

# INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CAPACITY ENHANCEMENT. RUSSIA'S POLITICAL SYSTEM BETWEEN STATE DUMA ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS OF 2011 AND 2016

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Next year Russia's political system is going to enter into a crucial phase. On the single voting day on September 18th, 2016, the elections to the State Duma are due to be held. In addition, Russian citizens will cast their ballots for parliamentarians in regional and municipal assemblies, as well as heads of several regions. Undoubtedly, these elections will make a huge impact on the evolution of the Russia internal agenda in the short-term and mid-term perspectives.

The upcoming electoral campaign and votes are, therefore, acknowledged to play a significant role in Russia's political life. The Rethinking Russia Center together with prominent political experts believes that it is essential to explain to the international academic circles the unfolding processes in Russia.

The previous legislative elections on December 4th, 2011, followed by an unprecedented wave of mass street protests, pointed to a crisis of the political and electoral practices in Russia. Over the last 4 years the state has placed a particular emphasis upon the restructuring and redefining of the whole system by "dismantling" the system, thus implementing Vladimir Putin's 2012 electoral manifesto. Contemporarily, it is possible to highlight that the Kremlin has succeeded in shaping a new institutional structure and design of the political system. All quantitative characteristics are underpinned by a higher quality of regulation and democratic procedures.

The analytical paper sheds light on the major parameters of Russia's political system and the specific characteristics of its electoral model. At the fundamental and operative levels it enables international experts to better comprehend Russia's internal policy, electoral campaigns, and behavior of political actors and also to anticipate further political developments.

The state of political institutions and practices ahead of the two federal electoral cycles – the 2011 and 2016 State Duma elections – serves as reference points to analyze the political system development.

The table below allows us to carefully consider how institutions have been established and have evolved, as well as to assess openness and competitiveness between the electoral campaigns of 2011 and 2016.

The electoral map, presented in this analytical report, demonstrates the current party system, which has been renewed in the course of 3 or 4 regional electoral cycles. It is worth noting that within just 9 months almost 112 million voters, 74 parties entitled to take part in the elections, independent candidates, observers and mass media will be able to give their own assessment of the new institutional architecture of Russia's political system.

The paper published in Russian and English emphasizes the importance of this research for foreign experts on Russia, and also for joint discussions, involving both foreign and Russian political analysts.

Russia's Political System between the State Duma Electoral Campaigns of 2011 and 2016.

*Next year Russia's political system is going to enter upon a new phase.* On the single voting day on September 18th, 2016, the State Duma elections are due to be held. For the first time since 2003 half of the seats will be distributed through the party list proportional representation system with a 5% electoral threshold, and the other half in single-member constituencies using the first-past-the-post system. On top of that, Russian citizens will cast their ballots for parliamentarians in 38 entities, heads of several regions, municipal heads and deputies (36 thousand mandates in total).

Most political experts believe that the previous legislative elections in 2011, followed by an unprecedented wave of massive street protests, indicated a crisis of the institutions and practices of representative democracy in Russia. Over the last 4 years the state has placed a particular emphasis upon the restructuring and redefining of the whole system by "dismantling" the system and then "fusing" parts, thus implementing Vladimir Putin's 2012 electoral manifesto. *Nowadays, it is possible to underscore that the Kremlin has succeeded in forming a new institutional structure and design of the political system.*

On one hand, it clearly manifests itself in substantial changes in various quantitative indicators of "volume" and "weight" of competitiveness in the domestic political arena (detailed data are presented in a separate table). On the other hand, with the view of promoting the sustainable development of its political system it is vital for Russia to ensure *that all quantitative characteristics are underpinned by a higher level of quality regulation and adoption of democratic procedures.*

By the 2016 elections, *Russia's political system has become more flexible and region-oriented, taking into account the interests of 85 Russian regions*; it has become more transparent in terms of the rules and regulations in those spheres of life, which were have been for the most part neglected in the previous years (for instance, the Internet, public oversight, security of street politics). Moreover, it has welcomed new political figures, public interest groups, as well as smart and creative ideas.

The state of political institutions and practices ahead of the two federal electoral cycles – the 2011 and 2016 State Duma elections – serves as reference points to analyze the political system development.

If we review all steps taken by the political establishment in this period, we will identify several tasks which the Russian authorities have tried to accomplish

First and foremost, *it was critical to give a fresh impetus to the party system, which by 2011 had already been gripped by protracted stagnation and hermetically sealed for other players*<sup>9</sup>. Under such circumstances, Russian elites were supposed to empower all public interest groups, even the smallest ones, to try party politics. At the same time, for the sake of sustainability and public confidence in newly elected government officials Russia needed institutional incentives to structurize a revived party system ahead of the upcoming elections to the State Duma. Russia implemented these measures so that in 2016 people would enjoy a real choice between viable parties of different ideological stripes, rather than between flash parties or hastily built coalitions which disintegrated right after the elections.

At the very outset of the reform, political parties in Russia did not enjoy voters' confidence and trust. The monthly survey reports of the Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VCIOM) suggested that in early 2012 a balance of approval (30%) and disapproval (43%) of parties' activities was negative. Russian residents did not trust either the judiciary or political parties. Parties ranked very low among institutions along with the judiciary. The slogan "You don't even represent us", popular during the 2011 and 2012 Russian protests, referred to all the 4 political parties which had managed to win seats in the State Duma.

*It was inevitable to reset the party system*

<sup>9</sup> They encompass not only a failed attempt to breathe new life into the Right Cause party by the 2011 elections, when Mikhail Prokhorov, billionaire businessman, lost his leadership at the very start of the electoral campaign, but also futile efforts of the Republican party of Russia, the People's Freedom party, the Party Action and other quasi-parties to obtain state registration in 2010 and 2011, after 2009 when 7 national parties lost their registration.

*and undertake confidence-building measures amid the absence of a clear demand for new parties in Russian society.*

Even in early January 2012, when the protest movement seemed to have gained momentum, sociologists brought forward an argument that the general public was cautious about the need to carry out profound reforms of the party system. According to the VCIOM opinion surveys, in early January 2012 less than half of the respondents (45% and 44% correspondingly) spoke out in favour of simplifying party registration procedures and reducing the number of signatures required to participate in elections, whereas one-third of the respondents (33%) were opposed to the liberalization of political legislation. At the same time, the Russian Research Institute "Levada Center" argued that 56% of those surveyed did not see any necessity in the creation of new parties (only 24% said "yes"), and only 18% of those questioned called for a new center-right party to be established (57% said "no"). Nevertheless, other proposals of the Russian authorities, including the return to direct elections of governors, were enthusiastically welcomed by the majority of the Russian population (more than 70% said "yes", as VCIOM stated in January 2012).

Consequently, the increase in public trust and confidence concerning the party and electoral systems was conditional not only upon the technical simplification of party-building, but also upon the functioning of social lifts and updating staff profiles of old parties, as well as on the incorporation of new figures in the realm of public affairs. The surge in the number of mandates, distributed at regional and local levels within single-member constituencies, the revival of a mixed voting system to the State Duma, the reintroduction of direct elections of governors, the regionalization of the Federation Council, the development of primary elections for the ruling party, as well as the consistent revival of the third sector can be regarded as meaningful steps towards attaining the above mentioned goal.

Considering all the symptoms of the crisis of traditional democratic forms, foreign political scientists tend to place premium on a lower turnout, which is typical of all democratic

countries. In comparison with the early 1980s it is estimated to have dropped by 10%. In the USA, the general election voter turnout for the 2014 midterms was the lowest since 1918 (turnout of the voting-eligible population was just 33% percent). At regional and local stages, Russia has also followed suit. In these conditions, the state's appeal to the "third sector", the creation of an environment for continuous everyday involvement of social institutions in fulfilling state and municipal obligations, the gradual improvement in mechanisms and practices of direct democracy promotes the public's changing attitude to regular elections.

One of the long-term goals of the reform implies the elaboration of a model envisaging that the federal government may delegate the regulation of the institutional design of political systems to a lower level. Thus, these systems become flexible and can be easily adjusted to the changing realities. That was part of Russia's greater strategy aimed at the rejection of unified federal requirements for so called "partization" of municipal elections, the introduction of a larger variety of organizational forms of self-government, the expansion of the powers of local authorities, and the implementation of several models of governors' elections.

Finally, given a greater consolidation of the Russian society and major players of the political spectrum around President Vladimir Putin and his decrees issued in May 2012, both the United Russia party and other key parties, shared his strategic goals, had to identify their niche in the so-called "Putin's majority zone" to retain loyalty of the electorate.

Certain institutional practices have also been introduced, primarily, in light of the development of the All-Russia People's Front (ONF).

*The final road from the emergence of "one hundred colors" in Russia's politics to the rise of serious rivals for old parties and to the renewal of the whole party system has taken nearly three or four regional electoral cycles.*

The electoral map, drawn on the basis of the statistics from the universal voting day in 2015, illustrates that a structurization of Russia's political affairs is finally underway. However, it does not mean that new and small actors will fail to do well at the federal elections.

Russia has witnessed the division into de-facto federal, regional and local parties. This trend was predicted after the adoption of a multi-level qualification system<sup>10</sup> at different elections, although from the legal standpoint, all Russian parties tend to immediately acquire a national status, and the creation of regional parties is not allowed in Russia in contrast to other states where it is customary. However, in the party arena there are still apparent artificially created parties, the so called satellite parties.

At the very start of the 2016 State Duma electoral campaign Russia saw party consolidation and coalition formation (around the People’s Freedom Party “For Russia without Lawlessness and Corruption” (Parnas), the Motherland-National Patriotic Union or around

certain green parties). In case of electoral success micro-players can naturally merge with larger parties. This effect also was forecast by political experts after the implementation of the qualification system.

Following the reform of the party and electoral systems people have started to actually trust Russia’s parties. It was exemplified by the fact that in November 2015 the party system, from the public perspective, was perceived as more reliable (44%) than trade unions, the judiciary and opposition forces. Moreover, it caught up with the civic chambers and the balance of approval and disapproval became steadily positive (+15%)<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> In order to stand in any elections parties are required to command minimum support. In other words, they are supposed to have some party deputies in legislative bodies at the relevant levels or to collect signatures of the electorate.

<sup>11</sup> VCIOMData. Mode of access: [http://wciom.ru/news/ratings/odobrenie\\_deyatelnosti\\_obshestvennyx\\_institutov/](http://wciom.ru/news/ratings/odobrenie_deyatelnosti_obshestvennyx_institutov/)

**POLITICAL SYSTEM AT THE START OF STATE DUMA ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS OF 2011 AND 2016:  
EVOLUTION OF INSTITUTIONS ASSURING COMPETITIVENESS AND QUALITY OF POWER**

Institutional characteristic	Start of 2011 State Duma electoral campaign (according to the latest regional single voting day data, March 13, 2011)	Start of 2016 State Duma electoral campaign (according to the latest regional single voting day data, September 13, 2015)
<i>Openness and competitiveness of the federal electoral system</i>		
Political parties registration	At least 40 thousand members – <b>7 registered national parties</b> eligible to run in elections	At least 500 members – <b>74 national parties</b> eligible to run in elections, with municipal branches in half of the Russian regions, and 77 national parties with registration (as of December 2015)
Possible party liquidation because of its non-participation in elections	A party has not been participating in elections for <b>5 years</b>	A party has not been participating in elections for <b>7 years</b>
Type of electoral system during State Duma elections	<b>Proportional:</b> only party list voting	<b>Mixed:</b> 225 deputies – party list voting + 225 deputies – single mandate constituencies
Political parties and candidate registration for State Duma elections without signature collection	<b>4 parties</b> without signatures collection: – parliamentary parties – parties that have deputies from the party lists in 28 regional parliaments (out of 83)	<b>14 parties</b> without signatures collection: – parliamentary parties; – parties with more than 3% of votes at the latest State Duma elections; – parties that have a deputy from the party list at least in 1 regional parliament (out of 85)
Political parties and candidate registration for State Duma elections with signature collection	<b>150 thousand signatures</b> for a party list ( <b>for all the parties except 4</b> parliamentary parties, which are entitled not to collect signatures)	<b>200 thousand signatures</b> for a party list (for other small parties except 14 parties with federal qualification) <b>3%</b> of voters in a single mandate constituency (for self-nominated candidates and candidates from parties without qualification)
Vote threshold at State Duma elections	<b>7%</b> From 6% to 7% – 2 consolation mandates From 5% to 6% – 1 consolation mandate	<b>5%</b>

<b>Institutional characteristic</b>	<b>Start of 2011 State Duma electoral campaign</b> (according to the latest regional single voting day data, March 13, 2011)	<b>Start of 2016 State Duma electoral campaign</b> (according to the latest regional single voting day data, September 13, 2015)
Minimal requirements for the federal list of candidates at State Duma elections	<b>At least 70</b> regional groups in a federal list. Federal list registration is <b>cancelled</b> if there are <b>fewer than 60 regional</b> groups left after candidates' exclusion	<b>At least 35</b> regional groups in the federal list. Federal list registration is cancelled if there are <b>fewer than 20</b> regional groups left after candidates' exclusion
<i>Openness and competitiveness of the electoral system at regional and municipal levels</i>		
Number of political parties at regional and municipal elections countrywide (in a ballot)	<b>7 parties</b> , all of them registered at least 1 candidate	<b>55 parties</b> out of 74 nominated candidates or <b>registered</b> party lists. 49 of these parties registered (were present in a ballot) for at least one campaign, including: – 36 parties – for elections of deputies to regional legislative bodies and local government bodies on party lists; – 40 parties – for elections of deputies to regional legislative bodies and local government bodies in majority constituencies; – 27 parties – for elections of the heads of regions or the heads of local government bodies
Number of political parties at regional legislative elections on party lists (in a ballot)	On average <b>4.67</b> per region  From <b>4 parties</b> (7 regions out of 12, where elections to regional parliaments were held in March 2011, or 58% of campaigns) to <b>6 parties</b> (3 regions out of 12)	On average <b>7.82</b> per region  From <b>5 parties</b> (1 region out of 11, or 9% of campaigns) to 15 parties (1 region out of 11)
Nomination of candidates and lists by non-governmental organizations at elections to local government bodies	At 2010-2011 only party nomination and self-nomination of candidates to run in elections	<b>Non-governmental organizations</b> ran in the elections of the deputies or the heads of local government bodies by lists and/or constituencies in 11 regions
Registration of political parties and candidates at elections of heads of regional legislative bodies and local government bodies without the collection of signatures	<p><b>Federal Qualification Advantage (4 parties):</b> – parliamentary parties; – parties that have deputies from the party lists in 28 regional legislative bodies.</p> <p><b>Regional Qualification Advantage</b> in the region where elections to the parliament are held: – party has a deputy from the party list in the legislative body of this region (also the advantages is applied at elections to the local government bodies).</p> <p>Additional <b>municipal qualification advantage</b>, besides the regional one, <b>is not applied</b>.</p> <p>To sum up, after the single voting day there are <b>from 4 to 5 parties with regional qualification</b>.</p>	<p><b>Federal qualification advantage (5 parties):</b> – parliamentary parties; – parties with more than 3% of votes at the latest State Duma elections.</p> <p><b>Regional qualification advantage</b> in the region where elections to the legislative body take place (at least in one region – <b>27 parties</b> not taking into account <b>5 parties</b> with federal qualification advantage): – party has a deputy from the party list or has got over 3% at the regional parliament elections (the qualification advantage is also applied at elections to local government bodies); – party has deputies from the party list in any municipal council of this region; – the party lists got 0,5% of votes of the region at the latest municipal elections in the region in total Additional <b>municipal qualification advantage</b> is applied only in a municipality where elections to local government bodies take place: – currently a party has a deputy from the party list or a single-mandate majority winner in the municipal council To sum up, after the single voting day there are from 5 to 18 parties with <b>regional qualification</b>. The biggest number is in Dagestan (18), the Moscow region (13), and the Sverdlovsk region (12).</p>
Registration of candidates at the regional parliaments and local government bodies elections with signatures collection	<p><b>Up to 2% of signatures</b> for a party list or a candidate in a constituency (for parties without federal and regional benefits). In October 2010 and March 2011 – from 1% to 2% of the total number of voters.</p>	<p><b>At elections to regional parliaments – 0.5%</b> of the voters for a list, <b>3%</b> – for a candidate in a constituency (for parties without regional benefit and self-nominated candidates) <b>At elections to local government bodies – 0.5%</b> for a candidate in a constituency or for a list (for parties without regional benefit and self-nominated candidates).</p>
Registration of candidates at elections of the heads of local government bodies	<p>General rules of collecting signatures – <b>up to 2%</b> for parties without federal or regional benefits. <b>Up to 2%</b> of signatures for self-nominated candidates.</p>	<p><b>No party candidates need to collect signatures.</b> Self-nominated candidates collect <b>0.5%</b> of the signatures.</p>

<b>Institutional characteristic</b>	<b>Start of 2011 State Duma electoral campaign</b> (according to the latest regional single voting day data, March 13, 2011)	<b>Start of 2016 State Duma electoral campaign</b> (according to the latest regional single voting day data, September 13, 2015)
Threshold at the elections to regional legislative bodies and local government bodies	<b>From 6% to 7%</b> (the majority of elections to regional legislative bodies), and 1 consolation mandate for parties that received over 5% but not under the threshold <b>From 5% to 7%</b> (in the majority of the administrative centers of Russian regions)	<b>5%</b> (to regional legislative bodies and in the majority of administrative centers of Russian regions)
Voting on party lists in big cities	<b>Only in 11 out of 25 regional administrative centers</b> , where elections to local government bodies took place in October 2010 and March 2011 (majority system in other 13) After the latest single voting day, unified federal standards were introduced making it mandatory to elect on party lists at least half of the deputies to the top-level local government bodies (in cities or districts) with 20 or more deputies	<b>In all 25 regional administrative centers</b> , where elections to local government bodies took place on the latest single voting day. The electoral system to local governments at all levels, including the need for elections on party lists, is determined by law of a constituency rather than at the federal level
«None of the above» column	Not used	Used at municipal elections in <b>7 regions</b> , in 2015 used in <b>3 regions</b> at elections on party lists
Average turnout at elections to regional legislative bodies on the latest single voting day	<b>50.9% of the registered voters</b> (in 12 regions)	<b>41.8% of the registered voters</b> (in 11 regions)
Average result of United Russia at elections to regional legislative bodies on the latest single voting day	The latest regional single voting day before the elections to State Duma – <b>the emergence of a negative trend for United Russia</b> . United Russia gained on average <b>48.97%</b> at elections to regional legislative bodies (in 12 regions, with almost 12.9 million voters), with the result in 2 regions – below 40% and in 5 regions – below 50%	The latest regional single voting day before the elections to State Duma – retaining of <b>popularity by United Russia</b> , despite the elections in problem regions United Russia gained on average 59.91% at elections to regional legislative bodies (in 11 regions, with almost 12.1 million voters): with the result in only 1 region – below 50%
Average result of United Russia at elections to regional legislative bodies on party lists on the latest single voting day	United Russia received on average 49.29% of the votes in the elections to municipal councils in the capitals of the Russian Federation territorial entities on party lists (4 administrative centers, where about 1.4 million voters live and elections were held on party lists). Of these three regional centers the party gained under 40%. However, in the cities, where the party rating was low, the elections were held under the majoritarian system without the use of the party image	United Russia received on average 55.09% of the votes in the elections to municipal councils in the capitals of the Russian Federation territorial entities on party lists (23 administrative centers, where about 10.4 million voters live and elections were held on party lists). Of these in two regional centers the party gained under 40% and in 8 regional centers below 50% In all the capitals of the Russian Federation territorial entities, including the most difficult regions for the ruling party, the elections were held on party lists
<i>Quality of regional and municipal institutions</i>		
Forming the Federation Council (the chamber of the federal subjects in the Federal Assembly)	<b>No residence requirement</b> in the regions for the candidates to the Federation Council Senator from the region's executive is <b>appointed by the governor</b> <b>Deputies</b> of regional parliaments or local government bodies <b>may become</b> senators from the region's legislative (but there are exceptions)	<b>5-years residence requirement for candidates</b> , except for diplomatic, civil and municipal service and special service in the region Candidates to the Federation Council from the <b>executive indirectly participate in the elections together with the governor</b> ("senatorial troikas" nominated by the senatorial candidate, of whom one is later appointed senator). If the governor is elected, the incumbent deputies of State Duma, regional legislature or local government bodies and the Federal Council members (if they cross the "municipal threshold", i.e. collect the signatures of municipal deputies) become candidates to the Senate Candidates to the Federation Council from the legislative preliminarily participate in <b>direct elections (only a deputy of the regional parliament gets to the Federation Council)</b>

<b>Institutional characteristic</b>	<b>Start of 2011 State Duma electoral campaign</b> (according to the latest regional single voting day data, March 13, 2011)	<b>Start of 2016 State Duma electoral campaign</b> (according to the latest regional single voting day data, September 13, 2015)
Electing the highest official of a Russian region	Governors are <b>approved by the corresponding regional legislative body</b> by voting for the candidates suggested by the President ( <b>in all 83 regions</b> ) No direct gubernatorial elections.	Governors are <b>elected directly by citizens (75 regions)</b> Governors are <b>elected indirectly by the deputies of regional legislative bodies</b> out of the three candidates, suggested by the President (10 regions).
Governors with successful electoral background in their regions	<b>48% of governors</b> (40 out of 83 incumbent governors) have successful electoral background in their regions: – <b>26 had won direct elections</b> in their regions till direct elections were abolished in late 2004 (31%); – <b>14 governors had a successful background</b> at majoritarian elections in their regions in late 1990s and in 2000s (State Duma elections or elections to regional legislatures in single mandate constituencies, mayoral elections or elections of regional heads).	<b>79% of governors</b> (67 out of 85 incumbent governors not taking into account the Komi Republic) have successful electoral background in their regions: – <b>61 incumbent governors</b> won direct elections in their regions in 2012–2015 (out of 75 regions with direct elections) – <b>6 governors</b> who did not participate in direct elections or were elected at indirect elections, have successful electoral background at direct majoritarian elections in their regions in late 1990s and in 2000s (State Duma elections or elections to regional legislatures in single mandate constituencies, mayoral elections or elections of regional heads).
Average incumbent governors' age	<b>52.97</b> as of early 2011	<b>54.12</b> in September 2015 (some heads of regions have kept their posts over the recent 4 years)
Levels of local governance	<b>5 possible types</b> of municipal units <b>disregarding the peculiarities of city regions development</b> “Higher level”: – urban district; – municipal district; “Lower level”: – urban locality; – rural settlement; – intra-urban municipal unit of a federal city	<b>7 possible types</b> of municipal units <b>taking into account the peculiarities of city regions development</b> “Higher level”: – urban district without intra-urban division; – urban district with intra-urban division; – municipal district; “Lower level”: – urban locality; – rural settlement; – intra-urban district; – intra-urban municipal unit of a federal city
Diversity of issues under the local government bodies' jurisdiction and forms of interaction of different government levels	<b>38 local issues</b> under <b>urban districts'</b> jurisdiction <b>30 local issues</b> under <b>municipal districts'</b> jurisdiction The same list of <b>33 local issues</b> under <b>urban localities and rural settlements'</b> jurisdiction irrespective of the differences between their administrative and financial recourses	<b>44 local issues</b> under <b>urban districts'</b> jurisdiction <b>39 local issues</b> under <b>municipal districts'</b> jurisdiction <b>39 local issues</b> under <b>urban localities'</b> jurisdiction <b>At least 13 local issues</b> under <b>rural settlements'</b> jurisdiction (may increase: it depends on the region, administrative and financial resources) <b>At least 13 local issues</b> under <b>intra-urban districts'</b> jurisdiction (may increase: depends on the region, and its administrative and financial resources) Institutional conditions for <b>cooperation of regional and local authorities, of local government bodies of “higher” and “lower” levels</b> in promoting social and economic development of the territories More opportunities for <b>redistribution of powers upwards</b> (in favor of the state authorities) and downwards (in favor of local authorities), which depends on the regions' peculiarities, local government bodies' efficiency and condition of inter-budget relations
Diversity of ways of forming local government bodies	<b>3 ways</b> of forming local government bodies: – head of a municipal unit elected by national vote, who runs the administration (political and economic duties); – head of a municipal unit elected by national vote, who is a member and the speaker of local government body and a city manager hired on a competitive basis (the head of administration with economic duties); – “a double-headed system” without national vote: head of a municipal unit, a member of local government body with political duties, chosen of the deputies + city manager on a competitive basis (the head of administration with economic duties)	<b>5 ways</b> of forming local government bodies: – elected by national vote head of a municipal unit, which runs the administration (political and economic duties); – elected by national vote head of a municipal unit, who is a member and the speaker of local government body and a city manager on a competitive basis (the head of administration with economic duties); – “a system with two heads” without national vote: head of a municipal unit, a member of local government body with political duties, chosen of the deputies + city manager hired on a competitive basis (the head of administration with economic duties); – “a system with one head” without national elections with a full-fledged head of a municipal unit, chosen of the deputies (political and economic duties); – “a system with one head” without national elections with a full-fledged head of a municipal unit hired on a competitive basis (political and economic duties)

<b>Institutional characteristic</b>	<b>Start of 2011 State Duma electoral campaign</b> (according to the latest regional single voting day data, March 13, 2011)	<b>Start of 2016 State Duma electoral campaign</b> (according to the latest regional single voting day data, September 13, 2015)
<i>Opposition within the political system</i>		
Parliamentary opposition representatives among the highest officials of Russian regions and	<b>Communist party members among governors</b> (one region head) Parliamentary opposition representatives elected as mayors desert their parties or join the ranks of United Russia	<b>Communist Party (CPRF), Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR)</b> and Just Russia members among governors (CPRF – 2 governors, LDPR and Just Russia – 1 governor) Parliamentary opposition representatives elected as mayors of big cities do not desert their parties and head the party lists at elections
Parliamentary opposition representativeness in the State Duma and its committees	Parliamentary opposition representatives head 6 State Duma committees out of 32 ( <b>19%</b> ) Opposition representatives have <b>30% of seats</b> in the lower chamber	Parliamentary opposition representatives head 15 State Duma committees out of 30 ( <b>50%</b> ) Opposition representatives have <b>47% of seats</b> in the lower chamber
Parliamentary opposition representativeness in the Federation Council	<b>No parliamentary opposition representativeness in the Federation Council.</b> Sergey Mironov, leader of “Just Russia” and Federation Council speaker, was recalled from the Federation Council, the decision was made by United Russia deputies in Saint-Petersburg regional parliament	All three opposition parties <b>are represented in the Federation Council.</b>
Mass political protests in Moscow	<b>Mostly rejections</b> to requests for the formal permission to organize opposition protests in the center of Moscow, unauthorized demonstrations and arrests (“Strategy-31”, “Days of Anger” (for the first time authorized in March 2011	<b>Mostly authorized political protests</b> both in the center of Moscow and in the suburbs Special locations authorized for popular protests (“hyde parks”)
“Non-system” (radical) opposition	<b>Institutionally driven out the legal political framework:</b> no registered parties, frequent refusals to register self-nominated candidates, unauthorized popular protests	<b>Former “non-system” opposition is integrated into the legal political framework:</b> a party with federal qualification (The People’s Freedom Party – PARNAS) and several minor parties, periodic participation in the elections at different levels, authorized popular protests
<i>Social and political institutions in support of the national leader Vladimir Putin</i>		
Popular movement People’s Front for Russia (The All-Russia People’s Front (ONF))	<b>Not created yet.</b> Its creation was announced in May 2011. At 2011 State Duma elections ONF acts as a non-institutionalised (informal) union.	<b>Formally established, a leading civic movement</b> in Russia. Institutionalised as an institution of independent public control over the realization of president’s orders in all spheres at the state and municipal level and over government procurements. It is also empowered to appraise the Government’s reports to the Presidential Control Directorate).
United Russia political party	<b>“Closed pattern”</b> primaries (only party members and its adherents), about <b>0,2%</b> of voters cast their ballots There were some cases of mismatch between the seats order in the lists and primaries results	<b>The party holds “open pattern”</b> primaries (participation of all willing voters, unrestricted nomination of independent candidate), about <b>8-12% of voters</b> cast their ballots at the primaries to the regional parliaments and city councils in 2015 Party’s leadership usually ensures that candidates are listed in conformity with the primaries results seats. Other political forces learn from United Russia’s experience in conducting primaries (The People’s Freedom Party – PARNAS)
Institutional dimension of “Putin’s majority”	<b>Vladimir Putin is the leader of the ruling party</b> and the head of the Government, parliamentary opposition is opposing Government’s policy <b>Prime Minister is the leader of United Russia</b>	<b>Vladimir Putin is a post-partisan majority leader and United Russia leader.</b> All parliamentary parties and the majority of small parties share President Putin’s foreign and domestic policy priorities. Over 20 parties participate in the all-Russia’s People’s Front. <b>Prime Minister is the leader of United Russia</b>

Institutional characteristic	Start of 2011 State Duma electoral campaign (according to the latest regional single voting day data, March 13, 2011)	Start of 2016 State Duma electoral campaign (according to the latest regional single voting day data, September 13, 2015)
<i>Civic institutions</i>		
The Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation and public control system.	126 members. <b>Regions' representation in the Civic Chamber is not guaranteed.</b> "President's quota" is for citizens with distinct merits to Russia.	<b>Regional and professional representation in the Civic Chamber</b> is guaranteed. 168 members, 85 of them represent regions' civic chambers. At least half of the "president's quota" is for professional and social group representatives. Federal Law No. 212-FZ "On basic principles of public control in the Russian Federation" is adopted. It formalized the leading role of civic chambers and public councils attached to government bodies in the public control system. <b>The leading role of the Civic Chamber in forming public councils attached</b> to federal government bodies is institutionalized. <b>"The Russian public initiative" site works</b> (to conduct an Internet search for the most popular public initiatives to be further considered by the authorities at different levels) The post of a Minister for Open Government Affairs has been introduced. In addition to the public ombudsmen and ombudsmen for the children's rights, the institution of the Ombudsman for businessmen's rights attached to President's Office has been established.
The Human Rights Council of the Russian Federation	<b>40 members</b> appointed by President without preliminary public discussion.	<b>63 members</b> appointed in accordance with the results of preliminary online voting. Larger and more balanced representation of different human rights the institution of the Ombudsman for businessmen's rights attached to President's Office has been established.
Interaction with socially oriented non-profit organizations	<b>9 types</b> of socially oriented non-profit organizations' activities give them the right to get additional support of both federal and local government bodies.	<b>17 types</b> of socially oriented non-profit organizations' activities give them the right to get additional support of both federal and local government bodies. President's order <b>to work out</b> socially oriented non-profit organizations' ("non-profit organizations of increased social benefit") <b>new legal status.</b> In December 2015 the Russian President gave orders to give the new legal status to social non-profit organizations – "Provider of social services" (similar to the foreign status of "Public-benefit non-profit organizations") and provide them with tax and property exemptions.
Support of non-profit organizations	In 2011 <b>1 billion roubles granted by the President</b> to hold a competition between non-profit organizations USAID, NED, IRI and other foreign foundations supporting non-profit organizations are present in Russia. Citizens are not informed about non-profit organizations' financial support from abroad. <b>Non-profit organizations try to receive foreign support.</b>	In 2015 <b>4.228 billion roubles granted by the President</b> to hold a competition between non-profit organizations The majority of foreign foundations left Russia. Laws about "foreign agents" and "undesirable organizations" were adopted. <b>Many non-profit organizations refrain from receiving foreign support</b> in favor of domestic financing and crowdfunding. In December 2015 in the Address to the Federal Assembly the President suggested allotting up to 10% of the regional and municipal social programs to the nonprofit organizations for nonprofit organizations to participate fully in the delivery of social services on the ground.