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A decade after the collapse of communism, Russia still lacks a robust party system. Most institutions of the state are immune from party influence. However parties play a central role in the lower house of parliament, the State Duma. Why? Why have parties been successful in organizing and influencing the work of the State Duma but enjoyed only very limited success elsewhere? This article argues that parties in Russia are weak in general because the most powerful politicians in Russia have made choices to make them weak. Cultural, historical, and socioeconomic 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.

EXPLAINING PARTY FORMATION AND NONFORMATION IN RUSSIA

Actors, Institutions, and Chance

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A party system is an essential attribute of a democratic policy. If there are no parties, there is no democracy (Lipset, 2000). Despite the erosion of party influence 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. In liberal democracies, parties perform several tasks. During elections, they provide voters with distinct choices, be they ideological, social, or 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

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to key decision makers, small parties can have inordinate influence over policy debates, whereas 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.

The crux of party power comes first from participation in elections and then from winning representation within the state. In consolidated democracies, parties are the most important part of the representative structure, aggregating societal interests and then representing those interests within the state. In fact, the degree of party control over the structuring of electoral choices and the 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 vote and then win representation within the state 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 in all. In elections in which parties play a central role, they do not enjoy a monopoly in structuring the vote. Consequently, parties have only limited representation within the state and even less influence on the state's actions. The one oasis of party development has been the State Duma, the lower house of parliament. Parties have played a central role in parliamentary elections, 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.

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 socioeconomic 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. At the same time, the privileged position of parties in the State Duma also resulted from individual choices about institutional design. But these consequential design choices had unintended consequences that did not represent

the preferences of the most powerful. As a result, antiparty forces may overrun even this bastion of party power. Both the 1999 parliamentary election and the 2000 presidential election suggest that such an assault may occur soon.

To demonstrate the centrality of individual choices about institutional design in the making and unmaking of Russia's party system, this article proceeds in a somewhat unorthodox fashion by pushing the causal chain back one step in each section. The first section provides a rough measure of Russian party development by focusing on the electoral and representative roles of parties in Russia. An attempt is then made to quantify the degree of party penetration into Russia's main political institutions, which are filled through popular election. The second section explains the results described in the first section. After exploring the many structural constraints on party development, the importance of institutional design for both stimulating and stunting party development is highlighted. The third section then pushes the causal arrow back one step further to explain the origins of the institutions described in the second section. The argument is 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.

MEASURING PARTY DEVELOPMENT IN RUSSIA

There are many different ways to measure party development. Some like to count members. Some like to measure partisanship among voters. Others like to trace party influence over policy outcomes. Each of these approaches has strengths and weaknesses. The first two approaches can be quantified but provide only proxy measures for party development and party influence. The party with the largest membership does not always enjoy the greatest electoral success or highest level of influence over policy outcomes. Conversely, low or declining levels of partisanship do not necessarily translate into a loss of party dominance at the polls or in policy making. The third measure—party influence over outcomes—is most interesting but is also the most difficult to trace (Laver & Budge, 1992).

A fourth approach for calibrating party development—measuring the electoral success and subsequent degree of party representation within state bodies—is used here. In the causal chain between party organization, party

identification in society, electoral success and/or representation in the state, and ultimately influence over policy outcomes, this measure assesses the penultimate step.¹ 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. Analysts of party development also have asserted that the “party-in-government” often precedes the development of extra-parliamentary organizations or the “party-in-the-electorate,” suggesting that the party-in-government is a good place to start for tracing party development in a young democracy such as Russia (Key, 1964). This stage in the chain also can be quantified much more easily than either the earlier stages in the causal chain or the final stage.

THE FEDERAL EXECUTIVE

Without question, the most powerful position in the Russian political system is the office of president (Shevtsova, 1999). To date, parties 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. Party leaders have participated in presidential elections. In the 1996 vote, three of the top five finishers were party leaders, whereas the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF), 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.

Through the Duma, parties have played some role in influencing the composition of the federal 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. This institutional arrangement severely weakens the role of parties in the formation of the government and therefore weakens the role of parties more generally. After crises, however, 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

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

government as expressed in the parliamentary election. After the August 1998 financial crash, opposition parties in the Duma demanded the resignation of the liberal Prime Minister Sergei Kiryenko and succeeded in promoting the appointment of a left-of-center candidate, 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 in party members. When party members did join the government, their allegiances usually transferred to the prime minister and drifted away from their party leaders and organizations. More generally, the composition of the government has never reflected the balance of forces within the Duma.

THE FEDERATION COUNCIL

The Federation Council, the upper house of the Russian parliament, is another party-free state institution. Although the rules of its formation have changed throughout the 1990s, its members do not rely on party support or party identification to obtain their seats in the council. Committees and regional associations, not party factions, organize the internal work within the council. A number of Federation Council members did adopt party affiliations in the run up to the 1999 elections to the State Duma, the lower house of parliament (Petrov & Titkov, 1999). Most important, nine regional executives joined forces to form the electoral bloc Fatherland–All Russia (Otechestvo-Vsya Rossiya or OVR). Yet this coalition quickly fell apart after the 1999 vote. Similarly, the progovernmental 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. Notably, none of these regional leaders joined these blocs as a means to enhance their own electoral prospects. Putin's new formulation for forming the Federation Council, which now has representatives to the Federation Council nominated by regional executives and legislatures rather than the regional executives and chairs of regional parliaments themselves, is likely to weaken party influence in this chamber even further.

THE STATE DUMA

Elections to the State Duma constitute the one arena in which parties have played a major role. Likewise parties have played a central role in the internal organization of this legislative organ and have a direct influence over Duma policy outputs. But this party dominance is neither growing nor even stabiliz-

ing. In fact, the electoral results of the 1999 parliamentary elections suggest that party influence over this institution may be waning. 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. Russia's current electoral system for the State Duma accords parties a privileged position regarding the selection of 50% (225) of Duma members. This 50% allocation goes proportionally to parties that receive at least 5% of the popular vote in a national election (for a single electoral district). As discussed in detail as follows, 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 did appear to be consolidating by the end of the decade. This core is composed of four national parties—the CPRF, Yabloko, the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR), and the Union of Right Forces. When compared with 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 all Duma votes in the 1990s.² The ability to field national party lists and candidates in three consecutive national elections suggests 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.

Second, all four parties have well-defined political orientations, loyal electorates, and notable leaders. In focus groups commissioned by the author in 1999, voters indicated that they knew these parties well, in fact, much better than they knew other parties competing in this same election (Byzov, 2000). The Communist Party is Russia's left-of-center party, the Union of Right Forces and Yabloko are liberal parties, and Zhirinovskiy's LDPR is a more nationalist party. Demographic patterns also correlate with partisan sympathies. For instance, the older, poorer, less educated, and more rural are most likely to support the CPRF, whereas the young, rich, more educated, and urban are more likely to vote for Union of Right Forces or Yabloko (Colton, 2000).

Third, as Table 1 demonstrates, three of the four parties won roughly the same percentage in the 1999 election that they won in December 1995, suggesting that these parties might be developing loyal followings. The CPRF

2. The Union of Right Forces did not compete in the 1993 or 1995 votes, although 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.

Table 1
Results of Party-List Voting in Russian Duma Elections in 1995 and 1999 (as a percentage of national proportional representation vote)

Political Party and/or Bloc	1999 (%)	1995 (%)
Communist Party of the Russian Federation	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 ^a		8.1
Liberal Democratic Party of Russia and/or Zhirinovskiy Bloc	5.98	11.4
Unity (Medved)	23.32	NA
Fatherland–All Russia	13.33	NA
Our Home Is Russia	1.2	10.3
“None of the above” and parties below the 5% threshold	18.63	49.6

a. On the logic of such bloomings of executive power, see Moe and Caldwell (1994).

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 with Yabloko totals in 1995 or even 1993. The Union of Right Forces performed surprisingly well in 1999, although the total electoral support in 1995 (when adding together the small blocs that divided their vote in 1995) is not that different from 1999. Zhirinovskiy’s LDPR suffered a sharp decline and lost nearly half of its electoral support, suggesting that the LDPR may be the weakest of these four “old” parliamentary parties. Given all that has happened in Russia during the past 4 years—the 1996 presidential election, the August 1998 financial crash, rotating prime ministers, and the wars in Kosovo and Chechnya—what is most striking about these results is the stability, not volatility, of aggregate support.³

Significantly, 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 2% of the popular vote in the 1999 election.

An additional feature shared by all of these parties is that they have acted together to make the Duma a party-centric institution.⁴ In the first post-Soviet

3. 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.

4. Of the four, Russia’s Choice had the least disciplined faction in the 1990s. In 1993, however, Russia’s Choice was not simply a neoliberal 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.

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 (Haspel, Remington, & Smith, 1998). The new parliament voted to give the status of faction to all parties that had received more than 5% 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 35 members to form a new faction. The allocation of committee chairs was also done proportionally between party factions, and the Council of the Duma was established to organize the agenda of the parliament (Remington & Smith, 1998). The new Duma also approved a 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 preeminent actors in the Duma and created real incentives for nonpartisan Duma deputies to align with a faction. In the 1990s, internal cohesion made the Duma a more formidable opponent for the president (Sitnikov, 1999).

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 striking, two new electoral coalitions competing on the party-list ballot succeeded in capturing a significant portion of popular vote—Fatherland—All Russia and Unity. These two election blocs shared many similar qualities with each other but have little in common with the four parties previously mentioned. In contrast to the four parliamentary parties discussed earlier, these two organizations are better understood as presidential coalitions.

First, neither Fatherland nor Unity participated in the 1995 parliamentary election. For the leaders of these coalitions, the 2000 presidential race was the focus of attention from the very beginning. Moscow mayor Yuri Luzhkov created Fatherland to promote his presidential aspirations, whereas 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 (Colton & McFaul, 2000). Immediately after Putin's victory, the Fatherland—All Russia coalition collapsed. A year later, Fatherland leaders pledged to integrate their organization into the new party of power, Unity.

Second, both Fatherland and Unity had very poorly defined identities within the electorate in the 1999 parliamentary election. Focus groups commissioned by the author in Moscow (where the most sophisticated voters in Russia are located) revealed that just 7 days before Election Day, voters did not understand what either coalition stood for or represented. Fatherland–All Russia’s program contained many contradictions (Makarenko, 1999). Unity’s program was even more mysterious.

Third, almost by definition, these new political organizations 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. Not surprising, therefore, and in contrast to stable levels of support expressed throughout the fall for the four parliamentary parties previously mentioned, popular support for these two presidential coalitions varied considerably throughout the 1999 parliamentary campaign period. Fatherland took a nose dive, whereas Unity enjoyed a radical climb in the polls.

Finally, although 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 Fatherland–All Russia 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.

Although concerned primarily with influencing the presidential election, these two new electoral coalitions together captured more than 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 (SMDs). 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 SMDs, which constitute the other half of the Duma. Nonpartisan candidates assumed a much more prominent role in the 1999 vote than in 1995, and nonpartisan actors—including first and foremost regional elites—played a much more active role in influencing the outcome of these elections than in previous years (McFaul, Petrov, & Ryabov, 1999). In the aggregate, as Table 2 shows, nonpartisans 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

Table 2

Deputies Elected With Political Party and/or Bloc Affiliation: Russian State Duma Elections, 1995 and 1999

Political Party and/or Bloc	1999			1995		
	Deputies		Total	Deputies		Total
	Deputies From Party-List Voting	From Single- Mandate Races		Deputies From Party-List Voting	From Single- Mandate Races	
Communist Party of the Russian Federation	67	47	114	99	58	157
Yabloko	16	4	20	31	14	45
Union of Right Forces	24	5	29	0	9	9
Zhirinovskiy bloc	17	0	17	50	1	51
Unity (Medved)	64	9	73	NA	NA	NA
Fatherland–All Russia	37	30	67	NA	NA	NA
Our Home Is Russia	0	7	7	45	10	55
Agrarian Party of Russia	NA	NA	NA	0	20	20
Independents or others	—	114	114	—	103	103
Unfilled seats			9			

CPRF won 11 fewer seats in 1999 than in 1995. Yabloko's share of single-mandate seats decreased from 14 to 4, and two of these seats were won by candidates with only a loose affiliation with Yabloko: Sergei Stepashin, a former prime minister, and Mikhail Zadornov, a former finance minister. In 1995, Democratic Choice of Russia (DVR) captured less than 4% 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. Zhirinovskiy'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 31 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.

REGIONAL HEADS OF ADMINISTRATION (PRESIDENTS AND GOVERNORS) AND REGIONAL LEGISLATORS

Finally, Russian political parties play a very limited role in regional politics. In some major metropolitan areas, such as St. Petersburg and Ekaterinburg, multiparty systems are beginning to take root, but in most

regions, a state-based informal network dominated by the local ruling elite—called in Russia the “party of power”—still dominates politics.

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 (McFaul & Petrov, 1997). The CPRF, through its affiliate the National Patriotic Union 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, the NPSR had endorsed only 12 candidates (Vladimir Akimov, CPRF campaign advisor, personal communication, September 16, 1996). By the end of this cycle, the CPRF claimed to have won as many governorships as the NPSR had endorsed, 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. Yabloko endorsements played an important role in some races, especially in St. Petersburg, but Yabloko party members did not win a single race. Only one candidate with open ties to DVR (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, Stoner-Weiss (2000) reports that only 11.5% of all deputies in regional parliaments have national party affiliations, including 7.3% from the CPRF, but less than 1% for any of the three other parliamentary parties previously mentioned (Stoner-Weiss, 2000). Obviously, party development in the national legislature has not stimulated a commensurate growth of party influence in regional legislatures.

THE IMPORTANCE OF INSTITUTIONS

The causes of party weakness in Russia are many and diverse. 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 hyperorganized and “overpartyized,” 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. Whereas other East European countries were able to revive old parties from the precommunist 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, which continue to form the basis of the largest organizations in the postcommunist era, including first and foremost the CPRF. 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 (Roeder, 1989).

The scale of socioeconomic transformation in Russia also has impeded party development. Socioeconomic cleavages were important for party development in Western Europe (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967). In Russia, these cleavages are still ill defined. If transitions to democracies in capitalist countries involve changing primarily the political system, successful postcommunist transformations destroy old classes, create new interest groups, and confuse, at least temporarily, almost everyone living through the transition. The slow development of capitalism in Russia suggests that we should expect a similarly slow formation of market-based interest groups.⁵ The slow emergence of civil society severely limits the organizational, financial, and ideological resources necessary for party development. Russian parties, in turn, have had difficulty situating themselves on programmatic or interest-based dimensions.⁶ 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 than by particular economic or even ethnic concerns (Whitefield & Evans, 1998). In Russia between 1990 and 1997, political situations and electoral choices were often polarized into two camps, those for change and those against it (McFaul, 1997). More conventional cleavages

5. Moreover as in all capitalist societies, small groups with well-defined interests (such as 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 Moe (1980).

6. This is the *tabula rasa* school. For a discussion of this literature, see Kitschelt, Mansfeldova, Markowski, and Toka (1999). Almost a decade after the collapse of communism, however, one would think that the contours of a postcommunist society would have begun to form by now.

that demarcate the contours of stable party systems in other countries may perhaps emerge only now that this polarization has begun to recede.

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. These same factors also cannot be cited to explain party emergence. The role of parties in government differs from institution to institution, suggesting that more proximate variables are intervening to cause this variation. Institutions and individual choices in designing institutions must also be brought into the analysis (Moser, 1995; Remington & Smith, 1995; Sartori, 1994; Shugart & Carey, 1992). Specifically, Russian political elites made choices about the timing of elections, the kinds of electoral systems, 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, including first and foremost the incorporation of proportional representation in the parliamentary electoral law, which have stimulated the emergence and development of political parties.

As a complement to structural or organic models of party development that correctly highlight the reasons for the lack of party development in Russia, this article argues that individual politicians and interest groups can manufacture the emergence of parties. Structural, cultural, or legacy factors cannot explain the emergence of the parliamentary parties previously described. And they cannot account for the variation of party strength within different Russian state institutions, because the causal arrow of all of these structural theories points toward weak or no party development.⁷ Yet, as documented above, the core of a multiparty 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 as well as the relatively strong degree of party development with the Duma. The seeds of a multiparty system and the barren environment surrounding these seeds demand explanation. To account for both the emergence and the lack of a party system, individual actors, their preferences, their power, and their

7. 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.

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 have had a direct impact on 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 article 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, the LDPR, and the Union of Right Forces (Fish, 1995b). The fact that 50% 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 50%, as many have 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 the LDPR) most likely would not exist today. Yabloko and the LDPR got their jump starts as national organizations from the proportional representation ballot in the 1993 parliamentary elections. 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 in 1993, 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 proportional representation in the 1993 election. In 1995, DVR (the liberal core that remained after Russia's Choice disintegrated) won no seats from proportional representation but did win nine single-mandate seats. In 1999, however, the Union of Right Forces benefited greatly from proportional representation, winning 24 seats from the party list vote compared with only five seats in single-mandate races. Only the CPRF, the one party with an organizational inheritance from the Soviet period, could survive without proportional representation.

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 (O'Donnell & Schmitter, 1986). 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 1990.⁸ As discussed earlier, 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 anticommunist front. Proto-parties formed, but they remained under the umbrella of Democratic Russia, biding their time until the moment for multiparty 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 postcommunist election—a “founding election”—right away. Yeltsin, however, disagreed. Only 2 years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union did Russia finally have its first multiparty 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, Christian Democratic, Social Democratic, and Communist parties (Fish, 1995a). Yeltsin's decision to veto the idea of holding such a founding election left these new political parties to wallow for the next 2 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 and 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 (Colton & Hough, 1998). Yeltsin also sequenced elections so that parliamentary and presidential votes did not occur simultaneously, a decision that further hampered party development (Shugart & Carey, 1992).

Despite these other timing and sequencing decisions that impede party emergence, the incorporation of proportional representation into the 1993, 1995, and 1999 electoral system for the State Duma has helped to stimulate

8. 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 of 1990 elections.

party emergence in Russia. The importance of electoral rules for party development is especially apparent when national and regional parliaments in Russia are compared.⁹ Only a small handful of regional legislatures have mixed electoral systems, whereas the overwhelming majority use only single-mandate systems. Stoner-Weiss (2000) reports that the five regions that do incorporate some degree of proportional representation did show a higher degree of party penetration than the national average. For party advocates, proportional representation does appear to be their best tool.

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 are parliamentary systems (Linz, 1994). The same has been true in Russia (Moser, 1998). This institutional constraint has been especially pronounced in Russia, as parties do not control the formation of government or even structure the presidential vote. This institutional arrangement resembles what O'Donnell (1994) 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" (O'Donnell, 1994, p. 59). Organizations such as parties that mediate interests between state and society or constrain the freedom of action for the chief executive are not needed in 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 postcommunist Russia suggests that the Kremlin occupant may not be as omnipotent as is commonly perceived, whereas the Duma has grown stronger over time (Remington, Smith, & Haspel, 1998). But the center of power is still 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, however, 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 becomes apparent only when com-

9. Although comparison of national and regional votes must take into account several important differences, this comparison has the advantage of keeping structural variables relatively constant, allowing the causal influence of the electoral system to be isolated.

bined with the mixed electoral system of the State Duma. Russia's current electoral law for the Duma has stimulated the emergence of a multiparty 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 runoff 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 interparty rivalries. It is also a risky strategy because 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 2 weeks after the first vote.¹⁰ 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" of 100 organizations—the NPSR—during his presidential bid in 1996. 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 nonpartisan, anticommunist 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. Only if and when two political parties dominate all others will candidates seeking executive office have an incentive to seek a party affiliation.¹¹ Mixed electoral systems for parliaments (which encourage several parties with a minority share of the electorate) and runoff majoritarian systems for presidents (which require successful candidates to win 50% of the electorate) do not mix well.

10. Imagine how the dynamics of campaigns in presidential primaries in the United States would change if the general election took place only 2 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, because these opponents would be crucial to remobilizing support for the party's winning candidate in the final election held just 2 weeks later.

11. The miscalculations of former Prime Minister Yavgeny Primakov are instructive in highlighting this point. In the fall of 1999, Primakov decided to compete in the parliamentary election as head of Fatherland–All Russia as a means of jump-starting his presidential campaign. By joining one party, however, Primakov alienated his supporters in other parties, including first and foremost the Communist Party. Even if Fatherland–All Russia had placed better than third in the parliamentary vote, Primakov would have had to seek support from other parties to reach the majority necessary to win in the presidential vote. On the other hand, had Primakov not identified with any political party in the parliamentary vote, he could have more easily sought the endorsement of all opposition parties as a "coalition" consensus candidate.

EXPLAINING INSTITUTIONAL DESIGN: POWER AND CHANCE

In the previous section, I 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 (Ordeshook, 1995).

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 (Ordeshook, 1990; Shepsle, 1986). Over time, institutions can develop an independent role or have autonomous intervening influence on social outcomes (March & Olsen, 1989). Some institutions may even become so powerful that they dominate the construction of the preferences, choices, and capabilities of individuals. During periods of rapid and momentous change when old institutions are collapsing and new institutions are 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. However, in the design of new political institutions, zero-sum distributional questions are more prevalent. 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 (Knight, 1992; Krasner, 1991; Tsebelis, 1990). When actors design new political institutions, they rarely act for the good of society and usually work for the good of themselves (Hardin, 1989). This means that they will design institutions that promote party development only if they see party growth to be in their interest. To date, most in Russia 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 by offering increasing returns to those who abide by them (Arthur, 1994; Pierson, 2000). 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.

THE POLITICS THAT PRODUCED PRESIDENTIALISM

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 about obtaining and then consolidating political power through a process that did not need 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 Russian history or culture. Rather, Russia's strong presidential system emerged directly from the transition process. In contrast to many other presidential systems in the postcommunist world, the old communist elite in Russia did not create the Russian presidency (Easter, 1997). On the contrary, the creation of the presidential office was a strategy adopted to insulate the anticommunist movement from the power of the old elite.

Anticommunist forces in the Russian Congress of People's Deputies first floated the idea to create a presidential office in the spring of 1990. As a minority in this parliament, Russia's "Democrats" reasoned that their leader, Boris Yeltsin, would have more power as a directly elected executive than as a chairman of a parliament in which his support was thin and waning. 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. Yeltsin therefore succeeded in putting a question about the Russian presidency on the March 1991 referendum. The referendum passed overwhelmingly. It is not surprising that 3 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 because Yeltsin had cultivated an electoral base well before parties had come into existence.

At the time of his electoral victory, Yeltsin had captured an office with ill-defined powers. After the June 1991 presidential vote, the increasingly anti-Yeltsin Russian Congress had 6 months to clarify and codify the constitutional division of powers between the president and the parliament. The Congress planned to limit the powers of the presidency and keep all significant powers with the legislature. Before they codified these preferences into law, however, Soviet hard-liners attempted a coup and failed in August 1991, just months after Yeltsin's electoral victory. 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 *de facto* expansion of presidential purview met with little resistance.¹² In fact, 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 Congress and the president began to debate which political institution was supreme, the Congress or the presidency. In October 1993, this stalemate eventually produced armed conflict between the two branches of government. Yeltsin won this violent confrontation and then took advantage of his victory to write a new superpresidential constitution. In December 1993, voters ratified Yeltsin's rules as the new constitution of Russia.

The impulse for presidentialism came from Yeltsin and his desire to stay in power in the spring of 1991. Yeltsin's military victory in October 1993 against the Russian Congress allowed him to write the new political rules of the game as he desired. This institutional design in turn has impeded party emergence in Russia. Powerful actors making choices about institutions—not history, culture, or socioeconomic 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 reelection campaign in 1996. Alone these resources were not sufficient to win reelection (on other factors, see McFaul, 1997). Yet they were more than enough to compensate for the lack of a party affiliation. As long as the state continues to enjoy an enormous resource advantage over other nonstate 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. The office of acting president endowed Putin with resources that helped him win the presidential election in March 2000 (McFaul, 2000). He did not need a party affiliation to win.

With more space, a similar detailed story could be told about the emergence of powerful executives at the regional level. Most regional leaders

12. On the logic of such bloomings of executive power, see Moe and Caldwell (1994).

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. 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. 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 nonpartisan model of electoral politics for governors and republican presidents (Goloso, 1997).

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 runoff, 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 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. The presence of many candidates helps to impede such coordination.

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION: ACCIDENT OF HISTORY

The origins of proportional representation have a different lineage than presidentialism. Political actors choose electoral laws that maximize their ability to succeed in the electoral process. The outcome of struggles over the design of electoral laws, therefore, should reflect the preferences of the powerful. But they do not always do so. Russia’s mixed electoral system resulted from the intervention of normatively motivated political entrepreneur and a means-ends miscalculation on the part of the Yeltsin administration, which then produced an institutional arrangement that survived beyond one electoral cycle. To be sure, this ideational intervention and mistake occurred in an arena of institutional design of least importance to Yeltsin and his team—the Duma. If the Duma had more powers, Yeltsin and his team might have deployed extraconstitutional means to correct the error. Over time,

however, this mistake has produced some unintended consequences—positive consequences—for party development.

The opportunities for ideas to matter, for political entrepreneurs to seize center stage, and for powerful interest groups to miscalculate are rare. They are most likely to occur precisely during periods of rapid institutional breakdown. In stable institutional settings in which individuals choose from the same menu of choices over multiple iterations, the particular causal role of unique individuals or ideas should indeed be minimal. The preferences and power of leaders in stable institutional settings should also be easier to identify and therefore behavior should be easier to predict or explain. In stable settings, the preferences and power of social groups should also be relatively fixed and thereby constraining to the leaders who represent these groups. In uncertain institutional settings, however, the causal role assigned to unique individuals and ideas should be greater (Goldstein & Keohane, 1993). As Weber (1978) argued, “Charismatic rulership in the typical sense . . . always results from unusual, especially political and economic situations. . . . It arises from collective excitement produced by extraordinary events and from surrender to heroism of any kind” (p. 1121). When institutions break down, individuals (and analysts of individuals) have less information about the consequences of their actions or the intentions of other actors. They must make decisions under conditions of uncertainty, which may produce unintended results. In volatile institutional settings, preferences and power of leaders become variables, not constants, especially when the collapse of previous institutions eliminates past preferences from the menu. An effective leader who proposes a new ideological or normative orientation for the state and society can fill the void. In these situations of institutional breakdown, we should assume that individuals have autonomy and the possibility to influence institutional change—at least in the short run.

Such was the case in the design of Russia’s electoral system for the Duma. On October 1, 1993, Yeltsin decreed a new set of rules for electing a new parliament. Yeltsin’s preferences, however, were not precisely reflected in this decree because Yeltsin did not have precise preferences regarding the Duma electoral rules. At this moment, Yeltsin was much more focused on the Congress standoff, which ended 3 days later in violent conflict, and his new constitution. In the midst of a constitutional crisis swiftly devolving into civil war, Yeltsin had little time or proclivity to ponder the electoral effects of proportional representation versus first-past-the-post systems (Sergei Filatov, Yeltsin’s former chief of staff, personal communication, March 25, 1998).

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. Unlike most of those who had worked on the

new electoral law before the shelling of the Congress of People's deputies, Sheinis had a normative commitment to multiparty democracy. He believed that proportional representation could be deployed to help stimulate the emergence of a multiparty system in Russia and that it would help consolidate Russian democracy (Sheinis, personal communication, May 12, 1995). Sheinis took advantage of the chaos of the moment in September and October 1993, as well as of the ignorance of his colleagues regarding the institutional effects of electoral laws, to guide the crafting of a presidential decree that allocated 50% of all seats in the Duma through proportional representation. Sheinis succeeded in securing this decree over the advice of several key Yeltsin advisors, who supported a majoritarian system. Publicly, these aides argued that direct elections of individuals allowed for greater accountability of deputies. Privately, these same people believed that a parliament composed of deputies from SMDs would be more supportive of the president and thus easier to control (Giorgii Satarov, former presidential advisor, personal communication, August 22, 1995). Days before the signing of the decree, Yeltsin's staff had managed to reduce the number of proportional representation seats to one third of the total Duma. However, in a last-minute meeting with Yeltsin, Sheinis and his colleagues Sergei Alekseev and Sergei Kovalev succeeded in increasing the number of proportional representation seats to 50%. In his meeting with Yeltsin, Sheinis first explained the merits of the mixed system on ideological grounds, claiming that a mixed system would stimulate party development and thereby promote democratic consolidation. When this argument failed to resonate with Yeltsin, Sheinis posited that the pro-Yeltsin electoral bloc, Russia's Choice, would be the biggest beneficiary of this electoral system. Yeltsin was swayed and approved of the mixed formula (Sheinis, personal communication, October 10, 1997). Like most analysts at the time, Sheinis and probably Yeltsin assumed that Russia's Choice and the other reformist parties running in the election would win a majority or a solid minority of the popular vote. Given their lack of reach in the regions, however, Russia's Choice would not win many single-mandate seats.

The mixed electoral system did not produce the anticipated results. Zhirinovskiy's neonationalist LDPR won 23% of the popular vote on the proportional representation ballot, whereas Russia's Choice won 15%, less than half of what was expected. The other "Democratic" parties all together won less than 10% of the popular vote. The Russian Communist Party and their rural comrades, the agrarians, combined for almost 20% of the vote. As expected, the proportional representation vote had stimulated the formation of a party system at the national level in Russia, but from the perspective of the drafters, it had stimulated the development of the wrong kind of parties.

Shocked by this electoral result, the presidential administration tried to amend the electoral system during the 2 years before the next parliamentary vote in December 1995. The president and his team wanted to eliminate proportional representation altogether and use majoritarian rules to reshape Russia's political landscape into a two-party system. After several attempts, their efforts failed. The majority in the Duma voted in favor of the existing mixed system because 50% of those Duma deputies owed their seats to proportional representation. In addition, more than 70 deputies who won Duma seats through SMDs were members of those parties that won seats through the proportional representation 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. In other words, the new electoral system from 1993 had reorganized political forces to create a new majority in favor of the status quo. The Kremlin continued its campaign to reduce proportional representation after the 1995 parliamentary election but did not succeed in changing the law before the 1999 parliamentary vote.

Russia's electoral decree for electing Duma deputies did not precisely reflect the preferences of the most powerful actors in the Russian polity at the time. Rather, the decree initially reflected the ideas of Sheinis and his associates, who had very little political or economic power. 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. The rule change also benefited Sheinis's new political affiliation, Yabloko, which formed soon thereafter to compete in the December 1993 elections. Once the powerful realized what had occurred as a result of Sheinis's intervention, they tried to change this electoral system. But the design itself helped to create a new coalition of actors in favor of the new institutional design that sustained the system through the 1995 and 1999 parliamentary elections.

THE FUTURE OF PARTIES IN RUSSIA

The current state of party development in Russia is not an equilibrium. The institutional tensions in the present system create strange incentives and ambiguous signals for political actors. In particular, the mixed electoral system for the parliament does not reflect the interests of the most powerful political actors in the polity. In the long term, two paths to a more stable outcome seem available: (a) liquidate the presidency and develop a multiparty

parliamentary system or (b) liquidate proportional representation in the Duma as the first step toward developing a two-party presidential system.

The first path would be another engineered solution to address party weakness in Russia. It is not surprising that the same people who drafted the original mixed electoral system also advocate the weakening of presidential powers. These advocates of multiparty development still believe that proportional representation has given Russian parties a foothold within the national legislature. From this base, these parties might then begin to influence other electoral situations, including the SMD seats in the Duma, the presidential campaign, regional legislatures, and eventually even regional executives.

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. Although a glimmer of hope for such an institutional change appeared after the August 1998 financial crash, such amendments seem very unlikely, especially after Putin's electoral victory.

More likely is the elimination of proportional representation and a weakening of political parties, at least in the short run. The results of the 1999 parliamentary elections unexpectedly undermined the majority coalition in favor of proportional representation and the status quo rules more generally. Unity, the virtual party that captured almost one quarter of the popular vote on the party list in the 1999 vote, has promised to eliminate proportional representation as a component of Russia's parliamentary election law (*Edinstvo*, 1999). Before the 1999 vote, pro-party deputies always had a solid majority within the Duma, because parties won all of the party-list seats and added more to their ranks by winning some single-mandate seats. In other words, the innovation in the electoral system first introduced in 1993 initially had little to do with the preferences of the powerful and occurred primarily due to chance in the uncertain and chaotic context of the fall of 1993 crisis. Once in place, however, the rule change seemed to manufacture a coalition in favor of perpetuating these rules, even if other important actors in the Russian polity, including first and foremost the powerful president, did not support the mixed electoral system. These rules in turn allowed for proto-parties to sprout even if they were not firmly rooted in socioeconomic cleavage structures of Russian society. The results of the 1999 election have threatened to undermine this equilibrium. For the first time, an electoral bloc that rejected proportional representation won seats through proportional representation. It

is not surprising that this party—Unity—was created by the presidential administration. If Russia's electoral law were eventually amended to eliminate proportional representation altogether, then Russian party development—especially liberal party development—would suffer a serious setback.

If proportional representation is eventually written out of the Russian parliamentary election law, we should witness the emergence of a two-party system (Duverger, 1954). But the trajectory for growth will be a lot slower and will produce less disciplined parties more akin to U.S. parties than European 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 50% 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 outlived the election cycle for which they were created. To date, however, these regional organizations have not linked up to national party structures and have yet to survive beyond the political fortunes of the individual leaders who founded them.

If national coalitions built from below by linking regional parties together do not occur quickly, the end result of liquidating proportional representation could still be the emergence of a two-party system—the right-of-center Unity (with Fatherland now in alliance) and the left-of-center Communist Party. If the liberal parties Union of Right Forces and Yabloko eventually unite, they might also survive to capture a small number of seats in large urban centers. However given the Communist Party's failure to secure 50% in a national vote during the past decade—a decade in which the economic conditions were ripe for Communist Party renewal—such an innovation might also produce a hegemonic one-party system. Minor parties might continue to exist, but one party—the party of power—would dominate all electoral processes of consequence. In the 2000 presidential race, Putin won the largest percentage in 84 of Russia's 89 regions. If recast as a parliamentary vote, the March 2000 election results would have given Putin's party a slight majority under proportional representation but 94% of all seats in a first-past-the-post system. After a decade of weakly institutionalized multiparty politics, Russia could be heading backward again toward one-party rule.

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