

Victims of a Managed Democracy? Explaining the Electoral Decline of the Yabloko Party

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Abstract: Although the declining fortunes of Russia's social-liberal party, Yabloko, can partially be explained by its own failings in key areas, ultimately the marginalization of programmatic opposition, the problems of media access, and the huge imbalance in resources available to political parties (all features of "managed democracy") have played the determining factor in the party's electoral decline.

Keywords: elections, managed democracy, opposition, political parties, Russian politics, Yabloko

Imagine a football game. It requires goals, a ball, and a field. Now it is as if we have neither goals nor a field, nor a ball—only a signboard declaring the score. As soon as you enter the stadium you can see who has won, and the score. Taking part in such a procedure is impossible.¹

Introduction

For scholars of political parties in postcommunist Russia, the December 2003 State Duma election was noteworthy for a number of reasons. First, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF) suffered a massive decline in support, losing half of its electorate. Second, the pro-presidential United Russia (YeR) party gained over one-third of the vote to become the largest faction in the State Duma and was joined in parliament by the Kremlin-created Motherland (Rodina) bloc. Third, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR), outwardly fond of nationalist rhetoric but nevertheless supportive of the regime, more than doubled the size of its Duma faction. For the liberal parties, the electoral outcome was catastrophic. The collapse in the liberal-reformist vote and the consequent failure of Yabloko and the Union of Right Forces (SPS) to pass the

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5 percent threshold was seen as the end of an era in Russian party politics. The “historic mission” of the liberal parties in Russia was now over, proclaimed Putin’s deputy chief of staff, Vladislav Surkov.²

Yabloko’s failure in the 2003 Duma election did not reflect a sudden rejection of the party’s social-liberal agenda by the Russian electorate. The party’s share of the vote had been in constant decline since the first post-Soviet parliamentary election in 1993.³ Nevertheless, despite its relatively low level of support over ten years, Yabloko is a well-established political party. The party’s leader, Grigory Yavlinsky, who worked with both Gorbachev and Yeltsin and stood for the presidency in 1996 and 2000, enjoys a high profile both in Russia and the West. As an overtly democratic, liberal reformist party with a strong pro-Western orientation, the fact that Yabloko has become a marginal force in Russian politics should be of concern to those in Russia and the West who are interested both in the establishment of democratic norms and the relative strength of political forces promoting democratic and market reforms in Russia.

The lack of an effective opposition in Russia after 2003 has serious implications for democratic development. In his seminal work on opposition, Dahl describes the system of managing political conflicts in a society by allowing opposition parties to compete with governing parties as “one of the greatest and most unexpected social discoveries that man has ever stumbled onto.” The normative relevance of opposition parties is clear for Dahl, who sees their existence as “very nearly the most distinctive characteristic of democracy itself” and their absence as “evidence, if not conclusive proof, for the absence of democracy.”⁴ Without effective opposition parties there can be no real prospect for the alternation of power, a key requirement of a functioning democracy. The reality in Russia, however, is that opposition parties have increasingly found themselves frozen out of the political process, starved of access to the media, and competing against pro-presidential parties able to tap into massive administrative resources.

Two common factors united the three parties that fared the worst in 2003. Each can be broadly seen as being in opposition to Putin’s regime and each can be characterized as “programmatic” parties.⁵ The electoral decline of such parties and the dominance of de-ideologized “catchall” parties whose agendas do not go far beyond providing support for the president have been key features of party politics in Russia since 1999.

Although this article uses the framework of “managed democracy” to explain the electoral decline of the Yabloko party, other important factors have contributed to its downward trend as well. The failure to form cohesive coalitions with like-minded forces, organizational failings, the inability to mobilize its core electorate and expand its limited social base, and an ill-conceived electoral strategy have all contributed to Yabloko’s inexorable decline.⁶

The failure of liberal parties to create a unified democratic reformist coalition has been a persistent feature of postcommunist politics in Russia.⁷ Despite dwindling levels of support, Yabloko has consistently resisted calls for unification from its economic-liberal rivals, leading to accusations that it has hindered the development of consolidated liberal opposition to the regime. After the electoral failure of both Yabloko and SPS in the 2003 parliamentary elections, the inability of the two parties to unite was seen as a major tactical error.⁸ Yabloko’s own organizational deficiencies, most notably its elitist approach to recruitment, held back the development of a strong membership base capable of mounting effective electoral campaigns, particularly outside Moscow and St. Petersburg, its traditional heartlands.⁹ Although there is an intuitive appeal in an argument attributing

Yabloko's declining share of the vote to a lack of support for democratic and liberal values in Russia, the party is guilty of taking its admittedly limited electorate for granted. In 2002 Deputy Chairman Sergei Ivanenko stated that Yabloko "will always have its electorate, which makes up seven to ten percent," a statement that rang hollow after electoral defeat in 2003.¹⁰ Finally, Yabloko's campaign strategy has contributed to declining support. In 1995 a combination of elitist campaign literature and an uninspiring, if not obtuse, media campaign failed to inspire the voters. Four years later a confused and incoherent position on Chechnya (opposing renewed military intervention while calling for increased security measures) managed to alienate both core Yabloko supporters and the wider electorate.¹¹

However, while accepting that a range of endogenous factors have contributed to Yabloko's decline, this article argues that, ultimately, exogenous factors (the marginalization of issues-based opposition parties, the mobilization of vast administrative resources to support pro-presidential parties, and unequal access to media resources) have drastically reduced its ability to campaign effectively and have, therefore, had a major impact on the party's electoral outcomes.

Managed Democracy in Russia

By the mid-1990s, the suggestion that former authoritarian countries were simply at particular stages of the "democracy continuum" and that, given time, they would reach the endgoal of "fully developed" liberal democracy, became tenuous. It became apparent that some countries might, in fact, become "hybrid regimes" containing elements of both democratic and authoritarian systems. An ever-increasing range of qualified democratic models designed to provide a better understanding of such regimes is now on offer. Since 2000, the most commonly used form of "adjectival democracy" in the Russian context has become the "managed" variant. The term has become inextricably associated with the Putin regime and commentators and analysts have used it frequently—although with little attempt to define it precisely. Is this concept useful in bettering our understanding of the Russian polity or is it simply a case of "definitional gerrymandering"?¹²

A managed democracy can be seen as one that contains all the formal trappings of a democracy—a parliament, judiciary, party system, regular elections, an independent media, the rule of law, civil society—but where such institutions may be constrained, regulated, or adjusted by a central authority. Elections are held regularly in Russia, a diverse set of political parties has competed each time, and observers generally agree that results have reflected popular preferences. A diverse set of political parties has competed in elections. However, although elections in Russia can be considered free, they have not necessarily been fair. Even without overt coercion or pressure on parties or voters, the capacity to mobilize administrative resources has given pro-presidential parties an enormous advantage and, in doing so, has marginalized opposition parties such as Yabloko.

As with other adjectival variants, the concept of managed democracy is inherently teleological, the implication of managed democracy being that it can be managed into a "more democratic" variant of democracy.¹³ Indeed, Sergei Markov, a political analyst close to the Kremlin and widely credited as one of the architects of managed democracy in Russia, argues that the concept is not an ideal but "a natural stage in the development of Russia from Soviet dictatorship to normal democracy."¹⁴ Markov's view of managed democracy as a necessary step on the road to consolidated democracy is not shared by others who use the concept. A more typical interpretation is that of Timothy Colton and

Michael McFaul, who see Putin's regime as one reconciled to a limited diversity of opinion but nevertheless determined to contain such diversity within the boundaries fixed by the regime.¹⁵ Yavlinsky views managed democracy as "an administrative-bureaucratic system in which emasculated democratic institutions and procedures, reduced to an empty formality, serve as some kind of fig leaf." Russian democracy, argues Yavlinsky, is a "Potemkin village whose façade merely looks European."¹⁶

Yavlinsky is not the only critic of managed democracy. Richard Sakwa, for instance, warns against conflating process and outcomes. In terms of process, Putin's regime has sponsored changes to the party system and electoral legislation, but while this can be seen as evidence of managed democracy, it can also be interpreted as an attempt to improve the competitive nature of Russian politics. As for outcomes, Sakwa argues, it is an exaggeration to suggest that electoral outcomes are entirely "managed." In fighting to get its candidates elected in regional and other elections, Putin's regime is doing no more than what democratic leaders have traditionally done.¹⁷ Although the latter is certainly true, the regime uses massive administrative resources not at the disposal of most democratic leaders to ensure its favorites are successful.

As a concept, managed democracy is therefore not entirely unproblematic. It makes implicit teleological assumptions and, although it can be viewed as a positive development (for instance, in Markov's understanding of the concept), it has largely been used as a catchall term to describe what is perceived by many as a tendency toward authoritarianism under Putin. Despite these problems, it provides a useful framework for an analysis of Yabloko's increasing marginalization in successive election campaigns.

Managed Democracy and the Marginalization of Yabloko

Although major imbalances between the parties in campaign funding and access to the media marked the parliamentary campaigns of 1993 and 1995, Yabloko was nevertheless able to campaign in the manner it felt was appropriate. Since the 1996 presidential election, however, Yabloko and Yavlinsky have either come under attack from a hostile media or have been ignored altogether, finding themselves increasingly marginalized in campaigns dominated by competition between bigger players. Although this article focuses on Yabloko's electoral decline, it would be irrational to ignore Yavlinsky's presidential campaigns of 1996 and 2000, as its leader has faced the same problems as his party has in parliamentary campaigns.

Presidential Election 1996: Post-Soviet Russia's First "Managed" Campaign?

The polarization of the electorate determined the outcome of the 1996 presidential election. The campaigns became a referendum on reform in which the incumbent, Yeltsin, was able to successfully impose on the electorate a binary choice: either a return to communism or the continuation of reforms.¹⁸ Yeltsin's strategy involved running as the candidate of reform rather than as a communist or nationalist, marginalizing other reformist competitors, and convincing voters that the costs of changing the status quo were far greater than the known costs of maintaining the current course.¹⁹ Crucial to the success of Yeltsin's strategy was that he would be perceived as the only reformist candidate capable of defeating the Communist candidate, Gennady Zyuganov. The polarized electorate that returned Yeltsin to the presidency in June 1996. This involved marginalizing of Yavlinsky's candidacy, leaving the Yabloko leader's team powerless to effectively get his message across to a mass audience.

Yeltsin controlled the airwaves. The three nationwide television channels, ORT, RTR, and NTV gave the incumbent 53 percent of the prime-time television coverage between May 6 and July 3. This was three times the amount allocated to Zyuganov and nine times that of Yavlinsky.²⁰ Although Yabloko had enjoyed a good relationship with NTV (part of the business empire of Vladimir Gusinsky, then a major financial backer of the party), relations cooled as soon as the campaign began.²¹ Pressure was clearly put on journalists and editors to give positive coverage to Yeltsin and to ignore or attack his opponents, and the media was acting out of a sense of self-preservation. They were not only concerned that freedom of the press would be eroded under a Communist administration but that the material advances made by many in the media would be lost if Zyuganov was successful.²² The two main protagonists were the only candidates not effectively squeezed out of the public eye. When the high profile figures of Sergei Kovalev, Yelena Bonner, Ella Pamfilova, and Yuri Afanasev held a press conference to launch a committee in support of Yavlinsky's candidacy, the event was completely ignored by the television news on the three national stations.

Once Yeltsin's own campaign began to gain momentum it became clear that no single candidate would be able to successfully challenge him or Zyuganov. It was under these circumstances that the idea of a "Third Force" materialized. Had the idea become reality, Yavlinsky would have contested the presidential election as part of a coalition with General Aleksandr Lebed and Svyatoslav Fedorov.²³ Although it briefly appeared that an alternative coalition could challenge the two main contenders and provide Yavlinsky with a vehicle for achieving his aspirations, the creation of an alliance was dependent on the ability of the three to surmount the personal and ideological differences that separated them. In early May Lebed announced he would be standing on his own and it was clear that the Third Force would never become reality. For Yavlinsky, the failed talks were seen as evidence of his reputation as a politician unable and unwilling to compromise.²⁴

Although the inability of the three to agree on a common platform undermined the project from the start, the manipulative tactics of Yeltsin's campaign team were the real catalysts for the collapse of the nascent alliance. Yeltsin held talks with both Yavlinsky and Lebed in May in an attempt to forge an alliance with one or the other, offering both men positions in a future Yeltsin administration in return for support in the second round of the election.²⁵ The idea of an alliance with Yeltsin replaced the concept of a Third Force as an alternative to the regime. It was vital for Yeltsin to form an alliance with either Lebed or Yavlinsky. The deal was easier to achieve with Lebed, who privately agreed to support the president in the second round in return for the post of secretary of the security council in Yeltsin's new administration. Yavlinsky, on the other hand, had made too many public demands of Yeltsin.²⁶

The 1996 presidential elections can be seen as postcommunist Russia's first overtly "managed" campaign. Anatoly Chubais, head of Yeltsin's campaign team, outlined a brilliantly planned and executed strategy aimed at polarizing the electorate, freezing out reformist candidates, and manipulating two serious competitors, Yavlinsky and Lebed.²⁷ Yavlinsky's dwindling poll ratings reflected his marginalization. Yeltsin's ratings rose from 8 percent in January to 36 percent in June 1996 while Yavlinsky's declined from 14 percent to 8 percent over the same time.²⁸

Parliamentary Election 1999: Frozen out in the Succession Struggle

If the 1996 presidential campaign centered on the choice between continued reform or a return to communism, the 1999 parliamentary campaign was very much concerned with the question of who would replace Yeltsin in 2000. In essence, the 1999 Duma election acted as a primary for Putin's presidential campaign in which Yabloko became the victim of a struggle between Unity and Fatherland-All Russia (OVR). The Kremlin-backed campaign against OVR may well have been designed to cripple the presidential pretensions of Primakov and Luzhkov, but the concomitant marginalization of Yabloko was damaging both to it and its leader's presidential aspirations.

Although previous election campaigns had not been issues based, this trend was even more evident as the parliamentary election became a struggle for succession—which marginalized those parties choosing to campaign on issues.²⁹ Instead of a campaign in which parties debated the serious issues facing the country, the 1999 campaign was largely fought between powerful elite coalitions of politicians, regional leaders, and oligarchs representing the two putative “parties of power”: Unity and OVR. The marginalization of programmatic parties was bound to affect Yabloko more than the Communists. Whereas the KPRF had never received much favorable media coverage in the past, and relied on their organizational network to mobilize voters, Yabloko depended on the media to a far greater extent to broadcast its message.

Media coverage of the election in 1999 was clearly biased.³⁰ Although media bias played a role in the previous elections, in 1999 it reached new levels, being marked by “techniques of media manipulation and the merciless denigration of opponents.”³¹ A report by the European Institute for the Media (EIM) found that impartiality was a larger problem in 1999 than in 1995. It stated that bias was especially visible in news programs on the two state channels, ORT and RTR, and that coverage was especially biased against the Fatherland-All Russia alliance and heavily in favor of the pro-government Unity party.³² Yavlinsky later attributed his party's campaign results to the imbalance in media coverage. Unlike Unity and SPS, Yabloko had not been accorded any air time on the state-run ORT and RTR television channels. “How can we compete,” asked Yavlinsky, “if one of the goals on a football pitch is one meter long, while the other is ten kilometers long?”³³ Similarly, Deputy Party Speaker Vladimir Lukin described the campaign as “unprecedented in terms of the impudent manipulation of public opinion,” adding that “all the efforts of the state institutions were targeted at boosting the results for the pro-government parties.”³⁴ There is little evidence, however, of a concerted, Kremlin-backed media campaign against Yabloko. Instead, the pro-government media concentrated its efforts on the denigration of OVR and its leaders, and the promotion of Unity and, to a lesser extent, SPS. The few elements of the media not sympathetic to the Kremlin, notably the NTV television channel, found themselves supporting Fatherland-All Russia by default. At the start of the campaign, Gusinsky's Media-Most corporation pledged its support for both Yabloko and Fatherland-All Russia. Yabloko, therefore, expected positive coverage from Gusinsky's NTV, which also supported it in 1995. It did provide Yabloko with advice on public relations and assisted in the production of campaign videos and advertisements,³⁵ but as the campaign progressed, Yabloko was effectively squeezed out. NTV increased its support for Fatherland-All Russia as a response, the channel claimed, to the bias favoring Unity on ORT and RTR.³⁶ The result of this media polarization was that Yabloko was frozen out of the campaign. As a member of Yabloko's press service remarked, “This was the most

effective way to damage the party—to say nothing at all, neither good nor bad. It was as though we simply did not exist.”³⁷

Presidential Election 2000: Yavlinsky’s Last Throw of the Dice?

For much of the 2000 presidential campaign, Yavlinsky received more media coverage than had been afforded Yabloko four months earlier. This was especially true of coverage on state-owned television.³⁸ Whereas in 1996 Yavlinsky had been squeezed out of the media spotlight in the battle between Yeltsin and Zyuganov, in 2000, with the outcome a foregone conclusion, and with the clear favorite not actively campaigning, Yavlinsky was presented with more media opportunities.

However, if Yavlinsky initially enjoyed a comfortable relationship with the state-owned media during the 2000 campaign, then this changed drastically in the final week of the campaign. ORT refused to broadcast Yavlinsky’s campaign video on the grounds that its content was “unreasonable.”³⁹ In the final days of the campaign, ORT launched an unprecedented attack on Yavlinsky, accusing him of having spent about ten times as much money on his campaign as was officially allowed. The television station alleged that German foundations supported Yavlinsky and that a gay organization pledged its support. The RTR channel added to the sudden outbreak of Yavlinsky-baiting by quoting a report that the Yabloko leader had undergone plastic surgery.⁴⁰ A member of Yavlinsky’s campaign staff saw the motivation for this unexpected attack so late in the campaign as evidence that Putin was concerned by Yavlinsky’s challenge: “The leader of our party is threatening Putin’s plans for a clear victory in the first round and even threatens Zyuganov in the second round. The anxiety of the Kremlin and the mass media it controls testifies to the huge growth of support for Yavlinsky, recorded by pollsters. How else could such counter-propaganda be explained?”⁴¹

Although opinion polls had shown a slight increase in Yavlinsky’s rating throughout the campaign, the groundswell of support suggested by the Yabloko spokesperson had not taken place.⁴² Yavlinsky’s campaign manager, Sergei Mitrokhin, suggested that ORT’s attack was part of a larger anti-Yavlinsky trend in the final week of the campaign. He cited an attack on the offices of Yavlinsky’s campaign team in the Moscow region town of Noginsk and the setting up of an organization calling itself the Yabloko Youth Union, which declared its support for fellow candidate Konstantin Titov.⁴³ These appear, however, to have been isolated incidents, and talk of a wider anti-Yavlinsky campaign, outside the media, is difficult to substantiate. A more plausible explanation of ORT’s actions relates to the fact that the station’s broadcasting license was due for review by government officials in May 2000. ORT’s top executives and journalists, knowing that Putin would effectively be their new master, may therefore have had an incentive to show their loyalty by helping Putin win the election outright in the first round.⁴⁴ The attacks on Yavlinsky therefore were the result of an overzealous media out to curry favor with the new president. Nevertheless, regardless of who was doing the manipulating, the outcome, once again, was the marginalization of Yavlinsky’s candidacy.

Parliamentary Election 2003: Campaigning in the Shadow of the Yukos Affair

The 1996 presidential and the 1999 parliamentary campaigns are the two key elections in postcommunist Russia. The former determined definitively the issue of “reform or communism,” the latter Yeltsin’s succession. By 2003, with both of these issues resolved

and Putin in a position of dominance, there was no single formative issue. With Yabloko hovering around the five percent mark in opinion polls throughout 2003 and posing little threat to the established order, it was unlikely that the party would either attract the interests of the Kremlin or face the same problems of marginalization that beset its campaign in 1999. Nevertheless, arguments and counterarguments have been made suggesting that the Kremlin aimed to manipulate the party's performance in the elections.

Following the parliamentary campaign of 1999, Yabloko found itself in a financial crisis. The 1999 campaign drained Yabloko's resources and Vladimir Gusinsky's arrest in June 2000 on embezzlement charges and the subsequent break up of the Media-Most empire severely curtailed opportunities to replenish its coffers.⁴⁵ Yabloko not only came to miss Gusinsky's financial contributions, but also the favorable coverage from and regular access to NTV. Both developments impacted Yabloko's campaign in 2003.

In seeking the financial backing necessary to fill the void left by Gusinsky's departure from politics, Mikhail Khodorkovsky's Yukos Corporation seemed to fit the bill.⁴⁶ In April 2003 Khodorkovsky publicly stated that he intended to finance the electoral campaigns of both Yabloko and SPS out of his own pocket. Initially, Khodorkovsky's funding appeared to be unproblematic. Aleksandr Veshnyakov, Chairman of the Central Electoral Commission (TsIK), greeted Khodorkovsky's initiative as the heralding of a new era of transparency in party funding, proving that "civilized rules of funding are beginning to be adopted."⁴⁷

If the revival of actions in Chechnya colored the 1999 Duma elections, then the Yukos affair hung over the 2003 campaign like a cloud. The July 2003 arrest of Platon Lebedev, the head of Yukos' parent company, Group Menatep, and the detention of Khodorkovsky in October (both on charges of fraud and tax evasion dating back to the privatization period of the early 1990s), provided the backdrop for campaigning. The wave of anti-oligarch sentiment that accompanied the gradual unraveling of the saga was skillfully exploited, if not actually fuelled, by political parties, notably YeR, the LDPR, and the new Motherland (Rodina) bloc. At the same time, Yabloko, SPS, and KPRF were in the difficult situation of either assuming an ambiguous position on the affair or risking the loss of popular support by criticizing the actions being taken against Khodorkovsky's business empire. As with the action against Media-Most, Yabloko once again stood to lose financial support, this time at a crucial point in the election run-up. Unlike the fallout from the dismantling of Gusinsky's operations—when it at least had the opportunity to build political capital from the NTV takeover—there were no such opportunities in the Yukos case. The actions against the corporation's senior executives proved singularly popular with the electorate. Yabloko was certainly in danger of being damaged through its association with Yukos. Not only was Yabloko reliant on Yukos funding but, for the first time, it included three business people—all from Yukos but none a party member—on the party list.⁴⁸

Although the Yukos affair proved politically damaging to the party, more damaging in a practical sense was Khodorkovsky's arrest, and with it the end of Yukos funding. The loss of over half of its funding, coupled with the appropriation of campaign material in a raid on the party's main PR company, the Agency for Strategic Communications (ASK),⁴⁹ was a calamitous start to the 2003 election campaign.⁵⁰ Yabloko found itself running a campaign tainted by its association with Yukos but without the financial support the association should have brought.

Any attempt to identify the Putin regime's role in Yabloko's 2003 campaign leads to the realms of Kremlinology, a minefield of unsubstantiated reports, rumors, and half-rumors.

Although some analyses suggest the Kremlin acted to disrupt Yabloko's campaign, other analysts believe Putin offered encouragement to the party and hoped to see it reenter the Duma. Sergei Kolmakov, of the Foundation for the Development of Parliamentarism in Russia, suggests that the silovik segment of the presidential administration was behind black PR campaigns directed against Yabloko, the aim being to engineer an even greater rift between Yabloko and SPS and seriously damage both parties' prospects of passing the five percent threshold.⁵¹ Kolmakov further argues that the raid on the ASK offices was another attempt to damage Yabloko's electoral prospects following opinion polls in October that showed an increase in its rating. Finally, according to Kolmakov's analysis, the Kremlin changed its tune in the latter stages of the campaign, deciding that including Yabloko in the Duma would both help improve Russia's image abroad and give greater flexibility in policymaking.⁵² Other accounts suggest that Putin "went out of his way" to help Yabloko, offering it extra television coverage in the latter stages of the campaign.⁵³ One report suggested that the Kremlin was deliberating as to whether to "pad out" the Yabloko vote as late as election night itself.⁵⁴

If all such reports are to be believed, then the picture that emerges is one more of mis-managed rather than managed democracy, implying that either the Kremlin had no clear strategy for dealing with the liberal parties or that different groups within the presidential administration took opposing views as to whether Yabloko should have a future in the Duma. These conflicting reports, by their very unverifiable nature, remain the subject of conjecture. Whether Putin personally attempted to give Yabloko's campaign a boost, or if the siloviki were working behind the scenes to discredit it, will remain unknown. However, there is little reason why the administration would actively seek to prevent the Yabloko faction from returning to the Duma. Given its poll ratings, a Yabloko faction in the fourth Duma was never likely to be greater than it had been in the third, and therefore would have lacked the ability to block legislation. A Yabloko faction would, in any case, have continued to support the government on many key issues. The continued presence of Yabloko in the Duma would also have allowed Putin to show that, despite criticisms to the contrary, opposition forces were tolerated and still had their place in Russian politics, especially useful for the president on the international stage. Instead, some in the West saw the failure of Yabloko and SPS to gain reelection as nothing less than a "disaster for democracy" in Russia.⁵⁵

The use of administrative resources by the state apparatus on behalf of YeR in 2003, however, cannot be doubted. The report by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODHIR) on the 2003 elections stated that United Russia enjoyed a distinct advantage because of "verified instances of the use of administrative resources" and singled out the blurring of the distinction between YeR and the executive administration as being of particular concern, suggesting that this had distorted the electoral process and jeopardized the integrity of the democratic election system. The active participation of local administrations in support of YeR gave it more advantages. The OSCE/ODHIR report found that in many cases, YeR candidates' campaign headquarters were often located within a state or government administrative office.⁵⁶ The report also observed that in some cases candidates were prevented from gaining access to suitable space for rallies and meetings and denied equal opportunities to hold campaign meetings for public employees. There were further reports of voters coming under pressure to vote for a particular candidate.⁵⁷ In St. Petersburg,

Yabloko and SPS complained that they had both faced “serious administrative pressure” during the campaign. Yabloko’s Anatoly Golov referred to the problems of distributing campaign material: “We are not able to place [campaign materials] in any organization with budgetary financing. They have orders from authorities not to accept advertisements except from candidates running with the United Russia party.”⁵⁸

Golov further claimed that school directors had signed a document issued by the district education ministry obliging them to accept campaigning information only for YeR candidates.⁵⁹

Prevented from effectively campaigning because of terminated funding, office raids, and lack of significant media coverage, Yabloko was effectively frozen out of the elec-

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toral process. Yabloko had to rely on coverage in television news programs and national newspapers and concentrate on free television debates as the primary medium for communicating its electoral platform. As with most of the main competing parties, coverage of Yabloko in television news was scarce. Footage of the president and YeR dominated media election reporting. The OSCE Election Observation Mission (EOM) reported that most of the media outlets it monitored “failed to provide impartial or fair coverage of

the election campaign” and that media coverage was “characterised by an overwhelming tendency of the State media to exhibit a clear bias in favour of United Russia.”⁶⁰ Coverage of Yabloko on prime time television news programs was particularly scant. Significantly, the NTV station, which gave Yabloko frequent and favorable coverage when it was part of Gusinsky’s Media-Most empire, allocated less time to the party than to any of its main competitors in 2003 (see table 1).

Yabloko fared somewhat better in the national newspaper coverage of the campaign. Yabloko received significant exposure in the liberal *Novaya gazeta* and it was also adequately covered in *Moskovskii komsomolets*, *Komsomolskaya pravda*, and *Argumenty i fakty*. Much of the newspaper coverage was negative, however. More than half the reporting of Yabloko’s campaign in *Rossiiskaya gazeta* and *Kommersant* and a quarter of the coverage in *Parlamentskaya gazeta*, *Argumenty i fakty*, and even the party’s “house paper,” *Novaya gazeta* was unfavorable (see table 2). However, although Yavlinsky spoke of the “total control of the media” and of the difficulties in organizing television and radio appearances, the party’s general response to the media imbalance was muted compared with its reaction in 1999, when several party leaders pointed to problems of media access as being at least partially responsible for the party’s disappointing showing. In 2003 it was as if the party tacitly accepted the new rules of the electoral game and never expected anything other than scant media coverage. When asked whether Yabloko expected to be treated fairly by the media, Yavlinsky replied that most parties would suffer from marginalization or negative reporting and that only YeR would be actively promoted. The task of simply getting the party name mentioned in reports was problematic. “When a Yabloko activist appears on a television program these days,” complained Yavlinsky, “he is never introduced as being a member of Yabloko, he is only introduced by name.”⁶¹

TABLE 1. Percentage of Prime Time News Coverage Allocated to Political Subjects in the 2003 Duma Elections

	Yabloko	YeR	SPS	KPRF	LDPR	Motherland	President
First Channel	2.48	18.42	2.77	11.94*	2.49	2.27	36.16
Russia TV	5.06	16.01	6.33	14.70*	3.43	1.48	35.41
NTV	2.94	5.96**	13.36**	5.88*	6.87**	3.34	34.83
TV Center	5.61	21.93	1.66**	13.92*	5.83	1.52	23.01
Ren TV	2.97**	9.14*	19.16	5.14*	15.90	7.07**	12.82**
Average	3.81	14.29	8.65	10.32	6.90	3.14	28.44

* Indicates where more than 50 percent of coverage estimated to have been negative.

** Indicates where more than 25 percent of coverage estimated to have been negative.

Other coverage estimated to have been either positive or neutral.

Source. OSCE/ODIHR Report

Note. YeR = United Russia; SPS = Union of Right Forces; KPRF = Communist Party of the Russian Federation; LDPR = Liberal Democratic Party of Russia

TABLE 2. Percentage of Coverage Allocated to Parties in National Newspapers in the 2003 Duma Elections

	Yabloko	YeR	SPS	KPRF	LDPR	Motherland	President
<i>Parlamentskaya gazeta</i>	3.24**	10.24	4.08**	4.31*	4.31*	2.04	9.44
<i>Rossiiskaya gazeta</i>	4.08*	22.28	7.93**	8.67*	2.75*	7.98*	15.27
<i>Moskovskii komsomolets</i>	18.42	30.42**	12.26*	3.22*	>1.00*	2.38*	10.93**
<i>Komsomolskaya pravda</i>	12.45	17.59**	10.92**	5.92*	4.87*	7.07**	11.54**
<i>Kommersant</i>	1.95*	9.16*	11.93*	8.79*	4.04*	3.91*	17.58*
<i>Novaya gazeta</i>	11.98**	21.61*	15.11**	8.04*	5.09*	4.75*	20.58*
<i>Argumenty i fakty</i>	17.95**	19.19**	9.86*	2.82*	2.47*	16.38**	12.40
Average	10.00	18.64	10.30	5.96	3.50	6.36	13.96

* Indicates where more than 50 percent of coverage estimated to have been negative.

** Indicates where more than 25 percent of coverage estimated to have been negative.

Other coverage estimated to have been either positive or neutral.

Source. OSCE/ODIHR Report

Note. YeR = United Russia; SPS = Union of Right Forces; KPRF = Communist Party of the Russian Federation; LDPR = Liberal Democratic Party of Russia

Electoral Fraud: Fact or Fiction?

It is clear that Yabloko has suffered from being marginalized as an issues-based party and as a direct result of media imbalance, particularly in the 1996 presidential election and the 1999 and 2003 parliamentary elections. To what extent can more direct manipulation, in the form of electoral fraud be attributed to Yabloko's electoral decline? After the latter two elections, Yabloko has voiced its concerns regarding the degree of electoral fraud taking place. It is commonplace for party members to see vote-rigging as a major factor behind

Yabloko's electoral outcomes in 1999 and 2003. Former Moscow Duma deputy and director of the Moscow Foundation for Electoral Technology, Nataliya Borodina, argued that her research showed that electoral fraud was widespread in Moscow and suggested that although observers had been scrupulous in their monitoring of the voting process, they failed to adequately scrutinize the counting procedure.⁶² An advisor to Grigory Yavlinsky, referring to the 1999 elections made similar comments: "I personally saw the papers proving that in Saratov, Yabloko gained fifty percent more votes than was actually announced. Of course, foreign observers found the elections free and fair but the results of any elections depend mainly not on how people vote but on how people count."⁶³

In the aftermath of the 2003 election senior Yabloko members were quick to suggest that electoral fraud may have been responsible for Yabloko's failure to pass the 5 percent barrier. Sergei Mitrokhin was not prepared to rule out "large-scale ballot rigging," citing instances of votes being counted in the absence of observers and in some cases ballot papers being sent to regional commissions in unsealed boxes.⁶⁴ Yavlinsky pointed to discrepancies between observer protocols and the official figures of the TsIK, adding that the party had "its own theories of what happened and who made the decisions."⁶⁵ Yavlinsky had no doubt that vote-rigging cost the party dearly, stating with some degree of hyperbole that Yabloko's biggest mistake was that "we should have understood earlier that to win five percent in Russia, twenty percent of the vote must be gathered de facto."⁶⁶

In 2003, an alternative vote-counting system, Fair Game, established by the KPRF suggested that YeR's total had been inflated at the expense of both Yabloko and SPS.⁶⁷ The KPRF could hardly be accused of bias as the "Fair Game" count indicated a slightly lower overall Communist vote. The alternative count suggested that Yabloko (with 5.88 percent) and SPS (with 5.04 percent) gained sufficient votes to pass the electoral threshold.⁶⁸ The numbers from the alternative count roughly corresponded to those of an exit poll conducted jointly by the *Moscow Times* and the Soros Foundation. A further exit poll carried out by the Public Opinion Foundation also indicated higher totals for Yabloko and SPS (see table 3). The Communists subsequently alleged that the Fair Game analysis suggested that at least 3.5 million ballot papers had been added to inflate YeR's final tally and that approximately 1.5 percent of the vote was "stolen" from Yabloko and SPS. For Yabloko, Galina Mikhaleva claimed that the party's observers had discovered discrepancies with official TsIK data in 540 of 5,000 protocols checked. According to Yabloko's findings, and supporting the claims of the KPRF, the number of valid papers had been inflated in favor of YeR. Uncounted votes for Yabloko were also discovered.⁶⁹

TABLE 3. Comparison of Official Central Electoral Commission (TsIK) Count, Fair Game Alternative Count, and Exit Polls (%)

	Yabloko	SPS	YeR
TsIK official count	4.30	4.00	37.09
KPRF/Fair Game count	5.98	5.12	33.10
<i>Moscow Times</i> /Soros exit poll	5.80	6.10	34.10
Public Opinion Foundation exit poll	5.10	4.70	36.90

Source. *St. Petersburg Times*, December 11, 2003.

Note. SPS = Union of Right Forces; YeR = United Russia

The Central Electoral Commission denied allegations of manipulation and ignored demands from the KPRF and Yabloko for recounts in specific areas. TsIK Chairman Aleksandr Veshnyakov refuted the claims, stating that no grounds existed for calling the results of the elections into question, adding dismissively that Yabloko and KPRF spokespeople should “curb their emotions.”⁷⁰ Although the OSCE/ODIHR report was unable to confirm or deny the complaints of Yabloko and the KPRF, it did express concerns and stated that the large number of postelection complaints demanded an appropriate response and investigation by the election authorities.⁷¹

Given the closeness of Yabloko’s official result to the electoral threshold in 2003, it is entirely understandable that its leaders continued to raise the question of electoral manipulation.⁷² However, to cite this as a major factor for electoral decline detracts from more significant factors. For Yabloko, the impact of media bias and marginalization, particularly in the post-1995 campaigns have far outweighed the effect of any instances of vote-rigging.

The Problems of Programmatic Opposition

In analyzing Yabloko’s electoral decline, we also learn what it takes to be a successful political party in post-Soviet Russia. Writing shortly after the 2003 Duma elections, McFaul argued that the “losers” in the elections (KPRF, Yabloko, and SPS) were united by the fact that they were all opposition parties, none were Kremlin creations, and all had some roots in society. In contrast, the “winners” (primarily YeR and the Motherland bloc) had the support of the Kremlin, access to administrative resources, and were loyal to the president. Neither could be defined as an opposition party.⁷³ The key trend in Russian party politics since 1999 is the emergence of parties that lack a clear ideological orientation, are able to rely on administrative resources and favorable media coverage, and whose overriding rationale is to provide support for the president. The decline in support for programmatic parties is not only evidenced by the defeat of Yabloko and SPS in the 2003 elections but also by the catastrophic collapse in the KPRF’s vote.

As a programmatic party with a clear ideological orientation and a record of opposition to the presidencies of Yeltsin and Putin, Yabloko is the very antithesis of a successful modern-day political party in Russia. Parties with clearly articulated programmatic platforms have been less successful than those with little or no well-defined ideological or programmatic commitments. As a programmatic party, Yabloko undoubtedly suffered from being marginalized in the 1999 and 2003 parliamentary elections. The 1999 Duma elections marked a clear realignment in Russian politics, “based neither on ideology nor even on general political issues, but on an appreciation of power and its privileges.” Parties that “exploited populist slogans and the virtual world of media politics” found more electoral success than those with relatively coherent platforms.⁷⁴ The most successful of all these parties has been YeR, a party lacking any clear ideological or programmatic orientation, but benefiting hugely from the backing of the Kremlin and the vast financial, media, and administrative resources it receives from the central and regional government(s) and sections of the business elite.⁷⁵ In 2003, other groups with little in the way of policies other than their support for President Putin joined YeR.⁷⁶

The decline of programmatic parties and the dominance of de-ideologized parties of power should concern those who wish to see the development of a stable party system and the consolidation of democracy in Russia. Although the fact that in the West parties have increasingly jettisoned ideological baggage in the quest for vote maximization cannot be

ignored, such parties are already well established on the political scene in terms of their social bases and organizational capacities. In Russia, however, the linkage between society and power remains weak, a trend exacerbated by the decline of those parties with roots in society. Although President Putin has often spoken of his desire to see the development of a functioning party system in Russia, what has emerged instead is a system dominated by parties lacking any coherent programmatic appeal and unable to effectively aggregate societal interests, a key role of political parties in established democracies.

Yabloko has therefore found itself competing as a programmatic party against parties that do not offer coherent, issues-based platforms, but instead put forward amorphous programs, and whose main appeal to the voters is their support for the president. Although support for Yabloko's programs is limited, evidence suggests that the potential support base is larger than its share of the vote in successive elections.⁷⁷ Rather than a lack of support for specific policies, a more general lack of interest among the Russian public in ideological-programmatic politics may explain why programmatic parties in Russia are disadvantaged. Antiparty sentiment, a common feature of transitions from authoritarian rule, has impeded party development in Russia.⁷⁸ Many Russians retain negative feelings toward the very notion of "party."⁷⁹ This legacy of the Soviet era is particularly detrimental to programmatic parties, the stress on collective goals by such parties alienating voters "all-too-accustomed to elaborate statements of social goals with altogether too little perceived benefit to individual citizens."⁸⁰ If it is accepted that Russians have tired of seventy years of ideological and programmatic invocations to create the new society, the appeal of programmatic parties in postcommunist Russia may be understandably restricted. The proliferation of charismatic and clientistic parties in Russia may be, in part, the consequence of party leaders' perceptions of this issue together with the high demands and potential electoral costs of putting forward clear-cut substantive programs.⁸¹

Conclusion

Yabloko's electoral decline has often been attributed to its failure to form effective electoral coalitions and its unwillingness to work with the government.⁸² Other factors also explain Yabloko's inability to stop the decline in its share of the parliamentary vote. Some of these factors, notably Yabloko's campaigning strategy, taking for granted its limited social base, and its elitist approach to membership recruitment, can be attributed to failings on the part of Yabloko itself.⁸³ Although these are important variables meriting further consideration, exogenous factors such as institutional design, the lack of political space for opposition parties, the level of media imbalance during election campaigns and the marginalization of programmatic opposition have ultimately determined Yabloko's situation. That said, the interplay between exogenous and endogenous factors should not be ignored. The failure to mobilize its electorate and expand its social base left the party vulnerable and easier to marginalize than a party with a larger membership and developed social base. Yabloko's disinclination to encourage membership growth left it reliant on a small, if dedicated, group of activists to fight the 2003 Duma campaign after the catastrophic termination of Yukos funding.

The task facing Yabloko after 2003 is gargantuan and a return to parliamentary representation for it in its current form seems unlikely. If it is to return to the State Duma in 2007, Yabloko will set a precedent in Russian politics, no party yet having survived four years in the extra-parliamentary political wilderness. Yabloko's task will be made even

more difficult by changes to the electoral system, which take effect for the 2007 elections. To gain parliamentary representation, Yabloko will have to surmount a 7 percent electoral threshold, introduced by the Central Electoral Commission and ratified by parliament in 2005.⁸⁴ If Yabloko is to have a future in Russian party politics then it will surely be as a core part of a new united democratic-liberal party, given the fact that the electoral reform also prevents parties from competing in elections as a bloc or coalition. Clearly this will be problematic. Ideological differences between the democratic-liberal forces still remain and cannot easily be glossed over.⁸⁵ Party leaders have been unable to overcome such problems in the past, but the creation of new incentives and the sense that, to echo Irina Khakamada's sentiments, the liberals now face their final wake-up call may ease the pain of compromise.⁸⁶ For a new party to be successful it must attempt to encompass not only the two main parties, Yabloko and SPS, but other actors such as independent Duma deputy Vladimir Ryzhkov. Furthermore, as opinion polls suggest, the electorate has grown tired with the old leaders.⁸⁷ A new party led by Ryzhkov or Sergei Mitrokhin of Yabloko may have more appeal than one led by Yavlinsky. Yabloko may also have to look beyond the "usual suspects" when it comes to forging new alliances. Should, for instance, former Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov be capable of mounting a serious challenge for the presidency in 2008, the liberal forces will have to decide whether to throw their weight behind his candidacy. In the past, Yabloko would certainly not have been prepared to make such a compromise—Yavlinsky has ruled out working with Kasyanov.⁸⁸ Conditions now dictate, however, that Yabloko will have to give serious consideration to what were previously thought of as unholy alliances.

Regardless of the strategies Yabloko adopts, either as an individual party or as part of a new unified party, Russia's liberals face an uncertain future. Yabloko (or any new party) will have to operate in a constrained political environment. The space for opposition parties in Russia has narrowed under Putin's presidency. Although this certainly reflects widespread popular support for President Putin, it may also reflect a recognition on the part of the electorate that opposition parties are unable to play a significant role in Russian politics because of the Russian presidency's supremacy and the parliament's relative. It is also, however, indicative of the fact that opposition parties have been marginalized, starved of access to the media, and unable to effectively compete with pro-presidential parties bolstered by administrative resources. Managed democracy in Russia has been seen as a means by which the regime allows a limited diversity of opinion and interest but constrains such diversity within its own boundaries.⁸⁹ The future for opposition parties in Russia depends, to a great degree, on the extent to which they continue to be constrained by the regime. Ultimately, Yabloko's future and the future of the wider liberal movement in Russia will be determined more by the actions of the Kremlin than by its own strategies and initiatives.

NOTES

1. Grigory Yavlinsky, "Strana okhodit i nichego nel'zya podelat'," *Moskovskii komsomolets*, January 30, 2004.
2. "Kommentarii. Chelovek Nedeli: Demiurg," *Vedomosti*, December 15, 2003.
3. Yabloko received 7.86 percent of the party list vote in 1993, 6.89 percent in 1995, 5.93 percent in 1999, and 4.32 percent in 2003.
4. Robert Dahl, *Political Opposition in Western Democracies* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966), xv.

5. A programmatic party is one that has a distinct, consistent, and coherent programmatic and ideological agenda and clearly incorporates such ideological and programmatic appeals in its electoral campaigns. See Richard Gunther and Larry Diamond, "Species of Political Parties: A New Typology," *Party Politics* 9, no. 2 (2003): 187.

6. David White, *The Russian Democratic Party Yabloko: Opposition in a Managed Democracy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006). Henry Hale also identifies organizational failings and a lack of coherent electoral strategy as factors contributing to Yabloko's electoral decline: Henry Hale, "Yabloko and the Challenge of Building a Liberal Party in Russia," *Europe-Asia Studies* 56, no. 7 (2004): 993–1020.

7. For an analysis of the divisions between Russia's liberals see David White, "Going Their Own Way: The Yabloko Party's Opposition to Unification," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 21, no. 4 (2005): 462–86.

8. The liberal economist Yevgeny Yasin argued that had the two parties competed on a single democratic ticket they would have gained at least 8 percent of the vote. Conflict in the democratic camp deterred liberal supporters from voting. Yevgeny Yasin, "Demokratiya s chistogo lista," *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, December 12, 2003. One cannot ignore, however, that deep ideological divisions (Yabloko's social liberalism as opposed to the economic liberalism of SPS) lie at the heart of the schism. See White, "Going Their Own Way," 465–67.

9. Prior to reorganizing in 2001, Yabloko's notoriously labyrinthine membership system, overseen by Deputy Chairman Vyacheslav Igrunov, seemed designed as much to prevent people from joining the party as encouraging new recruits. To join the party, prospective members were required to serve a six to twelve month probationary period as a "candidate member" before being considered for full membership by either the member's regional branch or Yabloko's Central Committee. During this period the probationary member was expected to prove himself/herself through participation in the association's activities.

10. Sergei Ivanenko, Yabloko deputy chairman and State Duma deputy, interview with author, Moscow, March 12, 2002. Ivanenko's comments were by no means an isolated view. Many Yabloko members interviewed by the author during 2001–02 expressed similar opinions.

11. For more details on the 1995, 1999, and 2003 parliamentary election campaigns see White, *The Russian Democratic Party Yabloko*, 125–35. For Yabloko's muddled policies on Chechnya in 1999 see Hale, "Yabloko and the Challenge of Building a Liberal Party in Russia," 1009–14.

12. David Collier and Steven Levitsky, "Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research," *World Politics* 49 (April 1997): 445. Collier and Levitsky argue that scholars should avoid "definitional gerrymandering" in the sense of introducing a new definition every time they encounter a somewhat anomalous case.

13. Harley Balzer, "Managed Pluralism: Vladimir Putin's Emerging Regime," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 19, no. 3 (2003): 194.

14. Sergei Markov, "The Future of Managed Democracy," *Moscow Times*, January 27, 2004.

15. Timothy J. Colton and Michael McFaul, *Popular Choice and Managed Democracy: The Russian Elections of 1999 and 2000* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2003).

16. Grigory Yavlinsky, "Yabloko Rejects Putin's Managed Democracy," *St. Petersburg Times*, January 25, 2002.

17. Richard Sakwa, *Putin: Russia's Choice* (London: Routledge, 2004), 123.

18. Richard Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society*, 3rd edition (London: Routledge, 2002), 157.

19. Michael McFaul, "Russia's 1996 Presidential Elections," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 12, no. 4 (1996): 344.

20. Vsevolod Vilchek, "TV after Elections: Illusory Peace," *Moscow News*, July 18, 1996. The share of television air time (NTV, ORT, and RTR) up to the first round was as follows: Yeltsin 53 percent, Zyuganov 18 percent, Lebed 7 percent, Yavlinsky 6 percent, Zhirinovskiy 5 percent, and others 11 percent. Data compiled by European Mass Media Institute.

21. This was due in no small part to the appointment of the head of NTV, Igor Malashenko, to lead Yeltsin's reelection campaign.

22. Ellen Mickiewicz, *Changing Channels: Television and the Struggle for Power in Russia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 170.

23. Lebed was one of the leaders of the Congress of Russian Communities bloc (KRO), which

gained a 4.3 percent share of the party list vote in the 1995 Duma elections. Federov was the leader of the left-democratic Workers' Self-Government Party.

24. Vladimir Gel'man, "Dilemmy demokraticheskoi oppozitsii: G. Yavlinskii, 'Yabloko' i prezidentskie vybory," *Mirovaya ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya* 10 (1997): 23.

25. Marina Shakina, "'Tret'ya sila' ne sostoyalas," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, May 13, 1996.

26. Asked if he would accept the offer of a top governmental post in return for an electoral alliance with Yeltsin, Yavlinsky replied that the president knew his terms—an end to the war in Chechnya, a guarantee of continued reform in terms of de-monopolization, privatization, regional reform, and macro-economic stabilization. Such terms, Yavlinsky believed, were unlikely to be met. Olga Gorshunova, "Gaidar porval s proshlym," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, January 24, 1996. Yavlinsky later prepared a document for Yeltsin, setting out the conditions under which a compromise between the two would be possible. In effect, the document was Yavlinsky's own presidential program. Yavlinsky also demanded the resignation of Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, First Deputy Prime Minister Oleg Soskovets, Defense Minister Pavel Grachev, and the president's chief of staff Nikolai Yegerov. Stepan Kiselev, "Usloviya Yavlinskogo izvestnyi. Reaktsii prezidenta poka net," *Izvestiya*, May 18, 1996.

27. It was ironic that Chubais had been given full responsibility for running Yeltsin's campaign. Chubais had been dismissed from his post as first deputy prime minister in January 1996 largely as a scapegoat for the nonpayment of back wages to government workers and also to appease Yeltsin's hard line advisors. Sergei Filatov, Yeltsin's chief of staff, and another reformist sacked in January was also brought back to run the president's campaign.

28. Oleg Savel'ev, "Posledni predvyborny opros VTsIOM: El'tsin—Zyuganov: 36—24," *Segodnya*, June 13, 1996.

29. Richard Sakwa, "Russia's 'Permanent' (Uninterrupted) Elections of 1999–2000," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 16, no. 3 (2000): 93.

30. A report by the European Institute for the Media found that the state broadcasters ORT and RTR were heavily biased in favor of the pro-government Unity party. No commercial broadcasters provided impartial reporting. TV Center supported Fatherland-All Russia as did NTV although the latter channel was found to have the most balanced coverage of all major TV stations. European Institute for the Media Final Report on Monitoring of the Media Coverage of the Parliamentary Elections in Russia in December 1999. (Düsseldorf: EIM, 2000) <http://www.eim.org/MaDP.htm> (accessed January 24, 2000).

31. Sakwa, "Russia's 'Permanent' (Uninterrupted) Elections," 93.

32. European Institute for the Media Final Report on Monitoring of the Media Coverage of the Parliamentary Elections in Russia in December 1999.

33. "Prichina nevyssokogo rezul'tata 'Yabloko'—neravnye usloviya bor'by—Grigory Yavlinsky," Yabloko press release, December 20, 1999, <http://www.yabloko.ru/Press/1999/9912202.html> (accessed January 24, 2000).

34. "Nyneshnie vybory v Gosdumu nel'zya schitat' demokraticheskimi—Vladimir Lukin," Yabloko press release, December 20, 1999, <http://www.yabloko.ru/Press/1999/9912205.html> (accessed January 24, 2000).

35. Yulia Zaitseva and Evgeny Savin, "Proraby predvybornykh blokov," *Izvestiya Media* (supplement to *Izvestiya*), November 29, 1999.

36. European Institute for the Media Final Report on Monitoring of the Media Coverage of the Parliamentary Elections in Russia in December 1999.

37. Evgeniya Dillendorf, Yabloko press secretary, interview with author, Moscow, April 19, 2001.

38. Laura Belin, "Rivals Charge Yavlinskii Getting Preferential Treatment," RFE/RL Russian Election Report, March 17, 2000, <http://www.rferl.org/elections/russia00report/2000/03/03170300.html> (accessed March 30, 2000).

39. According to Yavlinsky, the video warned about "the danger posed to the country in the event of the development of a totalitarian regime." In a letter to the head of the Central Electoral Commission, Aleksandr Veshnyakov, Yavlinsky argued that the refusal to broadcast the video clip was a "manifestation of censorship" and a violation of his right to publicize his campaign. ORT's director for administrative and legal issues stated that "the commercial associates the Russian elec-

torate with prisoners but this group represents just a fraction of the voters” and that “a phrase [in the commercial] about law-enforcement servicemen falls under the Criminal Code article relating to disrespect for state authorities,” Yabloko press release, March 19, 2000, <http://www.yabloko.ru/Press/2000/000319.html> (accessed March 30, 2000).

40. Sarah Karush, “Yavlinsky Comes Under Fire from Kremlin,” *Moscow Times*, March 24, 2000. For a comprehensive analysis of negative reporting of Yavlinsky on the ORT channel in the final days of the campaign see, Laura Belin, “ORT Launches Wide-Ranging Attack on Yavlinsky,” RFE/RL Russian Election Report, March 24, 2000, <http://www.rferl.org/elections/russia00report/2000/03/04-240300.html> (accessed March 30, 2000). For a report into the use of homophobia in the anti-Yavlinsky campaign see Gay.ru, “Gays and the Russian Election,” <http://www.gay.ru/english/community/politics/election.htm> (accessed June 26, 2003). Representatives of the Ebert Foundation and the Freidrich Naumann Foundation both refuted allegations that they funded Yavlinsky’s campaign. See Yabloko press release, March 24, 2000, <http://www.yabloko.ru/Press/2000/0003243.html> (accessed March 30, 2000).

41. Denis Babichenko, “Ne s’edim—tak ponadkysyvaem,” *Segodnya*, March 23, 2000.

42. Yavlinsky’s ratings varied between 3 percent and 5 percent from January to June 2000. VTsIOM surveys in Richard Rose and Neil Munro, *Elections without Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 168.

43. “Izбирatel’nyi shtab Grigory Yavlinkogo o potreboval rassledovaniya intsidenta v Noginske,” Yabloko press release, March 23, 2000, <http://www.yabloko.ru/Press/2000/000323.html> (accessed March 30, 2000). Andrei Sharomov, former chief of the Yabloko Youth organization in Moscow, confirmed that the Yabloko Youth Union was not associated with the party in any way and was essentially a spoiling operation designed to take votes away from Yavlinsky. Interview with author, Moscow, May 17, 2001.

44. Belin, “ORT Launches Wide-Ranging Attack.” This explanation is further supported by the fact that the private network, TV-6, also distanced itself from Yavlinsky in the final week of the campaign, scrapping plans for the showing of a documentary film of the Yabloko leader. Boris Berezovsky was the most influential shareholder at both stations, but stood to lose control over ORT if its broadcasting license was revoked.

45. After agreeing to sign a deal selling his controlling stake in Media-Most to Gazprom in return from his freedom, Gusinsky fled the country. Gusinsky later claimed that the deal had been signed under duress.

46. The party’s connection with Yukos was not a new development. Yavlinsky readily admitted that Khodorkovsky had been “helping” the party since 1993, although Media-Most remained the primary sponsor. Yukos only began to support the party “substantially” beginning in April 2002. Syuzanna Farizova, “My nichem ne otlichaemsya ot Ermitazha,” *Kommersant-Vlast*, August 25, 2003.

47. Valery Vyzhutovich, “Tycoon Puts His Cards on the Table,” *Moscow News*, April 16, 2003. As the author of the article pointed out, Veshnaykov was being optimistic. Under the Law on Political Parties, election funds may not exceed 250 million rubles (approximately \$8 million). It was estimated, however, that YeR’s election budget could reach three hundred million dollars while Yabloko, SPS, and the KPRF would operate their campaigns on \$30 to \$40 million each.

48. Yana Serova, “Navstrechu vyboram. Duma bogatykh,” *Novaya gazeta*, November 24, 2003. Konstantin Kagalovsky (a Yukos shareholder, former board member and head of the Yukos-founded Open Economics Institute), Galina Antonova (head of strategic planning at Yukos), and Aleksandr Osovtsov (project director of Yukos’s Open Russia Foundation) were prominently placed at 11th, 12th, and 13th places, respectively, on the Yabloko party list. Yavlinsky was explicit as to the reasons for including the Yukos representatives on the party list—this had been Yukos’s condition for funding the party: “We accepted that condition and we believe that this open policy is right. We cannot earn that money ourselves, as the law does not allow us to do that.” Interview with Grigory Yavlinsky, NTV channel, “Apelsinovy sok,” November 2, 2003, reproduced on Yabloko Web site: http://www.eng.yabloko.ru/Publ/2003/tv/031102_ntv_yavl_.html (accessed November 8, 2003).

49. The offices of the Agency for Strategic Communication (ASK) were raided by officials from the Prosecutor-General’s office on October 23, 2003, as part of the ongoing investigations into allegations of tax evasion by Yukos. Computer servers containing programs and information together

with a large quantity of documents relating to Yabloko's campaign were seized in the raid. ASK director, Vadim Malkin, claimed that the confiscation of the material would paralyze Yabloko's campaign for at least a month, the length of time the servers were to be held. See "Delo YUKOSa. Prishli za 'Yablokom,'" *Kommersant*, October 24, 2003.

50. A Central Electoral Committee report at the end of October suggested that Yabloko was already running out of official campaign funds, having spent over eighty-seven million rubles out of its 121 million ruble campaign fund. "Parties Spending," *Moscow Times*, October 30, 2003.

51. In 2003 two "black PR" campaigns were launched against Yabloko. The first of these, in May 2003, sought to convince voters that Yabloko had a secret alliance with the KPRF. Stickers, posters, and billboards appeared throughout Moscow portraying a red apple together with a hammer and sickle and a collage of Yavlinsky with the KPRF leader, Gennady Zyuganov, all bearing the slogan "My vmeste!" (We are together!). The campaign played on the fact that Yabloko had, together with the Communists, initiated a vote of no confidence in the government. Later in 2003, another anti-Yabloko "black PR" campaign was launched. A movement named "Yabloko without Yavlinsky" was launched in St. Petersburg by a municipal council deputy, Igor Morozov. A statement from the organization stated that Yavlinsky's "lust for power" had alienated the electorate and that he should be removed as party leader.

52. Sergei Kolmakov, "The 2003 Elections and the Fate of Democratic Parties," *Russian Election Watch* 3, no. 3 (2003): 7, <http://daviscenter.fas.harvard.edu/publications/rew.html> (accessed January 25, 2004).

53. Sakwa, "The 2003–2004 Russian Elections and Prospects for Democracy," *Europe-Asia Studies* 57, no. 3 (2005): 375–76. Sakwa also suggests that the Kremlin was actively behind attempts to ensure the return of Yabloko to the Duma, Putin inviting Yavlinsky to appear with him on television, and arranging extensive media coverage for Yabloko in the last week of the campaign.

54. Yulia Latynina, "Why the Liberals Did Not Lose the Elections," *Moscow Times*, December 10, 2003.

55. Jonathan Steele, "The Awful Truth: Russia's Election Was a Disaster for Democracy," *The Guardian*, December 10, 2003.

56. OSCE, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, "Election Observation Mission Report," January 27, 2004, 12.

57. *Ibid.*, 12–13.

58. Vladimir Kovalev, "Liberal Candidates Suffer 'Administrative' Pressures," *St. Petersburg Times*, December 2, 2003.

59. Kovalev, "Liberal Candidates Suffer."

60. OSCE, "Election Observation Mission Report," 16. The EOM monitored five national television stations (state-funded First Channel, Russia TV, and TV Center, and the private NTV and Ren TV) and seven national newspapers (the state-owned *Rossiiskaya gazeta* and *Parlamentskaya gazeta* and the private *Kommersant*, *Moskovskii komsomolets*, *Komsomolskaya pravda*, *Novaya gazeta*, and *Argumenty i fakty*).

61. Farizova, "My nichem ne otlichaemsya ot Ermitazha."

62. Nataliya Borodina, former Yabloko Moscow Duma deputy, interview with author, Moscow, March 12, 2002. Borodina has written a number of articles on electoral fraud, which can be found at <http://www.moscow.yabloko.ru/borodina/index.html>.

63. Advisor to Grigory Yavlinsky, interview with author, Moscow, April 11, 2001.

64. "SPS, Yabloko on Their Election Defeat," *Moscow News*, December 10, 2003.

65. Natal'ya Gromova, "Strana ukhodit i nichego nel'zya podelat," interview with Grigory Yavlinsky, *Moskovskii komsomolets*, January 30, 2004.

66. Valeria Korchagina, "Yavlinsky Out of the Running," *Moscow Times*, December 22, 2003.

67. Shortly before the December elections, Yabloko, SPS, and the KPRF agreed to work together in monitoring the vote. The Fair Game system was devised by Ilya Ponomarev, former Yukos executive and head of the KPRF's information technology centre. The three parties provided observers at an estimated 92,000 polling stations in seventy-seven of Russia's eighty-nine regions. Observers received copies of protocols at the polling stations and contacted the Fair Game control center to report their data. Fair Game's figures were based on sixty thousand protocols, two-thirds of the total.

See Orkhan Dzhemal, "Fal'sifikatsii. Vybory-2003: Mertye dushi proshli 5-protsentnyi bar'er," *Novaya gazeta*, January 29, 2004.

68. Orkhan Dzhemal, "Fair Game ob'yasnyayet," *Novaya gazeta*, December 18, 2003.

69. "Communists say Duma Vote Was Rigged," *Gazeta.ru*, December 10, 2003, reproduced on Yabloko's Web site, http://www.eng.yabloko.ru/Publ/2003/1-NET/031210_gazeta_ru.html (accessed December 13, 2003); Ol'ga Kitova, "Raznye arifmetiki," *Russkii kur'er*, December 19, 2003.

70. "Communists and Yabloko Call into Question the Voting Results," ITAR-TASS, December 19, 2003, reproduced on Yabloko's Web site, http://www.yabloko.ru/Publ/2003/AGENCY/12/031219_itar_tass.html.

71. OSCE, "Election Observation Mission Report," 23.

72. The controversy continued into 2004. In March, Yabloko filed seventy-eight lawsuits demanding the invalidation of the results in 170 out of Russia's 225 constituencies after comparing 14,065 protocols that its observers received with the ones received by local election committees and discovering that the numbers did not match. Protocols show the vote counts registered at any given polling station. Observers and election officials should be given identical signed and stamped copies. See Viktor Khamraev, "Aktsiya 'Yabloko' pokatilos po sudam," *Kommersant*, March 11, 2004. For an analysis of electoral manipulation from a Yabloko perspective see Galina Mikhaleva, "Election Results 2003: Another Step towards Autocracy," *Russian Election Watch* 3, no. 4 (2004): 9–10, <http://daviscenter.fas.harvard.edu/publications/rew.html> (accessed February 1, 2004).

73. "Communists' Demise, Nationalists on the Rise," *Moscow Times*, December 8, 2003.

74. Sakwa, "Russia's 'Permanent' (Uninterrupted) Elections," 109

75. The "party of power" is a peculiarly Russian phenomenon, gaining its position through its support for the president. It does not neatly fit into a single party type but, instead, can be seen as a hybrid party containing elements of the clientistic and catch-all models.

76. Both the People's Party headed by Gennady Raikov and the Russia's Rebirth-Party of Life bloc led by Duma speaker, Gennady Seleznev and Federation Council speaker Sergei Mironov received support from the Kremlin. Both leaders made clear their positions regarding their attitudes to the presidency. Seleznev stated that the bloc was "prepared for constructive and honest cooperation with the president and the government" and Mironov suggested that Putin's term in office should be extended to seven years. "The Parties to Keep an Eye on," *Moscow Times*, December 2, 2003.

77. In an opinion poll carried out in October 2003, two months before the parliamentary elections at which Yabloko failed to pass the 5 percent threshold, 14 percent of respondents stated that they supported the goals of Yabloko. Fond "Obshchestvennoe mnenie," "Mesto Partii 'Yabloko' na politicheskoi stsene Rossii" (Public Opinion Foundation), October 16, 2003 <http://bd.fom.ru/report/map/d034126> (accessed November 11, 2003).

78. Geoffrey Pridham, "Political Parties and Their Strategies in the Transition from Authoritarian Rule: A Comparative Analysis," in *Party Formation in East-Central Europe: Post-Communist Politics in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and Bulgaria*, ed. Gordon Wightman, 11 (London: Edward Elgar, 1995).

79. Jeremy Lester, *Modern Tsars and Princes: The Struggle for Hegemony in Russia* (London: Verso, 1995), 51.

80. Frederic J. Fleron Jr., Richard Ahl, and Finbarr Lane, "Where Now in the Study of Russian Political Parties?" in *Party Politics in Post-Communist Russia*, ed. John Löwenhardt, 241 (London: Frank Cass, 1998).

81. Fleron, Ahl, and Lane, 241–42.

82. See White, "Going Their Own Way," 462–86.

83. These factors are analysed throughout White, *Russian Democratic Party Yabloko*.

84. The rewards for passing the threshold, however, may be greater than before. As part of President Putin's package of state reforms in the wake of the Beslan hostage crisis of September 2004, the plurality component of the electoral system has been scrapped, leaving all 450 Duma seats to be elected through the party list system. The Law on Elections of Deputies to the State Duma (Federal Law No. 51-F3) was passed on May 18, 2005. Full text available at http://www.cikrf.ru/_3/zakon/zakon51_180505/zakon_51.htm.

85. For a detailed analysis of the divisions between Russia's liberals see White, "Going Their Own Way," 462–86.

86. Caroline McGregor, "Liberals Struggle to Survive," *Moscow Times*, December 9, 2003.

87. A VTsIOM poll in October 2005 indicated that 32 percent would be prepared to vote for a united democratic party providing such a party had new leaders. Only fourteen percent would vote for such a party with the existing leaders. "Ob'edinenie demokraticeskikh sil: 'za' i 'protiv'," VTsIOM press release, no. 318, October 18, 2005, <http://www.wciom.ru/arkhiv/tematicheskii-arkhiv/item/single/1863.html> (accessed January 18, 2006).

88. Denis Babichenko, "Edinstvo protivopolozhnostei," *Itogi*, March 8, 2005.

89. Colton and McFaul, *Popular Choice and Managed Democracy*, 207.