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**Party
Formation
and
Non-Formation
in Russia**

Michael McFaul

**Russian Domestic
Politics Project**

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Introduction

A party system is an essential attribute of a democratic policy. No parties, no democracy.¹ Despite the erosion of the influence of parties in old democracies and the difficulties of establishing new parties in new democracies, theorists still agree that parties and a party system are necessary evils for the functioning of representative government.² In liberal democracies, parties perform several tasks. During elections, they provide voters with distinctive choices, be they ideological, social, or even ethnic. After elections, parties then represent the interests of their constituents in the formulation (and sometimes implementation) of state policy. The degree of party penetration of state institutions need not correlate directly with a given party's power over policy outcomes. Empowered by expertise or connections to key decision makers, small parties can have inordinate influence over policy debates, while large parties may suffer the opposite: no expertise, no personal networks, and therefore, little influence over policy. Yet, some degree of representation within the state is usually necessary for a party to influence policy outcomes. In politics with highly developed party systems, parties also perform other functions that can include everything from organizing social life to social welfare.

The crux of party power comes from participation in elections and then winning representation within the state. In pluralist democracies, parties traditionally serve as “the most important part of the representative structure in complex democratic societies,” aggregating societal interests and then representing those interests within the state.³ In fact, the degree of party control over the structuring of electoral choices and subsequent party penetration of significant state bodies serve as good proxy measures for party development. Successful parties and developed party systems must be able to influence the structure of the vote, and then win representation within the state in order to influence policy making.

By this set of criteria, party development in Russia has a long way to go. Parties do influence electoral choices in some elections, but not all. And in elections in which parties play a central role, they do not play a monopolistic role in structuring the vote. Subsequently, parties have only penetrated very limited sectors of the Russian state. One area in which parties have succeeded in playing a central role in competing in elections is in the lower house of parliament, the State Duma. Parties have won seats in this legislative organ and have been able to translate their electoral successes into parliamentary power by organizing the internal operation of the Duma in ways that privilege parties. But in every other part of the Russian government—the presidential administration, the federal government, the Federation Council, regional heads of administration, and regional parliaments—parties have played a marginal role in structuring votes and an even lesser role in penetrating or influencing these other governmental entities.

¹ For a recent review of this proposition, see Seymour Martin Lipset, “The Indispensability of Parties,” *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 11, no. 1 (January 2000), pp. 48–55.

² On the decline of parties globally, see Philippe Schmitter, “Intermediaries in the Consolidation of Neo-Democracies: The Role of Parties, Associations, and Movements,” unpublished manuscript, September 1997.

³ Seymour Martin Lipset, as quoted in Philippe Schmitter, “The Consolidation of Democracy and Representation of Social Groups,” *American Behavioral Scientist*, vol. 35, nos. 4/5 (March/June 1992), p. 423.

Why? Why have parties been successful in organizing and influencing the work of the State Duma, but enjoyed only very limited success elsewhere? Why has party success within the Duma not stimulated party development elsewhere? Is Russia's current weak party system a temporary outcome or a permanent feature of Russian politics?

This article argues that parties in Russia are weak because the most powerful politicians in Russia have made choices to make them weak. Cultural, historical, and socio-economic factors play a role in impeding party emergence, but individual decisions—especially decisions about institutional design—are the more proximate and more salient causes of poor party development. The privileged position of parties in the State Duma also resulted from individual choices, but those choices had unintended consequences that did not represent the preferences of the most powerful. As a result, even this oasis of party power may be overrun by anti-party forces. Both the 1999 parliamentary election and the 2000 presidential election suggest that such an assault may occur soon.

To demonstrate the centrality of individual choice and intent in the making and unmaking of Russia's party system, this paper proceeds as follows. The first section provides a measure of party development. After discussing alternative ways of assessing party strength, this section argues that the electoral and representative roles of parties are the most important indicators of party development. An attempt is then made to quantify the degree of party penetration into Russia's main political institutions that are filled through popular election. The results are not encouraging for those concerned with party development. Section Two explains the results described in previous section. After exploring the weakness of various structural approaches, the importance of institutional design for both stimulating and stunting party development is highlighted. The electoral rules of the game for all offices and the presidential system are discussed in detail. The third section then pushes the causal arrow back one step further to explain the origins of the institutions described in the previous section. The argument is then made that almost all of the institutional arrangements for choosing elected leaders reflect the preferences of Russia's most powerful actors, those who have not needed parties to remain in power. The one exception is the electoral law for the State Duma, that is, the one institution that has encouraged party consolidation. In several respects, this law was an accident of history—an accident that is likely to be "corrected" in the future. The final section offers conclusions.

1. MEASURING PARTY DEVELOPMENT IN RUSSIA

There are many different ways to measure party development. The most common approach simply counts party membership as an indicator of party organization. Using this metric in Russia, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) looks like a robust organization with a reported membership of approximately 500,000, while liberal parties such as Yabloko and Democratic Choice of Russia appear to be weak with memberships in the thousands. In the country as a whole, party membership in Russia is commonly referred to as low.

But compared to what? Compared to card-carrying party members in European democracies, Russia probably does have a low level of party activists. Compared to the United States, however, Russia's numbers may not be so low. To be sure, party identification in the United States is high, and therefore party "registration"—an act that occurs at the ballot box and is organized by the state (not the party)—is also very high. Yet, the number of employees of American parties is extremely low. In the conservative stronghold of Orange County in

southern California, the Republican Party has only one full-time employee in non-electoral periods.⁴ Russian parties probably employ greater numbers.

Moreover, counting the number of employees or party members provides only a partial indication of a party's electoral power, policy influence, or future trajectory. The CPRF most certainly has the largest membership of any Russian party, but its 500,000 members represent only a tiny fraction of the membership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in 1991. The number, therefore, does not say much about the CPRF party's strength regarding electoral performance, influence over policy outcomes, or potential for growth in the future. Most Russian political experts agree that Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) is the second largest, and second-best organized party in Russia.⁵ Yet this party has continued to lose half its popular support in each subsequent parliamentary election in the 1990s (23 percent in 1993, 11 percent in 1995, and 6 percent in 1999). In the presidential election in March 2000, Zhirinovskiy won a paltry 2.7 percent of the national vote.⁶ The same negative trend for the LDPR can be seen regarding single-mandate races, an arena in which local party organization should produce payoffs. The LDPR won five single-mandate seats in the 1993 parliamentary elections, one in the 1995 vote, and zero in the 1999 vote. By contrast, Unity (Medved)—a virtual party, with no real party membership, formed just weeks before the 1999 parliamentary vote—captured nearly one-quarter of the popular vote. Obviously, the correlation between party organization and electoral success is not precise.

A second approach to measuring party development is to gauge the degree of partisanship in society. Party organization clearly contributes to societal identification with parties, but other factors such as ideological affinity and embrace of party leaders also play a role. In Russia, the trajectory regarding party identification appears to have been positive for most of the decade, but has now stalled.⁷

⁴ This anecdote may no longer be true (or perhaps never was). But it was reported to the author during a visit to Republican Party headquarters in 1992 while accompanying a group of visiting Russian party activists to the United States.

⁵ This said, Fatherland–All Russia, a new party formed in 1999, claimed to have 400,000 members in September of the same year. (Author's interview with Sergei Mdoiyants, deputy director of the Fatherland campaign, September 22, 1999.)

⁶ This is the unofficial result of the March 26, 2000 vote as reported on the website of the Russian Central Election Commission, www.fci.ru.

⁷ In our surveys of Russian voters just after the December 1999 parliamentary elections, half of the Russian voters reported a party affiliation, roughly the same percentage reported in a 1995 survey organized by Timothy Colton and William Zimmerman. The January 2000 survey, written and fielded by Timothy Colton, Polina Kozyreva, Mikhail Kosolapov, and myself, had 1600 respondents. This level of partisanship is much higher than that reported in a 1993 survey conducted by White, Rose, and McAllister (see below), which found that only 22 percent of respondents identified with a party. However, Colton reports that partisan identification declined considerably in the run-up to the 1996 presidential vote, falling from 49 percent in late 1995 to 31 percent in mid-summer of 1996. Obviously, voters are thinking more about their party sympathies just before voting on a party list vote for the parliament. For further discussion on party identification within the electorate, see Timothy Colton, "Babes in Partyland: The Riddle of Partisanship in Post-Soviet Russia," paper presented at the University of Houston, March 2000; Timothy Colton, *Transitional Citizens: Voters and What Influence Them in the New Russia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, forthcoming May

Like party organization, however, societal partisanship is only a partial or proxy measure of the development of a multi-party system. The relationship between partisanship and party influence over politics is only indirect. Voters can lack strong party identifications, but still allow the electoral process and the political system to be dominated by parties. In the United States, for instance, the number of voters who identify with parties has decreased in the last two decades, but the electoral process, as well as the policy process, is still dominated by the two largest parties. Moreover, in new democracies, partisanship in society is likely to lag behind party development more generally since voters cannot become partisan until parties have emerged and developed.

A third measure of party strength is to track the influence of parties on policy outcomes. Smaller parties can possess expertise that allows them to have a disproportionate degree of influence over specific policy issues, while large parties with less expertise might enjoy less impact on policy development. A party's ability to join coalitions and cooperate with other parties can also effect a party's degree of influence over policy. Extremist parties, even popular ones, tend to become marginalized in the policy process, while centrist groups tend have greater influence than the popular support in society would suggest. While the influence of parties on policy outcome may be the most important indicator of party strength, nonetheless, devising an empirical measure of the degree of such influence is not easy, and is well beyond the scope of this paper.

Instead, a fourth approach for calibrating party development is used here—that is, measuring the electoral success and subsequent degree of party representation within state bodies. In the causal chain between party organization, party identification in society, electoral success/representation in the state, and ultimately, influence over policy outcomes, this measure assesses the penultimate step.⁸ Although many other variables intervene to dilute or enhance the influence of parties over policies after elections have occurred, some degree of success at the polls and subsequently some degree of representation within the state are necessary conditions for policy influence in most countries. This stage in the chain can also be quantified much more easily than either earlier stages in the causal chain or the final stage. At a minimum, it is a good place to start in developing a comprehensive assessment of party development.

The Presidency

The most powerful position in the Russian political system is the office of president, and it is the president who appoints the prime minister.⁹ The lower house of parliament—the State Duma—must approve the president's choice for prime minister. But if they reject the president's candidate three times, then the Duma is dissolved and new elections are held. Not surprisingly, votes against the prime minister have been few and far between. The president also has the power to issue decrees, which have the power of law until overridden by a law passed by both the upper and lower houses of parliament and signed by the president. Presidential decrees have been used to privatize entire oil companies, television networks, and nickel mines!

2000) chapter three; and Stephen White, Richard Rose, and Ian McAllister, *How Russia Votes* (Chatham, NJ: Chatham House, 1997).

⁸ Obviously, there are other ways to map this causal chain depending on the country in question.

⁹ On the power of the presidency under Yeltsin, see Lilia Shevtsova, *Yeltsin's Russia: Myths and Realities* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999).

The president also controls the nomination process of judges to both the Constitutional Court and the Supreme Court. Control over this office, therefore, is the grand prize of Russian politics.

Parties, however, have played a marginal role in structuring presidential votes and have enjoyed no success in gaining party representation within the president's office or the presidential administration. Still, party leaders have participated in presidential elections. In the 1996 vote, three of the top five finishers were party leaders, while the CPRF's leader, Gennadii Zyuganov, advanced to the second round. In the 2000 vote, party leaders again participated, but the winner, as in the 1991 and 1996 elections, was not a party member.

President Yeltsin was anti-party. He never joined a party nor advocated the creation of one. As he explained soon after leaving the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, he had no great desire to join or create another party after thirty years in the service of one party. Nor is his successor, President Vladimir Putin, a member of any party, though he did serve as Deputy Chairman of Our Home Is Russia in St. Petersburg during the 1995 parliamentary elections and has hinted about participating in the creation of a new national party, Unity. Significantly, neither Yeltsin nor Putin owed their rise to power to party organizations.

A fundamental cleavage issue did shape the contours of Russian presidential elections in 1991 and 1996. Yeltsin managed to forge a majority coalition in both elections by running *against* communism. His closest challengers in 1991 and 1996, especially when consolidated in the run-off in 1996, advocated a return to some form of communism. In rough form, Russia's electorate also divided along these two positions, especially when compelled to make binary choices in elections, as in the second round of the 1996 election, and the referenda votes in April 1993 and December 1993. Yet, a party system organized around this cleavage issue did not crystallize, and since 1996, this cleavage issue has faded in importance.¹⁰ In the run-up to the 2000 presidential election, two of the *original* three leading candidates—former prime minister Yevgeny Primakov and acting president Putin—were only weakly connected to party structures and had no relationship to ideologically based parties.

In sum, parties have not structured electoral choices in Russian presidential elections and have not enjoyed representation within the presidential administration.

The Prime Minister and Federal Government

Through the Duma, the lower house of parliament, parties have played some role in influencing the composition of the government. Formally, the distribution of power between parties in the Duma does not have direct influence on the selection of the prime minister or other ministers in the federal government. The relationship between parties and prime ministers is the opposite of more established democracies—individuals become prime minister first and then form parties while in power or after leaving office. Viktor Chernomyrdin formed his party, Our Home Is Russia, three years after becoming prime minister in 1992. Prime Minister Sergei Kiryenko formed his party Novaya Sila (New Power) and then headed the liberal coalition Union of Right Forces (SPS) *after* he left the government. Prime Minister Primakov was non-partisan while in office, but also helped to form a new party—Fatherland—after leaving the

¹⁰ See Michael McFaul, *Russia's 1996 Presidential Election: The End of Polarized Politics* (Palo Alto, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1997).

government. Sergei Stepashin is the one prime minister who joined an existing party, Yabloko, after losing his job as prime minister. While in office, however, he had no party affiliation.

After crises, parties in the Duma have managed to influence the choice of prime minister and the composition of the government. Following the December 1993 elections, Yegor Gaidar and Boris Fyodorov resigned from their posts in the government after their party, Russia's Choice, suffered a devastating defeat at the polls. Prime Minister Chernomyrdin subsequently invited representatives from the Agrarian and Communist parties to join his team as a way to reflect (albeit only partially) the will of the people within his government as expressed in the parliamentary election. After the August 1998 financial crash, opposition parties in the Duma demanded the resignation of Kiryenko, blocked the reappointment of Chernomyrdin (who had been removed earlier in the year), and promoted the appointment of Yevgeny Primakov. Primakov then appointed CPRF leader Yuri Maslyukov as his first deputy prime minister.

In all of these cases of party penetration of the government, however, the president and the prime minister were not obliged to bring party members in. And when party members did join the government, their allegiances usually transferred to the prime minister, and drifted away from their party leaders and organizations.¹¹ More generally, the composition of the government has never reflected the balance of forces within the Duma. Zhirinovskiy's Liberal Democratic Party of Russia won nearly one-quarter of the vote in 1993, but enjoyed no representation within the government after the election. The CPRF won a landslide victory in 1995 and controlled almost half of all the seats in the Duma thereafter, but subsequently did not name fifty percent of the ministers in Chernomyrdin's government. As alluded to above, former members of government have often tried to spur the formation of parties after leaving office, but parties have only marginally influenced the formation of Russian governments.

The Federation Council

The Federation Council, the upper house of the Russian parliament, is another party-free state institution. It is currently comprised of chief executives of regional governments and chairs of regional legislatures, and its members do not rely on party support or party identification to win their seats in the Council. Committees, not party factions, organize the internal work within the Council. When decisions must be made that reflect proportions smaller than fifty percent, regional associations coalesce. For instance, in 1999, when the Federation Council had to elect five new members to the Central Election Commission, they allowed regional associations to make the selections, in contrast to the Duma, which selected its members proportionally to reflect the party distribution of seats in the lower house. A communist/anti-communist divide can be discerned regarding some votes in the Federation Council, but regional voting patterns are more salient. A number of Federation Council members did adopt party affiliations in the run-up to the 1999 parliamentary elections.¹² Nine regional executives, including important leaders such as Yuri Luzhkov from Moscow, Vladimir Yakovlev from St. Petersburg, Mintimer Shaimiev of Tatarstan and Murtaza Rakhimov of Bashkortostan, joined forces to form the electoral bloc Fatherland–All Russia (OVR). Yet this coalition quickly fell apart after the 1999

¹¹ Mikhail Zadornov from Yabloko and Sergei Kalashnikov from the LDPR are two typical examples.

¹² Some, in fact adopted multiple affiliations. See Nikolai Petrov and Aleksei Titkov, "Regional'noe izmerenie vyborov," in Michael McFaul, Nikolai Petrov, and Andrei Ryabov, eds., *Rossiia nakanune dumskikh vyborov 1999 goda* (Moscow: Moscow Carnegie Center, 1999), pp. 50–78.

vote, when All Russia leaders broke with Fatherland. Similarly, the pro-governmental electoral bloc, Unity (Medved), garnered the endorsement of dozens of Federation Council members during the 1999 parliamentary campaign, but only one of these regional leaders actually joined Unity. Importantly, none of these regional leaders joined these blocs as a means to enhance their own electoral prospects.

In sum, parties have exercised only limited influence in the selection of “senators” to the Federation Council and have exerted almost no influence whatsoever in the internal organization of this state institution. Consequently, it seems safe to conclude that parties also have not influenced policy decisions taken by this legislative body.

The State Duma

Elections to the State Duma constitute the one arena in which parties do a play a major role. Likewise, parties play a central role in the internal organization of this legislative organ and have a direct influence over Duma policy outputs. At the same time, the electoral results of the 1999 parliamentary elections suggest that party influence over this institution cannot be considered a permanent feature of Russian politics.

Russia’s current electoral system for the State Duma accords parties a privileged position regarding the selection of fifty percent (225) of Duma members. This fifty-percent allocation goes proportionally to parties that receive at least five percent of the popular vote in a national election (for a single electoral district). Yet this privileged position has not translated into increased party influence in the remaining single-mandate district elections. Even on the party-list ballot, parties have begun to lose control of the vote.

The Party-List Ballot: “Parliamentary Parties” versus “Presidential Coalitions.” As discussed in detail below, proportional representation has helped to stimulate the development of interest-based or ideological parties within the Duma. After three parliamentary elections in the 1990s, the core of a multi-party system does appear to be consolidating. This core is comprised of four national parties—the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, Yabloko, the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, and the Union of Right Forces. When compared to each other, these four parties share many attributes that can also be identified in parliamentary parties in other political systems.

First, all of these parties participated in previous Duma votes.¹³ They are not newcomers to the parliamentary electoral process. The ability to field national party lists and candidates in three consecutive national elections suggest that these four parties have financial resources, brand names, and organizational capacities. Three of the four have enjoyed representation in all three parliaments that have served since 1993. The predecessor to the Union of Right Forces, Democratic Choice of Russia, won only 3.8 percent of the popular vote in 1995 and therefore did not have a faction in the Duma. However, the party and its leaders survived this dark period for their party by occupying senior positions in the government.

Second, all four parties have rather well-defined political orientations, loyal electorates, and notable leaders. In focus groups commissioned by the author in 1999, voters indicated that they

¹³ The Union of Right Forces did not compete in the 1993 or 1995 vote, though the core party within this electoral bloc, Democratic Choice of Russia, did compete in the 1995 election and its predecessor, Russia’s Choice, competed in 1993.

knew these parties well, much better that they knew other parties competing in this same election.¹⁴ The CPRF's program has now recognized the legitimacy of private property and free markets, but nonetheless still advocates a major role for the state in the economy.¹⁵ The CPRF's position on the economy, however, is not its only unique platform plank. CPRF programs and policy documents also include a heavy dose of patriotic slogans, nationalistic proposals, and nostalgic conservatism. The Party boasts an extremely loyal following that identifies with these issues. The older, poorer, and more rural are those most likely to support the CPRF. The head of the party, Gennadii Zyuganov, has been a nationally recognized political figure in Russia for the last decade.

Likewise, Yabloko has a well-defined political niche (the "liberal opposition"), a core electorate (the not-so-well-off intelligentsia and white-collar workers of large and medium-sized cities), a national grassroots organization, and a well-known leader. Yabloko's identity is defined more by the kind of people who identify with the party, and less by the kind of ideology of policies the party advocates.¹⁶ Yet, this identity is strong and well defined. Along several dimensions, Yabloko probably most closely approximates a genuinely *post-Soviet* political party.¹⁷ In contrast to the CPRF, this party was created from scratch after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

By contrast with the Democratic Choice of Russia (DVR) in 1995, the Union of Right Forces (SPS) modified its platform before the 1999 campaign.¹⁸ Most importantly, while DVR had opposed the first war in Chechnya in 1995, SPS supported the second war there in 1999. The rest of SPS's program, however, has remained consistent over the decade—unabashedly liberal (in the European sense of the word). The demographics of their electorate are the polar opposite of the CPRF: young, wealthy, and urban. SPS leaders, including former prime ministers Sergei Kiryenko and Yegor Gaidar, and former first deputy prime ministers Boris Nemtsov and Anatolii Chubais, are some of the best known (if not most notorious) political figures in Russia. For most voters in Russia, no amount of campaign advertising would change their firm opinions—some firmly positive, but most firmly negative—about these people. Organizationally, SPS has only a skeletal organization outside of Moscow, St. Petersburg, Samara, and Chelyabinsk, but other resources—including strong financial backing—compensate for this weakness.

¹⁴ *Formirovanie politicheskikh ustanovok i prepochtenii naseleniya Rossii v khode parlamenskikh vyborov: Kratskii otchet* (Moscow: Fond 'Ruskii proekt,' January 2000), 2 vols.

¹⁵ See Mikhail Dmitriev, "Party Economic Programs and Implications," in Michael McFaul, Nikolai Petrov, and Andrei Ryabov, with Elizabeth Reisch, *Primer on Russia's 1999 Duma Elections* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999), pp. 31–60.

¹⁶ In answer to a question posed by the author about ideological orientation in March 2000, Vycheslav Igrunov, deputy chairman of the party, guessed that one-third of Yabloko member are liberals and two-thirds are social-democrats, but that most would have a difficult time answering such a question.

¹⁷ Aleksei Kuzmin, "Partii v regionakh," in Sergei Markov, Michael McFaul, and Andrei Ryabov, *Formirovanie partiino-politicheskoi sistemy v Rossii* (Moscow: Moscow Carnegie Center, 1998), pp. 137–51.

¹⁸ On this evolution, see Alexey Zudin, "Union of Right Forces," in McFaul et al., *Primer on Russia's 1999 Duma Elections*, pp. 103–12.

Table One
Results of Party-List Voting in Russian Duma Elections in 1995 and 1999
(as a percentage of national proportional representation vote)

Political Party/Bloc	1999 (%)	1995 (%)
Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF)	24.29	22.7
Yabloko	5.93	7.0
Union of Right Forces	8.52	
Democratic Choice of Russia		3.9
All right-wing parties ¹⁹		8.1
Liberal Democratic Party of Russia/Zhirinovskiy Bloc	5.98	11.4
Unity (Medved)	23.32	N/A
Fatherland–All Russia	13.33	N/A
Our Home Is Russia	1.2	10.3
“None of the above” and parties below the 5 percent threshold	18.63	49.6

Only Zhirinovskiy’s LDPR has a rather ill-defined and rapidly changing ideological orientation, though the core of his views are still nationalistic and imperial. This may be the reason that the LDPR has continued to lose support, in contrast to the other three parties, which have maintained their electorates.

Third, as Table One demonstrates, three of the four parties won roughly the same percentage in this election that they won in December 1995.

The CPRF won almost exactly the same percentage, with a slight improvement, over its 1995 showing. Yabloko lost a percentage point—a big blow to the party, but a small variation when compared to Yabloko totals in 1995 or even 1993. The Union of Right Forces performed surprisingly well in 1999, though the total electoral support in 1995 (when adding together the small blocs that divided their vote in 1995) is not that different than 1999. Zhirinovskiy’s LDPR suffered a sharp decline and lost nearly half its electoral support, suggesting that the LDPR may be the weakest of these four “old” parliamentary parties. As a whole, though, what is most

¹⁹ “All right-wing parties” includes: Democratic Choice of Russia (3.86 percent), Forward Russia! (1.94 percent), Pamfilova-Gurov-Lysenko (1.6 percent), and Common Cause (0.7 percent).

striking about these result is the stability, not volatility, of aggregate support.²⁰ Three of these parties won plus or minus five percentage points of what they had won in 1995. Given all that has happened in Russia over the last four years—the 1996 presidential election, the August 1998 financial crash, rotating prime ministers, and the wars in Kosovo and Chechnya—these numbers represent incredible stability on par with other European proportional representation parliamentary democracies.

It is also striking to note that no new ideologically based party has managed to challenge these established parties for their political niches. New nationalist, communist, and liberal parties have formed; some even have long histories and famous leaders. But none captured more than two percent of the popular vote in the 1999 election.

An additional shared feature of all these parties is that they have taken their parliamentary roles very seriously. They all have established disciplined factions in the Duma, which in turn then helped to organize the work of the lower house along party lines.²¹ In the first post-Soviet Duma that convened in 1994, party leaders took the initiative in writing the internal rules of order within the parliament, which have survived to this day. Because of the mixed electoral system, more than half of the Duma deputies had a party affiliation, so leaders moved quickly to establish the primacy of party power.²² The new parliament voted to give the status of faction to all parties that had received more than five percent of the popular vote on the party-list ballot. Independent deputies (or deputies elected on party lists who then opted to quit their parties) had to collect thirty-five members to form a new faction. The allocation of committee chairs was also done proportionally between party factions, and Council of the Duma was established to organize the agenda of the parliament. Rather than proportional representation, each faction got one vote on this Council.²³ The new Duma also approved a new rule that gave parties control over speaking privileges on the floor. Finally, party leaders passed a resolution that gave parties the power to allocate staff to individual faction members. These new rules quickly established parties and party leaders as the pre-eminent actors in the Duma and created real incentives for non-partisan Duma

²⁰ Of course, aggregate stability does not mean that individuals are consistently supporting the same parties. Measurement of individual voters' preferences must be discerned from national surveys.

²¹ Of the four, Russia's Choice had the least disciplined faction in the 1990s. In 1993, however, Russia's Choice was not simply a neo-liberal ideological party but also the party of power closely affiliated with the president and his government. Now that the Union of Right Forces no longer enjoys this party of power status, we should expect to see a more disciplined faction in the 2000 Duma.

²² As Viktor Sheinis reflected, "If we would have had a 100 percent single-mandate system, we would have had 450 parties." In his estimation, the electoral law helped to provide internal organization to the new Duma, a quality that was lacking in the Russian Congress of People's Deputies. (Author's interview with Duma Deputy Viktor Sheinis, May 12, 1995). Evidence for his assessment is provided in Moshe Haspel, Thomas Remington, and Steven Smith, "Electoral Institutions and Party Cohesion in the Russian Duma," *The Journal of Politics*, vol. 60, no. 2 (May 1998), pp. 417–39.

²³ On the consequences of this institutional innovation, see Thomas Remington and Steven Smith, "Theories of Legislative Institutions and the Organization of the Russian Duma," *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 42, no. 2 (April 1998), pp. 545–72.

deputies to align with a faction.²⁴ All of these party-friendly proposals were approved by a party-dominated Duma.

Not everyone celebrated this new partisan predominance in the Duma. At the time, Yeltsin's presidential advisor, Georgii Satarov, interpreted this shift in power to the parties and away from the committees as a setback for the professionalization of the Duma.²⁵ The presidential administration tried to correct this "party-ization" [partizatsiya] of parliament by eliminating proportional representation from the Duma electoral law, a campaign that failed twice—before the 1995 elections, and then again in 1999.²⁶ That presidential aides lamented the formation of party politics within the Duma suggests that this new organizational structure was consequential. Internal cohesion made the Duma a more formidable opponent for the president.²⁷

This core group of well-established parliamentary parties, however, has not dominated parliamentary elections and has not enjoyed monopolistic control over the internal affairs of the Duma as do many party systems in consolidated democracies. The results of the 1999 parliamentary vote suggest that the party dominance over parliamentary elections and parliamentary representation may be declining, not increasing.

Most strikingly, two new electoral coalitions competed on the party-list ballot, which succeeded in capturing a significant portion of popular vote—Fatherland–All Russia and Unity (Medved). These two election blocs share many similar qualities with each other, but have little in common with the four parties mentioned above. In contrast to the four *parliamentary parties* discussed above, these two organizations are better understood as *presidential coalitions*. They are different animals.

First, neither Fatherland nor Unity participated in the last election and they are both unlikely to participate in the next parliamentary election. For the leaders of these coalitions, the 2000 presidential race was the focus of attention from the very beginning. Luzhkov created Fatherland to promote his presidential aspirations, while Primakov joined Fatherland–All Russia to advance his presidential prospects. On behalf of Putin, the Kremlin created Unity to weaken Luzhkov and Primakov as presidential candidates, and strengthen Putin's prospects.²⁸

²⁴ Committees provided an additional set of identities for Duma members, which at times countered the power-of-party faction leaders. The geography of the Duma's final home (in the old Gosplan building) fostered committee identification as deputies were allocated offices according to their committee affiliations and not their party affiliations. According to Vladimir Lukashev, chief of staff for Russia's Choice interviewed by the author (May 25, 1995), this decision about offices made party coordination more difficult. Nonetheless, parties provided the primary organizational structure for the new parliament, not the committees. On parties versus committees, see Joel Ostrow, "Procedural Breakdown and Deadlock in the Russian State Duma: The Problems of an Un-Linked, Dual-Channel Institutional Design," *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 50, no. 5 (July 1998), pp. 793–816.

²⁵ Author's interview with Georgii Satarov, October 9, 1997.

²⁶ On these battles, see Michael McFaul, "Institutional Design, Uncertainty, and Path Dependency during Transitions: Cases from Russia," *Constitutional Political Economy*, vol. 10, no. 1 (March 1999), pp. 27–52.

²⁷ Aleksei Sitnikov, "Power from Within: Sources of Institutional Power with the Russian Duma," unpublished manuscript, Stanford University, December 1999.

²⁸ Author's interview with Yulia Rusova, one of the Unity organizers and campaign managers, February 2000.

Neither coalition was very concerned with party development. And with Putin's victory, Primakov's coalition, Fatherland–All Russia, has now collapsed.

Second, both Fatherland and Unity have very poorly defined identities within the electorate. Focus groups commissioned by the author in Moscow (where the most sophisticated voters in Russia are located) revealed that voters did not understand what either coalition stood for or represented just seven days before Election Day. Fatherland–All Russia's program contained many contradictions.²⁹ Some leaders of this coalition emphasized the need for greater state intervention in the economy while others advocated the cutting of taxes. Regional leaders such as Tatarstan's President Shaimiev stressed the need for greater decentralization and the strengthening of federal institutions, while others, including Primakov and Luzhkov, advocated the strengthening of the federal government. The coalition's position on Chechnya also wavered and waffled. Unity's program was even more mysterious. Eventually, a program was published, but its target audience appeared to be electoral analysts, not Russian voters.

Almost by definition, these new parties had new electorates, that is, people without a tradition of voting for these two parties. Fatherland–All Russia did enjoy the support of loyal followers in cities and regions governed by their leaders but this was only a handful of places. Information about electoral decision making in this vote is still being gathered, but it is reasonable to speculate that the electoral supporters of these two coalitions probably changed their minds about whom to support most frequently and they probably made up their minds later than most. Not surprisingly, therefore, and in contrast to stable levels of support expressed throughout the fall for the four parliamentary parties mentioned above, popular support for these two presidential coalitions varied considerably throughout the 1999 parliamentary campaign period. Fatherland took a nosedive, while Unity enjoyed a radical climb in the polls.³⁰

Finally, if the four parliamentary parties did not have serious presidential contenders within their ranks, both of these presidential coalitions boasted one or two serious candidates before the parliamentary campaign began—Primakov and Luzhkov from OVR and Putin (Unity's surrogate leader) from Unity. After this parliamentary campaign—which served as a presidential primary for these two presidential coalitions—both Primakov and Luzhkov accepted their defeat and withdrew from the presidential race.

Though concerned primarily with influencing the presidential election, these two new electoral coalitions together captured over a third of the popular vote on the “party” list in the December 1999 election. Their participation on the party-list ballot impeded the expansion of support for Russia's more established parties.

Elections in the Single-Mandate Districts (SMD). If Russia's established, ideologically based parties did not manage to expand their success on the party list in 1999, they suffered serious setbacks in producing winners in single-mandate districts, which comprise the other half of the Duma in this same election. Non-partisan candidates assumed a much more prominent role in the 1999 vote than in 1995, and non-partisan actors—including first and foremost regional elites—played a much more active role in influencing the outcome of these elections

²⁹ Boris Makarenko, “Fatherland–All Russia (OVR),” in McFaul et. al., *Primer on Russia's 1999 Duma Elections*, pp. 61–76.

³⁰ See Nikolai Petrov, “Fenomen ‘Edinstva’,” in *Parlamentskie vybory 1999 goda v Rossii*, no. 4 (January 2000), pp. 14–17.

Table Two
Deputies Elected with Political Party/Bloc Affiliation
Russian State Duma Elections, 1995 and 1999

Political Party/Bloc	1999			1995		
	Deputies from Party-List Voting	Deputies from Single-Mandate Races	Total	Deputies from Party-List Voting	Deputies from Single-Mandate Races	Total
Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF)	67	47	114	99	58	157
Yabloko	16	4	20	31	14	45
Union of Right Forces	24	5	29	0	9 (DVR)	9
Zhirinovskiy Bloc (LDPR)	17	0	17	50	1	51
Unity (Medved)	64	9	73	N/A	N/A	N/A
Fatherland–All Russia	37	30	67	N/A	N/A	N/A
Our Home is Russia	0	7	7	45	10	55
Agrarian Party of Russia	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	20	20
Independents/Others	-	114	114	-	103	103
Unfilled Seats			9			

than in previous years.³¹ In the aggregate, as Table Two shows, non-partisans captured more SMD seats in 1999 than in 1995.

One pattern is especially striking—the declining role of the older parliamentary parties in determining electoral outcomes in SMD districts. The CPRF won eleven fewer seats in 1999 than in 1995.³² Yabloko’s share of single-mandate seats decreased from fourteen to four. This

³¹ See Aleksei Makarkin, “Gubernatorskie partii,” (pp. 178–90), Nikola Petrov and Aleksei Titkov, “Regional’noe ismerenie vyborov,” (pp. 50–78), and the five regional profiles of the pre-election setting in 1999 (pp. 191–262) in Michael McFaul, Nikolai Petrov, and Andrei Ryabov, eds., *Rossiia nakanune dumskikh vyborov 1999 goda* (Moscow: Moscow Carnegie Center, 1999).

³² All of these figures should be treated as preliminary since this article was written before the first session of the new Duma had convened, the moment when actual single-mandate party affiliations

result is even more striking when one recognizes that two of Yabloko's four victories went to politicians only loosely affiliated with the party and better known for their roles in previous Yeltsin governments: Sergei Stepashin, a former prime minister, and Mikhail Zadornov, a former finance minister. In 1995, Democratic Choice of Russia (DVR) captured less than four percent of the popular vote but won nine single-mandate races. In 1999, the Union of Right Forces more than doubled DVR's party-list showing, but managed to win only five single-mandate seats. Zhirinovsky's party won no single-mandate seats. Even the two new presidential coalitions did not dominate the single-mandate races. Unity won only nine seats. Fatherland–All Russia did win thirty-one seats, but the vast majority of these came from regions dominated by regional executives associated with this coalition. In other words, local parties of power, rather than a national party affiliation delivered the wins. This includes nine seats from Moscow, and three each from Moscow Oblast, Bashkortostan, and Tatarstan. Four regions accounted for two-thirds of all of Fatherland–All Russia's single-mandate victories. Independents accounted for the largest number of single-mandate victors, winning 104 races out of the 216 seats that were filled.³³ Over half of these "independents" pledged their loyalty to Putin and the Kremlin just weeks after the parliamentary vote and formed a new pro-governmental coalition called Narodnyi Deputat (People's Deputy). This Duma group will not, however, constitute a political party. These deputies owe their victories to local patronage, not national parties.

The unexpected emergence of non-party parties in the Duma has already influenced its internal organization. In its first political act, Unity cut a deal with the CPRF to abandon the earlier method of proportional allocation of the speakership, committee chairs, and deputy speakers. Instead, these two factions used their combined majority to select a speaker and most of the chairs as they saw fit. To be sure, slight majorities enjoy disproportionate control of committee chairs in parliaments all over the world, including the United States. Yet, this deal between Unity and the CPRF may unravel since the two parliamentary factions hold radically different views on a number of issues. Over time, Duma cohesion may weaken as a result of the electoral success of these presidential coalitions.

In sum, parties continue to play a significant role in structuring elections to the State Duma. Parties also enjoy significant representation within the Duma. Parties, however, have not expanded their dominance over this state institution and may actually be losing their privileged position. If parties lose this partisan oasis, they will have serious difficulties expanding into other areas of Russian political life.

Regional Heads of Administration (Presidents and Governors) and Regional Legislators

Parties also play a very limited role in regional politics. In some major metropolitan areas, such as St. Petersburg and Ekaterinburg, multi-party systems are beginning to take root, but in most

will become better known. The basic conclusions drawn here, however, can be made based on the rough approximations.

³³ In eight electoral districts, the elections were declared invalid because turnout was below 25 percent. The election for the electoral district in Chechnya did not occur.

regions, a state-based informal network dominated by the local ruling elite—that is, party of power systems—still dominate politics.³⁴

Few executive leaders at the oblast, krai and republic level have open party affiliations. During the cascade of elections of regional executives in the fall of 1996 and spring of 1997, political parties played only a marginal role in selecting and endorsing candidates.³⁵ The CPRF, through its affiliate the National Patriotic Front of Russia (NPSR), was the only party that had any real influence on these elections as a political party. And even the CPRF was usually chasing candidates to endorse, rather than selecting candidates to run. At the beginning of the electoral cycle, NPSR had endorsed only twelve candidates.³⁶ By the end of this cycle, the CPRF claimed to have won as many governorships, but even many of these so-called red governors soon distanced themselves from the Party leadership after election victory.

The Kremlin backed candidates and funded campaigns, but not through party organizations. Other parties, including regional parties and coalitions, figured only in individual races. Zhirinovskiy's LDPR ran candidates in several races, but won only one, in Pskov. Governor Mikhailov in Pskov may be the only candidate who won due to party affiliation. General Aleksandr Lebed's National Patriotic Republican Party also endorsed several candidates (including the general's brother) and could claim credit for the electoral victories of Aleksei Lebed in Khakasiya and Yuri Yevdokimov in Murmansk.³⁷ Yabloko endorsements played an important role in some races, and especially in St. Petersburg, but a Yabloko party member did not win a single race. Only one candidate with open ties to Russia's Choice (Semen Zubakin in the Altai Republic) succeeded in winning a governor's race.

Local "parties of power" with no ideological affiliation and with strong ties to local executive heads also dominate most regional legislatures. In her careful study of party representation in regional legislatures, Kathryn Stoner-Weiss reports that only 11.5 percent of all deputies in regional parliaments have national party affiliations, including 7.3 percent from the CPRF, but less than one percent for any of the three other parliamentary parties mentioned above.³⁸ Obviously, party development in the national legislature has not stimulated a commensurate growth of party influence in regional legislatures.

³⁴ On the concept of the party of power in Russia, see Andrei Ryabov, "Partiya vlasti' v politicheskoi sisteme sovremennoi Rossii," in Markov, McFaul, and Ryabov, *Formirovanie partiino-politicheskoi sistemy v Rossii*, pp. 80–96.

³⁵ Michael McFaul and Nikolai Petrov, "Russian Electoral Politics after Transition: Regional and National Assessments," *Post-Soviet Geography and Economics*, vol. 38, no. 9 (November 1997), pp. 507–49.

³⁶ Author's interview with CPRF campaign advisor, Vladimir Akimov, September 1996.

³⁷ Though not a gubernatorial race, the mayoral election in Samara saw a major electoral victory by Lebed's party.

³⁸ Kathryn Stoner-Weiss, "The Limited Reach of Russia's Party System: Under-Institutionalization in Dual Transitions," unpublished manuscript.

2. EXPLAINING PARTY DEVELOPMENT AND THE LACK OF PARTY DEVELOPMENT: THE IMPORTANCE OF INSTITUTIONS

The causes of party weakness in Russia are many and diverse. One school posits that the Soviet legacy matters. Seventy years of Communist Party rule created a strong negative reaction within Russian society for “party” politics. Because Soviet society was hyper-organized and “over-partyized,” post-Soviet Russian leaders and citizens have had an allergic reaction to parties. After quitting the Party in 1990, Yeltsin vowed never to join another party again, and many in Russia sympathize with his decision. If other East European countries were able to revive old parties from the pre-communist past, Russia had only a splash of experience with competitive party politics before the Bolshevik revolution, so there was no party culture to resurrect. The Soviet system did produce large quantities of social and organizational capital. In fact, organizations and networks that were formed in the Soviet era—be they Party cells, Komsomol networks, or union organizations—continue to form the basis of the largest organizations in the post-communist era, including first and foremost the Communist Party of the Russian Federation. Yet, this inheritance may serve more as a barrier to the growth of grassroots party development and less as a base from which to develop new party organizations. After all, these organizations served to control people, atomize society, and discourage participation in real politics.³⁹ Although formally resembling parties and party-affiliated groups, these Soviet organizations have little in common with Western-style parties and interest aggregation observed in Western democracies. Only after these old organizations have faded and only after Russians have recovered from their Soviet-inflicted traumas regarding politics will they begin to recognize the importance of parties for democratic consolidation.

A variation of this legacy approach goes back even farther to argue that *Russian* history and culture, not just the Soviet period, is the main impediment to party development. This school explains weak party development as part of a more general phenomenon of the lack of democratic development.⁴⁰ Russians have not built strong parties, because Russians are not democratic. Instead, so the argument goes, Russians prefer strong, paternalistic leaders who develop a direct relationship with the people that is not mediated or distorted through parties. Russia’s hundreds of years of autocratic rule is cited as evidence for this approach.

A third structural approach to explaining the lack of party development devotes attention to the scale of socio-economic transformation in Russia. Building on the classic work on party development by Lipset and Rokkan, these structural theorists attribute the lack of party development in Russia to poorly defined socio-economic cleavages in Russian society.⁴¹ If transitions to democracies in capitalist countries involve changing primarily the political system, successful post-communist transformations destroy old classes, create new interest groups, and confuse, at least temporarily, almost everyone living through the transition. The slow development

³⁹ Philip Roeder, “Modernization and Participation in the Leninist Development Strategy,” *American Political Science Review*, vol. 83 (1989), pp. 859–84.

⁴⁰ Tim McDaniel, *The Agony of the Russian Idea* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Victor Sergeev and Nikolai Biryukov, *Russia’s Road to Democracy: Parliament, Communism and Traditional Culture* (London: Edward Elgar, 1993).

⁴¹ Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan, “Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments,” in Lipset and Rokkan, eds., *Party Systems and Voters Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives* (New York: Free Press, 1967), pp. 1–64.

of capitalism in Russia suggests that we should expect a similarly slow formation of market-based interest groups.⁴² Russian parties, in turn, have had difficulty in situating themselves on programmatic or interest-based dimensions.⁴³ For instance, Russia has weak liberal parties, because Russia has a small and ill-defined middle class. Under these circumstances, interest cleavages in the 1990s have been fashioned more by general attitudes about the transition, rather than by particular economic or even ethnic concerns.⁴⁴ In Russia between 1990 and 1997, political situations and electoral choices were often polarized into two camps, those for change and those against.⁴⁵ More conventional cleavages that demarcate the contours of stable party systems in other countries may perhaps emerge only now that this polarization has begun to recede. This approach predicts that party development will occur from the bottom-up.

These structural approaches offer important insights about party weakness in Russia. But the long shadow of an authoritarian past and an unstructured post-Soviet society cannot be blamed entirely for the lack of party development in Russia today. In addition, this paper argues that there is a causal relationship between individual choice—especially choices concerning institution design—and party development.⁴⁶ Specifically, Russian political elites made choices about the timing of elections, the kind of electoral systems, and the relationship between the president and parliament at the federal level and the relationship among the heads of administration of local legislatures at the regional level, all of which have impeded party development.

But elites also made a few choices about institutional design, which have stimulated the emergence and development of political parties. Rather than a structural or organic model of

⁴² Moreover, as in all capitalist societies, small groups with well-defined interests (like Russia's financial oligarchs) are more likely to solve collective action problems more efficiently and faster than mass-based groups such as the small business associations or trade unions, which are more likely to articulate their interests through parties. See Terry Moe, *The Organization of Interests* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

⁴³ This is the *tabula rasa* school. For a discussion of this literature see Herbert Kitschelt, Zdenka Mansfeldova, Radoslaw Markowski, and Gabor Toka, *Post-Communist Party Systems: Competition, Representation, and Inter-Party Cooperation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 391–401. For the author's own *tabula rasa* explanation of the lack of party development early in the transition, see Michael McFaul, "Party Formation after Revolutionary Transitions: The Russian Case," in Alexander Dallin, ed., *Political Parties in Russia* (Berkeley, CA: International and Area Studies, 1993), pp. 7–28. Almost a decade after the collapse of communism, however, one would think that the contours of a post-communist society would have begun to form by now.

⁴⁴ See Stephen Whitefield and Geoffrey Evans, "The Emerging Structure of Partisan Divisions in Russian Politics," in Matthew Wyman, Stephen White, and Sarah Oates, eds., *Elections and Voters in Post-Communist Russia* (Glasgow: Edward Elgar, 1998), pp. 68–99.

⁴⁵ This is the argument in McFaul, *Russia's 1996 Presidential Election*.

⁴⁶ On the relationship between proportional representation and multi-party systems, see Matthew Shugart and John Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); and Giovanni Sartori, *Comparative Constitutional Engineering* (New York: New York University Press, 1994). On Russia, see Robert Moser, "The Impact of the Electoral System on Post-Communist Party Development: The Case of the 1993 Russian Parliamentary Elections," *Electoral Studies*, vol. 14, no. 4 (1995), pp. 377–98; Steven M. Fish, "The Advent of Multipartyism in Russia," *Post-Soviet Affairs*, vol. 11, no. 4 (1995), pp. 340–83; and Thomas Remington and Steven Smith, "The Development of Parliamentary Parties in Russia," *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, vol. 20 (1995), pp. 457–89.

party development, this approach suggests that individual politicians and interest groups can manufacture the emergence of parties. Structural, cultural, or legacy factors cannot explain the *emergence* of parliamentary parties described above.⁴⁷ And they cannot account for the variation of party strength within different Russian state institutions since the causal arrow of all of these structural theories points towards weak or no party development.⁴⁸ Yet, as documented above, the core of a multi-party system in Russia has emerged within the Russian parliament. Over time, these parties may wither and die, but even if they do fade from Russian politics as important forces, their short-lived emergence must still be explained.

A comprehensive explanation for party development in Russia must be able to account for the weak party penetration of most state institutions, including the presidential administration, the government, the Federation Council, regional heads of administration, and regional legislatures, as well as the relatively strong degree of party development with the Duma. The seeds of a multi-party system and the barren environment surrounding these seeds both demand explanation. To account for both the emergence and the lack of a party system, individual actors, their preferences, their power, and their decisions (especially their decisions about institutions) must also be brought into the equation. In particular, the kind of electoral laws and the kind of rule governing executive-legislative relations chosen during the construction of Russia's new political system has had a direct impact on both party development in one arena, as well as on the lack of party developments in other arenas. After first demonstrating the causal relationship between these institutional choices and party development, the final section of the paper then explains how and why these institutional arrangements came into being in the first place.

Proportional Representation in the Duma: Lifeline for Party Development

As predicted by party analysts and promoted by party advocates, proportional representation as a component of Russia's electoral law to the Duma has stimulated the emergence and consolidation of four proto-parties in Russia: the CPRF, Yabloko, LDPR, and the Union of Right Forces.⁴⁹ The fact that fifty percent of all Duma deputies must acquire their seats through proportional representation in a national election has allowed these four parties to organize and survive. This particular percentage has also been critical to giving these parties the power to organize the internal rules of the Duma. If it were less than fifty percent, as many have

⁴⁷ If the "past" were the determining factor of all social outcomes all the time, there would never be any change. The key to constructing useful path-dependent arguments is to specify the conditions under which change could occur, the parameters within which change might occur, and the other factors that might come into play which might alter the status quo.

⁴⁸ More generally, modernization theories are never very good at accounting for short-term variation. Instead, these kinds of theories are better at identifying long-term trends and trajectories.

⁴⁹ As Steve Fish presciently wrote in the summer of 1993 before the introduction of proportional representation into the Russia electoral system: "The surest way to animate parties—and the most radical means of correcting the 'birth defects' that the elections of 1989 and 1990 created in the embryonic party system—would be a system of proportional representation (PR) that grants parties a monopoly over authority to nominate candidates in office." "Democracy and Interest Representation in Post-Soviet Russia," in Alexander Dallin, ed., *Political Parties in Russia* (Berkeley, CA: International and Area Studies, 1993), p. 43.

advocated, then the Duma might not privilege parties, but instead might gravitate to a more committee-dominated form of internal organization.

Without proportional representation, three of these four parties (Yabloko, Union of Right Forces, and LDPR) most likely would not exist today. Yabloko and LDPR got their jumpstarts as national organizations from the 1993 parliamentary elections.⁵⁰ In the last three parliamentary votes, the LDPR has won 126 seats through the party list, but only six single-mandate seats. Yabloko has won 67 seats on the party list in these three votes but only 25 single-mandate seats. As the party of power, Russia's Choice—the predecessor organization to the Union of Right Forces—won almost as many seats from single-mandate victories as they did from PR in the 1993 election. In 1995, Democratic Choice of Russia (the liberal core that remained after Russia's Choice disintegrated) won no seats from PR, but did win nine single-mandate seats. In 1999, however, the Union of Right Forces relied much more on the PR ballot, and won from it, but gained only five seats in single-mandate races. And as discussed above, the trajectory for all of these “parliamentary parties,” including the CPRF, moves in the wrong direction regarding SMD successes. Only the CPRF, the one party with an organizational inheritance from the Soviet period, could survive without PR.

If proportional representation has been the lifesaver that has kept parties afloat, it was tossed to them after years of splashing in the ocean alone. Generally, parties assume center stage in transitions at the moment of first or founding elections.⁵¹ In the Soviet/Russian transition, however, parties organized only after the first two national elections to the Soviet Congress of People's Deputies in 1989 and the Russian Congress of People's Deputies in 1990.⁵² As already discussed, parties played a very marginal role in the June 1991 presidential elections. During this period of struggle against the Soviet system, Russian democrats placed a premium on preserving a united anti-communist front. Proto-parties formed, but they remained under the umbrella of Democratic Russia, biding their time until the moment for multi-party politics was ripe.

In the opinion of party leaders, this moment came in the fall of 1991. After the failed *putsch* attempt in August 1991 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union a few months later, party organizers believed that Russia needed to convene its first post-communist election—a “founding election”—right away. Yeltsin, however, disagreed. Only two years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union did Russia finally have its first multi-party election.

Had Yeltsin convened elections soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia's political parties might have been able to step in and provide voters with programmatic choices. With the right electoral law, they might even have succeeded in monopolizing the process of selecting candidates. At the time, the entire range of European-style parties existed, including liberal,

⁵⁰ The LDPR was founded well before the 1993 vote, but assumed a national profile only after its spectacular showing in this vote. Yabloko was founded specifically to compete in this 1993 election.

⁵¹ Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions*, vol. 4 (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), p. 57.

⁵² In 1989, all parties except the Communist Party of the Soviet Union were illegal. In February 1990, Article Six of the Soviet Constitution was amended to allow for other parties to organize, but this amendment came too late to allow parties to participate in any substantial way in the spring 1990 elections.

Christian-democratic, social democratic, and communist parties.⁵³ Yeltsin's decision to veto the idea of holding such a founding election left these new political parties to wallow for the next two years with no political role in the polity. When the next election occurred in December 1993, most parties created during the heyday of democratic mobilization in 1990–1991 had disappeared. Liberal parties were especially hurt by the postponement of new elections as many voters associated the painful economic decline from 1991 to 1993 with the leaders and policies of these liberal parties. Not surprisingly, new protest groups such as the LDPR as well as older communist opposition groups such as the CPRF and the Agrarian Party of Russia performed well in these first elections, while liberal parties performed poorly. Yeltsin also sequenced elections so that parliamentary and presidential votes did not occur simultaneously, a situation which also hampers party development.⁵⁴

In comparing the relative success of party development in the State Duma with the lackluster growth of parties in regional parliaments, electoral institutions also constitute the critical intervening variable. Only a small handful of regional legislatures have mixed electoral systems, while the overwhelming majority use only single-mandate systems. Kathryn Stoner-Weiss reports that the five regions, which do incorporate some degree of PR, did show a higher degree of party penetration than the national average.⁵⁵ For party advocates, PR does appear to be their best tool.

Others have made the opposite claim. In Russia, for instance, Georgii Satarov has argued that PR has impeded the emergence of a two-party system that is better suited for Russia. Others have posited that national parties created and sustained by PR distort the emergence of two parties in single-mandate districts for the Duma by running multiple candidates. From this same analysis, we should expect to see a proliferation of *party* candidates in every majoritarian kind of election, be it a single-mandate district race for a regional parliament seat, a governor's election, or a presidential contest.

To date, however, it is difficult to find evidence to support this claim. Party proliferation in these arenas has not occurred. In Russia's first presidential election in 1991, only two candidates were affiliated with parties and one of them, Nikolai Ryzhkov, only loosely so. In 1996, the same two parties that competed in 1991—the CPRF and the LDPR—ran candidates and were joined by a third party candidate, Grigorii Yavlinskii from Yabloko.⁵⁶ The remaining seven candidates, however, and two of the top three finishers—Yeltsin and Lebed—had no party affiliation. Similarly, parties have not generated the proliferation of candidates for gubernatorial elections. In the SMD elections for the Duma, several candidates still contest these seats, but the vast majority of those competing are independents, not candidates affiliated with national parties. The cause of the slow emergence of a two-party system does not appear to be the “proliferation” of parties generated by the Duma electoral system.

⁵³ Steven Fish, *Democracy from Scratch: Opposition and Regime in the New Russian Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

⁵⁴ Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies*.

⁵⁵ Stoner-Weiss, “The Limited Reach of Russia's Party System,” p. 23.

⁵⁶ Three party candidates, it might be noted, is the number that competed in the 1996 U.S. presidential elections and will compete in the 2000 general election.

Over time, we might expect (as Duverger would) that a two-party system would form in response to the kind of electoral system used in most regional parliaments, as well as in selecting the fifty percent of State Duma deputies.⁵⁷ The single cleavage issue of communism versus anti-communism could have served as the basis for the emergence of such a two-party system. Over time, one could imagine that the communist camp might have evolved into a social democratic party, while the anti-communist camp might have developed into a liberal or conservative party. This cleavage had already begun to fade, however, before the two parties affiliated with the two sides of this barricade coalesced. Other contours of a two-party system are difficult to identify. In a country as large as Russia with virtually no history of electoral politics, such a process will take a long time.

Strong Executives + Weak Parliaments = A Weak Party System

After the inclusion of proportional representation in the Duma electoral law, the next most important design decision of consequence for party development concerned the presidential system. Around the world, presidential systems are less conducive to party development than parliamentary systems.⁵⁸ The same has been true in Russia.⁵⁹ This institutional constraint has been especially pronounced in Russia, as parties do not control the formation of government or even structure the presidential vote. Russia's president is so powerful that some have even characterized the political system as a dictatorship or a monarchy.⁶⁰ Even those who reject the authoritarian label still agree that Russia's political system resembles what O'Donnell has called a delegative democracy. In delegative democracies, "whoever wins election to the presidency is thereby entitled to govern as he or she sees fit, constrained only by the hard facts of existing power relations and by a constitutionally limited term of office."⁶¹ Organizations such as parties that mediate interests between state and society or constrain the freedom of maneuver of the chief executive are not needed in these delegative democracies. The one arena of state power that parties do dominate—the State Duma—is also one of the least effective institutions in the system. Empirical research on the actual exercise of presidential power in post-communist Russia suggests that the Kremlin occupant may not be as omnipotent as is commonly perceived, while the Duma has grown stronger over time.⁶² But the center of power is still

⁵⁷ Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activities in the Modern State* (New York: Wiley Press, 1954).

⁵⁸ Juan Linz, "Presidential or Parliamentary Democracy: Does It Make a Difference?" in Juan Linz and Arturo Valenzuela, eds., *The Failure of Presidential Democracy: Comparative Perspectives*, vol. 1 (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994).

⁵⁹ Robert Moser, "The Electoral Effects of Presidentialism in Post-Soviet Russia," *The Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, vol. 14, nos. 1 and 2 (March/June 1998), pp. 54–75.

⁶⁰ Lilia Shevtsova, *Yeltsin's Russia* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999); and Peter Reddaway and Dmitri Glinski, *Market Bolshevism* (forthcoming).

⁶¹ Guillermo O'Donnell, "Delegative Democracy," *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 5, no. 1 (January 1994), p. 59. In contrast to others who have invoked his definition, however, O'Donnell believes that "delegative democracy is not alien to the democratic tradition. It is more democratic, but less liberal, than representative democracy" (p. 60).

⁶² Thomas Remington, Steven Smith, and Moshe Haspel, "Decrees, Laws, and Inter-Branch Relations in the Russian Federation," *Post-Soviet Affairs*, vol. 14, no. 4 (1998), pp. 287–322; and Scott Parrish, "Presidential Decree Power in the Second Russian Republic, 1993–1996," in John Carey and Mathew

firmly ensconced in the Kremlin. A similar distribution of power between executives and legislatures exists at the regional level.

The presence of a presidential system is not a sufficient condition to explain weak party development in Russia. After all, many established democracies with strong presidents also have robust party systems. The salience of this institutional dimension only becomes apparent when combined with the mixed electoral system of the State Duma. Russia's current electoral law for the Duma has stimulated the emergence of a multi-party system. However, it is a system in which no single party has garnered more than a quarter of the vote in any parliamentary election. Leaders of these parties can hope to take advantage of the run-off system in the presidential vote as a way to reach beyond their party's electoral base. Such coalitions are difficult to pull together due to inter-party rivalries. It is also a risky strategy, since the *party* candidate has to rely on the endorsement of other parties and the support of their electorates in a second round of voting, which occurs only two weeks after the first vote.⁶³ To date, only one party candidate, Zyuganov, has advanced to the second round and even he considered it necessary to downplay his Communist Party affiliation and hide behind a presidential "coalition"—the National Patriotic Union of Russia (NPSR)—which claimed to represent over 100 organizations.⁶⁴ To piece together a majority in 1996, Yeltsin decided not to affiliate with any single party in the December 1995 parliamentary vote. This strategic move then allowed him to act as a focal point for a large non-partisan, anti-communist coalition. Prime Minister Putin used the same strategy. He endorsed not one but two parties in the 1999 parliamentary vote—Unity and the Union of Right Forces. After this election, he then called on all "reform" and "centrist" organizations to join his presidential coalition. Affiliating with a party too closely during the parliamentary vote or sooner would have limited his chances in the general election.

Former Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov's alternative path is instructive. For him, the 1999 parliamentary vote served simply as a presidential primary—an opportunity to build momentum before the more important vote in 2000. Different advisors offered different strategies.⁶⁵ One team recommended that Primakov run in a single-mandate district as an independent, win a landslide victory in that district, and then call upon all anti-Yeltsin parties, including even the CPRF, to endorse him as their presidential candidate. Another group argued that Primakov needed an organization (that is, a "party") to run a presidential campaign. They recommended that Primakov join Luzhkov's new coalition, Fatherland–All Russia, as a way to jumpstart his presidential bid.

Between Primakov's decision to join Fatherland–All Russia and the Duma election in December, many unexpected factors intervened to undermine Fatherland–All Russia's popular

Soberg Shugart, eds., *Executive Decree Authority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 62–103.

⁶³ Imagine how the dynamics of campaigns in presidential primaries in the U.S. would change if the general election took place only two weeks after the conclusion of the primary vote. Prospective candidates in both parties would have to run more centrist campaigns in the primaries and at the same time have to be more cordial to their opponents in the primary who would be crucial to remobilizing support for the party's winning candidate in the final election held just two weeks later.

⁶⁴ See chapter four of McFaul, *Russia's 1996 Presidential Election*.

⁶⁵ Author's interviews with Fatherland consultants, September 1999.

support and thereby decrease Primakov's prospects as a presidential candidate.⁶⁶ Negative television coverage of Luzhkov and Primakov during the fall campaign, a poorly run Fatherland campaign, and Putin's skyrocketing popularity as a result of "successes" in the Chechen war played a decisive role.⁶⁷ At the same time, Primakov's decision to participate in a multi-party national election to the parliament would also have weakened his chances to be elected president even if none of these other factors had intervened. Even under the best of circumstances, Fatherland–All Russia is unlikely to have won more than 28 percent of the popular vote (the highest polling number I could find for the coalition) in the parliamentary vote. With this minority share of the total electorate, Primakov would eventually have had to invite *other* parties to support him, other parties that may have had serious problems with endorsing a candidate from Luzhkov's party. Instead of serving as the focal point of a grand, multi-party coalition that Primakov might have headed as a non-partisan, "father of the nation" figure (like Yeltsin in 1996), Primakov would have had to negotiate a partnership with other parties, which would have been especially difficult without positions like the vice-presidency to trade for support.⁶⁸

Given Fatherland–All Russia's poor showing in the multi-party arena, Primakov opted not to run at all in the presidential election. Had he won a major victory in a single-mandate district, he might have been better placed to form a large, anti-Putin coalition.

In sum, mixed electoral systems for parliaments (which encourage several parties with a minority share of the electorate) and run-off majoritarian systems for presidents (which require successful candidates to win in fifty percent of the electorate) do not mix well.

3. EXPLAINING THE CHOICE OF INSTITUTIONS: THE IMPORTANCE OF POWER AND CHANCE

The previous section has attempted to show the causal relationship between institutions and party development. In pushing the causal chain one step further back, the next question is why did Russian political leaders select this set of institutions in the first place? This question is especially puzzling given the rather inchoate mix of institutions chosen. Mixed elections systems

⁶⁶ A July 1999 poll conducted by the All-Russian Center of the Study of Public Opinion (VTsIOM) showed the level of support for Fatherland at 28 percent, higher than any other party. (Quoted here from *Vlast*, no. 31, August 10, p. 20). On election day, however, Fatherland–All Russia won only 13.3 percent of the popular vote.

⁶⁷ Putin's popularity eventually grew beyond Chechnya as people started to appreciate a leader of action. VTsIOM polls conducted over the fall of 1999 found the population to be much more optimistic about reforms and much more upbeat about the economy. For instance, in August 1999, VTsIOM asked citizens if they and their families had adapted to the new changes that had occurred in their country in the last ten years; 29 percent reported yes, while 42 percent that they would never adapt. In November 1999, although the economy had not changed appreciably since August, 40 percent had suddenly adapted and only 36 percent reported that they would never adapt. In another VTsIOM question asked in August 1999, 28 percent reported that the situation regarding payment of wages, pensions, and stipends in their region or city had improved (presumably in the last month as the question is asked every month), while 27 percent reported that the situation had become worse. In November, 51 percent reported an improvement, while only 17 percent reported the opposite.

⁶⁸ Not surprisingly, Primakov endorsed the idea of creating a vice-presidential office.

with strong PR components simply do not interface well with presidential systems in which the chief executive is selected in a run-off majoritarian system.

In tracing the decision-making process that produced this set of institutions shaping party development in Russia, the first argument is that actors design institutions that serve their interests.⁶⁹ Over time, institutions can develop an “independent role” or have autonomous intervening influence on social outcomes.⁷⁰ Some institutions may even become so powerful that they dominate the construction of the preferences, choices, and capabilities of individuals.⁷¹ During periods of rapid and momentous change when old institutions are collapsing and new institutions forming, however, it seems unreasonable to assign institutions such an independent causal role. Rather, autonomous actors—driven by preferences and armed with power—must be brought into the equation. Institutions are endogenous to the political process itself, reflecting the preferences of those affected by the design. Under certain circumstances, actors can cooperate and coordinate their behavior to produce institutions that offer everyone an improvement over the status quo.⁷² However, in the design of new political institutions, zero-sum distributional questions are often most salient. In these situations, the new institutional arrangement more often reflects the preferences of the more powerful or more successful actors in the game of institutional design.⁷³ When actors design new political institutions, they rarely act for the good of society and usually work for the good of themselves.⁷⁴ This means that they will design institutions that promote party development only if they see party growth to be in their interest. To date, in Russia, most have not.

A second argument, however, is that institutional designers seeking to maximize their self-interest also make mistakes. Especially during periods of rapid revolutionary change when uncertainty clouds means-ends calculations, we should expect actors to make choices about institutions that may have unintended consequences. And once in place, institutions—even accidental institutions—can begin to reform and reshape preferences and power in ways that can sustain them. This set of simple arguments provides an analytic framework to explain the emergence of institutions in Russia that have *both* impeded and stimulated party development.

⁶⁹ Peter Ordeshook, “The Emerging Discipline of Political Economy,” in J. Alt and K. Shepsle, eds., *Perspectives on Positive Political Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 9–30.

⁷⁰ James March and Johan Olsen, *Rediscovering Institutions* (New York: Free Press, 1989).

⁷¹ J. Meyer, J. Boli, and G. Thomas, “Ontology and Rationalization in the Western Cultural Account,” in G. Thomas, J. Meyer, F. Ramirez, and J. Boli, *Institutional Structure: Constituting State, Society, and the Individual* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1987).

⁷² F.A. Hayek, “Notes on the Evolution of Systems of Rules of Conduct,” in *Studies in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967).

⁷³ In the literature on institutions, this distinction is often flagged as the difference between efficient and distributional institutions. However, it is probably more accurate to claim that all institutions have varying degrees of efficiency and distributional functions and that some institutions are more efficient while others are more distributional than others. See Jack Knight, *Institutions and Social Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); S. Krasner, “Global Communications and National Power: Life on the Pareto Frontier,” *World Politics*, vol. 43 (1991), pp. 336–66; and George Tsebelis, *Nested Games* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990).

⁷⁴ Russell Hardin, “Why a Constitution?” in B. Grofman and D. Wittman, eds., *The Federalist Papers and the New Institutionalism* (New York: Agathon Press, 1989), pp. 100–20.

The Politics that Produced Presidentialism⁷⁵

Decisions of self-interest made in an uncertain context produced Russia's presidential system. These choices initially had little or nothing to do with concerns about party development. Rather, they were all about obtaining, and then consolidating, political power through a process that did not require strong parties. Once in place, Russia's presidential system has provided aspirants to the office a path to power that does not require a party affiliation.

Concentrated power in the hands of the president is not the result of some kind of Russian cultural authoritarianism or a historical proclivity for strong, individual leaders.⁷⁶ Rather, the office of the presidency (and then the considerable powers of this presidential office) emerged directly from the transition process. Moreover, in contrast to many other presidential systems in the region, the old communist elite did not create the Russian presidency.⁷⁷ On the contrary, the creation of the presidential office was a strategy adopted to insulate the anti-communist movement from the power of the old elite.

The idea for the creation of a Russian presidential office had begun to circulate among democratic circles soon after the first session of the Russian Congress of People's Deputies in the spring of 1990. At the first meeting of this newly elected body, it became obvious to Russian "democrats"⁷⁸ that they controlled a minority of seats in the new parliament. In its first act of consequence in May 1990, the new Russian Congress of People's Deputies did elect Boris Yeltsin as chairman, but only by a paltry victory margin of four votes after several ballots. The vote reflected the precarious balance of power within the Congress and probably within society as a whole. Democrats were a minority in this body. Boris Yeltsin pieced together his slight majority only by emphasizing his support for Russian sovereignty. Over time, as other issues became more salient, Yeltsin's majority withered.

Given this precarious hold on power, Yeltsin and his allies saw the creation of a Russian presidential office as a way to insulate Yeltsin from the increasingly conservative Congress. Polls indicated that Yeltsin was much more popular with the people than with the deputies. If he could secure a direct electoral mandate, he would be in a much stronger political position vis-à-vis his opponents in the Russian Congress and the Soviet government. The push to create a Russian presidency was in response to a concrete political situation and was not the result of a carefully

⁷⁵ This section is adapted from Michael McFaul, "Institutional Design, Uncertainty, and Path Dependency during Transitions."

⁷⁶ On Russia's cultural proclivities for autocratic rulers, see Stephen White, *Political Culture and Soviet Politics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979). In searching through Russian cultural history, one can also find evidence to argue that Russia's past is collective, if not even democratic. See Nikolai Petro, *The Rebirth of Russian Democracy: An Interpretation of Political Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995); and the review of these debates in Russell Bova, "Political Culture, Authority Patterns, and the Architecture of the New Russian Democracy," in H. Eckstein, F. Fleron, E. Hoffmann, and W. Reisinger, *Can Democracy Take Root in Post-Soviet Russia?* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998), pp. 177–200.

⁷⁷ On the general argument, see Gerald Easter, "Preference for Presidentialism: Postcommunist Regime Change in Russia and the NIS," *World Politics*, vol. 49 (January 1997), p. 184.

⁷⁸ This is the label that was adopted by this anti-communist movement and that was used by their friends and foes alike.

plotted strategy or philosophy about the need for a separation of powers or checks and balances.⁷⁹ In fact, the referendum on the Russian presidency went forward *before* the actual powers of the president had been spelled out and incorporated into the Constitution.

The March 1991 referendum on the creation of the Russian presidency passed overwhelmingly; 69.9 percent supported the creation of the post of a Russian president; only 28.0 percent were against the idea. Not surprisingly, three months later, Yeltsin won a decisive electoral victory to become Russia's first president. He did not need a party affiliation to win this office, which had been created basically to insulate Yeltsin personally from the Russian Congress. Yeltsin had cultivated an electoral base well before parties had come into existence.

At the time of Yeltsin's electoral victory, however, all did not seem lost for his opponents. Yeltsin had won election to an office with ill-defined powers. After the June 1991 presidential vote, the Russian Congress—a body in which support for Yeltsin was not as strong as in the electorate—had six months to clarify and codify the constitutional division of powers between the president and the parliament. Had events unfolded in an orderly fashion, this Congress might have been able to turn Yeltsin and his presidential office into a weak executive. In the interim, however, a dramatic and unexpected event radically altered the political situation in Russia—the August 1991 coup attempt which Yeltsin and his allies thwarted. In the interim period between the failed coup attempt and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991, *President* Yeltsin played the pivotal role and his presidential office—not the Russian Congress of People's Deputies—assumed primary responsibility for all major institutional innovations and policy initiatives. The institution of the presidency began building organizational capacity and power to deal with these crises, and it encompassed a shift in resources that included new staff, new bureaucracies, and greater executive control over the state budget.

Initially, this blooming of the presidential branch of government met little resistance.⁸⁰ As a demonstration of its support of Yeltsin's leadership, the Russian Congress voted in November 1991 to give the president extraordinary powers of decree. This honeymoon period ended, however, soon after the beginning of radical economic reform in January 1992. The sources of polarization between the Congress and the president eventually grew beyond disputes over economic issues and became a contest as to which political institution was supreme, the Congress or the presidency? The stalemate eventually produced armed conflict between the two branches of government. It was Yeltsin's victory in the October 1993 conflict that created the conditions to put into place a super-presidential constitution. Yeltsin took advantage of his victory in October to write a new super-presidential constitution and then succeeded in ratifying this new basic law in a popular referendum in December 1993. After an initial period of hesitation, all political actors, including those that Yeltsin had squashed in the fall of 1993, acquiesced to this new institutional order and began adjusting their behavior to play within these new rules of the game.

⁷⁹ Bruce Cain and W.T. Jones, "Madison's Theory of Representation," in B. Grofman and D. Wittman, eds., *The Federalist Papers and the New Institutionalism* (New York: Agathon Press, 1989), pp. 11–31.

⁸⁰ On the logic of such bloomings of executive power, see Terry Moe and Michael Caldwell, "The Institutional Foundations of Democratic Government: A Comparison of Presidential and Parliamentary Systems," *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics*, vol. 150 (1994), pp. 171–95.

Yeltsin's struggle to survive in power in the spring of 1991 motivated the original idea to create a presidential system. Yeltsin's ability to prevail in October 1993 allowed him to then impose his own super-presidential constitution. This institutional design in turn has impeded party emergence in Russia. Powerful actors making choices about institutions—not history, culture, or socio-economic structures—erected this barrier to party development.

Once in office, Yeltsin then used the largess of the state and the alliance between the state and Russia's financial oligarchs as the resources for his re-election campaign in 1996. Alone, these resources were not sufficient to win re-election.⁸¹ Yet, they were more than enough to compensate for the lack of a party base. While the state continues to enjoy an enormous resource advantage over other non-state actors in the economy and society, control of the state will be the best strategy for winning the presidential election. On December 31, 1999, Prime Minister Putin won the game of musical chairs by being the lucky person in the prime minister's chair on the day of Yeltsin's resignation. Had Primakov or Stepashin managed to survive as prime ministers a while longer, they might have enjoyed the same advantages of the state—this “party surrogate”—in their presidential bids that Putin now enjoys.

With more space, a similar detailed story could be told about the emergence of powerful executives at the regional level. Most regional leaders obtained executive power through presidential decree in the fall of 1991 when Yeltsin created the new position of *Glava Administratsii* (Head of Administration) at the oblast level. These “governors” replaced the chairman of the Executive Committee of the oblast soviet (*izpolkom*) as the new local executive, reporting directly to the national executive rather than to the oblast soviet.⁸² These governors then appointed new mayors and regional heads of administration in their oblasts, effectively creating a hierarchical system of executive authority from the president down to the local mayor. Elections for these heads of administration were scheduled for December 8, 1991. Yeltsin, however, decided to postpone them and instead unilaterally appointed executive authorities. Yeltsin removed several local leaders who supported the coup leaders, but in many regions, he appointed former first and second secretaries of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to these new executive offices. Once in power, these regional executives then used the resources of the state, rather than the electoral resources of a political party, to seek election when elections for these posts finally did occur several years later. Similar to the national scene, close parasitic relations between the state and regional oligarchs sustain this non-partisan model of electoral politics for governors and republican presidents.⁸³

Securing support from the state-oligarch nexus at the regional level is also the most rational strategy for winning a single-mandate seat in a national parliamentary race. Especially because these elections do not include a run-off, the resources of the local party of power are sufficient to win the needed plurality for victory. Ironically, local elites have an interest in party proliferation because

⁸¹ On the other factors, see McFaul, *Russia's 1996 Presidential Election*.

⁸² The president's candidate for the post of governor could be vetoed by a two-thirds majority in the oblast soviet. In most cases, Yeltsin's *apparatus* agreed ahead of time with the local oblast soviet on a suitable candidate. In some cases, this procedure took months. For instance, due to sharp divisions within the local oblast soviet, the Head of Administration for Saratov Oblast was appointed only in March 1992. (Author's interview with Saratov Oblast deputies, Saratov, August 1992).

⁸³ Grigorii Golosov, “Russian Political Parties and the ‘Bosses’: Evidence from the 1994 Provincial Elections in Western Siberia,” *Party Politics*, vol. 3, no. 1 (1997), pp. 5–21.

it helps lower the threshold for victory in the single-mandate races. If only two parties competed in these elections, an anti-party of power coalition might be able to consolidate.⁸⁴ The presence of many candidates helps to block such coordination.

As mentioned above, challengers to state candidates have been compelled to form parties and electoral coalitions in order to balance the power of the incumbent or his/her handpicked successor within the state. Primakov opted for Fatherland–All Russia while many governors followed the example of Eduard Rossel in Ekaterinburg and formed regional parties. In the 1995–1997 electoral cycle, these outsiders enjoyed some success.⁸⁵ The trajectory, however, is toward entrenchment of non-partisan executives through elections with less competition and a declining role of parties. In 1999, only one party-affiliated candidate in nine races won a gubernatorial election.⁸⁶

Proportional Representation: Accident of History

Because electoral law influences the electoral outcome, rational actors choose electoral laws that maximize their ability to succeed in the electoral process. The outcome of struggles over the design of Russia's electoral law should reflect the preferences of the powerful. But they do not, at least not precisely. Russia's mixed electoral system resulted from a means-ends *miscalculation* on the part of the Yeltsin administration, which then produced an institutional arrangement with lock-in properties. To be sure, this mistake occurred in an arena of institutional design of least importance to Yeltsin and his team—the Duma. If the mistake had affected a more important institution or if the Duma were more powerful, Yeltsin and his team might have deployed extra-constitutional means to correct the error. Over time, however, this mistake has produced some unintended consequences regarding party development, and eventually it could even threaten the power of the actors who allowed the mistake to occur in the first place.

Yeltsin spelled out the electoral rules for the Duma in Decree No. 1557, which was issued on October 1, 1993.⁸⁷ While the constitution did reflect Yeltsin's preferences, the decree did not, since Yeltsin himself did not have strong inclinations one way or the other regarding the Duma electoral rules. In late September of 1993, he was much more focused on the constitution and was dealing with the Congress standoff. Yeltsin issued the decree only three days before military conflict broke out between his government and the Congress-appointed

⁸⁴ Yeltsin benefited from the bipolar dynamic in the second round of the 1996 presidential election. When forced to choose between the lesser of two evils, the majority of voters supported Yeltsin against Zyuganov. In a single ballot with no run-off, however, Yeltsin would have come precariously close to losing this election, as he won only three percent more than Zyuganov in the first round. See Richard Rose and Evgeny Tikhomirov, "Russia's Forced-Choice Presidential Election," *Post-Soviet Affairs*, vol. 12, no. 4 (1996), pp. 351–79.

⁸⁵ McFaul and Petrov, "Russian Electoral Politics after Transition."

⁸⁶ This winner, General Gromov in Moscow Oblast, had only a weak party affiliation with Fatherland–All Russia. Three other challengers defeated incumbents. Two of these winners were mayors and one was a former presidential representative—that is, non-partisan candidates from state structures.

⁸⁷ This story is elaborated in McFaul, "Institutional Design, Uncertainty, and Path Dependency during Transitions."

government. In this context, Yeltsin had little time or proclivity to ponder the electoral effects of proportional representation versus first-past-the-post systems.⁸⁸

Instead, those involved in earlier debates about the electoral law played a central role in writing this crucial set of rules, including first and foremost, People's Deputy Viktor Sheinis. Though not a member of a party at the time, Sheinis had a normative commitment to multi-party democracy. He believed that proportional representation could be deployed to help stimulate the emergence of a multi-party system in Russia, and that it would help consolidate Russian democracy.⁸⁹ Sheinis took advantage of the chaos of the moment in September/October 1993, as well as the ignorance of his colleagues regarding the institutional effects of electoral laws, to guide the crafting of a presidential decree that allocated fifty percent of all seats in the Duma through proportional representation. Sheinis prevailed in securing this decree over the advice of several key Yeltsin advisors, including Aleksandr Kotenkov, Georgii Satarov, and Mikhail Krasnov. In public statements, these Yeltsin aides supported a majoritarian system because they believed that direct elections of individuals allowed for greater accountability of deputies. Privately, Yeltsin aides also intimated that they believed a parliament composed of deputies from single-mandate districts would be more supportive of the president and thus easier to control.⁹⁰ Days before the signing of the decree, they had managed to reduce the number of PR seats to one-third of the total Duma. However, in a last minute intervention with Yeltsin directly, Sheinis and his colleagues Sergei Alekseev and Sergei Kovalev succeeded in maintaining the number of PR seats at fifty percent. In his meeting with Yeltsin, Sheinis first argued for the merits of the mixed system on ideological grounds, claiming that a mixed system would stimulate party development and thereby promote democratic consolidation. In Sheinis' own estimation, this first argument about the need for parties did little to sway the president. But when Sheinis argued that the pro-Yeltsin electoral bloc, Russia's Choice, would be the biggest beneficiary of this electoral system, Yeltsin became more interested.⁹¹ Like most others at the time, Sheinis and probably Yeltsin believed that Russia's Choice and the other reformist parties running in the election were capable of winning a majority of the popular vote. Given their lack of reach in the regions, however, they were unlikely to win a majority of the single-mandate seats.

This election did not go as planned by the scriptwriters. Zhirinovskiy's neo-nationalist Liberal Democratic Party of Russia won almost one-quarter of the popular vote on the PR ballot. Russia's Choice secured a paltry 15 percent, less than half of what was expected, while the other "democratic" parties all won less than 10 percent of the popular vote. The Russian Communist Party and their rural comrades, the agrarians combined for almost 20 percent of the vote, while new "centrist" groups combined for less than one-quarter of the vote. As expected, the PR vote had stimulated the formation of a party system at the national level in Russia, but from the perspective of the drafters, it had had stimulated the development of the wrong kind of parties.

Horrified by this electoral outcome, the presidential administration spent the next two years trying to rewrite the electoral law. The president and his team wanted to get rid of proportional

⁸⁸ Author's interview with Yeltsin's chief of staff at the time, Sergei Filatov, December 1997.

⁸⁹ Author's interview with Sheinis, May 1995.

⁹⁰ Author's interview with Satarov, May 1995.

⁹¹ Author's interview with Sheinis, October 1997.

representation altogether and reshape Russia's political landscape into a two-party system. Working through parliamentary factions loyal to Yeltsin, the presidential administration proposed a new mixed system in which 300 seats would be allocated through single-mandate districts and only 150 seats would be allocated according to proportional representation.⁹² When debated in the spring of 1995, however, this amendment to the electoral law failed to pass through the Duma.⁹³

The majority in the Duma wanted to keep the 50-50 system because fifty percent of those Duma deputies owed their seats to proportional representation. In addition, more than seventy deputies who won Duma seats through single-mandate districts (SMD) were members of those parties that won seats through the PR ballot, meaning that a solid majority supported the 50-50 formula. This support cut across ideological lines as liberal, nationalist, and communist parties all supported the status quo formulation. These deputies also realized that the difference between 225 and 150 was pivotal, since 225 PR seats would guarantee that a majority would favor the existing formulation, whereas the presidential proposal did not. Within the Duma, the new electoral system from 1993 had reorganized political forces to create a new majority in favor of the status quo. The Kremlin's campaign to reduce PR after the 1995 parliamentary election also failed.

Russia's electoral decree, and then law, that was passed by the State Duma did not reflect neatly the well-defined preferences of the powerful. Rather, the decree initially reflected the ideas of Sheinis and his associates, who had no major political or economic power base at the time of its drafting. He and his allies took advantage of an uncertain context to sneak into existence a rule change that had significant and lasting positive consequences for party development in Russia. Once the powerful realized what had occurred as a result of Sheinis' intervention, they tried to reverse this institutional design. But the design itself helped to create a *new* coalition of actors in favor of the new institutional design.

CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE OF PARTIES IN RUSSIA

The current state of party development in Russia does not appear to be headed toward a stable, long-term outcome. The institutional tensions in the present system create strange incentives and ambiguous signals for political actors. In the long term, two paths to a more stable outcome seem available. Eventually, Russia must either liquidate the presidency and develop a multi-party parliamentary system, or liquidate proportional representation in the Duma as the first step toward developing a two-party presidential system.

The first path is a continuation of the engineered solution for party weakness originally devised by the authors of Russia's current electoral system for the Duma. These advocates of party development believed that proportional representation would give Russian parties a foothold within the national legislature. From this base, these parties would then begin to influence other electoral situations, including the SMD seats in the Duma, the presidential campaign, regional legislatures, and eventually even regional executives.

⁹² Olga Tarasova, "Prezidenta i deputatov razdelili proporsii," *Kommersant'-Daily*, February 14, 1995, p. 2.

⁹³ Thomas Remington and Steve Smith, "Political Goals, Institutional Context, and the Choice of an Electoral System: The Russian Parliamentary Election Law," *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 40 (1996), pp. 1253-79.

The prospects for this trajectory are still alive, but they are not gaining momentum. The “old” parliamentary parties have not managed to expand beyond the Duma’s walls. On the contrary, the latest election cycle provides evidence that their influence in other electoral arenas and state institutions is decreasing. Constitutional amendments that limited the powers of the president constitute the one institutional change that could stimulate party power by design from above. While a glimmer of hope for such an institutional change appeared after the August 1998 financial crash, such amendments now seem very unlikely, especially after Putin’s electoral victory.⁹⁴ In addition, the institutional base of operations for this campaign for multi-party development—Russia’s current electoral law from the Duma—is now at risk after the 1999 parliamentary elections. Unity, the virtual party that captured almost one-quarter of the popular vote on the party list, has promised to eliminate proportional representation as a component of Russia’s parliamentary election law. Before the 1999 vote, pro-party deputies always had a solid majority within the Duma, since parties won all of the party-list seats and added more to their ranks by winning some single-mandate seats. The 1999 election represents the first time that an electoral bloc that rejected proportional representation won seats through proportional representation. If Russia’s electoral law were eventually amended to eliminate PR altogether, then Russian party development—especially liberal party development—would suffer a serious setback. The battle over this electoral law in the coming years may be the most important, if largely unnoticed, consequence of the 1999 parliamentary election.

If PR is eventually written out of the Russia parliamentary election law, parties still have a chance to develop, but the trajectory for growth is likely to be a lot slower and will produce less disciplined parties. Periodically, as we witnessed in the run-up to the 2000 presidential elections, as well as in several key gubernatorial races, ad hoc coalitions or parties will continue to form as a strategy for securing the necessary fifty-percent-plus-one to win in these majoritarian elections. At some point in time, these coalitions may begin to stick, and survive beyond the election immediately in question. In some gubernatorial races, regional parties have attempted to survive such as Transformation of Urals (Ekaterinburg), Renewal of Urals (Chelyabinsk), and Fatherland (Krasnodar).⁹⁵ To date, however, these regional organizations have not linked up to national party structures.

If national coalitions which are built from below by linking regional parties together do not occur quickly, the end result of liquidating PR might be the emergence of a hegemonic one-party system à la Mexico. Minor parties might continue to exist, but one party—the “party of power”—would dominate all electoral processes of consequence. After a decade of weakly institutionalized multi-party politics, Russia could be heading backwards again toward one-party rule.

⁹⁴ On these debates about constitutional change, see Michael McFaul, “Authoritarian and Democratic Responses to Financial Meltdown in Russia,” *Problems of Post-Communism*, July/August 1999, pp. 22–32.

⁹⁵ This Fatherland, created by Governor Kondratenko, is not affiliated in any way with the national organization with the same name created by Yuri Luzhkov.

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