Who Rules Russia?
The Power Elite of the Russian Federation*

Chris Monday**

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1) 국문요약

미하일 호도르콥스키(Khodorkovsky)의 새로운 신념은 푸틴이 수장인 FSB(연방보안국, 구 KGB)가 현재 러시아를 통제하고 있다는 것을 재확인해준다. 이 서류는 푸틴이 현재의 리더이며 수년간 이러한 지배가 계속될 것이라고 주장한다. 하지만 그의 권한은 획일적인 KGB식 스타일의 보안구조에 기초를 두고 있지 않다. 다만, 분산되어 있는 힘 있는 엘리트들 사이에 널리 합의된 산물이다. 사실, 이러한 엘리트 그룹은 지역 인사, 과두체집권층(oligarchs), 실로비키(siloviki), 지식 및 문화산업 등 다양한 그룹에서 나온다. 그들 각각은 러시아의 미래와 관련하여 다른 비전을 가지고 있고 푸틴은 그들의 관심과 현재 그들의 상태 유지를 위한 중요한 조정 역할을 충분히 하고 있다. 다른 공산주의 자들이나 기존 공산주의 국가들에서와 같이 러시아 엘리트는 급격히 유전적인 카스트제가 되어 가고 있다.

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** Associate professor, Department of International Studies, Dongseo University
I. Introduction

In the face of world criticism, a Russian court on December 27, 2010 handed a new conviction to Mikhail Khodorkovsky, once Russia’s richest man, who has been jailed for the last seven years after challenging the prerogatives of Vladimir Putin.1) This has appeared to vindicate widespread talk that the former KGB (whose members now own Khodorkovsky’s company) now runs Russia—with Putin as their chief.2) This paper argues that Putin indeed is Russia’s leading figure and will likely remain in charge for many years. But his authority is not based in a monolithic KGB-type security structure, but rather is the product of a broad consensus among various, dispersed power elites. In fact, it is because these elites are drawn from diverse groups—the regional elite, the oligarchs, the siloviki, the knowledge and cultural industries—each of hold conflicting visions of Russia’s future, that Putin fulfills an essential role in coordinating their interests and maintaining order.

Russia is no “Normal Country.”3) This has been repeatedly demonstrated by a bizarre series of national ceremonies which were substituted for genuine elections. It has now become obvious the Russian politics is far removed from basic notions of normal democracy; in particular, a standard criterion labels democratic only those systems which permit ruling parties to be voted out of office, a clear impossibility under Russia’s current regime. Even more surprising from the standpoint of predictions formulated by researchers in the 1990s is the fact that the Kremlin’s windfall prosperity, while confounding democracy theorists,4) has allowed the Russian state to establish a peculiar brand of new

3) Russia’s Western reformers long maintained that Russia was a “normal country” because its political system was analogous to the politics of countries that enjoyed a per capita income on a level similar to Russia’s citizens. See: Andrei Schleifer and Daniel Treisman, “A Normal Country,” Foreign Affairs, Vol. 83, No. 2 (March-April 2004). Oddly, left-of-center historian Steven Cohen also finds contemporary Russia to be a Normal Country. See: Stephen F. Cohen, “The Media’s New Cold War,” The Nation (Jan. 31, 2005), p.1.