls for specific actions, systematic approach and focus on results. Party projects develop effective technological solutions to the most pressing problems and needs of society (United Russia Party website). United Russia claims a total of 46 projects including 26 related to 'social sector' and 15 of 'infrastructure sector'. Party emphasizes that the objective of the social projects is to humanize the social environment-by addressing the issue of culture, development, volunteerism, family problem, childhood education and promoting innovation, modernization of the economy and strengthening the social infrastructure of the country (United Russia Party website). Party stresses that central philosophy of his party projects is the man with his interests, problems, aspirations and hopes. Hence, implementation of projects have not only brought the positive changes in the lives of people but also immensely contributed to the development of social infrastructure and strengthened the civil society in Russia (United Russia Party website).Thus, in sum, it can be concluded that the concept of party project formulated and implemented by Russia is a unique innovation in the history of political parties across the globe. Hence, this concept not only confers a peculiar place to United Russia among its rival but also enhances the chances of party's electoral feat.

Party's website claims that United Russia set itself the ambitious goal of competitiveness, not only within the country but also abroad. Creating a modern

party, in their work the best international practices, requires constant expansion and deepening of international cooperation. In 2004-2008, the Party of signed agreements with 13 parties from Japan, China, Mongolia, CIS and Latin America to serve the above mentioned purpose (United Russia Party website). Presently, United Russia is a member of: the International Conference of Asian Political Parties (ICAPP).

Above all, at the ninth party congress, it was decided to intensify inner debate at intra-party level on the basis of the three clubs of United Russia – "Centre for Social-Conservative Policy," "liberal-conservative political action club", and "state-patriotic club'' in order to create more opportunities for creative self-realization of each member of the Party (United Russia Party Website). Thus, in 2008, three clubs namely social-conservative club, liberal-conservative club and state-patriotic club was established within the United Russia Party structure. Originally, they were intended to help government officials in developing strategies to implement the government's ambitious program "Strategy 2020". However, after the close examination of their working mechanism, Kunkler (2010) suggests that they also may function as an ideology incubator for the larger party and as a safety valve for internal party dissent.

Chapter 4:

Social and Electoral base of United Russia Party

BACKGROUND

Measurement of the strength of a party needs a standard of measurement. Generally, three different yardsticks are being used for this purpose. Firstly, to ascertain the total number of primary membership of particular political party. Secondly, to get a clear picture of how many voters vote regularly for the political party. Thirdly, number of parliamentary seats being won by a political party. However to use all the three criterion all together would not gives us true picture but collectively can give us proper insight about the strength of a political party (Sartori 1976). A political party constantly works among the electorates to convert their potential social and electoral base into voting strength.

Which Political Party Has Recently Made a Good, Positive Impression on You?

|	Share of group	United Russia	Just Russia	LDPR	KPRF	Youth Movement "Nashi"	Agrarian Party	Yabloko	Union of Right Forces	Party of Russia's Rebirth	Russian National Unity (RNE)	People's Party of Russia	National Bolshevist Party	other party	none of the aforementioned parties	no answer
All respondents	100	23	6	6	5	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	40	23
Men	47	22	6	6	7	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	41	20
Women	53	25	6	5	4	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	38	26
Age 18 to 35	36	26	3	2	5	3	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	40	25
Age 36 to 54	37	25	5	6	7	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	41	20
Age 55 and above	27	18	11	11	3	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	37	25
No secondary school	14	19	3	11	4	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	34	33
Secondary school	35	24	5	4	6	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	38	27
Vocational school	33	23	6	6	6	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	43	20
University	17	27	10	5	3	3	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	42	15
Income up to 2,000 rubles	19	28	4	8	7	2	3	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	31	24
Income 2,001 - 3,999 rubles	33	21	9	7	3	1	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	42	22
Income over 4,000 rubles	24	22	7	4	6	2	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	44	20

Source: Russian Analytical Digest, 17th April 2007

SOCIAL BASE OF UNITED RUSSIA PARTY

Sandeep Shastri (2003) argues that support bases of political parties in a democratic political system chiefly consist scores of socio-cultural and economic indicators namely Gender voting behaviour, urban support base, rural support base, educational levels of voters, occupational group, religion, economic class and so on. The Russian society too is distributed along those cleavages as we have already discussed in chapter 2 of this present work. The opinion of different socio-economic groups matters the most while analysing the social and electoral base of any political party. Hence, United Russia cannot be the exception of this fact.

## Which Political Group Has Made a Good , Positive Impression on You Recently? (April 2007)

Answers According to Sex
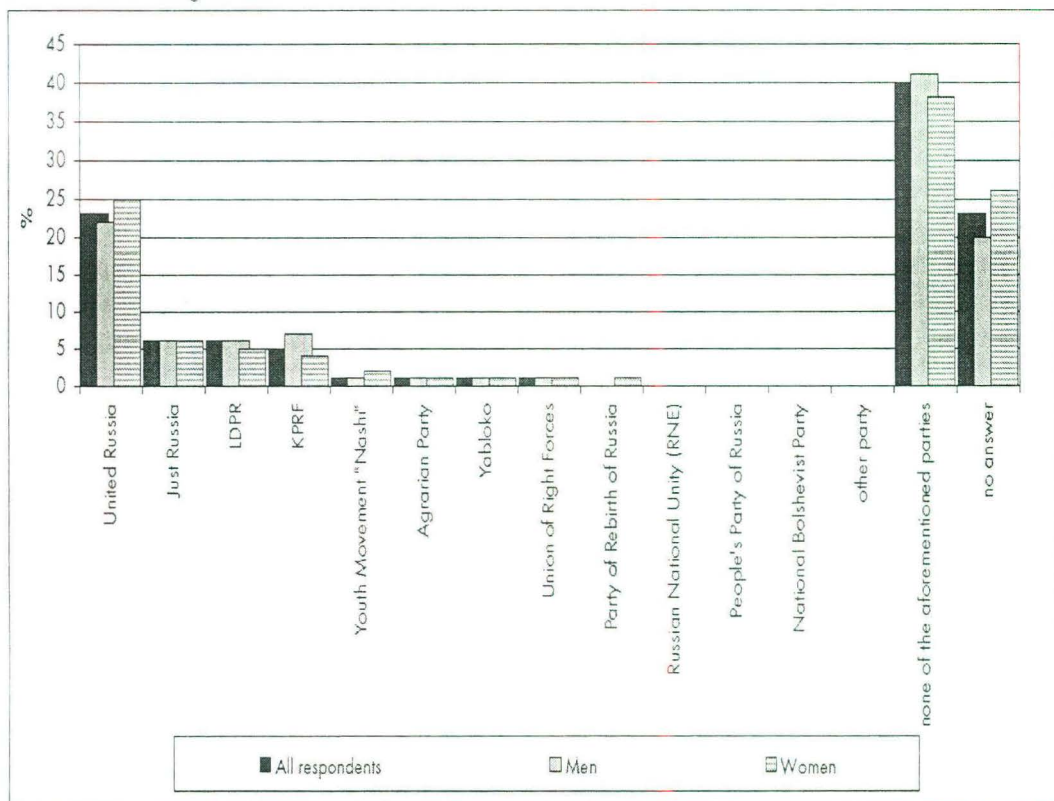
Source: Opinion poll by the public opinion foundation (FOM) on 12th april 2007
http://bd.fom.ru/report/map/projects/dominant/dom0725/domt0715_1/d071501

According to the above mentioned table one can argue that Russian women's top choice is United Russia when it comes to express a liking for any political party. The aforementioned data suggests that 30 percent of the respondent liked United Russia party as a party which makes positive impression on the voters. However, men lagged behind with women as only 23 percent of them expressed their liking for the party.

Answers According to Age Cohort
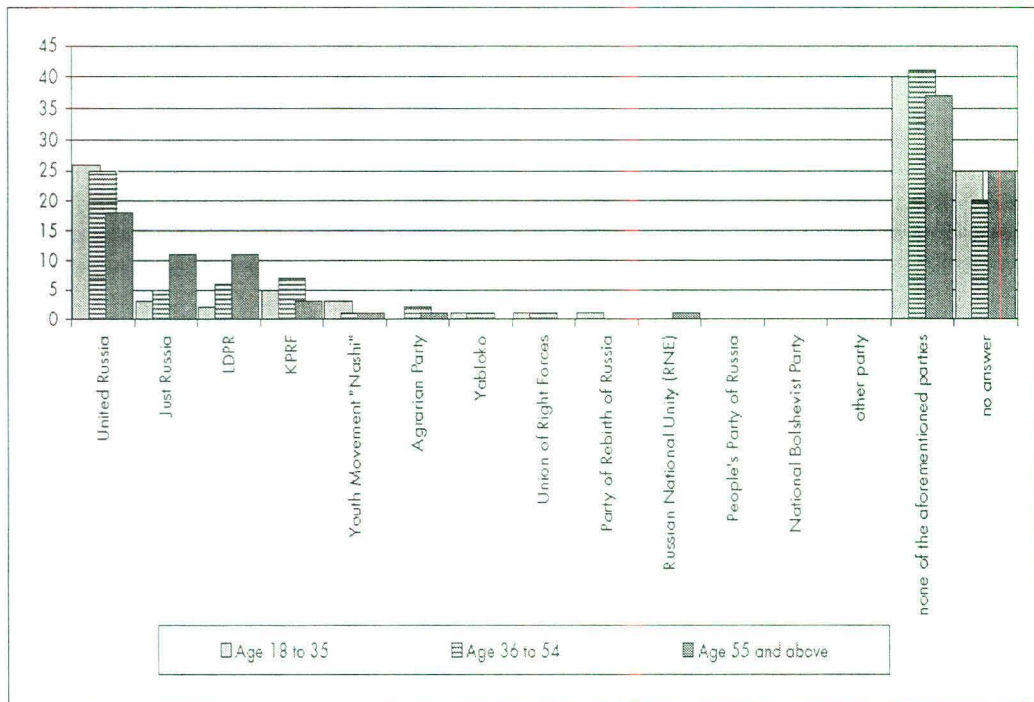
Source: Opinion poll by the public opinion foundation (FOM) on 12th april 2007
http://bd.fom.ru/report/map/projects/dominant/dom0725/domt0715_1/d071501

The aforementioned table demonstrates the age-wise political preference of Russian population. After examining this, one can argue that around 18 percent respondent in 55 years and above age group express their support for United Russia party while 24 percent respondent supports this party in 36-54 years age group. The youths aged of 18-35 are the biggest supporter of party as the highest 25 percent respondent from this category turned up the party supporter.

Answers According to Level of Income

Legend: □ Income up to 2,000 rubles ■ Income 2,001 - 3,999 rubles ⊞ Income over 4,000 rubles

Categories (x-axis): United Russia, Just Russia, LDPR, KPRF, Youth Movement "Nashi", Agrarian Party, Yabloko, Union of Right Forces, Party of Rebirth of Russia, Russian National Unity (RNE), People's Party of Russia, National Bolshevist Party, other party, none of the aforementioned parties, no answer

Answers According to Type of Place of Residence

Legend: ■ Moscow □ Megapolis ⊞ Large town ⊡ Small town ▨ Village

Categories (x-axis): United Russia, Just Russia, LDPR, KPRF, Youth Movement "Nashi", Agrarian Party, Yabloko, Union of Right Forces, Party of Rebirth of Russia, Russian National Unity (RNE), People's Party of Russia, National Bolshevist Party, other party, none of the aforementioned parties, no answer
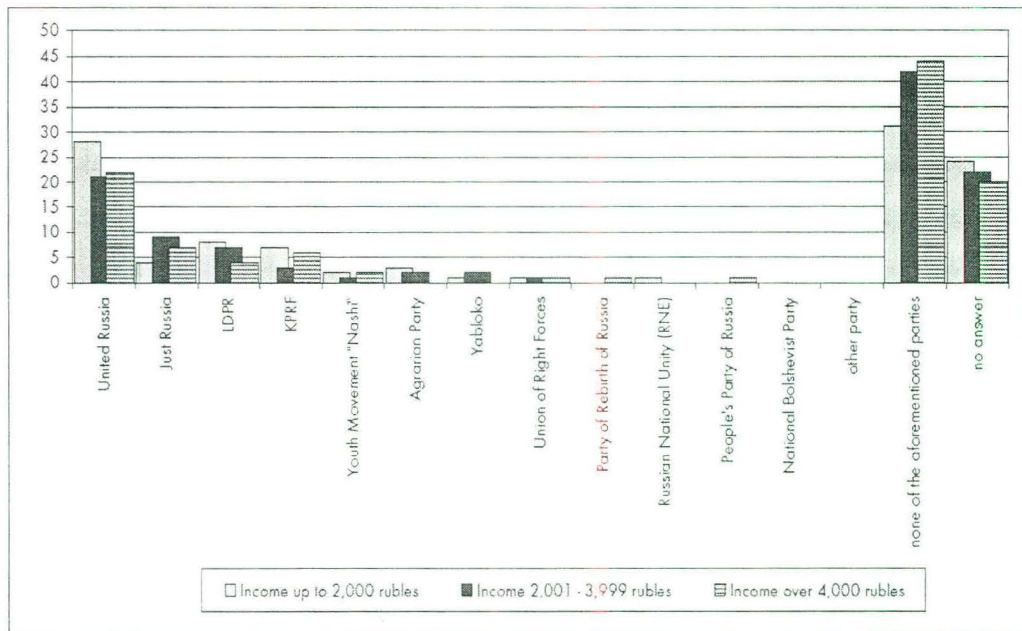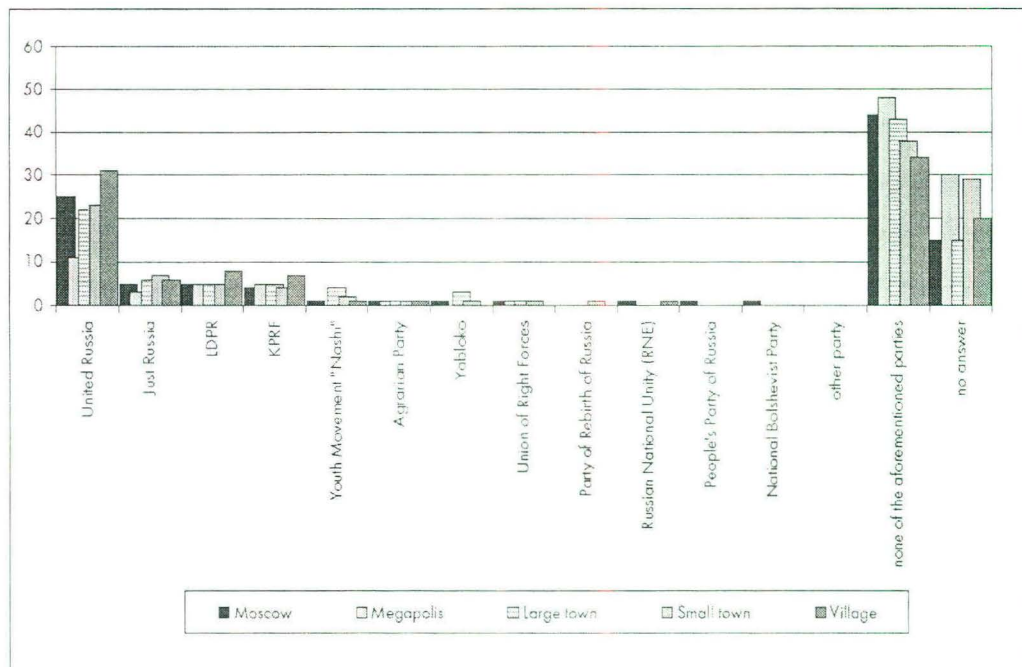
Source: Opinion poll by the public opinion foundation (FOM) on 12th april 2007

http://bd.fom.ru/report/map/projects/dominant/dom0725/domt0715_1/d071501

The above mentioned table shows the United Russia party's support basis among different income groups. It indicates that it has strong grip over the lower and upper
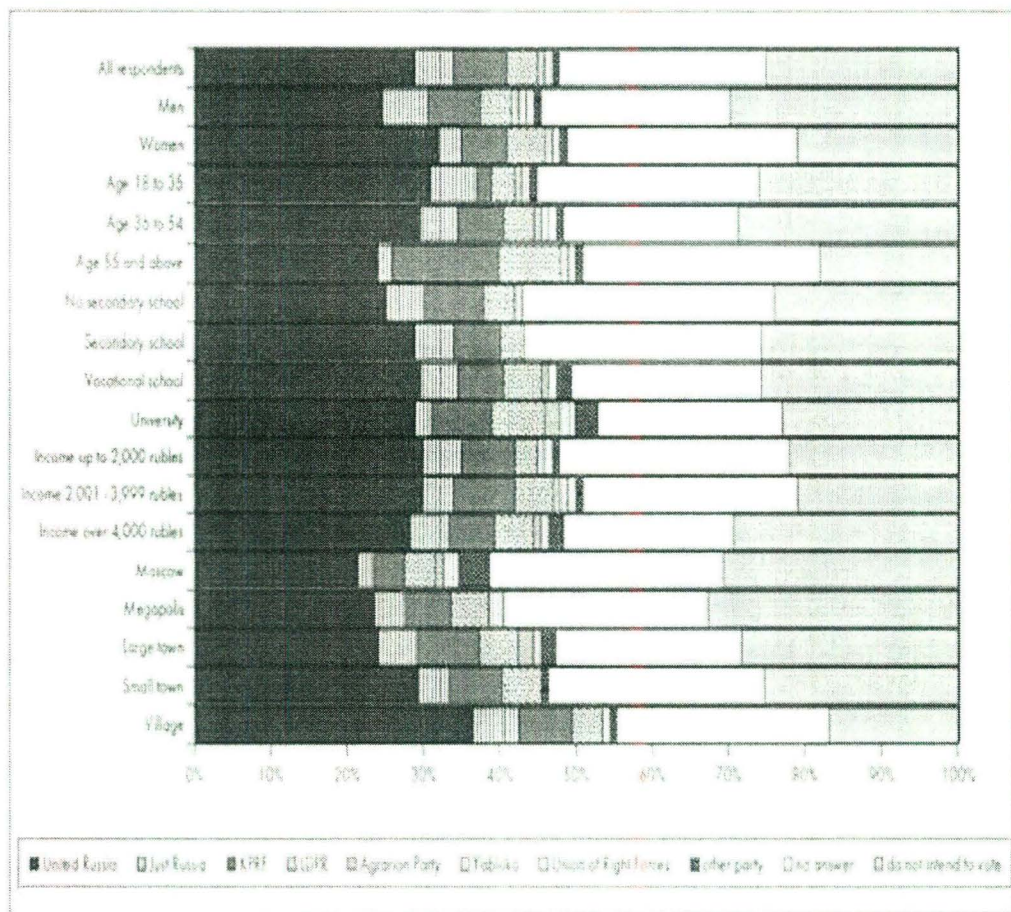
strata of middle class in Russia. Respondents from lower middle class scored high with 27 percent (approx) in comparison to their upper middle class counterpart. On the basis of residence, the respondents from country-side and villages turned up the biggest supporter of United Russia party followed by the residents of capital Moscow. People from small towns, large town and mega-polis too expressed their support for the party in their respective strength. Hence, it becomes clear that party has strong hold in the countryside and the capital itself. However it is also a dominant group in other regions of Russia.

In the case of Russia, the role of middle class is very significant to determine social and electoral bases of a political party. However, it has been tough always to determine the actual basis to define middle class in Russia (Ovcharova 2012).On the basis of economic criteria , the middle class constituted the 20 percent of Russian society in early 2000s and remained constant till the 2007.In other words it can be said that middle class in Russia did not grow in size. She further assures that concentration of wealth occurred into few hands among middle class segment.

She adds that in contrary to the late 1990s early 2000s saw more bureaucrats but fewer business class people adding segment of Russian society. Thus, it can be assured that only composition of the middle class in Russia changed but not its size (Ovcharova 2012). Moreover, the Russian middle class is embedded with the Russian economic and political system.

She argues that since the size of middle class in Russia did not increased in the early 2000s therefore it has relatively less influenced over the Russian politics (Ovcharova 2012). The table below shows in an explicit manner that women constitute the largest share among United Russia supporters with 30 percent share followed by men with 23 percent (approx.) in individual category. The data also shows that party voters are largely concentrated around small towns and villages of Russia.

Source: Russian Analytical Digest, No.19, 17th April 2007

Social base of United Russia party: Gender Perspective

In 2007 parliamentary election "Fair Russia" led the group of parties giving women more opportunities to become Duma legislators. On the other hand Liberal Democratic Party of Russia enlisted only 14 percent women among its candidates list. United Russia prefer only 16 percent women of its total candidates lists. However, this figure was almost doubled in comparison to the 2003 election when it favoured only 8 percent women on party ticket.

By the 2003, "United Russia" became the leader in bringing largest number of female deputies to the parliament (Aivazova 2008).

She argues that the ruling party has catered the need of gender-sensitivity in electoral representation. She illustrates that first of all the ruling party raised the number of

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Source: Russian Analytical Digest, No.19, 17th April 2007

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women-deputies. Second, it ensured gender parity at least in one but significant part of their list, namely, among members of the under 30 age group (Aivazova 2008).

In march 2007 parliamentary election, united Russia received 64.3 percent of votes obtaining constitutional majority in the parliament. Among the party deputies, 41women got elected with a little over 9 percent of total party deputies.

As far as addressing gender related issues are concern, Putin himself given proper attention. In 2000, Putin highlighted the fact that Russians should respect moral principles which they learn in families (Aivazova 2008).

On the other hand, the chapter "on our priorities" considered "overcoming poverty" as a major task for the ruling party. Putin in his electoral manifesto promised the poor to pay pensions on time and to provide assistance to the target persons. Poor in Russia include old age people, pensioners where 2/3 of them are women. Putin continued with this policy in his subsequent terms with some minor changes. United Russia party's presidential candidate in 2008, Dmitry Medvedev came up with his awareness programme called "women's agenda". With this two among four national projects on education and on health-care targeting women were commenced.

Additionally, the agenda focussed on humanitarian issues that women are still traditionally responsible for. Hence, children are up brining, education and health projection, care of senior citizens and most household duties.

Medvedev also assured that state would formulate different policies to cater the needs of wives, mothers and workers. He opines that Russsian women face new realties in the labour market which mostly disseminates from privatization and therefore, aggravate their situation.

In March 2, 2008, Medvedev became Russia's president after clinching 70.28 percent of votes in the presidential elections.

Aivazova (2008) argues that gender peculiarities of voting behaviour are a new issue in Russia. She analysis the 2007 parliamentary elections and states that higher level of female voting activity have been the greatest example of gender disparity in Russian voters behaviour.

Referring to a survey data, she claims that 33 percent of men voter hand voted for putin led united Russia out of total 46 percent men voters while 48 percent of women voters voted for the party out of 54 percent of female voters who turned up to the poll.

In 2008 presidential election, 73 percent of women out numbered 65 percent men who queued up for the polls. In 2004, women voter's turnout was 69 percent in comparison to 64 percent of men. Earlier in 2008, women's turnout was 72 percent against the 66 percent of male went to poll.

Dmitry medvedev's success was largely based on the women voters turnout of 53 percent out of total 55 percent female who turned up to the poll booths. On the other hand, only 41 percent of male voters supported Medvedev out of total 47 percent of males turned up for voting.

ELECTORAL BASE OF UNITED RUSSIA PARTY

For many of the Russians, United Russia is the primary mechanism for elite circulation and career advancement within the political system. It has been evident that 65 out of total 83 regional executives ran on the party ticket in the 2007 Duma elections (Roberts 2012). Hence, it implies that united Russia has successfully widened its base among the regional elites. It is true that regional elites themselves were seeking a launching platform which could provide them a stable and somewhat dominant position. Therefore, United Russia emerged as their most favourable choice. United Russia and the elites, both were the beneficial of this holy alignment. It is worth mentioned that party not only broadened its social and electoral base penetrating to the regions of Russia but also its leadership, especially Putin, used it as a better source of legitimacy among the electorates. Besides, elites were not only obtained their desired place in power hierarchy successfully but also prepared the ground for their further career advancement (Roberts 2012).

In 2001, the centrist parties were having major share in voting preference among all chief social classes viz. salariat, routine non-manual, petty bourgeoisie, working class in the society of Russia (Evans and Whitefield 2006.) The author duo through their data analysis claimed that the 55 percent respondents from Salariat claims preference to vote for centrist parties while 56.2 percent people from the routine non-manual

class prefer the centrists.Centrists parties like unity and others were politically preferred by 44.2 percent respondents while from petty bourgeoisie 50.8 percent of working class respondent prefer to vote for above mentioned group of parties in election. Overall 52.3 percent of voters politically prefer centrist parties to vote among total number of 1787 voters (Evans and Whitefield 2006). They also claim that 4.8 percent, 11.9 percent, 32.0 percent, 7.1 percent, 55.0 percent people belonging to salariat class prefer to align with centrist parties in the elections of 1993, 1995, 1996, 1998 and 2001 respectively.

Thus, their analysis show except the year 1998 year there was increasing trend in the vote share of candidates of centrist parties. However, routine non-manual class of Russia preferred to these parties in terms of 3.9 percent, 14 percent, 30.0 percent, 4.1 percent and 56.2 percent in the election years respectively. (Evans and Whitefield 2006.) Aforementioned five election year petty – bourgeoisie as a class preferred centrists in terms of 3.6 percent, 11.1 percent, 35.0 percent, 10.2 percent, 44.2 percent in the election year of 1993, 1995, 1996, 1998 and 2001 respectively .

People from the working classes were 3.6 percent, 11.6 percent, 23.8 percent, 8.4 percent, 150.8 percent in terms of their voting preference to centrist party in the election years respectively as mentioned above (Evans and Whitefield 2006). In sum, after the careful analysis of the authors' data it becomes explicitly clear that by the 2001, centrists were the most politically preferred from where almost 50 percent of the people were giving its preference to vote the centrists in post- Soviet Russia.

Nevertheless, this cycle of preferential voting in favour of centrist group continued till the date. However, the players like Unity and others have changed now. With the phenomenal success of United Russia party, one can conclude that as a centrist party it has sustained the trend in party system of Russia. More importantly, the emergence of United Russia as a strong party and consolidation of the party. In the decade of 2001-2011 suggests that the intra-sectoral share of voting preference is highly inclined to the united Russia among all centrist parties in post-communist Russia. (Evans and Whitefield 2006). This perhaps explains the possible reason behind united Russia's status of dominant party of power.

The huge surge in support for Unity and Putin in the elections of 1999 and 2000 respectively manifested the successful outcome of the "catchall strategy" of Putin's

presidential ambitions. He did not prefer to rally behind the class appeal to woo the Russians to accomplish his electoral feat (Rose and Munro 2002). This is perhaps because there was no class–vote relationship in early years of post–Soviet Russia as the required sociological or political conditions for its emergence do not exist post-communist society (Evans and Whitefield 2006.) Putin's catch-all appeal has encompassed various class bases to vote for their choices. Kin distinction within class strength. Firstly, professional and managerial class referred popularly as Salariat Secondly, routine non- manual workers. Thirdly, self employed and shall employers called the petty bourgeoisie. Fourthly, skilled, semi and unskilled, managerial workers called the working class.

According to a survey conducted after the December 2003 parliamentary elections, party competition in Russia has concentrated around two major parties where preferences of voters are largely determined by assessments of economic performance, general evaluation of the incumbent president and opinion on relevant contemporary issues (Colton and Hale 2005). Besides, personalities of party leaders are decreasingly less considered while voting for a particular party. Colton and Hale (2005) believe that these developments suggest a healthy development of Russian party system driven by united Russia.

Keynev (2012) claims that by the 1993 Russia has adopted super presidential political system as it became clear when Russian president started to appoint majority of government official and important bureaucrats. Later, it was extended to the regional governors too in 2005.

Keynev (2012) argues that a regulating law in dramatically increased the states power to control the balance sheet of political parties. From January 2009 onwards every party receiving more than 3 percent of vote were entitled to get 20 Rouble annually for each vote. Earlier they were receiving only five Rouble per vote. If they satisfied the aforementioned conditions. Additionally, a party was entitled to get one time offer of 20 Rouble per vote . If its candidates obtain more than 3 percent percent of vote in presidential election. Consequently, these all provision immensely benefited the United Russia party in 2007 parliamentary election as it succeeded in gathering 65 percent of the votes. Besides, weaker parties were burdened with additional monetary pressure with the legislative changes. This resulted in

dissolution of many parties due to bankruptcy. Now parties getting less than 3 percent of vote would not have free access to mass media in the next election campaign . Aivazova (2008) argues that gender peculiarities of voting behaviour are a new issue in Russia. She analyses the 2007 parliamentary elections and states that higher level of female voting activity have been the greatest example of gender disparity in Russian voter's behaviour. Referring to a survey data, she claims that 33 percent of men voter had voted for Putin led United Russia out of total 46 percent men voters while 48 percent of women voters voted for the party out of 54 percent of female voters who turned up to the poll. The following table reflects the mood of the votes prior to the presidential election of 2008.

"For Which of the Following Political Parties Would You Vote If Elections Were to Take Place Next Sunday?" (April 2007)
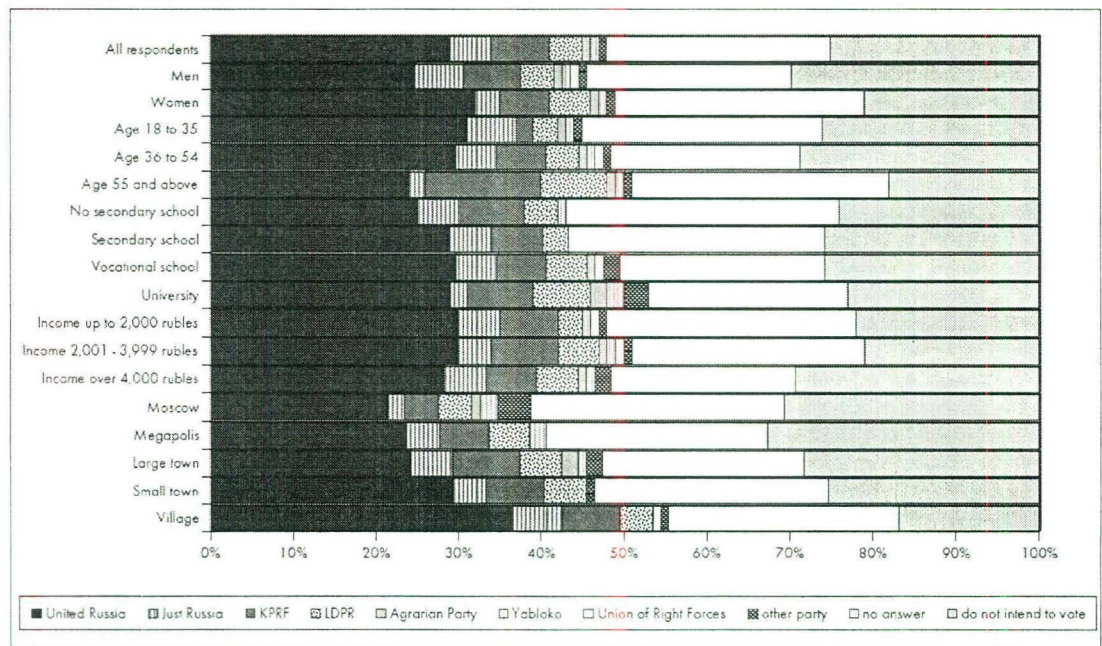
In 2008 presidential election, 73 percent of women out numbered 65 percent men who queued up for the polls. In 2004, women voter's turnout was 69 percent in comparison to 64 percent of men. Earlier in 2008, women's turnout was 72 percent against the 66 percent of their male counterparts.

Dmitry Medvedev's success was largely based on the women voters turnout of 53 percent out of total 55 percent female poll on the other hand , only 41 percent of male voters supported Medvedev out of total 47 percent of poll from males.

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After close scrutiny of Russian political parties, Keynev (2012) concludes that there is high degree of instability and vagueness in their political programmes. He argues that media coined the terms systemic and non-systemic to differentiate between parties which are registered , therefore, recognized by the state and those who have not been recognized by the regime as " opposition party". For instance, CPRF and a Just Russia are systematic opposition parties since they have been conferred the status of opposition party by the state however, 'PARNAS' i.e. The peoples freedom movement is not a recognized party in Russia as its application for the registration has been rejected by the authority(keynev 2012) .

This opposition party emerged at the Russian political scene in december 2010 with the merger of four different political movements .

Putin's two elections concentrated must on his hard-earned reputation as a competent and decisive leader who can lead the country to high in the sky from the front. During elections in 2000 he capitalised the support of officeholders at all level, a media campaign encashing 'presidential' image to the electorates and the voters' idea of benign regime. In other word, voters were no in favour of change as they believe that it will make their life more miserable. Therefore, they overwhelmingly supported new face as Putin .

The Kremlin's use of persuasion-coverage of the elections and Putin's ever increasing genuine popularity collectively ensured the landslide victory or UR. Putin was re-elected for presidential post in 2004 with thumping with over 71 percent of the vote (Remington 2012). Nothing much changed in 2008 presidential elections except the candidate Medvedev who recorded his victory with huge margin of 70 percent vote rather clinched more than a 2:1 margin than his three rivals combined. Putin's support for Medvedev coupled with the huge administrative interference in the electoral process by the Kremlin paved the way for Medvedev to succeed Putin as the president of Russian federation (Remington 2012). The success of United Russia in Regions of the country too should be taken into account while assessing the party's performance.

The table explicitly shows that the party has outnumbered its rivals with huge margin.

Table: March 2007 Regional Assembly Elections

Party	Average Vote (Party List)	Number of Regions Competing	Number of Regions Winning Seats
United Russia	44.05%	14	14
Communist Party	16.04%	14	14
Just Russia	15.53%	14	13
Liberal Democratic Party	9.62%	14	11
Union of Right Forces	7.14%	9	5

Source: Russian Analytical Digest, No.19, 17th April 2007

The potential voters of a political party have a soft corner regarding the party which they can express and share anywhere provided with the opportunity. The essence of different surveys and opinion polls lie in this fact. The table given below offers an tabular explanation about whom the voters would choose if elections happen. Majority of people went with the ruling United Russia party.

"For Which of the Following Political Parties Would You Vote If Elections Were to Take Place Next Sunday" (in percent) (April 2007)

	All respondents	Men	Women	Age 18 to 35	Age 36 to 54	Age 55 and above	No secondary school	Secondary school	Vocational school	University	Income up to 2,000 rubles	Income 2,001-3,999 rubles	Income over 4,000 rubles	Moscow	Megapolis	Large town	Small town	Village
Share of group	100	47	53	36	37	27	14	35	33	17	19	33	24	8	12	17	38	25
United Russia	29	25	32	31	30	24	25	28	30	29	30	30	28	21	24	24	29	37
KPRF	7	7	6	2	6	14	8	6	6	8	7	8	6	4	6	8	7	7
Just Russia	5	6	3	6	5	2	5	5	5	2	5	4	5	2	4	5	4	6
LDPR	4	4	5	3	4	8	4	3	5	7	3	5	5	4	5	5	5	4
Agrarian Party	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	2	0	1	1	1	0	2	0	0
Yabloko	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	2	1	1	1	2	2	1	0	0
Union of Right Forces	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
other party	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	2	3	1	1	2	4	0	2	1	1
do not intend to vote	25	30	21	26	29	18	24	25	26	23	22	21	29	30	33	28	25	17
no answer	27	25	30	29	23	31	33	30	25	24	30	28	22	30	27	24	28	28

Source: Opinion poll by the Public Opinion Foundation (FOM), http://bd.fom.ru/report/map/projects/comment/com... 12 April 2007
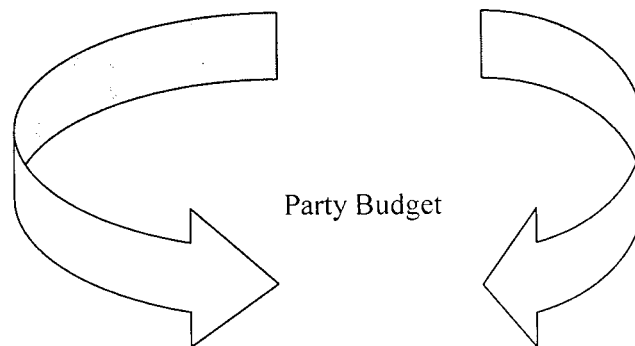
FINANCIAL BASE

Ware (1987) believes that managing of financial resources in an efficient manner is also a constituent element of success of a party. According to Ware (1987) there are six main sources of funds for party-related activities. Firstly, there are some individual candidates who are capable enough to meet their expenses while contesting elections. Hence, they do not withdraw anything or withdraw minimal amount form party fund. Thus, these type of candidates by bearing their expenses with their own not only eases the financial burden over limited resources of party but also leave ample amount to be attributed by party to Some needy candidates. It is an indirect source of Finance for party. Secondly, the oldest source of party-funding can be traced to the patron of the party. Both the old and the new patrons come forward to Fund party. It is an ever-expending list where each one is concerned either to preserve a special set of social relations or join politics as a hobby or vested interest . Thirdly, some active interest groups also provide fund to a   party driven by their own concerns to protect their specific economic or any other interest. Fourthly, a payment by public officials from their salaries into party Treasury is made on regular basis. This   type of funding is quite popular among present day "Green Parties" to finance their party activities. Here elected officials along with lower level of administrators associated with party. are required to pay a certain portion of their salary to the party. Fifth, Largest source of funding can be traced to membership fee collected on periodical basis from party 'membership dues'. However in the contemporary politics, the decline of party membership is a major concern for parties are diversifying on other sources of income too. Sixth, State funding is practiced in many countries (Ohman 2011) but in different forms. The biggest advantage of this mechanism is that it may free the parties from special and vested interest of the individual, Group or corporate financiers. According to Hofmeister and Grabow (2011) there are several means of income for a political party. Firstly, membership fee is the most popular source of income for a political party as it is an expression of affection to a party. The management and disbursal of party- membership fee must be transparent and accountable. Secondly, financial contributions of parliament members as party-cadre and regular donations by officials of party are significant source of income. Thirdly, revenues from capital investment can be most regular source of income. However, this is not so popular among modern political parties. Fourthly, Donations from various corners constitutes the substantial

share of party-funding. Fifthly, Political party can also borrow a loan to meet its regular or any other expenses. It could also need it for other developmental work. However, this kind of financial source could lead to indebtedness.

Fig 1: Resources for political party financing

Private Resources	State Resources
Membership fees. Contribution of Parliamentarians and other representatives of the party in public offices. Donations. Income from party's assets. Other sources of income (eg. Publication).	Direct financial contributions from the state. Reimbursement of electoral campaigning costs. Indirect financial contribution from the state. Exemption of taxes in cases of heritage or donations to te parties. Taxes revenue for party, fees and donations

Party Budget

Source – Adapted from Hofmeister and Grabow (2011)

Legislations on political parties have altered the landscape of financial base of political parties in Russia. Keynev (2012) argues that a regulating law in dramatically increased the states power to control the balance sheet of political parties. From January 2009 onwards every party receiving more than 3 percent of vote were intitled to get 20 rubble annually for each vote . earlier they were receiving only five rubble per vote. If they satisfied the aformention conditions. Additionally a party was entitled to get one time offer of 20 rubble per vote . If its candidates obtain more than 3 percent percent of vote in presidential election. Consequentially these all provision immensely benefited the united Russia party in 2007 parliamentary election as its

succeeded in gathering 65 percent of the votes . besides weaker parties were burdened with additional monetary pressure with the legislative changes .
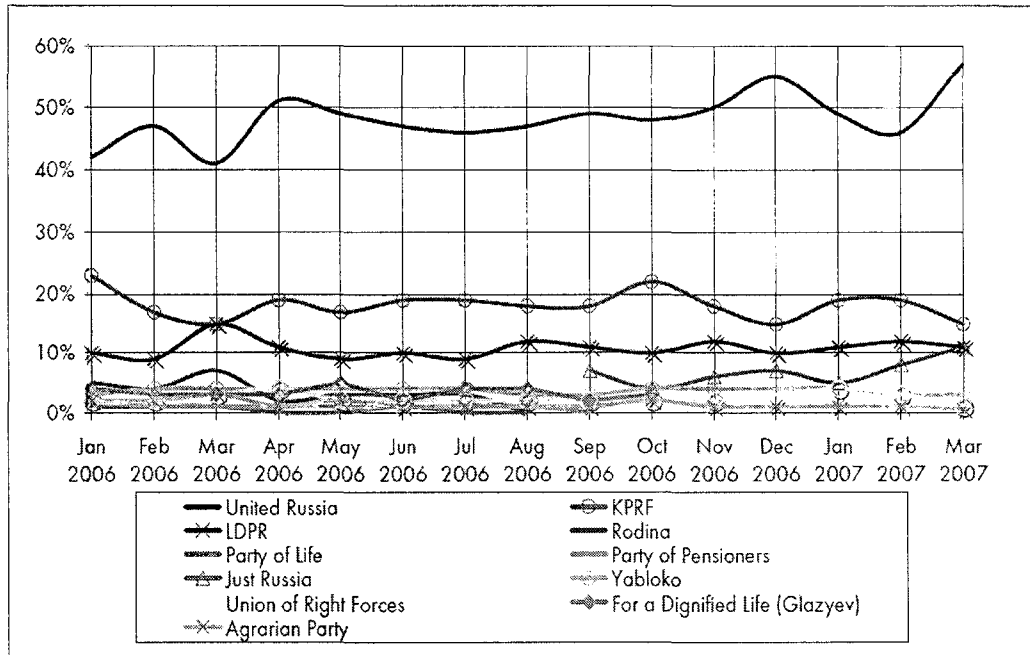
This resulted in dissolution of many parties due to bankruptcy. Now parties getting less than 3 percent of vote would not have free access to mass media in the next election compaign

UNITED RUSSIA PARTY: ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS

On the basis of our above discussion on social, electoral and financial bases of United Russia one can argue that this is the cumulative effect of its strong and potential bases that party is climbing the new ladders of success day by day.

Russian politics is heavily influenced by the regime itself therefore parties are a part of Putin's "managed democracy" to a large extent. If Russia seriously wants to develop a citizen-participant authentic party system than it has to do away with this 'managed democracy' like tendencies (White 2005). However with the advent of another category i.e. 'parties of power' has added another colour in its fold with united Russia as its most eligible representative. These categories can be clubbed under party families of Russia for the purpose of more detail examination (Remington 2012).With the establishment of United Russia's dominance in the 2000s Russia is again returning to a new form of single party rule (Remington 2012). Membership of United Russia significantly contributed to the phenomenal success of United Russia party. By the presidential election of 2000s, party claims to have two million members across Russia with an overseas increase of around 3, 00,000 members per year during the first six year of its existence (Roberts 2012). The enclosed table shows how greatly United Russia is favoured among the Russian electorates. After the close examination of the table one can infer that party ratings remain very high comparatively to it's counterparts. Moreover this has been not a temporary phenomena with a minor degree of change in the period of one year.

Party Ratings and Monthly Snapshots of Voter Preferences

60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%

Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar
2006 2006 2006 2006 2006 2006 2006 2006 2006 2006 2006 2006 2007 2007 2007

— United Russia   KPRF
✕ LDPR   — Rodina
Party of Life   Party of Pensioners
Just Russia   Yabloko
Union of Right Forces   For a Dignified Life (Glazyev)
✕ Agrarian Party

The party of power- united Russia managed to secure the greatest portion of the popular vote and thus achieved the constitutional majority in the state Duma. kunov *et. al* (2005) argue that there is a pattern of preference shifts in the Russian election electorates. Firstly, the pro-Putin United Russia did not receive those amount of votes in 2003 election which its predecessors (Unity and Fatherland) had received in the 1999 legislative elections. Secondly, there was lack of an explicit ideological dimension in United Russia's electoral base as it was supported by different types of voters from various parties. This particular diversified electoral base coupled with lack of an independent ideology questions the party's ability to retain a constitutional or simple majority in next Duma elections. Theoretically, the stability of any party system decreases with the increase in volatility of ideology preferences in the elections.

kunov *et. al* (2005) claim that Russian political system can't be termed as a stable and system with predictable voter preferences after 2003 parliamentary elections. However, then they attribute this transformation of electoral landscape to several

factors where all are emanating from one place i.e. the Kremlin. It was his own perestroika or 'vertical of power' which changed the rules of the game.

If parties cannot strongly define their electoral base it becomes increasingly difficult for them to carry forward societal preference onwards till it is get transformed into government decisions and policy. Kunov *et. al* (2005) claim that the party of power i.e. United Russia succeed in drawing support from entire political spectrum. The success of United Russia party lies on certain structural pillars namely role of leadership, weak opposition, the 'dominant party of power status' and 'authoritarian elections'. These all elements of United Russia's success will be discussed as follows.

Role of leadership cult

Remington (2012) argues that United Russia's success is totally dependent upon the durability of Putin's popularity and endurance of his power. Though it seems almost impossible now but if in future Putin is not able to come back than party will require a new leader in Kremlin. The success of United Russia party in December 2007 elections owes much to its association with Putin. However, Putin himself was powered by a rapid rate of economic development in Russia during his presidential rule (McAllister and white 2008).Hence, the weightage of putin's popularity is immense in United Russia's popularity which needs a closer scrutiny.

Sakwa (2012) argued that during Yeltsin's period the Russian politics was dis-institutionalised and was focused on conflict among elites and personalised leadership. This certainly prevented any democratic consolidation under Boris Yeltsin's leadership. Majority of his personnel policy was directed against individual and left him little time for development politics or the work for consolidation of the institutional framework. Thus, his regime was politically aimless. However, he was relatively tolerant of criticism including of media persons (Sakwa 2012)

Yeltsin-style of politics resulted in subordination of politics to certain transcendent goals, movement towards the market, stimulating bad governance on a score of systemic and procedural dimensions. This along with others significantly contributed

to the lack of coherence to his state craft. His presidency can be considered as deeply flawed but he cannot be termed a poor leader (Sakwa 2012).

Vladimir Putin challenged the political style of his predecessor-Yeltsin but not his political programme. Putin believed that democracy in post-Soviet Russia has been imposed from above which led to chaos and has to be overcome. Therefore, he stood for transformation of the internal dynamics of the system obtained as inheritance . He went for establishing new relationship between major interests and the regime and new rules of political behaviour among the elites (Sakwa 2012). Similarly, he changed the relationship between the party system and the leaders in parliament and outside . He forged a new relationship between regime leaders and the federal level by attacking the old system of fragmented regionalism based on adhoc personalised ties between governors and the central executive officials. Likewise, there was visible change in the relationship between business leader including the so called 'oligarchs' and the state authorities. Besides, the pattern of change was stark in the domain Putin attempted with major success to negotiate the conditions of Russia's membership of the communist of nations from western sphere (Sakwa 2012).

Putin was a classic anti-revolutionary, rejecting not only the foundations of the communist system in Russia but condemning the form of political behaviour associated with the communist project. Putin's leadership opted for a search for normality after it attempted to return to normalcy. Thus, he put an end to talk of transition as tried to normalise and stabilise the country (Sakwa 2012). His notion of normality was inspired with the spirit of de-politicisation along with keeping certain subjects beyond the sphere of political contestations. Though he condemned the 1990s but he took the remedial view of russian politics instead of dismissing democracy as damaging for Russia. This view of politics not only focused to overcome the occurrence of soviet and Yeltsinite government but also to re-establish new form of Russian uniqueness.

He went for re-legitimisation of state power. He also restablished the states prerogatives especially in relations with regional and big leaders . His regime witnessed the emergence of a type of state corporatist capitalism .He presided over eight years of continuous economic growth resulted in sharp rise in living standards wages and social benefits paid on time , and the proportion of the population living in poverty halved. However, his leadership failed to bring about some concrete changes

in Russian economic and society which could elsewhere long lasting prosperity, stability and self esteem (de vries and Shekshnia 2008)

His innovative policies and leadership style marked the designing of new era in Russian history. Putin's programme of normal   politics accompanied by attempts to rebuild the state, reflected the underlying values of the society, the aspirations of the political elite and his persistently high pull ratings suggest that it was perceived to correspond to the needs of the country (Sakwa 2012).

On 24th Sept 2011 Putin announced that he has planned to return for a third term in the presidential elections of a 4th march 2012. Thus, rather than competitive elections shaping the composition of parliament and the presidency, the administrative system would decide everything on behalf of the people. Hence, elections had become plebiscitary which only ratified decisions already made outside of the electoral process. Ryabov (2008) argues that 'Tandemocracy' is the best term to describe the evolving relationship between President Dmitry Medvedev and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. Thus, this kind of bad governance practices thwarted the process of consolidation of the constitutional process. Ultimately, the negative impact of bad governance undermined the qualities of statecraft which Putin desired for despite the relating high quality of leadership under his regime.

Sakwa (2012) argues that Medvedev in his first presidential term was constrained by social and political factors. Earlier Russian leader used to achieve power consolidation and policy innovation by defaming their predecessor, but for Medvedev this venue was closed. Since Putin retained the informal status of national leader therefore, the personality image of Medvedev as a leader never came to forefront. Thus, his persona was eclipsed by the deeds and an aura of Putin.

Medvedev pitched for a liberal programme for the modernisation of the country. He was in favour of need for the development of civic initiative and civil society from below. However, he was not in favour of modernisation from above rather he was inclined towards adopting the "path of confrontation" or the "path of cooperation" with the state as advocated by Putin for advancement of civil society in Russia. Sakwa (2012). Thus, he opposed a programme called programme of modernization from the middle. This particular programme was based on developing middle class by securing their property rights along with the independence of the judiciary and free but responsible public domain (Sakwa 2012).

Public announcement for his plan to return to the Kremlin as president of Russia brought disappointment for many. First, Medvedev himself was personally humiliated as he has been not trusted for other term without any specific reason. Second, people took their "castling move" more an insult of the electorates. Third, international observers were considering it as an irritant in consolidation of multi-party democracy in Russia. Hence, though Medvedev led the UR in parliamentary elections of December 2011 but people were not in mood of tolerating administration interference in elections. Thus, it provoked large number of protest gathering in Moscow against 'managed democracy' (Sakwa 2012). Thus, it becomes clear that Putin phenomena can play an instrumental role in the victory of candidates of United Russia. Hence, Remington (2012) rightly claims that United Russia needed Putin much more than Putin needed the party.

This relationship or equation between Putin and United Russia does not seems to change in near future as it is evident that Putin has a tight grip over United Russia

After the chaotic 1990s, Russians treasured the stability and increased living standards during Putin president. He became genuinely popular leader for the first time in post soviet history. People took pride in the resurgence of Russia and its global count and were prepared to write the story of authoritarian political system dominated by one man fondly called " national leader" i.e. Putin (Radyuhin 2012).

Weak opposition

The existence of an organized opposition is an essential feature of western democracy while its absence is a feature of eastern democracy. From the 18th century onwards the functions of the opposition were no longer separately organized; instead of creating within the state separate institutions in opposition to the true institutions of government, rivalry was established within the ranks of the latter. The same general aim was pursued by 'limiting power by power', by creating an opposition within the government instead of outside it (Duverger 1954).

Hofmeister and Grabow (2011) argues that functions of opposition parties is to criticise the government in a constructive way, control it through healthy debate and discussion, to come up with viable alternative to force people to vote them into power.

Theoretically, Russia's opposition liberals could come to power through elections or cooperating with the incumbent authorities. Orttung (2009) dwells upon the potential of liberal segment of the opposition in Russia. He argues that currently liberals have little leverage in the elite battles taking place at the top of Russian politics. Though the Yabloko party continues to exist under new leadership yet it has not found a strong place under contemporary conditions. Although the liberals have little chance of coming to power at the federal level today, they are building experience in campaigning and governing that could be useful if an opportunity opens in the future (Orttung 2009). Thus, he seems convinced present form of participation is definitely going to help the opposition for their strengthened position in future.

However, resentment built up gradually as corruption grew to unmanageable proportion coupled with bureaucratic hurdles. Long lasting red tapism, court serving the rich and the powerful and the economy remained critically dependent on the export of hydrocarbons and metals. Meanwhile people could not change the system through elections and the opposition parties were almost incompetent therefore mere existent on the political scene (Radyuhin 2012). He adds that the authorities have firmly put down attempts to set up new parties, denying them registration under various pretexts and narrowing businessmen who dared to support them. Colton and Hale (2005) argue that opposition parties appear to be either in decline or based on more ephemeral attachment and vague senses of parties competence on major issues. However, they argue that for these kinds of actions are deliberately done by kremlin. Besides, putin-supporters administrative officials have used control over television and law enforcement agencies to weaken the communist party and to boost the United Russia.

Russia's traditional liberal opposition of Yabloka and the Union of Right like opposition forces have played a little role in the 2007 state Duma elections. Wilson attributes this phenomenon to the fact that opposition in Russia has still not united them. They have not transcended their past identities and also continued with discredited figures (Wilson 2007).

Kremlin has set up its own opposition in just Russia in additional to its main party. The main task for the Kremlin is to preserve its resources and popularity in such a

political system where the opposition has not enough power to challenge the authority's agenda (Wilson 2007).

Dominant party of power

Herron (2009) argues that 'parties of power' are closely associated with presidential power in Russia. Their closeness and intimate relationship with the executive power brought for them sufficient and fine access to material, personal and financial resources hardly available to other groups.

The opposition parties after accuses there parties of using "administrative resources" for their nefarious design and purposes. A party of power could have good access to administrative resources like intensive positive media coverage, favourable administrative decisions by institutions like Judiciary, Election commission and the ability to disburse formal or informal reward to the citizens during an election campaign (Herron 2009).

Because of their proximity to the chief executives, these parties may disappear after their patrons leave the political scene. In such circumstances the parties can move a step further by forming a new party of power. Examples of parties of power like citizens union of Georgia, Our Home is Russia and people's Democratic party (Ukraine) have collectively witnessed this phenomena. Despite the failure of some parties of power to sustain themselves for long they have been the long lasting feature of post-soviet party politics (Herron 2009).

A prominent leader of United Russia , Vladimir Surkov warned the party that it would have to 'reduce its dependence on administrative resources' and would have to 'master the habits of ideological battle'. The party would have to find new ways of ensuring that it remained meaningful for its membership, united on loyalty to Putin, and attractive to voters in the country. If the door to dominant regime party status was closed, then it would have to transform itself into a full-scale programme party (Sakwa 2008)

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Authoritarian elections

United Russia uses variety of covert and overt methods to ensure its electoral victory Remington (2012). Firstly, it pressurises federal and local level administrative official to disqualify popular candidates of opposition parties . Secondly, it usually dominates the airwaves in Russia. Not only government TV channels but also the private ones are full of debate-discussion programme where participants have been party's prominent members and leaders. This in a way certainly put an impact over voters in Russia In terms of their psyche and ideas. However, It does not mean that all set of people get influenced in wholesome by this type of propaganda. Thirdly, It has sufficient access to the financial resource both form public sector and private individuals and corporate groups. This definitely helps United Russia to outspend its rival in the electoral competition. More over there have been some instances in the past when the party has promoted the falsification and manipulation of election results in the favour of their candidates (Myagkov *et al.*2009). However, the manipulation of electoral results is not a phenomena restricted to few parties rather it could be identified in many countries of where democracy has not taken deep roots.

Colton and Hale (2009) express their confusion by arguing that a party like United Russia despite having such a solid socio-electoral base believes in some fraudulent means which is unnecessary in many aspects. Nevertheless it adopts many tricks to control the favourable electoral results and even spoils the bids of opposition to unite themselves against the united Russia (Colton and Hale 2009; see also Colton and Hale 2010).

Remington (2012) stated that the challenge before United Russia in the future years is to appeal its socio-electoral base without getting associated with Putin. Thus, In other words it has to get rid off with the persona and aura of Putin alone. A viable alternative should be presented before electorates by the United Russia. However, he suggests that Medvedev can be a good option on this account.

The authors argue that when the system of checks and balances is removed and state-owned television channels remain the single source of information than approval of bosses in Moscow becomes more important than the support of voters hence, in such an environment, the balloting becomes favourable for Kremlin (Kunov *et. al* 2005).

According to White (2012) Russia's Elections contains certain distinctive features which evolved with the passage of time. Firstly, there are ample evidences to suggest that new vacancies in regional electoral commission's posts were filled largely by the United Russia party members and its sympathisers. Secondly, Pro-Kremlin parties are getting systemic advantages in election-campaining without any exception. All the officials of the United Russia party list were the beneficiary of their office support in conducting their election-campaign. Thirdly, compulsion in the favour of ruling party was the dominant mode in election campaign. For instance , the factory administration used to decide and virtually dictate to vote for the "Right party" to their factory workers. Fourthly, There were also report of considerable violations of norms including multiple voting and the misuse of absentee certificates and the provisions for the voting at home. More importantly, this was being done with the nexus of state officials. Thus, White (2012) terms the elections in Russia as "Authoritarian elections".

Chapter 5:

Conclusion

In recapitulation of entire work, one can conclude that Political parties are one of the structural pillars of the Euro-centric western liberal democracies of contemporary era. Parties themselves are constituted with the four basic elements of Caucus, cell. branch and militia. These elements perform variety of function corresponding to the prevalent political system of the country. A political party's futuristic plans and objectives are largely dependent upon the model of its structural organization. Therefore majority of the party today gives proper attention to the basic organizational units. They have to perform variety of functions including propagating a particular ideology, educating and making aware people, recruiting and giving preliminary training to young political recruits, forming public opinion on relevant issues through debate and discussions and so on. To accomplish the above mentioned task properly there is need to have a co-ordination among all the structural units of a political party. Thus, it has to have a clear cut ideological orientation along with a big mass following which can be translated into potential voters. It should strive to establish a well-knit mechanism of intra-party democracy. Besides, it should have a perennial but legitimate source of income as party-funding is the life line of political activities. Both the state and the private entities finance the political party within the regulatory framework. Hence, political party acquires different forms in the process of their model of functioning. Classical theorist Duverger's classification of the parties in terms of Cadre, Mass and Catch-all could be counted among them.

Conglomerations of different types of parties form a party system in a polity. Sartori (1976) characterize it in terms of single party system and multi-party system including bi-party system. Thus, a party system refers to a systemic interaction between variety of parties chiefly governed by their attitude and behaviour within a regulatory framework.

Emergence of a party-system and advent of various political parties in Russia is purely a post-communist phenomenon. This came in the backdrop of then president of Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) Mikhail Gorbachev's initiation of liberal reforms under the guise of *Glasnost* and *Perestroika*. The intensity, magnitude and timing of reform along with other things played a catalytic role in disintegration of Soviet Union. Russian Federation under Boris Yeltsin attempted to introduce the functional multi-party system. However, due to constitutional crisis and yeltsin's ambitious agenda party-system resembled most to the "Feckless Pluralism" as rightly

termed by Gel'man (2006). Political system of Russia has witnessed appearance and disappearance of myriad political parties and movements till the today. Hence, instability has been the hallmark of Russian party system in early post-Soviet era.

This was the time when Chechen crisis was on its rise in late 1990s and president yeltsin too was in search of an able heir due to his ailment. Besides, prospects of economy were also gloomy as transition from one mode to another did not bore such results as projected. In such circumstances, mere assurance of stability was enough to take command of Russia. Population of Russia saw a sign of skilled statesman in former KGB (Russian intelligence agency) agent Vladimir Putin. He was appointed president of Russian Federation in January, 2000. With the eyes full of hope and aspiration, the dawn of new millennium brought some cheerful moments for Russians. Putin not only handled the Chechen crisis successfully but also steered the Russian economy from gloomy status to bright future. His economic acumen proved beneficial again during global financial crisis of 2008. Russia was not so badly affected with the sub-prime mortgage problem turned financial crisis which ultimately led to world economic recession. Thus, by capitalising on all the aforementioned achievements and counting on "Putinism" or "Putin phenomena", he became the most popular figure in Russia.

United Russia emerged on the Russian political scene in April, 2001 with the merger of Unity and Fatherland-All Russia. Initially, it commenced its journey by supporting Putin's bid to Kremlin. The party expresses its ideological preference with "Russian Conservatism"- a modified version of conservative ideology. Subsequently, it came up with the "Sovereign Democracy" and "Strategy 2020" as the guiding principles of the party. As a typical catch-all party, the United Russia has offered many things to virtually everyone. Election program of 2007 popularly known as "Putin's Plan- A Worthy Future for A Great Nation" states that United Russia is committed to the development of unique cultural and historical heritage of Russia, to increase economic competiveness through innovation based development strategy, to guarantee a qualitative life for Russian citizens, to work for institution building by supporting civil society, strengthening the sovereignty of Russia and so on. United Russia party platform (2009) not only continued with the basic element of the Putin's plan but also it expanded the wish-list by value addition. It commits to bring back the glory of Russian state by making it a major power in the contemporary world and also

expresses strong family as the basis of society. Party platform demands freedom corresponding with responsibility for the Russian media and also seeks revival of spiritual values and traditional religions of Russia. It believes in the vibrancy of middle class along with social partnership and generational solidarity. Party platform of the United Russia (2009) demonstrates its commitment to not only provide quality education for all but also to promote civic and legal consciousness among the demos i.e. people in Russia. In economic sphere, the party vows not only for regional development but also to focus on making healthy society. Besides, it wants to work for advancement Russian scientific knowledge. Party also seeks to establish a national innovation system as a path to renewal. More importantly, United Russia party emphasises that the success of Russia's youth is the success of the nation. Thus, it is clear that United Russia party has tried to incorporate all the demands of almost every strata of society. Party has attempted to assimilate variety of hopes and aspirations emanating from different sections of Russia by formulating the path of development of the nation.

A political party reaches to the upper echelon of electoral success with the backing of its social and electoral bases. With at the passage of time, the party strives towards consolidation of its support bases and United Russia too is not an exception on this account. An electoral program and manifesto consist the goals and objectives charted out by the strategist of party which they try to implement once voted for power. Party's electoral program and platform through its content not only try to cater the variety of demands of the population but also to attract different segments of society into the party fold. Chapter four of the present research deals in length with the social and electoral base of United Russia party. Through the reference of Remington (2010), Hale (2009) and others it explains that middle class in Russia has been the core of the support base of any party though there is lack of any consensus among scholars regarding the methodology to determine the size of middle class in Russia. Aivazova (2008) in her analysis uses the gender perspective to probe into the social and electoral base of different political parties in Russia including the United Russia party. She shows the male and female voter turnout in different elections of Russia. Besides, she not only reflects over the change in voting pattern with special emphasis on female voters but also attempts to discern the pattern of representation of females

in parliamentary politics of Russia. The opinion polls and surveys explicitly show that United Russia is choice of the majority of Russian population

United Russia party has emerged as the 'dominant party of power' in the history of political parties in post-Communist Russia (Roberts 2012). Sakwa (2008) in his analysis claims that post–Soviet Russian Party system is characterized by three types of parties on the basis of their relations with regime including 'regime party' or 'party of power'. 'Regime Parties' are sponsored and established by the ruling group to manipulate and shape political environment and in some cases to act as 'party of power'. Thus, he defines a 'Party of Power' as a political organization established with the support of the executive to take part in elections and legislature process. United Russia has captured the Kremlin and the Duma since a decade now virtually with no opposition. There are certain reasons for this phenomenal success of United Russia party. Leadership of Vladimir Putin has been the primary reason for its success since 2001. Putin has not only demonstrated his statesmanship but also shown leadership ability during his presidential regime. Variety of opinion polls shows the high level of individual popularity of Putin. Besides, he is very popular among women and youth due to his achievements. However, his top level of popularity has eclipsed the emergence of a viable alternative of Putin in the party which is not a healthy practice for a political party. Although Medvedev ascended to the presidential post for some time but it did prove just a beacon of hope because he would not been able to assert himself as a president of Russia as well as leader of the ruling party. Interestingly, both the leaders of United Russia- Putin and Medvedev- were not even the primary member of the party. They both become member of the party in recent past. The 'Tandemocracy' between Putin and Medvedev is also sen from different perspective. Their 'castling move' of exchanging premiership and presidency has not been taken in good spirit by the Russian population (Sakwa 2012). Secondly, the lack of an effective and viable opposition group has significantly contributed to the continuous victory of United Russia in elections at all the three levels including regions. Neither the communist led left parties nor the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia led right wing have succeed in presenting themselves as a viable alternative of United Russia before the electorates of Russia . thirdly , with the passage of time . United Russia has established itself as a dominant party of power. It uses variety of means to preserve and perpetuate its status of party of power. Since there is no hope

of end to this thriving nexus of   the party and the government officials therefore it can be said that is going to be continue in near future. Fourthly, United Russia is alleged to manipulate the electoral outcome in favour of their candidates. Experts argue that ballot stuffing, intimidating of voters, misuse of absentee certificates are some of the common methods of electoral fraud committed by the representatives and leaders of the party. Besides, the government election officers too are participant in making mockery of democratic elections. Hence, White (2012) terms the elections in Russia as "Authoritarian elections". Thus, the electoral success is the cumulative outcome of all the above mentioned factors.

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