



Pergamon

Communist and Post-Communist Studies 35 (2002) 23–38

www.elsevier.com/locate/postcomstud

Communist and
Post-Communist
Studies

Party support or personal resources? Factors of success in the plurality portion of the 1999 national legislative elections in Russia

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Abstract

The paper estimates party-related and non-party-related factors of electoral success in single-member district elections to the Russian State Duma in December 1999. As demonstrated by the analysis, both kinds of factors facilitate candidates' performance, but the utility of personal political resources of non-electoral origins is greater than that of party support. Thus it is likely to be valued by Russian politicians as a supplement, not as a core component of their electoral strategies. By distorting the structure of incentives for elite partisanship, this situation conserves party system underdevelopment in the country. © 2002 The Regents of the University of California. Published by Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Mixed system; Single-member districts; Personal vote; Political parties; Russia

In 1993, Russia adopted a mixed-superposition system (Massicotte and Blais, 1999) for electing the State Duma, the lower chamber of the country's national legislature. Since then, half of the 450 Duma deputies have been elected by a closed-list PR system in a nationwide constituency, while another half, by plurality rule in single-member districts. Plurality races can be contested not only by party nominees but also by independent candidates. Thus Russia's electoral system mechanically combines a clear-cut case of a 'party-centric' system with a system that, in contrast, is 'candidate-centric' in the sense that it increases the individual candidates' incentives to pursue personal votes (Carey and Shugart, 1995; Samuels, 1999). Even in

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systems within the latter broad category, building party reputations may be a feasible way to electoral success for some categories of candidates (Samuels, 1999). Yet at the same time, recent research on the effects of a mixed-superposition system in Japan has demonstrated that in plurality races, incentives to pursue personal votes persist (Gallagher, 1998; McKean and Scheiner, 2000). The primary purpose of this analysis is to provide a quantitative estimate of the relative weight of party-related and non-party-related factors of electoral success in single-member district elections to the Russian State Duma in December 1999. The secondary purpose is to place my findings into the context of the ongoing debate on party system formation in Russia.

One of the peculiarities of regime change in Russia was that the first competitive elections were held before the process of party system formation advanced. At the same time, in contrast to most East European countries, no elections took place in the immediate aftermath of the Communist party's departure from power in August 1991, and the Communist party itself remained banned for more than a year after the event. This constellation of factors, combined with a number of other negative influences, impeded party formation in the country (Fish, 1995; Urban and Gel'man, 1997; Golosov, 1998). While the PR portion of Russia's electoral system, when introduced in 1993, did serve as a counterbalance to party decay, if only because it allowed for a plethora of new electoral associations to be formed (Moser, 1995), plurality races remained a domain of personalistic, anti-party politics (Urban, 1994; Sakwa, 1995). In particular, elite non-partisanship persisted throughout the first electoral cycle in the regions of Russia (Golosov, 1997). In the 1995 Duma elections, there was a larger number of elite candidates who chose to run under party labels (Ishiyama, 1998; Moser, 1999), while the number of independents who won the elections decreased. However, the trend towards more party success in single-member districts was reversed in 1999. I expect that this analysis will demonstrate the persistence of personal resources as factors of electoral success in contemporary Russia.

The data sources used in this study, the official publications of the Central Electoral Commission of Russia, are named in the table footnotes. In the first section of this analysis, I will briefly describe the arena of competition in the 1999 Duma elections and formulate my expectations regarding the sources of electoral success in single-member districts. In the second section, I will construct a set of corresponding independent variables and report the results of statistical analysis. Finally, I will discuss the implications of my findings for assessing the prospects for party development in Russia.

Political parties and candidates in the 1999 Duma elections

A detailed description of the field of party competition in the PR portion of the 1999 elections can be found elsewhere (Oates, 2000). Here, only essential facts will be reported. Overall, as many as 26 electoral associations and blocs ran their lists. In the further analysis all these entities will be occasionally referred to as 'parties'. The list of the leading opposition party, the Communist Party of the Russian Feder-

ation (KPRF), received 24.3% of the vote nationwide. The second runner, a recently formed Unity movement endorsed by then Prime Minister and presidential hopeful Vladimir Putin, came close with 23.3% of the vote. Other important participants in party list elections were a ‘centrist’ coalition called Fatherland—All Russia and led by a tandem of people both of whom apparently sought the presidency for themselves, the former Prime Minister Evgenii Primakov and Moscow mayor Yurii Luzhkov (OVR, 13.3%); the liberal Union of Right Forces (SPS, 8.5%); the ultra-nationalist yet increasingly pro-government Zhirinovskiy Bloc based upon the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR, 6.0%); and the social liberal Yabloko party (5.9%). None of the remaining 21 entities received more than 3% of the vote.

Among those 2227 candidates whose names were on the ballot in single-member districts, there were 1147 independents; the major parties named above nominated 521 candidates; and 559 candidates ran under the labels of minor parties.¹ Four parties registered for party list competition failed to nominate candidates in single-member districts. At the same time, five parties ran individual candidates without being able to participate in list competition. Overall, then, the number of parties participating in plurality races was 27. The largest number of candidates, 130, was nominated by KPRF. However, there was no direct correspondence between a party’s success in the PR portion of the elections and the number of district candidates. Unity ran only 31 candidates, while a politically negligible splinter group of the Communist party, Spiritual Legacy, as many as 107. A minor party that deserves special mention here is Our Home Is Russia (NDR), the most important pro-government force in the 1995 Duma elections. While it appears that its party list vote in 1999 was swallowed by Unity and OVR, it ran a relatively large number of strong candidates in single-member districts.²

Who were the candidates in single-member districts? Given the specific purpose of the present analysis, it is important to identify those categories of candidates that can be expected to be individually resourceful. One such asset prominently featuring in cross-national research on factors of success in single-member districts is, of course, incumbency. As many as 260 incumbents participated in the plurality portion of the 1999 elections. The fact that their number exceeded the number of constituencies is not surprising, given that in a mixed-superposition system, party list deputies have an option of trying their luck in single-member districts too. One may argue that this makes the category of incumbents quite heterogeneous in terms of their

¹ Party nomination is not the only form of party affiliation available to district candidates in Russia. They can also state party membership on the ballot paper. In this analysis, nevertheless, all non-party nominees are treated as independents. The reason is that party nomination is a form of party affiliation controlled by the party, but party membership is not. A party that does not want its member to run against its preferred candidate is not in position to prevent him from running. Indeed, in 1999 there were several instances when members of the same parties competed in single-member districts. Hence, only party nomination can be taken as a sign that a candidate was meant to benefit from party-controlled resources, such as the use of its label.

² The figures reported here apply to those candidates whose names actually appeared on the ballot on the election day. Technically speaking, there were many more nominees, but some of them failed to obtain registration, and some of those who were registered withdrew their candidacies for a variety of reasons.

chances for electoral success. A resulting methodological problem will be addressed in the following section of the analysis. In general, however, there is no apparent reason to deny the existence of incumbency advantage in Russia: the share of incumbents who won districts races in 1999 was 35.8%, while among non-incumbents, the figure fell to 6.3%.

The second category of individually resourceful candidates that can be identified for the purposes of this analysis is not so easy to define in one word. The underlying idea, however, is simple. Incumbency is a personal political resource gained in the electoral arena. The second category applies to those power resources that were acquired elsewhere. While identifying groups of candidates belonging to this category, I relied primarily on information easily available to each of the voters from the ballot paper that, according to the Russian electoral law, has to provide a brief description of the candidate's occupation. With a minor exception to be discussed below, I did not expect the voters to possess additional information. I also left out of this analysis the possibility that the voters could have made their choices without being informed about the candidates, or that this information was not an important factor of their choice. This possibility is real when voting behavior is influenced by corruption or coercion, which the case in some of the regions of Russia. However, such instances, often euphemistically referred to as the use of 'administrative resources' in the journalistic accounts of Russia's politics, are not dealt with in this study. Individual resources are understood as those advantages of office which, by enhancing the candidates' public reputations, increase the likelihood of sincere voting for them. That is why information available to the voters is essential.

I counted as individually resourceful those candidates who, at the time of the Duma elections, were deputy heads of regional administrations or governments (19); ministers or deputy ministers in the regional governments (19); heads or deputy heads of city administrations in those cases when the voting population of the given city comprised no less than 50% of the voters in the given district (10); heads or deputy heads of regional legislatures or their chambers (22); federal ministers or deputy ministers (7); deputy speakers of the national legislature (4); and one ex-minister whose previous status was indicated on the ballot paper. As an exception from the 'ballot information rule', the second category was supplemented with those people who, at this or that time, served as prime ministers of the Soviet Union or Russia and/or sat on the once all-powerful Political Bureau of the Soviet Communist Party's Central Committee. I assumed that in these capacities, they acquired personal reputations known even to the least interested and informed of the Russian voters. Upon the inclusion of this small, strictly delineated group of only six people, the selection comprised 88 candidates. The rate of success among them turned out to be about the same as among incumbents, 37.5%. Does this constructed category embrace the whole spectrum of political resources available to Russia's legislative candidates? Most importantly, economic power is not taken into account. For a variety of reasons, Russia's nascent entrepreneurial class is eager to seek Duma seats, and many entrepreneurs are indeed successful public politicians. Yet identifying the cases when the advantages of managerial positions in the economy did matter among as many as 2227 individual candidates proved to be an insurmountable task. For

example, the ballot paper may say that the given candidate is a deputy director of the Zvezdochka (Starlet) company. The Starlet may be a kiosk, which scarcely stands for a formidable electoral resource. But in fact, it is a huge submarine building plant that provides jobs and benefits for a near majority of the district's population. In most cases, such an information is difficult to retrieve, and any attempt would have brought too much subjective judgment into my analysis.

Table 1 provides descriptive information on the candidates in the 1999 Duma elections. The overall number of winners does not reach 225 because in one single-member district (Chechnya) elections did not take place, while in eight districts, there were no winners at all.³ Speaking of the substance contents of the data reported in the table, it is worth noting that incumbents were more likely to run under party labels, while a majority of power resourceful candidates were independents. However, no diagnostics of the factors of electoral success is so far available. At the moment, it is sufficient to say that I expect party support, legislative incumbency, and power resources of non-electoral origins to influence individual candidates' performance. Statistical analysis is needed to estimate each of the factors' impact with a degree of precision.

Variables and findings

The purpose of this analysis suggests that the dependent variable should be related to the concept of electoral performance. One such variable that is most easily avail-

Table 1
Candidates in the 1999 single-member district elections

	Number of candidates	Incumbents among them	Power resourceful candidates among them	Number of seats gained
KPRF	130	74	8	47
Unity	31	2	2	9
OVR	89	11	8	30
SPS	66	6	2	5
LDPR	90	5	0	0
Yabloko	115	20	4	4
NDR	89	26	7	7
Minor parties	470	25	10	9
Independents	1147	91	47	105
Total	2227	260	88	216

Source: calculated by the author on the basis of the data presented at the official Internet site of the Central Electoral Commission of Russia, Vybory-99, <http://www.izbircom.ru>

³ This happened because of the Russian electoral system's provision to cast votes 'against all candidates'. If the number of such votes exceeds each of the candidates' returns, none of them receives a seat, which leads to by-elections.

able is the percentage share of the vote received by each of the candidates, further referred to as the vote variable.⁴ Turning to the independent variables, the way of measuring party support in a mixed-superposition system is seemingly unproblematic. In each of the districts, electors cast their votes both for individual candidates and for party lists. Then for each of the candidates nominated by a certain party in a certain district, the exact scope of this party's support is easily detectable in the form of the percentage share of the vote cast for the respective party list. This defines the party support variable for party nominees. For independents, as well as for the nominees of five minor parties that did not make it into the list competition, the variable assumes zero values.⁵

A problem with this way of coding is that it implicitly assumes a one-channel flow of votes from the party to the candidate. Yet votes may flow in the opposite direction too. In a number of studies of the 1995 Duma elections in Russia, it has been established with different levels of precision that the presence of a strong party candidate often enhances the fortunes of the given party in the given district (Petrov, 1996; Golosov and Yargomskaya, 1999; Herron and Nishikawa, 2001). The existing quantitative proofs of this phenomenon, dubbed the 'contamination effect' in the most recent study, may be insufficient because it is quite possible that parties abstain from running their nominees in those districts where they feel their chances to be especially weak. Yet, given the uncertainty of electoral fortunes in contemporary Russia, the idea seems plausible enough. In this connection, the best I can do is to recognize that some of the statistical estimates of the effects of party support variable (primarily, unstandardized coefficients) reported below may be inflated. Standardized coefficients, however, are unlikely to be influenced in this way because I left out of this analysis party performance in those districts where the respective parties did not run candidates at all.

The key problem with measuring the effects of incumbency in a mixed-superposition system is the existence of two different categories of incumbents—those who won in the given districts and those who did not (which primarily applies to party list incumbents). In order to solve this problem, I chose to employ two different incumbency dummies both coding incumbents as 1 and non-incumbents as 0. The labels of the variables are self-explanatory: district incumbency and list incumbency.⁶ A substantive problem to be addressed here is whether thus constructed variable corresponds solely to individual electoral resources. I would not claim that. Even

⁴ Of course, votes have no intrinsic value of their own; they are primarily means to gain seats. This made me experiment with two additional dependent variables, a dummy that coded those who won Duma seats as 1 and those who did not as 0, and a variable related to the concept of electoral marginality. Statistically, however, the use of these alternatives did not make any significant difference.

⁵ A more complex way to describe the party support variable is to say that this is an interactive variable (a party support dummy multiplied by the percentage of the vote received by that party in the given district) as all independents are coded as zero. Given the fragmented nature of Russia's party system and the related proliferation of very small parties, making use of such a weighting scheme appears to be essential for estimating party-related factors of electoral success.

⁶ There was also a small group of district incumbents who ran for reelection in different districts. For them, both incumbency variables assumed zero values.

for district incumbents, party support or its lack could seriously influence the percentage of the vote received by a candidate in the past elections. Hence within the heuristic design of this analysis, the incumbency variables stay in the midway between the party support variable and the variable most directly related to the notion of personal political resources, with district incumbency being located closer to the latter end of the continuum.

Further in this analysis, the variable related to the notion of personal political resources will be referred to as the power variable. Indeed, the majority of political resources available to the candidates in this category at the time of the elections stemmed from their current or previously held positions within the apparatus of the state power. This variable was easy to construct if only because I failed to develop a concise rank ordering of power resources discussed in the previous section of the analysis, which left me with a dummy that coded power-resourceful candidates as 1 and those who lacked power resources 0. Since I have already stated that I am inclined to consider the set of independent variables as a continuum running from party to non-party resources, it is important to clarify to what extent the power variable can be substantively separated from party support. I would suggest that by and large, they do not overlap. Political parties do not significantly influence administrative appointments in the regions of Russia. There are very few regions where governors or mayors were elected with significant party support (Solnick, 1998), and even in these regions, party appointees rarely enter significant positions of power. Federal ministers and deputy ministers normally cut their ties with parties upon being appointed to the government. Positions in regional legislatures are slightly different in this respect, yet given the legislatures' fragmented nature and weak political posture vis-à-vis the regional executives, the lack of sustainable party groupings, and the abundance of independents (Golosov, 1999), it is unlikely for a committed partisan to be elevated to assembly chairmanship or deputy chairmanship. Rather, such positions normally come as a reward for political flexibility associated with a non-partisan stance. True, party representatives hold deputy chairmanships in the national legislature, but this rare assets stem from intra-party bargaining rather than from party support as such.

It is clear that individual candidates' performance depends not only on their own resources but also on those of their rivals. In order to express this idea numerically, I introduce three additional independent variables. I dub them 'party challenge', 'incumbency challenge', and 'power challenge'. They are intended to add to our understanding of how robust the related 'basic' variables are. At the same time, they may help illuminate, even though imperfectly, the impact of the structure of competition upon each of the candidates' performance. The additional variables were constructed in a like fashion. First, I sum up the values of the respective 'basic' variable for the given district. Second, for each of the individual candidates, I deduct his value of the variable from the sum. For example, in a hypothetical constituency with three candidates whose parties received 30, 25 and 0% of the vote, the values of the additional party challenge variable will be 25 ($= 30 + 25 + 0 - 30$), 30, and 55%, respectively. The incumbency challenge variable was constructed on the basis of summing up the values of both incumbency variables introduced above; in

addition, district incumbents who ran for reelection in different districts were taken into account.

Proceeding from a clear premise that the overall number of candidates in the district may negatively affect the percentage shares of the vote received by each of the candidates, I introduce a respective control variable. Another control variable used in this analysis is the percentage share of the vote cast against all candidates. As already mentioned, the scope of the vote against all candidates defines electoral outcomes only in those rare cases when it exceeds the vote for each of the candidates. But even if this does not happen, one can expect that the more votes are wasted in this way, the less votes are received by each of the candidates. Moreover, I would speculate that the lack of strong candidates provides the elector with an additional incentive to vote against all. While this expectation needs to be proven quantitatively, it provides an additional reason to believe that there may be a negative association between the dependent variable and the against all vote variable.

The control variables described above enter my analysis primarily for the sake of improving the goodness-of-fit of the model. I do not expect them to fundamentally influence the significance of the basic variables that are central for this analysis. The critical test for the robustness of the model will be provided by introducing a variable directly related to the question of whether the factors that I expect to boost the vote percentage of a candidate also improve the change in the candidates' vote compared to the last time when he or she was running. Thus one more control variable, further dubbed 'past vote', assumes the value of the percentage share of the vote received by the given candidate in the given district in any elections since December 1995.⁷ It should be mentioned that no redistricting took place in Russia between the 1995 and 1999 elections, which makes variable construction a lot easier than it could be otherwise.

How many individual cases have to be used in this analysis? In principle, the whole population of 2227 candidates could be available. Yet such a choice would have been problematic. Not all candidates join Russia's plurality races in pursuit of electoral success. Minor parties run their candidates simply to substantiate their claims for a 'serious' political status. And it is not unusual that independents run not in order to win a seat but rather, to split the vote for those candidates who are perceived as a threat by their rivals and/or local executive elites. To take an extreme and somehow anecdotal example, the 1999 elections witnessed several instances when many personalities of the same name appeared on the district ballot. One of these personalities was normally a strong candidate, while others tended to be pensioners, university students, or unemployed. Such people are widely presumed to sell their names to the strong candidate's real rivals, who expected each of such profiteers to steal a percentage point or more of the vote from inattentive electors. In a close race this may matter, and indeed, electoral results proved that such a witty strategy was not entirely unfruitful.

⁷ In several districts the 1995 elections were followed by by-elections. In such cases, the shares of the vote received in the most recent by-elections were taken into account.

In general, the proliferation of candidates in single-member districts accompanied by oddities like cited above is a direct consequence of party underdevelopment in the country. Yet at the moment it is important to technically filter out those candidates who did not really seek seats. I sought to achieve that by reducing the selection of individual candidates to three front runners in each of the districts. This left me with those candidates who were presumably ‘important’. An obvious alternative, establishing a criterion of ‘importance’ as an arbitrarily set share of the vote, was not employed because in districts with high levels of vote fragmentation this would not make much difference anyway, while omitting front runners that lost to very strong competitors on a large margin would be theoretically counterproductive.⁸ It must be noted that even though the number of cases in the analysis was thus reduced to 672, the ‘challenge’ variables were constructed on the basis of the whole set of 2227 cases. The descriptive characteristics of the variables employed in this analysis ($N = 672$) are reported in Table 2.

Table 2
Descriptive statistics about the variables in the analysis

	Range	Mean	Std. deviation
Vote	1.84–92.32	21.43	13.12
<i>Basic variables</i>			
Party support	0.00–73.44	8.73	12.96
District incumbency	0.00–1.00	0.20	0.40
List incumbency	0.00–1.00	0.06	0.23
Power	0.00–1.00	0.07	0.26
<i>Additional variables</i>			
Party challenge	0.00–79.24	28.19	19.68
Incumbency challenge	0.00–4.00	0.88	0.80
Power challenge	0.00–4.00	0.30	0.57
<i>Control variables:</i>			
Number of candidates	3.00–20.00	9.96	3.77
Vote against all	0.12–27.32	10.90	5.24
Past vote	0.00–86.80	7.23	13.48

Sources: as for Table 1; calculated by the author on the basis of the data presented in Vybory deputatov Gosudarstvennoi Dumy Federal'nogo Sobraniia Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 1995: elektoral'naia statistika. Ves' Mir, Moscow, 1996; Dopolnitel'nye vybory i zameshchenie vakantnykh mandatov deputatov Gosudarstvennoi Dumy Federal'nogo Sobraniia Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 1996–1998: elektoral'naia statistika. Ves' Mir, Moscow, 1999.

⁸ As a part of my statistical analysis, I also ran robustness tests using four and five front runners. This did not bring significantly different results.

Table 3 reports the results of multiple regression of the vote variable on the set of all independent variables but the past vote. The results generally confirm my expectations regarding the factors of electoral success in Russia's district races. Nearly all coefficients prove to be statistically significant at the 0.05 level or better, and all of them have the expected signs. A partial exception is list incumbency that apparently does not contribute much to the candidate's electoral success. Yet it is the rank ordering of independent influences that is essential for the purposes of this analysis. The standardized coefficients suggest that party support and district incumbency are almost equally important for gaining votes, but neither is as important as power resources are. Among the challenge variables, party challenge and power challenge turn out to be quite significant. The impact of incumbency challenge, in contrast, is not very visible, which suggests that in each of the districts, the voters were quite aware of who the 'real incumbent' was. The number of candidates and the scope of against all vote exert expected influences upon individual candidates' performance, but these influences are far from being overwhelming.

Consider a hypothetical, single-member district with three candidates, one of whom has party support, another being a district incumbent, and the third relying upon personal power resources. List incumbency, for its lack of significance, is left out of the analysis. Let us assume that the share of the vote against all candidates in this constituency is close to average, 11%. Then, using the regression equation reported in Table 3, we can establish that for the party candidate to outrun the power-resourceful candidate, the list of the respective party had to receive at least 50% of the vote in the given constituency (in this case, the shares of the vote received by

Table 3

Multiple regression of candidates' percentage share of the vote on party-controlled and personal resources and control variables (without past vote)

Variables	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		
	<i>B</i>	SE	<i>B</i>	<i>T</i>	Sig.
<i>Basic variables</i>					
Party support	0.205	0.035	0.203	5.846	0.000
District incumbency	6.669	1.178	0.202	5.660	0.000
List incumbency	2.599	1.952	0.045	1.332	0.183
Power	10.836	1.669	0.217	6.494	0.000
<i>Additional variables</i>					
Party challenge	-0.086	0.024	-0.130	-3.604	0.000
Incumbency challenge	-1.287	0.596	-0.078	-2.161	0.031
Power challenge	-3.019	0.773	-0.130	-3.907	0.000
<i>Control variables</i>					
Number of candidates	-0.599	0.126	-0.172	-4.764	0.000
Vote against all	-0.278	0.083	-0.111	-3.350	0.001
Intercept	30.861	1.656		18.639	0.000
Number of cases	672				
R^2	0.28				
Adjusted R^2	0.27				

the three candidates would be 32.0, 25.3, and 31.2, respectively).⁹ Taking into account that the list of the strongest party in the 1999 elections, KPRF, received less than a half of this share of the vote nationwide, this appears to be an unlikely outcome. Therefore, power resources emerge as a crucial precondition for winning plurality elections in Russia.

The second step in my analysis is to check the robustness of the model by introducing an additional control variable, the past vote. The results are reported in Table 4. Most of the variables survive the test for robustness quite safely; the party, party challenge, power, power challenge, and against all variables not only retain their previously reported significance levels and direction, but even the numerical values of the regression coefficients remain almost intact. Similarly, the list incumbency variable remains about as insignificant as it used to be. What disappears is the significance of seat incumbency that seems to entirely fade away when the past electoral success is controlled for. Incumbency advantage, if separated from party support, can be viewed as a sum of two distinctive components: electoral support obtained at the time of initial election and additional popularity or distrust gained by constituency service or its lack. It is these components' rough aggregate that can be conventionally expressed by the incumbency dummy variable. Clearly, results reported here

Table 4

Multiple regression of candidates' percentage share of the vote on party-controlled and personal resources and control variables (with past vote)

Variables	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		
	<i>B</i>	SE	<i>B</i>	<i>T</i>	Sig.
<i>Basic variables</i>					
Party support	0.202	0.035	0.199	5.810	0.000
District incumbency	-0.525	2.174	-0.016	-0.241	0.809
List incumbency	2.957	1.933	0.051	1.530	0.127
Power	10.810	1.651	0.216	6.548	0.000
<i>Additional variables</i>					
Party challenge	-0.080	0.024	-0.120	-3.376	0.001
Incumbency challenge	-1.309	0.589	-0.079	-2.221	0.027
Power challenge	-3.031	0.765	-0.131	-3.964	0.000
<i>Control variables</i>					
Number of candidates	-0.570	0.125	-0.163	-4.570	0.000
Vote against all	-0.272	0.082	-0.109	-3.312	0.001
Past vote	0.249	0.063	0.255	3.920	0.000
Intercept	29.978	1.653		18.130	0.000
Number of cases	672				
R^2	0.29				
Adjusted R^2	0.28				

⁹ Variables entered into the equation are party support, district incumbency, power, party challenge, incumbency challenge, power challenge, number of candidates, and the vote against all.

suggest the irrelevance of constituency service in the Duma elections, but I will leave this side product of my analysis without further elaboration.

Importantly, from the point of view of the principal goal of this study, this time it is the past vote that emerges as the strongest individual influence upon candidates' electoral returns. But does this finding lead to the inference that the role of personal resources has been overstated in my previous analysis? In order to answer this question, let us return to the hypothetical single-member district described above, assuming that the share of the district vote received by the list of the party politician is that of the KPRF list nationwide, 24.3%. The regression equation predicts that in order to outrun a power-resourceful candidate who did not contest elections in the given district in the past, his rival who did had to gain at least 53% of the vote in the previous election (in this case, the shares of the vote received by the three candidates would be 25.8, 33.0, and 32.8, respectively). Since such a level of support for district candidates in the 1995 elections was rare and unusual, the persistence of personal resources as primary factors of electoral success in contemporary Russia remains apparent. This being said, it is important to make an important reservation. In the hypothetical examples given above, each of the candidates was endowed with only one kind of resource, be it party label, incumbency, or power. But combinations of these resources were also feasible, and while power resources were scarcely compatible with the incumbency advantage, it was not unusual to combine them with party support. Even more often, party nominees were incumbents.

Table 5 reports how the combinations of resources, if possessed by candidates in hypothetical districts similar to those described above, could have facilitated electoral performance. While numerical precision in such hypothetical examples is scarcely achievable because the errors of estimates are not taken into account, I sought to

Table 5

Predicted winners and their margins of victory in hypothetical district elections, each contested by three candidates with different sets of resources

Candidates and their resources in hypothetical single-member districts			Winners (margins of victory in parentheses)	
A	B	C	Model with the district incumbency dummy	Model with the past vote variable
Power	Party support	Incumbency	A (5.9)	A (6.5)
Power	Party support, incumbency	Incumbency	B (1.7)	B (0.8)
Power	Party support	Incumbency, party support	C (1.2)	A (0.8)
Power, party support	Party support	Incumbency	A (13.6)	A (15.1)
Power, party support	Party support, incumbency	Incumbency	A (6.0)	A (6.6)
Power, party support	Party support	Incumbency, party support	A (8.7)	A (10.4)

make the examples more plausible by using the real-life values of the variables and introducing some logical consistency into the values' choice. The values of variables were entered into regression equations on the following assumptions: (1) that the shares of the vote cast against all candidates were 11%; (2) that the list of the party supported candidate received 26.0% if he did not have power resources and (3) 26.5% if he did; (4) that the past vote of the incumbent was 19.5% if he did not receive party support and (5) 24.2% if he did. In the last example reported in the bottom row of the table, with all three candidates enjoying party support, (6) candidate C receives 20.4 on this parameter. The figures are the average shares of the vote (1) against all candidates, 1999; (2) for the list of KPRF in those districts where there were KPRF candidates, 1999; (3) for the list of Unity in those districts where there were Unity candidates, 1999; (4) for those NDR candidates who also ran in the 1999 elections, 1995; (5) for those KPRF candidates who also ran in the 1999 elections, 1995; (6) for the list of OVR in those districts where there were OVR candidates, 1999.¹⁰ As follows from the table, the power resourceful candidate beats his rivals in all cases except some of those when he does not receive party support but his rivals do. Hence, while power resources are clearly the most valuable assets available to aspiring legislators in contemporary Russia, such resources may be insufficient for winning the election. Under certain conditions, they have to be supplemented with party support. It is this combination that is likely to result in a wide-margin victory.

Conclusion

As expected, this analysis confirmed that both party support and personal resources facilitated candidates' performance in the plurality portion of the 1999 Duma elections. But more importantly, it turns out to be that the role of party support is far from being overwhelmingly important. Personal political resources, gained either on the electoral arenas or by winning non-elected offices, tend to overshadow its impact. In particular, non-electoral power assets seem to be crucial for winning plurality races on safer margins. This means that incentives to pursue personal votes persist. Of course, no inference that party support is an insignificant factor of electoral success can be made. For resourceful politicians, and especially for district incumbents, party support may be of great value as a means of enhancing their electoral appeal. Yet this asset is likely to be valued by the aspiring politicians as a supplement, not as a core component of their electoral strategies. What matters is not what the candidate can gain entirely or partly with the help of the party (i.e. party support and incumbency, respectively), but something that candidates gain mostly independently from the party. What are the implications of this state of affairs for party development in Russia?

¹⁰ Examples with two incumbents per constituency are excluded for similar considerations of plausibility.

In the literature on party system formation in the country, both ‘pessimistic’ and ‘optimistic’ assessments can be found (Brader and Tucker, 2001). The ‘pessimists’ tend to substantiate their position with reference to the systemic properties of Russia’s party competition arena as demonstrated by the 1995 Duma election results. Indeed, the 1995 electoral returns combined a very high level of political fragmentation with more than a 50% level of voter volatility (Wyman, 1996). There was also a high level of split-ticket voting caused, as it has been demonstrated, primarily by weak voter attachments to parties (McAllister and White, 2000). As one of the studies of the 1995 Duma elections concludes, ‘voters for fuzzy-focus parties are not only difficult to predict but also hard to combine’ (Rose et al., 1997, p. 819).

From this perspective, the 1999 elections did not add much to the picture. While party system fragmentation, if conventionally expressed in form of the effective number of electoral parties, decreased by more than three, from 10.1 to 6.7, the system remains fragmented. Moreover, a higher level of vote concentration was arguably achieved not as a result of party development but due to the arrival of the ‘Putin factor’ that boosted the fortunes of the hastily assembled Unity movement (Colton and McFaul, 2000). Indeed, voter volatility exceeded 50% again. And, as I have already mentioned, the number of independents in the Duma increased. Inferences about the scope of split-ticket voting in the 1999 elections can be made from the weakness of the party support variable in regression equations reported above.

The ‘optimists’ have a different piece of evidence at their disposal, recent mass survey results. The opinion polls have convincingly demonstrated that anti-party sentiment within the electorate gradually decreases (Pammatt and DeBardeleben, 2000). At the same time, party identifications tend to rapidly consolidate; indeed, they are not significantly weaker than in those East Central European countries where relatively stable party systems have already emerged (Miller et al., 2000; Brader and Tucker, 2001). Does this indicate that the prospects for the development of Russia’s party system are actually brighter than its current shape may suggest?

In this debate, I would side with the ‘pessimists’. It is undeniable that voter attitudes profoundly influence party politics. Yet the decisive role in party formation is played not by voters but rather by politicians who ‘turn to their political party—that is use its powers, resources, and institutional forms—when they believe doing so increases their prospects for winning desired outcomes, and they turn from it if it does not’ (Aldrich, 1995, p. 24). I would argue that in Russia, the prominence of personal political resources distorts incentives for elite party activism in a way that hinders party development. It may be advantageous for a personally resourceful politician to gain party support. But affiliation with such an advantage-seeker may bring no good to the party itself.

Resourceful politicians, viewing party support as a mere supplement to their success, are least likely to subject themselves to the limitations of party discipline and loyalty. Indeed, party loyalty is not entirely compatible with the purpose of securing personal political assets, because these assets tend to be gained by different political commitments. For a deputy head of a regional administration elected to the Duma under a party label, the preferences of the head of administration are likely to remain more important than party goals. Hence the influx of elite supporters, even if desir-

able from the point of view of the party's nearest electoral goals, threatens its organizational stability. The demise of Our Home Is Russia came largely as a result of its elite members' migration to new entities, OVR and Unity, the first of which, in turn, disintegrated immediately after the 1999 elections, while the second remained mostly inactive thereafter.

It may be so that the contemporary Russian voter is attached to political parties, eager to support large formations rather than tiny groups, and unwilling to go for complex ticket-splitting schemes. Yet these properties are unlikely to be translated into actual electoral behavior under conditions when parties themselves come and go on the eve of each of the consequent elections, when their electoral chances are therefore difficult to predict even for sophisticated political analysts, and when an important party may abstain from running candidates in the majority of single-member districts. Politicians and their incentives, not voters and their preferences, generate major problems in the development of Russia's party system. In 1993, these problems could be related primarily to elite non-partisanship. As appears from the current analysis, this has changed. Incentives for elite partisanship have already arrived. But, being combined with disincentives for party loyalty, their arrival scarcely contributes to party development. Insofar as personal political resources persist as the strongest determinant of electoral success, the party system is likely to retain its current, fluid and amorphous shape.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Gabor Toka for his methodological suggestions and very insightful critique of the drafts of the paper.

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