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1. **UK Ministry of Defence**

RUSSIAN DUMA ELECTIONS:

A PREVIEW

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The Duma elections are scheduled to take place on 19 December 1999. Although these elections are therefore four months away, it is opportune to look at the constellation of electoral blocs and parties that are currently forming. These Duma elections are important, as they occur about six months before the scheduled date for the next presidential elections, which should produce the successor to Boris Yel'tsin. The leaders of the movements that do well in the December 1999 Duma elections are likely to be the main contenders for the presidency in 2000.

It should be noted that the Russian party system is not like the British party system, or the party systems of other western countries. Western party systems usually consist of two large parties or blocs of parties (one centre-right, the other centre-left) that receive most of the vote and a number of smaller parties, one of which often captures a significant number of votes (eg the Liberal Democratic Party in Britain). The Russian party system consists of a large number of parties and electoral blocs, none of which (with the exception of the Communist Party) is able to mobilise a large proportion of the electorate. Parties and blocs are constantly being formed and reformed, and lack the cohesion of western parties. As a result, Duma factions are often amorphous, with deputies constantly changing allegiance. There is also a large number of independent deputies.

There are 450 deputies in the Duma. The voting system for their election is similar to that for the German Bundestag. Half of the deputies (225) are voted for on a proportional representation party list system, and the other half represent constituencies, and are voted for on a first past the post system.

Opinion polls which asked for respondents' voting preferences for Duma elections reveal that the three best-supported movements/parties are: the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF), Otechestvo, and Yabloko.

2. **KEY ELECTORAL BLOCS**

3. **COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

This is led by Gennady Zyuganov. It has been the major opposition force to the Yel'tsin leadership since 1993. Zyuganov also leads the Popular Patriotic Union of Russia, an

umbrella organisation of various nationalist and socialist movements. The CPRF states that it supports multiparty democracy, but it appears committed to restoring much of the pre-Gorbachev status quo ante. It contains a strong nationalist, authoritarian element that favours state control of the economy, and an anti-western foreign policy. There are also strong anti-semitic elements in the party. There is also a social democratic tendency, of which the current Duma chairman Gennady Seleznev is a prominent representative.

4. **OTECHESTVO-VSYA ROSSIYA**

This is an amalgamation of Otechestvo, led by Moscow mayor Yury Luzhkov, and Vsyaya Rossiya, led by St. Petersburg mayor Vladimir Yakovlev. Otechestvo was formed in the autumn of 1998, and may be regarded as broadly social-democratic in its orientation. Vsyaya Rossiya was formed in April 1999, and comprises many key regional leaders, including the presidents of Tatarstan, Bashkortostan and Ingushetia. The movements were amalgamated in August 1999. On 12 August, former prime minister Yevgeny Primakov agreed to head this electoral bloc. It should be noted that Luzhkov and some of his allies in Vsyaya Rossiya have often been criticised for an authoritarian ruling style.

YABLOKO

This is led by Grigory Yavlinskiy, and is reformist and social-democratic in orientation. It will therefore compete for the same vote as other liberal movements such as the Union of Rightist Forces (see below), and maybe also for the same vote as Otechestvo-Vsyaya Rossiya. Yavlinskiy has said he would back former prime minister Sergey Stepashin, who announced on 25 August that he would run for the Duma on the Yabloko list.

There are other movements, the most important of which are:

5. **The Union of Rightist Forces**

This was formed at the end of August 1999, based on a merger of Pravoye Delo (led by Boris Nemtsov) and Novaya Sila (led by Sergey Kiriyenko). Its other key leader is Irina Khakamada. It is possible that it could ally with Golos Rossii, led by Samara governor Konstantin Titov. There had been some discussion with Sergey Stepashin, but he has refused to join. This is a liberal alliance, favouring the continuation of market reforms and consolidation of democracy. It is unlikely to do well.

6. **Nash Dom Rossiya (NDR) - Our Home is Russia**

This is the movement led by former prime minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, which was formed in 1995. There had been some discussion that NDR might join with Pravoye Delo and Novaya Sila, but this was rejected by the NDR political council in August 1999. The NDR appeared in August 1999 favourably inclined to working with Sergey Stepashin. This movement is also unlikely to do well.

The Peoples' Republican Party, led by Aleksandr Lebed, governor of Krasnoyarsk. It was reported in August that Aleksandr Lebed and Boris Berezovskiy were having talks about forming an electoral alliance.

The Liberal Democratic Party, led by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy.

The Congress of Russian Communities, led by Dmitry Rogozin. This is usually known by its Russian acronym, KRO.

"Stalinist bloc - Working Russia - Officers - For the USSR". This is an alliance of Viktor Anpilov's "Working Russia", Stanislav Terekhov's "Officers' Union", Igor Malyarov's "People's Patriotic Youth Union", and Georgy Tikhonov's "Union".

The Movement in Support of the Armed Forces led by Viktor Ilyukhin (a CPRF deputy). This will be forming an alliance with other nationalist movements.

The Otechestvo-Vsya Rossiya movement has scored a considerable coup by persuading Yevgenny Primakov to head its list of candidates for the proportional representation section of the Duma. Primakov enjoyed considerable popular support when he was prime minister, and opinion polls showed that he would be a popular presidential candidate, should he decide to run for president next year. This appears to have discomfited both the Yel'tsin leadership and the CPRF. Yury Luzhkov also enjoys considerable support in presidential opinion polls, and the performance of Otechestvo-Vsya Rossiya in December 1999 will be of considerable interest. However, even if it were to perform poorly, this would not necessarily augur ill for Primakov or Luzhkov if either were to run for the presidency. The KRO performed badly in the December 1995 elections, when Aleksandr Lebed was one of its leaders, yet he came a strong third in the first round of the presidential elections in June 1996.

A large proportion of the Russian electorate appears to support market-oriented economic reforms, but with a strong element of social protection. For this reason they may be inclined to support a movement or individuals with a social-democratic orientation. If Otechestvo-Vsya Rossiya seeks to convey this message and is successful in so doing, then it could perform well. This would strengthen immensely the likelihood of Primakov running for president in 2000 (Luzhkov has said he will not run if Primakov decides to run). This would cause consternation in the Yel'tsin camp, and could create that possibility that Yel'tsin may try to create a pretext for illegally staying in power beyond the expiry of his term of office.

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