TITLE: PARTISAN BONDS AND DEMOCRATIC SUCCESSES: BUILDING INSTITUTIONAL LINKAGES BETWEEN CONSTITUENTS AND LEADERS

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PARTISAN BONDS AND DEMOCRATIC SUCCESS: BUILDING INSTITUTIONAL LINKAGES BETWEEN CONSTITUENTS AND LEADERS

SUMMARY

The following report is designed to present a comprehensive overview of the findings resulting from an empirical study of party organization development in the Russian Federation in the spring and summer 1997. The report is divided into three sections and each section presents a response to one of the questions that drove our research proposal. The first question deals with the number of dimensions or divisions that define individual party programs and partisan competition in Russia. We argue that the patrimonial communist legacy that characterized the Soviet period has led to a dominant and enduring cleavage based on positions on economic reform. Party positions on social and national identity issues reinforced this dominant cleavage.

The report’s second section focuses on the question of the internal cohesion of political parties and the subsequent role that these organizations can play in the development of democracy in Russia. Programmatic crystallization or structuration refers to the extent to which parties take positions on substantive issues. Given the institutional structure of the Russian political system and the legacy of patrimonial communism, we expect party structuration to be low. Our results confirm this expectation.

The third section compares the development of the Russian party organizations and the Russian party system to those of the post-Communist states in Central Europe. Using comparable data, this section demonstrates that Russian political competition varies from competition in other post-Soviet states in two critical ways. First, taken together Russian parties show much less programmatic structuration than their East European counterparts. Second, Russian parties remain divided along a single dimension that limits interest articulation and programmatic competition in the electoral arena.

We provide a theoretical framework based in variation in institutional structures and communist legacies to understand these differences.

Our Evidence

The data used to explore the dimensions of Russian party competition is derived from a March 1997 survey of 360 Russian politicians in 17 oblasts. The regions chosen for the study were geographically dispersed across Russia though they were mostly concentrated in European Russia. We chose the regions to maximize differences in geographic location, economic bases, and political development. Participants in the sample were asked to place their own party as well as their competitors on policy issue scales and on more general ideological dimensions. Eight parties were included in the study: The Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF), the Yavlinsky Bloc (YABLOKO), Our Home is Russia (NDR), the Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR), Women of Russia (WOMEN), Democratic Choice of Russia (DVR), the Agrarian Party (APR) and Alexander Lebed’s new party—Honor and the Motherland.
The Dimensions of Partisan Competition in Russia

Abstract: Several authors have suggested that partisan competition in Russia is organized around a single dimension dominated by economic concerns. This dimension defines the extent to which parties take identifiable positions on political issues. We investigate the dimensions of competition that divide Russian parties based on a survey of party elites conducted in March 1997. These data confirm the hypothesis that Russian parties are divided along a single-dimension although it cautions that this finding applies only to the arena of party competition and not other arenas of national and regional electoral competition.

Scholars have expended a great deal of energy studying the political implications of partisan organization for democratic and democratizing systems. This paper explores one component of party system development: the number of dimensions that organize party competition and the content of that alignment. Our findings, consistent with recent analyses by McFaul (1996) and Fish (1995), confirm the suspicion that Russian party competition is divided along a dominant dimension defined by market liberalization on one end and social protection on the other. This division is reinforced by positions in cultural and national identity issues creating uni-dimensional party competition. However, we disagree with the characterization of the vanishing center in Russian politics. Our data presents evidence that some parties, in particular, Alexander Lebed's new party, are attempting to establish themselves in a centrist position. In identifying this dimension, we leave aside the issues of internal party coherence and the relationships between party elites and party voters.

Why is this important?

Scholars have been engaged in a debate over the relationship between the divisions evident in party competition and the subsequent development of democracy. The prevailing assumption, derived from the work of Robert Dahl (1956), seems to be that uni-dimensional competition undermines democratic institutions. Dahl argued that democratic outcomes result from the appeasement of small groups. Majorities are artificially constructed by political institutions—voting systems and political parties—and not true representations of popular interest. The alternative view, presented by William Riker (1982), points out that multi-dimensional competition can lead to instability in the political system due to the inability of the system to impose a clear winner in competition. While the imposition of binary choices is inherently unfair, they do create conditions under which a system can achieve stability. This debate highlights the trade-offs inherent in democracy—majority versus minority interest representation; high representation versus systemic stability.

In addition, the substantive nature of these dimensions is expected to influence the nature of the policy produced by government. Thus, battle between the post-Soviet parties and reform forces will
define the subsequent divisions over economic liberalization strategies. In turn, the economic divide is likely to lead politicians to adopt socio-cultural positions to bolster party positions. The net result is polarized competition in which political, economic, socio-cultural, and ethnic divides reinforce each other.

Factors that determine the dimensions of competition:

Several factors contribute to the level of programmatic structuration in democratic systems. In the study of post-Communist regimes, these factors can be divided into two groups: institutional and legacy-based factors. Institutional factors refer to the structures that set the rules of the game of electoral competition and the larger political system. In particular, we focus on the effects of the mixed-electoral regime and the presidential system adopted by national referendum in 1993. We know from comparative study that Presidential systems produce fewer divisions in political competition. In contrast, the mixed electoral system will likely lead to proliferation of parties and a more complex set of divisions. The question is which set of incentives prevails.

Following Cox (1997) we recognize that institutions constrain and facilitate the articulation of societal divides in the political arena, but they do not determine the context or alignment of such divisions. In addition to institutional forces, the political context, or legacy of the past, push Russia toward uni-dimensional competition. To explore the content of the dimensions of party competition we turn to a discussion of the Communist legacy. Legacy factors look backward to the structure of the old Communist regime. These factors identify both the conditions that led to the democratization process and the conditions that coexist with newly constructed democratic institutions. We focus on the informal structure of legacies that are loosely related to Putnam’s (1993) notion of social capital. These include the nature of the pre-reform relationships between state and society, the internal organization of elite and mass opposition groups, and the nature of societal divisions. In Russia, all of these factors, characterized as the result of patrimonial communism, yield a particular resource distribution among defenders and challengers of the status quo in a critical phase of the transition. All of these factors lead us to expect less programmatic structuration and more polarization than is evident in other post-Communist regimes that exhibit different legacies.

The basis of this expectation in Russia is the conditions that led to the endurance of the successor party, the Communist Party of Russia (KPRF) led by Gennady Zyuganov, and its persistent support of the status quo. The reason for this intransigence is threat that market liberalization poses for the extensive clientelist networks developed during the Soviet period. In the face of an entrenched successor party, and a lack of political resources, democratic parties have been unable to present a viable alternative vision of a new Russian political and economic system. The implications of this configuration is that the divisions present in the old system remain in place.
longer and polarize political debate more deeply that in countries emerging from Communism with different legacies and resource distributions.

The Substantive Bases of Russian Party Divisions

As discussed in the second section of the report, Russian parties were found to be extremely diffuse. Despite this lack of cohesion, we attempted to identify the programmatic political divides that define Russian party competition. Consistent with our expectations, we found that Russian parties are divided along a single dimension. Factor analysis revealed that three groups of issues emerged in the data. However, each of these factors was strongly correlated with the others confirming our suspicion that party competition is uni-dimensional.

The strongest factor identified in the paper is economic concerns. Party positions on this set of issues were defined at one end by positions in support of social protection and on the other by positions in support of market liberalization. These endpoints were defined by parties' positions on national health care, government protection against bankruptcy and rising unemployment in the industrial sector, protection of collectivized agriculture, and restrictions on foreign investment. In this case, market liberalizers were those most inclined to privatize industry and agriculture despite the threat of bankruptcy, and to demand that citizens take more responsibility for their own welfare.

These economic factors correlated with parties' positions on issues that distinguish between Western and Russian values. In this case, those who support “Western” values of environmental protection, increased roles for women in the economy, and cooperation with the West supported market liberalization. In contrast, those who stressed Russian values also stressed the need for social protection. A final dimension was based on parties' positions on treatment of non-Russian minorities and the use of languages other than Russian in an official setting.

The existence of three possible cleavages did not undermine our expectation that political competition in Russia would approximate uni-dimensionality. Again, with the possible exception of Lebed's party, the parties' positions across the three dimensions were highly correlated. The more social protectionist and morally restrictive a party is the less it wished to cooperate with the West, make environmental protection a priority, or increase the pace of privatization. In Lebed's case, the nascent party appears to be attempting to stress market-based economic policies together with a nationalist appeal. There was no evidence that Zhirinovsky's LDPR was following a similar strategy.

These results set Russia apart from most Central European post-Communist countries where parties are more ideologically coherent but compete along a number of different dimensions. The implication is that these divisions are likely to be much more persistent in Russia and prevent reform parties from developing an alternative vision to the status quo. In turn, this suggests a more contentious political environment in which viable compromise is difficult to obtain. However, we caution that this finding applies only to the elections in which partisan competition dominates. In
Russia, this is limited to parliamentary elections. Presidential, gubernatorial, and regional elections may not be susceptible to the same forces.
Party Cohesion in the Russian Federation

ABSTRACT: Issue-based party competition has long been touted as the key to solving the problems that plague democratic systems. In particular, programmatic party competition is thought to enhance the ability of citizens to hold their elected representatives responsible for their actions in office. Based on the current institutional structures and legacy of the Soviet past, we expected Russian parties to evidence a lack of cohesion on issue positions. This expectation was confirmed by the data. Russian parties were found to lack programmatic structuration. In addition, the patterns within parties reveals interesting and unexpected variation in the development of party organizations.

The Programmatic Structuration of Russian Political Parties

This paper reports the results of our inquiry into the degree of party structuration within Russian political parties. Party structuration, or the degree to which parties take identifiable positions on political issues, enhances the potential for accountability and responsiveness of political parties. Given institutional factors and the legacy of the Soviet period, we expect that Russian parties would exhibit very low programmatic structuration since both factors hinder the development of coherent parties.

Why is this important?

In general, the substantive competitive divisions or dimensions that divide parties are thought to play an important role in the functioning of democratic systems. Voters know their representatives’ positions on very few of the issues that emerge on the legislative agenda. Voters who wish to reduce the uncertainty about the behavior of the politicians whom they support will opt for (party) politicians who “bundle” issue stances such that their positions capture highly abstract generalized commitments. Thus, candidates and parties enable voters to choose more rationally among competitors in a low-information environment, if the former “map” their issue positions onto broad ideological “dimensions” (Hinich and Munger 1994). Such labels allow for attachment between voters and policy-makers that create system-wide stability over time. Lacking data on voters’ affect toward the parties as well is data on alternative linking mechanisms we do not draw conclusions about the durability of voter-party linkages. We limit our conclusions to whether or not Russian parties are able to present coherent party programs to their competitors and to the voters.

Factors That Determine Party Structuration

In developing expectations about the behavior of individuals within Russian parties, we again identified the key components of current democratic institutions and the legacy of the Soviet period. The key institutional factors, the mixed-electoral system that governs parliamentary elections,
together with a strong presidency, lead us to expect a lack of party development. The Russian presidential system produces a proliferation of parties around potential presidential candidates as well as intra-party conflicts about the nomination of the parties' candidates. The disproportionate strength of the presidency relative to the legislature undermines the potential to build strong parties in government that can be extended into mass parties.

Similarly, the legacies of patrimonial communism that characterized the Soviet period in Russia created incentives for politicians to build personalistic relations with constituents rather than invest in party organizations. These incentives do not derive so much from the pre-eminent position of the CPSU but rather from the vestiges of the strong patronage system that evolved within the Soviet system. This system insured regional leaders' autonomy from the central elite and created interests that were different from those of the ruling party. Thus, both sets of factors, institutional structures and the post-Soviet legacy, created incentives against the development of strong partisan institutions. In turn, this undermined the level of party structurization evident in the Russia party system.

Our Findings

Our findings confirmed the expectation that Russian parties would evidence a lack of party structuration. Compared with the East European counterparts Russian parties are markedly less cohesive. These differences cannot be attributed to differences in issue salience across countries.

Issue Salience

As in all post-communist countries, economic issues have the greatest salience for Russian parties. These issues center on state involvement in the economic system, the trade-off between inflation and unemployment, the pace of market liberalization, and the role of land reform. Other issues that were very salient for Russian party members were environmental protection and moral restraint of the mass media. In contrast, cultural issues such as the treatment of minorities in the Russian Federation, the use of non-Russian languages in schools, the influence of the Russian Orthodox Church in schools were consistently ranked as the least salient issues on the political agenda.

Individual parties did have idiosyncratic favorite issues. For example, the LDPR and Lebed's Honor and the Motherland both stressed policy toward Russians in the near abroad as a critical issue for their party. Women of Russia was the only party whose agenda was not dominated by economic issues. Not surprisingly, the role of women in the economy, the trade-off between traditional values and market institutions, and the environment are most salient for this party. For five of the other eight parties included in the survey, the role of women was deemed an insignificant issue for the party.
The Coherence of Individual Parties

In order to examine the coherence of individual parties within the Russian party system we used two measures. One included the judgements of all of the members of the sample. The second included only the party members’ judgements about their own parties. In constructing the two measures, our goal was to ensure that party members’ perceptions of their parties’ positions were not grossly different from the perceptions of their competitors. The underlying thought was that in order to effectively communicate its positions to voters a party must first forge agreement on the issues within its organization and then communicate that position to its opponents. If parties cannot do this on an elite level, there is little hope that they will be able to project these opinions on down to the voters’ level.

In terms of the internal diffuseness of parties, measured by the scores of those judges who were actually party members the data reveal some interesting and unexpected findings. It is interesting to note that comparing the judgements of all respondents with these internal scores demonstrated that parties were less coherent internally than their competitors gave them credit for being.

The most coherent party in the sample was Lebed’s nascent party that had just held its founding conference when the survey was conducted. The party was particularly coherent on economic issues. In general, party members adhered to the ‘centrist” identity of the party and placed it on the center for most issues. This suggests that Lebed’s strategy was to build on the remains of the KRO organization he abandoned after the December 1995 parliamentary elections.

The second cluster of parties was Our Home is Russia and Russia’s Choice, followed by Yabloko. These scores may speak to the success of agencies who have aided them in party development. It may also reflect the fact that these parties must represent actual government policies and do not have the luxury of remaining in the opposition. Of all of the parties included in the survey, these were the most capable of programmatic-based or spatial competition.

The anti-reform parties defied the conventional wisdom by demonstrating themselves to be less coherent than the reform parties. In general, this may be the function of their opposition position in the current regime. For instance, on the core economic issues the KPRF is relatively cohesive in its stance against the status-quo. However, on nationalist and cultural issues the party is divided. These strains were evident in the coalition Zyuganov constructed in his run for President in 1996. The divisions within the Agrarian party appeared in their positions on economic and agricultural reform. The party is caught between two constituencies and this is evident in the organization. Zhirinovsky’s LDPR is the most heterogeneous party on all issues including the issues of national identity.

In part due to the problems of internal party cohesion, the judgements of non-party members in the sample varied from the internal judgements cited above. In cases where external evaluations reflect internal evaluations, we observe low asymmetry between internal and external placements. In
party members, we observe high asymmetry. Much of this variation is predictable. On issues such as market liberalization, opponents perceived the reform parties to be more supportive of rapid economic change than their own members admitted. Conversely, members in these parties saw themselves as favoring increased social protection while their opponents disagreed. This pattern was strongest for NDR and Yabloko but also held for LDPR and Lebed’s party.

On some issues, parties universally tried to demonstrate a position in support of a set of policies while their opponents universally tried to prove this position false. In the case of Russia, this was true of support for environmental protection and support for intervention to control the mass media. In other words, all Russian parties strongly supported the anti-liberal position of political control of media while their opponents all tried to accuse them of moral laxity. We label this type of competition valence competition.

Conclusion

These results can demonstrate how parties are capable of competing in the political system. By comparing internal cohesion with the measure of external perceptions, we can identify the signals that parties and their opponents’ reactions send to the voters. These reactions are summarized in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Implications for Party-Voter Ties</th>
<th>High Cohesion</th>
<th>Low Cohesion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Asymmetry</td>
<td>Spatial Competition</td>
<td>Internal Conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Asymmetry</td>
<td>Valence Competition</td>
<td>Chaos</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In cases where there is high cohesion and low asymmetry parties are capable of competing on spatial terms. Each party knows where it stands on the issues and these positions are understood by its competitors. The parties who are able to compete in this way are the reform parties: NDR, Yabloko, and Democratic Choice of Russia. In contrast to these, Lebed’s party competes almost exclusively on valence issues. These are issues where the parties all hold cohesive positions but their opponents do not perceive this position. The other parties compete in different ways depending on the issue being discussed. Many are marked by internal conflict where the party is internally divided but their opponents perceive a central tendency. The KPRF moves between valence competition and internal conflict. The final category is chaos where the party does not project a coherent position on issues and opponents cannot place the party’s position. LDPR moves from internal conflict to chaos demonstrating it to be the least able to communicate issue positions to voters.
Our conclusions center on the process of building linkages between voters and parties. Based on our findings, few parties are able to attract support based on coherent issue positions. This suggests that other sorts of linking mechanisms including clientelist-based party-voter linkages and charismatic linkages play an important role in the political system.
The Russian Political Party System in Comparative Perspective

Abstract: Using the judgements of elite party members of eight parties in the Russian Federation, we can compare the development of the Russian party system with the development of party systems in other post-Communist countries in East Central Europe. Our theoretical framework leads us to expect that Russian parties will be less coherent than their counterparts in Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, and even in Bulgaria. In addition, we expect that Russian politics will be more likely to be divided along a single dimension where economic, cultural, and national identity issues all reinforce each other. In East Central European countries we expect the legacy of the Communist past and the institutional structures to produce a more complex set of political divisions.

Why is this important?

Scholars and policy makers have struggled to understand how the legacy of Communist systems affected the development of post-Communist political competition and in particular, party competition. A number of theories have been suggested to account for the transition in the post-Soviet period. The tabula rasa view, which posits that parties are unable to make programmatically coherent appeals because they lack knowledge about the competitors and constituents. The communist legacies view argues that similarities of institutions and power relations across the Soviet bloc produce similarities of party systems in the new democracies of the region. Yet, both theories fail to explain the variation in party system development across these countries.

While this study was primarily a study of the Russian party system, using comparative data we can explore the critical differences in the development of post-Communist systems to shed light on democratic procedures operating in these countries. Given the framework, we expect that the Russian party system will be less developed than all of the Central European countries but will look most similar to Bulgaria.

What are the Critical Differences between Countries?

In our view, the critical difference between post-Communist states include both the legacy of the past system as well as elements of the institutional structures that govern political competition in the current period. The primary institutions considered here are the nature of the electoral system and the structure of the executive. On these points, we expect Russia’s strong presidential system and mixed electoral system to undermine the development of coherent parties and to continue to divide competitive politics along a single dimension. In contrast, the parliamentary and semi-presidential systems of East Central Europe as well as the electoral systems based on proportional representation are more likely to foster coherent party development and multi-dimensional programmatic competition.
The legacy of the Soviet experience reinforced institutional factors in each country. Factors such as the lack of a professionalized civil service, democratic experience, and a mobilized work class prior to the development of Communism all contribute to political behavior once the system has collapsed. Countries’ political systems that exhibited a strong pre-communist working class mobilization, democratic experience, and a strong civil service were classified as bureaucratic-authoritarian communism. Systems characterized by non-working class mobilization, semi-authoritarian regimes and a weaker civil service can be characterized as national accommodative communist regimes. Both of these sets of conditions are more likely to have a more developed party system with parties engaged in programmatic competition. Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic are examples of these ideal types.

Finally, countries with little pre-communist mobilization, no experience with electoral competition, and a weak clientelist state apparatus developed patrimonial communism. Russia and Bulgaria both fall into this category. Given these past conditions, we expect the post-Communist period to evidence a highly fragmented opposition, enduring Communist successor parties, and incentives for individual elites to forge personal linkages between themselves and their constituents. In other words, these factors are likely to prohibit party development and programmatic competition.

**How do these Differences Affect Party Development?**

As expected, there were marked differences between party development in the Russian Federation and in the East European countries. These differences were evident in three categories: the salience of issues, the degree of party coherence, and the number of dimensions that defined electoral competition.

*Salience*

All of the party systems in post-Communist countries stressed economic issues as the most important. In Russia, but not in other countries, this issue is followed by national questions, particularly questions about the protection of ethnic Russians in the near abroad. After these two, only issues of environmental protection and moral restraint of the mass media are important to Russian politicians. Finally, like other post-Soviet countries multi-cultural issues are judged to be unimportant despite the ethnic diversity that has created political problems for some of these regimes.

*Party Coherence*

Parties that exhibit coherence around policy appeals also exhibit programmatic structurization. In general, these parties are able to compete based on programmatic appeals if they choose to do so. There are some extremely interesting findings when data on party coherence is compared with coherence in East Central Europe.
On average, Russian parties were much more diffuse than Central European parties including Bulgaria. In addition, Russian parties were more polarized on the most salient political issues in contrast with Central European countries where there is a tendency for more consensus on important issues. Thus, the observation that Russian parties lack cohesion holds true across all issue areas whether or not they are salient.

Examining the difference between the judgements of a particular party by party members and members of competing parties, show that the asymmetry between these two judgements does not explain evidence of lack of cohesion in Russian parties. Interestingly, comparing internal party judgements with those of external opponents does show an interesting difference between the two regions. In Russia, parties saw themselves as considerably more supportive of a state-run social safety net and less supportive of market liberalization than their opponents’ accusations. The reverse is true in East Europe where parties struggle to be more supportive of market liberalization than their opponents are willing to credit. Similarly, in Russia, parties struggle to be seen as moral arbiters trying to control the influence of the mass media by limiting their freedoms. In contrast, East European parties struggle to appear more supportive of free press while competitors suspect them of anti-liberal intentions. Russian parties appear to be running for office by running against liberal values.

Dimensions of Competition

As expected Russian parties were divided along a single cleavage defined by economic issues. Two other dimensions, cultural and nationalist, were also identified but these reinforced the existing dominant division. In contrast, in East Europe, the dominant economic divide was cross-cut by cultural and nationalist cleavages. In addition, issues of nationalism and cultural intolerance were associated with the ‘right’ parties of Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic while in Russia such parties are associated with the left parties.

Conclusions

This research suggests important distinctions among the party systems of the Russian Federation and those of East Europe. As our framework predicted, Russia and Bulgaria, both examples of patrimonial communism, are similar in that these party systems lack cohesion. In contrast, the other countries included in the study exhibited far more partisan cohesion across all political issues. This finding suggests that issue-based party competition may be more difficult to achieve in Russia than in Central Europe. Subsequently, we may observe voter-representative linkages based on clientelist or patronage-based ties.