

Russia: Central Institutions

Legislative (Federal Assembly)

State Duma (lower house): 450 members, currently elected through proportional representation (PR) from one at-large national district, with closed party lists. Elections are held every four years; latest was in December 2011. Currently four major parties: United Russia; Communist Party of the Russian Federation; Liberal Democratic Party of Russia; A Just Russia.

Powers:

- ◆ primary policymaking body, with the ability to introduce, amend and approve legislation;
- ◆ approves the President's choice of Prime Minister, also the chairman of the Central Bank and its auditors, and the Commission for Human Rights;
- ◆ can hold votes of no confidence, but three of these in the span of two months leads to immediate dissolution and new elections;
- ◆ can amend the constitution if 2/3 of members approve;
- ◆ can impeach Russian President with a 2/3 vote.

Federation Council (upper house): currently 166 members, due to a shrinking number of Russian regions; each sends two representatives to this house. As of 2007, "Senators" do have to be residents of the regions they represent; as of 2011, they also have to be members of the body (legislature or regional administration) that they represent.

Powers:

- ◆ Secondary policymaking body, which can alter bills sent from the Duma but not propose new ones;
- ◆ required to approve all presidential decrees which concern national security, states of emergency, and using troops abroad;
- ◆ tries the president if impeached;
- ◆ can change the borders of regions in the RF;
- ◆ confirms judicial appointment for central courts, and the leader of the Procuracy.

As of 2005, a *Public Chamber* with invited citizen and civil organization representatives has existed to review policy during the formulation process. It has no formal policy powers.

Executive (Presidency, Prime Minister and Presidential Administration)

Semi-presidential system.

President: Currently, serves a six-year term (constitutional amendment), elected in a two-round majority popular vote; if 60% given to any one candidate in the first round, election is decided. President must serve no more than two consecutive terms.

Powers:

- ◆ President is formal Head of State, but also has "Head of Government" powers including nominating the PM and cabinet;
- ◆ can dissolve the Duma if at least one year has passed since elections, or more than six months exist until the end of the presidential term;

- ◆ can propose and veto bills;
- ◆ can call for a popular referendum on bills;
- ◆ issues executive decrees on matters both internal and regarding national security;
- ◆ can settle disputes between regional and federal organs;
- ◆ can suspend regional actions if they contradict the RF constitution;
- ◆ can declare “states of emergency” if there is unrest or disorder;
- ◆ has direct control over so-called “power ministries” such as the Foreign, Internal Affairs (which oversees internal security) and Defense Ministries (since 2008, however, these ministries have also reported to Putin as PM);
- ◆ has control of the internal and international intelligence agency, the Federal Security Service (FSB);
- ◆ appoints all federal judges in the Russian Federation, with the approval of the Federation Council;
- ◆ appoints positions in the Presidential Administration, which is the leadership of the bureaucracy in Russia;
- ◆ appoints “presidential representatives” which represent the presidential administration to supervise implementation of federal policy in seven federal districts in the RF;
- ◆ nominates governors in the various regions of the RF, with regional legislatures electing the governors.

A *State Council* representing the governors of the regions meets with the President to discuss federal matters.

Prime Minister: Serves an indeterminate term dependent on presidential appointment and Duma approval. Not tied to specific parties, although PM has been a member of United Russia since 2007.

Powers:

- ◆ formally, PM is head of the Presidential Administration, with all domestic agencies reporting to him/her, except for agencies listed above to President;
- ◆ represents the President to the Duma, introducing legislation.

Putin created a *Presidium* of representatives of the major agencies, including agencies that do not report to the PM, after 2007.

The *Presidential Administration* comprises all of the bureaucratic agencies in the Russian central government, including representatives of the agencies to the regions. Since 2007, this is the primary body which creates policy initiatives.

Judiciary

Civil law system: multiple courts for civil, criminal and business law. Courts primarily exist to apply law, not conduct judicial review. Changes in law within the legislatures must be applied by courts unless constitutional review in constitutional courts (national or in regions, if regional law is in question) occurs.

Constitutional Court: Primary judicial review court in the RF, with 19 members serving 15-year terms. Justices are appointed by RF President with Federation Council approval.

Cases to the court require standing from parties directly affected by a case or law in question; if regarding legislation, law must already be promulgated and enacted. Parties eligible to approach court include governmental representatives in the Executive and Legislative branches and regions; citizens can approach Court on civil rights matters only.

Supreme Court: Final appeals court for civil, criminal and administrative legal matters that do not involve constitutional questions, either through the federal or regional courts. Can review laws and acts of the state for congruence with federal legislation but not if questions are constitutional. Can review and certify election results if requested. Comprised of multiple divisions of judges for the three major review sections, with a Chief and Assistant Chief Justice. All justices are appointees, with the Chief Justice serving a six-year term.

Supreme Arbitrazh Court: Final appeals court on matters of business and taxation law. Justices appointed by the President.