

The Federal Assembly – more than just a “rubber stamp”?

Ben Noble and Paul Chaisty

For many observers of Russian politics, the country’s bicameral national parliament – the Federal Assembly – is a sham institution: a “rubber stamp” body that simply nods through decisions made by the president without providing effective oversight or representation. According to a wide range of analyses, the emergence of United Russia as the dominant “party of power” under President Vladimir Putin facilitated a highly effective “unity of purpose” (Haggard and McCubbins 2001: 16) in a formally separation of powers system, allowing the executive branch to dominate the legislature (Chaisty 2005 and 2008; Remington 2007 and 2008a; Reuter 2017). The story of the Federal Assembly and its relationship with the executive maps, therefore, onto the broader story of national-level politics in Russia: from the “feckless pluralism” and executive-legislative clashes of the 1990s to the “dominant power politics” and legislative docility in evidence under Putin (Gel’man 2006).

Executive “capture” of the legislature is certainly a central story of post-Soviet Russian parliamentarism. And yet, the narrative can be taken too far. The Federal Assembly can certainly “rubber stamp” legislative initiatives, particularly those from the president and from the Government when elite groups are united. But there is also much more going on under the surface. Even when votes are unanimous, this can disguise important conflict and negotiation behind the scenes (Gandhi, Noble and Svolik 2020: 1367). That should not necessarily give hope to those who strive for an autonomous parliament in Russia, able and willing to act as a check on executive power. But it does mean that analysts of Russian politics cannot simply ignore the national parliament. This chapter provides an overview of the profound changes in the Russian parliament’s place in post-Soviet politics, looking at important legislative functions that comparative scholarship has noted for assemblies in both democracies and non-democracies.

Parliamentary power in post-Soviet Russia

In the 1990s, the Federal Assembly (1994–) and its predecessor, the Supreme Soviet, achieved a level of influence in political life that has never been matched by representative institutions in modern Russian history. During this first post-Soviet decade, legislators enjoyed a relatively high degree of autonomy in law-making, and the organisational arrangements and cultures of legislative institutions were shaped in large part by the actions of their members. Despite fears that the 1993 Constitution – adopted in the shadow of the violent October constitutional crisis that year – would lead to “fig-leaf parliamentarism” (Holmes 1993–94: 124), the second convocation (1996–99) of the State Duma – the lower chamber of the Assembly – saw a plurality for the Communist Party (KPRF). This meant that President Boris Yeltsin was far from able to dominate the legislature: executive control of parliament was constrained, and inter-branch relationships took the form of a complex mixture of conflict and bargaining (Chaisty 2005). Notwithstanding their many shortcomings, Russia’s early parliaments were, therefore, a counterweight to executive power and provided a focal point for political activity in the country (Chaisty and Schleiter 2002).

In contrast, the first two decades of the twenty-first century were defined by executive dominance of the Russian parliament. This was a consequence of two important developments. The first was the formation of pro-executive parliamentary majorities in the State Duma. This political achievement gave the Kremlin under Presidents Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev levels of

parliamentary support that were unachievable during Boris Yeltsin's rule, and it enabled the executive branch to overcome the parliamentary resilience of the 1990s. This change of direction was achieved at the Third Duma (2000-03) with the formation of a presidential coalition from four parliamentary party groups.¹ And this coalition formed the basis for a new Kremlin party, United Russia, which went on to win majorities – or super-majorities – in the 2003, 2007, 2011, 2016, and 2021 parliamentary elections. The second important development was the removal of powerful regional leaders from the upper house, the Federation Council. This change greatly weakened the political importance of the second chamber, and it eroded the relative autonomy that senators had enjoyed in the last years of Yeltsin's rule.² In light of this neutering of the upper chamber, the State Duma is by far the more important of the two chambers and is the focus of this chapter. The sections below trace these changing parliamentary dynamics over time by looking at the main functions and roles performed by legislatures: from law-making to oversight, and from representation and elite recruitment to popular approval and legitimacy.

Law-making

The effects of executive dominance are most clearly visible in the legislative activities of the Russian parliament. The formation of reliable pro-executive majorities produced a disciplined and loyal assembly – a useful asset when all federal legislation is constitutionally required to be approved by the legislature. One clear indication of the shift from conflict to control is the change in the frequency with which legislative initiatives adopted by the State Duma have been rejected or returned to the lower chamber by the Federation Council or the president. Figure 1 shows the frequency of such “veto” cases by year. The pattern presented is a stark demonstration of quite how different both inter-chamber and executive-legislative relations were in the 1990s compared to the 2000s. The second half of the 1990s saw clear conflict, with a rising number of “vetoes”. But politics under Putin saw a dramatic reduction in open conflict in and with the parliament. Although cases of “vetoes” did not entirely disappear in later years, these did not necessarily reflect policy disputes between chambers and across branches: the executive sometimes used this institutional mechanism to block bills that proved to be more unpopular in society than anticipated (Chaisty 2012: 96).

¹ This coalition was formed in spring 2001 from the Unity, Fatherland-All Russia, People's Deputy, and Russia's Regions parliamentary party groups.

² Although the term “senator” has been frequently used colloquially to refer to members of the Federation Council, an amendment to Article 95 of the 1993 Constitution – made along with many other changes in 2020 – introduced the term into the constitutional text itself, thereby formalising its usage.

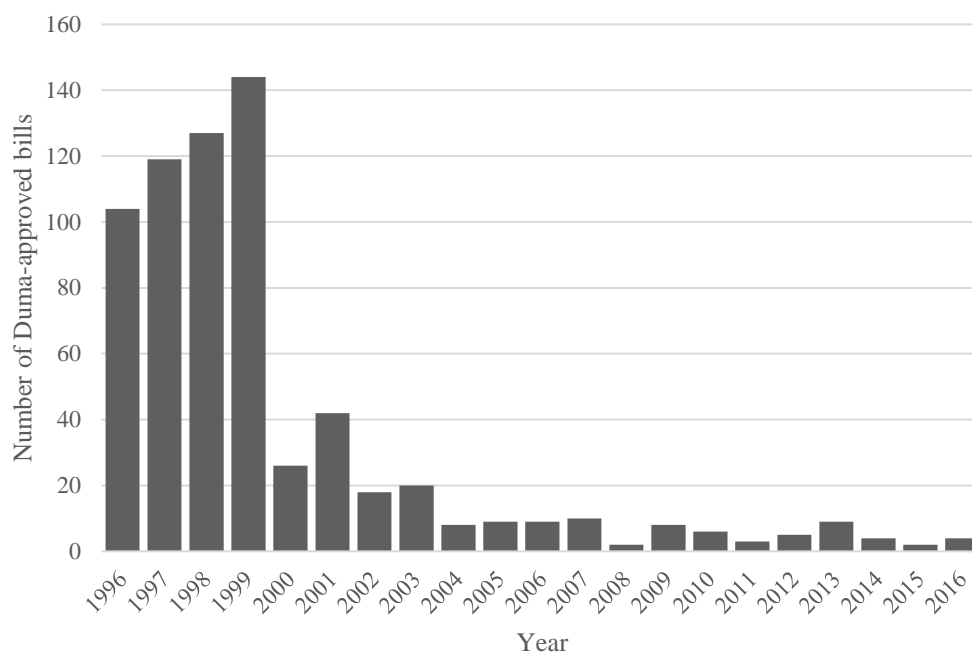


Figure 1: Yearly number of legislative initiatives adopted by the State Duma that were then rejected or returned by the Federation Council or the president.³

Trends in the passage of yearly budget bills also help provide a general over-time picture. Between 2001 and 2015, draft budgets passed from Duma introduction to presidential signature quicker; were debated less on the Duma floor; and saw fewer changes made to the bills’ main texts (Noble 2017a: 506–507). The picture is, again, one of the legislature playing a less muscular role in the law-making process – of introducing less resistance. Part of this might be explained by negotiations moving to the pre-parliamentary stage of law-making in so-called “zero readings”, where the Government consulted with United Russia deputies to iron out points before the relative publicity of Duma consideration. Regardless of the reasons for the smoother passage of budget bills, the general dynamics in later years contrast starkly with the protracted, public battles that characterised budgetary politics in the 1990s. In the words of one deputy: “Earlier when we discussed the budget in the autumn session it was the norm for members of the budget committee to return home at two o’clock at night or in the morning. Would it be possible to observe that in the Duma today?” (quoted in Tagaeva, 2010). The answer to this rhetorical question is even clearer now than it was then: no.

Dominance over the parliament might suggest a unified executive. But that has not always been the case. And intra-executive factionalism has been one key source of outcomes that do not conform with “rubber stamp” expectations – that is, of the speedy, unanimous, uncritical adoption of bills supplied exclusively by the executive. For instance, bills proposed by the Government and the president have sometimes failed to become laws or have been heavily amended during passage through the Federal Assembly. Rather than a sign of inter-branch struggle and bargaining, many such cases can be traced to *intra-executive* policy disputes that spill over into the parliamentary phase of law-making (Noble 2020). The legislature acts, therefore, as an important “elite battleground” on which powerful interests and bureaucratic actors hash out their policy differences,

³ These figures are taken from the archived version of the State Duma’s website – <http://www.duma.gov.ru/legislative/statistics/> – which includes law-making statistics, running from the beginning of 1996 to the middle of 2017. Federal constitutional laws and treaty ratifications are excluded.

with deputies nodding through the resolutions to these disputes settled elsewhere by others but requiring ratification during the legislative stage of policymaking (Noble and Schulmann 2018).

But deputies are not completely passive. Although executive bills take precedence and rarely face serious obstacles, Russian parliamentarians are sometimes the formal sponsors of changes successfully made to executive initiatives (Krol 2017), as well as sponsors of whole bills. In the State Duma's seventh convocation (2016–21), for instance, State Duma deputies and Federation Council senators introduced around 53 percent of the 5,531 bills submitted overall (Egupets, Malaev and Kosenok 2021). Although it is not always possible to discern who is the first mover of legislative initiatives formally introduced by legislators, there is extensive evidence that deputies and senators lobby the interests of economic and state actors. Indeed, a 2019 investigation by Transparency International concluded that deputies "are often associated with specific commercial or non-commercial organisations, financial-industrial groups, and state or municipal organs of power, whose interests are affected by the bills they introduce" (Basmanova, Berezovskaya and Tel'nova 2019: 12). This finding is consistent with other studies showing the impact on legislative behaviour of parliamentarians' sectoral ties (Chaisty 2013). Analysing voting patterns on budget legislation in the State Duma's seventh convocation, Noah Dasanaïke (2021: 9), for instance, finds that "[d]eputies are more likely to vote in discord with the party apparatus when they previously held important positions in companies". It would be a mistake, then, to assume that Russian legislators always act as cookie cutter automatons, simply giving formal, unanimous assent to legislative initiatives supplied by the executive.

The volume of federal legislation has increased markedly over time (see Figure 2), with many of these laws introducing amendments to previous legislation. These amending laws sometimes result from haphazard responses to evolving policy issues, occasionally resulting in swift U-turns, given mistakes, unintended consequences, or opposition from affected stakeholders (Khmelnitskaya 2015). This legislative "inflation" – the "proliferation of many small and incoherent pieces of legislation" (Döring 2001: 147) – is likely a reflection, in part, of the executive's ease in passing legislation through a compliant Federal Assembly, something also highlighted by the notable increase in the velocity of law-making (Chaisty 2014). And this legislative instability clearly has negative consequences: as former Federation Council speaker, Sergei Mironov, has observed, "[i]t's difficult to talk about the supremacy of law if it changes or is repealed when something unsettles the Government" (quoted in Chaisty 2006: 199). This impression of the paucity of checks and balances on the executive, and resulting worrying effects, is also clear when considering formal oversight measures.

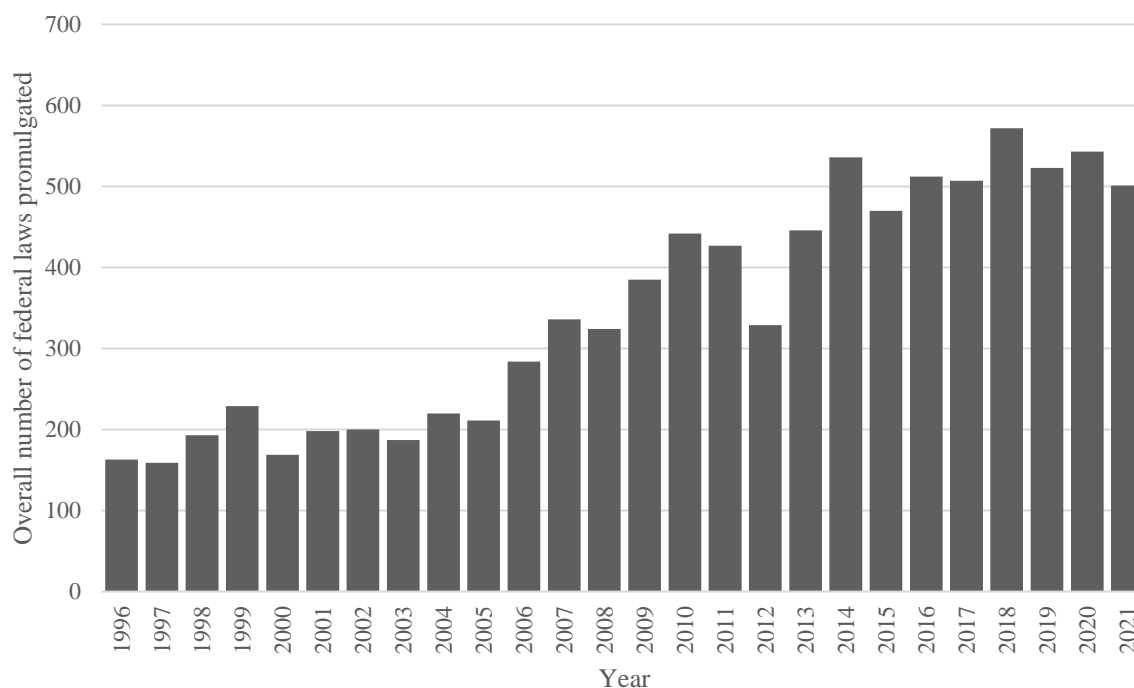


Figure 2: Total number of federal laws produced in Russia per year, 1996–2021.⁴

Oversight

The original version of the 1993 Constitution did not clearly specify the parliament’s powers of oversight. Certain provisions of the Constitution gave the parliament the scope to develop its powers in this area, such as the authority to appoint members of the Accounts Chamber – a body which has the power to audit the use of budgetary funds by the state bureaucracy – and the right to hold parliamentary hearings. But other mechanisms of oversight were not mentioned, such as questions to ministers in parliament, interpellations to government ministries (*zaprośy*), and investigations (see Remington 2008b).

In more recent times, the parliament’s powers of oversight have been formalised in a number of ways. For instance, legislation was passed in 2005 detailing rules relating to the conduct of parliamentary inquiries; amendments to the Russian Constitution in 2008 required the Government to submit an annual report on its activities to the State Duma, which is subject to questioning by legislators; 2013 saw the passage of legislation relating to parliamentary *kontrol’* (“oversight”); and a new article, Article 103.1, was inserted into the Constitution in 2020, enshrining the parliamentary authority of *kontrol’* for the first time.

In practice, however, these formal institutional changes have not resulted in more meaningfully effective oversight. The annual reporting procedure, for instance, has to date been little more than a platform for the prime minister to showcase the Government’s achievements – yet another manifestation of the unity of purpose created by United Russia’s dominance of the State Duma. There have, however, been some interesting exceptions. During a “Government hour” query session in the State Duma in 2019, speaker Vyacheslav Volodin grilled Minister of Economic Development Maksim Oreshkin, requiring the minister to come back at a later date when he was better prepared

⁴ Russian federal laws are numbered, with a reset to zero at the beginning of each calendar year. The total number of federal laws produced each year corresponds, therefore, to the number of the final federal law promulgated in a given year. These figures do not include federal constitutional laws.

to answer questions (Noble 2019). But beyond infrequent episodes like this, United Russia leaders have focused more on cooperation with the Government than on probing oversight, as an erstwhile head of the Central Executive Committee of the party, Andrei Vorob'ev, explained: "We don't control the Government, we cooperate with it. We engage in active dialogue and in contrast to previous Dumas this is without fisticuffs and other extravagant tricks" (quoted in Khamraev 2007).

It is still possible, however, to find quieter forms of oversight and criticism. The Accounts Chamber, for instance, releases occasionally scathing reports into the misspending of budget funds (Mereminskaya 2020). And, less visibly still, the State Duma's Legal Department occasionally writes critical reports on draft legislation introduced by the executive (Makutina 2015). In both cases, this critical scrutiny is based on technical expertise, rather than *political* factors – although the Accounts Chamber's authority was certainly boosted by the appointment of former finance minister, Alexei Kudrin, in 2018. Caricatures of total, slavish obedience to the Kremlin's diktats miss these subtler ways through which the executive is monitored and critiqued. But, absent a legislature with political heft and autonomy, this criticism and oversight are distinctly limited in their capacity to check executive power. And this is related, in part, to changes regarding the Russian parliament's representative function.

Representation and elite recruitment

Article 94 of the 1993 Constitution refers to the Federal Assembly as a "representative" as well as a "legislative" body. Article 95 then specifies the number of representatives in each of the two chambers. The State Duma has remained unchanged with 450 seats, although the electoral system for filling these seats has changed over time, moving from a mixed electoral system – with 225 seats filled through first-past-the-post races in geographical constituencies and 225 seats filled by party-list proportional representation (PR) – to a wholly PR system, and back again to a mixed system.

The picture for the Federation Council is more complicated. Broadly speaking, the upper chamber is meant to ensure regional representation in national-level decision-making, like in many bicameral systems. Under the 1993 Constitution, it has always been the case that two representatives from each federal subject take up seats in the Council. And this has resulted in a changing overall number of senators, as the number of federal subjects has changed over time. But constitutional amendments in 2014 and 2020 have also affected the *hypothetical* total number of senators. In 2014, the president gained the authority to appoint senators, with the number of such presidential appointees capped at 10 percent of the number of senators coming from the regions. In 2020, this cap was changed to "no more than 30", of which "no more than seven" could be appointed for life. In addition, presidents themselves gained the right to become lifetime senators on stepping down from office; they also reserved the right to decline taking up this position in the Federation Council. To date, however, all senators have been representatives of their respective regions.

There has also been variation in the mechanism for filling seats in the upper chamber: initially by direct election, then by *ex officio* membership for the heads of the legislative and executive branches of each region, then by appointments made by the two branches in each federal subject. So much have the principal-agent dynamics shifted over time that Cameron Ross and Rostislav Turovsky (2013: 59) argue that the Federation Council "effectively represents the federal government in the regions rather than providing the regions representation in federal policy-making". Incessant institutional tweaking has, it seems, turned legislators into chains in the "power vertical"; the desire for more central control by the Kremlin has undermined the ability of legislators to carry out their work as representatives of their constituents.

Again, however, that argument should not be taken too far. A small number of parliamentarians do play a visible, influential role in Russian politics. For instance, State Duma deputy Pavel Krasheninnikov and senator Andrei Klishas were central figures in the 2020 constitutional change project, including shepherding through implementation legislation (Noble and Petrov 2021). Russian media even periodically report the results of legislator “effectiveness” ratings, which purport to take into account factors such as parliamentarians’ law-making activity and their media presence (TASS 2021).

But does this effort pay off? Some deputies rise to positions of importance in parliament, such as Krasheninnikov and Klishas. Others move on to positions in the federal executive, as ministers, deputy ministers, or officials in the Government or the Presidential Administration (Ozerova 2021). And others still move to the regional level, including as governors – such as Sergei Furgal, who became Governor of Khabarovsk Krai in 2018, before his arrest in 2020 and replacement by another State Duma deputy, Mikhail Degtyarev. Other parliamentarians move into business roles or work for public and government relations firms. In fact, a study looking into the career pathways of State Duma deputies, drawing on data from 2004 to 2016, found that greater effort by legislators increased their chances of keeping their seats, but did not raise their chances of being promoted into an executive post – something that was, instead, influenced by personal connections and prior work experience (Shirikov 2021). And this has clear effects on how Russians view the national parliament.

Popular approval and legitimacy

“Parliament is not the place for discussions.” This one phrase – summarising comments made in December 2003 by then State Duma speaker, Boris Gryzlov – has come to distil for many the Federal Assembly’s peripheral place in Russian politics. In fact, the phrase has become a leitmotif of commentary on the State Duma, including by modifying it to signal putative change. Thus, early on in his speakership of the State Duma, Vyacheslav Volodin said that the Duma “should be a place for discussion” (*RIA Novosti* 2016). But this proved to be more rhetoric than reality, with many of Volodin’s early initiatives as speaker appearing to be driven more by a desire to enforce discipline in his new institutional domain than to encourage meaningful debate (Noble 2017b). Indeed, analysis released in July 2021 by *IStories* and *Znak.com* – two Russian investigative journalism websites – provided evidence that parliament was quite literally not a place for discussion for some deputies: during the State Duma’s seventh convocation, 22 deputies did not say a single word in the lower chamber’s plenary hall (Anin and Plyusnina 2021).

This all feeds into popular perceptions of the legislature. And the picture is not pretty: in December 2021, Levada Center polling data suggested that 57 percent of Russians did not approve of the State Duma’s activities, versus 41 percent who did (Levada Center 2022). This changed, however, following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine: in March 2022, 59 percent of respondents said they approved of the Duma’s activities, with 36 saying they disapproved. The only time before that when a higher percentage of Levada respondents have approved of the lower chamber’s activities than disapproved was after Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014. During this period, nominally opposition parties with parliamentary seats – most notably, the KPRF; the confusingly named Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR); and A Just Russia⁵ (collectively referred to as the

⁵ Following a merger in 2021 with the “For Truth” and “Patriots of Russia” parties, the party was renamed “A Just Russia – For Truth”.

“systemic”, co-opted opposition) – united in their support of the Kremlin’s actions in a very visible “rally ‘round the flag” effect, which was dubbed the “Crimean consensus” (Noble 2017b).

This period of unity jarred with dynamics only a few years previously, following elections for the State Duma’s sixth convocation in December 2011. Widespread allegations of fraud brought an unprecedented number of Russians onto the streets in the “For Fair Elections” movement. According to the official results, United Russia just missed out on securing 50 percent of the vote, but still won a simple majority of seats. Some opposition deputies were emboldened by the protest mood and United Russia’s loss of a super-majority – so much so that they tried to filibuster a repressive legislative initiative proposing to ramp up punishment for those deemed to have violated rules regulating protests (Noble and Schulmann 2018, 55–56). But this defiant spirit from opposition deputies was short-lived. The State Duma’s leadership rode roughshod over the lower chamber’s standing orders to overcome the filibuster – and, more broadly, the Duma quickly gained the reputation as a “mad printer”, hastily producing a wide range of repressive legislation, including relating to so-called “foreign agents” and “gay propaganda” (*BBC News Russian* 2013).

Instead of providing a platform for debate between a wide range of voices, the Federal Assembly is often used as a platform to demonstrate regime support – and thereby bolster legitimacy. For example, on 22 February 2022, both chambers voted unanimously in support of “friendship, cooperation, and mutual assistance” treaties with the Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics – something the Federation Council speaker, Valentina Matvienko, called a “very important, possibly historic decision” (*BBC News Russian* 2022). It is certainly not the case that all legislative votes are unanimous, but, given United Russia’s super-majority in the State Duma, the Kremlin can afford nominally opposition parties voting against certain proposals, particularly when the symbolism of national unity is less important.

All legislatures function to some degree as stages for political theatre. A key variable, though, is the degree to which this theatre is scripted or unscripted. One incident that was obviously highly choreographed – in spite of official statements to the contrary – was the intervention of Valentina Tereshkova in the State Duma’s plenary hall during the second reading of Putin’s constitutional reform bill in March 2020. The Duma deputy (and first woman in space) proposed an amendment allowing the sitting president to run again in 2024 and stay in power until 2036. Despite claiming that the Russian people had implored her to propose the amendment, subsequent investigative reporting showed that the idea originated within the executive (Vinokurov and Makutina 2020; Pertsev 2020). In effect, the Kremlin used a proxy parliamentarian to propose an idea, in the hope – one imagines – that it would give the amendment the authenticity of an initiative appearing to come from the people, rather than the self-serving change of a president set on staying in power. And this shows how the Federal Assembly is still used to provide a veneer of legitimacy for the political system, with the executive’s policy agenda realised through federal legislation.

Conclusion

When announcing his project to amend the 1993 Constitution on 15 January 2020, President Vladimir Putin stated that the changes would, among other things, “increase the role and significance of the country’s parliament, the role and significance of the State Duma” (Putin, 2020). But, to the surprise of very few, this has not happened. One clear demonstration relates to the role of the State Duma in the passage of legislation implementing the 2020 constitutional changes. Some key committee discussions simply did not take place – and, following resistance to the passage of certain bills by KPRF deputies, the president’s plenipotentiary representative in the Duma, Garri Minkh, intimated that Communist legislators should stop their critical scrutiny of changes already

approved by Russians in the “all-Russian vote” that ended on 1 July 2020 – or else give up their mandates (Noble and Petrov 2021: 141).

One much-touted change relates to the State Duma’s role in the formation of the Government. According to the original version of Article 111 of the 1993 Constitution, for instance, the president appoints the prime minister “with the agreement of the State Duma” – but a 2020 amendment modifies this language, meaning that the appointment of the premier only takes place “after the approval of their candidacy by the State Duma”. Although this was seen by some as superficially empowering the State Duma, other amendments clearly “strengthened rather than weakened the powers of the president” (Teague 2020, 319–20). For example, whereas the president was previously required to dissolve the Duma and hold parliamentary elections after three rejections of a prime ministerial candidate, a 2020 constitutional amendment means that the president simply has the “right” to do so. This change allows the president to appoint their desired prime minister in the face of resistance from the lower chamber but without incurring the disruption associated with dissolution. Besides, with the current unity of purpose between the executive and legislative branches in Russia, this is a decidedly hypothetical situation.

It is difficult, in fact, to exaggerate the role United Russia plays as the “party of power”, allowing the Kremlin to dominate the legislature. Indeed, research on Russian law-making highlights how executive power has its limits when the president lacks political support in the legislature, even within the confines of the 1993 Constitution (Remington, Smith and Haspel 1998; Shevchenko and Golosov 2001; Chaisty 2006). And that makes retaining a United Russia (super-) majority vital if the executive wants to continue realising its legislative agenda with ease and prevent needling scrutiny from anti-executive parliamentary forces. This is the basic reason why the authorities invest so many resources and so much effort into achieving the electoral results they want by unlevelling the electoral playing field (Noble 2021).

The Kremlin has clearly focused on controlling the legislature. But one result of this is the legislature’s neutered role as a source of information on, and initiatives from, society. And that is one reason why the Public Chamber was created in 2005 – as a venue for the articulation of ideas from civil society. This “para-constitutional”, “substitute” institution (Petrov, Lipman and Hale 2014: 16) was, in effect, created as an ersatz parliament: “[w]ork that should properly have been the preserve of the State *Duma* was transferred to this new body, a type of non-political parliament” (Sakwa 2008: 889). Indeed, the Chamber holds “zero readings” and conducts scrutiny on certain legislative initiatives. Although there are still instances when non-governmental organisations can cooperate somewhat fruitfully with legislative and other state actors on legislation (Bindman, Kulmala and Bogdanova 2019), the Federal Assembly in general does not function as a bridge between Russian civil society and the state.

Does all of this mean that parliamentarism simply does not exist in Russia? According to the head of the Russian Presidential Administration during the constitutional crisis of October 1993, Sergei Filatov, “[p]arliamentarism in Russia only has a very brief history. In fact, it is limited to the period from 1990 to 1993, because that was the time when there was division of power and, particularly important, the country’s parliament was playing the leading role in our life. This is what parliamentarism means” (quoted in *Interfax* 2006). And yet, despite modern-day assertions that it is not worth paying attention to legislative politics in Russia, it *is* still important to study the Federal Assembly. Russia’s national parliament is certainly not the centre of decision-making. And the importance of the Assembly does not lie in its ability and willingness to check executive actors, nor does it lie in its role as a venue for vigorous, critical debate between democratically elected

representatives. But we should not discount the Russian parliament simply because it does not function like legislatures in democracies.

One such difference relates to the place of nominally opposition parties. In the State Duma's eighth convocation – which started in 2021 and is scheduled to sit until 2026 – United Russia deputies hold the chairmanships of only 17 of the 32 committees, even though the party has a much higher proportion of seats (over 70 percent). This mismatch likely reflects one way by which systemic opposition parties are co-opted. Indeed, research on regional legislatures in Russia finds that the co-optation of systemic opposition parties through committee chairmanship appointments – and the rent-seeking opportunities that these enable – results in fewer street protests organised by these parties (Reuter and Robertson 2015). This all means that paying attention to the legislative behaviour of parties does not constitute falling for the façade of a decorative opposition; rather, it is an important part of understanding how nominally opposition party organisations fit into the broader governance of a non-democratic political system.

The “rubber stamp” moniker represents an important reality – of legislative subservience and executive dominance. The president faces no meaningful resistance from the Federal Assembly, and occasions that appear to show legislative defiance of the Government are either political grandstanding rooted in broader parliamentary impotence or they reflect intra-executive policy splits. But that means that, by focussing on parliamentary behaviour, we can gain a rare window onto debates and relationships that are often beyond reach in the corridors of the Presidential Administration and the Government. As long as Russia maintains the constitutional requirement for all federal legislation to pass through the Federal Assembly, the parliament and the legislative stage of policy-making will remain important as a venue and opportunity, respectively, for the resolution of policy differences, even if legislators themselves play a decidedly secondary role.

References

- Anin, R. and M. Plyusnina (2021), “*Deputat molchit – sluzhba idet*”, *IStories* 1 July. <https://istories.media/investigations/2021/07/01/deputat-molchit--sluzhba-idet/>
- Basmanova, E., O. Berezovskaya and S. Tel'nova (2019), *Lobbizm v Gosudarstvennoi Dume Federal'nogo Sobraniya (sed'moi sozvyv)*. Transparency International Russia. https://dumabingo.ru/Лоббизм_в_Госдуме.pdf
- BBC News Russian* (2013), “*Gosduma: ‘vzbesivshiysya printer’ ili Rossiya v miniatyure*”, 28 February. https://www.bbc.com/russian/russia/2013/03/130303_duma_crazy_printer
- BBC News Russian* (2022), “*Gosduma i Sovet Federatsii edinoglasno odobrili dogovory s DNR i LNR*”, 22 February. <https://www.bbc.com/russian/news-60475345>
- Bindman, E., M. Kulmala and E. Bogdanova (2019), “NGOs and the Policy-Making Process in Russia: The Case of Child Welfare Reform”, *Governance* 32, 2: 207–222.
- Chaisty, P. (2005), “Majority Control and Executive Dominance: Parliament-President Relations in Putin's Russia” in A. Pravda (ed), *Leading Russia: Putin in Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press): 119-37.
- Chaisty, P. (2006), *Legislative Politics and Economic Power in Russia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan).
- Chaisty, P. (2008), “The Legislative Effects of Presidential Partisan Powers in Post-Communist Russia”, *Government & Opposition* 43, 3: 424–53.
- Chaisty, P. (2012), “The Federal Assembly and the Power Vertical” in G. Gill and J. Young (eds), *Routledge Handbook of Russian Politics and Society* (London: Routledge): 92-101.

- Chaisty, P. (2013), “The Preponderance and Effects of Sectoral Ties in the State *Duma*”, *Europe-Asia Studies* 65, 4: 717–36.
- Chaisty, P. (2014), “Presidential Dynamics and Legislative Velocity in Russia, 1994–2007”, *East European Politics* 30, 4: 588–601.
- Chaisty, P. and P. Schleiter (2002), “Productive but Not Valued: The Russian State Duma, 1994–2001”, *Europe-Asia Studies* 54, 5: 701–24.
- Dasanaïke, N. (2021), “Businessperson Deputies and Party Cohesion: Evidence from the Russian State Duma”, *Party Politics*, Online: 1–10 <https://doi.org/10.1177/13540688211025176>
- Döring, H. (2001), “Parliamentary Agenda Control and Legislative Outcomes in Western Europe”, *Legislative Politics Quarterly* 26, 1: 145–65.
- Egupets, A., M. Malaev and A. Kosenok (2021), “*Sdali sessiyu i sozyv*”, *Kommersant* 19 June. <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4859045>
- Gandhi, J., B. Noble and M. Svolik (2020), “Legislatures and Legislative Politics Without Democracy”, *Comparative Political Studies* 53, 9: 1359–79.
- Gel'man, V. (2006), “From ‘Feckless Pluralism’ to ‘Dominant Power Politics’? The Transformation of Russia’s Party System”, *Democratization* 12, 4: 545–61.
- Haggard, S. and M. McCubbins (2001), “Introduction: Political Institutions and the Determinants of Public Policy” in S. Haggard and M. McCubbins (eds), *Presidents, Parliaments, and Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press): 1–26.
- Holmes, S. (1993–94), “Superpresidentialism and Its Problems”, *East European Constitutional Review* 2, 4 and 3, 1: 123–26.
- Interfax* (2006), “Press Conference with a Group of State Duma Deputies and Scientists on Civil Society and Development of Parliamentarism in Russia”, 29 May. <https://advance.lexis.com/api/permalink/5fd8455b-0491-418d-9e59-ad8d0b861f37/>
- Khamraev, V. (2007), “*Zakonodatel'naya vlast' otlichilas' ispolnitel'nostyu*”, *Kommersant* 20 November. <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/827303>
- Khmelnitskaya, M. (2015), *The Policy-Making Process and Social Learning in Russia: The Case of Housing Policy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan).
- Krol, G. (2017), “Legislative Performance of the Russian State Duma: The Role of Parliament in an Authoritarian Regime”, *East European Politics* 33, 4: 450–71.
- Levada Center (2022), *Indikator*. <https://www.levada.ru/indikatory/>
- Makutina, M. (2015), “*Popravka dlya bit'ya*”, *RBK* 8 October. <https://www.rbc.ru/society/08/10/2015/56bc96059a7947299f72ba71>
- Mereminskaya, E. (2020), “*Schetnaya palata raskritikovala rabotu ispolnitel'noi vlasti*”, *Vedomosti* 6 February. <https://www.vedomosti.ru/economics/articles/2020/02/06/822363-schetnaya-palata>
- Noble, B. (2017a), “Amending Budget Bills in the Russian State Duma”, *Post-Communist Economies*, 29, 4: 505–22.
- Noble, B. (2017b), “The State Duma, the ‘Crimean Consensus’, and Volodin’s Reforms” in A. Barbashin, O. Irisova, F. Burkhardt and E. Wyciszkievicz (eds), *A Successful Failure: Russia After Crime(a)* (Warsaw: Centre for Polish-Russian Dialogue and Understanding): 103–117.
- Noble, B. (2019), “Volodin’s Duma: Cabinet 2.0.”, *Riddle* 23 December. <https://ridl.io/en/volodin-s-duma-cabinet-2-0/>
- Noble, B. (2020), “Authoritarian Amendments: Legislative Institutions as Intraexecutive Constraints in Post-Soviet Russia”, *Comparative Political Studies* 53, 9: 1417–54.
- Noble, B. (2021), “The Russian State Duma Elections: Costs for the Kremlin”, *ZOiS Spotlight* 15 September. <https://en.zois-berlin.de/publications/the-russian-state-duma-elections-costs-for-the-kremlin>

- Noble, B. and N. Petrov (2021), “From Constitution to Law: Implementing the 2020 Russian Constitutional Changes”, *Russian Politics* 6, 1: 130–52.
- Noble, B. and E. Schulmann (2018), “Not Just a Rubber Stamp: Parliament and Lawmaking” in D. Treisman (ed), *The New Autocracy: Information, Politics, and Policy in Putin’s Russia* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press): 49-82.
- Ozerova, M. (2021), “Plany byvshikh deputatov: ‘Glavnoe, chtoby zarplata ne nizhe 400 tysyach’”, *Moskovskii Komsomolets* 4 October. <https://www.mk.ru/politics/2021/10/04/plany-byvshikh-deputatov-glavnoe-chtoby-zarplata-ne-nizhe-400-tysyach.html>
- Pertsev, A. (2020), “Gosduma neozhidanno dlya sebya obespechila Putina novymi prezidentskimi srokami”, *Meduza* 10 March. <https://meduza.io/feature/2020/03/10/gosduma-neozhidanno-dlya-sebya-obespechila-putina-novymi-prezidentskimi-srokami>
- Petrov, N., M. Lipman and H. Hale (2014), “Three Dilemmas of Hybrid Regime Governance: Russia from Putin to Putin”, *Post-Soviet Affairs* 30, 1: 1–26.
- Putin, V. (2020), “Poslanie Prezidenta Federal’nomu Sobraniyu.” Kremlin 15 January. <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/62582>
- Remington, T. (2007), “The Russian Federal Assembly, 1994-2004”, *The Journal of Legislative Studies* 13, 1: 121-41.
- Remington, T. (2008a), “Patronage and the Party of Power: President-Parliament Relations Under Vladimir Putin”, *Europe-Asia Studies* 60, 6: 959-87.
- Remington, T. (2008b), “Separation of Powers and Legislative Oversight in Russia” in R. Stapanhurst, R. Pelizzo, D. Olson and L. von Trapp (eds), *Legislative Oversight and Budgeting: A World Perspective* (Washington DC: World Bank Institute): 173-82.
- Remington, T., S. Smith and M. Haspel (1998), “Decrees, Laws and Inter-Branch Relations in the Russian Federation”, *Post-Soviet Affairs* 14, 4: 287-322.
- Reuter, O. J. (2017), *The Origins of Dominant Parties: Building Authoritarian Institutions in Post-Soviet Russia* (New York: Cambridge University Press).
- Reuter, O. J. and G. Robertson (2015), “Legislatures, Cooptation, and Social Protest in Contemporary Authoritarian Regimes”, *The Journal of Politics* 77, 1: 235–48.
- RIA Novosti (2016), “Volodin schitaet, chto Gosduma dolzhna byt’ mestom dlya diskusii”, 5 October. <https://ria.ru/20161005/1478556872.html>
- Ross, C. and R. Turovsky (2013), “The Representation of Political and Economic Elites in the Russian Federation Council”, *Demokratizatsiya*, 21, 1: 59–88.
- Sakwa, R. (2008), “Putin’s Leadership: Character and Consequences”, *Europe-Asia Studies* 60, 6: 879–97.
- Shevchenko, I. and G. Golosov (2001), “Legislative Activism of Russian Duma Deputies, 1996-1999”, *Europe-Asia Studies* 53, 2: 239-61.
- Shirikov, A. (2021), “Who Gets Ahead in Authoritarian Parliaments? The Case of the Russian State Duma”, *The Journal of Legislative Studies Online*, 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13572334.2021.1940435>
- Tagaeva, L. (2010), “Nizhnyaya palata No. 5”, *Novaya Gazeta* 24 April. <https://novayagazeta.ru/articles/2010/04/25/3612-nizhnyaya-palata-5>
- TASS (2021), “Opredeleny lidery reitinga effektivnosti deputatov v nachale goda”, 29 March. <https://tass.ru/politika/11017169>
- Teague, E. (2020), “Russia’s Constitutional Reforms of 2020”, *Russian Politics* 5, 3: 301–28.
- Vinokurov, A. and M. Makutina (2020), “S popravkoi na reshayushchii golos”, *Kommersant* 14 March. <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4289868>