The Impact of the Electoral System on Post-Communist Party Development: the Case of the 1993 Russian Parliamentary Elections

ROBERT G. MOSER

Department of Government, University of Texas at Austin, Burdine 536, Austin, TX, 78712-1087, USA

This paper uses a case study of the 1993 Russian parliamentary elections to explore the influence of proportional representation and plurality electoral systems on party formation in a post-communist regime. The mixed PR-plurality electoral system used by Russia in the 1993 elections is a particularly useful case for such analysis for it allows the simultaneous study of these two electoral systems under the same set of social, economic, and cultural conditions. This study found that common emphasis placed on the number of parties allowed by PR versus plurality systems is misplaced in the context of Russian politics. The vital impact of electoral systems under post-communist conditions is their permeability to independent candidates. PR systems tend to impose party labels on the electorate and elites and thus bolster the status of parties as electoral agents. Plurality systems allow independents to compete on a level playing field with partisan candidates, robbing parties of the preferential treatment they need to get established in the initial years of democratic governance.

Elections are the raison d'être of political parties. By definition, political parties in competitive polities exist in order to compete for government office through electoral contests (Epstein, 1967). This is one of the most crucial differences between political parties, which try to capture political power, and other intermediary institutions, such as interest groups and the media, which only try to influence those already in power. Regularly held elections are a necessary but not sufficient condition for the development of competitive political parties beyond a clandestine state or a superficial existence that thinly veils some authoritarian regimes. Many features of a party's existence are inextricably tied to elections. A party's survival and strength is measured in terms of electoral outcomes. Parties sustain a meaningful existence only if they can consistently gain a decisive amount of electoral support and a party's strength is often measured in the number of votes it can muster. Moreover, party systems are usually described by the number of parties winning substantial electoral support (LaPalombara and Weiner, 1966; Sartori, 1976) and changes in these systems are marked by critical or realigning elections (Key, 1955).

Consequently, elections occupy a special place in the study of party development. The first competitive elections following the end of authoritarian rule, in
particular, has received much scholarly attention. The founding election is thought to provoke political parties, bringing them to the center of the political stage. Furthermore, the timing, sequence, conduct, and results of the founding election are considered to have a significant and lasting effect on the embryonic party system (O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986).

Besides providing the mechanism through which parties find a reason for existence, elections also directly affect the form and function of parties and party systems. The electoral system, that is, the manner in which an election is contested and votes are translated into seats, greatly influences the number and type of parties that develop. Political analysts since John Stuart Mill have debated the consequences of different types of ballots, magnitudes of electoral districts, and the benefits and liabilities of plurality versus proportional representation systems. Indeed a whole academic subfield has emerged around the interrelationship between a state's electoral system, its party system, and the quality and stability of its government.

The 1993 parliamentary election was Russia's founding election. This election was not the first national competitive election to be held on Russian soil since the advent of democratization. Nor was it the first electoral contest to be held after the collapse of communist power, the April 1993 referendum holding that honor. However, the 1993 elections marks a watershed in Russian political development because it was the first instance of electoral competition for national public office held under Russian (as opposed to Soviet) hegemony. It was also the first contest for public office to be freely and legally contested on a multiparty basis unfettered by manipulations of the once dominant CPSU.

This article investigates the impact of the 1993 parliamentary election on the development of Russia's political parties. It seeks to examine Russia's 1993 parliamentary election from the perspective of electoral engineering. Were Russia's founding elections held in such a way as to promote or hinder party development? Did electoral rules have the expected effects on Russian parties that comparative studies of electoral systems claim them to have? In studying these questions special attention will be given to the central element of electoral engineering: the electoral system.

The 1993 parliamentary election had mixed results for party development in Russia. It did bring an enhanced status to electoral blocs and parties. The 13 electoral organizations on the party list ballot, even those recently manufactured specifically for the ensuing election, enjoyed a level of attention and influence unparalleled in Russia's post-communist experience. In this sense, the 1993 parliamentary election acted according to general expectations for founding elections. The holding of elections provided a forum in which parties occupied a central role. However, this newly found status for Russia's nascent parties was partial and superficial.

Increased party influence was partial because parties controlled the nominations of only one of the three electoral contests for public office included in the election. As will be explained in more detail below, the 1993 election was divided into three separate races, two for the lower house and one for the upper house. Seats to the lower house, the State Duma, were chosen both on a party list PR basis and in single-member, first-past-the-post races. Seats to the upper house, the Federation Council, were chosen in two-member, plurality contests. Russian parties and electoral blocs controlled the nominations in the PR contest by default because only registered parties were allowed to run a list of candidates. No nonpartisan lists of
candidates were registered. In the plurality contests, independent candidates predominated. More than half of the individual candidates to the lower house were independents and a vast majority of candidates to the upper house were independents. Thus, despite the fact that public attention was focused on the 13 electoral blocs competing in the PR race, parties were the primary electoral agent in only that one part of the election.

Moreover, this increased party influence and status was superficial in the sense that party organizations remained personalistic, organizationally amorphous, and ideologically ambiguous. While the 1993 election may have increased the stature of Russia's parties, it did little to improve on their organizational weakness, incessant infighting, or lack of reliable socio-economic constituencies. Like the party organizations preceding them, the electoral blocs that emerged to contest the 1993 election continued to be little more than vehicles for the well-known personalities that formed them.

To what extent can these shortcomings in party development be attributed to poor electoral engineering? It is argued here that the electoral system had a significant but limited effect on the emerging party system in Russia. The electoral system and pre-election registration requirements greatly determined who would be allowed to participate in the elections and even influenced the success and failure of individual parties.

However, as will be shown, the electoral system had some consequences that run counter to some of the most hallowed propositions in the scholarly literature on the subject. It is argued that the common emphasis on the number of parties allowed by PR and plurality systems is misplaced in the Russian context. Neither system was particularly adept at controlling the large numbers of new electoral associations trying their hand in the founding elections. Rather, the crucial difference between PR and plurality systems lay in their permeability toward independent candidates. PR systems bolstered the status of political parties by keeping independent candidates off the ballot and forcing elites and voters alike to think in terms of party affiliation. By contrast, single-member, first-past-the-post contests undermined party development by allowing independent candidates onto the ballot easily. By allowing powerful local elites the option to run unattached, this system denied parties the preferential treatment they need to thrive in the initial years of electoral competition in post-communist states.

**Electoral Systems and Parties**

The electoral system is the most commonly cited instrument of political engineering affecting parties and party systems. The study of the impact of electoral systems on party systems has a long tradition and strong claims to universal generalizability regardless of geopolitical status, socio-economic development, or culture. This subfield has benefitted from the fact that its subject matter—votes and seats—are easily operationalized and measured and hence comparable across a wide variety of cases (Taagepera and Shugart, 1989). Moreover, there has developed a relatively strong scholarly consensus that the electoral system does have a significant effect on a country's party system. While scholars have modified Duverger's strongly-worded law and hypothesis which sparked the modern debate, few scholars have argued that the choice of electoral system has no effect on a country's party system.
Scholars have outlined several general features upon which to categorize electoral systems. These include the structures of the ballot, district magnitude, and allocation rules (Rae, 1971; Taagepera and Shugart, 1989). There are also other more specific elements of electoral laws such as voting thresholds and district apportionment which may also have important effects for party development.

The structure of the ballot concerns the mechanics of the vote itself, that is, the type of choice voters are given when deciding between electoral contestants. Two types of ballots have been observed: categoric and ordinal. Categoric ballots require voters to make an unequivocal decision for one candidate or party over all others. Ordinal ballots allow voters to make a more complex decision by allowing them to rank candidates or parties. Holding other factors constant, categoric ballots are expected to constrain the number of parties by concentrating each vote into a single mandate for a single contestant, while ordinal ballots are expected to diffuse the voters' mandates among a large number of parties (Rae, 1971; Taagepera and Shugart, 1989).

One factor not addressed in the comparative literature on ballot structure is the issue of nonpartisanship, which weighs heavily in the 1993 Russian parliamentary elections. However, the effect of nonpartisan ballots is discussed in the literature on state and municipal elections in the US where nonpartisan elections makeup close to two-thirds of the elections at this level (Cassel, 1986). Scholars of American nonpartisan elections have found that removal of party labels from the ballot largely succeeded in marginalizing party activity in municipal elections. Adrian found that after the adoption of the nonpartisan ballot party activity was almost always inconsequential in the election of candidates even in cases where parties continued to try to assume their traditional monopoly over elective office (Adrian, 1959). Moreover, the voting decision itself was found to be of a different character in nonpartisan elections. Without party labels to give then cues as to the policy positions of candidates, voters in nonpartisan elections tended to place more emphasis on personal characteristics of the candidate. Empirical research suggests that voters in nonpartisan elections tended to be more influenced by the assumed ethnicity of candidates' surnames and even the order in which candidates' names appeared. Whereas, such factors played little role in similar elections where partisan labels were included on the ballot (Cassel, 1986). Finally, the nonpartisan ballot may actually change the voters' perception of the value and role of partisan affiliation, cuing voters to disregard partisan affiliation of candidates even when it is generally known by the voting public. Adrian (1959) writes:

...the voting public views participation in partisan and nonpartisan elections as two different kinds of activity, each independent of the other; and the nonpartisan office-holder is normally expected by the voting public to keep any party activity on his part separate from his role in nonpartisan office.

It must be noted that not all national elections have included partisan descriptions of candidates. For example, ballots in Great Britain have only recently introduced candidate descriptions of any kind onto the ballot. However, British parties were well-established long before competitive elections with universal suffrage were held. British parties controlled the nomination process and the partisan affiliation of candidates was quite clear to all. Thus, mechanical constraints such as nonpartisan ballots are only effective when the role of parties as electoral agents
is vulnerable, such as local American politics and, as will be seen, contemporary Russian politics.

District magnitude (the number of legislative seats assigned to each electoral district) and allocation rules (plurality systems versus PR) should be considered together because they are so interconnected. Plurality allocation rules in which victory is achieved by winning more votes than any other contender in the district is almost always coupled with a low district magnitude ($M$), usually $M = 1$. Proportional representation, in which seats are distributed according to a contender's proportion of the vote, requires a district magnitude greater than one and better approximates its intended effect of proportionality between a party's share of legislative seats and its proportion of the popular vote as district magnitudes get larger. Consequently, scholars have found that district magnitude rather than allocation rule was the decisive element in an electoral system affecting the number of parties in a polity (Rae, 1971; Taagepera and Shugart, 1989).

Plurality systems with low district magnitudes (typically single-member districts) tend to constrain the number of parties and often lead to two-party systems. This is because single-member districts severely penalize parties that cannot obtain a plurality of the vote in any one district. Over time, supporters of weak parties will tire of 'wasting' their vote on a continual loser and tend to shift their support to a party more likely to win representation. Moreover, leaders of minor parties may be constrained from even running candidates because they have no hope of achieving the plurality necessary for representation (Duverger, 1954).

Conversely, multi-member districts and proportional representation tend to be correlated with multi-party democracies and coalition governments. This is because votes for smaller parties are not wasted as they are in single-member plurality districts. Instead of having to win pluralities in small districts, parties in PR systems are awarded seats according to their proportion of the popular vote in larger, multi-member districts. Again, district magnitude is a decisive factor in determining the proportionality of PR systems and the level of party proliferation. At low district magnitude levels ($M < 5$), even PR systems tend to favor larger parties at the expense of smaller ones to the extent that their legislative seat distributions more closely resemble the 'plurality' principle than anything proportional to the electoral distribution of the popular vote. At district magnitudes of five and above, the level of proportionality is more acceptable. However, for parties receiving more minuscule percentages of the popular vote (5 per cent and less), they can not hope for representation until district magnitudes reach 20 or more. Because of this, Taagepera and Shugart argue that electoral systems should be considered along a continuum of proportionality rather than as a dichotomy between plurality and PR systems (Taagepera and Shugart, 1989).

It should be noted that the link between electoral systems and the number of parties is not directly causal. Single-member plurality systems do not create two-party systems on their own and multi-member PR systems do not cause party proliferation. Rather, electoral systems are like filters which constrain and channel a country's pre-existing configuration of political forces. Plurality systems with low district magnitudes are powerful filters which tend to constrain political forces and force them to consolidate into larger electoral coalitions capable of winning pluralities in a large number of geographically dispersed electoral districts. As district magnitudes grow and PR systems are adopted the filter of the electoral system gets weaker and allows the configuration of a country's political forces to express itself
The Russian Electoral System: Combing Two Extremes

The 1993 Russian electoral system combined single-member plurality district races with a party-list PR system containing one nation-wide district magnitude of 225 seats; thus combining the two extremes along the plurality-PR continuum in one system (Taagepera and Shugart, 1989). Before the campaign even began, electoral blocs and individual candidates were required to collect signatures to appear on the ballot. Parties and electoral blocs wishing to field a party list in the national PR contest were required to collect 100,000 signatures. Moreover, these signatures had to come from a reasonably wide geographical distribution. Signatures had to come from different administrative districts with no more than 15 per cent of the signatures coming from any one district. Essentially, this meant that blocs had to collect signatures from at least seven administrative regions (Rossiiskie vesti, 12 October 1993).

Individual candidates for the single-member districts to the State Duma could get onto the ballot either by being nominated by an electoral bloc which met the signature requirement for the party list vote or by gathering signatures equal to 1 per cent of the number of registered voters in his or her electoral district, typically about 5000 signatures (Rossiiskie vesti, 12 October 1993). Candidates to the upper house could be nominated by a registered electoral bloc or gather signatures equal to 2 per cent of the registered voters in his or her administrative region but no less than 25,000. The elections to the upper house were dual-member plurality contests. The districts for these seats were based on the administrative regions of the Russian Federation (republics, krais, oblasts, autonomous oblasts and autonomous okrugs) much like the US Senate’s district are based on the 50 states. Each of the 89 administrative regions of the Russian Federation was granted two seats in the Federation Council (Ukaz Prezidenta, ‘O vyborakh v Sovet Federatsii. . . ’).

The 1993 electoral system used a categoric ballot forcing the voter to give his or her mandate to only one candidate or bloc. However, the Russian voter was given one additional choice not commonly found on ballots in the West. He or she could vote against all the candidates listed by marking the box ‘against all’ (protiv vsekh) at the bottom of the ballot. This is a holdover from the Soviet era when voters did not vote for candidates but rather crossed out the names of candidates they did not support. In that period, voters could vote against all the choices by just crossing out all of the names. In the end, while the number of votes against all candidates or blocs showed the frustration and confusion of the Russian voter, these were essentially wasted votes because they did not invalidate the election no matter how many voted that way.

Certain legal thresholds were also employed. In the party list PR contest, a legal threshold of 5 per cent of the national vote was established before any party list could gain representation. For single-member plurality races, a minimum of 25 per cent of an electoral district’s registered voters had to turnout. This threshold only invalidated races in six electoral districts. In one of these, in Chechnya, electoral sites were not open and the election was not held. In the five others in Tatarstan, the local elite called on the population to boycott the elections and the turnout
was well below the 25 per cent threshold. Two legal thresholds were required to validate the election to the upper house. At least three candidates had to contest the two seats up for election and 25 per cent of registered voters had to turnout for the elections.

The plurality races for both the lower and upper houses were contested on a nonpartisan ballot. The ballot listed a candidate’s name, year of birth, occupation, and residence but not his or her partisan affiliation or lack thereof. Information on a candidate’s partisan affiliation could be gained only from media coverage and a candidate’s personal campaign. Given the low level of voter knowledge and interest in this part of the campaign both sources failed to inform many voters about the partisan attachments of the individual candidates in these races.

The Russian electoral system combined PR and plurality systems as independent parts of the same system. This is different from the German system of ‘personalized PR’, which also combines elements of both plurality and PR systems in a two-tiered electoral system. However, in the German system, the results of the plurality and PR contests are interconnected. After the results of the single-member plurality contests are computed, parties are awarded the number of seats roughly proportional to their share of the national vote in the PR contest minus the number of seats they won in the plurality contests. In this way parties denied proportional representation in the plurality contests are compensated by the concurrently held PR race (Rae, 1971).

As in some other post-communist states such as Bulgaria, Russian electoral engineers provided for no such link between PR and plurality systems in the mixed system (see Nadais, 1992). Parties and blocs were awarded all of the seats they won in both races regardless of whether the distribution of seats to the State Duma coincided with the distribution of votes in either one of the electoral races. As will be seen, the results of the two elections were vastly different, not only in the degree of proportionality, but also in the relative success of individual parties.

The Impact of the Pre-election Registration Rules

Before the electoral campaign even began, the registration rules played a significant role in determining the number and type of parties that would participate in the elections. Certain types of parties were restricted from participation either through direct presidential decree or rules making it difficult for such parties to get on the ballot. The most virulent opposition groups, which were engaged in the violent attempts to overthrow the Yeltsin regime, were banned from participation by decree. On 4 October, Yeltsin suspended a number of opposition groups and publications, including the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, which later was allowed to participate in the elections (see Nezavisimaya gazeta, 7 October 1993). While this official censorship denied the opposition some of its most noteworthy leaders and publications, it did not exclude the irreconcilable opposition from competition. In fact, this action may have unintentionally helped to consolidate the nationalist opposition by ridding the field of competing blocs with a non-communist oppositionist orientation. The non-communist protest vote had few options other than Vladimir Zhirinonsky’s Liberal Democratic Party to express itslf.

Similarly, the requirement of the collection of 100,000 signatures for registration excluded a significant number of would-be electoral contenders. Upon announcement of this criterion for participation the potential field was instantly narrowed
from the almost endless myriad of small groups and cliques (Rossiiskaya gazeta, 14 October 1993 published a list of 92 social associations who could legally present candidates) to less than two dozen serious organizations that could feasibly put together a petition campaign. This group was further whittled down to 13 by the 100,000 signature threshold.

Another target of registration rules was ethnically based parties. Many of Russia’s ethnic minorities have their own administrative districts. Of 89 administrative subjects, the Russian Federation contains 32 ethnic-based administrative regions: 21 republics, 10 autonomous okrugs, and the Jewish Autonomous Oblast. However, the titular nationality does not necessarily make up a plurality of the population in its own republic or autonomous oblast. In fact, in some ethnic-based regions the titular nationality does not even make up the second largest group after Russians in the region. For example, in Bashkortostan, Russians constitute 39 per cent of the republic’s population, Tatars 28 per cent, and Bashkirs only 22 per cent. For the purposes of this study ‘ethnic-based region’ will refer to those 32 administrative districts named for a non-Russian ethnic group.

Such a federal arrangement has tended to politicize ethnicity. Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, many of Russia’s ethnic-based republics have declared their sovereignty and struggled to gain autonomy and even independence from Moscow. Chechnya and Tatarstan stand as the most extreme examples of this push for political and economic sovereignty. By requiring that no more than 15 per cent of a bloc’s valid signatures come from one region, registration rules greatly undermined the formation of ethnically based electoral blocs. As intended, no electoral bloc representing a particular nationality (e.g. Tatars, Bashkirs) nor any bloc representing the interests of ethnic-based areas as a whole was able to get on the party list ballot.

However, an unintended consequence of this move may have been the disengagement of ethnic-based regions from party politics. None of the registered parties and blocs was able to recruit a significant number of successful elites from these regions into the emerging party system. At the same time, ethnicity seemed to remain a salient factor in the election of representatives in ethnic-based areas. While only 16 of 178 winning candidates in Russian regions were non-Russian (9 per cent), 23 out of 40 winning candidates in ethnic-based regions were non-Russian (58 per cent). Concerning the latter, 19 of 23 non-Russians elected in ethnic-based regions were members of the titular nationality of the region from which they were elected (International Republical Institute, 1994).

Table 1 shows a comparison of the level of partisanship in Russian versus ethnic-based regions. In the plurality contest, ethnic-based regions were decidedly less partisan than Russian regions. The average proportion of partisan candidates running in an electoral district was significantly lower in ethnic-based regions. Electoral districts in ethnic-based regions averaged 27 per cent partisan candidates while districts in Russian regions averaged 50 per cent partisan candidates. There was also a marked difference in the success of partisan candidates running in ethnic-based regions. Only seven out of 40 winning candidates (17.5 per cent) from an ethnic-based region were partisan candidates; while 76 out of 178 winning candidates (42.7 per cent) in Russian regions had an official partisan affiliation. Finally, the complete absence of partisan activity in single-member districts was more common in ethnic-based than in Russian districts. Of 40 electoral districts from ethnic-based regions, eleven (27.5 per cent) were completely nonpartisan with no
TABLE 1. Partisan activity in Russian versus ethnic-based regions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of district</th>
<th>Average % of partisan candidates per district</th>
<th>% (No.) of totally non-partisan districts*</th>
<th>% (No.) of elected partisan candidates that had partisan affiliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic-based districts (N = 40)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27.5 (11)</td>
<td>17.5 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian districts (N = 178)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4.5 (8)</td>
<td>42.7 (76)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Rossiiskaya gazeta, 30 November 1993, pp. 4-5.
*Defined as districts with no partisan candidates.

candidates with a proclaimed party affiliation; compared to eight nonpartisan contests (4.5 per cent) out of 178 in Russian electoral districts.

Of course, citizens in ethnic-based regions were forced to make a choice among parties in the PR race. Table 2 compares the activity and success in ethnic-based regions of seven parties and blocs which overcame the national 5 per cent threshold for representation. Results in the PR race for ethnic-based regions reflected some of the general trends found in the rest of the country. Like Russian regions, Zhirinovsky's LDP won the greatest share of the PR vote in ethnic-based regions although at a somewhat lower percentage. However, ethnic-based regions tended to be more communist-oriented probably at the expense of Russia's Choice which performed more poorly in ethnic-based regions than in the rest of the country. The self-proclaimed 'party of the regions' Sergei Shakhrai's Party of Russian Unity and Accord (PRES) showed the greatest improvement in ethnic-based regions, almost doubling its proportion of the PR vote from 6.7 per cent for the country as a whole to 12.0 per cent for non-Russian regions.

As for the single-member plurality contests, no party was particularly successful in gaining representation in any part of Russia. However, parties and electoral blocs were virtually shut out of ethnic-based regions. Part of the problem was a lack of party penetration into ethnic-based regions. Most blocs contested almost twice the proportion of Russian districts than ethnic-based districts. PRES was the only electoral party to field candidates in both Russian and ethnic-based regions at comparable rates. However, PRES failed to gain a significant number of seats from this increased penetration into ethnic-based areas, winning only two seats. This may have been more a function of the general lack of success of PRES candidates in the single-member districts than a particular anti-partisan sentiment among the electorate in ethnic-based districts. The party won only two seats in Russian single-member districts.

It might be argued that the lack of partisan activity in ethnic-based regions arose from other factors besides ethnicity. Ethnic-based regions, particularly autonomous okruogs, tend to be sparsely populated, underdeveloped regions. Perhaps parties and electoral blocs simply ignored these areas because they lay on the country's political, social, and economic periphery. However, the rationality imposed by the electoral system would suggest otherwise. The system actually overrepresented the sparsely populated ethnic-based regions by awarding each subject of the federation at least one electoral district regardless of population, not to mention two seats in the upper house. Thirteen electoral districts had less than 200,000 registered voters. All of these were located in non-Russian autonomous oblasts and republics, with the smallest containing only 13,863 eligible voters. The average of eligible voters
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Average % of PR return in ethnic-based regions</th>
<th>Nation-wide % of PR return</th>
<th>% (No.) of ethnically-based districts with party's candidate</th>
<th>% (No.) of Russian districts with party's candidate</th>
<th>% (No.) of winning candidates in ethnic-based district from party</th>
<th>% (No.) of winning candidates in Russian district from party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Russia's Choice</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>17.5 (7)</td>
<td>56.4 (101)</td>
<td>7.5 (3)</td>
<td>14.5 (26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yabloko</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>20.0 (8)</td>
<td>44.7 (80)</td>
<td>0.0 (0)</td>
<td>3.9 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRES</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>30.0 (12)</td>
<td>31.8 (57)</td>
<td>5.0 (2)</td>
<td>1.1 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Party of Russia</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>15.0 (6)</td>
<td>30.2 (54)</td>
<td>0.0 (0)</td>
<td>1.1 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Democratic Party</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>7.5 (3)</td>
<td>31.8 (57)</td>
<td>0.0 (0)</td>
<td>2.8 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agrarian Party</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>17.5 (7)</td>
<td>35.2 (63)</td>
<td>5.0 (2)</td>
<td>8.9 (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communist Party</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>5.0 (2)</td>
<td>31.3 (56)</td>
<td>2.5 (1)</td>
<td>8.4 (15)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Rossiiskaya gazeta, 30 November 1993, pp. 4–5.
Russia: Election Observation Report, 12 December 1993,
(Washington, DC: International Republican Institute, January, 1994).
Biuleten' tsentral'noi komissii Rossiiskoi Federatsii, No. 1, 1994.
for each electoral district was 472,000 (Biuletyn, 1994). Thus, a party or bloc that was able to capture the electorate of an ethnic-based region would be overcompensated.

It is not suggested here that the existence of ethnically based parties would be beneficial for the development of a multiparty system in Russia. Often times ethnically based parties lead to polarization of political forces and even threaten the stability and territorial integrity of the state. This is why they are often restricted through electoral rules similar to those used in the 1993 Russian elections (see Horowitz, 1985). What is argued here is that the absence of ethnically based parties did not remove or in any way help alleviate the problem of ethnicity in Russian politics. None of the parties or blocs effectively coopted elites or electorates in ethnic-based regions. Thus, nationalist sentiment had to find expression in other ways such as the boycott of the December elections engineered by the Tatar leadership that invalidated the election in Tatarstan.

The Impact of the PR Party List Contest

The results of the 1993 elections were greatly influenced by the rules by which votes were translated into legislative seats. These rules not only influenced the number of parties that would comprise the emerging party system; they also influenced what type of parties would gain representation. Given the drastically different results between the PR and plurality contests, the choice of electoral system may even have had a hand in the success and failure of individual parties.

By combining plurality and PR contests for seats in its lower house, the Russian electoral system provides the unique opportunity to study the impact of these two types of electoral systems within the same political system at the same time. Therefore, first the PR and plurality contests will be examined separately. An analysis will be made on what type of party system each would have produced independently. Then the party system that emerged in the State Duma out of the mixed PR-plurality system will be analyzed.

Electoral studies have tended to focus on the impact electoral systems have on the number of parties allowed representation in the legislature. As noted above, PR systems are thought to be more permissive, allowing more proliferation of political parties, while plurality systems tend to constrain the number of parties. When examined separately, the PR and plurality contests of the 1993 Russian elections fail to support this basic assertion. As expected, the PR component of the system allowed the representation of a large number of electoral blocs. However, the single-member plurality contests did not work to constrain the number of parties any more than the PR system.

Table 3 shows the distribution of seats for parties in the PR party list race. As expected, the PR contest allowed a large number of parties to gain representation. Of the 13 electoral blocs on the ballot, eight blocs overcame the five per cent legal threshold required to win seats in the PR contest. The Laasko and Taagepera effective number of parties index was used to determine the number of parties produced by each electoral system. The Laasko and Taagepera effective number of parties index is designed to determine the number of parties in a party system taking into account each party's relative size. This index can be based on either the proportion of the electoral vote \(N_v\) or on the proportion of seats a party receives after these votes are translated into seats \(N_s\). By comparing the effective number of
TABLE 3. Results of PR Party-list contest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Electoral Bloc</th>
<th>% of Nation-wide PR vote</th>
<th>% (No.) of seats from PR contest*</th>
<th>Deviation between % of votes and % of seats (dev. as % of column 1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Russia’s Choice</strong></td>
<td>15.51</td>
<td>17.78 (40)</td>
<td>+2.27 (+14.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yabloko</strong></td>
<td>7.86</td>
<td>8.89 (20)</td>
<td>+1.03 (+13.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PRES</strong></td>
<td>6.73</td>
<td>8.00 (18)</td>
<td>+1.27 (+18.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Democratic Party of Russia</strong></td>
<td>5.52</td>
<td>6.22 (14)</td>
<td>+0.70 (+12.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agrarian Party</strong></td>
<td>7.99</td>
<td>9.33 (21)</td>
<td>+1.34 (+16.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communist Party</strong></td>
<td>12.40</td>
<td>14.22 (32)</td>
<td>+1.82 (+14.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Liberal Democratic Party</strong></td>
<td>22.92</td>
<td>26.22 (59)</td>
<td>+3.30 (+14.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Women of Russia</strong></td>
<td>8.13</td>
<td>9.33 (21)</td>
<td>+1.20 (+14.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>†Russian Mvt. for Democratic Reforms</strong></td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>-4.08 (-100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>†Civic Union</strong></td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>-1.93 (-100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>†Dignity and Charity</strong></td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>-0.70 (-100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>†Future of Russia</strong></td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>-1.25 (-100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>†KEDR ecology bloc</strong></td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>-0.76 (-100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*percentage in brackets refers to the seats won as a percentage of the total seats available in the PR contest (225).
†denotes bloc that did not gain enough seats to form legislative fraction.
(Washington DC: International Republican Institute, January, 1994).

The effective number of electoral parties \((N_e)\) with the effective number of parliamentary parties \((N_p)\) one can determine the effect of the electoral system on the number of parties (see Taagepera and Shugart, 1989). Both PR and plurality systems tend to constrain the number of parties and favor larger parties, the former to a much lesser extent than the latter. Taagepera and Shugart (1989) argue that electoral systems in general tend to reduce the effective number of parties by an average of about one half of a party \((N_e = N_p - 0.4)\).

The effective number of electoral parties for the PR part of the 1993 Russian elections was 7.58. In comparative perspective, 7.58 effective electoral parties is quite high. According to Taagepera and Shugart’s (1989) analysis of 48 countries in the 1980s only Ecuador (10.3) had a higher number of effective electoral parties. In comparison to post-communist competitive elections in Eastern Europe, 7.58 remains on the high end with only the 1992 Polish party system with 10.9 effective parties being more fractionalized (McGregor, 1993). This shows that not only did a large number of parties and blocs contest the election for this part of the electoral system, but that the vote was distributed in such a way that no one or two parties were clearly dominant. Therefore, despite the press coverage on the surprising showing of the LDP, the vote in the PR contest was rather evenly distributed.

The effective number of legislative parties for the PR portion of the vote was 6.40. Thus, the PR system constrained the number of parties gaining legislative representation by over one effective party. This suggests that the legal threshold of
five per cent did have its intended effect to some degree. However, closer examination of the vote distribution would suggest that the five per cent legal threshold was not high enough to encourage substantial pre-election coalition-building. Most serious parties figured they could overcome the barrier and only one, the Russian Movement for Democratic Reforms (RDDR), was mistaken. Indeed, the five per cent threshold only denied representation to the most marginal parties. The total share of the vote for the five parties denied representation because of the threshold totalled a mere 8.7 per cent of the total vote. Many blocs entered the race expecting little more than to overcome the five per cent barrier and secure election for their highest placed elites. This is in fact what most of the blocs managed to accomplish. Five out of eight blocs gained less than ten per cent of the vote. A higher threshold of ten per cent may have had a much stronger constraining influence on the party system. This would have denied representation to all but the three strongest parties (Russia’s Choice, LDP, and the Communists). Faced with a somewhat more formidable barrier, some of the smaller parties may have considered coalition more seriously.

The Impact of the Single-member First-past-the-post Contests

While the PR results showed an expected proliferation of parties, the impact of the plurality portion of the election was surprising in its inability to constrain the number of parties winning representation. Single-member first-past-the-post elections are supposed to encourage pre-electoral consolidation of like-minded political forces into larger parties. Small parties are presumably punished for their inability to win a significant number of pluralities in individual districts. Consequently, they do not win sufficient representation to sustain existence or do not even bother to run candidates. This did not occur in the 1993 Russian elections. Table 4 shows the distribution of seats among the 12 registered parties and three post-election legislative factions that had winning candidates in single-member districts. Only the ecological bloc, KEDR, did not manage to elect at least one of its candidates in the single-member district races. In the election, the plurality system actually allowed more parties and electoral blocs (12) to win at least one seat than the PR system with its five per cent threshold. This is not entirely surprising. Rae (1971) points out that plurality systems actually have a lower threshold for the entrance of new parties than PR systems because they only require that a party win a plurality in one district. This is fewer votes than a legal or effective threshold in PR systems which require a proportion of the national vote to achieve representation. If one included the parties that failed to meet registration requirements but managed to elect their leaders as independent candidates (for example, Irina Khakamada (Party of Economic Freedom), Nikolai Lysenko (National Republican Party), and Sergei Baburin (Russian All-Peoples Union) all won seats as independent candidates), the number of parties allowed representation would be even higher. Moreover, the plurality election also spawned an additional three legislative factions (besides the eight factions based on the electoral blocs which won representation in the PR contest) composed predominantly of representatives who had no partisanship affiliation during the election.

Some problems with the data and the very nature of the results from the single-member districts make it difficult to determine the effect of the plurality system on the number of parties in the emerging party system. First, no nation-wide vote totals
The proliferation of independents makes the effective number of parties very difficult to calculate. The fact that many of these deputies later joined a legislative faction of one of the electoral blocs further complicates the issue. The effective number of electoral parties \( N_e \) seems impossible to calculate with any certainty given the high number of independents. However, one can calculate the effective number of parliamentary parties \( N_p \) produced by the plurality contests if one treats legislative factions as parliamentary parties. This means stretching the term parliamentary party to include legislative factions which had no corresponding electoral party and counting independents which later joined a legislative faction as 'party

---

**Table 4. Results of single-member plurality districts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Electoral bloc or faction</th>
<th>No. elected under party label</th>
<th>No. of independents joining bloc or faction</th>
<th>No. joining from different blocs</th>
<th>Total joining leg. faction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Russia's Choice</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yabloko</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRES</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Party of Russia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women of Russia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agrarian Party</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communist Party</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Democratic Party</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian Mvt. for Dem. Reforms</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic Union</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future of Russia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dignity and Charity</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Regional Policy</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union of 12 December</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian Path</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 30 November 1993, pp. 4-5.  
*Russia: Election Observation Report, 12 December 1993*,  
(Washington DC: International Republican Institute, January, 1994).  

Note: The total joining a bloc's legislative fraction (column 4) does not always add up to columns 1-3 because of cross-party jumping. For example, the Communists lost three candidates originally elected under its party label to the Agrarian Party, New Regional Policy, and Russian Path. Likewise, Russia's Choice lost three candidates: two to the Union of 12 December and one to the Agrarian Party.
members'. Given the fact that all but four deputies from the single-member district races joined factions and that the literature provides no alternative for dealing with independents this step seems justified. Based on the legislative factions joined by candidates from single-member districts, the effective number of parliamentary parties emerging from the plurality portion of the electoral system was 5.79, which was only slightly lower than the effective number of legislative parties produced by the PR contest.4

What accounts for this failure of the plurality system and single-member districts to constrain the number of parties? Rae (1971) offered only one exception to Duverger's 'law' concerning the correlation of single-member plurality elections and two-party systems: 'Plurality formulae are always associated with two-party competition except where strong local minority parties exist.' This was not the case in Russia in 1993. The 'minority' parties that did receive representation were not parties with geographically concentrated support. The registration rules limiting the number of signatures from any one region of Russia made sure no such parties would compete in the 1993 elections.

The failure of the plurality portion of the 1993 Russian elections to constrain the number of parties suggests a more fundamental oversight in the literature on electoral systems. The quantitative studies upon which hypotheses concerning the number of parties allowed by plurality systems have been based have studied established democracies over an extended period of time. This is especially true when considering plurality systems because of the relatively low number of them. Lijphart (1994) did include 'new' democracies such as Costa Rica and India in his analysis which should have curbed this problem. However, both of these cases had established parties before the introduction of free elections, the Congress Party in India and National Liberation in Costa Rica. Thus, the consistent correlation between two-party systems and single-member plurality elections has been observed in systems which have pre-existing large parties and a series of elections.

What happens in founding elections when there are no large parties capable of seriously contesting each and every electoral district with a network of powerful local cadres? The 1993 Russian elections suggests that in such an atmosphere local notables unattached to any electoral bloc predominate. Russian parties and blocs were successful in single-member district races only when they could recruit already established notables to run under their label. However, Russian parties and blocs had very little to offer powerful local elites. Most (with the possible exception of Russia's Choice) lacked sufficient monetary and personnel resources to adequately support their own party list campaign much less individual candidates running in local districts. The most powerful local candidates already possessed more name recognition and logistical support from their local position in government, business, or social organizations than any electoral bloc could provide. Moreover, the post-communist era has been and continues to be marked by widespread anti-party sentiment. The general public distrusts parties and party candidates. Politicians beginning with Boris Yeltsin himself tend to shun partisan labels and attachments. Therefore, besides having little to offer the most influential candidates, party attachments were shunned as a liability. This can be seen in the high number of instances of candidates with previous party attachments who ran as independents only to join the same bloc in the legislature that they shunned during the campaign. Interestingly, this was most common in a conservative party, the Agrarian Party of Russia, which had 18 independents later join its faction.
Consequently, in most cases parties and electoral blocs were left recruiting the only candidates who could reasonably benefit from partisan affiliation: little known candidates with few resources. In some instances well-known local elites who had previous attachments to democratic movements or the Communist Party and agro-industrial complex (Agrarian Party) maintained those ties and ran as partisan candidates. (As mentioned earlier, others submerged those ties until after the election.) In other districts, the two government blocs, Russia’s Choice and to a lesser extent PRES, managed to take advantage of their position in the Yeltsin administration to recruit Yeltsin’s local appointees. However, by and large, parties’ and blocs’ individual candidates were the ‘outs’ rather than the ‘ins’ of the local power structure.

One can see the lower political influence of party candidates as compared to independent candidates by comparing the occupational status of winning candidates. Those who held positions in the local administrative apparatus had the greatest advantage in the election in terms of name recognition and patronage. Those in local legislative organs also held an advantage over non-state candidates but had less name recognition and had less control over state resources. Thus, it is not surprising that almost 20 per cent of winning candidates held a significant position in the local administration (oblast, city, or rayon head of administration, assistant head of administration, or head of administrative department). Whereas, only six per cent of winners came from local legislative bodies. The strongest candidates (from local administrations) tended to be more independent than weaker candidates (from local legislatures). Of the 21 winning candidates from administrative organs, 14 were independents while only seven had party affiliations. However, of the 12 winning candidates from local soviets, six were independents and six were partisan.

Moreover, the use of nonpartisan ballot played a significant role in undermining parties’ role in the nomination process in single-member districts. Where strong partisan feelings for one party or bloc were expressed in the party list race, for Zhirinovsky’s LDP for example, one might expect to find coat-tail effects in the single-member district races. However, the absence of partisan labels on the single-member district ballot made it quite difficult for voters to vote a straight ticket in both the PR party list race and the single-member plurality contest. Party candidates were essentially hidden except to the minority of voters politically active enough to know their local candidates’ partisan affiliation or campaign programs from the local press campaign coverage. In retrospect, given the surprising victory of Zhirinovsky’s LDP in the PR race, the nonpartisan ballot probably helped the reformers by hiding the identity of little known LDP candidates in districts where Zhirinovsky was extremely popular. At the same time the nonpartisan ballot hindered general party development on the local level.

Moreover, as Adrian argued in the case of American nonpartisan elections, the nonpartisan ballot may have influenced Russian voters’ perceptions of the appropriate representative from local single-member districts. The nonpartisan ballot may have discredited partisan candidates in favor of powerful independent candidates who were seen as less tied to the Moscow establishment and thus better able to defend the interests of the locality in Moscow. Surveys taken during the campaign support such an analysis. Respondents claimed to pay very little attention to partisan labels in making their choice in the single-member district races. Only 3.2 per cent of respondents said they used party affiliation as a basis for their vote for individual candidates; while ‘personal qualities’, ‘attention to needs of region’, and ‘policy program’ were each cited by 19 per cent of respondents (Colton, 1994).
Thus, instead of producing two large political parties and shutting out smaller parties, the single-member first-past-the-post races produced very opposite results. Because of a lack of strong pre-existing parties and anti-party sentiment, independents ruled the day and parties were able to elect only a handful of their best candidates. Incentives to consolidate like-minded political forces to avoid splitting the vote and allowing less popular foes to be elected were unheeded on both ends of the spectrum. Moreover, the nonpartisan ballot removed any chance for a significant amount of straight-ticket voting that would have benefitted parties that had a strong showing in the PR race. By failing to impose party formation on elites and the electorate as the PR party list system had done, the plurality system left the door open to continue the personalistic, anti-party politics that has characterized post-soviet Russian politics.

This is not to say that the consolidating effects of single-member plurality elections will not come into play over time. Duverger's law is premised on a psychological effect that is only manifested over a series of elections. Thus, these findings may be unique to a founding election in which the lessons and logic of electoral systems are not yet internalized by elites and voters. Comparative analysis of the number of parties contesting founding elections does suggest a decline in the effective number of parties with subsequent elections. However, the decline in the effective number of parties is relatively small (approximately 0.30) which suggests a 'fine-tuning rather than a major adjustment' (Turner, 1993).

Only future elections will tell whether the proliferation of independents in Russian single-member plurality elections will continue. Will incumbents who ran as independents in the founding elections be able to maintain this status in future elections? Or will they willingly adopt (or unwillingly be saddled with) a partisan label corresponding to the legislative faction they joined while in the legislature?

The Electoral System: Helping to Determine Who Won and Lost

The results of the 1993 Russian elections suggest that electoral rules actually may have helped to determine which parties won and lost. Different Russian electoral blocs and parties were dramatically more or less successful under different types of electoral systems. Figure 1 compares the number of seats won by the eight electoral blocs and three post-election legislative factions in the PR and plurality elections.

Those parties with a relatively strong cadre of local notables because of patronage systems (Russia's Choice) or a local organizational base (Communist and Agrarian Parties) were more successful in the plurality elections than those parties and blocs which lacked a local cadre. This was not so much an issue of local organization as one of elite recruitment. Travkin's Democratic Party of Russia (DPR) was relatively well-organized on the local level. However, its local cadre was made up of lesser known politicians who held less influential government positions in the local soviets rather than in the executive structures if they held state positions at all.

A system of only single-member plurality districts would have benefitted the three 'cadre' parties (Russia's Choice, Agrarians, and Communists) and perhaps PRES if it could have continued to attract a substantial number of moderate independents. More importantly, such a system would have enhanced even further the influence of independent candidates and their 'nonparty' legislative factions, further strengthening the anti-party trend underlying Russian politics.
On the other hand, the PR party list contest allowed parties and electoral blocs with little or no local organization or cadre base to gain representation. The three parties and blocs with a local cadre were by no means disadvantaged by their structure as their success in both electoral realms demonstrate. The PR system was more of an opportunity than a constraint. In this part of the election, a bloc having one charismatic leader with a knack (and the financial backing) to effectively use television could commandeer an election stacked against it as Zhirinovsky and his Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) powerfully demonstrated. However, another bloc, Women of Russia, showed that an attractive message of moderation, social welfare, and social reconciliation could also find success despite the absence of extensive resources, well-known leadership, or charismatic appeal. Undoubtedly, the LDP and Women of Russia would have had a very marginal impact on the election had it not been for the PR party list race.

Consequently, the different electoral systems had different effects on the ideological content of the State Duma. The PR contest accentuated the polarization of radical market reformers and communist and nationalist opposition with very little representation for centrist blocs. This radical reform/anti-reform polarization was also manifested in the three successful cadre parties in the single-member district contests—Russia's Choice, the Communists, and the Agrarian Party. However, if one looks at the independent candidates who formed the three post-election legislative factions, the largest faction, New Regional Policy (NRP), occupies the amorphous center while the two much smaller blocs occupy the extreme positions on each side of the political spectrum. This more closely resembles what most survey data suggest is the basic contours of Russian popular opinion. According to one massive survey, 48 per cent of respondents favor a gradual transition to the market, while only 14 per cent favor a quick market transition and 17 per cent are against market reform. Twenty-one per cent did not know how to respond (Hough, 1994).
Mixing PR and Plurality: a System that Multiplied Parties

One effect of the variegated success of different parties in the PR and plurality contests was that combining the two systems actually multiplied the final number of effective parties in the State Duma even further. The effective number of parliamentary parties of all 440 deputies elected to the State Duma who joined factions was 8.66, substantially higher than the PR score (6.40) and plurality score (5.79) when the two parts were examined separately.

How is it that the number of effective legislative parties in Russia's mixed system was greater than either of its parts taken separately? The answer lies in the differential success of the parties in the two parts of the election. As noted above, only Russia's Choice, the Agrarian Party, the Communists, and (to a lesser extent) PRES enjoyed significant success in both the PR and plurality portions of the election. The other parties tended to excel in one or the other electoral realms. When the two parts are combined this tended to expand the number of parties found in the State Duma.

In a strictly PR system, Russia's Choice, the Agrarian Party, and PRES would have been less influential; not to mention, the three post-election legislative factions which would not have been formed. In a strictly plurality system, Women of Russia, Zhirinovsky's LDP, the Democratic Party of Russia, and the Yavlinsky-Boldyrev-Lukin bloc (Yobloko) would have virtually dropped out.

By combining the two systems an expansion of the number of legislative parties occurred. Moreover, a more equitable distribution of the numbers of deputies in each legislative party was produced. Blocs which performed well in the PR race saw their percentage of seats in the State Duma diminish with the addition of the single-member district winners and vice versa.

Conclusions: the Power and Limits of Electoral Engineering

The experience of the 1993 Russian elections shows the power and limitations of electoral engineering upon the character of the country's emerging party system. The electoral system had important implications for the Russian party system. However, the effects of the electoral system were somewhat different than those commonly observed in the literature on electoral systems and diverged significantly from the intentions of those who crafted the system itself. Six general propositions arise from this study.

First, the registration rules for nomination greatly constrained the number of participants allowed to participate even before the official campaign began. The signature requirement whittled the number of registered electoral organizations down from 97 to 13. Furthermore, registration rules that limited the total number of signatures allowed from any one region removed ethnic-based and geographically-concentrated parties from competition. This not only removed the threat of potentially disintegrative forces from attaining a spot on the ballot, but also undermined the integration of elites and electorates from ethnic-based regions into the emerging party system.

Second, the introduction of a party list PR system imposed parties upon elites as well as the electorate. The addition of this electoral device was the single most important instrument facilitating the formation of parties and electoral blocs introduced in the 1993 elections. In addition to forcing the formation of parties and
blocs, the PR system lowered the start-up costs for electoral associations by allowing ambitious politicians to form electoral blocs without an extensive nation-wide organization. Political entrepreneurs such as Vladimir Zhirinovsky and Grigorii Yavlinsky could contest elections based on their personal appeal without a well-established grass-roots organization or network of local cadre capable of running competitively in local districts.

Third, the plurality proportion of the election was far less conducive to party development precisely because it required a national network of local notables capable winning nonpartisan local races. No party or bloc had the organizational capacity or cadre to be competitive in even half of the 225 single-member districts. This left the field open to local notables, who ran predominantly as independents because parties offered few tangible benefits and some costly burdens. The nonpartisan ballot further undermined party development in the plurality elections by hiding partisan candidates from an unaware public, thus hindering straight-ticket voting in PR and plurality contests.

Fourth, in terms of the number of parties, both the PR system and plurality system allowed for the proliferation of parties, blocs, and legislative factions but for different reasons. As expected, the PR system allowed for the entrance of many parties because of the oft-cited proportionality achieved under proportional allocation rules with large district magnitudes. In 1993, Russia's PR electoral district was as large as it could be—one nation-wide district—and thus achieved a high degree of proportionality. A five per cent legal threshold denied representation to only the most marginal parties with the possible exception of the reformist Russian Movement for Democratic Reforms (RDDR), which only narrowly failed to overcome the threshold.

On the other hand, the plurality system was expected to constrain the number of parties and promote a consolidation of political forces into large coalitions but failed to do so. The Russian party system had yet to establish large parties capable of reaping the benefits of the disproportionality of plurality systems. Consequently, there was a proliferation of independent candidates that dominated this part of the election. This suggests that at least in founding elections where parties are poorly developed, single-member first-past-the-post systems may actually open the door to the proliferation of independent candidates and thus perpetuate a system devoid of large electoral parties. More comparative study needs to be done on this question. A similar outcome occurred in the first post-communist elections in Ukraine in 1994. Ukraine used a single-member majority system with a second ballot run-off to fill all of its legislative seats. Approximately half of the winning candidates had no party affiliation in the electoral campaign but most independents later showed partisan sympathies after being elected (Arel and Wilson, 1994).

Fifth, the different portions of the electoral system (PR and plurality) awarded and penalized different types of parties and blocs. The plurality system favored independents and those blocs with more developed local cadres: the Agrarians (which was the only party to win more single-member seats than PR seats), Russia's Choice, and the Communists. On the other hand, the PR system allowed personalistic blocs (Yabloko, DPR, and Zhirinovsky's LDP) and one bloc geared to a narrow constituency (Women of Russia) to gain significant representation. Without the PR contest, these blocs would have had little or no impact on the elections.

Finally, because the two parts of the electoral system benefitted different parties, their combination into one system tended to multiply the number of effective parties in the State Duma. Taken alone both the PR and plurality portions of the
system produced approximately six effective legislative parties. However, together they produced almost nine effective parties in the new State Duma. The crucial difference between the Russian system and mixed plurality-proportional systems as found in Germany appears to be the lack of ties between the two parts of the system (Rae, 1971).

The electoral system had a major impact on Russia's emerging party system. However, it will take time to determine to what extent electoral rules influenced the internal organization of parties. During the campaign, electoral rules had little impact on the internal cohesion of Russia's emerging parties. Russian politics remained personalistic, which continued to undermine the organizational development of political parties and the institutionalization of parties beyond the fate of their leaders. Parties and blocs remained fragile organizations filled with internal dissension, personality clashes, and ideological battles.

The PR party list contest should have given party leaders great influence over rank-and-file members and a powerful weapon to enforce party loyalty and discipline over those elected to the State Duma on party lists. Independents joining factions after the election may feel greater freedom to defy their faction's political line. Future research could investigate how the electoral rules continued to shape the development of parties as they make the transition from the electoral to the governing realm.

Notes

1. Russian regions are defined as all oblasts, krais, and the cities of Moscow and St. Petersburg. According to this definition, out of the 89 subjects of the federation there are 57 Russian regions with 178 single-member electoral districts and 32 ethnic-based regions with 40 single-member electoral districts.

2. The Women of Russia bloc was omitted because it had very few candidates running in single-member districts and no candidates running in districts in ethnic-based regions.

3. The total vote for the 13 electoral blocs was less than 100 per cent (95.78 per cent), probably on account of the 'against all' vote. To account for this, I revised each bloc's vote percentage by dividing it by 0.9578. The rest of the computation was carried out according to Laasko and Taagepera's formula, \(1/\sum P^2\), where \(P\) equals the revised vote percentage of each bloc.

4. Six seats were left unfilled in December and four independents remained unaffiliated. To account for this, the percentage of seats for each legislative faction was computed by dividing each faction's number of seats by 215 rather than 225 (the total number of seats to be filled in single-member districts). The effective number of parties index was then computed according to the formula outlined in note 3.

5. Occupational status and partisan affiliation of candidates were published in Rossiiskaya gazeta, 30 November 1993, pp. 4–5.

6. These figures are based on the faction affiliation of legislators as of February 1994. As already noted most factions contained members who ran as independents and only joined after the elections. A list of legislators and their faction affiliation was published in Aleksandr Sobianin, Eduard Gelman, and Oleg Kayunov, 'Golosovaniya deputatov Gosudarstvennoi Dumy, 11 yanvarya-11 fevralya 1994 goda,' (Moscow: Informatsionno-analiticheskaya gruppa, 1994).

References


The Case of the 1993 Russian Parliamentary Elections