**RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

Government

The executive power was split between the President and the Prime Minister, but the President was the dominant figure. The legislature was represented by the Federal Assembly of Russia. It had two chambers: the State Duma, lower house, and the Federation Council, upper house.

Politics

The politics of Russia (the Russian Federation) takes place in the framework of a federal semi-presidential republic. According to the Constitution of Russia, the President of Russia was head of state and of a multi-party system with executive power exercised by the government, headed by the Prime Minister, appointed by the President with the parliament's approval. Legislative power was vested in the two houses of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, while the President and the government issued numerous legally binding by-laws.

Since gaining its independence with the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991, Russia has faced serious challenges in its efforts to forge a political system to follow nearly seventy-five years of Soviet rule. For instance, leading figures in the legislative and executive branches have put forth opposing views of Russia's political direction and the governmental instruments that should be used to follow. That conflict reached a climax in September and October 1993, when President Boris Yeltsin used military force to dissolve the parliament and called for new legislative elections (see Russian constitutional crisis of 1993).

This event marked the end of Russia's first constitutional period, which was defined by the much-amended constitution adopted by the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic in 1978. A new constitution, creating a strong presidency, was approved by referendum in December 1993.

With a new constitution and a new parliament representing diverse parties and factions, Russia's political structure subsequently showed signs of stabilization. As the transition period extended into the mid-1990s, the power of the national government continued to wane as Russia's regions gained political and economic concessions from Moscow. Although the struggle between executive and legislative branches was partially resolved by the new constitution, the two branches continued to represent fundamentally opposing visions of Russia's future. Most of the time, the executive was the center of reform, and the lower house of the parliament, State Duma, was a bastion of anti-reform communists and nationalists.