

**PARTIES VS. INDEPENDENTS: THE CASE OF  
RUSSIA'S 2003 ELECTIONS IN KRASNODAR AND  
RIAZAN**

HENRY E. HALE AND TIMOTHY J. COLTON



The National Council for Eurasian and East European Research  
2601 Fourth Avenue, Suite 310  
Seattle, WA 98121

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## **Executive Summary**

In this working paper, we aim to contribute to the small body of work that does take the question of party system development seriously, that does not simply ask “What kind of parties?” or “How strong the parties?” but “Why parties at all?” One of our innovations is to apply survey evidence to this question, most importantly by comparing how voters relate to party-nominated candidates and independents in the ways that the theoretical literature on parties would lead us to think is important in generating a party-dominated polity. We present here a first cut into the data, suggestive more than definitive. Specifically, patterns in two carefully chosen districts in the 2003 Duma elections suggest that party-nominated candidates indeed enjoy an advantage over nonparty candidates, but that this advantage is rather slight and is not present in all the areas that the comparative literature leads us to expect.

**PARTIES VERSUS INDEPENDENTS:  
THE CASE OF RUSSIA'S 2003 ELECTIONS IN KRASNODAR AND RIAZAN**  
(A First Cut at New Data)<sup>1</sup>

Henry E. Hale  
George Washington University  
[hhale@gwu.edu](mailto:hhale@gwu.edu)

and

Timothy J. Colton  
Harvard University  
[tcolton@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:tcolton@fas.harvard.edu)

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How do political systems become party systems? The near ubiquity of parties in countries with competitive electoral systems tends to be taken for granted rather than rigorously explained. Russia's difficulties developing a robust party system, however, call into question the wisdom of simply assuming that strong parties will develop over time so long as a place retains competitive elections. Russia remains a highly nonpartisan environment, with its most powerful official (the president) having never run for election or reelection as a party nominee and with many other major offices having little to do with parties. There has been no major change in these brute facts since competitive elections became the norm in Russia in the early 1990s.

In this working paper, we aim to contribute to the small body of work that does take the question of party system development seriously, that does not simply ask "What kind of parties?" or "How strong the parties?" but "Why parties at all?" One of our innovations is to apply survey evidence to this question, most importantly by comparing how voters relate to party-nominated candidates and independents in the ways that the theoretical literature on parties would lead us to think is important in generating a party-dominated polity. We present here a first cut into the data, suggestive more than definitive. Specifically, patterns in two carefully chosen districts in the 2003 Duma elections suggest that party-nominated candidates indeed enjoy an advantage over nonparty candidates, but that this advantage is rather slight and is not present in all the areas that the comparative literature leads us to expect.

### **How Do Political Systems Become Party Systems?**

A political party, building on Sartori (1976: 58-64) and Schattschneider (1970: 35-7), is here defined as an enduring association of people who identify themselves by a public label and are joined together under it for the primary purpose of winning control of the national

government by means of presenting their own candidates in elections for public office on the basis of a common platform.<sup>2</sup> When law stipulates that only parties can participate in a given set of elections, of course, we are justified in taking parties as givens. But most large countries with competitive elections, states as diverse as the United States, India, and contemporary Russia, do not mandate party monopolies in the polity. There, it is germane to wonder how, if at all, parties come to “close out” the political market.

Societies without mandated party monopolies have typically experienced a phase of partial party penetration early in their democratic histories and passed through it fairly quickly. The American founding fathers initially believed that parties were an evil and took a while to reconcile themselves to their utility in political struggles (Hofstadter 1970). As late as the 1820s, after the Federalist Party had entered political oblivion and the Jeffersonian Republican Party had effectively dissolved in the wake of President James Monroe’s retirement, U.S. politics was largely dominated by state- and city-level machines quite autonomous of any national party (Aldrich 1995; McCormick 1966; Remini 1959). India experienced a like period before the Congress Party established itself as a full-fledged country-wide party (Weiner 1967). In both places, though, parties soon came to dominate national politics, with the Democrats, the Whigs, and then the Republicans coming to the fore in the United States and Congress establishing hegemony in India.

The foremost explanation for the grip parties acquire on the political market flows from the premise that democracy is unworkable in their absence. As Aldrich (1995) argues, most theories of party emergence come down to pleading parties’ usefulness in resolving two generic problems. One is the *social choice problem* faced by legislators: ad hoc minimal majorities could

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<sup>2</sup> This comes from Hale 2006. Russian law lays out specific, but somewhat different, criteria for an organization to register as a “party.” Forty-odd organizations were recognized as parties as of the summer of 2003.

pass any number of bills on almost any issue where there is latitude for tradeoffs; parties stabilize coalitions, so that legislators do not continually make successful counter-proposals to existing agreements and trap themselves in a futile “cycling” pattern. The second is the *collective action problem* whereby candidates for office have to muster the active support of a huge quantity of individual citizens in order to win an election.

In tracing how these benefits are originally orchestrated, classic works on parties discriminate between “internal” and “external” paths (Duverger 1954; Shefter 1977, 1994). In internal party formation, nonpartisan legislators find it in their interest to form a lasting coalition (solving the social choice problem) and then bolster it by mobilizing the electorate through grassroots organization (solving the collective action problem).<sup>3</sup> In external party creation, outsiders take up the collective action conundrum first and move from elections to gaining entry into government. Party candidates, so the reigning school of thought holds, eventually become the only viable ones because they have an insuperable advantage either in delivering legislative goods or in garnering popular votes. The logic is said with few exceptions to force even reluctant party builders to follow suit, as Hofstadter’s (1970) memorable study of the American case makes clear. Leading theorists have taken the assumption of the near-inevitability of parties so much to heart that they portray party formation as a relatively smooth process of absorbing or eclipsing alternative forms (Duverger 1954; Hofstadter 1970; LaPalombara and Weiner 1966; O’Donnell and Schmitter 1986; Ostrogorski 1902; Panebianco 1988; Sartori 1976; Schattschneider 1942).

Others, to be sure, see party building as a rather more problematic sequence and leave room in their explanations for the opportunistic harnessing of circumstances. These accounts depict processes by which parties mobilize state resources to outcompete other groups (Weiner

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<sup>3</sup> Seminal works here include Beer 1965, Duverger 1954, Sartori 1976, and Weber 1946.

1967; Ware 2000), build on legacies from the pre-democratic period (Coleman and Rosberg 1964: 664), or otherwise absorb or outmuscle other forms of organization once political competition compels them to do so (Aldrich 1995; Rokkan 1970; Shefter 1977, 1994). The literature also contains a dissident strain that testifies to a “decline of parties” in Western democracies even today.<sup>4</sup> The authors in this camp are to varying degrees skeptical of traditional claims of party indispensability. Some, like Epstein (1986), limit themselves to observing that parties serve different functions from polity to polity, making it difficult to call any one function indispensable. Some assert that parties have lost ground because advanced communication technologies have cut the transaction costs of collective action, opening parties up to buffeting from other political forces (Dalton 2002; Mair 1990). Others maintain that the “personal vote,” pegged to constituency service as opposed to party, is gaining in salience in legislative elections (Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1984, 1987). Still others contend that the kinds of socioeconomic cleavages that have often underpinned the parties have yielded increasingly to other (notably “postmaterialist”) cleavages (Dalton 2002; Inglehart 1983). To date, however, this literature is mostly about shifts in the importance, coherence, issue orientation, and representational quality of parties and not about their outright extinction, to say nothing of their failure to crop up in newly democratized societies. Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina (1987: 9) find that, despite the growth of the personal vote in the United States, “the single most important variable affecting the congressional vote remains the voter’s partisan identification.” Lawson (1988) postulates that as parties falter at providing linkage between elites and masses, alternatives such as interest groups and political action committees will crowd the field; she, too, stops short of saying parties will disappear. Anckar and Anckar (2000) declare iconoclastically that democracies generally can

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<sup>4</sup> For angles into this voluminous literature, see Bartels 2000; Dalton 2002; Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002; Mair 1990.



function without parties, but illustrate only from island microstates and do not formulate what, if anything, would replace parties.<sup>5</sup>

Whether one buys into the strong or the weak version of the argument, the comparative literature on the rise of parties boils down to a claim that they offer office seekers one or more of three tangible benefits. The first is a capacious *organization* that will grant candidates support in communicating with and rallying supporters and money to subsidize their campaigns. No less basic is a second benefit, provision of what political scientists, borrowing from the lexicon of commercial marketing, have termed a party *brand name*. A partisan brand conveys valuable information on candidates' likely future stands, fosters and evokes party loyalties, ties candidates in voters' minds to other powerful politicians, and/or signals that a candidate has wide social support (Aldrich 1995; Snyder and Ting 2002). A major-party label can bestow on a candidate the focal status of "contender" and eliminate citizens' fear of wasting a vote on someone who has no significant chance of winning (Cox 1997). The third advantage is thought to turn up relative to legislative or policy *outputs*. Even were parties not to provide office seekers with organizational or branding help in overcoming the collective action problem in the electorate, they can still allay the social choice problem in the legislature (Aldrich 1995). Assuming that voters care about legislative outputs, party candidates reap an advantage because they are better positioned to "deliver the goods" voters want than are candidates who will insist on independence in the legislature.

Perhaps the biggest problem with this scholarly literature is that this central claim, that parties come to dominate competitive political systems because they provide benefits to office-

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<sup>5</sup> We also note an interesting literature contending that parties have no significant impact on lawmaking activity: Krehbiel 1991, 1993, 1998, 2000; Mayhew 1974a (27); and Schickler 2000. Upholding parties' importance are Cox and McCubbins 1997; Cox and Poole 2002; Cox, Rosenbluth, and Thies 2000; Snyder and Groseclose 2000; and Wright and Schaffner 2002. For an overview, see Smith 2000. This literature does not deny assumed party importance in solving the collective action problem of election.

seekers and office-holders, has not been rigorously tested with appropriate controls. In virtually every account of party-system origins, party-dominated countries are compared only with their own non-party pasts. While some studies have considered countries with weak party systems, the focus is still on the parties in these countries. The question these latter accounts really address, then, is usually about party strength and weakness rather than about why we have parties at all. Related to these problems is another: Even if we grant that parties expand because they are useful, without adequate control cases we are unable to specify with any confidence which of the various posited mechanisms (organization, branding, outputs) are in fact doing the work.

### **The Approach of This Study**

In our work on Russia we take a different approach, using important independent candidacies for office as control cases to help us isolate exactly what parties might be providing office-seekers and office-holders that independent candidates cannot get without parties. This approach differs sharply from that of previous research on parties, which usually treats independent candidates as an afterthought or even a methodological nuisance rather than a crucial scholarly opportunity.<sup>6</sup> Yeltsin- and Putin-era Russia represents a particularly opportune setting for such a study due to its large numbers of important non-party candidates.<sup>7</sup>

In this paper, we report some of our preliminary findings based on representative surveys of voters in two of the Russian State Duma's single-member-districts. The surveys were done after the most recent Duma election, which was held on December 7, 2003. The two districts

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<sup>6</sup> For example, Hesli, Reisinger, and Miller (1998b) acknowledge that most candidates in the Ukrainian elections they studied ran as independents, but focus on determinants of the "emerging party system," leaving consideration of the "independents" category for undefined future work.

<sup>7</sup> Hale 2006.

were selected according to several criteria. First, we sought districts that were similar in: (a) featuring nominees from a nearly “full set” of major parties, including at least the pro-government United Russia, the opposition Communist Party, and one of the opposition liberal parties (Yabloko or the Union of Right Forces); (b) featuring at least one significant independent candidate; (c) containing both urban and rural populations in significant measure; and (d) being part of ordinary regions as opposed to ethnically designated territories. Criteria (a) and (b) ensured that the districts enable us to study what we want to study, differences between partisan and independent candidates. Criterion (c) means that we can check to see whether our results are merely an artifact of urbanization, and criterion (d) controls for the potentially complicating effects of ethnic politics.<sup>8</sup> While we wanted our two districts to be similar in the above ways, we also sought districts that varied greatly on one factor widely thought to have a major impact on the role of parties: the general level of “democracy” in a region. Here we relied on the expert assessment of one of Russia’s own premier analysts of regional politics, Nikolai Petrov, and his team of analysts, who regularly produce a rating of levels of democracy in the provinces, measuring essentially the degree of dominance of the local governor’s political machine.<sup>9</sup> By studying districts in both relatively democratic and relatively autocratic contexts, we will gain better leverage over how political contestation affects the hypothesized advantages of political parties for candidates.

The choice of districts was made about two weeks prior to the election. While not many districts met all our criteria, we ultimately selected District No. 46 in the Krasnodar region and District No. 149 in the Riazan region. Henceforth we may refer just to the “Krasnodar district” and the “Riazan district,” but this should be understood as relating specifically to districts 46 and

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<sup>8</sup> We also conducted surveys in two ethnic regions, Adygeia and Bashkortostan, which will be analyzed at a later stage of the project.

<sup>9</sup> For more detail on these ratings and their methodology, see McMann and Petrov 2000.

149; both Krasnodar and Riazan also contain other districts that are not discussed here but that may differ from those we examine. These districts and the races they featured will be briefly described below.

The surveys involved sample sizes of approximately one thousand voting-age citizens each (to be exact, 1,041 respondents in Krasnodar and 1,044 in Riazan). Respondents were selected through the multistage area probability method and can be taken as representative of the populations of the two districts. Survey interviews were done between late December 2003 and mid-February 2004. The fieldwork and data entry were managed by the Demoscope survey group at the Institute of Sociology, Academy of Sciences, Moscow. We put these surveys in context through a general reading of published material on the national Duma campaign and analytical reports written on the campaigns in each of these districts by local experts (Natalia Kolba in Krasnodar and Vladimir Avdonin in Riazan), commissioned by the authors.<sup>10</sup>

In the pages that follow, we briefly describe the two district races, framing them in the larger Duma campaign, and then compare independent and party-nominated candidates in their capacities to do what parties are posited to help them do.

### **The 2003 Duma District Races in Krasnodar 46 and Riazan 149**

In Russia's mixed electoral system, 225 seats in the Duma, which is the dominant lower house of parliament, are elected through a proportional representation (PR) system and the remaining 225 are elected in single-member districts (SMDs). The most prominent feature of the 2003 district races for the Duma was the Kremlin's unprecedentedly strong effort to coordinate candidacies in its favor. In the previous Duma elections, in December 1999, nominees of the

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<sup>10</sup> We are grateful to Robert Ortung, Nikolai Petrov, and Alexei Titkov for their important role in organizing the process of obtaining these district reports.

pro-government Unity party,<sup>11</sup> organized in haste less than three months before the campaign, had won just nine district races. Overall, Russia's major parties won only 102 of the 224 district seats up for election that year, with the remainder going to either minor-party representatives or, more typically, independents backed by "party substitutes," notably provincial political machines or major corporate conglomerates. Once elected president in March 2000, Vladimir Putin cobbled together a working Duma majority thanks to his great popularity and the massive resources Russia's presidents wield. But his administration nevertheless saw advantage in producing a larger and more easily controlled Duma majority and so began very early in Putin's first term to push and cajole the provincial bosses and corporate "oligarchs" into coordinating their efforts around particular candidates sanctioned by the Kremlin. These candidates, in turn, were generally expected to run under the banner of the Unity party's successor, the United Russia Party (Hale 2006).

While the coordination was not fully successful, it did produce a much more "partisan" election and a much more partisan set of Duma deputies than had ever been the case before. Most of this party bounty naturally went to United Russia, whose nominees won 100 district seats outright in December 2003 and which then absorbed a large number of other candidates into its Duma coalition ("fraction") after the election. When combined with the party-list results, in which United Russia won 38 percent of the vote, the pro-Kremlin party wound up with 306 deputies in its fraction, or more than two-thirds of the total Duma. The two most prominent self-professed "liberal" parties, Yabloko and the Union of Right Forces (SPS), won just four and three district seats, respectively, and both failed to clear the five-percent hurdle necessary to win

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<sup>11</sup> In this paper, for simplicity's sake, we refer to all organizations meeting our definition of "party" as parties even though they themselves might have held different formal legal designations at the time. For example, we refer here to the Unity party even though it was formally not a "party" but an "electoral bloc" during the 2003 Duma campaign. It later acquired the formal designation as a party.

seats through the PR competition. The other major parties winning substantial numbers of seats for its district nominees were the Communist Party (KPRF), which scored just 12 victories after having boasted 46 wins in 1999, and the Motherland (Rodina) bloc, a new party that surprised some observers by netting eight district seats and clearing the five-percent barrier in the PR race.<sup>12</sup>

The campaigns in our two districts reflected these broad trends as well as much of the complexity that is provincial politics. The southwestern Krasnodar District No. 46 combined one of Russia's major port cities, Novorossiisk, with the highly rural area around Tuapsinsk. The district's major-party nominees in 2003 included the incumbent, Sergei Shishkarev, who had won his seat as an independent in 1999 but was now competing as a Motherland nominee; the Communist Party candidate, Konstantin Shirshov; the United Russia nominee, Ilia Kochian; LDPR candidate Aleksandr Belichenko; and Yabloko representative Sergei Panchenko. Equally important for our study is that the district also featured a prominent set of independent candidates who were widely regarded to be among the top contenders, notably: Deputy Tuapsinsk Mayor Anatoly Vysochin; the leftist former Duma deputy whom Shishkarev had defeated in the 1999 election and who enjoyed strong support from some local branches of the most prominent local party,<sup>13</sup> Nina Zatsepina; big businessman and provincial legislator Mikhail Kovaliuk, backed by some major economic groups in Novorossiisk; and Sergei Yaryshev, the security chief for the Novorossiisk port who was reported to be supported by Novorossiisk's major port authority as well as the Krasnodar governor's political machine. The presence of both Yaryshev and

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<sup>12</sup> The People's Party also won 17 seats for its district nominees, most of whom then joined United Russia's fraction upon entering the Duma. This party was originally a Duma coalition of pro-Putin independent deputies from the 1999 election and most of the 2003 winners were incumbents. The Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) won 11 percent of the PR vote but not a single district seat in 2003. See Hale 2006 for more details.

<sup>13</sup> This is the Otechestvo ("Fatherland") Party, which had been the chief electoral vehicle of Krasnodar's longtime governor, the powerful machine politician and leftist-nationalist Nikolai Kondratenko, who left office a few years before the elections and handed power over to the current governor, Aleksandr Tkachev, who began to establish a somewhat independent power base.

Kochian in the race illustrates that the Kremlin's effort to coordinate the candidacies of pro-Putin candidates in Krasnodar was hindered by local complexities too elaborate to explain in this paper.<sup>14</sup> Nikolai Petrov's May 2003 assessments of regional democracy placed Krasnodar among Russia's least democratic regions, ranking it 66th out of 89.

Riazan District No. 149 primarily included a part of the city of Riazan as well as some of the surrounding rural territory and was located in Riazan Oblast, the 11th most democratic region of Russia according to Petrov's May 2003 rankings. The incumbent here was a Communist Party member, Nadezhda Korneeva, who enjoyed the support of the province's governor and important regional business interests. Her main opponent was Nikolai Bulaev of United Russia, which was suspected of having struck a deal with SPS for the latter to withdraw a popular candidate in a joint effort to defeat Korneeva. Bulaev had the strong support of the Riazan mayor's administration as well as Kremlin authorities, who Avdonin reports were able to restrain the governor from applying the full force of his office to reelect Korneeva. Yabloko, SPS, and the LDPR all nominated little-known candidates. The two party favorites in the race were joined by Igor Trubitsyn, an independent deputy in the regional legislature with strong support from local business. Trubitsyn was the director of the holding company Roskontrakt, which controlled a large number of businesses in the Dashkovo-Pesochnia territory of Riazan city, a territory with roughly a fifth of the district's registered voters. Two other strong independent challengers, who were never however expected to win, were the perennial candidate and former big businessman Viktor Milekhin and the scandal-seeking Riazan city councilman and construction firm director Aleksei Mikhailov, linked to a network of local retail and construction business structures.

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<sup>14</sup> For more information on this race, see another NCEEER working paper by the authors, "The Disappearing Duma Districts: A Look at What Russians Will Be Losing," April 2006.

The results of the races are presented in Tables 1 and 2. As can be seen, the incumbent and Motherland nominee Shishkarev was victorious in Krasnodar, soundly beating the United Russia nominee (Kochian) and two independent rivals, both of whom were supported by significant local power structures. In Riazan, United Russia was more successful: Its nominee Bulaev handily defeated the incumbent and Communist nominee Korneeva and the strongest independent challenger, Trubitsyn. The tables also present the findings from our surveys. From the subset of respondents who said they voted, the second column in each table presents the percentage of respondents who claimed shortly after the election to have voted for the different candidates. Two things stand out. First, there is substantial overreporting of voting for the winner, a tendency common to survey analyses of voting behavior. More importantly, however, our estimates of the vote totals of all of the other candidates, in both districts, are highly accurate. This suggests that the overreporting of votes for the winners results primarily from non-voters claiming to have voted rather than from people inaccurately identifying whom they actually voted for.<sup>15</sup> This helps us interpret patterns of support for the candidates.

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<sup>15</sup> Additionally, we have confidence that the results are not distorted by fear on the part of respondents: Both winners, whose votes are overreported, actually had histories of opposition to local authorities and one winner (Shishkarev) was also not the favorite of the Kremlin, yet we see virtually the same pattern of overstated support for the winners.



**Table 1: Results in Krasnodar**

<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Actual Result</b>	<b>Survey Result</b>
Shishkarev	19	29
Yaryshev	14	12
Kochian	11	9
Zatsepina	9	9
Shirshov	8	10
Kovaliuk	8	8
Vysochin	5	3
Belichenko	3	1
Panchenko	3	1
Beloglazov	2	1
Savchenko	1	1
Kuznetsov	1	.3
Sergeeva	1	1
Gerasimov	.3	0

**Table 2: Results in Riazan**

<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Actual Result</b>	<b>Survey Result</b>
Bulaev	31	40
Korneeva	16	13
Trubitsyn	11	8
Sherin	5	5
Tabolin	4	3
Milekhin	4	2
Dmitriev	2	1
Mikhailov	2	1
Viktorov	2	1
Kprf	2	.1
Potapov	2	1
Sidorov	1	1

**Parties vs. Party Substitutes in Krasnodar and Riazan**

We now undertake a simple comparison of the relationship between voters and district candidates, with an eye to learning more about the role parties play in this relationship by comparing party candidates with independents.<sup>16</sup> To begin, it is helpful to ask voters directly whether they think their legislators tend to perform best when in parties. Since comparative

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<sup>16</sup> The figures reported in this working paper reflect adjustment according to the Kish weighting procedure, designed to correct for certain sample distortions, such as the overrepresentation of retirees since they are most likely to be at home when the interviewer comes calling.

theory posits that parties tend to develop because they help politicians obtain outputs that voters want, it is important to find out whether voters in fact see things this way. We thus queried respondents about three types of outputs that district legislators are posited by experts to provide: legislation for the benefit of the country as a whole (hereafter, just “legislation”), funds from the state budget for the benefit of the deputy’s particular district (labeled “pork” in the table that follows), and services that in the United States are typically referred to as “constituency service,” helping individual electors with concrete problems such as pensions, jobs, or military service. We do find that residents of our two regions value these different outputs. Asked which they thought should be the priority for their SMD deputies, pluralities in both Krasnodar and Riazan named constituency service (44 and 52 percent, respectively), while substantial numbers also named legislation (22 and 27 percent) and pork (20 and 17 percent).<sup>17</sup>

Tables 3 and 4 report our findings when we asked respondents whether they thought their deputies could better provide each of these three goods by being a member of a party fraction in the Duma or by remaining independent.<sup>18</sup> As can be seen, pluralities in every instance believed that deputies were more effective by working through parties in the parliament. At the same time, however, in no case was this a majority opinion: Roughly as many potential voters in both Riazan and Krasnodar believed either that parties make no difference or that legislators are actually better off spurning party fractions altogether. Thus while many voters do tend to perceive that parties make for better deputies, this finding is far from overwhelming. In any case, the stronger incentive for candidates looking to convince voters of their future effectiveness would seem to be to pledge party affiliation rather than to spurn it.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Question 86, Okrug survey.

<sup>18</sup> Question 82, Okrug survey.

<sup>19</sup> We might also expect voters to distinguish among different types of parties here: Being affiliated with a majority party fraction might be expected to bring a deputy more influence than affiliation with a small opposition

**Table 3. Perceptions of Parties' Importance for SMD Deputies in Providing Key Outputs: Krasnodar**

	In Party Fraction	Outside Party Fraction	No Difference	Hard to Say
Legislation	47	20	24	8
Pork	40	24	25	10
Constituency service	35	26	28	10

**Table 4. Perceptions of Parties' Importance for SMD Deputies in Providing Key Outputs: Riazan**

	In Party Fraction	Outside Party Fraction	No Difference	Hard to Say
Legislation	48	12	27	13
Pork	42	11	29	17
Constituency service	36	14	36	15

Theories of party development also frequently cite the organizational capacities of parties as being a key to their spread: Candidates group together in parties so that they can pool resources or gain access to organization. These assets are said to help them win votes by connecting more effectively with the electorate. Our surveys contained a large series of questions designed to determine the degree to which prospective voters were contacted by district candidates as well as the particular forms in which this contacting took place. Contrary to sometimes held perceptions that Russians have little contact with their district candidates' campaigns, we in fact find that the contacting was quite extensive and multifaceted in Krasnodar and Riazan in the 2003 SMD Duma races there. Table 5 presents some summary information to this effect. While only 8 percent of our respondents in the Krasnodar district and 3 percent in the Riazan district reported any direct contact with representatives of the candidates, large majorities in both places received at least one mailing or saw at least one leaflet or poster from an SMD candidate. Near-majorities in both localities witnessed candidates' television advertising while 55 percent of surveyed Krasnodar district residents were exposed to candidates through

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party. While this was beyond the scope of what was possible in our survey, this dynamic, if found, would reinforce the finding that the net incentive in terms of voter perceptions of the sources of "outputs" would be for candidates to join parties.

newspapers (this figure was just 34 percent in the Riazan district, however).

**Table 5. Percentage of Respondents Reporting Different Forms of Contact by SMD Candidate Campaigns.<sup>20</sup>**

	Candidate representatives	Mailings	Leaflets, posters	Newspapers	TV ads
Krasnodar	8	85	65	55	45
Riazan	3	75	63	34	49

Were party candidates, on the whole, noticeably more effective at reaching voters than were independent candidates in our two districts? To get at this question, Table 6 breaks down by candidate our data on different forms of contacting, grouping candidates not only by their district but also by whether or not they were nominated by parties. Within the four groups defined by the categories “party candidates/independents” and the two districts, candidates are listed in the order of the actual vote share that they won in their races (and that vote share is reported in the second column) so as to make clear to the reader which are the major and which are the minor candidates.

If we focus on the very strongest independents and the very strongest partisans, the partisans do appear to have a slight but consistent advantage: The top party candidates did tend to reach a wider swath of voters than did the top nonparty candidates in the same districts. For example, the winner Shishkarev (Motherland) in Krasnodar managed to contact 65 percent of all district residents through mailings and over 40 percent through leaflets and newspapers, while the top-performing independent in the district (Yaryshev) reached at least 10 percent fewer potential voters on each count. A similar pattern was evident in Riazan: the winner Bulaev (United Russia) contacted more voters than did the strongest nonpartisan (Trubitsyn) in every

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<sup>20</sup> Questions 97, 99, 102, 112, 116, Okrug survey.

category, according to our survey. This does not simply reflect incumbency, since Bulaev was not the incumbent in Riazan. Moreover, the local experts on these districts, Kolba (Krasnodar) and Avdonin (Riazan), make clear in their on-the-ground analyses of the regions that parties did play important roles in these candidates' campaigns. Kolba mentions in particular the television exposure that Shishkarev got through the Motherland party, and indeed a third of his district's residents had seen at least one advertisement that featured him. The sharpest difference between the top party candidates and the top party substitute candidates appears to have been in television advertising, with the top party candidates far outpacing even the strongest independents.

At the same time, when we turn our attention away from Riazan's Shishkarev, who had been an independent when he originally won the seat in 1999, the picture becomes cloudier. For one thing, within Riazan, the top three independents were more than capable of generating at least as much voter contact as did any of Krasnodar's partisans other than Shishkarev, including United Russia's nominee, Kochian. The independent Yaryshev, in particular, stands out for reaching nearly half of all potential voters through his mailings and making his candidacy known through leaflets, newspapers, and television advertising more effectively than any of the other candidates in the district except Shishkarev. Importantly, the independents Zatsepina and Kovaliuk were not far behind, also reaching more people than did the second-most effective partisan. While Riazan's nonpartisan candidates were, as a set, considered weaker to begin with by our local experts, Trubitsyn disseminated leaflets and posters in a manner on a par with the leading partisan (Bulaev of United Russia) and kept pace with the second strongest partisan contactor, the Communist incumbent Korneeva, in mailings and newspaper. The Riazan independent Milekhin, despite netting just 4 percent of the vote, also reached over 10 percent of the district's voters in several categories of contacting, besting the representatives of all parties

**Table 6. Estimated Share of District Residents Reporting Different Forms of Contact with the Following Candidates<sup>21</sup>**

	Vote won	Candidate representatives	Mailings	Leaflets, posters	Newspapers	TV ads
<b>PARTY CANDIDATES</b>						
<i><b>Krasnodar</b></i>						
Shishkarev (Rodina) (i)(w)	19	4	65	47	42	35
Kochian (UR)	11	1	19	21	11	6
Shirshov (KPRF)	8	1	14	10	5	3
Belichenko (LDPR)	3	0	3	1	1	1
Panchenko (Yabloko)	3	0	3	1	2	2
Kuznetsov (PVR/RPZh)	1	0	1	.1	.4	1
Gerasimov (Rus)	.3	0	1	.5	.4	.3
<i><b>Riazan</b></i>						
Bulaev (ER) (w)	31	1	45	36	24	33
Korneeva (KPRF) (i)	16	1	30	24	16	24
Shershin (LDPR)	5	.2	9	12	3	5
Tabolin (Yabloko)	4	0	6	3	1	3
Dmitriev (SPS)	2	1	10	4	2	3
Potapov (VR-ES)	2	0	1	1	.4	1
Sidorov (Rus)	1	0	1	1	.3	1
<b>INDEPENDENTS</b>						
<i><b>Krasnodar</b></i>						
Yaryshev	14	3	46	34	25	18
Zatsepina	9	1	35	19	29	14
Kovaliuk	8	2	42	24	27	14
Vysochin	5	.1	4	5	3	1
Beloglazov	2	.1	4	4	3	1
Savchenko	1	.1	3	1	2	1
Sergeeva	1	.1	1	1	.3	.1
<i><b>Riazan</b></i>						
Trubitsyn	11	.5	27	35	9	13
Milekhin	4	.4	12	15	9	11
Mikhailov	2	.1	3	2	3	2
Viktorov	2	.1	2	1	1	1
Kprf	2	.1	1	1	1	2

(i) = incumbent

(w) = winner

<sup>21</sup> These figures are generated by taking the percentage of voters who were contacted in a particular way who reported contact by a particular candidate and multiplying it by the fraction of the whole sample who reported being so contacted. The former figures are from questions 98, 100, 103, 113, 117, Okrug survey, and the latter are those from Table 5.

other than United Russia and the KPRF. Additionally, so few respondents were directly contacted by candidate representatives that neither partisans nor nonpartisans stand out as having any kind of advantage here.

If partisans do appear to have an advantage in voters' eyes for producing outputs but do not appear to be dramatically more effective at contacting the district electorate, are parties lending significant reputational support to individual candidates? The concept of reputation is multifaceted and will be treated in diverse ways in future stages of this study, but for now we focus on the following question: Do any strong partisan attachments voters might have seem to be transferring to partisan candidates, generating forms of identification that cannot also be produced and mobilized by independents without the help of party nomination? Many survey instruments used to study party identification essentially rule out a negative answer by wording the research question in such a way that it could not reasonably apply to individual candidates. Here we rely on a measure developed by Green, Palmquist, and Schickler (2002), based on social psychological studies of group identification, in their comparative study of partisanship. They ask voters how strongly they agree or disagree with the following statement: "When someone criticizes [party X], it feels like a personal insult" (Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002, 37). We thus insert "candidate X" in place of "party X" and thereby gain some insight into the degree to which people come to identify with the candidates they vote for. If party identifications exist and rub off on candidates, and if this truly represents an advantage of party affiliation for candidates relative to nonpartisanship, we would expect *ceteris paribus* that voters should display greater levels of attachment to partisan than independent candidates (even if the overall level of attachment to candidates is low). Since we assume that such attachments are meaningful to candidates only if they generate a vote, we only ask voters about the particular candidate they

voted for.

Table 7 shows that in both Riazan and Krasnodar, there are significant numbers of voters who display signs of strong personal attachment to their candidates. Slightly over 10 percent in each district strongly agree that they feel personally insulted when their candidate is criticized, while roughly 30 percent more in each case “more or less” agree.

**Table 7. Percentage of Self-Reported Voters Agreeing/Disagreeing to the Statement that They Feel Personally Insulted When the Candidate They Voted For Is Criticized**

	Strongly agree	More or less agree	More or less disagree	Strongly disagree	Hard to say
Krasnodar	14	27	40	9	10
Riazan	12	31	22	7	25

We break these responses down by individual candidate in Table 8, which like Table 6 groups candidates according to region and whether or not they are party-nominated and which also orders candidates in the four resulting categories according to the share of the vote they won according to the official election results. Candidates who garnered less than 4 percent of the vote (rounded up) are dropped from the table since too few of their self-professed voters appeared in our survey to generate meaningful results for this part of the analysis. The results presented here do suggest that at least some parties may indeed be producing such an effect. The findings for the Communist Party’s candidates are the most suggestive: Between a fifth and a quarter of those who voted for the KPRF candidates (Shirshov in Krasnodar and Korneeva in Riazan) appear to feel the most intense sense of attachment to their candidates, strongly agreeing that they feel personally insulted when their candidate is criticized. This is far greater than the share of any of the independents’ voters who profess such bonds, and this is true even for independents who ultimately won more votes than did the KPRF candidates--thus intensity of feeling does not appear to be merely a function of more general electoral appeal. The fact that precisely the



Communist Party has such effects is just what theories of party development would expect since the KPRF has had the most time to cultivate such attachments. From this perspective, it is also unsurprising that the LDPR's candidate in Riazan, Shershin, also generated strong psychological connections with his voters: The LDPR joins the Communists as being one of the only two parties to win fractions in the Duma through the PR competition in every general Duma election, thereby giving it the capacity to lend such appeal to candidates.<sup>22</sup>

These results remain only suggestive pending further testing, especially because there appears to be no consistent significant difference between independent-candidate voters and party-candidate voters in terms of lesser attachments. Nevertheless, there do appear to be grounds for concluding that parties at least have the potential to generate voter loyalties to candidates over time in greater measure than even strong independents can elicit on their own.

Finally, we consider whether party candidates are consistently viewed by voters as being more competent to handle important particular issues than are independent candidates. Table 9 reports the percentages of our survey respondents who identified a given candidate as being likely "do the best job" in providing social guarantees, improving the regional economy, or combating crime and corruption. As with previous tables, candidates are listed by district, relationship to parties, and in the order of the vote they ultimately received. Respondents were also given the option of responding that there was no significant difference among candidates on these issues. As the table makes clear, the overwhelming majority of voters opted for the latter choice or were not able to venture an answer. The only candidates to stand out as being exceptionally competent on multiple issues are the two winners, Shishkarev in Riazan and Bulaev in Riazan. The independent Yaryshev in Krasnodar appears to have had a bit more

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<sup>22</sup> This will require further investigation, however, since some of our other findings suggest that the LDPR's electorate has been highly unstable since 1995 despite its relatively consistently strong results in party-list elections.



**Table 8. Percentage of Self-Reported Voters for Each Candidate Who Agree/Disagree with the Statement that They Feel Personally Insulted When Their Candidate Is Criticized**

	Vote won	Strongly agree	More or less agree	More or less disagree	Strongly disagree	Hard to say
<b>PARTISANS</b>						
<i>Krasnodar</i>						
Shishkarev (Rodina)	19	12	33	39	8	8
Kochian (UR)	11	15	17	42	12	10
Shirshov (KPRF)	8	25	19	31	12	14
<i>Riazan</i>						
Bulaev (ER)	31	10	33	25	6	22
Korneeva (KPRF)	16	21	31	18	8	20
Shershin (LDPR)	5	28	16	9	6	38
Tabolin (Yabloko)	4	0	26	26	11	37
<b>INDEPENDENTS</b>						
<i>Krasnodar</i>						
Yaryshev	14	16	20	45	6	14
Zatsepina	9	12	33	37	14	4
Kovaliuk	8	12	16	51	6	16
Vysochin	5	6	50	28	17	0
<i>Riazan</i>						
Trubitsyn	11	6	32	14	8	36
Milekhin	4	7	7	36	0	50

credibility on crime and corruption than most other candidates, but he still trailed Shishkarev, if only by a hair. One possible interpretation in light of aforementioned findings is the following: Most voters simply don't think that their district representatives really have the power to impact such big issues and instead many want them to focus on small things that they can achieve, such as providing constituency services. Indeed, as was noted above, the latter is where a plurality of our districts' voters wanted their parliamentary representatives to place their priority.

**Table 9. The Percentage of Respondents Identifying a Candidate as Likely to Do the Best Job on Key Issues<sup>23</sup>**

	<b>Social guarantees</b>	<b>Regional economy</b>	<b>Crime and corruption</b>
<b>PARTISANS</b>			
<i><b>Krasnodar</b></i>			
Shishkarev (Rodina) (i)(w)	13	13	7
Kochian (UR)	2	2	2
Shirshov (KPRF)	4	3	3
Belichenko (LDPR)	.1	1	1
Panchenko (Yabloko)	.2	.2	.3
Kuznetsov (PVR/RPZh)	0	0	.1
Gerasimov (Rus)	0	.2	0
<i><b>Riazan</b></i>			
Bulaev (ER) (w)	16	15	13
Korneeva (KPRF) (i)	5	3	2
Shershin (LDPR)	2	2	2
Tabolin (Yabloko)	.4	.2	.4
Dmitriev (SPS)	.1	.1	.1
Potapov (VR-ES)	0	0	.2
Sidorov (Rus)	0	0	.2
<b>INDEPENDENTS</b>			
<i><b>Krasnodar</b></i>			
Yaryshev	3	2	6
Zatsepina	3	1	2
Kovaliuk	3	3	3
Vysochin	1	1	.4
Beloglazov	.1	.1	0
Savchenko	0	0	.4
Sergeeva	0	0	0
<i><b>Riazan</b></i>			
Trubitsyn	2	2	1
Milekhin	1	1	1
Mikhailov	1	.3	.3
Viktorov	.1	.2	.4
Kprf	.1	.1	.1

## Conclusion

This paper has provided a first cut into fresh survey data obtained with the objective of improving our understanding of just what it is that parties might provide that independent

<sup>23</sup> Questions 124, 125, 126, Okrugs survey.

politicians cannot get through other channels or from other forms of political organization. Our case study of two districts, one in Krasnodar and the other in Riazan, surely reflect that candidates in post-Soviet Russia are capable of connecting effectively with voters independently of parties. While the victors in our two districts were both party nominees, the nonpartisans did nearly as well as the top party-nominated candidates in contacting potential voters, generating personal attachments on the part of voters, and communicating a sense of competence to handle important issues. Of course, this was not always saying much: No candidate stood out in a large number of potential voters' minds as being best able to deal with the key problems of the regional economy, crime and corruption, and social welfare. But sometimes it was to say a lot. The leading candidates were fairly effective in finding ways to reach voters, and the top independents were indeed able to reach over a third of voters in their districts in such a way that the voters remembered this afterwards. This speaks to the fact that "independents" were not really independent in any pure sense. Instead, as Hale (2006) has pointed out in other elections, the strongest nonpartisans often had the backing of important "party substitutes" such as political machines or major corporate conglomerates that tended to operate independently of parties. Our district reports make clear that the strongest independents did have such support: Yaryshev from the Krasnodar regional political machine, Zatsepina from the remains of a partially displaced political machine (local branches of Krasnodar's Otechestvo party) and business structures, Vysochin in the Tuapsinsk territorial administration, Kovaliuk from Novorossiisk city business, and Trubitsyn from his major corporate network in a big part of the city of Riazan. These structures were able to give independent candidates much of the support that other candidates could hope to gain from parties, even the strongest parties in our two regions.

At the same time, we also find some limited evidence that parties still have the potential

to give candidates an edge, even in Russia's highly complex political environment. For one thing, in both districts, more voters tended to believe that deputies are more productive in party fractions than to believe independents generate better results. Additionally, the two parties with the longest official tenure in the Duma (the KPRF and LDPR) also appeared to be taken close to heart by larger shares of their voters. This personal attachment, which did appear to transfer from party to candidate in a limited fashion, at least potentially means that party candidates can hope for a more solid electorate, one that will turn out in foul weather and stick with that candidate for multiple election cycles to a degree greater than nonparty candidates are likely to experience. Of course, all this remains in the realm of hypotheses to be tested, and doing some of this work is the task of future analyses of the data presented here as well as other research.

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