

Boxing Russia

Executive–Legislative Powers and the Categorization of Russia’s Regime Type

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Abstract: This paper¹ examines the debate over the categorization of the Russian political system as “semi-presidential” (as many, especially comparativists, argue) or “super-presidential” (as perhaps the majority of Russian area experts argue). To approach a resolution of this debate, the article focuses on the interpretation of the relevant articles in the Russian constitution, presents practical comparisons with unambiguously semi-presidential systems (such as those in France and Poland), and delves into the issue of executive cohabitation between president and prime minister as the *sine qua non* of semi-presidentialism. To that end, the Yeltsin-Primakov dyad is examined in some detail. At its base level, the article rejects the notion that Russia since 1993 is a semi-presidential system of the French or Polish variety, since, it is argued, (1) the possibility of bona fide cohabitation is not present under Russia’s constitutional rules, (2) the Prime Minister and cabinet are ultimately not responsible to the State Duma, and (3) the Prime Minister is not president-independent. Rather, viewing Russia as essentially a super-presidential system, though not without its own problems, best captures the nature of politics in the country.

Keywords: cohabitation, executive-legislative relations, Russia, semi-presidentialism

Since the adoption of the Russian constitution in December 1993, much debate has arisen over attempts to categorize the new regime among the familiar forms known to exist in the democratic world. Institutionally, is Russia a presidential system, a “super-presidential” system, or a “semi-presidential” system? While Russia is among a group of countries such as Iceland, Ireland, Israel, and Finland that seem to defy typological consensus, the ambiguity over the Russian case is perhaps a bit more peculiar.

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On one level, debates about the institutional makeup of the ambiguous cases listed above usually center on two choices: Whether the country in question is parliamentary or semi-presidential, with the answer hinging on one's appreciation of the actual role of the head of state. By that standard, for example, Ireland is generally categorized as parliamentary, the direct popular election of the Irish president notwithstanding.

For Russia, however, the range of assertions bridges a wider institutional gap. Some view Russia as "super-presidential," meaning that political power between the executive and the legislature is skewed overwhelmingly in favor of the former, to the detriment of the democratic credentials of the system. Others, however, noting the presence under the constitution of both an elected president and a "prime minister,"² consider Russia to be a "semi-presidential" analog to France or Poland. Still others discount the role of the "prime minister" to that of little more than a presidential chief-of-staff, leading them to see Russia as a presidential system more similar to the United States than to France or Poland.³ Finally, others, dissatisfied with the broadness of the "semi-presidential" category, have generated intermediary categories: "premier-presidentialism" and "president-parliamentarism" (with Russia falling into the latter).⁴ Unlike the ambiguous

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cases cited above, in which the debate seems to revolve around parliamentarism and (some variety of) semi-presidentialism, in the case of Russia the argument more precisely hinges on whether or not the Russian constitution of 1993 created a super-presidential or (some variety of) semi-presidential system.

At a second level, there seems to be a noticeable predictability in the type of analysts who are more likely to place Russia into one of the polar choices. That is, Russian area specialists are more inclined to see Russia as a super-presidential system, while comparativists who focus less on countries than they do on regime-types tend to view Russia as semi-presidential.⁵ This conceptual ambiguity has been further complicated since the 2008 acquisition of the prime ministership by former president Vladimir Putin—who, many argue, has more actual authority in Russian politics than does the president, Dmitry Medvedev.

This paper explores the debate on the status of Russian political institutions. It assesses the arguments for and against each rival conceptualization of the Russian political system, and ultimately argues against the claim that Russia is a semi-presidential system in any generic sense.⁶ This position is not defended dogmatically, however, as it is admitted that Russia's institutional structure as described in the 1993 constitution does indeed provide grounds for all camps to press their claims. Ultimately, though, viewing Russia as a "super-presidential" regime is less harmful to a valid understanding of Russian politics than are the rival conceptualizations. To the degree that this claim is valid, then, viewing Russia as "semi-presidential"—grouping it, therefore, with France and Poland—is most injurious to a proper understanding of Russian politics. At the center of this determination is the issue of cohabitation in Russian politics. Semi-presidential regimes have as a *sine qua non* the real possibility (or probability) of executive cohabitation, *stricto sensu*. Institutionally

speaking, Russia lacks this possibility. The idea that Russia may not lack the possibility due to personalistic or idiosyncratic variables, on the other hand, speaks volumes about the level of institutionalization that has yet to occur in the Russian political system.

Semi-Presidentialism and Russian Executive Politics

The categorization of political regimes is not a mere scholastic exercise. Comparativists since the time of Socrates' Lyceum have attempted to link the institutional characteristics of particular political systems to a variety of measures of regime performance.⁷ Central to most attempts at classifying regime types have been (a) the procedures for electing political leaders, (b) the procedures for dismissing political leaders, and (c) the constitutional and political powers of the political leaders.⁸ In modern comparative politics, the discussion among scholars on the "presidentialism vs. parliamentarism" issue has produced a voluminous amount of literature on various aspects of regime performance,⁹ and has led to the creation of a more nuanced understanding of both the categories employed by comparativists and the downstream consequences of institutional choices. The conceptualization and categorization of different regime-types allows scholars to make claims to constitutional engineers about how different institutional choices perform, what their strengths and weakness are, and how to avoid design mistakes. Such issues, of course, became evident in the post-Communist states of Central and Eastern Europe, particularly during the 1990s.

To assess the claim that Russia is, in essence, a semi-presidential system, it is important to describe the core principles of that regime type. Two well-known and influential definitions of semi-presidentialism are those of Maurice Duverger and Giovanni Sartori. In his seminal 1980 article on semi-presidentialism, Duverger defines the regime type as such:

[A] political regime is considered as semi-presidential if the constitution which established it combines three elements: (1) the president of the republic is elected by universal suffrage; (2) he possesses quite considerable powers; (3) he has opposite him, however, a prime minister and ministers who possess executive and governmental power and can stay in office only if the parliament does not show its opposition to them.¹⁰

Sartori felt that Duverger's definition was a bit too ambiguous, and attempted in his own fashion to make the definition more precise:

Semi-presidentialism is 'semi' precisely in that it halves presidentialism by substituting a dual authority structure for a monocentric authority structure. In presidential systems the president is protected and insulated from parliamentary interference by the division of power principle. Instead, semi-presidential systems perform on a power sharing basis: the president must share power with a prime minister; and, in turn, the prime minister must obtain continuous parliamentary support. ... The one characteristic that any semi-presidential system *must* have (by virtue of its very name) is a dual authority structure, a two-headed configuration."¹¹ [emphasis in original]

More specifically, for Sartori, a semi-presidential regime has the following characteristics:¹²

- (1) The head of state (president) is elected by popular vote for a fixed term of office.
- (2) The head of state shares executive power with a prime minister, thus entering a dual authority structure whose three defining criteria are:

- a. The president is independent from parliament, but cannot govern alone or indirectly, and therefore his will must be conveyed and processed via his government.
- b. The prime minister and his cabinet are president-independent in that they are parliament-dependent: they are subject to either parliamentary confidence or no confidence (or both), and in either case need the support of a parliamentary majority.
- c. The dual authority structure of semi-presidentialism allows for different balances and also for shifting prevalences of power within the executive, under the strict condition that the “autonomy potential” of each component unit of the executive does subsist.

More recently, Matthew Shugart and John Carey, in their partial rebuttal of the standard Linzian critique of presidentialism, developed a more nuanced description of semi-presidentialism.¹³ In essence, they offered up two different forms of semi-presidentialism: premier-presidential systems, on the one hand, and president-parliamentary systems, on the other. For them, premier-presidential systems (e.g., France, Austria, Finland, Romania, Poland, and, arguably, post-1994 Ukraine¹⁴) are those semi-presidential regimes that adhere to the definition offered by Duverger. However, there exists for Shugart and Carey a distinct second type of semi-presidential regime that they label, somewhat awkwardly, “president-parliamentary.” This type of regime has the following characteristics, and comes closer to describing the Russian case:

- (1) The president is elected by popular vote.
- (2) The president appoints and dismisses cabinet ministers.
- (3) Cabinet ministers are subject to parliamentary confidence.
- (4) The president has the power to dissolve parliament or has legislative powers (e.g., executive decree power, the power to call referenda, veto powers), or both.

Into this latter category, which they view as the most risky form of governmental structure from the perspective of democratic consolidation and stability, Shugart and Carey have placed such cases as Weimar Germany and Portugal’s initial post-authoritarian 1976 system. By the application of the Shugart and Carey coding mechanism, Russia’s 1993 constitution would fall into this category.¹⁵

Obviously critical to all these accounts are (a) the duality of the power distribution in the executive organs of the government, (b) the fact that the prime minister and government are responsible to the legislature, and, given the separate and direct election of the president, (c) the real potential for political cohabitation between the president and prime minister. It is the position of this paper that Russia’s institutional rules as set out in its constitution does not accommodate these characteristics. Looking to Sartori’s definition, characteristics (2)b and especially (2)c are not accurate descriptions of Russian politics under its present constitution. Critical as they are to a definition of semi-presidentialism, then, Russia is strictly neither “semi-presidential” nor “president-parliamentary” (although the latter is closer to the mark). However, these claims are not unambiguously self-evident but must be demonstrated, a task to which we now turn.

Are the Russian Prime Minister and Government Responsible to the Duma?

Confounding the evaluation of the question of the prime minister's responsibility to the State Duma is Article 117-3 of the constitution.¹⁶ But, typical of the uniqueness of the Russian case, it, too, ultimately resolves to the benefit of the Russian president, though not without some complexities. The first part of Article 117-3 does indeed do more than suggest that the Russian head of government is responsible to the State Duma and is required to maintain its confidence:

117-3: The State Duma may express no-confidence in the Government of the Russian Federation. A no-confidence resolution shall be adopted by a majority of votes of the total number of the deputies of the State Duma.

Clearly, then, the existence of a no-confidence measure pushes the Russian institutional structure away from a pure presidential form. Simply put, pure presidential systems do not, by definition, admit to no-confidence measures on the part of the legislative branch. Presidential systems are marked by the "separate origin" and "separate survival" dicta, and the existence of Article 117-3, at least in part, does serious damage to the claim that Russia is presidential, let alone "super-presidential." But Article 117-3 does not end there:

After the State Duma expresses no-confidence to the Government of the Russian Federation, the President of the Russian Federation shall be free to announce the resignation of the Government or to reject the decision of the State Duma. In case the State Duma again expresses no-confidence in the Government of the Russian Federation within three months, the President of the Russian Federation shall announce the resignation of the Government or dissolve the State Duma.

Here, much of the leverage given to the State Duma with one hand is withdrawn with the other. The latter part of Article 117-3, by allowing the Russian president to (a) ignore the no confidence vote against his government by the State Duma, or ultimately (b) dissolve the State Duma if it were again within three months time to express no confidence in the government, emasculates in large part the initial grant of power to the legislature. It is a small consolation to those who would argue that the prime minister is responsible to the State Duma that the State Duma cannot be dissolved without its own participation (i.e., voting no-confidence twice). The fact remains that the president may retain a prime minister and cabinet that have received multiple no-confidence votes from the legislature and, adding insult to injury, is empowered to dissolve the legislature itself if it were to exercise its no-confidence powers twice. To be fair, the Russian constitution does in fact provide "no dissolution" zones during the life of each State Duma. Article 109 stipulates that the Duma may not be dissolved for any reason during the first year of its post-election existence (Article 109-3), nor during the six-month period leading up to a presidential election (Article 109-5).

“Simply put, pure presidential systems do not, by definition, admit to no-confidence measures on the part of the legislative branch.”

However, these provisions safeguard the Duma for, at best, one-and-a-half years out of its now five-year term of office.

Formal votes of no-confidence in Russian politics have been relatively rare. Table 1 shows the six instances of formal no-confidence votes that have occurred in the Russian State Duma since the adoption of the 1993 constitution. Article 117-3 requires that at least 226 deputies vote in favor of the motion for it to be considered passed. This has occurred only once, in June of 1995, when 241 deputies of the Duma so voted to express their opposition to the Chernomyrdin government over its mishandling of the June 14–19, 1995 Budyonnovsk hostage crisis in Stavropol' krai.¹⁷ That same article allows the Russian president to reject the Duma's no confidence vote by keeping his prime minister in office. This was the option adopted by Yeltsin in June 1995 as Chernomyrdin stayed on. It is worth noting, however, that the State Duma, in reaction to Yeltsin's non-response to the passed vote of June 21, quickly set on its agenda a second no-confidence measure. If a second no-confidence motion is passed by the State Duma within three months of the first, the president must take more decisive action: he must either sack the government and set about reconstituting a new cabinet, or dissolve the State Duma and call for new legislative elections.

TABLE 1. Votes on Motions of No Confidence

Date of Vote	In Favor	Opposed	Abstain	DNV	Total
October 27, 1994	193	54	55	148	450
June 21, 1995	241	72	20	117	450
July 1, 1995	193	117	48	92	450
March 14, 2001	126	78	5	241	450
June 18, 2003	172	163	6	109	450
February 9, 2005	112	20	4	314	450

It is certainly the case that in the summer of 1995, Yeltsin was loathe to dissolve the Duma, suffering as he was at the time from very low popularity ratings and the looming electoral threat of the opposition. The 1993 elections to the State Duma had resulted in the three main opposition parties winning a combined 43.3 percent of the party list vote and a total of 145 seats. The committed reformers had but 35.7 percent of the party list ballot, and a total of 126 seats.¹⁸ The 1993 constitution had carried the stipulation that the first Duma elected that year¹⁹ would have only a two-year term of office, so Duma elections were scheduled for December 1995. Yeltsin's summer of 1995 concern about the results of that upcoming election were well-based: the Communist Party of the Russian Federation doubled its party list support, rising to 22.3 percent of the vote and winning a total of 157 seats. Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's Liberal Democrats won 51 seats. These two main opposition parties in the 1995 election would win, then, 208 seats, and dwarfed the support behind the government. The Kremlin's "party of power" (nominally headed by Prime Minister Chernomyrdin), Our Home is Russia, garnered a mere 10.1 percent of the party list ballot and won only 55 total seats. It was in the midst of this political atmosphere that year that these votes of no-confidence were brought.

Still, when the June 21 no-confidence vote passed, Yeltsin still did not feel compelled to oust Chernomyrdin. The Duma opposition was keen on having prominent “power ministers” sacked over the mishandling of the Chechen war, launched in December 1994, and the June 1995 Budyonovsk hostage debacle.²⁰ When a second no-confidence measure seemed imminent, Yeltsin did take action to avoid a direct confrontation with the Duma. In order to forestall the passage of a possible second no-confidence vote in the Chernomyrdin government—one that would have triggered an early election to the State Duma—Yeltsin sacrificed three members of the cabinet in the last days of June: Interior Minister Viktor Yerin, Federal Security Minister Sergei Stepashin, and Minister of Nationality Affairs Nikolai Yegorov.²¹ These moves proved productive in easing the executive-legislative conflict. The subsequent vote of no confidence on July 1, 1995 failed to garner the necessary 226 votes, coming 33 votes short. The State Duma was not dissolved, and elections took place as scheduled in December 1995.

Can one interpret these events as indicative of governmental “responsibility” to the State Duma? On the one hand, legislative opposition and the threat of a second no-confidence vote resulted in the sacking of three prominent members of the cabinet. On the other hand, the only successful no-confidence vote of the period was ignored (and constitutionally so) by the president. Essentially, the three ministers were sacked not because the institutional mechanism described in Article 117 required that they be sacked, but due to an act of political expediency on the part of Yeltsin. Did the president retreat? Yes. Was he forced to retreat by the constitutional provision? No. Ultimately, the removal of the cabinet ministers was a political act, not a constitutional or “parliamentary” act. In this sense, the events of June 1995 are perhaps closer to US President George W. Bush’s firing of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld in December 2006 than to the forced resignation of the James Callaghan government in Britain in 1979.²² The latter was a *constitutional* act that resulted from the passage of a no confidence vote in the British Commons; the former was an act of *political* expediency in the face of opposition to an unpopular war. To the degree that this argument is persuasive, then, the Russian government is not responsible to the State Duma in the way that “semi-presidentialism” would anticipate.

Is the Russian Prime Minister President-Independent?

It is certainly not the case that Russian prime ministers and cabinet ministers are “president-independent.” Article 111-1 of the Russian constitution states that the “chairman of the government ... shall be appointed by the President of the Russian Federation with the consent of the State Duma.” This “consent” exercised by the Duma is, under normal circumstances, little more than the type of consent exercised by the US Senate when it confirms (or fails to confirm) cabinet secretaries nominated by the president. It is not the type of consent that defines the relationship between a prime minister and the parliament in either a British-style or continental European parliamentary system. In Russia, “consent” does not ordinarily mean that the head of government is “responsible to” or requires the “confidence” of the Duma. Were that the case, much of the 1990s in Russian politics would have been marked by cohabitation between President Yeltsin and an opposition-supported prime minister. What, then, of abnormal or unordinary situations? Two come to mind.

Article 111-4 describes one aspect of the confirmation process as it applies to presidential nominees to the position of prime minister. As in other areas of the constitution,

the procedure to resolve major conflict between the president and the State Duma are ultimately skewed in favor of the latter.

111-4: In case the State Duma rejects three times the candidates for the post of the Chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation, the President of the Russian Federation shall appoint the Chairman of the Government, dissolve the State Duma and call for new elections.²³

How has this procedure been exercised in practice since December 1993? Has the Russian president been successful, via the mechanism that threatens the dissolution of the State Duma, in staring down the Duma when the latter has opposed his nominee for the position of prime minister? To date, the historical record indicates that much of that answer depends on the political standing and popularity of the president himself. Table 2 shows the history of confirmation votes in the State Duma for Russian prime ministers. Two cases in the late Yeltsin presidency stand out as instructive of the political nature of these constitutional provisions and shed light on the degree to which the prime minister in Russia is responsible to the State Duma.

The first controversy in the naming and confirming of a Russian prime minister occurred in April 1998, when, after almost five and a half years in office, Prime Minister Chernomyrdin was sacked by Yeltsin.²⁴ Yeltsin quickly nominated Sergei Kirienko, the relatively obscure 35-year-old Minister of Fuel and Energy, to the post. Kirienko was considered a representative of the so-called young reformers, dedicated to liberal market forces and adherence to the recommendations of the International Monetary Fund. As shown above, Kirienko's nomination was bitterly opposed by the State Duma, which quickly voted down his candidacy on April 10, 1998. This marked the first time that the State Duma had rejected a prime ministerial nomination.²⁵ Duma deputies were then surprised when Yeltsin immediately renominated Kirienko for the post. Their reading of Article 111-4²⁶ required that the president submit a *different* candidate for the position; Yeltsin's reading, however, led him to assert that he could, in fact, nominate the same person twice or three times.²⁷ The second vote on the Kirienko nomination took place on April 17, 1998, and generated only 115 supportive votes in the State Duma. Yeltsin then nominated Kirienko for a third time. The Duma deputies now were forced to choose between voting down Kirienko for the third time (which was their constitutional prerogative), thereby forcing the dissolution of the Duma, or reversing course by surrendering to the president. The majority of the Duma deputies chose the latter, and in so doing kept their jobs. The third vote was 250 in favor of confirmation, with only 25 negative votes. The rest of the deputies formally abstained or failed to vote at all. This case seems to highlight the toothlessness of the State Duma's confirmation powers; indeed, the Duma seemed to have less power than the legislature in a pure presidential system. When Robert Bork and John Tower, for example, were rejected by the US Senate for positions on the Supreme Court and as Secretary of Defense, respectively, their candidacies became defunct.²⁸ This was not the case for Kirienko.

On the other hand, it was the State Duma that had its way in the next confrontation with the president over the naming of a prime minister. Indeed, Yeltsin showed bad form in the entire Kirienko affair. First, the president employed a very elastic and self-serving interpretation of Article 111-4 to ensure Kirienko's confirmation. He thus humiliated the State Duma deputies and revealed to the world the hollowness of the required Duma consent. Insult was added to injury by the fact that Yeltsin—after all the effort to

TABLE 2. Confirmation Votes for Russian Prime Minister (PM), 1991–2010

Date of Vote	PM Nominee	Term in Office	Duma Vote (Y-N-AB-DNV)
—	Boris Yeltsin	11/06/91–06/15/92	—
—	Yegor Gaidar	6/16/91–12/14/92	—
—	Viktor Chernomyrdin	12/14/92–03/23/98	—
12/12/93	<i>Adoption of Russian Constitution via national referendum</i>		
08/10/96 [†]	Viktor Chernomyrdin	12/14/92–03/23/98	314-85-04-48
04/10/98	Sergei Kirienko	3/23/98–08/23/98	143-186-05-116*
04/17/98	Sergei Kirienko	(ibid.)	115-271-11-53*
04/24/98	Sergei Kirienko	(ibid.)	251-25-00-174
08/31/98	Viktor Chernomyrdin	8/23/98–09/11/98	94-251-00-105*
09/07/98	Viktor Chernomyrdin	(ibid.)	138-273-01-38*
09/11/98	Yevgenii Primakov	9/11/98–05/12/99	317-63-15-55
05/19/99	Sergei Stepashin	5/12/99–08/09/99	298-55-14-83
08/16/99	Vladimir Putin	8/09/99–05/07/00	233-84-17-116
05/17/00 [†]	Mikhail Kasyanov	5/07/00–02/24/04	325-55-15-55
—	Viktor Khristenko	2/24/04–03/01/04	—
03/05/04	Mikhail Fradkov	3/01/04–09/12/07	352-58-24-16
05/12/04 [†]	Mikhail Fradkov	(ibid.)	356-72-08-14
09/14/07	Viktor Zubkov	9/12/07–05/08/08	381-47-08-14
05/09/08 [†]	Vladimir Putin	5/08/08–present	392-56-00-02

[†] By constitutional rule (article 111-2), the Russian president must re-submit his PM nominee for re-confirmation within two weeks of a presidential election, even if the PM had been confirmed previously. Chernomyrdin was already PM in 1996, but was re-submitted after Yeltsin won re-election to the presidency (Chernomyrdin had never been formally confirmed as PM previous to this point, since he was named PM prior to the adoption of the 1993 constitution). Likewise, Kasyanov was submitted for confirmation in the aftermath of Vladimir Putin's presidential election victory in 2000; finally, Fradkov was sitting PM when Putin won re-election in 2004 and Fradkov had to be re-nominated for conformation.

* Confirmation vote defeats.

get Kirienko into the prime ministership—sacked Kirienko on August 23, 1998, at the height of the Russian financial meltdown. When President Yeltsin attempted to reinstate Chernomyrdin to the post, the State Duma had had enough; it seemed determined not to be beaten again by the president. On August 31, the Duma voted down the Chernomyrdin nomination by a vote of 94–251. When Yeltsin determined to employ the same tactics that won him Kirienko, the Duma dug in its heels. Chernomyrdin was renominated immediately, but fell in a second confirmation vote on September 7 by a vote of 138–273. Yeltsin, this time under the mounting pressure of the financial crisis and

perhaps unsure of the result of any possible election to fill a dissolved Duma, decided to back off. Chernomyrdin withdrew from consideration, and Yeltsin nominated Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov to the post of prime minister. By all accounts, Primakov was a compromise candidate between the president and the Duma. He won easy confirmation on September 11, 1998, gaining the support of even the most anti-Yeltsin elements in the Duma.²⁹ It is the Primakov prime ministership that raises in its most obvious form the issue of cohabitation in Russian politics.

Was the Yeltsin–Primakov Relationship Cohabitation?

All executives coexist with legislatures. The narrative above certainly attests to that fact in Russia. However, the issue at hand is not coexistence, but “cohabitation,” which has a precise meaning and is arguably the *sine qua non* of semi-presidentialism. Presidents Yeltsin, Putin, and Medvedev have all had the prime ministers *they* wanted, regardless of the partisan disposition of the State Duma—with one possible exception. In many ways, then, it is this exception—the Yeltsin-Primakov relationship of 1998–1999—that is a litmus test of the question of whether Russia is actually a semi-presidential system or something else altogether.³⁰ As shall be seen below, many observers have categorized the period of September 11, 1998 to May 12, 1999 as one of executive “cohabitation.” The task at hand, then, is twofold: to determine whether this Yeltsin-Primakov coexistence was actually cohabitation, *stricto sensu*; and to determine if that state of affairs—however close it was to actual cohabitation—should be considered to have been a reasonable consequence of the formal institutional structure of the 1993 constitution. That is, was the Yeltsin-Primakov relationship actually cohabitation, as the word is used in the institutional literature on semi-presidentialism? And, to the degree that it was, was this “cohabitation” (real or imagined) consistent with the stipulations of the constitution? Ultimately, this paper argues that the answer to both these questions is no.

That the idea of cohabitation was in the air in the late summer of 1998, after the Chernomyrdin nomination failed for the second time and Primakov was successfully offered up in his stead, is clear from many contemporaneous accounts. Leon Aron, the author of a major biography of Yeltsin, and writing in *The Sunday Times* (UK) in 1999, referred to the Yeltsin-Primakov arrangement as “Russia’s first right-left cohabitation regime.”³¹ In the biography itself, Aron writes of this period:

In France, a redistribution of power between the executive and parliament did occur in an unexpected way through cohabitation, in which the leader of the parliament’s majority (or even plurality) became the Prime Minister. Such an arrangement seems quite conceivable in Russia as well. The ‘round table’ consultations between Yeltsin and the Speakers of both Houses, introduced in 1997, were the first steps in that direction. The Russian version of cohabitation became reality when Yeltsin was forced by the Duma to appoint Evgeniy Primakov in September 1998.³²

Similarly, Lajos Szaszdi argues that:

It is notable that this period of Russian government under the premiership of Yevgeny Primakov was characterized by a ‘French-style’ situation of ‘cohabitation’ between President Yeltsin and his Prime Minister, who had been approved by an anti-Yeltsin Duma majority in September 1998, in the aftermath of the August 1998 economic crisis.³³

In like fashion, the respected French journalist (and author of more than one book on Russian political affairs), Helene Carrere d'Encausse wrote an article titled "Russian Cohabitation and Its Uncertainties" in the September 15, 1998 edition of the right-of-center *Le Figaro*. In it, she clearly comes down of the side of those who see the Yeltsin-Primakov relationship as a genuine case of cohabitation:

The cohabitation underway in Russia will pit the two heads of executive power against each other.... Still Yeltsin will retain a great amount of power and will remain the voice of democracy.... While the cohabitation will result in ambiguities, such as between Primakov's declaration that reforms will continue and his nomination of the Communist Maslyukov, it has avoided a major clash, at least in the short term.³⁴

These examples are somewhat typical of the journalistic treatment of the political situation in Russia after Primakov's ascendancy to the prime minister's post. To be fair, of course, they do indeed capture something of the essence of the relationship extant at the time. Yeltsin was physically ill and absent more than usual during this period. His appointment of Primakov was considered a retreat in the face of legislative opposition. And it was Primakov—not Yeltsin—who made the famous *volte face* in the air and returned to Moscow when, during his March 23, 1999 flight to the US to meet with President Clinton, NATO renewed its bombing campaign in Yugoslavia over Kosovo. Primakov was a respected bureaucrat, if not a typical politician. What is more, it was not unusual at the time to view Primakov as a probable successor to Yeltsin, whose second term was to end in 2000.³⁵

All of these considerations make the use of "cohabitation" understandable, and suggest that executive cohabitation in Russia might become a more regular pattern in public affairs. Leon Aron again suggests such a development:

Yeltsin retreated again by nominating the Foreign Minister, the smart and stolid Evgeniy Primakov. To secure his confirmation, Primakov consulted the Duma so extensively both on Ministerial appointments and on economic strategy that his government became responsible to the parliament rather than to the President. Suddenly, Russia looked like a parliamentary republic. From now on, it would be extremely difficult for any Russian President to exercise his constitutional right to dissolve the Duma and schedule new elections if the two branches of power were to be deadlocked over the government's policies or a candidate for Prime Minister. It seemed that the President might not be able to dismiss a government without the legislature's consent, and might not even be able to appoint individual Ministers.³⁶

Of course, this sentiment was soon proven to be overly pessimistic, as evidenced by, if nothing else, Primakov's summary dismissal by Yeltsin in May 1999; Yeltsin did so without gaining the State Duma's "consent" beforehand and without suffering much political damage as a result. That having been said, however, at the time of Primakov's premiership such thoughts were not at all unreasonable.

The issue, however, is not whether the notion of cohabitation was acceptable to the average Russian, or even to astute observers of the political game at play between Yeltsin and Primakov. Of course, in laymen's terms, these two executive figures were coexisting, or cohabitating. The issue under consideration is whether or not their relationship was actually cohabitation as defined under semi-presidentialism. Recall the definitions of semi-presidentialism cited by Duverger and Sartori earlier in this paper. Of note here is their emphasis on the government's "responsibility" to the Duma. To those definitions

we can add that of Robert Elgie, a frequent contributor to the academic literature of semi-presidentialism and cohabitation. He reinforces the importance of the “responsibility” basis of semi-presidentialism:

A semi-presidential regime may be defined as the situation where a popularly elected fixed-term president exists alongside a prime minister and cabinet who are responsible to parliament. ... They [semi-presidential systems] all have presidents who are elected in a direct or direct-like manner and they all have prime ministers and cabinets who are responsible to the legislature.³⁷

The key question here is whether or not Primakov was “responsible” to the Duma or whether he was merely “confirmed” by it. Determining the answer to these questions is not easy. Perhaps some basic comparisons to unambiguously semi-presidential systems may help highlight the differences. In almost no respect was Primakov between 1998 and 1999 the Russian analog to, for instance, Lionel Jospin in France between 1997 and 2002,³⁸ or to Jerzy Buzek in Poland between 1997 and 2001.³⁹ In each of these cases, cohabitation is real in the strict sense of the term. The 1997 elections to the National Assembly in France resulted in a majority victory for the political Left. As head of the Socialist Party of France, the largest party of the political Left, Jospin became Prime Minister, *ipso facto*. His automatic elevation to that position by virtue of his parliamentary victory created a cohabitation period with Gaullist President Jacques Chirac. The cohabitation was made real by Jospin’s control of the National Assembly and his chairmanship of the major Left party in the country; it was highlighted by the fact that Jospin was Chirac’s opponent on both ballots of the 1995 French presidential election. He was the leader of the “party opposite,” to borrow a British phrase. Likewise, Jerzy Buzek became Polish prime minister automatically by virtue of the political Right’s parliamentary victory in the 1997 elections to the Sejm. He assumed the office as the leader of the major *opposition* coalition to the party of the sitting president, Alexander Kwasniewski. Neither Jospin nor Buzek could be summarily fired by Chirac or Kwasniewski, respectively, since each prime minister was produced by their control over the majority in the most recent parliamentary election in their respective countries. Hence, Jospin and Buzek persisted in the post of prime minister so long as they controlled the majority in the legislature. Similar stories could be told with Mitterrand–Chirac from 1986–1988, Mitterrand–Balladur from 1993–1995, or Kaczynski–Tusk in post-2007 Poland.⁴⁰

One may compare these French and Polish examples of cohabitation to the putative “cohabitation” in Russia under Yeltsin–Primakov. Aside from the extended discussion on related questions in the previous two sections of this paper, which themselves belie the claim of cohabitation, among the more specific things to consider presently are these: (1) Primakov was already in an important cabinet post (foreign minister) on the day he was elevated to the post of prime minister and was viewed by most observers to be a loyal supporter of Yeltsin in the previous battles of the period; (2) Primakov was not a member of one of the major opposition parties then arrayed against President Yeltsin in the State Duma; he was not forced on Yeltsin from without; (3) Primakov’s candidacy for the post of prime minister was considered by most to be a “compromise” between Chernomyrdin and an opposition party representative⁴¹; Primakov *was* an individual more palatable to the Duma opposition, but he was *not* a member of that opposition; (4) Primakov’s name was put forward, if we are to believe the reports at the time, by Grigory Yavlinsky, who, while not at the time a cheerleader for the President, was hardly yet a

member of the irreconcilable opposition; (5) Primakov did not head any political party or bloc that controlled any seats in the State Duma; and (6) Primakov was dismissed by President Yeltsin after a short tenure and without a whimper. The State Duma accepted the dismissal and confirmed Primakov's replacement—the previously vilified Sergei Stepashin—by a wide margin (see Table 2).

For these reasons, it is argued, Primakov's prime ministership under president Yeltsin does not constitute cohabitation. Interestingly, many of those who did view the situation in terms of cohabitation saw this development as a violation of the institutional rules spelled out in the 1993 constitution. That is, even if the Yeltsin-Primakov executive of 1998-1999 does not rise to the standard of cohabitation, *stricto sensu*, many viewed even that lesser relationship of coexistence as a violation of the rules of the game. That is, from the perspective of even some of those who viewed Yeltsin-Primakov as a form of cohabitation, the nature of this relationship between the president and the prime minister was a violation of the 1993 constitution. For example, Aron argued at the time that

The appointment of Primakov signifies a major weakening not only of the reform policies of 1992-1998 but, perhaps even more alarmingly, *a de facto constitutional coup d'etat*: the installation of a government responsible to the parliament, rather than the President. Given very deep ideological divisions in the Duma and its inability to form a working majority on anything except opposition to the President, a government controlled by the Duma could lead to a paralysis of power. I honestly wish this prediction be wrong but the Duma's record until now gives little ground for optimism.⁴² [emphasis added]

Again, it is the position of this paper that neither Primakov nor the other cabinet ministers were actually responsible to the Duma. But it is interesting to note that Aron believed that if such were the case, it would be a violation of the constitution, which, it must logically be assumed, in Aron's opinion should not permit such a development. Others echoed this sentiment as well. In an article titled "End of an Era" that appeared in *Kommersant Daily*, Igor Kirillov made the following claim:

A new premier and a new political reality have emerged. Russia has ceased to be a presidential republic to become a parliamentary one. *This, in effect, is a constitutional coup*. After several years of trying, the opposition has finally pushed Boris Yeltsin to the sidelines of political life. The Duma and government have become the key players. But the Kremlin is totally wrong if it thinks that the Duma will settle for that. With the government taken away from Yeltsin, the Kremlin may follow. There is nothing now to stop the opposition from forcing the president to step down. The bad thing is not his resignation—after all, he has outlived himself, as a politician. The bad thing is that the financial and economic elite may merge with the Communists.⁴³ [emphasis added]

As with the Aron example above, the benefit of hindsight reveals Kirillov's argument to be wrong. We know now that Yeltsin executed a political comeback in 1999, fired Primakov, and installed Vladimir Putin as his prime minister and successor. The fact remains, however, that the new status of the prime minister in 1998–1999 struck observers as a violation of the intent of the constitution. One final example will perhaps demonstrate that this relationship of Yeltsin-Primakov was considered inconsistent with the nature of the Russian political system that was created in 1993. Cohabitation, if that is what they thought they were witnessing, was not consistent under their understanding of the constitution.

Sergei Agafonov, commenting on the naming of Primakov as prime minister, wrote on the front page of the reformist *Noviye Izvestiya* that

All factions, except the LDP (Liberal Democrats), welcome Primakov in his hitherto unknown capacity, a political premier. It is quite new and attests to a *quiet constitutional coup*. The good thing about Primakov, which has endeared and united even the staunchest opponents of all, is that he has no special ambition.⁴⁴ [emphasis added]

Unless these individuals were somehow skills for the presidential administration, one can assume that their reading of the constitution in Russia would not admit to cohabitation in the sense that semi-presidentialism as a concept demands. When they believed that they were indeed witnessing such a development, they viewed it as a violation of the constitution. All three used the expression “constitutional coup.”

Conclusions and Caveats

How are students of transitional political systems to gauge the institutional nature of these regimes? Are the ways these regimes should be judged, institutionally speaking, different from the point of view one should take relative to firmly established and consolidated democratic regimes? Admittedly, much of the debate on how to analyze Russia’s 1993 constitutional structure is predicated on the under-institutionalized nature of the system. Because persons in Russia seem still to be more important than the offices they fill, analysts have scrambled to determine the actual distribution of political power in Russia as exists between the president and the prime minister. Anecdotally, this fact has been highlighted by Putin’s decision to assume the post of prime minister after eight years as president. The fact that such analytical scrambling took place after 2008, regardless of the fact that no constitutional changes in these offices had occurred, is evidence of the frailty of analyses such as those that have been presented in this paper.

Those interested in categorizing political regimes have been instructed to focus not on the “relational” properties of regimes (i.e., subjective assessments of the behavioral power relationships among the parts of the system); it is better to focus on the “dispositional” properties (morphological properties that refer to the strict institutional characteristics without reference to the relationships between and among them).⁴⁵ Just as Charles de Gaulle’s license *vis-à-vis* the 1958 constitution of the Fifth Republic has produced in contemporary France a presidential office with more “relational” prerogatives than one would expect from a “dispositional” reading of the constitutional document,⁴⁶ the present Russian system still operates at some variance from expectations. That having been said, however, the argument made in this article is based on both dispositional and relational considerations. Elgie warns that conflating these two sets of considerations is problematic because the relational properties of regimes are often a matter of debate. In essence, though, even a strictly dispositional analysis is compelling.

The Russian constitution of 1993 has created a political system that is difficult to categorize in institutional terms. It grants powers and authorities that seem to violate the commonly accepted tenets of presidentialism. First, it grants power to the president to dissolve the legislature, an authority that violates a fundamental tenet of presidentialism (i.e., the separate origin–separate survival rule). Second, the constitution stipulates that the legislature may employ acts of no confidence against the government, a legislative prerogative again not seen in pure presidential regimes. Finally, the constitution seems to create

a dual executive, with both a president and a prime minister. These three characteristics alone compel some observers to categorize Russia as semi-presidential.⁴⁷ For them, the Yeltsin–Primakov period is further evidence that they understand Russian institutions correctly. However, the constitution simultaneously grants other authorities that more than vitiate those mentioned above. In fact, they constitute powers that move the Russian political system into the category of “super-presidential.”⁴⁸ Yes, the State Duma may consider votes of no confidence against the government. But in Russia a vote of no confidence not only fails to compel the government to resign, but puts the Duma itself in jeopardy. Yes, there is a prime minister who must be confirmed by the State Duma, but failing to do so again puts that Duma at risk. These are presidential powers that presidents in pure presidential regimes do not enjoy. They combine to produce a constitutional system wherein the prime minister is not responsible to the legislature and is certainly not president-independent. The historical evidence seems to argue that the exact opposite is actually true: the prime minister is responsible to the president and is Duma-independent. Certainly the manner in which Yeltsin hired and fired prime ministers during 1998–1999, when Russia had five different premiers in quick succession, does little to support the claim that Russian prime ministers are responsible to the legislature. One is left with the conclusion that depictions of Russia as semi-presidential are empirically incorrect. Only by engaging in what Giovanni Sartori has called “conceptual stretching” will allow one to place Russia in that particular box.⁴⁹

Eugene Huskey’s study of presidential power seems to have gotten things right:

In post-Communist Russia, Boris Yeltsin has sought to reduce the tensions inherent in the dual executive arrangements by dramatically limiting the prime minister’s dependence on parliament as a source of political authority, and thereby increasing his dependence on the presidency... . In practical terms, the prime minister has been the president’s man rather than the parliament’s. Russia has therefore addressed the dual-executive dilemma by emasculating one of the fundamental elements of semipresidentialism, the accountability of the prime minister and his Government to the legislature. These instrumental arrangements appear to ensure that in Russia’s version of this hybrid model of government, presidential—and not parliamentary—features predominate.⁵⁰

Huskey’s emphasis of the president-dependent nature of Russian prime ministers finds an echo in Richard Sakwa’s analysis. Separating the Russian case from those of France and Poland, he writes that “Unlike France, however, the Russian prime minister has no independent power base in parliament and thus ‘cohabitation’ (where the president and prime minister are of different political persuasions) cannot formally exist.”⁵¹ While Sakwa posits that the Yeltsin-Primakov dyad was as close as Russia has gotten to cohabitation, Russian constitutional arrangements just do not admit to cohabitation in the formal sense.

This paper has argued in favor of an understanding of “cohabitation” that is more narrow and formal than is used in everyday discussions of Russian politics. Indeed, currently there are frequent references made to the “cohabitation” of President Medvedev and Prime Minister Putin. Again, this is an incorrect use of the concept and should be avoided. That Russia is currently being governed at the top by a “tandem” is one thing, but to describe that tandem as “cohabitation” is to misunderstand the definition of that concept. Admitting that the Russian prime minister since 2008 has been a powerful agent of the central government does not imply cohabitation. Rather, it speaks to the fact that in Russian politics, the power ratio of personalities-to-

positions is still higher than in Western democracies. This fact should not be surprising. The institutionalization of political authority in post-authoritarian societies from public persons to public offices is a drawn-out process. Comparing Russia's first post-Communist decade to its second on this score should provide optimism for the future.

NOTES

1. The author would like to thank Robert Elgie, Andrew Wilson, Bryon Moraski, and Scott Feinstein for their comments on the various arguments presented in this paper.

2. The term "prime minister" is inside quotation marks because the 1993 Russian constitution does not refer to the head of government as a "prime minister" or "premier." Notwithstanding the fact that the Russian heads of government since 1993 have frequently been referred to as one or the other, the constitution (Article 110, section 2) refers to the position as "Chairman of the Government" (Председатель Правительство). In this paper the terms will be used interchangeably.

3. For an excellent review of these debates, see Thomas F. Remington, "The Evolution of Executive-Legislative Relations in Russia since 1993," *Slavic Review* 59, no. 3 (2000): 499–520.

4. These latter categories are the intellectual creations of Matthew Shugart and John Carey. See *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics* (Cambridge University Press, 2002).

5. Either generically so, as in the case of Robert Elgie, or as a sub-type of semi-presidentialism, as in the case of Shugart and Carey.

6. Robert Elgie, the foremost expert on semi-presidentialism in Europe, has generally refrained from breaking the category of semi-presidentialism into sub-types and he has consistently placed Russia into that category.

7. See for example Arend Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); and Jan-Erik Lane and Svante Ersson, *The New Institutional Politics: Performance and Outcomes* (London: Routledge, 2000).

8. See Robert Elgie, "The Classification of Democratic Regime Types," *European Journal of Political Research* 33, no.2 (1998): 219–238.

9. Of course, much of this debate has been framed by the arguments of (and responses to) Juan J. Linz. See for an introduction to these controversies Linz, "Presidential or Parliamentary Democracy: Does it Make a Difference," 3–87, in Juan J. Linz and Arturo Valenzuela, eds. *The Failure of Presidential Democracy: Comparative Perspectives* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994); Matthew Soberg Shugart and John M. Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); and Jose Antonio Cheibub, *Presidentialism, Parliamentarism, and Democracy* (Cambridge University Press, 2006).

10. Maurice Duverger, "A New Political System Model: Semi-Presidential Government," *European Journal of Political Research* 8, no. 2 (1980): 166.

11. Giovanni Sartori, *Comparative Constitutional Engineering: An Inquiry into Structures, Incentives and Outcomes* (New York: NYU Press, 1997): 121; 122.

12. *Ibid.*, 131–132.

13. See Shugart and Carey, especially 55–75.

14. See on this debate, first, Oleh Protsyk, "Troubled Semi-Presidentialism: Stability of the Constitutional System and Cabinet in Ukraine," *Europe-Asia Studies* 55, no. 7 (2003): 1077–1095, in which the author views Ukraine during the Kuchma presidency as "president-parliamentary," and his later analysis that views intra-executive Ukrainian politics after Kuchma as less conflictual: Oleh Protsyk, "Intra-Executive Competition between President and Prime Minister: Institutional Conflict and Cooperation under Semi-Presidentialism," *Political Studies* 54, no. 2 (2006): 219–244.

15. See William A. Clark, "Presidential Power and Democratic Stability under the Russian Constitution: A Comparative Analysis," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 28, no.3 (1998): 620–637.

16. All subsequent references to the Constitution of the Russian Federation are from the official version published at Russian government website, at <http://www.government.ru/eng/gov/base/54.html>. The Russian Constitution was approved via a national referendum on December 12, 1993 and was officially

promulgated via its publication in *Rossiiskaya gazeta* on December 15, 1993.

17. For an in-depth review of changes in the composition of the Russian government in the first decade after the adoption of the 1993 constitution, including the 1995 vote of no confidence against the Chernomyrdin government, see Edward Morgan-Jones and Petra Schleiter, "Governmental Change in a President-Parliamentary Regime: The Case of Russia 1994–2003," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 20, no. 2 (2004): 123–163.

18. The "opposition" in the 1993 election was comprised of the Liberal Democratic Party (which won 22.9 percent of the party vote and 64 total seats), the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (which won 12.4 percent and 48 total seats), and the Agrarian Party (which collected 8.0 percent of the party list vote and a total of 33 seats). The "reformers" at the time were Russia's Choice (15.5 percent on the party ballot and 70 total seats), Yabloko (7.9 percent of the party vote and 23 total seats), the Party of Russian Unity and Accord (6.8 percent and 19 total seats) and at the time arguably the Democratic Party of Russia (5.5 percent of the party list vote and a total of 15 seats in the Duma).

19. The State Duma was elected on December 12, 1993, simultaneously with the referendum on the passage of the constitution.

20. The Duma opposition identified as the culpable parties (1) Defense Minister Pavel Grachev, (2) Interior Minister Viktor Yerin, (3) Minister for Nationality Affairs Nikolai Yegorov, and (4) Sergei Stepashin, the Federal Security Minister. Three of these four were fired in late June 1995 in order to appease the Duma and avoid a second vote of no confidence. Yegorov remerged as Yeltsin chief of staff, and Stepashin went on in 1997 to become Justice Minister, then Interior Minister, and ultimately (albeit briefly) Prime Minister in 1999.

21. The fourth target of the Duma opposition, Defense Minister Pavel Grachev survived in his position until 1996, when he was sacked in the lead up to the presidential election.

22. On the defeat of the Callaghan government, see Richard Rose, "Still the Era of Party Government," *Parliamentary Affairs* 36, no. 1 (1983): 282–299.

23. *Ibid.*, 16.

24. Indeed, the very fact that the Russian president can summarily fire sitting prime ministers without consulting the State Duma indicates just how dependent the prime minister and cabinet are on the president, and just how independent they are individually and collectively from the legislature.

25. Kirienko was actually the first non-incumbent prime minister presented to the State Duma for confirmation under the 1993 constitution. Inasmuch as Chernomyrdin was the sitting prime minister when the December 1993 constitution was adopted, he did not immediately require confirmation by the State Duma. However, article 111-2 of the constitution requires that a newly elected (or reelected) president submit his nominee for prime minister within two weeks of his (re-)election, even if the president intends on keeping the incumbent prime minister in place. Yeltsin was reelected president in July 1996 and resubmitted Chernomyrdin name as prime minister. Chernomyrdin was confirmed easily on August 10, 1996.

26. Article 11-4 does, in fact, use the plural "candidates" when referring to the nominees.

27. Ultimately the Russian Constitutional Court backed the President's interpretation. The court admitted that the article was ambiguous, but deferred to the president since the constitution declared the president the guarantor of the constitution (Article 80-2).

28. For a review of these and other cases, see David E. Lewis, *The Politics of Presidential Appointments: Political Control and Bureaucratic Performance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

29. The Liberal Democrats under Vladimir Zhirinovskiy were the only major Duma faction that voted in large numbers against Primakov's confirmation. See Tiffany A. Troxel, *Parliamentary Power in Russia, 1994–2001* (New York: Palgrave, 2003): 130. Troxel views the Russian political system as essentially semi-presidential.

30. One analysis of president-prime minister relations in the post-Communist period lists the Yeltsin-Primakov relationship as the only one in Russia marked by a high level of conflict between president and prime minister. See Oleh Protsyk (2006), 240.

31. *The Sunday Times*, August 15, 1999.

32. Leon Aron, *Yeltsin: A Revolutionary Life* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000): 717.

33. Lajos Szazdi, *Russian Civil-Military Relations and the Origins of the Second Chechen War*

(Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2008): 50.

34. Helene Carrere d'Encausse, "Les Incertitudes de la Cohabitation Russe," *Le Figaro*, September 15, 1998.

35. See, for example, Robert V. Daniels (1999). "Evgenii Primakov: Contender by Chance," *Problems of Post-Communism* 46, no. 5: 27–36.

36. Aron, 684.

37. Aron, 684.

38. On the Jospin cohabitation with Chirac, see John P. Willerton, "Jospin, Political Cohabitation, and Left Governance," *French Culture, Politics and Society* 23, no. 2 (2005): 43–70.

39. For an analysis of Polish cohabitation, see Oleh Protsyk, "Politics of Intraexecutive Conflict in Semipresidential Regimes in Eastern Europe," *East European Politics and Society* 19, no. 2 (2005): 135–160.

40. See Robert Elgie, *Political Institutions in Contemporary France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); on the Kaczynski-Tusk relationship, see Jacek Kucharczyk, "Poland: Warsaw's New Waltz," *Transitions Online*, Issue no. 02/12/2008 (2008).

41. Stephen White has pointed out that "Yeltsin himself, in another television address, emphasized that Primakov was a 'consensus candidate,' and one who for the first time would be able to count upon the support of the Federal Assembly as well as of the president. This was nonetheless the first time Yeltsin had been obliged to yield ground to his opponents, and it marked a significant shift towards what was at least de facto a more balanced relationship between president, government, and parliament." See his *Russia's New Politics: The Management of a PostCommunist Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000): 87.

42. This was Aron's response to a submitted question on PBS's Online Newshour, "Will Russia Survive its Economic and Political Crisis?," September 17, 1998, available at <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/forum/september98/russia.html> (accessed December 5, 2010).

43. *Kommersant Daily*, September 12, 1998, 1. Available via *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press* 37, no. 50: 3–4

44. Sergei Agafonov, "Political Premier," *Noviye Izvestiya*, September 11, 1998.

45. See for this distinction Robert Elgie, "The Classification of Democratic Regime Types: Conceptual Ambiguity and Contestable Assumptions," *European Journal of Political Research* 33, no. 2 (1998): 224–228. See also Petra Schleiter and Edward Morgan-Jones, "Citizens, Presidents, and Assemblies: The Study of Presidentialism Beyond Duverger and Linz," *British Journal of Political Science* 39, no. 4 (2010): 871–892; and Timothy J. Colton and Cindy Skach, "The Russian Predicament," *Journal of Democracy* 16, no. 3 (2005): 113–126.

46. See David S. Bell, *Presidential Power in Fifth Republic France* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2000), especially chapter 4.

47. See, for example, the argument of Jose Antonio Cheibub. For him, "it does not matter whether the assembly's ability to pass a no-confidence vote is restricted. . . . Article 117 of the 1993 Russian constitution [is] probably the most restrictive in the set of democratic constitutions. . . . But even in these restricted cases the government is subject to the confidence of the assembly in a way that it is not under presidential constitutions, where the government cannot under any circumstances be removed by a vote of the legislative assembly." *Presidentialism, Parliamentarism, and Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 36–37.

48. Stephen Holmes, for example, has argued that "the system established by Yeltsin's constitution, in fact, can most succinctly be described as superpresidentialism." Refer to Stephen Holmes, "Superpresidentialism and Its Problems," *East European Constitutional Review* 2 (4) and 3 (1) (1993 and 1994): 123–124. A similar argument is made by M. Steven Fish, "The Perils of Superpresidentialism," *Current History* 96 (1997): 326–330. Finally, my own "Presidential Power and Democratic Stability under the Russian Constitution: A Comparative Analysis," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 28, no. 3 (1998): 620–637 argues in favor of super-presidentialism as the best institutional label for post-1993 Russia.

49. Giovanni Sartori, "Comparing and Miscomparing," *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 3, no. 3 (1991): 243–257.

50. Eugene Huskey, *Presidential Power in Russia* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1999): 99.

51. Richard Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008): 113.