The 1999–2000 Elections in Russia

Their Impact and Legacy

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Parliamentary and Presidential Elections in Russia: The Political Landscape in 1999 and 2000

Vicki L. Hesli[1]

The chapters in this book have been written in response to a question about what the effects of the 1999 parliamentary elections and the 2000 presidential election have been on the evolution of political institutions and democratic government in the Russian Federation. The sitting of the 1999 parliament and the inauguration of President Vladimir Putin marked the completion in Russia of three competitive rounds of presidential elections (1991, 1996, and 2000) and three cycles of parliamentary elections (1993, 1995, and 1999). In the aftermath of each of the previous electoral cycles, scholars have interpreted, analyzed, and judged the development of presidentialism, parliamentary government, political parties, public opinion, and national integration. In a sense, scholars have been keeping a running theoretical and empirical tally of Russia's progress through the epic challenges of democratic consolidation in the world's territorially largest state. This book continues that evaluative and prescriptive process as we watch the institutional structures and the political landscape of the Russian Federation begin to stabilize into a form that is partly uniquely Russian but also representative of political processes characteristic of industrialized countries more broadly.

Early studies of Russia's democratization process tended to be either reserved or negative in their assessments and conclusions. Russian democracy was described as "electoralist," "formal," and "unconsolidated" (Linz and Stepan 1996; Grey 1997; Remington 1997; Sorensen 1998). This was contrasted with more positive assessments of democratic consolidation in other post-Communist regimes, such as in Hungary or Poland. Russia's 1999 parliamentary and 2000 presidential elections, and the subsequent changes in the configuration of legislative and executive power, call for a fresh assessment

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of its post-Communist regime. Considering the process and the outcome of the 1999 and 2000 elections, how are we to assess the likely effectiveness and performance of Russia's political institutions? Our focus here is on the presidency, the parliament, and political parties. Are these emergent institutions operating in ways that will contribute to the consolidation of democratic practices and procedures in Russia?

The present volume presents a package of scholarly perspectives on the development of the Russian presidency and parliament, and on the role that political parties and elections are playing in Russia's post-Communist transition. The contributing authors analyze Russia's electoral institutions and political parties in terms of the existing literature on democratization and institutional choice. Chapter authors also provide new and insightful theoretical frameworks for understanding emergent political parties and political leaders as these shape and are shaped by the outcomes of the parliamentary elections of 1999 and of the presidential election of 2000. In sum, the 1999 and 2000 Russian elections provide excellent cases for the testing of a multitude of hypotheses derived from a rich set of theoretical frameworks.

In this introductory chapter, I briefly overview the political setting in Russia by enumerating the key powers of the Russian president and parliament. I provide information on the results of prior elections and I introduce the main political parties and presidential candidates that competed in the 1999 and 2000 elections. I provide a short summary of the results of the two contests. From a theoretical perspective and within the broad rubric of democratic theory, I also consider briefly the key issues raised and the major themes discussed in each of the subsequent chapters.

THE PRESIDENCY

I begin my discussion with a look at the Russian presidency. The office of the presidency was first instituted as a result of a March 1991 referendum, when Boris Yeltsin as Chairman of the Russian Congress of People's Deputies placed the question of establishing the position before the people on the same day that they were asked by USSR President Gorbachev to support a reconstituted Soviet Union. After the referendum was approved, Yeltsin garnered 57 percent of the valid vote to defeat his nearest competitors, Nikolai Ryzhkov and Vladimir Zhirinovsky (with 17 percent and 8 percent of the vote respectively), in the first contested presidential race in Russia's history (June 1991). Yeltsin became president of Russia without embracing a political party. He had publicly resigned from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) a little over a year earlier.

In the 1996 Russian presidential election, Communist Party leader Gennadii Zyuganov emerged as a formidable opponent to the incumbent President Yeltsin. The elections were forced into a second round of voting

when Zyuganov challenged Yeltsin in the first round with 32 percent of the vote (to Yeltsin's 35 percent). Yeltsin emerged victorious in July 1996 after forming an electoral alliance with General Alexander Lebed.

According to the constitution, elections for the presidency of the Russian Federation were due to be held again in the summer of 2000. In the aftermath of the December 1999 parliamentary elections, however, Boris Yeltsin resigned from his position as president of the Russian Federation and elections were pushed forward to March 2000. Vladimir Putin, who had been appointed prime minister in August 1999, assumed the position of acting president (while remaining prime minister). Once he became acting president, Putin was the clear favorite in the 2000 presidential elections, and the presidential election campaign narrowed to a two-man race between him and Communist Party leader Gennadii Zyuganov. Whereas in the 1996 presidential election, Zyuganov competed with considerable chances of success against Boris Yeltsin, in March 2000, he faced a much stronger competitor, in the person of Vladimir Putin. Throughout Yeltsin's reign, Zyuganov had positioned himself as an anti-Yeltsin advocate, and likewise in the 2000 campaign, his rhetoric, while rooted in a socialist ideology, was directed against the legacies of Yeltsin's rule – rather than against Putin.

Putin's own platform, as reflected in his "Open Letter to the Russian Voters" (February 2000), was more pragmatic than ideological. It consisted of a plan for economic revitalization; the continuation of liberal reforms; a strengthening of state authority and the rule of law; and the suppression of any secessionist drives within the Russian Federation.

Other presidential candidates who had appeared to be significant players in the race before the Duma elections quickly faded. Opinion polls taken in January 2000[2] indicated that Putin's popular support hovered around 60 percent, while that of his strongest opponent, Gennadii Zyuganov, was only 15 percent. Others among the final list of eleven presidential candidates, with significantly lower popular support and chances of winning, were Grigorii Yavlinsky and Vladimir Zhirinovsky.

Grigorii Yavlinsky is the founder and leader of the democratic-oriented party Yabloko. Yavlinsky ran as a presidential candidate in 1996 and finished fourth (in the first round), with 7.3 percent of the vote. Vladimir Zhirinovsky, the founder and leader of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR), is a veteran of presidential races, running in all three Russian presidential elections. In the 1996 presidential elections, Zhirinovsky came in fifth (in the first round), with 6 percent of the vote. Whereas his main ideological position has invariably been one of extreme nationalism, his main targets throughout the 2000 campaign were the communist and democratic candidates rather than Putin. He advocates the strengthening of the Russian state,

[2] Opinion polls: January 22–3, 2000 ROMIR; January and February 2000 VTsIOM Surveys; January 1–29, 2000 New Russia Barometer VIII.

TABLE 1.1 *March 2000 Presidential Election Results (results are listed for the top five candidates only)*

Candidate	Percentage Vote
Vladimir Putin	52.94%
Gennadii Zyuganov	29.21%
Grigorii Yavlinsky	5.80%
Aman Tuleev	2.95%
Vladimir Zhirinovsky	2.70%

Source: Central Electoral Commission of the Russian Federation 2000 (b), 191.

especially of the army and security services, and is opposed to the growing autonomy and influence of regional leaders. The preelection support for Grigorii Yavlinsky and Vladimir Zhirinovsky, as registered in public opinion polls, hardly reached 3 percent.

Meanwhile, Putin continued to enlist the support of various political forces as the election date approached. A first-round victory (should he win over 50 percent of the vote in the first round) seemed more likely. Among Putin's supporters in the prepresidential election period were Unity, several other parties close to Kremlin (Fatherland and the Union of Right Forces [SPS]), as well as a growing number of regional governors. Indeed, one significant effect of the outcome of the 1999 parliamentary contest was the decision of Yevgenii Primakov, the leader of Fatherland-All Russia (OVR), not to compete for the presidency but rather to support Putin's candidacy.

The March 2000 presidential election registered a turnout of 68.74 percent, with 1.88 percent votes cast "against all candidates." The results of the election were hardly surprising (see Table 1.1): acting president and Prime Minister Putin won the race in the first round, with a slim majority (52.9 percent), while the next best performing contestant, Zyuganov, managed 29 percent of the votes. Yavlinsky came in third, with almost 6 percent of the votes, while Zhirinovsky came in fifth, with 2.7 percent.

Note that the Communist Party candidate, Zyuganov, gained 29 percent (nearly a third) of the votes cast. This portion of the electorate that voted for Zyuganov is uncomfortable with the moves that have been made by the Yeltsin regime toward a more promarket, individualistic, and Western-oriented economy. In turn, the main candidate of the democratic camp, Yavlinsky, fared worse than in the previous presidential elections of 1996 when, disposing of far fewer campaign resources, he managed over 7 percent of the vote (or 5.5 million votes in 1996 as compared to 4.3 million votes in 2000).

The results of the March 2000 presidential election are crucially important for the future of Russia. The results did not represent the imposition of

a new regime, but they did facilitate Russia's first transfer of executive power through the electoral process. Because Boris Yeltsin was prohibited by the Russian constitution from running for a third term, the country was braced to experience its first presidential turnover in post-Soviet times. Yet, because Yeltsin resigned early, immediately after the parliamentary elections, the outcome of the presidential election was all but predetermined. By transferring presidential power to Vladimir Putin early, and with the presidential elections moved up to March rather than being held in June of 2000, Putin's victory was all but guaranteed.

Even without a regime change, the retirement of Yeltsin and ascension of Putin to the presidency has changed the nature of the political system of the Russian Federation. The reader will recall that both the Russian president and the Russian Congress of People's Deputies (elected in 1990) remained in place after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991. The constitutional crisis of 1993, which pitted the Soviet-era Russian legislature against the promarket and anti-Soviet executive represented by President Yeltsin, led to a new parliament (elected in December 1993) and to a new constitutional structure (ratified in December 1993) by which presidential powers were significantly increased.

The Russian presidency that Putin inherited is a formidable position with extensive powers and constitutional prerogatives. Articles 80 through 92 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation give the president control over the armed forces, foreign policy, and the military doctrine of the Russian Federation; and the power to dissolve the State Duma (under restricted conditions), call a referendum, sign federal laws, and issue decrees and directives. The constitution gives the president the authority to settle differences between federal bodies and the authorities of regional governments and to declare a state of emergency. Elected for a four-year term, the president is empowered to select the prime minister (to be approved by the parliament), nominate judges, and appoint presidential representatives to the regions. In institutional terms, the President of the Russian Federation emerges as dominant over the legislative organs of the Russian Federation (the Federal Assembly).

Few scholars would argue against a characterization of the Russian system as one with a strong executive presidency. Indeed, the term "semipresidentialism" was coined primarily in reference to the period before the referendum on the 1993 Constitution of the Russian Federation. Since the adoption of the 1993 constitution, it is clear that the person who holds the position of president has extensive authority to shape the future of the Russian polity. Where scholars diverge is on the question of the implications of this strong presidency for democratic consolidation. Lijphart (1992), Sartori (1997), and Linz (1997) have cautioned that presidentialism is unlikely to contribute toward political stability in newly democratized countries, and that strong presidential powers are in fact associated with low

democratic performance throughout the post-Communist world. According to Linz (1990), the fixed term of office and the winner-take-all feature of presidentialism contribute to rigidity of the political process, inadequate societal representation, a dual authority structure, and fragmentation of the party system. Other authors have linked the structure of the presidential system and the development of the party system (Mainwaring 1992; Shugart and Carey 1992). The "dual authority" structure of Russian presidentialism is identified as the major source of interinstitutional conflict (Linz 1997; Linz and Stepan 1997; White 1997). Shugart (1996 and 1997) terms the system of dual accountability of the cabinet to the Duma and to the president a major source of regime instability. Similarly, Sartori (1997, 139) characterizes Russia's presidential system as "ill-conceived" given the tendency toward confrontation in the executive-parliament relationship.

Yet there are proponents of presidentialism who argue that the system provides greater efficiency than parliamentary systems, and therefore promotes political stability. Shugart (2000) argues forcefully in favor of presidentialism under conditions of weak parties, although empirical studies (e.g., Ishiyama and Velten 1998) have found that the strength of the presidency throughout the post-Communist world, including Russia, is not associated with indicators of political stability. Nichols (1999) provides another defense of Russia's presidential institutions.

These evaluations of Russian presidentialism were all based upon the Yeltsin era (1991 through 1999). Observations of the acute and violent conflict between the legislature and the presidency that characterized Russia in 1992 and 1993 influenced much of the analysis that is referred to in the two preceding paragraphs. Although the constitution has not changed, the office of the president and relations between the president and parliament changed considerably when Valdimir Putin took over as acting president in December 1999.

One of the most spectacular developments in the months between the December 1999 parliamentary elections and the March 2000 presidential elections was undoubtedly the ascendance of Vladimir Putin from obscurity to central stage. Putin's popularity gives him distinct advantages in shaping the office of the president and also in shaping his relations with the Federal Assembly. The rapid turnover in the office of prime minister that characterized the end of the Yeltsin era has not been replicated in the beginning of the Putin era. Vladimir Putin has been able to benefit from the support of a stable, working majority in the Duma, which has in turn facilitated the government's drive toward enacting and implementing policy reforms.

This has in turn had a positive impact on the nature of legislative-executive relations under the new administration. In contrast to Boris Yeltsin's personalistic style, Putin's own image of being above ideology has left open for him the possibility of alliance with any of Russia's political parties represented in the Duma. In April 2000, the State Duma and the Federation Council

ratified the START-II nuclear arms reduction treaty. President Yeltsin had been unsuccessful in winning approval of the treaty by the parliament though it had been signed (by Yeltsin and the U.S. president) seven years earlier (and ratified four years earlier by the U.S. Senate). Putin's ability to work with the political party Unity and with other factions within the Duma has allowed him to build and maintain a much more productive relationship with the legislative branch than had been the characteristic of the Yeltsin era. Thus, the presidential office has assumed a different profile under President Putin.

The Russian parliament is likewise evolving. The 2001 spring session of the Duma was notable in its legislative achievements, which rested directly on the coalition of centrist forces from Unity, Fatherland-All Russia, People's Deputy, and Russian Regions groups. In early 2002, Moscow Mayor Yurii Luzhkov's Fatherland party, the All-Russia movement, and the Unity party all held congresses in Moscow at which delegates agreed to dissolve their respective political organizations in favor of forming a new party called Unified Russia. Thus, factionalism in the Duma is likely to continue to decline, while a pro-Putin majority becomes more normal.

In the following chapters of this book, our contributing authors will offer further characterizations of the institutional and policy changes that are occurring under the leadership of Vladimir Putin. Before I turn to these, however, we first review the history and the importance of parliamentary elections in the Russian Federation.

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN RUSSIA

The powers of the Russian parliament (the Federal Assembly) are specified in Articles 94 through 104 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation. The Federal Assembly has two chambers. The State Duma (the "lower house") has 450 members, each of whom is elected for a four-year term. Two hundred twenty-five of these members are elected in single-seat constituencies (often referred to as single-member districts). The other 225 deputies are selected by proportional representation voting, with seats given proportionally to those parties receiving at least 5 percent of the popular vote. The 178 delegates to the Federation Council (the "upper house") represent Russia's 89 administrative regions (two delegates from each region). The method of selecting these delegates has changed since 1993: first, delegates were elected, then the heads of the executive and legislative organs of the region became *ex officio* delegates, and more recently delegates are selected by regional leaders. (Chapters 6 and 10 provide more details.)

The Federation Council has the power to approve decrees of the president and to impeach the president – although the process of impeachment is very difficult. Federal laws are first adopted by the State Duma, then voted on by the Federation Council, and ultimately signed by the president. It takes a two-thirds vote by both chambers to overcome the rejection of a law by

the president. The State Duma approves the nomination by the president for the prime minister, but in the absence of such approval, the Duma may be subject to dissolution.

Voters who participate in Russia's State Duma elections have two ballots: one to choose a candidate competing to represent their electoral district, and the other to choose a political party or an electoral organization that is running a list of candidates. In the single-member districts (SMD) elections, candidates are not required to have a party designation, but for seats filled by parties in proportion to the share of the national vote received if that share is over 5 percent (the proportional representation [PR] portion of the ballot), party names are the main component of the ballot (along with the names of the top three candidates on each party's central and regional list). Given the PR portion of the ballot, political parties are central to the operation of Russia's parliamentary elections.

In Russia, the first post-Soviet parliament was elected in December 1993. As a result of the 1993 elections, pro-Communist forces and the nationalist opposition together gained more than 40 percent of the seats in the State Duma, while proreform (i.e., pro-Yeltsin) forces won 35 percent of the seats in the lower chamber (Rahr 1994, 32). For the 1995 election campaign, the political field was fragmented and disordered with forty-three organizations listed on the ballot. When the votes were counted, four parties crossed the 5 percent threshold and received representation through the party-list portion of the ballot: the Communist Party, Our Home is Russia (NDR), the LDPR, and Yabloko. The proreform vote and the centrist vote were split among numerous parties, and 49.5 percent of the votes cast were for parties that failed to win any seats through PR allocation. The Communists had the best showing among all the parties in both the SMD elections and the PR vote share and became the largest faction in parliament. Groups opposed to reform maintained majorities in the State Duma elections in December of 1993 and 1995. The resulting legislatures were rightly characterized as obstacles to the reform agenda that was advanced by President Yeltsin.

In preparation for the 1999 elections, the Central Electoral Commission approved twenty-six parties as qualifying for the ballot. When all the votes were counted, the results showed that six parties had managed to win at least 5 percent of the party-list (PR) ballot and, therefore, passed the threshold for proportional representation in the Duma. These six parties divided 225 Duma seats among themselves according to their relative share of the vote. Out of the six, three (Unity, OVR, and SPS) did not exist (in their present form) or participate in the 1995 elections. The best performers in the PR race were the Communist Party and Unity (with 24.3 and 23.3 percent of the vote respectively). The OVR coalition pulled 13.3 percent of the vote, while the SPS, the Zhirinovsky Bloc, and Yabloko managed 8.5 percent, 6.0 percent and 5.9 percent respectively (see Table 1.2).

TABLE 1.2 *Results of the December 19, 1999 Elections to the State Duma of the Russian Federation*

Parties	PR List % Vote (number of seats)	Single-Member Districts Seats	Total Number Seats
Communist Party (CPRF)	24.3% (67)	46	113
Unity (Yedinstvo)	23.3% (64)	9	72
Fatherland-All Russia (OVR)	13.3% (36)	31	66
Union of Right Forces (SPS)	8.52% (24)	5	29
Yabloko	5.93% (16)	4	21
Zhirinovsky Bloc (LDPR)	5.98% (17)	0	17
Our Home is Russia (NDR)	1.2%	7	7
Other Parties		9	
Independents		106	106
Total Seats	224	215	439

Turnout was 60.1 percent.

Source: Central Electoral Commission of the Russian Federation 2000 (a), 121–2, 172.

Russian voters seemed to have engaged in strategic voting (they didn't "waste" their votes on parties unlikely to pass the 5 percent threshold). The disproportionality that results from votes being given to parties that do not clear the 5 percent threshold was far less in the 1999 election than it was in 1995. The parties with the largest percentages of the vote, but with too few votes to gain representation through the PR lists, each captured a relatively small portion of the vote (2.2 percent, 2.0 percent, 2.0 percent, and 1.2 percent respectively). This contrasts with the 1995 election, where parties with 3 percent and 4 percent of the vote were excluded from representation in the Duma. Thus, the 1999 elections saw a significant reduction in the number of wasted votes (votes that were won by parties that received no seats in the Duma) and by definition, a concurrent increase in the representativeness of the institution. This bodes well for both the institutionalization of the Duma and the consolidation of the party system.

Among those 225 deputies who were selected by direct election within electoral regions, the Communist Party and OVR were the only parties with a significant number of candidates winning SMD seats. The largest category of SMD candidates was that of independents, and they won half of the single-member seats in the 1999 elections. Unity performed the worst in this respect – indicating that the party was not able to build support for its SMD candidates in the regions. With the sitting of the 1999 Duma, most of the independent candidates formed or joined parliamentary factions. Three independents-based Duma factions emerged – the People's Deputy Group, which aligned itself with the Unity bloc; the Agro-Industrialists, which are

close to and controlled by the Communist Party; and Russian Regions (for more on the composition of the Duma factions, see Chapter 11).

Given the central role that political parties play in the operation of democratic governance, the question of the role played by parties in the 1999 parliamentary election and the concurrent impact of the election on political party development emerges as a central theme of this book. Each of our contributing authors evaluates the operation of political parties either before, during, or after the 1999 and 2000 parliamentary and presidential elections. Timothy Colton (Chapter 5) provides an excellent overview of why well-functioning political parties are good for political systems. These include the presentation to citizens of principled choices on issues of importance as well as continuity and structure to politics that last beyond the life span of particular individuals. In addition, the nature of political parties and the party system shape patterns of representation and influence government effectiveness. Most scholars agree that a few well-structured, programmatic parties, with a solid support base, help foster both government effectiveness and accountability (Lipset 1994; Sartori 1997). Highly fragmented, unstructured, or polarized party systems, in contrast, may lead to unstable regimes and may induce a withdrawal of public support from democratic institutions. Fragmented, unstructured, or polarized party systems are also problematic for executive-legislative relations in systems of dual authority due to the increased likelihood of interinstitutional conflict and high cabinet turnover.

The existing literature on this issue distinguishes between PR systems, which aim to increase accurate *representation*, and majority/plurality systems, which aim to increase *effectiveness* and clarity of responsibility (Powell 1989). The goal of Russia's mixed system, employing both a PR ballot and an SMD ballot, was to achieve a balance between the two objectives of representation and responsibility. Given the achievements of the Putin government and the success of the 2001 and 2002 sessions of the Duma, one could argue that Russia's electoral system is beginning to render these potential benefits – in contrast to evidence from the aftermath of the 1995 elections that seemed to indicate that the electoral system was impeding the development of well-functioning government.

As was the case with the literature on presidentialism, the 1999 Russian parliamentary election provides an opportunity to update the existing literature on political parties and on parliamentary systems. Our contributing authors do just this. Each author agrees that the nature of the political parties that are emerging in Russia is having significant consequences for the prospect of democratic consolidation. Our authors, however, offer a variety of perspectives on whether these prospects have been enhanced or hindered as a result of the 1999 and 2000 elections.

In preparation for the analyses that will be offered by the contributing authors in this volume, we can think of the major political parties that competed in the 1999 parliamentary election as falling into categories based upon two

major criteria. The first criterion is longevity – whether the party had competed in the previous Duma elections of 1993 and 1995 – and the second criterion is what we label "insiders" and "outsiders." Insiders participated in the Yeltsin-era establishment, while outsiders are seeking to gain control of the governmental and economic establishments. The resulting categories are given in Table 1.3.

The Russian party system is hard to categorize. Left-right dimensions, proreform and antireform dimensions, pro-Communism versus anti-Communism dimensions, and proregion versus procenter dimensions are

TABLE 1.3 *Major Political Parties Competing in the 1999 Parliamentary Elections in the Russian Federation*

Government Orientation	Old Parties (competed in the 1993 or 1995 elections)	New Parties (created for the 1999 elections)
Insider Parties		
Led by 1999–2000 Government Team		**Unity (Yedinstvo)** Founded: September 1999 Leaders: Sergei Shoigu, Alexander Karelin, Alexander Gurov
Led by Former Insiders		**Fatherland-All Russia (OVR)** Founded: August 1999 Leaders: Yevgeny Primakov, Yuri Luzhkov, Vladimir Yakovlev
	Our Home is Russia (NDR) Founded: May 1995 Leaders: Viktor Chernomyrdin and Vladimir Ryzhkov	**Union of Right Forces (SPS)** Founded: August 1999 Leaders: Sergei Kiriyenko, Boris Nemtsov, Irina Khakamada
Parties Led by Outsiders	**The Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF)** Founded: February 1993 Leader: Gennadii Zyuganov **Yabloko** Founded: October 1993 Leader: Grigorii Yavlinsky **Liberal Democratic Party of Russia–Zhirinovsky Bloc (LDPR)** Founded: March 1990 Leader: Vladimir Zhirinovsky	

also offered by authors of this volume as well as others as ways to understand the structure of the Russian party system. To make the situation even more complicated, relationships are different among parties during electoral campaigns than they are after elections when coalitions across parties need to be formed in order to pass legislation. The LDPR, for example, has historically presented itself as an alternative (oppositional) organization to the choices and decisions that were made by the Yeltsin presidency, yet according to roll-call analyses, the Zhirinovsky Bloc frequently voted for Yeltsin's bills. Similar problems emerge with our longevity dimension. The SPS was technically a new bloc created in 1999, yet the bulk of its members and leaders came out of the party Russia's (Democratic) Choice, which competed in 1993 and 1995.

The fact that the new parties performed better on the whole than the established parties (the Old Parties in Table 1.3) in the 1999 election lends credence to those who see the party system in Russia as "weak" or "underdeveloped" (see Chapter 9). Arguably the newly created political parties were meant to function primarily as electoral machines for their leaders – rather than to offer packages of policy alternatives and program commitments to a constituency of voters. Some Russian political parties, however, such as the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF), do exhibit a developed organizational structure and ideological coherence.

The CPRF has the most extensive organization of Russia's parties as it directly inherited the structures of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). Heading into the 1999 electoral season, the CPRF was considered to be the strongest party as it had won the largest share of the party-list votes in the 1995 parliamentary election. As it had for the 1993 and 1995 parliamentary elections, the CPRF continued to stress in the 1999 election campaign, albeit in a more moderate fashion, the Marxist-Leninist ideals of social justice. It advocated a more temperate drive toward reform than was characteristic of the Yeltsin regime. The CPRF looks back to the glorious and proud days of the Soviet Union and seeks to return Russia to its former stature as a world super power.

Yabloko (led by Grigory Yavlinsky) is similar to the CPRF in the sense that it participated in the 1999 Duma elections as one of just a few parties that had also contended in the first Duma elections in 1993 and the second Duma elections of 1995 (Table 1.3). Yabloko's strategy, amidst a seasonal fervor of mergers and coalitions, was to run independently. This strategy was expected to deliver a calculated result: to maintain its core of "democratic" supporters. Throughout the campaign, Yabloko positioned itself as the only viable democratic opposition to the current regime. Prior to the election, the party consistently voted against the government's proposed budgets and disassociated itself from the government's economic policies. Yabloko advocates the country's complete transition to a market economy, including the privatization of all state industries and the removal of subsidies for agriculture and fuel.

Vladimir Zhirinovsky's LDPR is also a competitor that survived through Russia's first (1993) and second (1995) post-Soviet parliamentary elections. The LDPR was initially disqualified in 1999 by the Central Election Committee for improper income declarations of some of its members. This prompted its leader to form a new party, called the Zhirinovsky Bloc. Zhirinovsky's Bloc, although known for an ultra-nationalist platform that calls for reincorporating former union republics into Russia, also made significant promises in the area of social welfare.

This decade-long history of political party competition, as represented by the participation through three electoral cycles by the Communist Party, Yabloko, and Zhirinovsky's organization, was supplemented in the 1999 parliamentary election campaign by the emergence of new political organizations. As the December 1999 Duma elections approached, new electoral associations were formed and existing political parties started exploring strategies for electoral alliances. Thus, the Fatherland-All-Russia coalition (OVR) coalition was formed in August 1999 – despite the fact that Fatherland and All-Russia were two separate organizations, distinct in ideology and electoral base – as a strategy to compete more effectively against the Communist Party and to ensure parliamentary representation for both parties.

The organization called Fatherland, led by Moscow Mayor Yurii Luzhkov, was appealing to those discontented with Russia's post-Communist economic reforms and, according to VTsIOM public opinion polls from the summer of 1999, was second in popularity after the Communist Party. All-Russia, founded in April 1999, brought together regional leaders, members of the State Duma, and directors of large enterprises. As a movement founded by influential governors and republican presidents, All-Russia advocated more powers for the regional authorities. Its own incentive for forming an alliance with Fatherland was the requirement that prohibited it from participating by itself in the party-list portion of the ballot, due to its late formation and registration as a party. The OVR centrist coalition supported market reforms, but also called upon the state to control and regulate the market. The party list for the OVR in the 1999 election was headed by former Foreign Minister and former Prime Minister Yevgenii Primakov. The OVR's main electoral message was the creation of nationally oriented state capitalism. Shortly after the OVR alliance was formed, the Agrarian Party also joined the alliance, ending its coalition with the Communist Party.

Regional electoral blocs, such as All-Russia, sought to improve the representation of regional interests in the State Duma. Regional presidents and governors who participated in these parties had been discontent with their limited influence based solely on those members of the Duma elected from SMDs. By forming their own parties to enter the electoral races on the party-list ballots, the regional leaders hoped to gain greater leverage on the federal government, through a stronger presence in the Duma. In turn, with Russia's regional governors elected instead of appointed by the presidential

administration, the major electoral blocs also competed to win the support of governors. Because governors and republican presidents have the power to influence voters in their respective regions, the support of regional leaders was an important asset for the electoral contenders (see Chapter 7). Thus, virtually all the major political forces courted and were in turn courted by regional elites.

The Voice of Russia (led by Samara Governor Konstantin Titov), another electoral organization newly formed in the period before the 1999 election, was similar to All-Russia in the sense that it advocated a "new federalism" that would grant regions more authority vis-à-vis the federal government. These two regional associations contemplated the possibility of forming an electoral alliance, given the potential difficulty for each of them to alone pass the 5 percent threshold in the Duma elections. Although at the level of policy, both regional blocs sought increased powers for the regions, they differed on economic policy issues. Where All-Russia favored "state capitalism," the Voice of Russia adopted a more liberal economic stance. The two parties eventually joined different alliances: All-Russia entered an alliance with Fatherland, while Voice of Russia joined the newly formed SPS.

The Union of Right Forces (SPS), a center-right coalition, was formed in August 1999 from New Force (led by former Prime Minister Sergei Kiriyenko), Young Russia (led by former Deputy Prime Minister Boris Nemtsov), Common Cause (led by Irina Khakamada), Democratic Choice of Russia (led by former Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar), and Voice of Russia. Most senior members of this coalition were former government officials. Among its stated goals was a reduction in the decision-making power of the central authorities in Moscow. The coalition sought to enhance the representation of the country's developing middle class, entrepreneurs, managers of small businesses, and private farmers. Their election campaign focused on calls for the protection of private property, on the idea of a professional army, and on anticorruption efforts.

The last of the major "political parties" that competed in the 1999 parliamentary elections is the one that emerged as the second-place winner in those elections and now plays a central role in operation of the State Duma. This is the organization called Unity (Yedinstvo). Unity was formed only in September 1999; yet it emerged after the election as one of the strongest forces in the Duma. Unity was formed as a "party of power" and from its very inception it enjoyed the support of both President Boris Yeltsin and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. Although formally not a member of the party, the latter attended its founding congress in October 1999 and explicitly endorsed the party in November before the elections. Unity's major calculated impact on the preelectoral scene was to take away votes from the popular OVR bloc, although it spurred a realignment of potential candidates across all political formations.

To summarize this section on the results of the parliamentary election and on the structure of the political party system, we can say that the