Russia's 1999 Parliamentary Elections: Party Consolidation and Fragmentation

MICHAEL MCFAUL

Author's note: *In the wake of Yeltsin's unexpected resignation on 31 December 1999 and the apparent inevitability of Putin's electoral victory in the March 2000 presidential election, the 1999 December parliamentary elections already seem like ancient history. For the analyst of Russian politics, however, Russia's Duma vote offers a new wealth of data that will help reveal important trends in electoral behavior, party development, and institutional consolidation. In this article, written just days after the vote, I cannot pretend to offer definitive conclusions about the election's consequences for any of these important issues. My aim is rather to suggest some tentative hypotheses that may help to guide future discussion and research.*

The 1999 Duma in Comparative Context: Elections as Normal Events

When evaluating Russia's progress in institutionalizing elections, the comparative set always drives the result of the analysis: When compared to the United States, France, or Poland, Russia's recent parliamentary vote does not look like a major achievement. In contrast to the 1993 and 1995 parliamentary elections, the Kremlin played an active and aggressive role in influencing the outcome of the 1999 vote. Through the control of television channels 1 (ORT) and 2 (RTR), the Kremlin and its allies viciously attacked their main opponent in the election, Fatherland–All Russia (OVR), and tirelessly promoted the government's electoral bloc, Unity. To be sure, media outlets supportive of Fatherland–All Russia, including TV Tsentr, the television network controlled by Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov, and NTV, the independent television network owned by Vladimir Gusinsky, responded to these attacks. Media coverage was biased but not monolithic. Add to this equation the hundreds of independent newspapers and other publications, many owned by the Communist Party, and you get a fairly diverse

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Michael McFaul is a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and an assistant professor of political science and Hoover fellow at Stanford University. He is grateful to Tatyana Krasnopevtseva, Elizabeth Reisch, and Aleksei Titkov for research assistance in preparing this article and to Nikolai Petrov, Andrei Ryabov, and Regina Smythe for conversations that helped to generate some of the ideas in it.

range of outlets for campaign coverage. Nonetheless, that the government-owned media adopted a partisan position is not a good sign for democracy. Without question, pockets of falsification and/or coercion of voters also occurred. How else can one explain the 89 percent support for Fatherland–All Russia in Ingushetiya! Even with falsification, however, pluralism was present, with some important republics backing Fatherland–All Russia and others demonstrating extraordinary support for Unity. Finally, the state proved ineffective in controlling campaign spending.

When this election is compared to other "elections" in Russian history, however, these violations do not seem as great. In a country burdened by hundreds of years of dictatorship, it is remarkable that Russia held its third consecutive election for the State Duma in the last decade. No other democratically elected legislative body in Russian history has lasted this long. All major political actors now believe that elections are the only legitimate means for assuming power in Russia. Political leaders ranging from Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov to liberal Boris Nemtsov have affirmed their belief in the electoral process. These political actors are demonstrating their commitment to democracy with more than words: they are paying campaign consultants rather than forming militias. Despite real dissatisfaction with the performance of democracy in their country, the vast majority of Russian citizens still believe that elections are the only legitimate means for assuming political power. In a ROMIR poll conducted in June and July 1999, 66 percent of all respondents believed that it is impermissible to ban meetings and demonstrations and 62 percent believed that it is impermissible to cancel elections.

The December vote was also held on time and under law—a law ratified in a democratic process by elected officials. The law governing the 1999 election was basically the same as the law that shaped the first post–Communist Duma election in 1993 and the second vote in 1995. Despite attempts by the Kremlin and its parliamentary allies to weaken proportional representation (PR), the 1999 electoral law retains the balance between PR seats and single-mandate seats outlined in the 1993 presidential decree on Duma elections and the 1995 law on Duma elections.[1] Fifty percent or 225 of the seats in the Duma were allocated according to PR and the other 50 percent of the seats were allocated according to single-mandate districts. As in 1993 and 1995, parties had to obtain a minimum of 5 percent to win seats on the party list. Such continuity over time regarding the rules of the game helps to stabilize expectations, a positive sign for institutional consolidation.[2] The basic territorial borders of the electoral districts were also preserved.

A third positive sign for democratic consolidation was the turnout in this election. In a vote that political pundits declared would have no influence on policy or Russia's future more generally, 60 percent of eligible voters nonetheless showed up at the polls on a cold December day. This percentage is almost twice the level of a typical parliamentary election in the United States when a presidential election is not occurring simultaneously.

In comparative perspective, a fourth sign of stability and consolidation emerging from this election was that the choices offered to voters had narrowed considerably. After an explosion of party proliferation in 1995, when forty-three parties appeared on the ballot, the 1999 parliamentary ballot contained only twenty-six parties. The even more dramatic contrast with 1995, however, was the strategic behavior of the Russian voter in 1999. Before the vote, public opinion polls showed that voters who supported small, unsuccessful parties in the last election did not want to waste their votes this time around. Fewer did. In 1995, 50 percent of votes on the party list ballot went to parties that did not cross the 5 percent threshold. In 1999, the percentage of votes casts for "none of the above" or parties that did not reach the 5 percent threshold was only 18.6 percent. Beyond the six parties that did cross the threshold, only two electoral blocs garnered more than 2 percent of the vote—Women of Russia (2.0 percent) and Communists, Workers of Russia for the Soviet Union (2.2 percent). Only two more parties garnered more than 1 percent of the vote—Party of Pensioners (1.95 percent) and Our Home Is Russia (1.19 percent).

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In another positive development, extremist, anti-system parties have either become marginalized or changed their ways. Vladimir V. Zhirinovsky's Liberal Democratic Party of Russia once looked like a Nazi facsimile. The Zhirinovsky bloc that won nearly 6 percent of the vote in the December 1999 elections operates primarily a commercial operation, selling its votes to the highest bidder. More radical nationalist groups that competed in the election performed miserably. The Communist Party of the Russian Federation garnered the highest percentage again on the party list vote, but its transformation in the last several years has made it no longer a threat to the status quo. Today's party doesn't want to overthrow capitalism; it aspires to reform the market.[3] Radicals who still reject capitalism and democracy joined splinter communist organizations, all of which failed to win seats in the new Duma.

More generally, all of Russia's parties appeared to gravitate toward the center in this election. Cleavage issues were much harder to identify. When one compares party platforms written for the 1995 parliamentary elections and those written as the December election was approaching, the growing convergence among party positions on virtually every major issue is striking.[4] In 1995, fundamental debates could be discerned regarding the nature of the economy, the war in Chechnya (the first war), or foreign policy. In the 1999 campaign, only the real specialist could identify different positions regarding these issues. To be sure, Yabloko eventually did adopt a unique position in opposition to the war in Chechnya (although Yavlinsky originally supported the Russian military response) and the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) still advocates a greater role for the state in economy than the Union of Right Forces. Likewise, the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) and the CPRF promote a much more ethnic-based version of nationalism than Yabloko or the Union of Right Forces. In comparison to 1995, however, the similarities between programs were much more striking than the differences.

Explanations for the convergence vary. On one hand, the positions reflect attitudinal trends in society. When over 70 percent of the population supported the war in Chechnya, no party dared to take an opposite position. Yabloko campaign managers believe that they suffered the electoral consequences of staking out a moral but unpopular position on the war. Even on the economy, polls show an increasing optimism about the future and a great satisfaction with the way the government is tackling economic issues. According to a November 1999 poll conducted by the All Russia Center for the Study of Public Opinion (VTsIOM), 80 percent of respondents were satisfied with the performance of Prime Minister Putin. When the government is this popular, it is difficult for parties to criticize its policies and still hope to win votes.

Another new element in this vote was that the Kremlin appeared to exercise much less influence over the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) compared to its influence in 1995. Under the leadership of its new chairman, Alexander Veshnyakov (originally nominated by the Agrarian Deputy Group in the Duma), the newly constituted CEC demonstrated its autonomy from the Kremlin. The CEC aggressively reviewed the lists of candidates seeking registration, disqualified one of Russia's leading political parties, the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, from the ballot, and also removed from the ballot the electoral bloc Spas, an openly fascist organization. The CEC also removed from the ballot dozens of individuals who had violated CEC registration procedures. As already mentioned, there is considerable circumstantial evidence to suggest that several regional leaders either falsified the election results or coerced their citizens into supporting certain parties and candidates. However, there is no credible evidence that points to fraud at the national level.

Finally, as the data in table 1 demonstrate, the balance of power within the Duma has changed radically compared with the previous parliament. In the old parliament, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation and its allies held a near majority, enabling it to dominate the legislative process. In the new Duma, it appears that the CPRF will control only 25 percent of the seats. A new Agrarian faction (or agrarians plus industrialists) may eventually coalesce, but the CPRF will certainly not have two factions as allies. In contrast, the pro-government Unity faction looks to control seventy-two seats or 16 percent, and two other pro-government factions, Narodnyi Deputat (People's Deputy) and "All-Russia" (the former ally of Fatherland), also are likely to put together the necessary thirty-five seats to form independent factions. Most important, no single group will be able to control a stable majority, meaning that compromise, deal making, and logrolling will return to Russian parliamentary politics.

Explaining Electoral Surprises

This election did produce some real surprises, the greatest being Unity's explosive success. One month before the vote, only 7 percent of the electorate plan-

TABLE 1
Deputies Elected, with Political Party/Bloc Affiliations, Russian State Duma Elections, 1995 and 1999

	1999			1995		
Political party/Bloc	Deputies from party list voting	Deputies from single-mandate races	Total	Deputies from party list voting	Deputies from single-mandate races	Total
Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF)	67	47	114	99	58	157
Yabloko	16	4	20	31	14	45
Union of Right Forces	24	5	29	0	9[a]	9
Zhirinovsky Bloc (LDPR)	17	0	17	50	1	51
Unity (Medved')	64	9	73	N/A	N/A	N/A
Fatherland–All Russia	37	30	67	N/A	N/A	N/A
Our Home is Russia	0	7	7	45	10	55
Agrarian Party of Russia	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	20	20
Independents /Others	—	114	114	—	103	103
Unfilled Seats			9			

[a] Democratic Choice of Russia (DVR).

ning to vote supported Unity.[5] At the time, such a low number was not surprising, as a very unpopular Kremlin had just manufactured the electoral coalition. Writing one month before the vote, Russian electoral experts Alexey Makarkin and Nikolai Petrov expressed the opinion of many when they observed,

> it remains unclear what might motivate voters to support this rather strange political coalition. Through a massive television campaign, Shoigu [the leader of Unity] has the personality and reputation to emerge as a sympathetic individual. Maybe this is all the bloc will need to win five percent of the vote. At the same time, the level of disgust with the current regime is so high that a bloc openly affiliated with the Yeltsin regime is unlikely to perform well in the upcoming vote."[6]

One month later, however, Unity shocked everyone by capturing 23 percent of popular vote on the party list.

The fall of Fatherland–All Russia had to be the second most important unexpected result. Writing in summer 1999, I believed that "the formation last week of a new electoral bloc, Fatherland–All Russia, might be the most important development in Russian politics since the 1996 presidential elections. Bringing together two of Russia's most powerful politicians—former Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov and Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov—and dozens of regional leaders, the new, left-of-center coalition has the potential to dominate the post-Yeltsin era."[7] Opinion polls in the early part of the fall campaign season provided strong evidence for this conclusion; the same poll that gave Unity 7 percent in mid-November showed nearly 20 percent support for Fatherland–All Russia among those who planned to vote.[8] A July 1999 VTsIOM poll showed the level of support for Fatherland at 28 percent, higher than any other party.[9] On election day, however, Fatherland–All Russia won only 13.3 percent of the popular vote.

"National television does not appear to have had any appreciable effect on the electoral performance of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation."

The surprise showing of the Union of Right Forces—the coalition of small, liberal, right-wing parties headed by Sergei Kiryenko—must be considered a third shocking result of the election. After the 1995 parliamentary elections, many analysts believed that Russian liberalism was dead, buried by the failures of the 1990s. As Steven Fish, one of the most astute observers of party development in Russia, wrote in spring 1996, "As the parliamentary elections demonstrated, the liberals' main problem is not their lack of unity but rather their lack of public support."[10] Three years later, most electoral specialists still concurred with Fish's obituary for liberalism.[11] Yet the Union of Right Forces not only crossed the 5 percent threshold, winning almost 9 percent of the popular vote, but the coalition also defeated the other main liberal party on the ballot, Yabloko.

The initial wave of explanations for these surprises focused almost exclusively on money and television; Unity and the Union of Right Forces performed so well because they had huge campaign budgets and television exposure on the two Kremlin-friendly television networks, ORT and RTR. In contrast, Fatherland–All Russia performed well below expectations because of negative coverage by the same two stations.[12]

Although the hard data have yet to be analyzed, the correlation between expanded negative coverage of Fatherland–All Russia and decline in support for this election bloc most likely exists. Likewise, we are likely to find a positive correlation between increased television exposure for Unity and Unity's rise in the polls. The same may hold true for the Union of Right Forces. Yet demonstrating those correlations is only the first step toward providing a full explanation for the electoral surprises and the frequently ignored electoral continuities. First, regarding the correlation between television exposure and money and electoral performance, the literature on campaign effects has suggested that money is often a necessary but not sufficient condition for electoral success. A popular campaign message is the second half of the equation. Second, a closer analysis of the vote totals reveals that the negative campaigning against Fatherland–All Russia did not have a uniform effect across the country. Given the high concentration of national media outlets in Moscow, the number and harshness of negative ads against Luzhkov were probably greatest in the capital. Yet, Luzhkov still managed to win 70 percent of the vote in Moscow in his campaign for reelection as mayor, and Fatherland–All Russia won roughly 40 percent of the vote in Moscow, three times its national average. Fatherland also won extraordinarily high percentages in republics governed by presidents loyal to Fatherland–All Russia. Obviously, other factors combined with the negative campaign coverage to produce these results. The anti–Moscow bias of most of the rest of Russia might be one such factor. Coercion or manipulation of voters in republics might be another.

Institutional Effects: Parliamentary Parties Versus Presidential Coalitions

To separate the effects of negative and positive advertising and measure the role of regional leaders are important research tasks that require data not yet available at the time of this writing. Before making general statements about the role of the different factors, however, one must remember that the same independent variable does not affect all parties equally. For instance, national television does not appear to have had any appreciable effect on the electoral performance of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation. Likewise, Yabloko does not seem to have benefited from its television coverage, even though the Yabloko campaign did run several national advertising spots, and Grigory Yavlinsky, the party's head, appeared frequently in NTV news programs and nationally televised debates. As for regional leaders, they probably did play an important role in the electoral outcome for Fatherland–All Russia and may have played a consequential role in influencing support for Unity and the CPRF, but they do not appear to have played any major role in the performance of Unity of Right Forces, Yabloko, or the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia. Pskov was the one region where the LDPR had a governor in power, yet Zhirinovsky's bloc won only 6.9 percent of the popular vote there, whereas Unity captured 39 percent.

On closer examination of this election in comparative perspective, one could make the case that two elections with very different dynamics governed by very different concerns and institutions occurred at the national level. One vote was a contest between political parties vying for seats in the Duma through the party list system. Well-known parties that have participated in previous elections dominated the campaign. These parties are very reliant on proportional representation for their political survival. The second vote also appeared to be a battle for Duma seats. In fact, however, the second national contest had nothing to do with the Duma and everything to do with the presidential election next year. The two main players in the campaign—Fatherland–All Russia (OVR) and Unity (Medved)—were formed first and foremost to influence the presidential election, not the parliamentary vote. A third kind of campaign took place in contests for single mandate districts. These were elections dominated by local parties of power, which had very little to do with either political parties or presidential elections.

Parliamentary Parties

The first contest was a typical, boring parliamentary campaign that resembles a PR vote in any European parliamentary democracy. The four main participants—the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, Yabloko, the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, and the Union of Right Forces—share many common attributes.

First, all participated in previous Duma votes. They are not newcomers to the parliamentary electoral process. Three of the four have enjoyed representation in all three parliaments. The predecessor to the Union of Right Forces, Democratic Choice of Russia, won only 3.8 percent of the popular vote in 1995 and therefore did not have a faction in the Duma. However, the party and its leaders survived this period by holding positions in the government.

Second, all four parties have rather well defined political orientations, loyal electorates, and notable leaders. In focus groups and opinion polls, voters demonstrate that they know these parties well. The CPRF's program has now recognized the legitimacy of private property and free markets but nonetheless still advocates a major role for the state in the economy. The party boasts an extremely loyal following. The older, poorer, and more rural you are, the more likely you are to support the CPRF. The head of the party, Gennady Zyuganov, has been a nationally recognized political figure in Russia for the last decade. Likewise, Yabloko has a well-defined political niche (the "liberal opposition"), a core electorate (the not-so-well-off intelligentsia and white-collars workers of large and medium sized cities), and a well-known leader.

In comparison with the Democratic Choice of Russia (DVR) in 1995, the Union of Right Forces (SPS) modified its platform before the 1999 campaign. Most importantly, SPS supported the war in Chechnya, whereas DVR opposed the war in 1995. The rest of its program, however, has remained consistent over the decade—unabashedly liberal (in the European sense of the word). The demographics of its electorate are the polar opposite of the CPRF: young, wealthy, and urban. SPS leaders, including former prime ministers Sergei Kiryenko and Yegor Gaidar and former first deputy prime ministers Boris Nemtsov and Anatoly Chubais, are some of the best known (if not most notorious) political figures in Russia. For most voters in Russia, no amount of campaign advertising would change their firm opinions—some firmly positive, but most firmly negative—about these people. Only Zhirinovsky's LDPR has a rather ill-defined and rapidly changing ideological orientation, although the core of his views are still nationalistic and imperial. In contrast to the other parties, this may be the reason why the LDPR has continued to lose support while the other three have maintained their electorates.

Third, during the 1999 campaign, these parties were not really competing with one another. Rather, they were busy trying to maintain their own electorates and did not invest much campaign time in seeking new supporters.[13] Consequently, with the possible exception of Yabloko and the Union of Right Forces, they almost never engaged each other directly. There was little mud slinging between the CPRF and the Union of Right Forces, or between Zhirinovsky and Yavlinsky.

Fourth, as shown in table 2, three of the four parties won roughly the same

TABLE 2
Results of Party-List Voting in Russian Duma Elections of 1995 and 1999 (as Percentages of National Proportional Representation Vote)

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

[a] Includes Democratic Choice of Russia (3.86%), Forward Russia! (1.94%), Pamfilova-Gurov-Lysenko (1.6%), and Common Cause (0.7%).

TABLE 3
Results of Polls Gauging Support for Political Parties/Blocs by Voter Age Group in Russian State Duma Elections, 1999 (% of Respondents)

	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–59	Over 60
CPRF	5.4	13.3	18.3	28.9	49.8
Unity	25.3	25.1	17.8	18.4	11.9
Fatherland–All Russia	15.3	16.8	13.5	16.6	11.6
Yabloko	10.6	11	19	10.3	6.4
Union of Right Forces	16.2	10.7	8.9	5.7	4.4
Zhirinovsky Bloc	12.1	8.4	6.4	3.6	1.6

percentage in this election that they won in December 1995. The CPRF won almost exactly the same percentage, improving only slightly over its 1995 showing. Yabloko lost a percentage point—a big blow to the party, but a small variation in the percentage in 1995. The Union of Right Forces did better this year, but its total electoral support (adding the small blocs that divided their vote in 1995) is not that different than 1995. Zhirinovsky's LDPR suffered a sharp decline, and this may be precisely because this bloc has the weakest ideological definition of the four parties. Yet three of the parties won plus or minus 5 percentage points of what they won in 1995. Given all that has happened in Russia over the last four years—the 1996 presidential election, the August 1998 financial crash, rotating prime ministers, and the wars in Kosovo and Chechnya—the numbers represent incredible stability, on par with other European PR parliamentary democracies.

It is also striking that no new ideology-based party has managed to challenge the established parties for their political niches. New nationalist, communist, and liberal parties have formed; some even have long histories and famous leaders. But none appears poised to capture 1 percent, let alone 5 percent, of the vote.

Fifth, all four of these parties have enjoyed roughly the same amount of public support throughout the entire campaign period, suggesting that the campaign process has only marginally influenced their electoral potential. Most election experts agree that the Union of Right Forces ran a most professional, well-financed, well-managed, and well-targeted campaign, which contributed to its strong showing. A focus on courting the young, educated, and wealthy in metropolitan areas, effective use of television that highlighted the party's youth, ideas, and government experience, and a Putin endorsement late in the campaign helped to consolidate SPS support. The negative rating of SPS was second only to that of the LDPR, but in a proportional representation system, parties do not necessarily need to capture 50 percent of the electorate to win, but instead can focus their energies on more narrowly defined electoral niches. Many electoral experts have observed that Yabloko conducted an ineffective campaign, with a poorly defined message and outdated television ads. Polls and focus groups supported the contention that Yavlinsky did not help his party by his performances in national television debates. Yavlinsky was particularly ineffective in his debate with SPS leader Anatoly Chubais. Yet despite its allegedly weak campaign performance, Yabloko lost only 1 percentage point when compared to its 1995 showing. The LDPR suffered the greatest setback, winning only half of what the party won in 1995. Of the four parliamentary parties, the LDPR was probably affected most directly by the appearance of Unity, as the pro–Kremlin coalition performed exceptionally well in LDPR strongholds of the past. When compared to the low expectations assigned to the LDPR at the beginning of the fall campaign, however, the 6 percent showing demonstrated that Zhirinovsky still has a loyal core of followers.

"The new coalitions engaged in fierce campaigns aimed at attracting new voters and winning voters from each other."

Sixth, as hinted above, none of the parties enjoyed strong support from governors or presidents of republics. The CPRF had the support of a dozen governors in the red belt, the Union of Right Forces had Governor Titov in Samara, and the LDPR enjoyed support from Governor Mikhailhov in Pskov. On the whole, though, these four cannot be considered regional-based parties.

An additional feature shared by these parties is that they will take their parliamentary roles very seriously. They understand that parliamentary participation is an important component of party development. And they should take their parliamentary jobs seriously because a final shared trait is that none of them has a leader who is a serious contender in the March 2000 presidential election. This assessment could have been made long ago, well before the results of the 1999 parliamentary vote. Multiparty systems reinforced by proportional representation usually do not generate single parties capable of winning more than 50 percent of the vote. Yet Russia's presidential electoral system requires that a successful candidate win more than 50 percent of the vote. In this system, therefore, identification with a parliamentary party hurts rather than helps presidential candidates. Yeltsin understood this well and did not join or even support any of the parliamentary parties. Putin has seemed to learn the institutional effects of mixing PR with a two-ballot presidential system and therefore also refrained from joining any single parliamentary party. In the 1999 campaign, he endorsed Unity and the Union of Right Forces. Immediately after the campaign, he emphasized his desire to build a nonpartisan coalition of supporters that could include these two parties as well as others. At the time of this writing, several other important other parties and coalitions, including All Russia, have endorsed the acting president.

Presidential Coalitions

The contrast between the parliamentary parties and the presidential coalitions in the 1999 election could not be starker. First, neither Fatherland nor Unity participated in the last election. They are both unlikely to participate in the next parliamentary election. The 2000 presidential race was the focus of attention from the very beginning. Luzhkov created Fatherland to promote his presidential aspirations. Primakov joined Fatherland–All Russia to advance his presidential prospects. On behalf of Putin, the Kremlin created Unity to weaken Luzhkov and Primakov as presidential candidates. Neither coalition was very concerned with party development. Fatherland–All Russia has already collapsed.

Second, both Fatherland and Unity have very poorly defined identities among the electorate. Focus groups that I commissioned in Moscow (where the most sophisticated voters in Russia are located) revealed that voters did not understand what either coalition stood for only seven days before election day. Fatherland–All Russia's program contained many contradictions. Some leaders of this coalition emphasized the need for greater state intervention in the economy while others advocated cutting taxes. Regional leaders such as Tatar President Shaimiev stressed the need for greater decentralization and strengthening of federal institutions, while others, including Primakov and Luzhkov, advocated strengthening the federal government. The coalition's position on Chechnya also wavered and waffled. Unity's program was even more mysterious. Eventually, a program was published, but its target audience appeared to be electoral analysts, not Russian voters. Almost by definition, these new parties had new electorates, that is, people without a tradition of voting for the two parties. Fatherland–All Russia did enjoy the support of loyal followers in cities and regions governed by their leaders, but those were but a small number of places. Information about voter decision making is still being gathered, but it is reasonable to speculate that the supporters of the two coalitions probably changed their minds most frequently about whom to support and probably made up their minds later than most.

Third, in contrast to the other four established parties, the new coalitions engaged in fierce campaigns aimed at attracting new voters and winning voters from each other. Unity leaders and Putin avoided direct attacks against OVR, leaving the real dirty work to the ORT and RTR television networks. Through their own media outlets, Fatherland leaders responded directly to these attacks. This action-reaction cycle, observable almost every day, stands in sharp contrast to the nonconfrontational and barely noticeable campaigns being waged by the other parties discussed above.

Despite the Kremlin's negative campaign against Fatherland–All Russia, and vice versa, preliminary analysis of the results suggests that Fatherland–All Russia (OVR), and Unity did not actually compete for the same kind of voter (tables 4–6). OVR's voters tended to be more educated, wealthier, and more urban than average. In several respects, the OVR voter in 1999 looked like the Our Home Is Russia voter in 1995. OVR also won significant support in a very small numbers of regions—Moscow, Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Mordovia, and Ingushetiya. Elsewhere, OVR actually won a smaller percentage than the Union of Right Forces. Even in St. Petersburg, whose governor Vladimir Yakovlev was on the OVR list, the Union of Right Forces won more support. The demographics of Unity supporters seem to be very different from those of OVR supporters. Unity voters tend to be younger, less-educated, and more rural (tables 3, 4, and 6). Whereas OVR enjoyed more support from richer voters, Unity enjoyed relatively equal support from all income levels (see table 5). Unity also appears to have done very well in so-called nationalistic regions such as Siberia, the Far East, and border regions such as Pskov. In sum, there appears to be no real correlation between those who supported OVR and those who opted for Unity.[14]

Fourth, again in contrast to stable levels of support expressed throughout the fall for the four parliamentary parties, popular support for these presidential coalitions fluctuated considerably in the last four months. Fatherland took a nosedive,

TABLE 4
Results of Polls Gauging Support for Political Parties/Blocs by Voters' Levels of Education, Russian State Duma Elections, 1999 (% of Respondents)

	Primary, incomplete secondary	Secondary, specialized secondary	Incomplete higher, higher
CPRF	53	27.1	15.4
Unity	10.9	19.9	19.3
Fatherland–All Russia	9.7	13.4	18.3
Yabloko	4.5	8.6	18.4
Union of Right Forces	2.3	7.5	11.4
Zhirinovsky Bloc	3.5	6.8	4.1

TABLE 5
Results of Polls Gauging Support for Political Parties/Blocs by Voters' Income Levels, Russian State Duma Elections, 1999 (% of Respondents)

	Low income	Average income	High income
CPRF	37.7	24.8	14.4
Unity	17	20.3	17.1
Fatherland–All Russia	11	14.2	20.3
Yabloko	7.9	12.1	14.5
Union of Right Forces	5	8.6	11.4
Zhirinovsky Bloc	6.5	5.1	4.9

TABLE 6
Urban/Rural Breakdown of Support for Political Parties/Blocs, Russian State Duma Elections, 1999 (%)

	City population					
	Over 1 million	300,000–1 million	100,000–300,000	Under 100,000	Rural	Percentage of total national vote
CPRF	13.9	24.6	24.8	30.1	32.2	26.3
Unity	14.1	16.9	23.9	18.7	20.5	18.6
Fatherland–All Russia	23.8	12.4	12	14.9	10.6	14.6
Yabloko	15.8	14.6	9.3	8.3	10.5	11.4
Union of Right Forces	9.1	13.5	8	6.4	5.9	8.2
Zhirinovsky Bloc	5.3	5.7	3	4	8.3	5.5

while Unity enjoyed a radical climb in the polls. The fluctuating numbers, as shown in table 7, suggest that the campaign itself played a crucial role in their final performances.

Negative television coverage of Luzhkov and Primakov most likely contributed to Fatherland's fall, while incessant coverage of Shoigu's every move probably helped Unity. But Putin's popularity must also figure into the equation. Putin's decisive role in Chechnya most certainly sparked this rise in public support, although few at the time believed that a second intervention into Chechnya would be popular. After all, the first intervention was extremely unpopular. Putin's popularity eventually grew beyond Chechnya as people started to appreciate a leader of action in the White House. VTsIOM polls conducted over the fall of 1999 found the population was much more optimistic about reforms and much more upbeat about the economy. For instance, in August 1999, VTsIOM asked citizens if they and their families had adapted to the changes that had

TABLE 7
Changes in Support for Fatherland–All Russia and Unity (Medved'), September 1999 to Election Day (% of Poll Respondents)

	September	October	19–22 November	3–6 December	Election day 19 December
Unity (Medved')	—	5	9	17	23.32
Fatherland–All Russia	22	21	15	10	13.33

Source: VCIOM polls, available on the Russian Votes Web site: www.russiavotes.org.

occurred in their country in the last ten years; 29 percent said yes, and 42 percent said that they would never adapt. In November 1999, although the economy had not changed appreciably since August, 40 percent had suddenly adapted, and only 36 percent reported that they would never adapt.[15] In another VTsIOM question asked in August 1999, 28 percent reported that the situation regarding payment of wages, pensions, and stipends in their region or city had improved (presumably in the last month, as the question is asked every month), while 27 percent reported that the situation had become worse. In November, 51 percent reported improvement, and only 17 percent reported the opposite.[16]

These kinds of attitude changes contributed to Putin's skyrocketing approval ratings, which reached as high as 80 percent on the eve of the parliamentary election. Putin then transferred his personal popularity to Unity by openly endorsing the coalition on national television and appearing several times in photo opportunities with Unity's leader and government minister Sergei Shoigu. It helped that Shoigu was also a young, nonpartisan, person of action, seemingly cut from the same cloth as Putin. Given Putin's remarkable popularity, we should not be surprised that "his" party would win a quarter of the popular vote—a percentage, after all, that was scarcely one-third of his own rating. As all opposition parties in the West know, it is very difficult to defeat popular incumbents. When Fatherland–All Russia offered a stable alternative to the very unpopular and erratic Yeltsin, the coalition's support grew, especially in summer 1999 when Yeltsin changed his government three times. Once Putin began to rise in stature, however, the electoral demand for Fatherland–All Russia withered.

Fifth, both of the coalitions relied heavily on regional leaders as members and allies. They fought each other for the support of governors and presidents and cared little about endorsements from parties or local legislative councils. At one point, Unity claimed to have support from forty-three governors and presidents (although only one formally joined the coalition), while Fatherland–All Russia championed itself as a party of regional executives.

Finally, if the four parliamentary parties do not have serious presidential contenders within their ranks, both of these presidential coalitions could have boasted one or two candidates before the parliamentary campaign began—Primakov and Luzhkov from OVR and Putin (Unity's surrogate leader) from Unity. After this parliamentary campaign—a campaign that served as a surrogate presidential primary for these two presidential coalitions—both Primakov and Luzhkov may be through as serious presidential contenders. Luzhkov has already stated as much; Primakov's participation would only add to the legitimacy of an election he and many others believe to be illegitimate.

Eventually, Russia must either liquidate the presidency and develop a multiparty parliament, or liquidate proportional representation in the Duma and have a two-party presidential system. Until or unless these institutional changes are made, however, expect more two-headed parliamentary elections in the future.

Elections in the Single-Mandate Districts

It is too early to speculate on the results of the election in the 225 single-mandate districts that make up the other half of the Duma. Many of the winners are unknowns who had not revealed their party identifications or political views, and some of the losers were well-known national figures. A few trends, however, already are apparent.

In the run-up to the 1999 vote, it was apparent that regional leaders intended to play a greater role in this parliamentary vote compared with previous votes. In 1995, regional leaders (most of them at the time were appointed, not elected) often viewed parliamentary elections as an event that did not affect them personally. In 1999, regional leaders seemed truly concerned about election results and appeared to actively try to influence the outcome. They wanted to have as many of their allies as possible elected, so as to be able to lobby effectively in the capital for their regional and personal interests. Over the past four years, regional executives have acted collectively within the Federation Council to balance the powers of the president. They now believe that the Duma can act as a similar check on executive power on the national level, especially if the Duma is controlled by "their" representatives. Consequently, governors and presidents joined electoral blocs and organized campaign resources for single-mandate candidates in their regions. Compared with 1995, governors also had more possibilities to influence the elections. Following the August 1998 financial crisis, many federally oriented oligarchs withdrew from the regions and left room for expansion of the role of administrative resources.

Measuring the role of governors on the party list is beyond the scope of this essay. Obviously, Fatherland–All Russia regional executives played a positive role for the party vote in Moscow, Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, and Ingushetiya. Yet, as already mentioned, Yakovlev did not deliver for Fatherland–All Russia in St. Petersburg. Regional leaders who backed Unity do appear to have had a marginal influence on improving the party's performance in their regions, but only in the margins. In no region did a pro-Unity governor deliver twice the national average, let alone three and four times the national average as did some Fatherland–All Russia leaders. The Union of Right Forces certainly benefited from the backing of Titov in Samara, where SPS won more than double their national average. Yet neither the LDPR nor Our Home Is Russia appears to have benefited from the backing of "their" governors. The CPRF performed well in regions where CPRF governors are in power, but the causal arrow in these pro-communist areas may point in the opposite direction, that is, governors who are Communists in these regions are Communists because the CPRF is so strongly supported in these places. With the aid of polling data, all of these relationships demand further research and exploration.

In the single-mandate races, however, one pattern already seems apparent—the declining role of national parties in determining the electoral outcomes. The CPRF won eleven fewer seats in 1999 than in 1995.[17] Yabloko's share of single-mandate seats decreased from fourteen to four. This result is even more disappointing when one recognizes that two of Yabloko's four victories went to politicians only loosely affiliated with the party and more well-known for their roles in previous Yeltsin governments—Sergei Stepashin, a former prime minister, and Mikhail Zadornov, a former finance minister. In 1995, Democratic Choice of Russia (DVR) captured less than 4 percent of the popular vote but won nine single-mandate races. In 1999, the Union of Right Forces more than doubled DVR's party list showing but still managed to win only five single-mandate seats. As usual, Zhirinovsky's party won no single-mandate seats. Even the two new presidential coalitions did not dominate the single-mandate races. Unity won only nine seats. Fatherland-All Russia did win a substantial thirty-one seats, but the vast majority of these came from regions dominated by regional executives loyal to the new coalition. In other words, local parties of power, rather than a national party affiliation delivered the wins. This includes nine seats from Moscow, and three each from Moscow Oblast, Bashkortostan, and Tatarstan. Four regions accounted for two-thirds of all of Fatherland–All Russia's single mandate victories. Independents accounted for the largest number of single-mandate victors, winning 104 races out of the 216 seats that were filled.[18] Over half of these "independents" had pledged their loyalty to Putin and the Kremlin just weeks after the parliamentary vote. Even if they do organize a pro-government coalition (tentatively called Nardonyi Deputat), this Duma grouping will not constitute a political party. These deputies owe their victories to local patronage, not national parties.

Implications for Democracy

At first glance, the results of Russia's 1999 parliamentary election look positive for democratic consolidation. The CPRF will no longer dominate politics within the Duma. As mentioned above, this change in the balance of power is likely to generate coalition building and compromise within the parliament itself and greater cooperation between the president and the Duma. The "red" Duma can no longer be blamed for inaction on important reformist legislation; the president and his government will have to assume greater responsibility.

In the medium run, the extent to which this election serves the cause of democracy will depend on Putin. The real winner of the 1999 vote was the one major Russian politician not on the ballot, prime minister and now acting president

Putin. Unity, the pro-Putin electoral bloc, soundly defeated Fatherland, the electoral coalition headed by Putin's chief rival for the presidential election, Yevgeny Primakov. The Communists finished first, another Putin objective, as he and his election team want to face Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov in this year's presidential vote. Putin must also be happy with the surprising showing of the Union of Right Forces and the fifty-four independents who have pledged their support to Putin. Even before Yeltsin's resignation, Putin was poised to ride the momentum of this parliamentary victory into an easy presidential victory.[19] After Yeltsin's resignation, Putin seems unstoppable.

What Putin will do with the electoral mandate, however, remains extremely uncertain. The 1999 parliamentary vote might one day be remembered as the moment that Russia buried communism forever and began a new millennium under a young, pro-market, and pro-democratic leader. However, if Putin chooses to use his popular support to violate democratic norms (even if the ends, such as fighting corruption, are worthy ones), then the 1999 vote will be viewed as the beginning of the end of Russian democracy in the 1990s. Putin's trajectory as a president simply cannot be foreseen at this early stage.

In the long run, the most significant outcome for democracy to emerge from the last parliamentary election concerns party development. The outcome is mixed. In several respects, the last election helped to strengthen Russia's "old" parties. Four parties that have competed in Russia's previous two Duma votes—the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, the Union of Right Forces (though by another name before), Yabloko, and the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia—all crossed the 5 percent threshold. As discussed above, these four parties look and act like parties in the Western sense, with well-defined platforms, loyal electorates, and party memberships. As a sign of their consolidation, it is striking that each garnered roughly the same percentage in 1999 as it won in the last parliamentary vote in 1995. Together, they represent the core of a new multiparty system in Russia, a key feature of liberal democracy.

Unity, however, unleashed a radical assault on Russia's party development. The state, not the people, created this electoral bloc, which can boast no history, no platform, and no membership. This virtual organization captured almost a quarter of the popular vote by riding the coattails of the popular prime minister, Vladimir Putin. One of Unity's distinguishing campaign slogans was a pledge to eliminate proportional representation as a component of Russia's parliamentary election law. Before the 1999 vote, pro-party deputies always had a solid majority within the Duma as parties won all of the party-list seats and added more to their ranks by winning some single-mandate seats. The 1999 vote represents the first time that an electoral bloc that rejects proportional representation won seats through proportional representation. If Russia's electoral law were eventually amended to eliminate proportional representation altogether, then Russian party development—especially liberal party development—would suffer a serious setback. The battle over this electoral law in the coming years may be the most important, if largely unnoticed, consequence of the 1999 parliamentary election.

NOTES

1. On the origins of this formulation for selecting Duma members, see Michael McFaul, "Institutional Design, Uncertainty, and Path Dependency during Transitions: Cases from Russia, *Constitutional Political Economy* 10, no. 1 (1999): 27–52.

2. Some minor changes were introduced in the new 1999 Duma electoral law. One year before the vote, a party or an organized movement had to specify in its charter its intention to participate in the 1999 parliamentary election. The change was designed to discourage latecomers. The new law also limited the number of candidates to 270 of whom not more than 18 (in the 1995, the number was 12) could be included in the federal part of the party list. The rest must be included in regional candidate groupings. The list of personal data to be made available to the public by candidates was also significantly increased. It included information about convictions, citizenship of foreign countries, amount and source of income, and a listing of property owned by the candidate. The new law was also more specific about registration procedures. It required the verification of signatures in the signature lists, forbids solicitation of signatures from experts from legislative bodies of interior affairs, judicial entities, military ministry, and other state organizations. At least 20 percent of all signatures, selected randomly, had to be officially verified by law. A final significant new provision did not allow party leaders at the top of the party list to use free television time if they were also running in single-mandate districts. This rule was designed to discourage individuals from registering parties as a way to help them win single-mandate seats, a phenomenon that occurred frequently in 1995.

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

4. See Tatyana Krasnopevsteva, "Comparing Party Platforms," Russia's 1999 Duma Elections: Pre-election Bulletin, No.1 (Moscow: Moscow Carnegie Center, 2 December 1999).

5. Agenstvo Regional'nykh Politicheskikh Issledovanii (ARPI), *Regional'nyi Sotsiologicheskii Monitoring* 49, 10–12 December 1999, 6.

6. Nikolai Petrov and Aleksey Makarkin, "Unity (Medved)," in McFaul et al., *Primer on Russia's 1999 Duma Elections*, 124. This chapter provides a concise history of the bloc.

7. Michael McFaul, "Russia's Political Forces Realign," *Wall Street Journal* (European Edition), 26 August 1999.

8. ARPI, *Regional'nyi Sotsiologicheskii Monitoring* 49, 10–12 December 1999, 6.

9. Quoted here from *Vlast* 31, 10 August 1999, 20

10. M. Steven Fish, "The Travails of Liberalsim," *Journal of Democracy* 7, no. 2 (April 1996): 114–15.

11. See Michael McFaul and Nikolai Petrov, "The 1999 Duma Election in Comparative Perspective," 8; and Alexey Zudin, "Union of Right Forces," 103–12, both in McFaul et al., *Primer on Russia's 1999 Duma Elections*. In my own survey of commentary and analysis on the elections before the vote, I found no one who predicted such a strong showing for SPS. Most believed that they would not cross the 5 percent threshold.

12. This kind of interpretation, the dominant explanation found in most journalistic accounts, is most eloquently stated in Thomas Graham, "Who Really Won in Russia?" *New York Times*, 21 December 1999, A31; and "Russia's Election: A Grubby Spectacle," *The Economist*, 18 December 1999, 19–21.

13. This assessment is based on my interviews with campaign managers from all four parties (December 1999).

14. In correlating the party percentages across eighty-eight regions, Aleksei Titkov found that a comparison of OVR and Unity produced a strong negative correlation (–0.6). The only other negative correlation of that magnitude occurred when comparing Fatherland–All Russia levels of support with Zhirinovsky's Bloc. Even the negative correlation between SPS and the CPRF was not as strong (-0.3). Not surprisingly, the highest posi-

tive correlation (0.6) occurred when comparing Yabloko and SPS. The author is grateful to Aleksei Titkov for generating these preliminary figures which, it must be cautioned, are based preliminarily on regional results and not on precinct-level figures, which have yet to be released.

15. http://www.wciom.ru/EDITION/press14.htm, 5 of 14.

16. Ibid., 6 of 14.

17. All of these figures should be treated as preliminary because this article was written before the first session of the new Duma had convened, the moment when actual single-mandate party affiliations will become better known. The basic conclusions drawn here, however, can be made based on rough approximations.

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

19. Many argue that his fate is tied exclusively to military success in Chechnya; as more body bags begin to undermine support for the war, so, too, will Putin's popularity decline. In the long run, strong opposition to the war may emerge, as it did during the last Russian invasion of Chechnya, in 1994–96. To date, however, this war is different. First, the rationale for intervention has changed. In 1994, Russian citizens did not understand why their military invaded Chechnya. Polls showed a majority did not believe that preserving Russia's territorial integrity was a worthy aim. In contrast, everyone, rightly or wrongly, understands the current offensive to be a counter-terrorist campaign against "bandits" who attacked Russian territory (Dagestan), for the first time since 1941. These same "terrorists" allegedly bombed innocents in Moscow and elsewhere. Consequently, public support for the war remains high and will not necessarily be undermined by higher casualties. Second, the current conflict is a different kind of war. Russian forces are greater: 100,000 compared with the 30,000 that fought before. Russian tactics differ, too: Russian generals are avoiding casualties by relying more heavily on aerial bombing. The Russian military has slowed the pace of fighting to avoid casualties but also to ensure that the popular war does not end too fast. Third, the electoral dynamics of the current war contrast with those of Russia's 1996 presidential race. Then, President Boris N. Yeltsin's chief pollster argued that the war had to end for Yeltsin to be reelected. Yeltsin agreed, and on 31 March, he signed a temporary cease-fire. In 2000, there will be no electoral pressure to end the war. On the contrary, the war is popular, and no major presidential candidate advocates negotiating with the Chechen authorities. Finally, Russia's three national TV networks support the war, in contrast to the 1994–96 campaign. NTV has begun to criticize the war, but only sparingly. Furthermore, few print journalists report from Chechnya because the Russian government has restricted their movement. Even if the Russian military has begun to lose and many Western reporters also claim they are losing, most Russians are unlikely to know it.