

Institutional Determinants of Chronic Policy Failure in Yeltsin's Russia

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Boris Yeltsin ended his presidency with an apology. He told his fellow Russians that he was sorry for failing to fulfill so much of what he and his people had hoped for in his new republic.¹ Indeed, the newly reconstituted Russian state experienced greater difficulty in effecting economic, political, and social reform than many observers had anticipated in the early 1990s. Even after the violence of the October 1993 power struggle, there was hope that the end of an intense political stalemate would usher in a period of dynamic transformation. Yet, through Yeltsin's tenure in Russia's Second Republic² (late 1993–99), Russia appeared to be running in place—or even losing ground—in its attempts to move toward a revitalized market economy and a consolidated democracy. Even with the improvement in Russia's economic and fiscal situation beginning in 1999, Russia's economy returned to its dismal 1994 levels only in 2000.³ Politically, Russia lost ground on key indicators measuring freedom and democracy during that period, as its Freedom House ranking for “political rights” fell (on a one to seven scale) from three in 1993 to five by 2000.⁴ A major reason for the disappointing overall performance appears to have been the inability of the Russian state to enact and implement central elements of its plans for political and economic reform. Yeltsin's attempts at major reform of the land code, tax code, military, energy sector, and social entitlements all ended in failure during his tenure. But why was the Russian state so unsuccessful in carrying out coherent, comprehensive reforms during that period? More specifically, why did the collaboration between the Russian executive and legislative branches so frequently lead to disappointing and unwanted policy outcomes?

In this article I argue that it was the structural weakness and isolation of the government (the Council of Ministers)⁵ within Russia's political system that was the root factor contributing to the poor policy outputs and the stagnation of reforms. Russia's constitutional choices set up an institutional structure that permitted the separation of policy responsibility, which resided with the government,

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from political power and accountability. The institutional structure led not only to a hostile stalemate between the executive and legislative branches over policy issues; it also often led to pernicious outcomes. I will demonstrate how three dominant institutional features in Yeltsin's Russia separated political power from policy responsibility and thus created chronic problems for policymaking. An afterword defends my argument in light of recent changes in policy efficacy and performance under Vladimir Putin.

Examining Russia's Institutions as an Explanation for Policy Failure

Although I emphasize the importance of institutional architecture, I do not contend that institutions and their arrangement rigidly determine outcomes. Rather, I argue that institutions limit the range of possible outcomes and make certain outcomes more likely than others.⁶ Institutions constrain and condition the choices of political actors and define the consequences of those choices.⁷ Within the state, institutional arrangement affects the relative power of actors in influencing policy outcomes and influences actors' perception of their own interests.⁸ In sum, institutional structure conditions the choices and capabilities and thus the performance of policymakers. So although the arrangement of institutions in Yeltsin's Russia did not doom policymaking efforts to certain failure, my argument is that it certainly made failure and the stagnation of reforms far more likely.

Several studies have concentrated on how Russia's current institutional structure has affected policy outcomes. Despite the many excellent contributions in this area, this literature has generated a series of noncomprehensive, loosely integrated explanations of policy failures. The problem stems partly from a tendency to focus too closely on particular institutional entities rather than adopting a broader perspective that emphasizes the inter-relations between the institutions. Studies have focused too much on the institutional structure and powers of either the president⁹ or the parliament¹⁰ and not enough on the institutional basis of their interaction. Second, to the extent that institutional analysis has investigated certain institutional actors in the Russian political system, it has insufficiently considered the state institution most directly responsible for policymaking—the government. Although others have de-emphasized the role of the government as a separate institution because of its relative political weakness compared to the president and the Duma, I argue that it is the political weakness and isolation of the government under Yeltsin that calls out for investigation.

More broadly, the institutional design of Russia's political system warrants study because it does not fit neatly into any category of political system. Because it incorporates elements of both presidentialism and parliamentarism and has a mixed electoral system, attempts to understand how its institutional structure influences policymaking must penetrate more deeply than the well-rehearsed debates over presidential versus parliamentary forms of government.¹¹ To understand more fully the consequences of institutional arrangement, we need to look more closely at the structure of institutions themselves (of executives and legislatures) and their combination and interaction within the political system (interactions between government systems and electoral systems).¹²

Russia's Institutional Separation of Power and Policy Responsibility

Although Russia's 1993 constitution fundamentally resolved the intense power struggle between the First Republic's executive and legislative branches by establishing the predominance of the presidency and clarifying the powers of both branches, the new constitutional order created a new problem. The structure of the new political system left the government, the state institution primarily responsible for economic and social policymaking, with uncertain and problematic links to major institutional sources of political power—to the president, to the legislature, and to political parties. In other words, Russia's new institutional arrangement left the government weak and isolated, without a reliable political leg to stand on. The government's chronic political weakness and isolation were created by the combination and interaction of three structural features: (1) the high degree of "separation of origin and survival" between the government and the Duma, (2) the structure of the political party system, and (3) a split executive. Those three features worked together to isolate the government from institutional sources of political support and accountability—from the legislature, from the president, and from political parties. The government's relationship to major institutional sources of political power and accountability are summarized in table 1.

First, the new political system established a high degree of "separation of origin and survival" between the executive and legislative branches. The government and the Duma were independently selected and faced very high costs for changing the composition of the opposing institution, which set the stage for a hostile stalemate over legislative policymaking. Second, the electoral system prompted the formation of a fragmented and polarized multiparty system. Specifically, the proportional representation component of the electoral system ensured that party-based factions would dominate the Duma while it simultaneously enabled extremist parties to obtain large factions. The result was a fragmented and polarized form of multipartism, which greatly complicated the government's attempts at legislative policymaking. Third, and perhaps most important, the Second Republic introduced a split executive, which institutionally separated the government from the president. That separation, although politically advantageous to the president, frequently undermined the government's legislative policymaking efforts. Although the government was burdened with responsibility for policy, it often lacked the solid political support and involvement of the most powerful actor in the system. Finally, the combination and interaction of the three institu-

TABLE 1. Government's Institutional Sources of Political Power and Accountability in Policymaking

Source of Political Power	Prevailing Feature of Relationship
Government–State Duma	High degree of separation of origin and survival
Government–Political Parties	Fragmentation and polarity of the party system
Government–President	Split executive

tional features compounded the government's isolation from sources of political power and accountability.

The institutional structure and the resulting chronic weakness and precariousness of the government's political position undermined the full range of capabilities needed for effective policymaking. Specifically, the government's political weakness made it difficult to "set and maintain priorities," "coordinate conflicting objectives into a coherent whole," "impose losses on powerful groups," "manage political cleavages," and "ensure effective implementation."¹³ Its diminished policymaking capabilities frequently propelled the policy process toward undesirable outcomes: deadlock between the executive and legislative branches over key policy issues or ill-advised "survival" compromises. The government's weak link to political power also reduced its political accountability for policy decisions, making corrections of policy mistakes difficult. Figure 1 depicts the causal chain leading to chronic policy failure in Yeltsin's Russia.

The Separation of Origin and Survival

The high degree of "separation of origin and survival" between the Russian executive and legislative branches deprived the government of institutional mechanisms that could ensure shared political orientation or shared accountability with the State Duma. The apparent mutual accountability of the Russian executive and the legislative branches is largely illusory. In terms used by Shugart and Carey, the principles of "separation of origin and survival" are far more robust in the Russian system than they appear at first glance.¹⁴ In practice, the Duma has had exceedingly limited discretionary power over the appointment (or "origin") and continued tenure (or "survival") of the government. Similarly, the president's ability to dissolve the Duma as a response to ongoing disagreements over policy issues was a limited, high-risk option.

The State Duma effectively has almost no control over the formation and composition of the state's main policymaking arm—the government. The constitution gives the president and his appointee, the prime minister, the right to form the government.¹⁵ Although the Duma formally has the right to accept or reject the president's nominee for prime minister,¹⁶ the constitution and its subsequent judicial interpretation severely limit the Duma's meaningful exercise of that power. Specifically, Article 111 of the constitution states that if the Duma rejects the president's proposed candidate for prime minister three times, the president then has the right to dissolve the Duma and unilaterally appoint the prime minister.¹⁷ The result has been that the Duma ultimately has very little say in naming prime ministers. A clear example of the president's ability to force his prime ministerial candidate through the Duma was Yeltsin's three-time nomination of Sergei Kiriyenko to lead the government in spring 1998. The Duma possesses no formal rights over the selection or approval of deputy prime ministers and ministers.

That is not to argue, however, that the Duma's oversight regarding nominees for prime minister has been completely without meaning or political influence. The Duma's approval process of candidates for prime minister has been influential in encouraging candidates to engage in a dialogue with the lower house.¹⁸ The

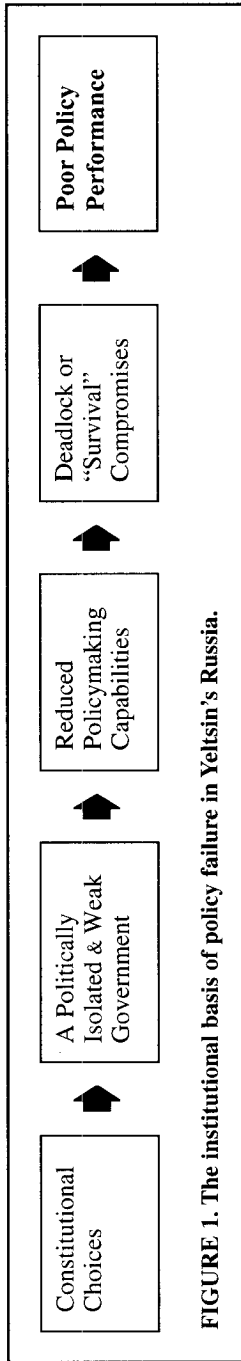


FIGURE 1. The institutional basis of policy failure in Yeltsin's Russia.

Duma's oversight can also be crucial in times of crisis, as shown by the Duma's rejection of Viktor Chernomyrdin in September 1998.

However, the Duma lacks a solid institutional foundation for control over who becomes prime minister or who serves in the government. Very often, its acquiescence over approval of a prime minister was essentially coerced in that it reflected the wish of the Duma's deputies to remain in office rather than their genuine support for the nominee. That set of rules makes possible the appointment of a prime minister and government that lack a solid base of support in the Duma, setting the stage for deadlock. Moreover, the Duma can claim that because it was not responsible for selecting the government, it is not responsible for the government's actions.

The "separation of *survival*" of the government and the Duma is also pronounced. On one hand, the Russian constitution provides the Duma with weak levers for the removal of the government. Although the Duma has the formal right to vote no confidence in the government, a closer look at the Russian constitution reveals daunting restrictions on this right. Unlike most parliamentary systems, the government in Russia does not need to maintain the authentic support of a majority in the parliament to remain in power. Avoiding a repeated successful vote of no confidence¹⁹ has not proved to be difficult for the government because such a vote would most likely result in the Duma's *own* dissolution, rather than the removal of the government. That is because if the Duma votes no confidence twice within a three-month period, the president can choose either to dismiss the government or to *dissolve the State Duma*.²⁰ Given that the president himself selects the government, and is therefore very likely to share policy preferences and political orientation with it, he can be expected to decide in the cabinet's favor.

Thus, the Duma's deputies understand that any determined attempt to remove the government is most likely to become a futile, self-defeating mission, one in which they put their own tenure at serious risk with an exceedingly low probability that the government will actually be removed. So even if the Duma placed its partisan goals or policy goals above its electoral goals,²¹ it still would not be rational for it to vote no confidence in the government. In addition, Duma deputies have strong electoral incentives against dissolution because it means having to face the uncertainty of new, early elections. Moreover, if the Duma is dissolved, its deputies must vacate the Duma premises within a few days, denying them the use of their offices and telephones for campaign efforts—a key advantage of incumbency in Russia's emergent party system. Given those obstacles, it is not surprising that since the adoption of the 1993 constitution, the government has *never* been removed as the result of a vote of no confidence by the Duma.

The consequence of the Duma's practical inability to remove the government is that even a government lacking a solid base of support in the Duma can persist in office. Although this institutional feature is a blessing for the government as far as its tenure and its autonomy to articulate policy plans independent of social forces are concerned, it has been a curse from the perspective of producing legislative agreement over policy. Freedom from having to maintain the

approval of a majority of deputies in the Duma also means that securing the Duma's agreement on particular policy issues can be much more difficult. Another consequence of the legislature's weak levers of influence over the executive is that the Duma is less willing to share responsibility for the government's actions, even though it refuses to vote no confidence. The Duma can argue that it had almost no influence over the formation of the government and that it had little chance of removing it, and that limited control implies limited responsibility. The result during the Yeltsin era was the Duma's reliance on the passage of nonbinding resolutions that harshly criticized the government without formally expressing no-confidence.

“Should the president be inclined to dissolve the Duma, his constitutional authority to do so is limited to specific conditions, and disagreement over policy issues is not among those conditions.”

At the same time, the ability of the Russian executive to dissolve the Duma over policy disagreements is also highly restricted. First, the government lacks the authority to dissolve the Duma unilaterally. Although the government can plead its case for dissolution to the president, Russia's institutionally divided executive (discussed below) allows the president to assume a distant, reserved stance toward the government's policymaking problems with the Duma.

Should the president be inclined to dissolve the Duma, his constitutional authority to do so is limited to specific conditions, and disagreement over policy issues is not among those conditions. According to the constitution (Article 109, point 1), the president can dissolve the Duma under circumstances relating to the Duma's three-time rejection of his candidate(s) for prime minister (Article 111) or the Duma's repeated vote of no confidence in the government (Article 117). That is, the constitution grants the president dissolution powers on issues specifically concerning the “origin” of the prime minister and the “survival” of the government, not on policy issues. For the president to dissolve the Duma even when it did not transgress the boundaries would have been to put his own tenure at risk by appearing to overstep his constitutional powers. Although Yeltsin clearly construed his power to dissolve the Duma more broadly (as his several threats showed), he nonetheless understood that actually dissolving the Duma over policy disagreements could precipitate a constitutional crisis.

Beyond specific constitutional limitations, other political factors made dissolving the Duma a high-risk choice for Yeltsin. Aware that his decision to use military force on the Supreme Soviet in 1993 was highly controversial and that the 1993 constitution was one of his own making, Yeltsin understood that his political future was best served by avoiding another violent confrontation with the legislature and by governing within his constitution's designated limits.²² Dissolving the Duma would have exacted a high cost for Yeltsin, not only in the form of polit-

ical instability and the increased risk of losing his hold on power but also by detracting from his efforts to show that his new constitutional system could manage disagreement over policy issues. In addition, dissolving the Duma could exacerbate the executive's policymaking problems with the legislative branch, because a new Duma would have to be elected.²³ Depending on the political mood in the country and the reason for dissolution, the end result might be the election of a new Duma even *more* firmly opposed to the executive than its predecessor was.

It is worth emphasizing that Boris Yeltsin *never* moved to dissolve the Duma over the six-year period that he served under the 1993 constitution.²⁴ Although time and hindsight have allowed Russia-watchers to grow accustomed to a lower level of executive-legislative conflict, few observers in December 1993 would have predicted Yeltsin's tolerance of opposition-dominated Dumas for the next six years. The fact that Russia's executive-legislative relations, however troubled, remained within stable, constitutional bounds during this period demands attention and explanation.

So while on one hand, it was exceedingly difficult for the Duma to dismiss the government, it was also a difficult and high-risk option for the president to dissolve the Duma over policy disagreements. The resulting situation was one in which both sides in the policymaking debate were relatively well entrenched in their constitutional positions in relation to the other. That high level of "separation of survival" meant increased rigidity in executive-legislative relations. In short, the rules governing the Russian political system allowed a large rift on ideology and policy issues to arise and persist between the government and the Duma while basically ensuring that the two institutions would continue to work in their existing compositions. That set up the fundamental preconditions for a hostile stalemate situation in which gridlock over government policy initiatives would become all the more likely.

A Multiparty System

Although the "separation of origin and survival" between the executive and legislative branches deprived the government of institutional mechanisms ensuring shared political orientation and shared accountability with the Duma, Russia's polarized and fragmented multiparty system made it difficult for the government to access consolidated political support from political parties in the Duma as well.

The electoral system, established in 1993, prompted the formation of a multiparty system and a Duma dominated by party-based factions. Although Russia adopted a "mixed" electoral system of half proportional representation (PR) and half majoritarian mandates,²⁵ a multiparty system emerged, suggesting a provisional addition to "Duverger's law."²⁶ Despite the mixed method of election, the formations of Duma deputies that were elected through proportional representation on party lists quickly dominated the State Duma. Taking advantage of lower susceptibility to problems of collective action,²⁷ as compared to their single-mandate counterparts, the Duma's new factions crafted its leadership organs and rules of procedure in such a way that they, the party-based factions, would become the most powerful actors. The factions²⁸ control the Duma's agenda-setting organ, the Coun-

cil of the Duma, with each faction receiving one vote on the council.²⁹ The factions also dominate negotiations over the distribution of the Duma's leadership posts—the chair, deputy chairs, and committee chairs. Finally, the factions dominate debate on the Duma floor, the distribution of office space, and other material privileges. Although Russia's political parties under Yeltsin were generally poorly developed and lacked strong grass-roots networks across the country,³⁰ the PR-dominant electoral system served to make a group of party-based factions the masters of the Duma. The dominant multipartism in Russia's lower house would render sound policymaking more difficult for the government.

As Scott Mainwaring has pointed out, systems that combine presidentialism and multipartism face particular difficulties in governing successfully over sustained periods.³¹ Although I do not focus on presidentialism per se, presidential systems usually are predicated on the separation of origin and survival. Mainwaring contends that the combination of presidentialism and multipartism is problematic for good governance because it (1) makes “executive/legislative deadlock and immobilism” more likely, (2) makes ideological polarization more likely, and (3) renders inter-party coalition building more difficult.³² Although the three pathologies discussed by Mainwaring may at first glance appear distinct, they all revolve around a central problem—the inability of policymakers in the executive to secure strong institutionally represented social support, whether it be through the legislature or political parties. The Russian government confronted all three problems of presidential multipartism during the Yeltsin period. It experienced severe difficulty in passing major legislation because it faced an influential, yet fragmented and polarized, spectrum of factions in the Duma.

The PR-dominant electoral system in Russia allowed for the polarization and fragmentation of the party system. That increased polarity and fragmentation made it more difficult for the government to assemble winning coalitions among widely varying political groups while maintaining policy coherence.³³ Systems with a dominant PR component allow for ideological polarity because PR is, as Giovanni Sartori points out, a “no effect” or *laissez-faire* electoral system that does not moderate, constrain, or obstruct the full representation of society's divisions.³⁴ Both the parties and voters know that even extreme viewpoints have an excellent chance of winning representation in parliament as long as they enjoy the support of a significant minority of society. Although Russia has an “impure” form of PR, with a 5 percent threshold for parties to gain seats in parliament, PR nonetheless established a favorable situation for Russia's extremists. Proportional representation can be particularly polarizing in societies undergoing political and economic change. In societies in transition, which are often deeply divided over the polity's form of government, PR systems do not mute or discourage the often-considerable support for extremist groups. Thus, PR systems tend to function more effectively in societies in which a consensus on basic values and the political system already exists.³⁵

In contrast, majoritarian and pluralist systems constrain behavior of both parties and voters toward the center of the political spectrum. Plurality systems force political parties to moderate their ideological positions in an attempt to capture as

much of the vote as possible, to form a "majority-forming attitude."³⁶ Similarly, voters face incentives to vote for candidates who they believe have a good chance of winning a majority, so that their votes are not "wasted." The desire among voters to pick a winner also tends to favor moderate candidates over extremists.

Polarization and Fragmentation of the Russian Party System

As the above suggests, the proportional representation component of the electoral system made possible a polarized political spectrum in the Duma. After elections to the Duma in 1993 and 1995, observers noted the increasing polarization of the party system and the erosion of the political center.³⁷ In Russia's parliamentary elections in 1993 and 1995, PR made possible the electoral success of what Sartori has called "anti-system" parties. As Sartori defines them, anti-system parties need not be revolutionary and may participate in the current system. The key requirement is that such parties are "oppositions in principle" and would radically transform the system if they were able.³⁸ Although both the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) and the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF) have grown more moderate, both could be considered anti-system parties for much of the Yeltsin era because both groups repeatedly called for fundamental changes in the constitution.³⁹ Proportional representation made possible the rise to prominence of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's ultra-nationalist LDPR. Catapulted from relative obscurity, in 1993 the LDPR received the highest proportion of any bloc on the party-list voting with 22.9 percent of the vote and 59 of the 225 PR seats. In the 1995 elections, the LDPR won 11.2 percent of the party-list vote and 50 PR seats. Although the radicalism of the LDPR was popular among a substantial minority, the LDPR had much greater difficulty attracting a plurality of voters in any particular electoral district. Its poor showing in single-mandate races, winning five seats in 1993 and only one seat in 1995, indicates that the LDPR would have been a marginal party in a plurality system. Although the KPRF probably would have done well in both 1993 and 1995 under a plurality system, such a system would have pushed KPRF candidates to moderate their programs as they fought to win over majorities. This is supported by Gennady Zyuganov's significant moderation of his program when he faced a plurality contest for the presidency in 1996. Overall, the PR system gave extremist voices a high level of representation and power in the State Duma, greatly complicating the government's attempts to find common ground with the lower house on policy matters.

The PR-dominated electoral system also allowed the emergence of a fragmented party system in Russia. In the first Duma (1993–95), there were generally ten factions and no clear majority coalition. In the second Duma (1996–99), there were seven factions with no clear majority coalition, although a leftist coalition (KPRF-People's Power-Agrarians) had a near majority. Under PR systems, large, centrist parties are less likely than in plurality systems to become focal points for the consolidation of political forces. The PR electoral system provides incentives for smaller groups to compete and accentuate their differences with larger groups in the political spectrum rather than to join them.⁴⁰ That incentive

structure is part of the reason that both parties associated with the government, Russia's Choice and Our Home Is Russia, fared more poorly in elections than most observers had expected.⁴¹ The PR system encouraged smaller right-center parties such as Yabloko to compete with pro-governmental forces rather than to forge coalitions with them. A two-party system, in contrast, would have made electoral consolidation around a major right-of-center party much more likely because it provides much higher barriers for electoral success and therefore greater disincentives toward going it alone.

The large number of factions resulting from multipartism would also mean that the government would face increased problems of collective action in assembling factions behind any particular policy issue.⁴² In Russia, that meant that the government would have to manage more fronts of disagreement with a range of different parties in the Duma, which created more conflicting demands for the government to reconcile in policymaking.

Russia's Split Executive

In addition to facing the pathologies associated with its separation of origin and survival with the Duma, combined with a splintered and polarized multiparty system, the government was deprived of a reliable institutional basis for accessing the power of the presidency for purposes of legislative policymaking.⁴³

Because the 1993 constitution grants broad powers to the president, Russia's political system has often been referred to as "superpresidential." Because the government is directly and completely subordinate to the president, one might be tempted to view the president and government as parts of an integrated, well-coordinated, highly capable executive during that period. But the power of the presidency in Russia should not be conflated with the power of the executive overall, or with the power of the government. The president and the government constitute the two major components of the Russian state that carry out executive functions. However, they are not fused in a single branch of power, as the constitution establishes the two branches of power by delineating their powers in separate chapters.⁴⁵ Yeltsin considered the presidency to be a separate and superior branch of power rather than part of the executive branch (*ispolnitel'naya vlast'*). He set the presidency apart from and above all other branches as the "guarantor of the constitution."⁴⁶ That is, he sought to construct the president as *the ruler of those who govern*, rather than one who is himself responsible for governing. The differences in legitimacy and political authority between the two institutions are acute. The *elected* president possesses clear and direct legitimacy, gained through a national plebiscite, and an impressive list of constitutional powers;⁴⁷ his *appointed* government has only indirect, dependent legitimacy with policy responsibilities. The split structure in the executive gives the president a high level of flexibility and discretion in determining his degree of support for, and association with, the government.

Although the government serves under the supervision of and is dependent on the president, it is a separate institutional entity. The 1993 constitution and federal law make the government subordinate to the presidency but clearly separate

from it.⁴⁸ The government possesses its own chair, the prime minister, who directs the work of the ministries in formulating and carrying out most of the state's domestic policies.⁴⁹ For the most part, the government works independently, with only intermittent direction, intervention, or commentary from the president.⁵⁰ The president oversees the work of the government, but does not directly organize its efforts in devising or carrying out policy. Instead, most policymaking responsibilities in the economic, financial, and social spheres are delegated to the prime minister and the government.⁵¹ Finally, the separation of the presidency and the government is manifested physically. The president and his administration work in the center of Moscow, in the Kremlin and at *Staraya Ploshchad* (Old Square), and the government's building, the *Belyi Dom* (White House), is located in the western part of the city at the *Krasnopresnenskaya naberezhnaya* (Krasnopresnenskaya embankment).

The separation between the president and the government is also institutionally reinforced by the sizable bureaucratic apparatus that surrounds the president. If the president were to sit virtually alone atop the state hierarchy as the "boss" of the government and the ministries, he would have little choice but to work closely with the government to pursue his initiatives. He would also have greater difficulty in disassociating himself from the work of the government. But instead, the president possesses a broad range of bureaucratic, analytical, security, and financial resources that allow him to operate outside the framework of the government. He has at his disposal the Presidential Administration, made up of more than 1,750 civil servants.⁵² That bureaucratic structure prepares presidential decrees, provides the president with political and economic analysis, conducts press relations, pursues relations with other state institutions, and houses presidential advisers. The president can also operate outside the framework of the government on national security, political, and economic issues through the Security Council, which is made up mostly of the heads of the "force ministries" (*siloviye ministerstva*), and through various special representatives who he has the power to appoint. Finally, the president has access to financial resources through the Administration of Presidential Affairs (*Upravleniye Delami Prezidenta*). That state bureau resembles a corporate conglomerate; it is made up of more than 200 companies in a vast array of businesses from manufacturing to construction to tourism. Given his substantial institutional support, the president possesses "his own" branch of government—an independent, bureaucratic, and financial base apart from the Council of Ministers. That allows him to distance himself from the government in its policy-making efforts, if and when he chooses.

The division between the president and the government was a major factor in weakening the government's ability to pass policy initiatives under Yeltsin, as the state's main policymaking arm faced a high level of uncertainty about the political support it would receive from the president. The government was often reluctant or unwilling to impose losses on special interests and ministries that enjoyed favor with the Kremlin. In addition, the president's ability to remove the whole government or any minister at any time prompted the government to focus more on short-term survival rather than long-term priorities, which undermined its abil-

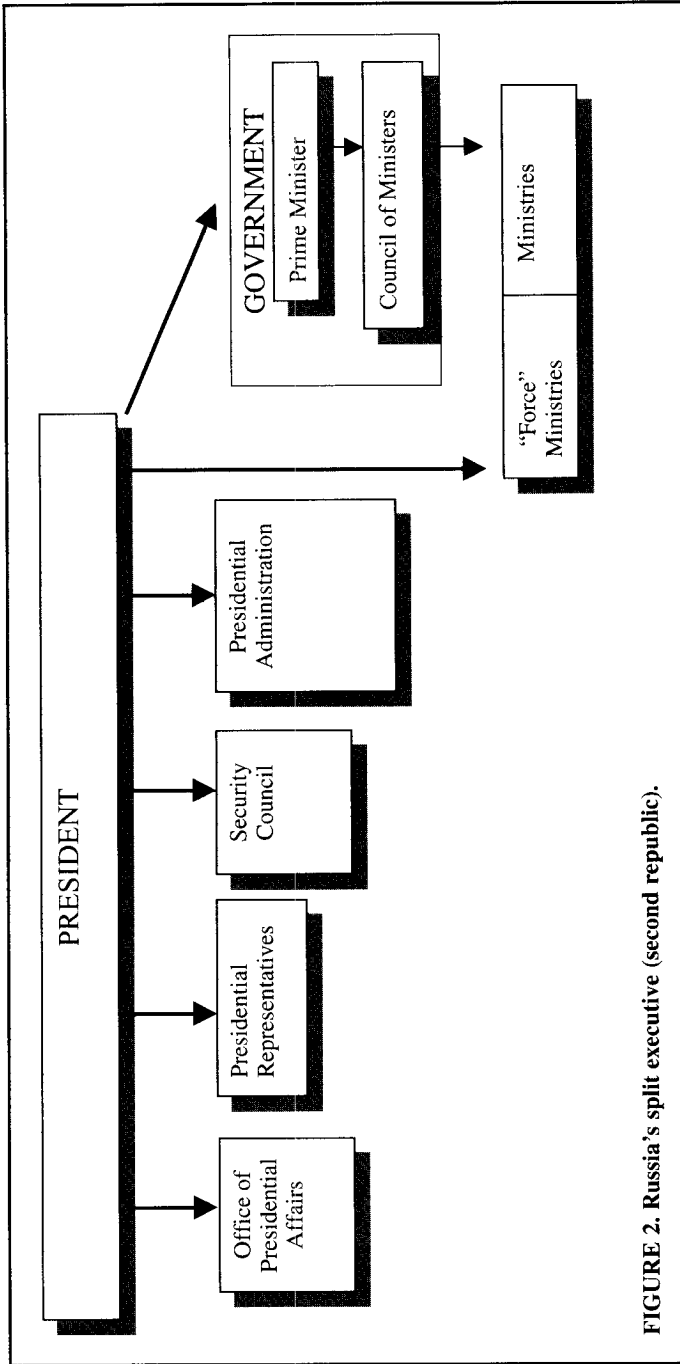


FIGURE 2. Russia's split executive (second republic).

ity to ensure consistency in policy decisions and to conduct long-range structural reform of the economy.

Although many other political systems also divide executive functions, they do not create a situation in which the state's main policymaking arm is deprived of a reliable institutional source of political power as the Russian system does. France's Fifth Republic divides powers between its president and government, but the French government remains linked to its own source of political support because it is formed and survives on the basis of a parliamentary majority. The situation is similar in post-communist Poland, where the government survives on the basis of a coalition of party-based factions in the parliament. In other words, in both cases, there is no institutionalized "separation of origin and survival" between the government and the legislature, as there is in Russia. Table 2 shows how Russia's political system compares to those of other selected countries regarding the three institutional features discussed above. Exhibiting all three features, the Russian system creates the fundamental structural preconditions for a weak, politically isolated government and leaves the state's main policymaking structure without a reliable political leg to stand on.

A Split Executive and the Separation of Origin and Survival

When combined with the separation of origin and survival of the executive and legislative branches, a split executive makes legislative policymaking more difficult by exacerbating the problem of "dual democratic legitimacy."⁵³ As Juan Linz has pointed out, presidential systems tend to experience greater problems in governing than parliamentary systems do because both the president and the legislature can claim to be acting on behalf of the will of the electorate, since they were both independently elected. Although Linz focuses on presidentialism per se, it is the "separation of origin and survival" on which most presidential systems are based (independent election and fixed terms of office) that leads to "dual democratic legitimacy." In Russia, the weak and easily severable link between the president and the government greatly worsens the dual legitimacy problem between the executive and legislative branches. Because the government cannot rely on the firm and constant support of the president in its bargaining with the Duma, its legitimacy over policymaking is rendered more indirect and uncertain than that of the legislature. The deputies and factions of the Duma can claim to be representing

TABLE 2. Three Institutional Features in Various Political Systems

Country	Separation of Origin & Survival	Multipartism	Split Executive
United Kingdom	—	—	—
France, Poland	—	✓	✓
United States	✓	—	—
Russia	✓	✓	✓

the interests of their constituents in policy debates, while the *appointed* government can only hope for the continued support and possible intervention of the president. The Duma can also exploit the institutional split in the executive to claim that the government's legislative initiatives are *not* those of the president and are therefore illegitimate. The Duma repeatedly used this divide and conquer strategy in blocking the government's belt-tightening legislative initiatives.⁵⁴ Moreover, the government has to be wary of criticism and disavowal from the president, which can further erode its claims to legitimacy. In contrast, in presidential systems without a split executive (such as the United States), the president's commitment to the cabinet is more direct, constant, and transparent. In such a case, the cabinet's legislative initiatives are clearly the president's as well.

A Split Executive and Multipartism

The combination of a split executive and multipartism has also worked to isolate the government from political power and accountability. First, multipartism is not likely to reduce the institutional division between the president and the government. With multipartism, the president's decision to join a party can alienate a high percentage of voters with opposing partisan sympathies. Presidents are thus more likely to try to remain "above" party politics. In contrast, in a two-party system the president risks alienating only the opposing party. For a president, joining a party in a more fluid, fragmented, and polarized multiparty environment can be risky because it ties one's political career to a party that may soon become marginalized or even cease to exist. But by not joining a common political party with the members of his appointed government, the president foregoes a crucial opportunity to allow political parties to overcome the organizational separation of the government and the presidency. That is what occurred in Russia. Yeltsin, wanting to be "the president of all Russians," refused to join a political party and thus refused to bond the presidency to the government through a common political organization. He left it to his prime ministers to lead pro-government parties, and to assume political responsibility for policy failure.

For the government, a split executive worsens the political problems of multipartism for the government. When the president remains institutionally separate from the government and does not join in a common political party with the government, pro-governmental parties lose out on a crucial asset—the political clout of the most powerful actor in the system—that would help them to consolidate more of the pro-incumbent portion of the political spectrum. That has the effect of stunting political party development. The result is a "catch-22." The president will not join a party because parties are too weak, cannot consolidate enough of the vote, and have an uncertain future; and the pro-governmental party remains weak, cannot consolidate enough of the vote, and has an uncertain future in large part because the president will not join. A major reason that both "Russia's Choice" and later "Our Home Is Russia" were essentially stillborn and short-lived was that they had responsibility for the government's performance, but did not have a clear connection to, or the support of, presidential power.⁵⁵ Yeltsin kept himself at arm's length from both parties. Although it might be argued that he was

not popular during most of his presidency and therefore his closer association would not have been much help to pro-governmental parties, the 1996 and 2000 presidential elections showed that the Russian presidency could consolidate tremendous financial, administrative, media, and social resources in its favor when it chose to do so. These resources could have been mobilized in 1993 and 1995, but Yeltsin decided against it, not wanting to stake his name on a political party. Pro-governmental parties lost a focal point and a symbol for consolidating their forces and did not present a united front in elections. The pro-governmental parties suffered at the ballot box as a result—exacerbating the polarized multipartism in the Duma and making the passage of legislation even more difficult.

Supporting the Argument

Detailed case studies of a number of economic and social policy spheres are directions for further research that may confirm the breadth and depth of my institutionally based explanation.⁵⁶ Even a brief glance at the policy outputs of the Russian political system under Yeltsin reveals convincing evidence for the argument. The government's weak links to institutional sources of political support repeatedly undermined its reform efforts in key policy spheres, including attempts at military, land code, social entitlements, and tax reform, and its effort to pass responsible annual budgets.

The government's problem in demanding reform of the military emanated largely from the dynamics of Russia's split executive, which placed the military directly under the president. Because of the close relationship, the Defense Ministry secured a decree from Yeltsin ensuring that military spending be set at no less than 3.5 percent of GDP. The Defense Ministry also used its influence with the president and in the Duma to keep its spending almost entirely secret from the government.⁵⁷ The pre-set funding level on defense and the lack of access to the details of military spending deprived the government of two important budgetary levers in compelling the military to reform itself.⁵⁸ When this was combined with a powerful defense lobby in the Duma, the government stood little chance of successfully forcing through military reform. According to former deputy finance minister Oleg Vyugin, the Ministry of Defense was the most blatant and aggressive in its circumventing government leadership in its lobbying efforts during Yeltsin's tenure.⁵⁹ Despite Yeltsin's repeated declarations and plans to make the military smaller and more professional, the government's political impotence prevented it from carrying out any meaningful reform.⁶⁰

In the agricultural sector, the government was unable to force through land reforms because the support of the anti-privatization Agrarian faction in the Duma was usually a crucial element in the government's attempt to assemble winning coalitions for the passage of annual budgets. Because the government badly needed the Agrarians' budget votes, and because the executive knew it would face great difficulty building a majority for land reform in the Duma, the executive abandoned serious efforts to pass a land code that would have sanctioned the free buying and selling of land and transformed Russian agriculture.

The government was similarly rebuffed in its attempts to restructure social

spending because of a lack of political support in the Duma. In spring 1997, the deputy prime minister for social affairs, Oleg Sysuyev, devised and sent a packet of laws to the State Duma for the restructuring of the system of social entitlements through addressed aid and means-testing.⁶¹ However, the government again lacked the necessary political support in the left-leaning Duma, and the initiatives soon died in the lower house.⁶² At the same time, the split executive allowed the president to remain distant from the unpopular initiative. Because social reform stalled, Russia continued to use an untargeted, unreformed system of distributing social aid. As of 2000, about 100 million of Russia's 146 million people were taking advantage of some form of social subsidy, aid, or exemption.⁶³ This high level of commitments in the social sphere set a very high bar for fulfillment, leading to chronic arrears in social payments.

The government's weak base in the Duma also stymied attempts to overhaul Russia's Byzantine tax laws. While the government sought to simplify the tax system, reduce the number of taxes, and flatten the tax scale, left-leaning factions in the Duma repeatedly blocked such changes because of their concern for maintaining income equality. Yeltsin put major tax reform on the agenda in 1995, and continued to call, in vain, for tax reform through the end of his presidency.⁶⁴ The substantive portions of a new tax code were not passed until summer 2000, when the government finally attained a pro-reform majority in the State Duma and after Yeltsin had left office.⁶⁵

The government's lack of reliable political support also undermined its attempts to conduct an effective budgetary policy. Pressured by the president and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to pass budgets with low deficits, and pressured by the Duma and its own branch ministries for higher spending, the government was repeatedly pushed into passing unrealistic and/or debt-laden budget laws. With intermittent and uncertain support from the president⁶⁶ and a weak political base among the factions in the Duma, the government repeatedly made ill-advised spending concessions to get its budgets adopted. The importance of the government's political strength for maintaining budgetary discipline was demonstrated when the ostensibly left-leaning Primakov government passed the most austere and realistic budget up to that point. Unlike the more avowedly liberal governments before it, the Primakov government could pass a responsible and realistic budget because it enjoyed the full support of a majority coalition in the Duma; the 1999 budget sailed through the Duma without any substantial changes.

The most dramatic and revealing instance of the government's weakness in passing economic initiatives through the Duma was the Kiriyenko government's largely unsuccessful attempt to pass its anti-crisis program through the lower house in July 1998. Even on the verge of a major financial crisis, the Kiriyenko government, which Yeltsin had forced on the Duma just three months earlier, could not assemble a coalition to raise urgently needed revenues and to ensure a multibillion dollar bailout from the IMF. Although most of the anti-crisis measures that the Duma refused to pass were subsequently implemented through presidential decrees, the revenue-raising measures were of dubious constitutionality.⁶⁷ The failure of most of Kiriyenko's anti-crisis package to pass demonstrates

how the "separation of origin" between the two institutions combined with a highly polarized party system directly contributed to policy immobilism at a crucial time and pushed the executive to govern at the edge of the constitution. During the 1998 crisis, the pathologies of the split executive also revealed themselves in the glaring lack of coordination over monetary policy between Yeltsin and his prime minister, and only three days before 17 August Yeltsin indignantly asserted there would be no ruble devaluation.⁶⁸

Privatization—the one major area in which reforms were swiftly carried out under Yeltsin—was an area not handled by the government at all. Instead, privatization was carried out by the State Property Committee, predominantly under presidential supervision and implemented by presidential decree. Without having to clear the hurdle of the Duma and with the firm, direct support of the president, privatization avoided the institutional stumbling blocks that time and again tripped up government-sponsored legislative reforms.

A Framework for Explaining Political Outcomes

In addition to finding strong support in Russia's lackluster record of reform, the institutional argument explains and accounts for a comprehensive range of outcomes in Russian politics and policymaking during the Yeltsin period.

First, as discussed above, it accounts for the frequency with which deadlock plagued Russia's policymaking and reform efforts across a whole range of socio-economic policies. This is a major area, in which this study's explanation is more satisfying than the "superpresidential" thesis. If Russia was truly a superpresidential system, then why was Yeltsin so persistently frustrated in his attempts to conduct sweeping economic reforms? Under a truly presidential system, executive branch efficacy would have been higher, and hasty, ill-advised reforms would have been more of a pitfall than deadlock and the stagnation of reform. In contrast, this study explains how institutional structure constrained the presidency in policymaking at the same time it made it politically predominant.

Second, the argument more accurately accounts for the patterns of intra-executive disagreement during the Yeltsin period. One major shortcoming of many analyses of Russian politics during the period has been insufficient consideration of this institutional division and the tendency to treat the Russian executive as a typical unified hierarchy. In contrast, this study provides a more concise and more accurate analysis of Yeltsin's relationship to his governments than previous explanations. The study shows how Yeltsin was able to construct intra-executive relations in such a way that he could serve as a distant, unaccountable supervisor to the government. My study includes both a better understanding of Yeltsin's reluctance to associate himself with political parties; his uneven, inconsistent support of his government in its battles with the State Duma; his generally hands-off approach to economic policymaking; and his frequent rotation of cadres in the government.

Third, the study provides a more nuanced understanding of the role of the State Duma in the policy failures during the period. Although many previous analyses tend to treat the Duma simply as either malevolently obstructionist or basically

irrelevant, this study supplies a more balanced, sophisticated, and well-founded account of the Duma's policymaking role. It uncovers the underlying institutional causes of the Duma's behavior by showing how the Duma's weak institutional links to the government (strong "separation of origin and survival" combined with a polarized and fragmented multipartism) pushed it towards confrontation, obstruction, opportunism, and evasion of responsibility in its relations with the Russian executive.

Fourth, my focus on the separation of power and policy helps to explain the relatively high level of resilience of Russia's political "principals" despite persistent and grave policy failures during the period. Because accountability of political principals both in the Kremlin and in the Duma for policy failures was relatively uncertain, voters most readily blamed agents in the government. As politically unconnected agents, members of the government were also expendable. My main thesis helps explain Yeltsin's re-election in 1996, as a good deal of the blame for previous policy mistakes could be shifted to the members of his governments. Although Yeltsin certainly absorbed some of the blame for the country's poor economic performance, the electorate could lay most of the blame for privatization on Chubais, for years of economic stagnation on Chernomyrdin, and for the 1998 financial crisis on Kiriyenko. It also helps to explain a surprisingly high overall level of political stability in the State Duma during the period. During a formative period for political parties and a difficult time for the country, one might have expected to see very low rates of survival by incumbent factions in the Duma, as the electorate responded to poor economic performance. Yet four major factions (KPRF, LDPR, Yabloko, Agrarians) consistently won mandates in all three post-Soviet Dumas, and all four factions were major players in the Duma during Yeltsin's tenure. Despite the considerable role these factions played in shaping policymaking outcomes, significant portions of the electorate appeared not to view these parties as responsible for poor policy performance.

Fifth, my argument also helps account for the failure of the "parties of power" under Yeltsin—Russia's Choice and Our Home Is Russia. Because both of these parties were formed around prime ministers, they were destined to shoulder most of the blame for policy mistakes. As a political organization clearly accountable for policy performance, which received insufficient support from the president and the other factions in the Duma, the "party of power" became the system's primary political scapegoat.

Sixth, through my focus on an institutionally weak government, the argument accounts for the high degree of influence of Russia's oligarchs over policy decisions. The government's weak links to major institutional sources of political power left policymaking more vulnerable to the influence from special interests in Russia's financial industrial groups.

In this article I have provided an analytical framework for explaining a broad range of outcomes in Yeltsin's Russia. Not merely pointing to an opportunistic president, or to an obstructionist, hostile Duma, or to weak parties and powerful business interests, this institutional argument integrates these intermediate and

partial explanations, and investigates their deeper causes. Most prominently, it explains how institutions permitted Yeltsin to act as he did; it uncovers how institutional structure gave the Duma few reasons to work constructively with the government; and it explains why political parties provided little help to the government's policymaking efforts.

Conclusion

This article argued that chronic policy failure in Yeltsin's Russia was largely rooted in the arrangement of its political institutions. Specifically, it focused on the combination and interaction of three institutional features in Russia's Second Republic that deprived the state's main policymaking arm—the government—from reliable sources of political power. A high degree of "separation of origin and survival" between the executive and legislative branches, a fragmented multipartism, and a split executive all combined to isolate and weaken the government politically by permitting its institutional separation from the legislature, from political parties, and from the president. The political isolation and weakness greatly diminished the government's policymaking capabilities and obscured political accountability. These in turn led to chronic policy immobilism and policy incoherence during Yeltsin's tenure. My analysis suggests that sustained improvement in Russia's policymaking performance will come only through the strengthening of the government's institutional links to political power—on giving the government a reliable political leg on which to stand.

Along with providing a framework for explaining persistent policy crises and the stagnation of reform under Yeltsin, I also offer information on the impact of institutions on policymaking. First, I emphasize the importance of considering the combination and interaction institutional features with one another. Second, and more specifically, I contend that multiple instances of organizational separation between political forces and policymakers promote lower levels of efficacy and accountability. Third, I underscore the importance of political parties for connecting state institutions to one another and mediating between them, especially in systems that allow other forms of organizational separation between policymakers and politicians.

Afterword: Putin's Russia

A New Political Landscape on Weak Institutional Foundations

I have argued that institutional structure and the ensuing separation of political power from policy responsibility were the major root causes leading to policy failure in Yeltsin's Russia. But how well does this argument account for policy performance under Yeltsin's successor, Vladimir Putin? Without question, Russia's executive under Putin has enjoyed far greater efficacy in making and implementing policy than it did under Yeltsin. Several important pieces of government-sponsored legislation that had languished in the Duma in the 1990s have been passed since 2000.⁶⁹ Given that Russia has not undergone any fundamental constitutional reform, this marked improvement in policy efficacy and performance may, at first glance, appear to undermine my institutionally based argument.

However, a closer look at Russian politics since the end of Yeltsin's tenure reveals that the executive branch has taken important steps to mitigate the separation of political power and policy responsibility that prevailed during Yeltsin's tenure. Most importantly, the presidency aggressively utilized its considerable powers and resources to offset the fragmenting, polarizing tendencies of the electoral system. This has allowed the executive to secure a far more compliant Duma and enabled the Kremlin to engineer a significant consolidation of the political party spectrum. The new political consolidation has essentially removed a major underlying cause of government weakness and of executive-legislative deadlock. At the same time, the presidency's aggressive use of its power has also pushed Russia towards a much less pluralistic form of democracy. The new consolidation of political power still lacks a solid institutional basis, and without its continued cultivation by the presidency, the deeper institutional features, which allow the separation of power and policy responsibility, may again predominate and cripple policymaking in Russia.

The Putin administration and the Kasyanov government now face a far more cooperative set of factions in the Duma than Yeltsin and the governments that served under him did.⁷⁰ Having sat on the sidelines during the two previous parliamentary elections, in the fall of 1999 Yeltsin and his Presidential Administration finally decided to leverage their financial, administrative, and media resources to obtain a more loyal Duma. Led by Alexander Voloshin, the Presidential Administration successfully orchestrated an aggressive plan to secure significantly greater and more loyal political support in the parliament. Yeltsin's inner circle organized the formation of the pro-presidential Unity movement and built up its image in an all-out, state-run media blitz, which ruthlessly and relentlessly attacked Unity's main rival, Fatherland-All Russia. At the same time, the Kremlin organized the creation of a loyal single-mandate deputy group—People's Deputy—in the Duma.

Although the state-run media supported pro-governmental parties in 1993 and 1995, the scope and intensity of this support paled in comparison to the support given to Unity in 1999. Another major difference was that in 1999, state-run media waged a merciless smear campaign of Unity's main competitors, signaling to elites that there would now be a price to be paid for outward opposition to those in power. That the Presidential Administration would have to resort to such cynical and bare-knuckled campaign tactics to achieve a higher level of government support in the Duma underscores the extent to which the executive had been left without the institutional preconditions for electoral success. In other words, the high degree of political fragmentation in the Russian system, which was a consequence of its institutional structure, finally pushed Yeltsin, and later Putin, to assume a heavier hand in parliamentary politics.

The Presidential Administration's aggressive campaign efforts bore fruit, and Unity finished a surprising second in the 1999 elections with 23.3 percent of the party list vote, only a percentage point behind the KPRF, which received 24.3 percent. Together, Unity and the People's Deputy group accounted for 140 of the Duma's 450 seats. With these two new large and completely loyal formations in

the Duma, the Kremlin finally achieved a "critical mass" of essentially unconditional support in the Duma, which it could use as a base on which to construct a solid majority. Forging alliances with its vanquished former rival (Fatherland-All Russia), with the liberal factions (Union of Rightist Forces and Yabloko), and with a smaller, more loyal LDPR, the Kremlin finally enjoyed a majority in the Duma in most issue areas.⁷¹ This greater level of support for the executive in the Duma was instrumental in getting a number of new legislative initiatives passed into law, including the tax and land codes.

Second, under Putin the presidency has taken a more active role in connecting itself to political parties. While Yeltsin kept himself at arm's length from political parties, Putin has publicly aligned himself with Unity, beginning with his endorsement of the party during the 1999 parliamentary campaign and continuing with his repeated addresses at Unity congresses. Under Yeltsin, Russia's statist parties were formed under the leadership of politically weak prime ministers. Under Putin, the major statist party has better chances for long-term survival because it is more clearly connected to the most powerful office in the political system—the presidency. Unlike Russia's Choice and Our Home Is Russia Unity cast itself as a *presidential party*, rather than a governmental party. That shift has diminished the government's independent political identity, which has had the effect of drawing the government and president closer together politically. The Kremlin has continued to consolidate political forces by building a larger, more encompassing statist party, Unified Russia.

The third way in which Putin has strengthened the executive's hand in policymaking has been to reinforce the link between the government and himself. Overall, Putin has stood by his government more closely than Yeltsin did. There have been far fewer instances of harsh public criticism of the government by the Russian president. Putin has made fewer attempts to shift responsibility for economic policy shortcomings onto the government. And although it is still early in his presidency, to this point, Putin has relied far less on the rotation of cadres in the government than Yeltsin did.

Much has been done to strengthen links between political power and policy-making during Putin's term, but these changes currently stand on uncertain institutional foundations. Even more troubling, Putin's approach toward overcoming the political fragmentation instilled by institutional structure, threatens the vitality of Russia's pluralism. Under Putin, the Kremlin's primary means of mitigating the separation of power and policy mostly has been the attempt to transform the party system. A dominant, institutionalized statist party could share ideas and information, and provide monitoring and accountability, across the branches of power—from the presidency to the government to the Duma. That would effectively counteract the fragmenting effect of the PR component of the electoral system and thus neutralize one of the system's three institutional features that serve to separate power from policy. Even so, the presidency will have to continually provide powerful disincentives for members of the political elite to form splinter-group competitors to the dominant statist party. This is because the current PR-dominant electoral system provides political rewards to would-be political

entrepreneurs who can exceed the 5 percent barrier in parliamentary elections. One major way the Kremlin is attempting to make its new party of power predominant is by punishing defectors and political adversaries with political marginalization. The Kremlin will likely continue to enforce these barriers to entry for would-be political rivals through continued control over the national media and through discretionary harassment of political adversaries by the state's law enforcement agencies. Clearly, this mode of politics has troubling implications for the quality of Russian democracy. Russia's executive has moved in this unsettling direction toward "managed democracy" (*upravlaemaya demokratiya*) largely in attempts to overcome the political fragmentation inherent in the electoral system.

Although Unified Russia stands a better chance for survival than its Yeltsin-era predecessors, its long-run success or relevance cannot be taken for granted. Unified Russia may yet go the way of previous parties of power. Its weak ideological basis and its top-down structure continue to jeopardize its institutionalization. If Russia experiences new social or economic crises, those who wish to avoid association with the government may leave the party. If that occurs, Unified Russia may grow weaker and fare poorly in the 2003 parliamentary elections, and the Russian executive may again face a hostile Duma and deadlock over policy by early 2004.

Second, Unified Russia may fail if Putin or his successor withdraws his support from the party. Unity has been constructed as a presidential party and Putin's past record of affiliation with the party will make such a disavowal more difficult, and thus more unlikely. Still, it is important to note that Putin has still refused to join the party officially, preserving his ability to distance himself from it if politically necessary. Until Russia's presidents are members of political parties, the strong potential for the failure of "parties power" and the problem of uncertain accountability will remain. And Russian observers have continued to comment on how, under Putin, Russia's institutional arrangement obscures presidential accountability.⁷²

Finally, there is little in Russia's institutional architecture that would discourage Putin from repeatedly abandoning his governments, should such a move become politically expedient. Russia's split executive structure affords the president a great degree of political flexibility, which so far Putin has exploited far less than Yeltsin did. But little would prevent Putin from blaming the government and firing it as a way to avoid responsibility if a major crisis develops.

With a pro-reform majority in the Duma, a more powerful pro-presidential party, and a president who chooses to support the government consistently, Russia now has better chances to pursue long-overdue economic and social reform. But these conditions are still easily reversible. Underlying institutional features built into Russia's political system mean that the separation of power from policy responsibility and a return to the legislative deadlock and policy failures that marked the Yeltsin period may be only an election cycle or major crisis away. The other, perhaps more proximate concern is that Putin's attempts to overcome the political fragmentation of the Yeltsin constitution may go too far and stifle the long-term development of pluralism in Russia.

NOTES

1. Yeltsin said, "I want to ask your forgiveness. I want to apologize for not making many of our dreams come true. What had seemed easy turned out to be extremely difficult." Boris Yeltsin, *Midnight Diaries*, trans. by Catherine A. Fitzpatrick, (New York: Public Affairs, 2000), 387. Yeltsin's farewell address to the nation was aired on ORT, 31 December 1999.

2. Russia's current constitutional arrangement, established in December 1993, is frequently referred to as its Second Republic. Robert Sharlet is generally credited with the classification of post-Soviet history into "republics," following the French model. See Robert Sharlet, "Russian Constitutional Crisis: Law and Politics under Yeltsin," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 9, no. 4 (October–December 1993): 314–36.

3. According to a February 2001 report by the government's Economic and Trade Ministry, in 2000 Russia's leading economic indicators returned to the overall levels they had reached in 1994. RFE/RL, "Best Year in Decade Brings Russia Back To 1994 Level," *RFE/RL Newline* 5, no. 42 (1 March 2001).

4. For "civil liberties," for the same period, Russia's ranking fell from four to five. Freedom House, "Freedom in the World Country Ratings: 1972–73 to 2000–01," <www.freedomhouse.org>.

5. I use the term government (*pravitel'stvo*) as synonymous with the Russian Council of Ministers—the leading organ of Russia's ministries, state committees, and agencies. It generally consists of the prime minister, deputy prime ministers and leading ministers of the executive branch (*ispolnitelnaya vlast*).

6. Douglass C. North, *Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 3.

7. North, *Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance*, 4.

8. Peter Hall, *Governing the Economy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 19.

9. The best institutionally based study of the Russian presidency under Yeltsin is: Eugene Huskey, *Presidential Power in Russia* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1999).

10. Thomas Remington has been one of the most prolific and thorough scholars of the Russian parliament. Two of his most recent contributions in this area with a strong institutional focus are: *The Russian Parliament: Institutional Evolution in a Transitional Regime, 1989–1999* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001); and, with Steven S. Smith, *The Politics of Institutional Choice: The Formation of the Russian State Duma* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

11. See Arend Lijphart, ed., *Parliamentary versus Presidential Government* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Matthew Shugart and John Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Alfred Stepan and Cindy Skach, "Constitutional Frameworks and Democratic Consolidation: Parliamentarianism versus Presidentialism," *World Politics* 46, no. 1 (October 1993); Juan Linz, "Presidential or Parliamentary Democracy: Does It Make a Difference?" in *The Failure of Presidential Democracy*, ed. Juan Linz and Arturo Valenzuela (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994); Giovanni Sartori, *Comparative Constitutional Engineering* (New York: New York University Press, 1994).

12. As Stephan Haggard and Matthew McCubbins have recently pointed out, "explaining political outcomes often requires greater focus on the details of institutional structure." "Political Institutions and the Determinants of Public Policy," in *Presidents, Parliaments, and Policy*, ed. Stephan Haggard and Matthew D. McCubbins (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 4.

13. This selected list of government capabilities necessary for policymaking is drawn from R. Kent Weaver and Bert A. Rockman, "Assessing the Effects of Institutions," in *Do Institutions Matter? Government Capabilities in the United States and Abroad*, ed. R. Kent Weaver and Bert A. Rockman (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1993), 6.

14. Matthew Shugart and John Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies*, 19, drawing on James

Madison's arguments in *The Federalist Papers*.

15. *Konstitutsiya Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, (approved 12 December 1993) Article 83, points (a) and (d).

16. *Konstitutsiya Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, Article 83, point (a).

17. *Konstitutsiya Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, Article 111, point 4. A subsequent decision of the Constitutional Court has, affirming president's interpretation, stated that the president can repeatedly nominate the *same* figure three times.

18. Nominees for prime minister have generally conducted consultations with the Duma's factions in advance of votes on their approval.

19. The constitution allows the president simply to ignore a first vote of no confidence from the State Duma. *Konstitutsiya Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, Article 117.

20. *Konstitutsiya Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, Article 114.

21. Steven Smith and Thomas Remington persuasively argue that Duma deputies are motivated by policy, electoral, and partisan goals. Steven S. Smith and Thomas F. Remington, *The Politics of Institutional Choice*, 24.

22. For more on Yeltsin's desire to avoid the uncertainties associated with a departure from the norms of his constitution, see Thomas Remington, "The Evolution of Executive-Legislative Relations in Russia since 1993," *Slavic Review* 59, no. 3 (Fall 2000): esp. 502–05.

23. *Konstitutsiya Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, Article 109, point 2.

24. Yeltsin did *threaten* to dissolve the Duma on several occasions, and those threats held some degree of credibility because of Yeltsin's reputation for being unpredictable and tough in a power struggle. Still, the Duma knew that its dissolution over policy issues would be a high-risk move for Yeltsin, and one likely to be a weapon of last resort.

25. Russia's electoral system distributes one-half of the Duma's 450 seats by a system of proportional representation. The other half are apportioned through single-mandate contests in 225 districts throughout Russia.

26. Duverger affirmed that proportional electoral systems will tend to create multipartism, and plurality electoral systems will tend to create two-party systems. Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1954), 217, 245. The Russian case suggests that with an evenly mixed electoral system, the proportional representation-multiparty dynamic will dominate.

27. Mancur Olson describes how organized groups can provide "selective incentives" for individuals in a group to engage in collective action for some collective good, whereas "latent" groups lacking this ability will be less likely to cooperate. Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 46–52.

28. For the purposes of clarity, I make no distinction between a faction (*fraktsiya*) and a deputy group (*deputatskaya gruppya*), referring to both as factions. The former gained rights to representation in the Duma by surpassing the 5 percent barrier in parliamentary elections, while the latter were formed by thirty-five or more like-minded deputies after the elections. *Fraktsii* have enjoyed slightly more prestige than deputy groups based on their performance in elections. Otherwise, both kinds of deputy formations (*deputatskie ob'yedineniya*) are functionally similar organizations.

29. *Reglament Gosudarstvennoy Dumy*, Art. 13, point 2.

30. The Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF), successor to the organizational remnants of the CPSU, was the major exception to this rule.

31. Scott Mainwaring, "Presidentialism, Multipartism, and Democracy: The Difficult Combination," *Comparative Political Studies* 26, no. 2 (July 1993): 198–228, esp. 199.

32. Mainwaring, "Presidentialism, Multipartism, and Democracy," 212–22.

33. Haggard and Kaufman write that under proportional representation systems, the "fragmentation of the party system and patronage demands from party leaders can create dangerous stalemates" in policymaking. Stephan Haggard and Robert R. Kaufman, *The*

Political Economy of Democratic (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 348.

34. Giovanni Sartori, *Comparative Constitutional Engineering*, 47, 55.

35. Arend Lijphart, the most prominent proponent of PR systems, provides evidence in support of PR mostly from Western, industrialized democracies with commonly held values and traditions. Arend Lijphart, *Electoral Systems and Party Systems* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

36. Quentin Quade, "PR and Democratic Statecraft," *Journal of Democracy* 2, no. 3 (Summer 1991): 41. See also Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1957), 117–18, 140; Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 191.

37. Charles H. Fairbanks, Jr., "The Politics of Resentment," *Journal of Democracy* 5, no. 2 (April 1994), esp. 39; Gordon Hahn, "Russia's Polarized Political Spectrum," *Problems of Post-Communism* 43, no. 3, (May-June 1996); Michael McFaul, "The Vanishing Center," *Journal of Democracy* 7, no. 2 (April 1996).

38. Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*, 132.

39. Zhirinovskiy called for an authoritarian system, while Zyuganov and the KPRF called for major constitutional changes to make the parliament more powerful than the president.

40. Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, 126–27, 141. Also see Richard S. Katz, *A Theory of Parties and Electoral Systems* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 121.

41. Although both "parties of power" hoped to capture about 30–40 percent of the vote, Russia's Choice won only 15.5 percent in 1993, and Our Home Is Russia won 10.1 percent of the vote in 1995. Tsentral'naya Izbiratel'naya Kommissiya, *Vybory deputatov Gosudarstvennoy Dumi 1995*, 94.

42. Mancur Olson argues that as the size of a group increases, the more difficult it is for the actors in the group to cooperate. Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action*, 33.

43. For a more detailed discussion of Russia's split executive and its implications for policymaking, see Alexander Sokolowski, "Bankrupt Government: Intra-Executive Relations and the Politics of Budgetary Irresponsibility in Yeltsin's Russia," *Europe-Asia Studies* 53, no. 4 (June 2001): 541–72.

44. For example, see Stephen Holmes, "The Post-Communist Presidency," *East European Constitutional Review* 2, no. 4 (Fall 1993), and 3, no. 1 (Winter 1004); Timothy J. Colton, "Superpresidentialism and Russia's Backward State," *Post-Soviet Affairs*, No. 2 (April-June 1995), 144–48; and M. Steven Fish, "The Pitfalls of Superpresidentialism," *Current History* (October 1997): 326.

45. The presidency is described in Chapter 4 of the Constitution, while the government is discussed in Chapter 6.

46. *Konstitutsiya Rossiiskoy Federatsii*, Article 80. Yeltsin often referred to his constitutional role in this manner.

47. *Konstitutsiya Rossiiskoy Federatsii*, Arts. 80–93.

48. See *Federal'nii Zakon "O Pravitel'stve Rossiiskoy Federatsii"*, 17 December 1997, Chapter I.

49. An important exception to this rule is the president's direct supervision of the government's "force" ministries (*siloviye ministerstva*), such as the Ministries of Defense, Internal Security, Secret Police, Foreign Affairs, Emergency Situations, which are directly subordinate to the president.

50. This view of Yeltsin's relationship toward the government is also held and supported in detail in Eugene Huskey, *Presidential Power in Russia*, esp. 49–50, 125–62.

51. The constitution specifically invests authority over economic and fiscal policy in the government. (Art. 114.)

52. Alexander Kotenkov, presidential representative to the State Duma, *Byulleten Gosudarstvennoy Dumi*, 29 January 1999, No. 234 (376) Part II, p. 3. During the period of study, the size of the Presidential Administration grew to a staff of more than two thousand, which was cut back in 1999.

53. Juan Linz, "Presidential or Parliamentary Democracy: Does It Make a Difference?" 6–8.

54. See Alexander Sokolowski, "Bankrupt Government," 558–59.

55. On how Yeltsin's lack of support hurt the electoral performance of Russia's Choice, see Michael McFaul, "Explaining the Vote," *Journal of Democracy* 5, no. 2 (April 1994): 6–7. For its impact on Our Home Is Russia, see Lilia Shevtsova, *Yeltsin's Russia: Myth and Reality*, 140–52.

56. For a detailed case study of Russia's budgetary politics during the period, which supports this essay's main argument, see Alexander Sokolowski, "Bankrupt Government: The Politics of Budgetary Irresponsibility in Yeltsin's Russia" (doctoral dissertation, Princeton University, 2002).

57. Interview with Yulia Ulyanova, expert on economic affairs, *Segodnya* newspaper, 6 December 1999.

58. In Duma debates over the 1997 budget, Budget Committee Chair Mikhail Zadornov criticized the government for "giving in to the military without demanding real reform of the armed forces." *Byulleten' Gosudarstvennoy Dumy*, No. 48 (190), 11 October 1996, 31.

59. Interview with Oleg V. Vyugin, former first deputy minister of finance, Moscow, 19 April 2001.

60. Russian military affairs expert Dmitri Trenin put it bluntly, stating, "Military reform languished under Yeltsin in the 1990s." Dmitri Trenin, senior fellow, Moscow Carnegie Center, presentation at Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, D.C., 13 December 2000.

61. Interview with Tatiyana Antipova, expert on social policy, EPICenter, Moscow, 9 September 1999.

62. "Duma Rejects Government-Backed Social Reforms," *RFE/RL Newslines*, 25 June 1997.

63. Figures are from the Ministry of Taxes and Duties, cited in Irina Granik, "*Pochinkom budut pugat' detey.*" *Kommersant*, 30 May 2000, 1.

64. In setting the agenda for budgetary policy for 2000, Yeltsin was still calling for the government to pass the substantive part of the new Tax Code. Boris Yeltsin, "*O byudzhetnoy politike na 2000 god.*" (*Poslaniye Prezidenta Rossiiskoy Federatsii B.N. Yeltsina Pravitelstvu RF*) Moscow, 12 April 1999. Printed in *Finansy* 5 (1999): 5.

65. The Duma adopted the substantive second part of the Tax Code, which introduced a 13 percent flat tax, on 19 July 2000 and President Putin signed it on 6 August. The changes went into effect on 1 January 2001.

66. For Yeltsin's inconstant support of the government in budgetary policy, see Sokolowski, "Bankrupt Government," 556–65.

67. Articles 104, 106, and 114 of the constitution establish that all measures relating to fiscal policy should be submitted to parliament. The moderate chair of the Duma's Budget Committee, Alexander Zhukov, called the decrees unconstitutional. See "Duma Deputies Question Constitutionality of Austerity Steps." *RFE/RL Newslines*, 21 July 1998. The president's chief economic adviser Alexander Livshits defended the government's steps by claiming they were emergency short-term measures. "Kremlin Official Says Decrees, Directives Only Temporary," *RFE/RL Newslines*, 21 July 1998.

68. Yeltsin stated, "There will be no devaluation—that's firm and definite." See "Yeltsin Rules Out Ruble Devaluation," *RFE/RL Newslines*, 14 August 1998.

69. Prominent examples of legislation that has had an impact on economic reforms include the Land Code, substantive portions of the Tax Code, and portions of the Civil Code.

70. The one important exception to this rule was the Primakov government, which experienced a higher level of policymaking efficacy than other Yeltsin governments.

71. Unity and People's Deputy initially formed an alliance with the KPRF to maximize

their committee chairmanships. That partnership ultimately gave way to a more traditional left-right cleavage in the Duma.

72. For example, see Yevgeniya Albats, "*Radi strany možno i risknut*" ("For the Sake of the Country, One Can Take a Risk"), *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 10 February 2001 (Internet version).