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**The Limited Agency and Life-cycles of Personalised Dominant Parties in the post-Soviet space: the cases of United Russia and Nur Otan**

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Vladimir Putin's United Russia and Nursultan Nazabayev's Nur Otan represent a distinctive type of dominant party due to their personalist nature and dependence on their presidential patrons. Such personalism deprives these parties of the agency to perform key roles in authoritarian reproduction typically expected of dominant parties, such as resource distribution, policy-making and mobilising mass support for the regime. Instead United Russia and Nur Otan have contributed to authoritarian consolidation by securing the president's legislative agenda, stabilising elites to ensure their patron's hold on power and assisting in perpetuating a discourse around the national leader. However, because these parties lack the agency to reproduce themselves, to entrench their position and to play more than a supportive role in regime consolidation the life-span of such personalist dominant parties is likely to be significantly shorter than that of dominant parties.

**Keywords:** political parties; authoritarianism; personalism; dominant parties; Russia; Kazakhstan

In the post-Soviet political space regime-centred political parties have monopolised legislative and electoral arenas.<sup>1</sup> These parties represent the interests of ruling elites, typically the president, and are characterised by shallow organisational structures and weak societal linkages.<sup>2</sup> The literature suggests that dominant parties in authoritarian regimes act to support autocratic rule by distributing resources and benefits among opposition elites and the wider public to build support for the regime.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, their dominant position in the legislature enables them to offer policy concessions to co-opt potential rivals into the regime through power-sharing deals.<sup>4</sup> The cases of Vladimir Putin's United Russia and president of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev's, Nur Otan (Light of Fatherland),<sup>5</sup> suggest dominant parties in the post-Soviet space do not possess the resource distribution or policy-making powers prized by authoritarian rulers elsewhere and lack the agency to perform such

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functions. Instead in Russia and Kazakhstan these competencies lay outside the control of dominant parties and inside the purview of the state and key state actors. If dominant parties in Russia and Kazakhstan are not endowed with the agency to perform the archetypal duties typified by the experience of dominant parties in other authoritarian states, what functions do they serve their respective autocratic patrons and what is their contribution to authoritarian consolidation and reproduction? To explore this issue the article addresses three questions: 1) how can we best conceptualise dominant parties in the post-Soviet space and what distinguishes them from dominant parties in authoritarian regimes in other parts of the world? 2) What purposes do these parties serve their political masters and to what extent do they contribute towards authoritarian consolidation? 3) And to what extent do they contribute to authoritarian reproduction in the long-term?

These questions are addressed by pursuing a qualitative, multi-method approach to data collection incorporating a review of the existing literature, official publications, surveys of local media sources 2005-11 plus elite interviews in Moscow, Almaty and Astana. 29 In-depth interviews with a range of experts were conducted during July-October 2011 and the authors also drew on their rich data set of over 80 interviews with parliamentarians, activists and analysts undertaken in 2006-7 for related projects.<sup>6</sup> All data was triangulated with at least one other source to ensure internal validity.

We argue United Russia and Nur Otan are personalised forms of dominant parties distinguishable from typical dominant parties such as the *Institutional Revolutionary Party* (PRI) in Mexico, the United Malaysia National Organisation (UNMO) and the People's Action Party (PAP) in Singapore, due to their reduced agency. United Russia and Nur Otan are not the channels through which resources and benefits are distributed, and neither do they possess powers of policy making. Instead they were established to bolster the consolidation of Putin and Nazarbayev's power. While they have no policy-making role, these parties did support authoritarian consolidation by serving as imprimaturs for presidential policy in the legislature.<sup>7</sup> While they lack powers of resource distribution, they have aided regime consolidation by minimising elite conflict and strengthening elite support. Furthermore, while the parties have a limited role in electoral mobilisation, they have promoted a discourse concerning the centrality of their respective leaders to the stability and prosperity of the nation. By these functions United Russia and Nur Otan have contributed towards authoritarian consolidation.

While scholars are broadly in agreement that Kazakhstan is authoritarian<sup>8</sup>, controversy remains over the regime categorisation of Russia, with some arguing for a hybrid definition<sup>9</sup> though many scholars now categorise Russia as authoritarian.<sup>10</sup> Indeed Russia has had the same Freedom House designation of ‘Not Free’ and the same political rights (6) and civil liberties (5) scores as Kazakhstan since 2005. Moreover, both states fit Linz’s definition of ‘political systems with limited [...] political pluralism, without elaborate and guiding ideology, but with distinctive mentalities, without extensive mobilisation [...] and in which a leader [...] exercises power within formally ill-defined limits but actually quite predictable ones’.<sup>11</sup> While we suggest United Russia and Nur Otan have provided support in consolidating authoritarian rule in Russia and Kazakhstan, their lack of agency, primarily explained by their umbilical ties to Putin and Nazarbayev, undermines their ability to contribute to authoritarian reproduction in the long-term. The unravelling and declining popularity of United Russia during the 2011-12 electoral cycle is evidence of this. The case of Nur Otan is slightly different. Due to the harder variant of authoritarianism in Kazakhstan, coupled with its unitary system, and the overwhelming extent to which President Nazarbayev has extinguished any political space for opposition, his control of the political system, and thus Nur Otan’s monopolisation of the electoral and legislative space, will remain unchallenged while he remains in power. However, the party’s lack of autonomy will undermine its ability to aid authoritarian durability in a post-Nazarbayev Kazakhstan. These parties’ lack of agency, due to their overt personalism, distinguishes them from archetypal dominant parties and shortens their life-cycle by limiting their contribution to the reproduction of the regime.

This article is broken into five sections. First we conceptually evaluate United Russia and Nur Otan as ‘dominant’ parties. The three sections which follow then explore how United Russia and Nur Otan fall short in the functions typically expected of dominant parties. However, in each section we argue the parties perform other functions which served to consolidate authoritarian rule. The final section explores more explicitly the differences between the two parties and how their lack of agency and regime dynamics impacts on their ability to reproduce authoritarianism and how this influences their prospects for survival.

## **Dominant, Hegemonic or Personalist? Ruling Parties in post-Soviet Authoritarian Regimes**

Dominant parties promote the survival of non-democratic regimes by encouraging power sharing and cooperation among ruling elites in an effort to deter rebellion.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, analysis has shown that non-democratic regimes which feature dominant parties have proven the most durable form of authoritarian rule.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, the functions dominant parties serve are evidently important given they are linked to authoritarian durability. Yet, scholars are working from the assumption that dominant parties possess independent agency in order to affect causality in supporting regime survival. For example, Magaloni and Kricheli propose two broad roles parties perform in non-democratic regimes: ‘a bargaining function, whereby the dictator uses the party to bargain with the elites and minimise potential threats to their stability; and a mobilizing function, whereby dictators use the party machine to mobilize mass support’.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, dominant parties are assumed to have agency through allocating rents, economic transfers, resources and positions to potential challengers, and the wider public (for the purposes of mass mobilisation). The subsequent hope is that in performing these roles the party engenders regime loyalty and stability.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, dominant parties are assumed to affect regime stability by being the channel in which intertemporal power sharing deals can take place by offering outsiders, oppositional elites and potential challengers limited control over policy.<sup>16</sup> To perform these roles successfully a party needs to maximise its monopoly of state resources and it is the politicisation of public resources through a party which sustains not just the authoritarian regime but also the party’s preeminent position.<sup>17</sup> Yet, to be able to offer policy concessions to potential rival elites, dominant party elites have to be actively involved in making policy. Similarly, in order to distribute jobs, resources and rents in an effort to establish credible power-sharing between rival elites, the party has to be in possession and control of jobs, resources and rents. United Russia and Nur Otan do not possess the agency to construct policy and distribute resources, and this brings into question the extent to which we can consider them dominant parties as typically understood in the literature.

Some scholars have been moved to suggest United Russia is an archetypal dominant party. Reuter, for example, argues that it ‘is increasingly being used as a channel for elite recruitment, a forum for distributing rents and a tool for managing elite conflict’.<sup>18</sup> However, other scholars while acknowledging United Russia’s and Nur Otan’s electoral dominance

point to their lack of influence over personnel and policy and reject their classification as a dominant party.<sup>19</sup> Gel'man and Remington, while describing United Russia as a dominant party, have both preferred to develop their own conceptualisations.<sup>20</sup> For instance Gel'man defines a dominant party as:

a party that is established by and closely tied to the rulers of an authoritarian regime; freely employing state power and resources to maintain its dominance, and uses extra-constitutional means to control the outcomes of elections and beyond.<sup>21</sup>

Gelman's definition suggests the dominant party in Russia takes on a more instrumental form as it is 'nothing more than the agent of its principals'.<sup>22</sup> Such a conceptualisation takes account of the party's lack of agency and also shares similarities with Sartori's classic definition of a hegemonic party:

A hegemonic party neither allows for a formal nor a de facto competition for power. Other parties are permitted to exist, but as second class, licensed parties; for they are not permitted to compete with the hegemonic party in antagonistic terms and on an equal basis. Not only does alternation not occur in fact; it cannot occur, since the possibility of a rotation in power is not envisaged.<sup>23</sup>

Sartori's definition captures the formal institutional context of the Russian and Kazakh political systems. In both cases there is limited multi-partism as other parties are allowed to compete, and legally there is a competition for power. Roberts adapts the concept to emphasise the party's lack of agency, referring to United Russia as a 'virtual' hegemonic party.<sup>24</sup> However, what is not fully captured in any definition of the dominant or hegemonic party in relation to United Russia and Nur Otan is the personalised nature of these parties. Both represent a form of personalised dominant party. They are parties which are inextricably tied to the personalist leadership of the country. They possess no autonomy in policy-making from their patron and are established by either elites close to the leader or the leader themselves as an organisation to support their leadership in key national and regional institutions (national legislature, regional government etc.). They have no ideology or programme separate from the personalist leader and while they operate in a multi-party context, elections are not genuinely competitive.

The Russian and Kazakh party systems have been shaped ‘from above’ and both regimes invested in building a personalised dominant party in the 2000s that could assist with controlling the political sphere. Both regimes used formal means like electoral legislation and the laws ‘on political parties’ plus informal practices (‘political technologies’, selective prosecutions) to diminish the competitiveness of elections and maximise the parties’ dominance.<sup>25</sup> In this sense, Kazakhstan and Russia embody a personalist form of authoritarianism.<sup>26</sup>

It is precisely this personalist form of authoritarianism found in Russia and Kazakhstan which defines both United Russia and Nur Otan’s lack of agency and which distinguishes them from typical dominant parties. While recognising that agency is a contested concept, here it is understood as the ability of an individual, institution, or organisation, to act with a degree of freedom and without constraint to reproduce or shape wider social processes and structures.<sup>27</sup> In the case of dominant parties, agency is presumed to exist where parties are able to shape policy or distribute resources among competing elite groups thus contributing towards moulding the political environment, particularly regime stability. For instance, a typical dominant party such as the People’s Action Party in Singapore exercises agency by the role it plays in supplying social services to the population, while in Malaysia the United Malays National Organisation has evinced agency by being the conduit through which resources are allocated and policy making occurs.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, what is of central importance is that these are parties which have a degree of independence from their leaders. Both parties, along with many other examples of dominant parties (e.g. PRI in Mexico, ANC in South Africa and the Liberal Democratic Party in Japan) have continued to survive and thrive even after their founder leaves the political scene. The cases of United Russia and Nur Otan are different. They do not possess the independent agency to allocate resources or devise policy. They are inextricably bound to their respective leaders and possess no separate identity; they are essentially the personal instrument of the leader. This is what marks them out as distinct from typical dominant parties.

The parties’ lack of agency goes some way to explaining their limitations in relation to policy making, resource distribution and mass mobilisation. However, as we discuss below, they have performed important roles in relation to consolidating the authoritarian rule of Putin and Nazarbayev through acting as legislative imprimaturs for presidential policy, as opposed to policy making, by marginalising alternative powerful independent actors and offering elite stability, as opposed to resource distribution, and by engendering a discourse regarding the

centrality of the leader to the nation as opposed to mass mobilisation. However, their lack of autonomy vis-à-vis their patron is a weakness limiting their capacity to contribute to the reproduction of the regime over the long-term.

### **Legislative imprimaturs**

A key feature of dominant parties in authoritarian regimes is that along with legislatures they can play a key role in co-opting potential rivals and interest groups outside the regime through offering policy concessions.<sup>29</sup> It is almost a truism that United Russia and Nur Otan play only a nominal role in policy formation in Russia and Kazakhstan. In Russia the parliamentary party faction has been strictly managed by the Presidential Administration, a fact openly acknowledged by some United Russia deputies<sup>30</sup> and all policy and decisions on voting were decided externally.<sup>31</sup> This lack of autonomy was best encapsulated by the late Communist deputy Viktor Ilyukhin:

[...] they are ordered about from the Kremlin and from the presidential administration, I am sorry for them. I am sorry for them – seriously. You understand, I am sorry because they don't decide anything themselves. They decide only one thing – to press the button, and this is also on orders. I sometimes say: Take away all your buttons and in their place, put one button in the presidential administration – and let them vote there.<sup>32</sup>

For Nur Otan the situation has been similar. Political analyst Sergei Duvanov has argued that 'despite its official status as the ruling party, [Nur Otan] does not form the strategy of the future, it does not play a role in the choice of government personnel...it is a party which only serves the interest of the government'.<sup>33</sup> Tellingly, the Mazhilis, and consequently the Nur Otan faction, are viewed as 'not the place where you can engage in serious politics'.<sup>34</sup>

This sentiment that United Russia and Nur Otan are instruments of the executive to control the legislature and legitimate their decisions is scarcely controversial.<sup>35</sup> These parties were never intended to contribute to policy-making; rather it was to act as foot soldiers in the legislature for their respective patrons. Building legislative majorities which are stable and cohesive is essential to ensuring a president's legislative programme is delivered.<sup>36</sup> Since their initial incarnation in 1999 both parties rapidly achieved a dominant position in national and local legislatures and were able to establish legislative majorities.<sup>37</sup> During 2003-11



United Russia held over a two-thirds majority of seats in the State Duma (37.6% vote in 2003 and 64.3% in 2007),<sup>38</sup> though this fell back to a simple majority (49.3% vote) in December 2011. The party also held a majority in 81 of 83 regional legislatures by 2010.<sup>39</sup> Otan (Nur Otan's predecessor) won 42 out of 77 seats in the 2004 parliamentary elections, while Nur Otan won all of the seats in 2007 (88% vote) and 83 of the 98 contestable seats (80.1% vote) in the 2012 parliamentary elections as well as holding 88 per cent of seats in regional legislatures.<sup>40</sup> Therefore both parties' penetration into the legislative branch was extensive and comprehensive, and was facilitated considerably by a restrictive political environment which favoured the presidential parties.<sup>41</sup>

The establishment of cast-iron partisan power in both the Duma and Mazhilis has expedited the smooth passage of Putin and Nazarbayev's legislative agendas. In the case of Russia, the discipline and voting cohesion of pro-presidential majorities in the Duma increased significantly with the advent and domination of the legislature by United Russia in stark contrast to the Yeltsin era when relations between the executive and pro-presidential factions in the Duma were often strained.<sup>42</sup> United Russia had certain privileges to facilitate the smooth adoption of laws, such as representation on the government's influential commission on legislative activity<sup>43</sup> and the so-called 'zero reading' where the budget and significant bills were considered prior to their formal introduction into the parliament. So debate moved out of the legislature to government territory and to behind closed doors,<sup>44</sup> and the adoption of legislation accelerated. Where United Russia was publically seen extracting policy concessions from the government, this was agreed with the government in advance.<sup>45</sup>

Similarly, with the establishment of Otan in 1999 and then Nur Otan in 2006 Nazarbayev was able to avoid the fractious relationship that had existed between the executive and the legislature from 1990-95.<sup>46</sup> By providing a compliant legislative majority, if not complete monopoly, Nur Otan has aided Nazarbayev in avoiding the intense institutional competition of the early years of his presidency.<sup>47</sup> Since Otan's inception, the president's legislative agenda faced ever dwindling opposition: 7 opposition deputies in 1995; 5 deputies in 1999; 1 in 2004 and 0 in 2007.<sup>48</sup> By taking all the seats in the 2007 election Nur Otan controlled all organs and committees within the Mazhilis. Even with Ak Zhol (Bright Path) and the Communist Peoples Party of Kazakhstan (KPNK) entering parliament in 2012 (with 8 and 7 deputies respectively), which in any case are considered pro-presidential, Nur Otan continues to possess a majority on legislative committees, and retains control over the legislative

agenda.<sup>49</sup> Since Nur Otan was formed in December 2006, there has been no case where the party refused to pass legislation passed down from the presidential administration. Therefore, the role of United Russia and Nur Otan has been to consolidate the rule of the regime by providing a cohesive partisan majority in the legislature to secure passage of policies drawn up by the presidential administration.

### **Stabilising Elites**

To maintain the regime Putin and Nazarbayev needed to marginalise prospective challengers to facilitate greater elite stability and cohesion. Such challengers, either individually or in larger factional groups, either held representation in the Duma or Mazhilis through a proxy party, possessed significant economic and political resources which represented a challenge to the authority of the head of state, or had an independent local power base which provided them with autonomy vis-à-vis the centre. Dominant parties in authoritarian regimes are usually able to stabilise elite support for the regime through their access to patronage and resources and via their ability to lock potentially conflicting elites into a positive-sum game whereby loyalty to the regime ensures medium-long-term benefits and the ability to accept short-term losses.<sup>50</sup>

### **Control of Resources**

For United Russia and Nur Otan, control over resources has remained in the hands of the regime and the state bureaucracy, but this has overlapped with both parties. The most notable example of this synthesis between state and party was the introduction of legislation permitting state officials to join political parties for the first time in 2005 (Russia) and 2007 (Kazakhstan). Unsurprisingly many governors joined United Russia, although federal executive personnel including Putin himself remained formally outside the party. In Kazakhstan, governors, ministers and bureaucrats joined Nur Otan *en masse*, eager to demonstrate their loyalty to the president.<sup>51</sup> Even though prominent state employees moved to join both parties, unlike during Soviet times the state is not subordinate to the party, instead the party remains subordinate to the state. In the regions, governors remained in control of channelling resources, not the party.

In Russia, governors were largely non-party until the mid-2000s when they joined United Russia.<sup>52</sup> After 2009, the introduction of party-based nominations for governors ensured a formal link, but one that remained largely symbolic. Governors controlled the main patronage

network in their region, even though during Putin's presidency their autonomy was curtailed significantly, so for example, governors had the say over key appointments in regional executives.<sup>53</sup> Beyond governors, the party had clear ambitions to perform a greater role in nominating their candidates for key posts. However, the creation of a United Russia 'cadre reserve' in 2008 was duplicated by a presidential 'cadre reserve' in 2009 which spoke volumes about the extent to which the regime saw this as an important role for the party. Bader and Roberts argue that neither the cadre reserve, nor the party's youth organisations have served to act as a springboard to senior office in Russia,<sup>54</sup> illustrating the party's limitations in regime reproduction.

In Kazakhstan the 2007 constitutional amendment allowing state officials to become members of political parties muddied the waters between the state and the party as governors moved from *de-facto* to actual heads of Nur Otan party branches. Jobs and resources, however, remained in the hands of governors and associated state bodies, not the party. Public employees, like teachers and doctors, rely on the local administration for their positions and often the ability to obtain a position within the public sector is dependent upon, either voluntarily or without knowledge, adopting membership of Nur Otan.<sup>55</sup> While Nur Otan may benefit from this process in terms of membership, what is key is that governors are able to command the process of job and resource distribution because of their position within the bureaucracy not the party.<sup>56</sup>

### ***Integrating Elites***

Despite their limited ability to distribute patronage and resources United Russia and Nur Otan were established as part of a process which was intended to neutralise and integrate powerful independent forces who were prospective challengers to their regimes. The first incarnations of these parties, Unity and Otan, were both highly contingent responses to elite fragmentation and the formation of opposition parties in 1999 engaged in positioning for forthcoming presidential (Russia) and parliamentary (Kazakhstan) elections.<sup>57</sup> Nur Otan and United Russia were both formed by mergers with potential challengers while rule changes, such as the permitting of state employees to join political parties, incentivised the incorporation of governors, state officials and state employees into the parties. This allowed the parties to integrate a broad spread of elites into the regime both negatively (preventing challenges to the regime) and positively (being able to mobilise extensive administrative resources at election

time). However, the Russian case illustrated the limits of this integrative role as over time conflicting regional interests resurfaced within the party.

Initially Otan emerged to counter a powerful independent opposition candidate for president, former Prime Minister Akezhan Kazhegeldin. While the presidential administration had successfully marginalised Kazhegeldin's 1999 presidential bid by a concerted campaign to discredit him,<sup>58</sup> his party, the Republic Peoples Party of Kazakhstan (RPNK) was set to participate in the 1999 parliamentary elections. Otan was established to neutralise this threat by merging a number of pre-existing pro-presidential parties.<sup>59</sup> The party marginalised the RPNK's election bid and stamped out any hopes that Kazhegeldin could feasibly oust Nazarbayev in the future: in the 1999 parliamentary elections Otan were the largest party in the Mazhilis obtaining 24 seats out of 77 (31 per cent). RPNK achieved just one seat.

However competition continued to exist between pro-regime groups and this competition, played itself out at the formal rational-legal level in party competition until 2006 when Nur Otan was established. In particular, two of the most influential factional elite groups, the Dariga Nazarbayeva and Rakhat Aliev group (the president's daughter and ex-son-in-law) and the group based around the interests of the Eurasian National Resources Corporation (ENRC) had relatively successful pro-regime parties, Asar (Together) and the Civil Party of Kazakhstan (GPK) respectively.<sup>60</sup> Nur Otan, therefore, was created with the specific function of uniting these parties allowing Nazarbayev to assert control over fragmented elites. According to one opposition member, the 'merging of the parties [Asar and GPK] with *Otan* was just about the minimisation of independent players ... to minimise the channels and resources of their political influence'.<sup>61</sup> A journalist writing at the time echoed this sentiment suggesting that 'among "the barons" surrounding Nazarbayev, the oldest daughter and son-in-law were the most visible, strong and independent. In conditions when the consolidation of the elite around the president became vital business, Nursultan Nazarbyaev could simply not concede a millimetre.'<sup>62</sup> Nur Otan, therefore, was established to united these independent players under Nazarbayev's wing.

Since Nur Otan's official conception at Otan's extraordinary conference in December 2006, there has been no evidence to suggest the party is acting as an institutional container for these competing interests. Rather, in the cases of Aliev, Nazarbayeva and the ENRC their political influence has declined significantly since the merger of their parties into Nur Otan. Both

Aliiev and Nazarbayeva found themselves marginalised and divorced from many of the financial and media assets.<sup>63</sup> Since the merger of the GPK into Nur Otan in 2006, analysts suggest their leaders have ‘lost interest in politics’ and their business has also been scaled back.<sup>64</sup> What this illustrates is that the party mergers were not an effort to institutionalise competing elite interests and potential challengers, but simply an attempt to centralise elite support for the president.

Similar to Otan, Unity was conceived as a last minute ‘presidential election tactic’<sup>65</sup> in 1999 to counter a threat to the regime in the form of Fatherland All-Russia (FAR), a conglomerate of powerful regional figures seeking Duma representation as a launch pad for their presidential candidate, Yevgenii Primakov. Unity’s impressive 23.3% compared to FAR’s 13.3% in December 1999 helped ensure that by the time of the presidential election in March 2000 FAR’s heavyweights had thrown their weight behind Putin.<sup>66</sup> In late 2001 Unity absorbed FAR to form United Russia, making FAR leaders like Yuriy Luzhkov and Mintimer Shaimiev co-Chairs of the party’s Higher Council. Thus strong autonomous regional actors were integrated into the regime by the party, permitting the Kremlin to tap their local power bases and electoral machines, but the joins were not always seamless. Luzhkov for instance retained considerable personal power, heading the so-called ‘Moscow group’, and tensions with Putin remained,<sup>67</sup> but crucially at the same time he remained outwardly supportive of the regime, delivering United Russia victories in Moscow for a decade.

United Russia’s lack of agency hindered its ability to effectively integrate elites and to mediate conflict between them where politico-economic interests clashed. In Russia the political landscape was complicated by the federal structure and the variegated experiences of pluralism and regional autonomy, making the building and maintaining of any national party challenging.<sup>68</sup> This diversity was acknowledged in the Kremlin’s experiment with an alternative pro-presidential party, Just Russia, which *inter alia* intended to maximise support for Putin from left-leaning voters and thus take votes from the Communists.<sup>69</sup> However, this party started to take votes from United Russia and Kremlin support was withdrawn as the regime began to focus all efforts on ‘operation successor’ during 2007-8.

Once Putin had decided to become prime minister in 2008, a 2/3 majority in the State Duma was desired to protect him from dismissal and facilitate constitutional changes if required. Given the move to a fully proportional electoral system for the 2007 parliamentary elections,

this was a very tall order for United Russia. In order to maximise the mobilisation capacity at this critical election time considerable efforts were made to recruit local elites including mayors from opposition parties and representatives of diverse and competing local business groups.<sup>70</sup> This rapid, heterogeneous expansion of the party during 2007-8 led to public manifestations of internal party conflict in towns and regions where elites were divided. Conflict between financial-industrial groups incorporated into the party was endemic in Smolensk,<sup>71</sup> while multiple United Russia candidates stood against the official party candidate in local elections in Nizhnyi Tagil in 2008, and in Smolensk and Murmansk in 2009.<sup>72</sup> Such cases illustrate the inability of the party in less authoritarian regions to lock competing elites into a longer-term positive sum game and this was connected to the party's lack of agency and its limitations in distributing spoils beyond posts in local legislatures. United Russia's struggle to contain intra-elite conflict at the local level illustrates that while the party was initially successful in consolidating elite support for Putin, its failure to evolve into a genuine dominant party served to hinder its ability to reproduce that support over the long-term.

### **Mobilising the Masses**

A central function of dominant parties in the literature is that of mass mobilisation which includes ensuring high electoral turnouts and supermajorities in the absence of competitive conditions to create an image of invincibility to deter would-be challengers.<sup>73</sup> Although such concerns were evident in Russia and Kazakhstan, our cases are distinctive due to the parties' lack of agency in the electoral process. Ultimately, personalism provides the clearest explanation for the parties' election successes, because the resources to reward supporters and sanction opponents remained largely external to both parties. These parties are dependent upon, above all, the personal popularity of the president or national leader as well as other notables at regional level for their electoral support. In other words, it is not so much that the party mobilises support for the leader, but the other way around: the party harvests the national leader's popularity at parliamentary and regional elections, underpinned by those of regional leaders, a skewed electoral playing field, administrative resources, media control and, to some extent, fraud. However, if one or more of these buttresses of exogenous party support are undermined, in particular the personalistic elements, then the party can struggle to maintain its position in the political system, as occurred in Russia during 2011. Nevertheless, simultaneously personalist dominant parties can contribute to promoting a narrative on the indispensability and inevitability of the leadership and thus assist in consolidating his/her

relationship with wider society. Although this has been pursued more extensively and successfully in Kazakhstan, this function was also detectable for United Russia especially as Putin was faced with leaving the presidency in 2008.

### ***Electoral Mobilisation***

Both Nur Otan and United Russia were formed as party extensions of the president and this proximity to the national leader was their main source of success. For example, party programmes are in essence regurgitations of the platforms and policies of their respective leaders. *Nur Otan's* 2007 manifesto<sup>74</sup> was derived from the president's speech given earlier that year to parliament, while United Russia's 2008 manifesto was tellingly entitled 'Putin's plan'.<sup>75</sup> The president's projection of his personal power and popularity onto the party was its greatest electoral asset.<sup>76</sup> Poll data from October 2007 by the Levada Centre found that 39% of those intending to vote for United Russia declared their support was primarily because it 'Putin's party'.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, Putin's decision to head the electoral list in 2007 led to an immediate surge in party poll ratings.<sup>78</sup>

However, while Nazabayev's relationship with Nur Otan has always been rather straightforward - he holds party card no.1, leads the party and most government officials are members of the party - Putin's attitude to United Russia has always been more complex. Putin did not join the party and was sometimes even publically critical of it,<sup>79</sup> although during the 2008 succession he drew closer to it, heading the 2007 party list first of all to ensure the required 2/3 Duma majority, but also as a source of popular legitimacy while occupying the Prime Minister's post. This helps explain why he chose to become the leader of the party in March 2008, as an additional institutional support to his position. However, Putin *still* did not join the party formally and later sought to distance himself from it, particularly after the party's rating fell in 2011. In May 2011, Putin formed the All-Russian Popular Front in an attempt to broaden his support base for the presidential elections but it was also an attempt to bring fresh blood into United Russia. Although Putin campaigned hard for the party in 2011<sup>80</sup> indicating that a good result was perceived as essential to his smooth return to the Kremlin in 2012, following the disappointing result of less than 50% vote, all references to the party were dropped from the presidential campaign.<sup>81</sup>

The personalist nature of the parties extended beyond their electoral dependence on Putin and Nazarbayev down to the sub-national level, where politics was also extremely personalised.<sup>82</sup>

Governors comprised the second key pillar in the parties' success because they controlled the resources that could be deployed to mobilise voters and perpetrate electoral fraud. In both states, state employees, who were often encouraged or forced to join the party, were mobilised for campaigning. This included a number of means,<sup>83</sup> for instance tasking local business directors dependent on the local administration for resources or licences to ensure their employees voted correctly.<sup>84</sup> In Kazakhstan, this mobilisation of state resources was extremely effective in delivering high turnouts and preponderant results for Nur Otan creating an aura of invincibility and inevitability around Nazarbayev's leadership.

While some Russian regions were able to deliver uniformity of pro-regime voting<sup>85</sup> elsewhere the picture was more heterogeneous. The synchronisation of governor's electoral machines with United Russia was partially undermined by the ending of governors' direct election in 2004. Some governors' capacity to utilise electoral machines was reduced because newly-appointed figures<sup>86</sup> sometimes lacked popularity in their regions<sup>87</sup> or had failed to establish good relations with local elites.<sup>88</sup> Thus in some regions, an important buttress of party support was undermined in the 2011 elections. As such, it was not United Russia *as a party* that was able to mobilise voters, but rather the party was the beneficiary of the resources that could be accessed by state officials who were often party members or at least needed to demonstrate their loyalty to the Kremlin to ensure the appropriate flow of budget receipts.

### ***Promoting the 'National Leader'***

Although neither party demonstrated agency in the electoral process, there is evidence to suggest that a more subtle role was played in promoting a narrative about the indispensability of Nazarbayev and Putin. In the case of Nur Otan the party is pivotal to the promotion of a discourse regarding the centrality of Nazarbayev's leadership to the unity, prosperity and stability of Kazakhstan.<sup>89</sup> This discourse has broadly focused on the president's success in nation-building, ensuring inter-ethnic stability, impressive economic growth and a successful foreign policy.<sup>90</sup> The party leadership and the party more broadly through campaign literature and posters, propagate this message. Perhaps the most notable instance of this was in 2010 when former Nur Otan First Deputy Chairman, Darkhan Kaletayev proposed the 'leader of the nation' legislation. This legislation conferred the title of *El basy* (leader of the nation) and formally bestowed on Nazarbayev the power to intervene in the domestic and foreign affairs of the state should he leave office as well as giving his family immunity from prosecution. Such aggrandising of Nazarbayev is not just an appeal to a form of charismatic leadership of



*Atatürkian* proportions, but is also a common theme put forward by Nur Otan deputies and officials.<sup>91</sup> Given that there is limited independent media, such fetishising of his leadership saturates the state media outlets which most Kazakh citizens consume and consequently many have bought into the narrative. A poll conducted in 2010 by the reputable Strategy Centre of Social and Political Studies found 89 per cent of respondents were happy with Nazarbayev's performance.<sup>92</sup>

However, there is a question of the extent to which the discourse can continue to be successful in penetrating the public consciousness. The leader of the nation legislation was controversial and created disquiet among some of the moderate majority in Kazakhstan.<sup>93</sup> Moreover, the erection of statues and the ubiquitous portraits of Nazarbayev across the country points to the stretching out the discourse into a personality cult which may not sit entirely comfortably with all citizens in Kazakhstan. Additionally, increasing incidents of violence and conflict including a series of suicide bombings in 2011 and long-term oil workers strikes have undermined the story of how Nazarbayev has created stability and harmony in Kazakhstan. While Nur Otan might be able to assist in the transmission of the discourse, the extent to which it can be successful in doing so is dependent upon the discourse at least reflecting the reality of people's everyday experience. Recent events suggest there is now an emerging mismatch between the story promoted by Nur Otan and the presidential administration and the realities of life for ordinary people. Some members of the Nur Otan hierarchy such as party Secretary Yerlan Karin recognise that the party does not have a long-term future as Nazarbayev's 'propaganda regime' and needs to evolve and 'use its political power to resolve "real issues"'.<sup>94</sup> If the party is to follow Karin's suggestion it needs to become a genuine ruling party where it possess agency separate from its patron.

Putin's leadership also witnessed a 'mini cult of personality'.<sup>95</sup> It became *de rigour* to hang his portrait in state offices, glorifying poems and artwork proliferated and these fed into the broader narrative about Putin bringing stability after the chaos of the 1990s, delivering strong statehood and a 'vertical of power' to prevent the disintegrative tendencies of the 1990s and bringing economic prosperity and national pride after the hardships and humiliations of the 1990s. In the literature, scholars see the party riding on the coattails of Vladimir Putin and dependent on his personal popularity and endorsements for its electoral success.<sup>96</sup> Therefore, party statements about and support for Putin must be understood primarily as attempts to fix the close connection between the party and Putin in voters' minds at election time.<sup>97</sup>

Nevertheless, United Russia did play a secondary role in supporting Putin as president, affirming the correctness of his policies and his exceptional personal qualities to bring stability and create a strong Russian state.<sup>98</sup> Furthermore, from 2007 with Putin's anticipated departure from the presidency, the function of creating a narrative around Putin that could help ensure his political future became tangible. Party literature for the 2007 election campaign referred to him as the 'national leader'<sup>99</sup> and in November 2007 the party even floated the idea of forming a 'Citizens' Synod of the Russian Nation', that would appoint a 'national leader' with special status and powers, who of course would be Vladimir Putin.<sup>100</sup> Some sources suggested that this trial balloon was released after consultations with deputy head of the presidential administration Vladislav Surkov, and indicated that the regime was toying with a para-constitutional position for Putin from 2008. The idea got considerable press and helped to fix the idea of Putin as national leader in the popular mind, buttressed by appropriate statements from the party's leadership.<sup>101</sup> Embedding the term 'national leader' in political discourse was important while Putin did not occupy the role of head of state and the executive. The term suggested a role above politics, integrative, representative of the entire population and of a timeless, unique nature i.e. a position not subject to presidential terms. It acknowledged his continuing influence in Russian politics in 2008-12, and kept open the option of returning to the presidency. The party helped to forge a widely utilised discourse around Putin personally that supported his continued significance in Russian politics. Putin could not do this by himself, party support was needed and in this instance rather successful, even if the broader discourse itself, as with discourse regarding Nazarbayev, was increasingly challenged from 2011.

### **Conclusion: The Life-Cycles of Personalist Dominant Parties**

While Nur Otan dominated all facets of public politics and subsumed elite conflicts, United Russia increasingly struggled to manage regional elite disputes and from 2011, experienced greater difficulty in maintaining electoral dominance in less authoritarian regions.<sup>102</sup> This divergence in the efficacy of the parties can be explained to a large extent by the nature of the regimes. Although we have argued that both Russia and Kazakhstan are authoritarian in the Linzian sense, and of a personalist variant, there are important differences. Kazakhstan's variant of authoritarianism is 'harder', longer-established and less ambiguous. The flowering of pluralism permitted by *glasnost* and *perestroika* was more limited in the Central Asia republics than in Russia and although elite turnover following the collapse of the USSR was

limited in Russia, it was almost non-existent in Kazakhstan.<sup>103</sup> Nazarbayev has been president since 1990 and has marginalised all opponents and restricted the political space for dissent. Crucially he was able to bring governors to heel in the mid-1990s by appointing national elites to these posts<sup>104</sup> whereas Russia's federal structure combined with state weakness in the 1990s permitted the emergence of regional strongmen who could challenge and win concessions from the centre. Putin's attempts to create a 'power vertical' facilitating the imposition of central power over the regions was only partially successful<sup>105</sup> and the presidential appointment of governors proved a double-edged sword for a United Russia partly dependent upon governors' electoral machines. So Russia exhibited a greater plurality of interests along regional and national lines. The softer variant of authoritarianism maintained under Putin also generated the 2008 'succession crisis'. While Nazarbayev had the constitution altered in 2007 to allow him unlimited presidential terms, Putin stressed adherence to the 1993 constitution, necessitating him stepping aside for a term. The regime's subordination of all political aims to facilitating a smooth succession shaped the trajectory of development for United Russia and imbued it with tensions, at once elevating the party as Putin's 'insurance policy' yet generating an urgent need to maximise the vote beyond what might have been considered realistic and so increasing the party's heterogeneity by its absorption of municipal officials from other parties.

Alongside distinctions in regime dynamics, the attitude of the national leader to his progeny was the second reason why Nur Otan was better able to maintain a dominant electoral position and stabilise elites. We have argued that Nazarbayev maintained a very close relationship with Nur Otan and this means that any attack on the party was perceived as an attack on the national leader, the architect of Kazakhstan's independent statehood. This personalist connection helps explain why Nur Otan has not faced challenges to its electoral position and is able to incorporate the highest echelons of national and regional elites with few visible tensions. However, this does not mean that the party will be able to contribute to authoritarian reproduction in the long-term as the intensely personalist nature of the party, and its lack of agency, means that once Nazarbayev leaves the political stage (he is 72 years old) the future of the party is highly contingent on the attitude of his successor as well as their position, who will not be as exalted as *El basy* or may wish to disassociate themselves to a greater or lesser extent from his personal party. On the other hand, Putin's attitude to United Russia was always more equivocal and this impeded the party's ability to integrate elites. For instance, Putin's ambivalence meant that many key federal elites did not see the necessity of

joining the party. In turn, the party's lack of agency limited its ability to contribute to authoritarian reproduction in the longer term and this was compounded by its subordination to Putin's short term electoral requirements. Putin's formation of the All-Russian Popular Front and his decision not to head the party's 2011 electoral list underscored the sense that he regarded the party as potentially damaging to his presidential chances in 2012. In this light, Putin's relinquishing of the party chair to Medvedev in May 2012 amid rumours about a possible rebranding or restructuring<sup>106</sup> can be interpreted *inter alia* as the regime's recognition of the project's failings and its uncertainty about United Russia's future role.

Our two case studies suggest the life-span of personalist dominant parties is likely to be significantly shorter than that of dominant parties, because these personalist dominant parties lack the agency to reproduce themselves, to entrench their position and to play more than a supportive role in regime consolidation. Whereas prior scholarship points to the important and enduring roles dominant parties perform in conjunction with power sharing, cooperation and voter mobilisation, which suggests that dominant parties (and other institutions) are more than simple 'window-dressing',<sup>107</sup> the two cases analysed here are different creatures. We have pointed to the overtly personalised element of these parties and the extent to which this overwhelms their autonomy and ability to perform functions typified by the experience of dominant parties elsewhere in the world. The personalist feature of these parties is their defining one, that ultimately renders them instruments rather than agents of the regime. As such, although they do play identifiable roles in authoritarian consolidation such as securing the president's legislative agenda, stabilising elites to ensure the patron's position and hold on power and assisting in perpetuating a discourse around the national leader, these are supportive rather than central to regime survival and the lack of agency limits their ability to lock elites into a long-term positive sum game and hence their own life expectancy. As such, United Russia and Nur Otan are *dominant*, but they do not truly have the agency to *dominate*, the power of domination remains with the president, regional governors and state bureaucracy. While there have been parties in the past who have survived excessive personalisation to go on and have enduring life spans, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's Republican People's Party of Turkey is one example, in these instances such parties have a clear ideological remit and were forged in the fires of nation and state formation amid an atmosphere of genuine political competition. This is not the case with United Russia and Nur Otan who have emerged *post hoc* nation and state formation in the decade following the upheaval of Soviet collapse. Therefore, further research is needed to consider the explicit

conceptual parameters of personalist dominant parties and the extent to which they are an exclusively post-Soviet anomaly or a broader global phenomenon illustrative of the changing roles and functions of political parties and formal institutions in authoritarian regimes.

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<sup>1</sup> Examples include United Russia , Nur Otan , New Azerbaijan Party , People's Democratic Party of Tajikistan, the Democratic Party of Turkmenistan.

<sup>2</sup> Bader, 'Understanding Party Politics'

<sup>3</sup> Van de Walle, 'Presidentialism and Clientelism'; Greene, *Why Dominant Parties Lose*; Magaloni and Kricheli, 'Political Order'.

<sup>4</sup> Magaloni, 'Credible Power-Sharing'

<sup>5</sup> For readability Russian party names will be translated directly into English. Kazakh party names will be transliterated due to their more esoteric meaning (for example, Ak Zhol which translates as Bright Path). However, where there is a clear meaning in English, such as the Communist Party of Kazakhstan, these will be translated.

<sup>6</sup> Isaacs, *Party System Formation*, Whitmore, 'Watchdogs or Show-dogs?'

<sup>7</sup> Authoritarian consolidation can be understood in two senses. The first is as a state of being in which immediate and medium term threats to the regime from potential challengers are remote. Thus, an authoritarian regime is consolidated once it has control and power over the main organs of the state and has embedded its rule and extinguished threats from opposing forces. The second is to view authoritarian consolidation as a longer process involving the establishment of dense institutional networks of power and incentive structures to shape citizen behaviour. Göbel and Andersson, 'Authoritarian Institution Building', 7. We adopt the former understanding of authoritarian consolidation and instead see the second definition as more akin to a process of authoritarian reproduction. This is a process which enables the regime to reproduce itself over the long-term in terms of elite cadre, a continuous legitimacy of the institutions, organisations and bureaucracy which support the regime and a perpetual discourse regarding the regime which resonates with and reflects the experience of the population.

<sup>8</sup> While most scholars view Kazakhstan's regime type as a form of authoritarianism, which is illustrated by high Freedom House scores year on year, others such as Martha Brill Olcott and Marina Ottaway have viewed Kazakhstan as semi-authoritarian. Admittedly, they made such prescriptions at the end of the 1990s when it could be argued the regime was more tolerant of opposition and dissent, something which in the following decade became less common. See Olcott and Ottaway, 'Challenge of Semi-authoritarianism'.

<sup>9</sup> E.g. Levitsky and Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism*; Sakwa, *Crisis of Russian Democracy*

<sup>10</sup> E.g. Gel'man, 'Party Politics in Russia' ; Golosov, 'Authoritarianism Incorporated'; Remington 'Patronage and the Party of Power'

<sup>11</sup> Linz cited in Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*, 159.

<sup>12</sup> Gandhi and Przeworski, 'Cooperation, Cooptation and Rebellion', 1-4; Gandhi and Przeworski, 'Authoritarian Institutions', 1280; Brownlee, *Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization*; Magaloni 'Credible Power-Sharing', 715-18.

<sup>13</sup> Geddes, *Paradigms and Sand Castles*, 69.

<sup>14</sup> Magaloni and Kricheli, 'Political Order', 124-5.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 126-8.

<sup>16</sup> Geddes, 'Why parties', 9.

<sup>17</sup> Greene, 'Political Economy'.

<sup>18</sup> Reuter, 'Dominant Party Formation', 294.

<sup>19</sup> Isaacs, *Party System Formation*, 81-2; Roberts "'Virtual' Party Hegemony, 198-200; Slider, 'How United is United Russia?', 257; Sakwa, *Crisis of Russian Democracy*, 12, 28, 307. There is limited scholarship on Nur Otan and it is difficult to unpack prior conceptual labelling of the party. While Bader's 'Hegemonic Political Parties' suggests the party fits the Sartorian conceptualisation of a hegemonic party others have suggested Nur Otan is a 'party of power' (e.g. Karmazina, 'Institutionalisation of the Party System') and this label has been applied also to United Russia and the New Azerbaijan Party (e.g. Meleshevich, *Party Systems*). However, there are a number of flaws inherent to the concept including the failure to integrate the concept with general theories of party typology and most importantly the failure to address adequately the personalised nature of the parties it portends to. See Isaacs, *Party System Formation*, 38-9.

<sup>20</sup> Gel'man, 'Feckless Pluralism', Gel'man, 'Competition to Hierarchy', Reuter and Remington, 'Dominant Party Regimes', Remington, 'Patronage and the Party of Power'.

<sup>21</sup> Gel'man, 'Competition to Hierarchy', 915.

- <sup>22</sup> Gel'man, 'Feckless Pluralism', 557
- <sup>23</sup> Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*, 204-5. Bader in 'Hegemonic Political Parties' has explicitly conceptualised Nur Otan and United Russia as a hegemonic parties.
- <sup>24</sup> Roberts, *ibid*.
- <sup>25</sup> For example, Laws 'on political parties' in Russia from 2001 and in Kazakhstan from 2002 required all parties to register with an unrealistically high number of members (50,000, although in both countries this was reduced - to 40,000 in Kazakhstan in 2008 and to 500 in Russia in 2012) and established convoluted bureaucratic processes that were practically impossible to satisfy (see Kynev, *Vybory parlamentov*, 21-22), creating legal pretexts to deny registration to any party.
- <sup>26</sup> Geddes defines a personalist authoritarian regime as one where 'access to office and the fruits of office depend much more on the discretion of an individual leader. The leader may be an officer and may have created a party to support himself, but neither the military nor the party exercises independent decision-making power insulated from the whims of the ruler' (*Paradigms and Sand Castles*, 51).
- <sup>27</sup> Giddens, 'The Constitution of Society'.
- <sup>28</sup> Mauzy and Milne, 'Singapore Politics', 85-98; Peplinsky 'Autocracy, elections and fiscal policy, 144-146.
- <sup>29</sup> Gandhi and Przeworski, 'Cooperation, Cooptation and Rebellion', 2.
- <sup>30</sup> Whitmore, 'Watchdogs or Show-dogs?', 1006.
- <sup>31</sup> Gel'man 'Competition to Hierarchy'; Sakwa, *Crisis of Russian Democracy*.
- <sup>32</sup> Viktor Ilyukhin, (Communist Duma deputy), interview, Moscow, March 17 2006. Similar opinions were expressed by, among many others, Nikolai Petrov (Scholar-in-Residence, Moscow Carnegie Endowment) telephone interview, September 26 2011 and Aleksandr Kynev (analyst), interview, Moscow, October 24 2011.
- <sup>33</sup> Sergei Duvanov (Journalist/ political analyst), Interview, Almaty, September 30 2011.
- <sup>34</sup> Ashimbayev cited in Tulindinova, 2011.
- <sup>35</sup> For example, see Gel'man, 'Competition to Hierarchy'; Sakwa, *Crisis of Russian Democracy* 2008, 25.
- <sup>36</sup> Chaisty, 'Presidential Partisan Powers', 433.
- <sup>37</sup> Both parties were initially established in 1999 under slightly different names. United Russia was called Unity and Nur Otan was formed as Otan.
- <sup>38</sup> The 2003 elections were held under a mixed (50/50) majoritarian/proportional system. Deputies elected in majoritarian districts joined United Russia to achieve a two-thirds majority. In 2007 the election was 100% proportional.
- <sup>39</sup> Ross, 'The Rise and Fall', 435.
- <sup>40</sup> As of the 2007 local elections. Republic of Kazakhstan's website, [www.election.kz](http://www.election.kz) (accessed October 18 2011).
- <sup>41</sup> Wilson, 'Virtual Politics'
- <sup>42</sup> Remington, 'Patronage and the Party of Power'.
- <sup>43</sup> Andrey Loginov (Government Representative to the State Duma), interview, Moscow, 16 March 2006.
- <sup>44</sup> *Ibid*; Institut "Obshchestvennaya Ekspertiza", 'Ne mesto', 189.
- <sup>45</sup> Loginov, interview. For instance, amendments to the law to 'monetise' social benefits following mass demonstrations in January 2005. Whitmore, 'Watchdogs or Show-dogs?', 1017.
- <sup>46</sup> Olcott, *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise*, 101.
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, 103-4; 108
- <sup>48</sup> Dzani, 'Kontr-evolutsiia parlamenta'
- <sup>49</sup> Andrey Chebotarev (Political analyst), interview, Almaty, 29 September 2011. In 2008, the government legislated for representation for at least two parties in parliament even if the party which finishes second in the parliamentary election fails to clear the 7% threshold.
- <sup>50</sup> Brownlee, *Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization*, 10.
- <sup>51</sup> Zonakz, 'V Nur Otan vstupili'
- <sup>52</sup> Curtailing the power of regional governors and bringing them under the control of the president was one of Putin's earliest institutional reforms. This included removing governors from the Federation Council and in 2004 their direct election was replaced by presidential appointment, incentivising them to demonstrate their loyalty to the president, including by ensuring a strong showing for United Russia in elections.
- <sup>53</sup> Slider, 'How United is United Russia?'
- <sup>54</sup> Bader, 'Hegemonic Political Parties'; Roberts, 'Virtual Party Hegemony', 285-6.
- <sup>55</sup> Maytonov, 'Atryauskie neftyaniki'; Usmanov, 'Mertvye dushi'; Pavel Lobachev (Director, 'Echo' Elections and Democracy (NGO)), interview, Almaty, July 14 2011; 2011.
- <sup>56</sup> Amirzhan Kossanov (General Secretary, OSDP-Azat Party), interview, Almaty, July 13 2011.
- <sup>57</sup> See Hale, 'Origins of United Russia' and Isaacs, *Party System Formation*, 68-73.
- <sup>58</sup> Olcott, *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise*, 119-20.
- <sup>59</sup> D'yachenko, et al, *Politicheskie partii Kazakhstana*, 79.

- <sup>60</sup> See Isaacs, *Party System Formation*, 72-3.
- <sup>61</sup> Marina Sabitova (Parliamentary candidate, OSDP-Azat party, Almaty), interview, August 18 2007.
- <sup>62</sup> Adilov, 'Otan Ukroshchenie'.
- <sup>63</sup> In spring 2007 Aliev was accused by the authorities of kidnapping and sought political asylum in Vienna. Aliev alleges that the accusations are politically motivated. V. Panfilova, 'Rakhat Aliev- Interv'yu pered arestom', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, June 6 2007, 1, 6. Nazarbayeva was given the post of Vice President of *Nur Otan* but in 2007 she was removed from this position and denied a place on the party list for the 2007 parliamentary election. However, she re-entered parliament as a Nur Otan deputy after the 2012 parliamentary election.
- <sup>64</sup> Adil Nurmakov (Political analyst), interview, Almaty, July 14 2011. In 2008 the mining company Kazakhmys, of which it is claimed Nazarbayev maintains control, raised its stake in ENRC to 26 per cent (Global Witness, *Risky Business*).
- <sup>65</sup> Hale, 'The Origins of United Russia', 169.
- <sup>66</sup> Luzhkov's public ambivalence towards Putin was overcome following the initiation of an investigation into his business affairs. Similarly Luzhkov's agreement to Fatherland's merger with Unity was in part secured by being allowed to stand for a third term as Moscow's Mayor. Zhegulev and Romanova, *Operatsiya "Edinaya Rossiya"*, 30-31
- <sup>67</sup> Sakwa, *Crisis of Russian Democracy*, 24, 166.
- <sup>68</sup> Ross, 'Rise and Fall'.
- <sup>69</sup> See March, 'Parastatal opposition'.
- <sup>70</sup> Kynev, 'Party Politics', 145-6.
- <sup>71</sup> See [Dmitriy Raychev, 'Smolensk smenil siti-menedzhera', Rossiiskaya Gazeta](http://www.rg.ru/2011/11/02/reg-cfo/major-anons.html) November 2 2011, <http://www.rg.ru/2011/11/02/reg-cfo/major-anons.html>. (accessed January 12 2012).
- <sup>72</sup> Slider, 'How United is United Russia?', Ross, 'Rise and Fall'.
- <sup>73</sup> Magaloni and Kricheli, 'Political Order'.
- <sup>74</sup> Nur Otan, 'Za prosvetanie'
- <sup>75</sup> United Russia, 'Plan Putina'
- <sup>76</sup> Ilya Ponamarev (Just Russia Duma deputy), interview, Moscow, September 30 2011; Petrov interview, Vladislav Kosarev, V. (Secretary, Communist Peoples Party of Kazakhstan and Mazhilis Deputy), interview, Astana, July 7 2011.
- <sup>77</sup> Cited in Roberts, "'Virtual' Party Hegemony", 174.
- <sup>78</sup> Roberts, *ibid*.
- <sup>79</sup> Sakwa, *Crisis of Russian Democracy*, 258.
- <sup>80</sup> Aleksey Markarkin (Vice-President of the Centre for Political Technologies), interview, Moscow, November 1 2011; Andrey Ryabov (Scholar-in-Residence, Moscow Carnegie Endowment), telephone interview, 23 September 2011.
- <sup>81</sup> For example, on the president's campaign website and election materials. Some references to the All-National Popular Front were used.
- <sup>82</sup> Kynev, 'Party politics', 142; Dosym Satpayev (Political analyst), interview, Almaty, April 7 2012.
- <sup>83</sup> See Wilson, *Virtual Politics*, for details.
- <sup>84</sup> Vladimir Kozlov (Chair, *Alga* party), interview, Al-maty, July 12 2011; Petukhova, Ekaterina, 'Kak golosovat' za "Edinuyu Rossiyu"', *Moskovskie Komsomolets* October 24 2011, <http://www.mk.ru/politics/article/2011/10/23/635615-kak-golos-sovat-za-edinuyu-rossiyu.html> (accessed October 24 2011).
- <sup>85</sup> Myagkov et al., *Forensics of Election Fraud*
- <sup>86</sup> Medvedev replaced 34 governors during 2008-11.
- <sup>87</sup> Kynev, interview; Petrov interview.
- <sup>88</sup> Conflicts between governors and local business elites negatively affected United Russia's election campaign in Irkutsk and Volgograd according to Darya Guseva, 'Central Problem', *Moskovskie Novosti*, October 12 2011, reproduced in Johnson's Russia List no.184, October 12 2011 (via email).
- <sup>89</sup> Chebotarev, interview.
- <sup>90</sup> Isaacs, 'Papa', 438-41.
- <sup>91</sup> Nomad.su, 'Mazhilis'.
- <sup>92</sup> Lillis, 'Nazabayev adored'
- <sup>93</sup> Observation based on informal conversations the author had with citizens in Kazakhstan who considered themselves supporters of the president.
- <sup>94</sup> Wikileaks cable, Kazakhstan: Party Politics Inside Out: Two Politicians, Released August 30 2011, reference ID 09ASTANA2148.
- <sup>95</sup> Sakwa, *Putin*, 76.

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<sup>96</sup> Roberts, ‘Virtual Party Hegemony’; Sakwa, *Crisis of Russian Democracy*, 229-32; Kynev interview.

<sup>97</sup> For example, the party’s St. Petersburg campaign newspaper listed four reasons to vote for *United Russia*, three based on the party supporting or working with Putin. “Edinaya Rossia” partiya, kotoraya rabotaet i reshaet problemy’, *Vyberi Peterburg*, November 16-22 2011, 6.

<sup>98</sup> For example, see Gryzlov, *Pryamaya Rech’*, 6; Gryzlov, ‘Two parties’.

<sup>99</sup> Gryzlov, ‘Two parties’, 88.

<sup>100</sup> For details see Anonymous, ‘Proekt ‘Natsional’nyi Lider’, *Kommersant*, November 7 2007 and footnote 93.

<sup>101</sup> For example, see ‘Putina predlozhena ob’yavit’ natsional’nym liderom s polnomochiiami psevdomonarkha’, *Newsru.com*, November 7 2007, <http://www.newsru.com/russia/07nov2007/sultuga.html#15>, (accessed January 12 2012).

<sup>102</sup> For recent analysis of Russia’s electoral map see N. Zubarevich, ‘Four Russias: Rethinking the post-Soviet map’, *Open Democracy*, March 29 2012.

<sup>103</sup> Murphy, ‘Illusory Transition’

<sup>104</sup> Cummings, *Kazakhstan*

<sup>105</sup> Monaghan, ‘Vertikal’

<sup>106</sup> For example, see Oleg Kashin, ‘Edinaya Rossia ostanetsya s name, dazhe esli zavtra nam skazhut, chto ona pereimenovana ili raspushchena’, *Kommersant FM*, 13.2.12, <http://kommersant.ru/doc/1872430> (accessed February 13 2012).

<sup>107</sup> Gandhi and Przeworski, ‘Authoritarian Institutions’, 1292.