TITLE: RUSSIAN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION LAW:
Political Goals, Uncertainty, Institutional Context,
and the Choice of an Electoral System

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This paper addresses the fit of a strategic model to the 1993 and 1995 electoral systems for elections to the Duma, the lower and more powerful house of the Russian Federal Assembly. It begins by reviewing the circumstances under which the 1993 electoral system decree was issued, and a description of the 1993 system. Yeltsin's advisors operated in an institutional context where parties were far less certain about the consequences of alternative plans than were, for example, parties in Germany in 1949. Moreover, Yeltsin's commitment to a powerful presidential system influenced his objectives with respect to the party balance in parliament. These considerations shaped the choice of electoral system. The authors then turn to a comparison of proportional representation (PR), single-member district SMD, and the mixed system that was used in 1993. The comparison demonstrates the basis of a serious miscalculation by the Yeltsin camp, which yielded new calculations by reformers about the next electoral system. They then discuss the way the outcome of the 1993 election shaped the alignment of party forces responsible for the 1995 electoral law.

The authors conclude that a theory of strategic choice based solely on preferences defined over policy outcomes cannot account for the adoption of the 1993 Russian electoral system or its 1995 successor. Unlike Germany in 1949, but more like Hungary in 1989, uncertainty and miscalculation were critical to the choice of an initial electoral system. Much of that uncertainty and miscalculation were substantially reduced once the first election occurred and its results were examined. But even then, the choice of an electoral system reflected preferences based on more than policy outcomes. The deputies of the Duma who drafted and approved the 1995 electoral law faced a trade-off between divergent goals -- maximizing the expected number of seats in parliament for political forces sharing their policy preferences, maximizing the chances of their own reelection, and, for the leaders of parliamentary parties, maximizing their personal power. The result was an electoral system for 1995 much like the initial system of 1993. Indeed, the choice of an initial system proved to be self-replicating as the party factions that gained parliamentary representation chose to preserve the existing system.

\[^1\text{Adapted from the text and edited by NCSEER Staff.}\]
THE RUSSIAN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION LAW:

Political Goals, Uncertainty, Institutional Context, and the Choice of an Electoral System:

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Early constitutional choices made in emerging democracies often have enduring consequences (Lijphart 1992; Hibbing and Patterson 1992; Nohlen 1984; Bawn 1993). Once adopted, decisions on such fundamental issues as the design of an electoral system can become self-perpetuating as long as no alternative set of institutional arrangements is favored by a majority of the main stakeholders in the system. The electoral systems of postwar Germany and postcommunist Hungary illustrate the point. Both acted to lock in the initial advantages of the major political parties that negotiated the original agreement. So far, no coalition of parties opposed to these arrangements has been strong enough to overturn them. Emerging democracies adopt their initial constitutional and electoral systems in different ways. Those of post-war Germany and Japan followed military defeat and foreign occupation. Several European post-communist states adopted new representative institutions through roundtable talks between incumbent communist rulers and challenger elites with a broad popular mandate (Jasiewicz 1993; Olson 1993). In contrast, the Russian electoral system of 1993 was the product neither of defeat in war nor a pact between old and new elites. Following the period of transition of 1990-93, during which Russia became an independent state upon the demise of the Soviet Union, Russia’s current representative institutions were decided mainly by pro-reform figures associated with President Yeltsin. Yeltsin instituted the electoral law governing the parliamentary elections of December 1993 by presidential decree. A new electoral law was approved in 1995 by the Duma using the standard legislative process.

Although Russia differs from 1989 Hungary and postwar Germany in the way its electoral system was adopted, the system chosen, like theirs, is mixed. In Russia, proportional and single-member district seats were made equal in number and were filled through separate ballots for the December, 1993, elections. The system was implemented by presidential decree after Boris Yeltsin disbanded the parliament controlled by opponents to his plans for economic and political reform and for a new constitution. In 1995, the Duma approved a new electoral law in anticipation of elections scheduled for December of that year.

At first glance, the 1993 electoral decree and 1995 electoral law should be additional cases of institutional choice dictated by the implications of election results for control over
policy-making institutions. Yeltsin and his closest lieutenants seemed motivated by the desire to proceed with constitutional and economic reform. The president appeared to be free to decree an electoral system that maximized his allies' numbers in the new parliament. And he consulted with talented specialists who could provide advice based upon the results of the April, 1993, referendum, among other things. In 1995, the lessons of 1993 and subsequent events could be incorporated in the calculations of the participants.

On the surface, therefore, the model of choice suggested by Bawn (1993, 967-8) should account for the 1993 and 1995 electoral systems of Russia. Bawn proposed a model based upon three assumptions: (1) parties' preferences for electoral systems are defined over policy outcomes, (2) parties make use of all available information about the electorates' voting preferences, and (3) parties participating in the choice of electoral institutions know the rules and the preferences of the other parties involved in the choice of electoral system. The model, Bawn continued, yields the expectation that parties "act to bring about the electoral system that they expect to result in the most desirable policy outcomes." Moreover, we would expect that, once established, a party's "ranking of alternative electoral systems will not change unless exogenous events change the way alternative systems affect subsequent policy choices."

In Bawn's study of post-World War II West Germany, these propositions correctly predict that the Social Democratic Party would support a proportional representation (PR) system in 1949 but switch to the current mixed PR/single-member district (SMD) system in 1953. In the mixed system as in the 1949 system, the total proportion of seats allocated to each party is determined by the voting on the second (list) ballot. The mixed system, however, allows voters to reward incumbents or to cast ballots based on candidates' personal qualities without affecting the proportional distribution of seats in the popular chamber. In both the 1949 and 1953 laws, then, Bawn argues persuasively that the SPD chose not to maximize its own seats but rather to minimize the likelihood that its main rival, the Christian Democrats, would win an outright majority of seats, thus increasing its own chances of leading a coalition government and shaping policy. The result was the self-perpetuating electoral system backed by a coalition of the SPD and its smaller partner, the Free Democratic Party.

The mixed SMD-PR electoral system adopted by Hungary in 1989 also reflected calculations about seat strength in parliament (Hibbing and Patterson 1992, 432-3; Lijphart 1992, 215). The Socialist (reform communist) party's preference for a predominantly SMD system with a plurality rule reflected their belief that they retained sufficient popular support and organizational strength in localities to be able to dominate SMD races. The opposition forces, underestimating their actual electoral strength, demanded a predominantly PR system. The round-table's agreement on a roughly equal split between SMD and PR seats was thus a
compromise mirroring the approximately even balance of power between regime and opposition in the talks as well as each side’s inability to calculate its actual strength accurately in the absence of comparable prior elections. As it turned out, the Socialists won only one district seat and their representation in parliament was salvaged by the PR component that its opponents had sought. Thus, uncertainty and miscalculation, although based on estimates of electoral outcomes, characterized the choice of the new Hungarian electoral system.

In this paper, we address the fit of a strategic model to the 1993 and 1995 electoral systems that governed elections to the Duma, the lower and more powerful house of the Russian Federal Assembly. We begin by reviewing the circumstances under which the decree was issued and a description of the 1993 electoral system. As we will indicate, Yeltsin’s advisors operated in a different institutional context where parties were far less certain about the consequences of alternative plans than were parties in Germany in 1949. Moreover, Yeltsin’s commitment to a powerful presidential system influenced his objectives with respect to the party balance in parliament. These considerations shaped the choice of electoral system. We then turn to a comparison of PR, SMD, and the mixed system that was used in 1993. The comparison demonstrates the basis of a serious miscalculation by the Yeltsin camp, which yielded new calculations by reformers about the next electoral system. We then discuss the way the outcome of the 1993 election shaped the alignment of party forces responsible for the 1995 electoral law.

We conclude that a theory of strategic choice based solely on preferences defined over policy outcomes cannot account for the adoption of the 1993 Russian electoral system or its 1995 successor. Unlike Germany but more like Hungary, uncertainty and miscalculation were critical to the choice of an initial electoral system. Much of that uncertainty and miscalculation were substantially reduced once the first election occurred and its results were examined. But even then, the choice of an electoral system reflected preferences based on more than policy outcomes. The deputies of the Duma who drafted and approved the 1995 electoral law faced a trade-off between divergent goals—maximizing the expected number of seats in parliament for political forces sharing their policy preferences, maximizing the chances of their own reelection, and, for the leaders of parliamentary parties, maximizing their personal power. The result was an electoral system much like the initial system. Indeed, the choice of an initial system proved to be self-replicating as the party factions that gained parliamentary representation chose to preserve the existing system. The Russian experience suggests that extreme caution must be exercised in applying simple policy-outcomes models to electoral systems.

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The 1993 Electoral Decree

While figures close to the president had the final word, the 1993 electoral law was the outcome of a lengthy process of deliberation in which many political figures and specialists participated. Members of the old parliament had been working since January, 1993, on a new electoral law in anticipation of new parliamentary elections (Sobyanin and Sukhovol’skii 1993; Urban 1994). The working group was chaired by a scholar and member of parliament, Viktor Sheinis, who was sympathetic to liberal reform but not tied to any particular faction of the democratic camp. Indeed, in the new parliament he joined the Yabloko faction rather than Russia’s Choice. Sheinis included into his working group a number of deputies and specialists who were not at all close to the Yeltsin or Gaidar entourage in the hope of building a consensus among a broad range of political groups and experts.

The work of the Sheinis group was the basis for the draft statute agreed upon by the Constitutional Assembly, called by President Yeltsin, which met in the summer of 1993. The draft was used in turn by Yeltsin as the basis for his September 21, 1993, decree on the procedures for the parliamentary elections. In a later decree, issued on October 1, Yeltsin made some further modifications into this law. For instance, in the October 1 decree, he raised the number of seats in the lower chamber, the State Duma, to 450 from 400. In doing so, he was restoring a figure that had been accepted by the Sheinis group and agreed to by a very wide range of political forces. In several other important respects as well, Yeltsin’s electoral law represented a consensus among a broad range of politicians and experts who had been discussing the new law in parliament and the Constitutional Assembly over the course of the year. And yet, the draft was never subject to a vote in the old parliament or the Constitutional Assembly. The views of opposition leaders on the work of the Sheinis group were not publicly expressed. Plainly, the authors of the draft were mainly from various reform-oriented factions.

The draft of the Sheinis group’s proposal, which was well known in Moscow by June, served as the basis for President Yeltsin’s decree and made a number of changes in the old electoral and parliamentary system besides reducing the number of seats. Among the most important were:

1. **Mixed PR/SMD System.** The Sheinis proposal introduced for the first time since 1917 a system of proportional representation in Russian parliamentary elections. Half of the 450 seats in the Duma were to be allocated to candidates elected from party lists according to the share of the vote each party received in a single, Russia-wide electoral district. The other half were to be filled by the winners of contests in single-member districts elected on a first-past-the-post, plurality basis. The party-list and district voting were conducted on separate
ballots. Thus, the proposal differs from the German system in that the parties' share of the PR vote would not determine the final distribution of seats in the parliament—only the share allocated from among the 225 PR seats. And the Russian plan included a single nationwide district instead of multiple multi-member districts for the proportional representation part of the election.

2. **Five Percent Party-List Threshold.** The proposal included a five percent threshold for representation of parties through lists.

3. **Single-Stage Election.** The new plan returned to single stage, plurality elections in territorial districts. 1989 and 1990 elections had called for run-offs between the two candidates who had received the most votes in the event that no candidate won with an absolute majority of votes on the first round. Now, instead, the candidate winning the largest number of votes won the seat (subject to the condition noted in no. 4 below.) The pre-1989, uncontested. Soviet elections had of course never needed a second round to achieve an absolute majority for the single candidate running.

4. **Lower Voter Turnout Threshold.** The proposal lowered of the threshold for voter turnout for a territorial district race to be valid to 25 percent from the 50 percent set for 1989 and 1990 elections.

5. **New Ballot Form.** On the new ballot, a voter placed a mark by the box representing the preferred candidate or party rather than crossing out all unwanted choices, as on the traditional Soviet-era ballot. Moreover, the ballot now included a space marked 'against all' candidates or parties. Initially, Yeltsin's decree provided that to win, a candidate (or party, in the national electoral district) had to receive more votes than any other, and also more votes than were cast against all candidates. In a subsequent decree, however, Yeltsin rescinded the requirement that a candidate receive more votes than were cast against all.

6. **Selection of Deputies for the Upper House.** A different method was chosen for electing the deputies of the upper house, the Federation Council. In this case, and for this election only, Yeltsin decreed that the upper chamber would be elected by direct popular election. The two candidates from every constituent territorial unit (subject) of the federation who received the most votes were declared the deputies to the Federation Council from that region. This provision, incidentally, contradicted the provisions of the constitution being voted on in the national referendum, under which the Federation Council was to be formed from among a
representative each of the executive and representative branches of each subject of the federation.

All of these provisions were included in the presidential decree.

The Institutional Context in 1993

The choice setting in Moscow during the fall of 1993 differed in important respects from that of post-war Germany or the "pacted" transitions of Eastern Europe. The first difference was the mechanism for choosing an electoral system. If in Russia there was no occupying power to veto the actors' choices, there also was no parliamentary body, like the German Parliamentary Council, on which all organized parties had representation and a vote on a new electoral law. As Bawn indicates for Germany, obtaining a majority on the Parliamentary Council for an electoral law required the agreement of at least two parties because no party constituted a majority by itself. Therefore, the choice of electoral system in Germany reflected a coalition-building process that necessitated the formulation of a system satisfactory to all of the partners in a majority coalition.

Nor did the Russian electoral law result from an explicit agreement among the major organized political forces over the rules of the game. Within very broad limits of acceptability to the general public, Yeltsin was free to choose the rules of competition. Imposition of a new electoral system by presidential decree meant that no formal vote or parliamentary coalition-building process was involved. The parliamentary strength of opposition forces was not a relevant consideration. Nevertheless, the president, who belonged to no organized party or electoral association and chose not to form a presidential party, had to contend with the leaders of multiple reform parties and factions whose leaders indicated their groups' intentions to compete in the forthcoming elections. The president, it is reasonable to assume, sought a system that would maximize the number of reform-oriented deputies in the new Duma, whatever their party or factional affiliation.

The surest way to maximize the number of friendly deputies would have been to ban opposition parties. In fact, Yeltsin did ban the parties most closely tied to former parliamentary speaker Ruslan Khasbulatov and former vice president Alexander Rutskoi. But Yeltsin, of course, wanted to establish a democratic system with legitimacy. He certainly was under considerable international pressure to do so. The electoral decree allowed most of the communists, agrarians, nationalists, and other opposition groups to compete in the elections. Moreover, although he put the new law into effect by presidential decree, the very speed with which he acted in September and October, 1993, made it likely that he would employ an
existing text for which wide support already existed rather than create a new one out of whole cloth.

To be sure, the arrangement of political institutions under the new constitution meant that Yeltsin could make policy by issuing decrees as long as the parliament did not actively oppose him, as the old one had. His minimum goal, therefore, was a Duma that was not dominated by a majority opposition coalition. But since the constitutional draft that he supported gave the Duma the power to vote no confidence in the government, he and his advisors must have preferred that the parties sympathetic to liberal reform would gain a majority. Thus, notwithstanding the restrictions on his freedom to choose an electoral system, we assume that he wished to maximize the number of pro-reform deputies in the new Duma and minimize the number of seats won by his opponents.

A second difference is the element of time. In this respect the German case differs from the postcommunist Hungarian and Russian examples. Having campaigned in local and regional elections and governed in local and regional governments for at least two years, German parties were reformed and well established by the time that a national electoral system was chosen in 1949. Parties were relatively well prepared to compete in national elections by that time. In contrast, most Russian "parties" in the fall of 1993 were little more than parliamentary factions and elite associations; their local branches were embryonic. Only the communists and agrarians could draw upon an inherited organization in many localities. And yet these proto-parties had only two months to become eligible for a place on the ballot, field candidates, and mount a campaign. For many of them, each of these concerns was a source of uncertainty. There was virtually no time for the consolidation of the smaller groups into larger, more competitive parties. Leaders had little choice but to proceed with their band of partisans.

A third difference concerns information available to reform parties and Yeltsin about their chances under various alternative institutional arrangements. Germany had local council elections in 1946 and Land council elections in 1947. The performance of the German parties in these elections gave the parties reasonably sound indications of their strength in the regions. Throughout Eastern Europe, however, anti-communist parties had no recent experience that would have enabled them to gauge the level of their support. The leaders of Poland's Solidarity movement were astonished by their landslide victory in 1989 which brought them the unwanted responsibility for forming the government. Similarly, Hungary's communists were too optimistic in 1989 and the opposition too pessimistic about their electoral potential (Lijphart 1992, 214-5).

Russia's parties were at a similar disadvantage in 1993 in gauging their popularity. A referendum in April, 1993, revealed patterns of support for and opposition to President Yeltsin
and the reform policy of his government broadly. Elections of governors (gubernatory) in several regions during the year gave some rough indication of voters’ preferences. Neither these, however, nor the elections of deputies in 1989 and 1990 and the presidential election of 1991 gave any concrete evidence of the levels of local or national support for the current array of political parties, blocs and movements. Moreover, there was no prior experience using the particular set of electoral districts created for the December 1993 balloting. Finally, the aggregate results of the referendum were a weak basis even for predicting a nationwide PR result because of the further deterioration of economic and social conditions in the interim, the unpredictable public response to the violent end to the old parliament, and the uncertainty about turnout. Unreliable public opinion polls were not going to help much.

Thus, while Yeltsin and his advisers surely would have liked to maximize the number of friendly deputies in the Duma in open elections, they had a weak basis for determining the kind of system which would achieve that objective. Indeed, participants we interviewed in the spring of 1993 expressed great uncertainty about the prospects of the parties under any electoral system. Uncertainty was so great that two very different positions on the preferred system were supported by different groups among Yeltsin’s top advisers.

Proponents of a predominantly SMD system offered as their primary argument a classical electoral system analysis—the reformers, as the most popular group in the country, would benefit from the bonus typically associated with an SMD, plurality system. In their view, the April referendum indicated that the Russian electorate was more pro-reform than anti-reform, which would allow a pro-reform party to pick up the support of voters who would not want to waste their votes by supporting moderate, single-issue, and social democratic parties, as they would in a PR system. This system, it was argued by at least one analyst close to Yeltsin, was the best way of gaining a majority of seats for reform-oriented deputies in the Duma. They also pointed out the importance of responding to the demands of local administrators for an opportunity to be elected to the Duma. And they thought, following Duverger’s Law (Duverger, 1953), that SMD, plurality elections would breed a two-party system that reformers would dominate in the foreseeable future.

Proponents of a predominantly PR system argued that old-line communists so dominated local governments and electoral commissions that an SMD system was a recipe for disaster for reformers. The use of party lists would allow the reformers to control the selection of list candidates. In addition, reform-oriented partisans were concentrated in the largest cities and so would have a difficult time fielding candidates, let alone winning pluralities, in some regions of the country under an SMD system. Besides, the proponents of this position doubted that the reformers could, in the time allowed, form a single party or bloc and benefit from the usual
SMD bonus. Yeltsin had been refusing to lead such a party for some time. Since the reform forces were likely to compete for the same district votes, and Yeltsin preferred to remain above the partisan contest, a PR system would allow several smaller reform parties to win seats.

SMD proponents countered that electoral commissions could be reformed so as to minimize the threat of corruption and that at least a temporary alliance of reform groups could solve the fragmentation problem. They also noted that a PR system would encourage fragmentation of reform-oriented parties and would likely exclude from Duma seats a key constituency of the Yeltsin administration, local elites and administrators. Local elites, whose support Yeltsin needed to implement reform and fend off his opponents, demanded an opportunity to be elected to the Duma. The Moscow-oriented proto-parties were unlikely to give local elites high places on party lists, so the local elites lobbied for district seats, as some of them held in the old parliament.

The two camps also differed in their assessments of the reformers' electoral base. Proponents of PR wanted to wage the same campaign that had succeeded in April 1993, June 1991, and March 1990: a strategy of mobilizing a popular democratic movement against communism. Proponents of a predominantly SMD system believed that the democrats could only win with a pragmatic, non-ideological strategy of allying with the forces of the center, both the rising private sector and market-oriented groups in the state sector.

Neither side could muster hard evidence for its position. The conflicting assessments of the Yeltsin camp's political situation seemed to reinforce the more normative arguments proffered by Sheinis for a mixed system. Sheinis and others, in interviews with the authors, espoused the value of the local representation that comes with an SMD system as well as the value of ensuring that smaller parties receive representation in the Duma, the more powerful of the two houses of the new parliament (Remington and Smith, 1994). Unfortunately, we have no way of determining the importance of these normative arguments for Yeltsin and his closest advisors.

Risk accompanied either strategy. The prospective benefit to the government forces, organized around former prime minister Gaidar and associated with the "shock therapy" program, of a predominantly SMD system was offset by the chance that communists and their agrarian allies would prove to be more effective in winning territorial races outside the major industrial cities. But the potential gain to the reformers by maximizing the territorially-concentrated democratic vote through a PR system with a national electoral district was counterbalanced by the prospect that demagogic politicians could successfully mobilize discontented voters around themes of opposition to the government. Even if a proportional
system would give smaller pro-reform parties opportunities to win seats. Centrist and opposition parties might win even more seats. The democratic forces could not be sure, however, that the old strategy of running against communism campaign would work in December, 1993, after the events of October, with Yeltsin remaining aloof, and dissatisfaction with social and economic conditions running high.

For the pragmatists in the Yeltsin camp, a mixed strategy appears to have been the best way to minimize the risk that opposition forces would be so strong in the new parliament that they could block reform. Within the range of options that were at their disposal, their decisions are consistent with an estimate of the probability of success and failure as approximately equal for either electoral system type. It made sense therefore to split the difference between the two. One frequently discussed alternative was to set the share of PR seats in the new parliament at one third. Making it half represented a still riskier change over previous practice. Certainly it increased the likelihood that all the democratic parties could gain representation in parliament. But by choosing not to employ a German-style provision that would allocate the total number of seats in the Duma by the shares each party received on the list ballot, the framers of the electoral law hedged against the possibility of a sweeping victory by anti-government parties. Indeed, had such a rule been in effect in the December, 1993, election, Zhirinovsky would have almost doubled his seat share.

To be sure, the pressure of time reduced their ability to analyze the probabilities associated with each alternative. Yeltsin announced elections for December as a part of his actions to disband the old parliament in September. And yet Yeltsin’s advisers, who had debated electoral system alternatives for many months as they participated in the deliberations of the Sheinis commission, appear to have settled on the Sheinis plan by the late summer of 1993 before Yeltsin dissolved parliament. No serious debate about the broad outlines of the electoral system is reported to have occurred in September and October, 1993.

As best we can determine, then, calculating politicians struggled with what they realized was inadequate information for making the choices they faced. The uncertainty, combined with the particular institutional context that they hoped would prevail after the referendum on the constitution, yielded a strategy that spread the potential gains and risks equally across the two systems of representation. The open question, still debated in Moscow, is whether the proponents of either predominantly PR or SMD systems were correct. Would the number of reform-oriented deputies have been higher with a pure PR or pure SMD system than with the mixed system?
1993 Electoral Results

Previous analysis of the results of the 1993 elections has relied on voting data aggregated at the level of the subjects of the federation or on individual-level pre- and post-election opinion surveys (Slider, et al., 1994; Wyman et al., 1994; Whitefield and Evans 1994; Hough 1994). The "subjects" are the 89 regions that comprise all the oblasts and krais, as well as ethnic-territorial entities (among them republics as well as lesser units), plus the two cities of Moscow and St. Petersburg, into which Russia is divided for administrative purposes. Some subjects of the federation were given only one territorial seat for the Duma, although every subject, under the decree, had to be given at least one seat. Others were divided into two or more seats, based on population. Most districts contain around half a million voters. In order to satisfy the requirements that every subject had at least one seat but that no electoral districts crossed the boundaries of subjects, some districts had many fewer voters than the average, and others somewhat more. The smallest district thus wound up with only 14,000 voters, while the largest had 724,000.

District-level data on both party-list and district voting are required to simulate the aggregate consequences of alternative electoral systems. We are fortunate to have such data. Data come from unpublished reports provided by members of the Central Electoral Commission and may contain errors. We believe they are the data being used by participants as well to evaluate the consequences of the choice of electoral system for the 1993 election outcomes.

The election data require a brief explanation. Candidates for district seats could be nominated in either of two ways. Registered electoral associations--those with the right to put up national candidate lists--could nominate candidates, or individuals could qualify if they could collect the required number of valid signatures (at least one percent of the voters of the district) on petitions. 1586 candidates ran for district seats, half of whom were nominated by national electoral associations. 1717 candidates were placed on party lists by processes governed by party rules or leaders. And some candidates (an unknown number) were placed on both party lists and district ballots. Candidates winning district seats and qualifying for seats through their party lists could choose which kind of seat to take in the Duma. Nearly all of them chose to assume the district seat and free another list seat for a lower-ranked member of their party.

Unfortunately, the weakness of the ties between district candidates and political parties complicates comparison between votes for candidates and votes for party lists in each district. Even where candidates had a clear partisan identity, party names were not printed on the ballots used for the territorial districts. Voters had to know or figure out which candidates
were associated with which parties; some polling stations had posted a list of candidates’ party affiliations on the wall, and in other cases, voters asked the parties’ observers stationed at the polling place, election officials, or friends and family members for help in determining the party affiliation of candidates. Personal observations at five polling places in Moscow on election day indicate that many voters were interested in knowing the party labels of candidates and frustrated that this information was not provided on the ballot form itself.

To analyze patterns of party affiliation for candidates running in districts, we use the listing of candidates published in the Russian press in November 1993, which indicated the electoral organization that nominated candidates (Rossiiskaia gazeta, November 30, 1993). Some district winners lacked a party affiliation as candidates but later joined a parliamentary faction. In such cases, we use the faction (parliamentary party) with which elected deputies registered in the Duma as an indicator of a candidate’s party. But a number of deputies not nominated by or affiliated with the registered electoral parties decided to form their own parliamentary factions in order to gain the advantages conferred on registered groups. They then competed in parliament for influence and members with the factions that formed out of electoral parties (Remington and Smith 1995).

Yet other district winners decided to change their partisan affiliation after the election. Some of the party switchers had been nominated by parties that failed to clear the five percent threshold; others simply decided to move to a parliamentary faction more congenial to their political position. In fact, members of party factions continue to flow in and out of factions, although not in great numbers. In order to determine the party affiliations of SMD deputies, therefore, we use figures for faction membership as of April 1994, i.e. after the initial phase of Duma organization was complete. Since party affiliation for Russian deputies is often far looser than in other European parliaments, no method for counting the parties’ victories in districts is entirely adequate. However, some initial reports published by the Russian news agencies proved to be highly inaccurate.

Comparing the Consequences of Mixed, PR, and SMD Systems for 1993

The results of the December, 1993, election are shown in Table 1 (page 31). Thirteen electoral organizations put up candidate lists. Eight of the thirteen succeeded in receiving more than five percent of the votes cast and therefore gained parliamentary seats—Russia’s Choice, Party of Russian Unity and Accord (PRES), the Yavlinsky-Boldyrev-Lukin party (Yabloko), Democratic Party of Russia, Women of Russia, Agrarian Party of Russia, Communist Party of the Russian Federation, and Liberal Democratic Party of Russia. In addition, many deputies elected in single-member district races formed parliamentary groups independent of the party-
based factions. Three formed in the first week of proceedings: the December 12th group, New Regional Policy, and Russia's Way (RP). December 12 attracted pro-reform deputies. New Regional Policy considered itself a centrist force, and Russia's Way was ideologically aligned with the opposition factions. But other district deputies jointed party factions. The table shows each parties' percentage of the national vote for party lists, number of seats received as a result of the list balloting, and number of district deputies who affiliated with it as of April, 1994. The last two columns show each parliamentary faction's size in the Duma.

The results in Table 1 support the conventional interpretation that no party or bloc won a majority in the Duma. The opposition, or anti-reform, parties—the Agrarians, Communists, and Liberal Democrats—won more seats than the democratic, or pro-reform, camp, comprising Russia's Choice, PRES, and Yabloko. The opposition wing constituted about 40 percent of the Duma. While this certainly was a disappointing result for the Yeltsin camp, it was a great improvement over the situation that they confronted in the old parliament (Remington, et al., 1994). But was it as much as the Yeltsin camp could have gotten under other electoral systems?

Based on the outcomes of the party list votes, we can project the results of the elections under several alternative electoral systems. As in other simulated election analyses, great caution must be exercised in interpreting the results (Bawn, 1993, 974-5). It is quite likely, for example, that the number of districts and district lines would have been different if Russia used the SMD system exclusively. As early as the winter of 1993, framers of the new constitution were planning a membership for the Duma with far fewer than the 1071 deputies of the Congress of People's Deputies, which they considered unworkable, and more than the 252 members of the Supreme Soviet, which they considered to be too small to represent Russia's diversity. Thus, it is quite unlikely that an exclusively PR parliament would have been left at 450 seats, as we must assume here.

Moreover, we cannot assume that voters would behave the same way in an exclusively PR or SMD system as they did in 1993. The opportunity for a voter to split his or her votes between parties on the two ballots creates possible outcomes that do not exist in exclusively PR or SMD systems. We cannot predict with confidence, at least with available data, how a voter who split her vote in 1993 would vote in an exclusively PR or SMD system.

Furthermore, we cannot treat a simulation of election results as a simulation of legislative behavior, which is, of course, what Yeltsin was concerned about. Most obviously, the party discipline associated with a parliamentary system cannot be assumed in the presidential-parliamentary system of Russia. Consequently, the electoral system itself is likely to have a strong effect on legislators' behavior. But whether a highly party-oriented Duma would have
proven to be in Yeltsin’s interest would have depended on the election results, just what was so
difficult to predict in late 1993.

Nevertheless, we do have a basis for creating policy-based groupings of candidates and
deputies. We conducted a survey during the 1993 campaign in which 420 candidates of ten
different parties were asked about a variety of policy positions. A factor analysis of their
responses produced the mean factor scores reported in Table 2 (page 32). The scores can be
interpreted as placement on a pro- and anti-reform dimension. The validity of this
interpretation is supported by the high correlation between the scores reported in Table 2 with
the mean factor scores of the parliamentary factions on the first dimension emerging from a
factor analysis of Duma roll-call voting during 1994 (Remington and Smith, 1994). The parties
with the strongest pro-reform candidates were Russia’s Choice, DPR, and Yabloko, while the
parties with the most anti-reform candidates were the Agrarians, Communists, and Liberal
Democrats. The candidates of the other parties fell somewhere between those groups.

With these considerations in mind, we turn to estimates of the consequences of
alternative electoral systems for the distribution of deputies across factions and groups (Table
3, page 32). The first column, reflecting the outcome of an all-SMD ballot, is based on the
actual shares of district seats held by factions as April 1994; it corresponds to the third column
of Table 1. The last column, projecting the results of an all-PR election, applies the shares
won by parties in the list voting (as adjusted by redistributing the votes cast for parties which
did not clear the 5% hurdle to the parties that did) to a hypothetical parliament of 450 seats.
Thus the shares for each faction are the same as in the second column of Table 1. The middle
column reports the seat shares that actually obtained in the half-and-half system that was used.
The second column, simulating the outcome of a 1/3 PR-2/3 SMD election, is based on the
assumption that the factions hold the same district seats that they actually hold while there are
only 113 PR seats rather than 225. Thus the party list vote is used to distribute only half as
many seats as was actually the case. In fact, one alternative often discussed is an electoral
system with one-third PR seats and two-thirds SMD seats. However, such discussions usually
assume that there would be 450 seats altogether (150 PR and 300 SMD), requiring a different
districting scheme than was actually employed; of course different district sizes and boundaries
would probably have yielded a different outcome. The fourth column projects the results of an
election in which the party-list balloting determines two-third of the seats. As in the other
simulations, parties retain their current shares of the 225 district seats, but now there are 450
PR seats to allocate to parties based on the party list vote.

The simulation suggests that the repercussions of altering the proportion of PR seats are
substantial. In an all-SMD system, the reform-oriented factions would have been better off than
in the actual outcome. This is not because their total share is appreciably different from one system to another. While the three party-based factions in the reform bloc gain a larger share of seats as the fraction of PR seats increases (combined, about 25 percent under an all-SMD system and about 35 percent under an all-PR system), the lost share of seats held by the district deputies in the independent pro-reform December 12 faction entirely offsets the gain. The implications for the reform factions have to do instead with the outcomes for centrist and opposition factions under alternative systems.

Together, the centrist factions do much better under more-SMD weighted systems because of the sizable number of independent deputies elected in districts who joined the NRP. In fact, the total percentage of centrist-faction deputies is twice as large under an all-SMD system as under an all-PR system. However, setting aside the NRP, the two small centrist parties--Women of Russia and Democratic Party of Russia--gain a far larger share of seats with more proportionality.

The overall percentage of opposition deputies would have been lower under an all-SMD system and higher under an all-PR system. This result is a function of the great success of the LDPR in party-list voting and the great weakness of the LDPR in district voting. Indeed, the LDPR's party-list success far outweighs the Agrarians' disproportionate success in district voting. Without the LDPR, the opposition bloc of Agrarians and Communists would improve its share only very slightly as the degree of proportionality increases.

It is worth noting, in light of Duverger's propositions, that only three parties won more than a handful of district seats: Russia's Choice, the Communist Party, and the Agrarian Party. In the underdeveloped party system operative in late 1993, many deputies were elected without close ties to parties and many of them formed independent factions in the Duma. But Zhirinovsky's Liberal Democratic Party, which did so well in party-list voting, only won five district seats. The Liberal Democrats' lack of district seats was due in part to their inability to field candidates. Yet, even in the districts where they had candidates on the ballot, the Liberal Democrats were much less successful at winning district seats than were the other three large parties (Table 4, page 33).

Thus, the simulation of aggregate results shows that the choice of electoral system had significant implications for the reform forces. The system that would have both maximized the percentage of reform deputies and minimized the percentage of opposition deputies was an all-SMD system. As we have shown, this is due primarily to two factors—the strength of the LDPR in party-list voting and the large number of deputies elected in districts who chose not to join the party-based factions. The LDPR's importance is well recognized. Indeed, the success of Zhirinovsky's party in the party-list voting was not anticipated by the Yeltsin camp,
proved to be a surprise to everyone, and has been a major concern for reformers working on a new election law. The importance of the independent, district-elected deputies has not attracted as much attention, although they hold the balance within the parliament.

**District-Level Consequences of the 1993 Electoral System**

The aggregate pattern in Table 2 is not the full story. District-seat voting may have been affected by a number of factors beyond the popularity of the party and these factors probably had differential effects on the parties. Four factors seem particularly important.

First, as the Yeltsin camp knew and we have noted, there are differences among the parties in their ability to field district candidates, particularly attractive candidates, and organize local campaigns. Unlike the post-war German parties, which had been organizing for several years before the first national elections, Russian parties were surprised by the timing of the 1993 elections and were poorly prepared to compete in local campaigns. Analysts close to Yeltsin assumed that the Agrarians and the Communists had a large advantage over other parties in this respect. The Agrarians and Communists, it was argued, benefitted from their connection to local administrations that still were dominated by individuals who were appointed by the communist regime. And they might have benefitted from corruption in local election commissions.

Second, a number of incumbents from the old parliament had developed a record of service to local constituencies. In fact, 105 incumbents of the old parliament ran for district seats in the new Duma (of these 47 ran simultaneously on a party list). The distribution across factions of those who were elected is as shown in Table 5 (page 33). Plainly, the Agrarians and Russia’s Choice were both advantaged in having a pool of experienced politicians to run in districts.

Third, as Duverger predicts, small parties may have been disadvantaged in district voting because of a mechanical and a psychological effect. The mechanical effect is that small parties are disadvantaged in a first-past-the-post, plurality system. The psychological effect is the preference of voters to not waste a vote on a candidate who has little chance of winning the seat. In this case, Russia’s Choice, the Agrarians, and the Communists were widely recognized as the most competitive parties, having organized large blocs of deputies in the old parliament.

And fourth, the character of inter-party competition may have varied from district to district. The closely allied Agrarians and Communists might have been expected to coordinate their efforts in local districts and try to avoid dividing the anti-Yeltsin vote. If so, the anti-Yeltsin parties would have been advantaged in individual districts where they nominated a single candidate while the pro-Yeltsin parties nominated more than one.
To determine the *ex post* aggregate effect of these and other district-level factors, we examine for each party the mean difference between party-list and district voting for districts in which the party had a candidate for the district seat. Table 6 (page 33) indicates that for Zhirinovsky and his Liberal Democrats, the party's list vote was almost always stronger than the district vote: the PR vote averaged more than 12 percentage points more than the vote for the district candidate (notice the mean minus the standard deviation is greater than zero for the LDPR). So, even where the LDPR managed to field candidates, its candidates did very poorly relative to the party list. For the Agrarians, the vast majority of local candidates outpolled the party list in the same districts. For the other parties, the mean difference is quite close to zero, although there is substantial variation from district to district.

In sum, it appears that an exclusively PR system would have greatly advantaged Zhirinovsky and his Liberal Democrats, while an exclusively SMD system would have advantaged the Agrarians. Furthermore, as best we can determine, neither Russia's Choice, the large party closest to Yeltsin, nor the Communists would have gained a significantly greater proportion of the seats by moving to a more exclusively PR or SMD system. However, if the Communists and Agrarians coordinated their candidate nomination efforts, perhaps so that the Agrarians ran in the districts where the interests of collective farms were still dominant, then it would be reasonable to argue that the Agrarian-Communist bloc, which later tended to behave as a voting bloc in the Duma, was collectively advantaged by SMD voting. Did the fragmentation of the parties undermine the district-level competitiveness of the democratic parties more than the opposition parties?

This question can be answered only if we make the very strong assumption that voters for one of the pro-reform parties (Russia's Choice, PRES, Yabloko, and the Russian Movement for Democratic Reform) would vote for any one of those parties before voting for any other party. With that assumption, the answer is yes, the democratic parties undercut their opportunities for district seat victories by competing against each other. More than one democratic candidate ran in 92 (54 percent) of the 170 districts in which at least one candidate ran under a democratic party label. In 22 (24 percent) of the 92 cases, the sum of the votes for the democratic wing's candidates exceeded the number of votes for the winner but the seat went to a candidate who joined an opposition or centrist faction. In contrast, in only 39 (33 percent) of the 118 districts with at least one opposition party candidate (Communist, Agrarian, or Liberal Democratic) did more than one opposition candidate run. In only nine (23 percent) of the 39 cases, the seat went to a democratic or centrist faction while the sum of the votes for the opposition bloc's candidates exceeded the number of votes for the winner. Thus, the higher
frequency of internecine competition among the democratic parties placed them at a somewhat larger disadvantage than was the case for the opposition.¹⁷

Both reform and opposition factions gained members as winning candidates with no party identification joined factions in parliament. About a quarter of the victorious independents joined a reform faction (including the December 12 group), and about the same number joined an opposition faction (including Russia's Way). But as we have seen, the largest number of independents joined New Regional Policy, an avowedly centrist faction representing non-party SMD deputies. With the influx of independents, the democratic factions ended up with one-third of the district seats and the opposition a little less than that. Given the concerns of democrats about their prospects in district contests, the democratic parties could not have been too disappointed with that result. But they probably could have been still more successful if they had developed a coalition strategy as their opponents seem to have done.

The Choice of an Electoral System in 1995

Over 1994 and 1995, the Duma discussed a new electoral law to govern the elections scheduled for December 1995. Our general framework suggests that the results of the 1993 election would provide the deputies with important information that would guide their preferences for a new system. The distribution of preferences, in turn, would, along with the decision rules of the Duma, determine the choice of a new electoral system by the Duma. Bawn's policy-based theory leads us to expect that the deputies of the Duma would prefer a system that produces desired policy outcomes. If the mixed system of 1993 represented a mixed strategy by the Yeltsin camp in the face of great uncertainty about the consequences of alternative systems for policy outcomes, the lessons of 1993 and intervening events would clarify the implications of each alternative.

Our task is to relate the 1993 results to the preferences of the major groups of deputies about electoral system alternatives and account for the collective choice of the Duma in light of the distribution of preferences. We begin by noting the preferences that would be dictated by the implications of 1993 election results for the policy outcomes.

Given the 1993 results, policy considerations would have dictated polarized preferences for the electoral system on the part of reform and opposition deputies. A roll-call analysis of the 1994 voting record of the Duma shows that a single left-right, economic reform dimension dominated Duma voting (Remington and Smith, 1995). On the basis of that dimension's alignment of the deputies' policy preferences, in which communist and agrarian deputies are allied with the LDPR against the reform parties, reform deputies should have favored a system weighted heavily in favor of district seats so as to minimize the opposition's
share, while for the same reasons opposition deputies would be expected to favor a more heavily proportional system. Since neither bloc commanded a majority, centrists would determine the choice of the Duma and would want to remain pivotal on policy questions in the new Duma.

We can be more specific. The alignment of the factions on the major left-right dimension that dominates Duma voting suggests the basis for two coalitions on the 1995 electoral law. The NRP was the largest centrist group and its mean on the left-right dimension is to the reform side of the overall Duma median. Thus, it is reasonable to predict on the basis of policy-oriented preferences for electoral systems, the NRP would side with the reformers for a system more heavily weighted in favor of SMD seats. If the NRP joined with the reform factions on an electoral law, the coalition would be just a few votes short of a majority. On the other hand, a coalition of the major opposition factions with the independent factions falling just to their side of the median (Women of Russia and the DPR) would not by themselves constitute a majority. A handful of deputies without faction membership might determine the outcome.

Yet, as it turned out, the Duma adopted legislation that provided for reinstatement of the 1993 system—a 50-50 split of PR and SMD seats, no compensatory seats to ensure overall proportionality, a five-percent PR threshold, and plurality district voting. Moreover, the Duma acted with the support of Russia’s Choice and other reformers. What accounts for this outcome?

We set aside the possibility that we have miscalculated the lessons of 1993 for the reformers. After all, Yeltsin proposed a plan that is consistent with our prediction that reform-oriented forces would benefit by a system favoring more SMD seats. He proposed a new electoral law that might be expected to favor the reform-oriented deputies by expanding the share of SMD seats to two thirds and reducing the share of PR seats to one third (300 SMD, 150 PR). He also proposed a reform that would hurt parties lacking strong local branches by forbidding them from running candidates simultaneously in districts and on national lists. Yeltsin sweetened his plan for parliamentary factions by exempting parties already in parliament from the need to collect signatures on petitions to register candidates, as had been required in 1993. His plan retained the five percent barrier to representation for parties but added a seven percent threshold for coalitions of parties.

Two other explanations appear to be reasonable possibilities. First, intervening events may have created new considerations that led at least some reform and centrist deputies to favor continuation of the mixed system. Second, it is possible that the theory is incomplete.
Perhaps preferences defined over policy outcomes did not exclusively determine preferences for alternative electoral systems. We favor the second explanation.

**Intervening Events**

The preferences for electoral systems within each of the three wings may have been affected by the rise of new issues or events. New issues and events can introduce new, cross-cutting policy dimensions that alter the factions' preferences for an electoral system. The war in Chechnia might be such an event. The war appeared to be the stimulus for Russia's Choice's reversal on the desirability of a strong presidency and its effort to expand parliamentary control over the executive branch. Zhirinovsky's faction and Russia's Way called unequivocally for allowing the army to suppress Chechen resistance, while the communists and agrarians called on all sides to cease hostilities. Plainly, the alignments associated with the Chechen war cut across the left-right dimension. If a new dimension, or perhaps a two-dimensional alignment, was operative at the time that the electoral law was adopted in early 1995, it might account for variation for expectations based on the left-right economic dimension that dominated Duma voting in 1994.

But the evidence is not consistent with this possibility. In the case of a new war dimension, the factions did not line up in a manner consistent with their views on the war. Russia's Choice and Russia's Way did not endorse the full-PR system that was advocated by Zhirinovsky. A two-dimensional account yields no clear expectation for a choice of an electoral system. Electoral-system preferences associated with a two-dimensional alignment of policy preferences are likely to result in majority-rule cycling.

**Power- and Reelection-Based Preferences**

An alternative explanation is that the interest of at least some deputies in protecting their chances of reelection or their personal power led them to favor an electoral law quite different from the one dictated by their policy interests. Research in other cases has suggested that in determining their preferences for a new electoral law, legislators and their parties may be moved by other considerations than maximizing policy influence. In Spain, for example, leaders appear to have preferred to retain control over their own parties over power-sharing alliances with other parties that would have yielded more favorable policy outcomes (Gunther 1989). In Russia, two considerations—the interests of party leaders in maintaining their personal influence and the interests of deputies and factions in retaining their seats in parliament—appear to have been at play.
Consider the interests of party leaders first. In early 1995, Russian parties were still in an embryonic state of organization and leaders of their parliamentary factions tended to take the initiative in the process of building party organizations. Russia’s Choice, PRES, CPRF, APR, LDPR, DPR and Yabloko are all led by the heads of their parliamentary factions. Even the parliamentary leaders of the New Regional Policy, comprising independent deputies elected in districts in 1993, took steps in 1995 to organize a national electoral movement. The parliamentary leaders were able to use the resources of their parliamentary factions to coordinate communications with the regional branches, to take leadership positions in the party organizations, and to set party programs. More important, parliamentary party leaders exercised control over their electoral organizations by controlling placement of candidates on the party list. A large PR element in the electoral law served to maintain their control over candidates and the emerging electoral parties.

The electoral interests of several small parliamentary factions also may have dictated preferences for electoral systems that varied from those predicted from policy interests. Yabloko and PRES, both pro-reform factions, were comprised of a majority of deputies who were elected on party lists. By adopting Yeltsin’s plan, the two factions had reason to expect that, at a minimum, they would lose a number of party-list seats and reduce their relative influence in the Duma. Thus, even if their policy interests suggested a more heavily SMD system, their electoral interests dictated that the proportion of PR seats at least be maintained.

Russia’s Choice was evenly split between party-list and district deputies. The faction’s size would be expected to increase in a system with more SMD seats but the party-list members would have reason to fear that fewer candidates on the party list would be elected. Supporting a 1993-styled electoral law would give all sitting members of the faction a reasonable chance of being reelected to the Duma.

The presidential-parliamentary system imposed by the 1993 constitution may have contributed to defining the interests of the reform factions by reducing the costs of their failure to maximize seats in the Duma. The president, able to operate by decree, did not require a secure parliamentary majority to pursue reform. To be sure, parliament could overturn presidential decrees, but only by a 2/3 vote, so the absence of a cohesive majority for the opposition meant that privatization and other aspects of reform could proceed.

At the other end of the political spectrum, the Agrarians had policy-based reasons for supporting more PR seats but had electoral reasons to support the maintenance of a large proportion of SMD seats. Agrarian deputies were closely connected with collective farms. They were well known locally and could expect to be advantaged in a heavily SMD system.
But this preference would pit them against the Communists and the LDPR, both of which were comprised of more party-list than district deputies.

All small parties benefitted from the absence of a majority bloc in the Duma, which could reasonably be attributed to the mixed electoral system. After the 1993 elections, faction leaders settled on institutional arrangements that reduced the risk that any bloc would be disadvantaged. Chamber leadership was vested in an all-faction steering committee which was organized on a parity rather than a proportional basis (Remington and Smith, 1994). Each faction, regardless of size, has an equal voice in the determination of the proposed agenda and, often, in hammering out compromise agreements that enable legislation to pass on the floor. Smaller factions might seek to preserve the existing multi-party, non-majoritarian arrangements by the perpetuating an electoral system that tends to reduce the chances that a cohesive majority bloc would emerge.

Debate on the 1995 Law

The debates over the 1995 electoral law provide a strong basis for determining the positions of the factions. In addition to the rollcall vote on the new electoral law at second reading in March, 1995, we have the record of debate on the bill as each faction offered its perspective during floor deliberation when the bill passed its first reading on November, 1994. (Biulleten' no. 67, 1994, pp. 38-56; Biulleten', no. 91, 1995, pp. 29-43). The record supports the view that non-policy considerations weighed heavily in the positions taken by the Duma factions.

The committee reporting the bill to the floor for passage in the first reading recommended three amendments to the president’s draft. The amendments restored the 50-50 mix of SMD and PR seats, dropped the ban on simultaneous balloting on lists and in the districts, and dropped the exemption on signature-collection for parties in parliament. The Duma rather easily agreed to the first two proposals and passed the president’s draft as amended; the amendment to drop the proposed exemption on collecting signatures was defeated by a narrow margin. In the second reading, the Duma reaffirmed its preference for the committee’s version, now approving the amendment to drop the exemption on collecting signatures again, and making a small number of other minor changes. An amendment that would have restored the Yeltsin plan of 150 PR seats and 300 SMD seats failed. The law passed in the second reading by a vote of 240 in favor, 65 opposed, and 8 abstaining. The breakdown of the vote by faction is shown in Table 7 (page 34).

As Table 7 indicates, most factions agreed with the committee’s recommendation to retain the 50-50 mix of the 1993 law. Most important, Russia’s Choice supported maintaining
the existing system, contrary to its apparent policy interests. Without the support of Russia’s Choice, Yeltsin’s plan had no chance of adoption. Yabloko and PRES, which might have favored the Yeltsin plan for policy reasons, instead behaved in a manner consistent with their electoral interests and supported continuation of a large PR component. The Communists, DPR, and LDPR preferred an all-PR system, consistent with both their policy and electoral interests, but, lacking a majority, indicated that they would settle for the 50-50 mix. Only the large NRP faction, comprised entirely of district deputies, argued strongly for an all-SMD Duma. The spokesman for the NRP indicated that his faction was willing to accept the one-third/two-thirds mix proposed by the president, but, when that option was defeated, opposed the committee plan.

Some factions spoke strongly in favor of the current system as having beneficial consequences for governance of the country and of the Duma on the grounds that a large share of PR seats tended to foster the development of parties, which contributed to the stabilization of political conflict in the country and to efficient decision-making in the Duma. L. N. Zavadskaya, speaking for the Women of Russia faction, commented that “if we cut off parties and political movements from elections today, and make elections solely single-member district, we will never form a political system, the basis of which is parties.” Moreover, she noted, in the Duma, “we can pass many political decisions only because the Duma is politically structured. If we dissolve into single-member districts, we will have to spend three or four or five times longer reaching decisions than at present.” The Women of Russia, it should be noted, included only a couple of district deputies. V. B. Isakov, chair of the legislation committee and a prominent representative of the Agrarian Party, observed that the half-and-half system is the “golden mean” and agreed with Zavadskaya that it tends to contribute to the development of a multi-party system in the country, which is essential to “reanimating” a political system in Russia. The golden mean for Agrarians may have involved compromising their conflicting policy and electoral interests.

In 1995, reelection- and perhaps power-based preferences proved more important than policy-based preferences as determinants of strategies on the electoral law. Much of the uncertainty about the consequences of the electoral system that was present in the fall of 1993 had disappeared and deputies could more accurately evaluate the consequences of a new system for their factional and personal electoral interests. A more generous interpretation would add that some deputies were concerned about the implications of the electoral law for building a viable party system. Plainly, a theory of strategic choice based solely on preferences defined over policy outcomes cannot account for the Duma’s action on the electoral system legislation in 1995.

23
Conclusion

The Russian experience over the 1993-1995 period indicates how difficult it is to model institutional choice. A mix of political goals, uncertainty about the consequences of choices, and the specific arrangement of political institutions greatly influenced the choice of an electoral system. In concluding, we review the importance of these factors for understanding institutional choice.

The mixed system implemented by the Yeltsin camp for the 1993 electoral system appears to have been consistent with a policy-based model of choice, at least under the circumstances that the Yeltsin camp encountered in September and October, 1993. Uncertain about the consequences of more exclusively PR and SMD systems but confident about the arrangement of policy-making institutions, they adopted a system of half party-list seats and half district seats for the more powerful house of the new Federal Assembly. But the 1993 Russian experience also suggests that extreme care must be taken in applying the framework to systems where the quality of the information available to the designers about the consequences of their choices is likely to be poor.

It is reasonable to speculate that the inability to make informed choices is common to parties involved in structuring electoral systems in the early stages of new democracies. Undeveloped parties, the absence of a relevant electoral record, rapidly changing political conditions, and other factors make it treacherous to estimate the consequences of alternative electoral choices. Once a system is chosen and initial elections are held, adjustments in the system, as long as they are not too great, can be made with some confidence about their consequences for control of policy-making institutions.

In 1995, after uncertainty about the consequences of alternative electoral systems was reduced, the policy-based model did not perform well. Incumbent deputies and factions had acquired a vested interest in the electoral system that brought them to office and some of them moved to reinstate that system at the expense of the policy interests. In fact, the president's closest allies on economic reform appear to have chosen to preserve their own seats at the risk of electing fewer like-minded deputies in the next election. Only a model that incorporates the reelection and power interests of deputies can explain their behavior.

The outcome of the 1995 debate over the election law seems inconsistent with the German experience described by Bawn (1993). In Germany, a major party acted to further its policy interests at the expense of seats in parliament. In Russia, a major party acted to maintain its members' seats and its leaders' influence at the expense of the policy and electoral interest of the party collectively. No simple model of policy-based choice can account for these differences.
Critical to understanding the differences between Germany and Russia is the larger institutional context. The parliamentary system of Germany meant that a party’s policy interests were closely connected to control over the government, which, in turn, could be (at the time, had to be) won with a coalition of parliamentary parties. The parliamentary-presidential system of Russia, with its strong presidential powers and bicameral legislature, reduced the importance of control over the Duma for policy choices. Personal political interests could be given greater weight in calculations about electoral systems in such a context.

One question that we must leave unanswered is the implication of the mixed system for the structure of the Russian party system over the long run. The German case suggests that district voting tends to reduce the number of effective parties, although not all the way to two, even with 50 percent compensatory seats that guarantee a high level of proportionality (Taagepera and Shugart, 1989, 230-2). If anything, the non-compensatory mixed system of Russia’s parliamentary electoral system and the necessity of competing for the presidency should give Russia an even stronger two-party tendency than we see in Germany. But much depends on features of the Russian system that are still in flux—whether parliamentary and presidential elections are held at separate times (Shugart and Carey, 1992), the distribution of power between the central and regional governments, court interpretations of presidential decree-making power, and, of course, economic and social conditions that influence the popularity of the parties.
References


"Izbiratel'nyi zakon: Materialy k obsuzhdeniiu," (Moscow: Izdanie proekttnoi gruppy po pravam cheloveka, June 1993).


Notes

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2. A contrasting case, however, is Poland, where three parliamentary elections have been held since 1989, each under a different electoral law.

3. By presidential decree, a referendum on a new constitution was held simultaneously with the December, 1993, parliamentary elections. The constitution was ratified.

4. The group published a compendium of materials in June 1993 that included their draft law, appendices on the proposed method for converting votes to seats, and articles justifying their preferences. "Izbiratel'nyi zakon: Materialy k obsuzhdeniiu," (Moscow: Izdanie proektnoi gruppy po pravam cheloveka, June 1993).

5. Most drafts circulating through 1993 had envisioned 450 seats, so Yeltsin was returning to the more widely accepted figure. 450 was considered preferable by the specialists working on the law for various reasons. Since there had been 900 territorial districts in the previous parliament, it was much easier to consolidate these into 450 new districts than into 400. That parliament of 1990-93, consisting of a Congress of People's Deputies and Supreme Soviet elected from among its members, had a total of 1,068 seats. Of these, 900 were single-member territorial district seats based roughly on equal population in each district. Another 168 seats were given to "national-territorial districts" created to ensure fixed quotas of representation from each of the ethnic-national territories in Russia's state structure. Since the new Duma was to have 225 territorial district seats and an equal number of seats allotted by proportional representation to parties, the 900 old territorial seats needed to be folded into 225 new territorial seats. This process could be accomplished more readily if the ratio was 4:1. Also, regions wanted to lose as few seats as possible. Finally, the figure of 450 was closer to the "ideal" number derived from the "cube law" of the ratio of seats to voters observed in many countries (for Russia the figure would be 466). The latter point, however, was hardly of decisive significance. Most important was the reason that under the pressure of time, it would be much easier to collapse 900 old districts into 225 new ones.

6. Under the constitution, the Duma's powers to defeat a government through a vote of no-confidence are limited. The Duma can vote no confidence in the government once with no further action being required. A second vote of no confidence within three months, however, requires that the president either appoint a new government or dissolve the Duma and hold new elections. Both the president and parliament thus face a certain risk in the event that the Duma votes no confidence in the government. Moreover, the constitution specifies that the President must be guided in his decisions both by the Constitution and current legislation. Opposition deputies in the Duma subsequently treated this provision as a useful loophole allowing them to attempt to pass laws that constrained presidential decree-making power. It can be assumed that after the violence of October 1993, both Yeltsin and his opponents would be reluctant to provoke new confrontations.

7. For instance, the regional elections returned a number of figures of the old communist establishment. Were the results to be interpreted as favorable for the Communist Party as such, or as evidence of the voters' preference for proven administrators with known political experience?

8. Also see the analyses of voting patterns at the level of the region by Clem and Craumer (1993) and Sobianin, Gel'man and Kaisunov (1994).

9. In fact, 88, since one region, the Chechen Republic, had declared itself independent of Russia and did not participate in the 1993 elections.
10. Sobyanin and Sukhovol'skii, pp. 8-9. The figure initially taken as the mean number of voters per district, given 225 districts and 107.6 million voters in Russia, was 478,000. In all, there were 20 subjects of the federation which were given a single seat each and where the number of voters was less than the 478,000 mean. Excluding these, the average number of voters per district was 508,000. The law provided that district size could deviate from this mean by 15% on either side, but it was not possible to observe this requirement in every case. See S. A. Avak’ian, "Vybori 1993-94 v Rossiiiskoi Federatsii: pravila i protsedury," Moscow: Mezhdunarodnyi blagotvoritel'nyi fond politiko-pravovykh issledovanii, Interlidal, 1993, p. 12.

11. One reason the data may contain errors is that there were a number of charges of election fraud in the December 1993 voting. One widely discussed theory is that the CEC allowed some regional officials (the regional governors were directly in charge of tallying and reporting votes from election districts in their regions) to manipulate the outcomes of the elections. Yeltsin was pressuring the governors to ensure at least a 50% turnout to validate the constitutional referendum, which was his principal concern. Some governors, then, according to this theory, inflated turnout figures in their provinces, getting themselves elected in their own races for the upper chamber, and distributing the "surplus" votes among various opposition parties in the party list votes for the Duma. Since the CEC has never allowed independent observers access to the ballots or the raw data and has never published a full tally of votes, one cannot dismiss these charges. We discuss the charges of fraud in more detail in Remington and Smith (1995).

12. Rossiiskaia gazeta, December 11, 1993. The data set used here for district candidates is taken from the list published in Rossiiskaia gazeta on November 30, 1993, which indicates the way in which each candidate was nominated. Around half of the candidates were nominated by national electoral associations, which we are calling "parties." The organization that nominated the candidate was noted in each candidate's listing, and was used in the data set as the indication of the candidate's party identification. Note that there was some shrinkage in the volume of candidates running between the time that the newspaper published the list, and election day; a few dozen candidates withdrew. The number of district candidates in our data set is 1623.

13. All parties that made it past the five-percent barrier and were able to form party factions in the parliament could attract new members from among independents or other parties, or lose members to other parties. Duma rules do not prevent individuals from freely changing their party faction affiliation. Indeed, the Duma decided not to adopt a rule (the so-called "imperative mandate") under which a member who left the party voluntarily or was expelled would forfeit his or her parliamentary mandate.

14. An ITAR-TASS report of December 25, 1993, indicated that Russia's Choice had won 56 district seats in addition to its 40 party list seats, and that the Communist Party had won 33 district seats in addition to its 32 list seats. Both figures were huge exaggerations, as were reports for several other parties' district victories. See Vera Tolz, "Russia's Parliamentary Elections: What Happened and Why," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Report, 3:2 (14 January 1994), p. 3.

15. The fact that a party nominated a given district candidate often had little significance either for identifying the candidate's political leanings or as a source of guidance, support or constraint for the candidate's campaign. This point can be illustrated by the fact that in several cases, more than one candidate nominated by the same party ran in a given district. There were four districts, for instance, in which two candidates nominated by the Agrarian Party were running against each other, and four other districts had two candidates nominated by the same party running against each other. In two of the districts where agrarian candidates competed, one of them won. In none of the other districts where parties had multiple candidates running did the party take the district. Party ties often had little organizational impact. In a survey of 420 candidates running for the Duma which we conducted in November 1993, around 40% of district candidates reported that they received campaign agitation materials from their parties but only around 15% reported receiving any financial help. Those running on a party list at the same time that they were running in a district did have more support: around 2/3 of candidates running both in districts and on a party list received campaign materials such as posters, and around 1/3 received financial help. A comparable breakdown obtained for those district candidates who were nominated by party organizations, but were not running on a party list.
16. The data in the table are drawn from several sources. Final official figures on national vote shares and the corresponding seats assigned for the parties are reported in the bulletin of the Central Electoral Commission: Biulleten' Tsentral'noi Izbiratel'noi Komissii Rossiiskoi Federatsii, no. 1 (12), Moscow, 1994, p. 67. Figures on the outcomes in district races by party are drawn from a data set we have compiled based on the listing of candidates in Rossiiskaia gazeta, November 30, 1993, which indicates how and by whom the candidate was nominated to run. Figures on the seats held by each faction are taken from a handbook published by a Moscow research firm: G. V. Belonuchkin, comp., Federal'noe sobranie: Spravochnik (Moscow: Panorama, 18 April 1994), p. 79.

17. Interestingly, if there were prior agreements among the opposition parties to avoid competing against each other in district races, they seem to have included Liberal Democrats as well. In 23 districts, communists and agrarians ran against each other. In 22, Liberal Democrats ran against one of the other two party's candidates. In 12, candidates nominated by all three parties were running.
## Table 1: Results of December 1993 Parliamentary Elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Party List Vote %</th>
<th>List Seats Received</th>
<th>Affiliated</th>
<th>District Deputies (450 seats)</th>
<th>Total seats (April)</th>
<th>As % of Duma</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reform parties</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>66</td>
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<td>39.56</td>
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<td><strong>Against all lists</strong></td>
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<td>225</td>
<td></td>
<td>214</td>
<td>439</td>
<td>97.56</td>
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RC = Russia's Choice  
PRES = Party of Russian Unity and Accord  
Yabloko = Bloc "Yavlinskii-Boldyrev-Lukin" [the names of its three leaders]  
Dec. 12 = Liberal Democratic Union of December 12 (NB: did not put up a list as electoral association; formed in first week as a group comprising SMD deputies)  
RDDR = Russian Movement for Democratic Reforms  
WOR = Women of Russia  
NRP = New Regional Policy (NB: did not put up a list as electoral association; formed in first week as a group comprising SMD deputies)  
KEDR = Constructive-Ecological Movement "Cedar"  
BRNI = Future of Russia/ New Names  
DiM = Dignity and Charity  
APR = Agrarian Party of Russia  
CPRF = Communist Party of the Russian Federation  
LDPR = Liberal Democratic Party of Russia  
RP = Russia's Way (NB: did not put up a list as electoral association; formed in first week as a group comprising SMD deputies)
Table 2: Party List Candidates Mean Factor Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Stnd. dev.</th>
<th>No. cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>RC</td>
<td>-0.906</td>
<td>0.605</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRES</td>
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<td>0.437</td>
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<td>Yabloko</td>
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<td>0.566</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>All SMD</td>
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<td>248</td>
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<tr>
<td>RDDR</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>-0.188</td>
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<tr>
<td>other</td>
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<td>CP</td>
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Table 3: Simulated Results under Alternative Electoral Systems (party faction/group % of seats)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>If 100% SMD (225 seats)</th>
<th>If 1/3 PR (338 seats)</th>
<th>With 50% PR (actual dist.) (450 seats)</th>
<th>If 2/3 PR (675 seats)</th>
<th>If 100% PR (450 seats)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Reform parties</td>
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<tr>
<td>RC</td>
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<td>6.21</td>
<td>6.67</td>
<td>6.93</td>
<td>7.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yabloko</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>5.33</td>
<td>6.22</td>
<td>7.26</td>
<td>9.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 12</td>
<td>11.56</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>5.78</td>
<td>3.85</td>
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<td>34.91</td>
<td>34.89</td>
<td>34.79</td>
<td>34.67</td>
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<td>19.53</td>
<td>14.67</td>
<td>9.78</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30.67</td>
<td>25.74</td>
<td>23.11</td>
<td>20.68</td>
<td>15.78</td>
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<td>Opposition parties</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>APR</td>
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<td>39.56</td>
<td>42.90</td>
<td>49.56</td>
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Table 4: District Races by Party

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>No. of districts where party candidates ran</th>
<th>No. of seats won</th>
<th>Percentage of seats won</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Russia's Choice</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Democratic</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yabloko</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRES</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agrarian</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communist</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women of Russia</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>33</td>
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</table>

Table 5: Distribution of Incumbents Winning in District Races by 1994 Faction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RC</th>
<th>Yabloko</th>
<th>APR</th>
<th>CPRF</th>
<th>NRP</th>
<th>RP</th>
<th>Dec. 12</th>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
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Table 6. Differences between Party List Vote Share and Candidate Vote Share, by District.

<table>
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<th>Std. dev.</th>
<th>No. cases</th>
</tr>
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Table 7: Final Vote on Duma Election Law in Second Reading, by April 1994
Faction Membership (March 15, 1995)

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<th></th>
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<th>DPR</th>
<th>KPRF</th>
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<th>RC</th>
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*Includes 5 members for whom factional affiliation is unknown.