

August 1, 2011

Russia: Dramatic Theater

Even though Russia is an illiberal Democracy, it still has elections. Different parties participate, and someone is elected. Usually this is a member of the United Russia Party. In fact, the political system does not look very legitimate from an outside perspective. Some may argue that it is illegitimate to those who are Russian citizens. This is not all bad; however, since the system provides political stability and order. Even though this stability is not transparent, it is clear that one ideology is followed. Getting to this point in the political culture of Russia, and what follows can be described as some sort of dramatic theater.

Olga Kryshтанovskaya states in *The Washington Post* that, “Our politics are a theater. There are directors and a script. And for some reason they love it when the public says there are conflicts.” The Kremlin lets this game go on since it provides a sense of order for Russia. When thinking about how this state was under the control of one party for more than three generations, the institutions have allowed single party dominance to occur. Even through corruption, it is acceptable to this society.

The opposition part, deemed possible is Right Cause and is led by Mikhail Prokhorov (Newsweek). The difference is that this party is supposedly right-winged. The confusion occurs since it supports policy-making of the Kremlin. The notion of a theater, and a dramatic one, comes to mind. This appears to be a ploy to create the illusion of an opposition. Unfortunately, if you call something an opposition, it does not make it one.

This is a right-winged party by name, but Prokhorov agrees with Medvedev, or rather, does not differ with him.

The People's Freedom party (PFP) gets banned a month later; supposedly having some of its members listed dead and others under-aged (The Guardian (London)). An unfortunate tactic used to eliminate any real opposition to the political monopoly in Russia. At least the monopoly has some resemblance of what Russian citizens desire most. Putin and Medvedev's party provide a strong iron fist of control. Where the Prime Minister and President differ is more interesting.

In *The Irish Times*, Medvedev announced that either Putin or he would run for President. There would be no competition between the mentor and protégé. "He even suggested that elections for governors of Russia's 89 regions whose removal was a key aspect of Mr Putin's centralisation of power might eventually be restored" (The Irish Times). What might happen? Depending on who gets the Presidency, major political restructuralization may occur.

Another article by *The Washington Post* describes that, "The State Department rightly objected when the Party of People's Freedom - the real opposition - was denied registration. It is on seeking space for such groups, and not Mr. Medvedev's Potemkin initiative, that the focus of U.S. policy should remain." International affairs take higher precedent than internal ones. Furthermore, a barrier exists, maybe formed out of the ruins of the iron curtain, showing that internal affairs are not to be discussed by non-Russian entities. It seems like politics as usual is occurring in Russia.

Work Cited

A real rivalry, or just part of an old game? – The Washington Post

Medvedev rules out poll clash with Putin – The Irish Times

Mr. Medvedev's next act – The Washington Post

Russian party barred from polls – The Guardian (London)

The Kremlin's Loyal Opposition; Mikhail Prokhorov is the likely leader of a new opposition party in upcoming elections--but Putin isn't scared. – Newsweek