Strong Partisans, Weak Parties?

Party Organizations and the Development of Mass Partisanship in Russia

Regina Smyth

There is little disagreement that political parties and, in particular, stable mass partisanship are essential for successful democratic consolidation. Parties incorporate voters and elites into the new state structure and also transform elections into mechanisms of accountability and responsiveness. This strong belief propelled post-Soviet scholars to examine the development of parties and party systems throughout the 1990s as a means of measuring the state of Russia's nascent democracy.[1] Collectively, their findings present a puzzle that can not be explained by existing theories. Innovative measures of partisanship based on analysis of Russia's voters showed rapid development of mass partisanship in the first two election cycles (1993 through 1996), while subsequent evidence showed stagnation or even decline in levels of partisan attachments.[2]

This article addresses the theoretical gap by incorporating elite strategies and actions into the explanation of the development of mass partisanship. Its argument relies on evidence from four rounds of surveys of Russian party elites to examine the elite side of the partisanship equation: the organizational cohesiveness of individual party organizations and their capacity to be effective in elections and in government. The data reveal a remarkably stable party system in terms of parties' mean issue placements. However, closer investigation exposes tremendous disagreement among party elites within each organization and a lack of comprehensive frameworks to link positions on critical issues. When considered in the context of mass studies, the picture of the party system and of political parties that emerges from this analysis underscores the need for alternative explanations that incorporate a missing variable, elite action, directly into a more complete explanation of emerging partisanship.

The direct consideration of elite behavior within party organizations—a test of the premise that parties are unitary actors—is essential when models are exported from the study of stable democracies and applied to transitional regimes. This approach highlights two key assumptions in most models of partisan attachments: that party organizations present voters with clear, distinct, and consistent programs that allow voters to distinguish among them in the electoral period and that party organizations are effective in the policy process. These factors constitute necessary

209

conditions for the emergence of durable linkages between party organizations and voters.

This finding based on elite data and viewed within the context of mass-level studies has important implications for how partisanship and party development in new democracies are studied, indicating the need to explore both mass and elite actions in the construction of stable party institutions. In substantive terms, these new data suggest that early conclusions of rapidly emerging partisanship overstated the trajectory of Russian party development. The new evidence suggests that forging durable partisan bonds is likely to be a long-term project in Russia, if it occurs at all.

Exploring the Assumptions: The Role of Party Strategies in Theories of Mass Partisanship

The central role for parties in democratic transition rests on their capacity to perform two key functions. The first function is the integration of mass participants into the new institutional structure to ensure governability.[3] The second function is the ability to aggregate mass interest to transform democratic regimes and, in particular, democratic elections into mechanisms of accountability and responsiveness to public demands.[4] It follows from these observations that the incorporation of voters into party organizations through durable ties is a critical element of party building.

The growing number of studies on failed or stalled transitions points to cases in which party organizations have not served these key functions.[5] Russia's failed transition, now labeled managed democracy, falls squarely into this category.[6] Yet early studies of Russian voters based on a wealth of data and creative new measures found higher than expected levels of partisanship in the new democracy.[7] Russia thus provides an excellent opportunity to examine the link between party development and democratic consolidation.

Recognizing this opportunity to study the emergence of critical institutions, scholars used Russia as a laboratory to explore competing measures and theories of partisan development and, in particular, the emergence of stable partisanship. The results can be divided into two broad categories: the supply-side analysts who focused on party elites and party organizations and the demand-side analysts who focused on mass behavior. The demand-side scholars are further divided by different approaches that yield very different conclusions about the state of Russian parties.

Led by Rose, Munro, and White, proponents of the supply-side approach point to the volatility in the party organizations and in the party system as inherent blocks to mass-level attachments.[8] They argue that between 1993 and 2003 party organizations remained extremely underdeveloped. Organizations exhibited a persistent inability to compete effectively for lower level offices.[9] National elections provoked changes in the actual parties that competed for office. From election to election there were dra-

210

matic swings in aggregate vote totals for each party. The party system was fragment-
ed and polarized and exhibited shifting patterns of ideological competition.[10]

Scholars focused on mass-level data told a different story. Regardless of their
measures or their approaches, they largely agreed that that there was higher than
expected partisanship in the first two election cycles in Russia, but they disagreed
over the implications of these findings. Scholars who posited an implicit learning
model in which individuals' attachment to a particular party is rooted in their cumu-
lative experience with the party argued that early partisanship was a harbinger of
rapid and linear development.[11] In contrast, scholars who posited a psychological or
sociological basis for partisan attachments offered more cautious predictions.[12]

Subsequent data collection in 1999 and 2003 revealed stagnant or declining levels
of partisanship, raising a theoretical dilemma. Learning models fail to predict the
stagnation of partisan attachments over time, while psychological and sociological
models can not account for the greater than expected short-term evolution of parti-
sanship. Overall, it is difficult to interpret the implications of any these findings
without a clearer understanding of the mechanisms that drive them.

Incorporation of elites' strategies into a model of partisan development provides
important insights into the empirical patterns evident in Russia. The most optimistic
mass-based theories of partisanship rest on strong assumptions about the nature of
party organizations and their capacity to act in government. Specifically, they
assume that party organizations are unitary actors organized around a consistent
bundle of policies or brand name.

While the premise holds in established democracies, it is problematic in new
ones. Still, Miller and Klobucar write that, "if there were no real differences between
programs or policies espoused by each party, it would be unrealistic to expect the cit-
izens to perceive a difference between parties."[13] Echoing this view, Brader and
Tucker argue: "Partisanship is not baseless or superficial: to the contrary, the voter
makes a connection between her interests and beliefs and the program and perfor-
mance of party leaders."[14]

A corollary to this assumption is that durable mass attachments extend beyond
the electoral arena to parties' effectiveness in government. In other words, the
process of building partisan ties between elections will continue based on parties'
actions in office—which policies they pursue and whether or not these policies are
consistent with their campaign pledges. This expectation is clear in studies of
Russia. Miller and Klobucar argue that sustained partisanship should be based on
deepening perceptions that parties are responsive to their loyalists.[15] In the compara-
tive context, Cox demonstrates that Britain's electorate did not orient itself around
parties until they became vital in the policy process, underscoring the importance of
party effectiveness in the development of partisan ties.[16]

While these scholars do not define responsiveness, others point to the need for
parties to act consistently with their programs, act in the best interests of the groups

211

they represent, and effectively pursue policies that they espouse.[17] As Ware argues, the greater the disagreement among party elites is, the less likely it is that the organization will be able to act effectively in office.[18] Moreover, extreme parties that espouse consistent positions may find it difficult to pursue policy goals because they are systematically excluded from governing coalitions.

A focus on elite strategies—or the supply side of the partisanship question—can begin to provide insights into the efficacy of different mechanisms that may drive mass attachments to particular parties. For example, if mass attachments persist and even deepen despite schisms among elites within parties, then greater attention should be devoted to theories that rest on forces exogenous to the party system, such as the role of historical legacy, past socialization, negative partisanship, and group identity. Attention might also be focused away from long-term determinants of partisanship and explore the impact of short-term factors such as candidates, issues, and economic conditions. In contrast, a finding of deep divisions within party organizations would call into question theories of mass attachments that hinge on mass-elite issue congruence, spatial proximity, the articulation of a coherent world-view, and running tallies of performance in office. Finally, a deeper understanding of the actions of elites and their impact on choices presented to new voters can also help to clarify differences among voters: why voters attach themselves to parties at different rates and with different intensity.

It is important to recall the limits of the data. They present one side, albeit a neglected one, of a complex puzzle by testing core assumptions about party organizations common to mass theories of partisan development. The findings suggest alternative explanations that marry mass and elite approaches to the study of nascent partisanship and account for anomalies that have not been addressed by any single approach. Thus, this explanation constitutes a first step in a theory-building process that requires a revaluation of mass-level data as well as studies that look beyond Russia.

The Data and Research Method

The empirical investigation takes aim at a core assumption in studies of both mass partisanship and democratic representation: that party organizations embody clear, consistent, and distinct issue positions that form the basis of the party's brand name. The analysis tests a series of implications of this assumption at the organizational and party system levels. In terms of party organizations, if the assumption of shared issue positions is true, then party homogeneity should be observed in the form of cohesiveness (party members' holding views similar to their party's positions), or high levels of coherence (party members' consistency over bundles of similar

212

issues), or party agreement around an alternative electoral strategy, either benefit delivery or leadership. In terms of the party system (or the relationships among the most durable parties competing for national office), where organizations' potential for strategic interaction is paramount, there should be an increase in opponents' abilities to identify their competitor's strategies and clear distinctions among parties' positions.

The inquiry is based on data collected through four waves of survey research in seventeen regions across the Russian Federation. The survey instrument asked mid-level party elites to place their own party and their competitors' parties on a ten-point scale on a series of policy issues ranging from economic reform to the appropriate role of the church in political life. The analysis presented in this article focuses on issues that tap different aspects of economic reform and relations with the West.

These data were collected between February 1997 and December 1999, the period after the initial findings of stronger than expected partisanship and contemporaneous with the collection of evidence that revealed stagnation. The fourth wave of the survey coincided with the 1999 campaign for national parliamentary elections. Each survey sample was drawn from the same pool of respondents, individuals who held a leadership position within the party organization (see the Appendix). Actual respondents varied as the party cadres changed over time. The survey queried elites in a total of fourteen parties, but for clearer presentation the article presents data on the six organizations that won seats in parliament in the last election. Since these parties are the most durable and most successful in terms of parliamentary representation, they pose the most stringent test of the propositions outlined above.

It is important first to establish a potential link between these actors and the voters' assessments of the party. The sample of regional elites includes a significant percentage of candidates on either the party list or in single member districts. In addition, the field research reveals that regional party leaders are quite active in educating voters by granting interviews, engaging in televised debates and regional advertising campaigns, and promoting regional party platforms. Thus, these respondents are the public face of the party in these regions as well as the heart of the parties' organizations. Moreover, it is critical to note that the patterns of conflict evident in the individual elite data are also evident in highly publicized press accounts of national party schisms.

The first part of the analysis reports parties' means across core issues. The findings reveal that individuals within each party organization, referred to as insiders throughout the discussion, report remarkably stable central tendencies on these issues over time. A comparison of these means with the assessments of the parties' opponents, a group labeled outsiders, shows how well parties communicate these positions to the closest observers of party politics.

213

The analysis then turns to how meaningful these average placements are in the sense of providing distinct choices, reliable predictors of future action, and information shortcuts to voters. Each is evaluated to determine whether or not the positions reported by party insiders are distinct from their opponents' positions. These findings reveal a very different picture of the consistency of the signals coming from party elites and the potential for common positions to attract like-minded voters. The data show that the wide variance in responses of individual party leaders across the federation renders most signals statistically indistinct from their opponents.

A second foray into the question of predictability comes in a measure of partisan cohesiveness based on a set of economic issues—the most salient set of issues facing Russian politicians and voters.[19] As mass-based theories of partisanship point out, assessments of parties should extend beyond simple issue congruence to encompass a consistent world-view or organization of political issues and events. In order for parties to serve as information shortcuts, they should be expected to be able to bundle similar issues into a consistent party platform. This measure of party cohesiveness captures the degree to which partisan respondents hold similar views of their party's positions across these linked issues. The higher the cohesiveness score is, the lower the agreement among respondents is. Again, the findings reflect the limited potential of the parties' positions as an information shortcut to predict positions on related issues.

The Structure of Partisan Choice

To evaluate the nature of the choice presented by different parties, partisans' evaluations of their party's positions are presented on four high salience issues. Figure 1 depicts parties' mean scores on an issue that is at the heart of Russian political conflict, the appropriate degree of state control of the economy. Figure 1 provides a graphic image of the party system described by party elites on the issues considered in this analysis. These assessments summarize the underlying structure of the party system since there is considerable consistency across the other issues discussed in this article and over time. The minor differences in parties' positions across issues are noted in the discussion.

The end points of the issue scale are defined as maintenance of state ownership of the economy (10) and the imposition of a free market (1). On this issue, elite assessments of parties' central tendencies define a clear structure to the party system that is remarkably stable over the period in which the data were collected. As expected, the KPRF anchors the left end of the spectrum, advocating extremely high levels of government intervention in the economy. SPS defines the right end of the spectrum, advocating the creation of free market institutions. FAR claims the center-left posi-

214

Figure 1 Mean Insider Scores on Mode of Economic Transition
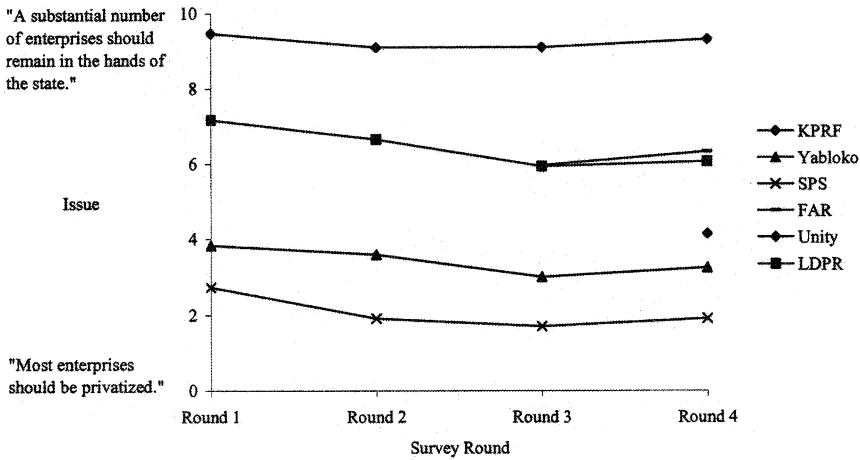
tion, and Unity, the predecessor to President Putin's United Russia organization, stakes out a position on the center-right.

The same tendencies are seen in parties' positions on the strategy of privatization. The question aims at the trade-off between privatization based on principles of economic efficiency and on principles of social justice. The end points of this issue are defined by (1) emphasis on social justice or (10) emphasis on economic rationality. The relative positions of parties' insider assessments on this issue are slightly different from the previous issue, although the placements of organizations on the right and left remain stable. The KPRF continues to anchor the left extreme of the party system while SPS defines the far right position. Within the left party family, the LDPR and FAR swap positions. Within the right party family, Yabloko and Unity change positions, as members of the Unity organization claim to be more willing to trade social justice for economic rationality. These changes in relative placements within party families provide the first clues of ambiguity in parties' signals.

Slight changes can also be observed in parties' average scores on a question asked in the final two waves of the survey: whether or not the property right distributions that emerged from the privatization programs under Yeltsin's regime should be reconsidered and revoked. The end points of this question are defined as (1) redefine property rights allocations and (10) maintain current property rights allocations. Parties' mean positions on this issue echo those reported in the figure: SPS and the KPRF anchored the political spectrum on the right and left, respectively. However, the gap between the FAR and Unity widened, as Unity was perceived as being more protective of existing property rights than the Luzhkov-Primakov coalition, FAR.

Investigation of the final issue, Russia's affect toward western military alliances,

215

shows the same general pattern of stability and dispersion. For this question, the end points of the scale are defined as no cooperation with the West (1) and cooperation with the West (10). Despite the hard rhetoric in reaction to NATO's intervention and debates over NATO's expansion, parties' positions on cooperation with western alliances reflect previous patterns of left-right distribution. This issue narrowed the political space, as SPS moved from its far right position. Unity also shifted toward the center of the space, marking a relatively clear distinction between itself and previous governing parties.[20] On the left, the nationalist LDPR rivals the KPRF to define the antiwestern position, while FAR appeared relatively centrist.

Together, the four questions demonstrate stability in elite assessments of their parties' positions across time and over salient issue areas. These mean issue placements correlate well with assessments based on analysis of campaign platforms.[21] Thus, the findings support the conventional wisdom that sophisticated partisans might discern parties' issue positions from their relative positions in the party system.

However, if the primary mechanism driving partisan attachments is similarity between the issue positions of party leaders and their voters, these data raise some important questions. First, there is an important structural change in the party system in the last two rounds of the survey, as FAR and Unity emerge in the center right and center left of the political space. Likewise, the party system has undergone significant changes in its cast of characters from election to election. The rise of FAR and Unity in 1999, the collapse of FAR just a few months later, the shifting support for the LDPR, Yabloko, and KPRF over time, and the demise of previously successful party organizations such as Women of Russia underscore system-level instability. Second, within left and right family groupings, parties' relative placements change from issue to issue. Voters' responses to these signals are unstable. Split ticket voting, low levels of partisanship in regional and presidential elections, and volatility in vote from election to election mar Russian electoral politics. This evidence demands a closer investigation of parties' mean issue positions and the information they provide to voters.

How Meaningful Are the Choices Russian Parties Present to Voters?

The intuition for focusing on the variation in party members' issue assessments within individual party organizations is straightforward: even if mean placements are different, if the variance around these means is high enough within individual organizations, the central tendencies across organizations may not distinguish one from another. To test this possibility, Table 1 reports the results of a difference in means tests on the same set of issues discussed above. This test determines whether or not differences within parties are so large that they render their mean positions indistinguishable from each other.

216

Table 1 Significance Levels for Differences between Insider Party Means

	KPRF	FAR	LDPR	Unity	Yabloko	SPS
			Mode of Transition			
KPRF	-	.15	.16	.01	<.01	<.01
FAR	.16	-	.92	.39	.19	.04
LDPR	.15	.92	-	.47	.26	.06
Unity	0.01	0.47	0.39	-	0.69	0.26
Yabloko	<.01	.19	.26	0.69	-	0.44
SPS	<.01	0.06	0.04	0.26	0.44	-

	KPRF	FAR	LDPR	Yabloko	Unity	SPS
			Privatization			
KPRF	-	0.22	0.09	0.05	0.05	0
FAR	0.22	-	0.71	0.52	0.47	0.1
LDPR	0.09	0.71	-	0.78	0.71	0.21
Yabloko	0.05	0.52	0.78	-	0.91	0.35
Unity	0.05	0.47	0.71	0.91	-	0.45
SPS	0	0.1	0.21	0.35	0.45	-

	KPRF	FAR	LDPR	Yabloko	Unity	SPS
			Redistribution of Property Rights			
KPRF	-	0.2	0.11	0.01	<.01	<.01
FAR	0.2	-	0.74	0.35	0.26	0.03
LDPR	0.11	0.74	-	0.57	0.46	0.11
Yabloko	0.01	0.35	0.57	-	0.86	0.31
Unity	0	0.26	0.46	0.86	-	0.4
SPS	0	0.03	0.11	0.31	0.4	-

	KPRF	LDPR	FAR	Unity	Yabloko	SPS
			International Alliances			
KPRF	-	0.64	0.47	0.23	0.04	0.01
LDPR	0.64	-	0.81	0.45	0.16	0.07
FAR	0.47	0.81	-	0.59	0.26	0.12
Unity	0.23	0.45	0.59	-	0.69	0.46
Yabloko	0.04	0.16	0.26	0.69	-	0.65
SPS	0.01	0.07	0.12	0.46	0.65	-

Cells give probabilities for null (no-difference) hypothesis; shaded cells are p <.20.

217

Interpretation of the results in Table 1 is complex because of the structure of the problem. The working hypothesis is consistent with the null hypothesis driving the test—that the parties' means are the same. The conventional wisdom assumes differences of means among parties—or the alternative hypothesis. Following the standard practice of statistical method and adopting a high level of statistical significance bias the analysis in favor of the conclusion that there is no discernable difference between the responses of the opposing parties. To prevent the possibility that the conventional wisdom is rejected too quickly, a relatively low standard of significance has been adopted. A twenty percent possibility that the outcome of the test is driven by chance is accepted.

Even under these stringent conditions, Table 1 shows that, for the most part, the parties' means are not different from one another except for the two most extreme parties, the KPRF and SPS. Partisan signals are strongest on the first question regarding the mode of transition. The data show that the KPRF stakes out a position distinct from all of its opponents, left and right. FAR is distinct from the KPRF, Yabloko, and SPS but not Unity. SPS is distinct from KPRF, FAR, and the LDPR but not from its competitors on the right. For all other parties the evidence does not support the conclusion that the parties' means are distinct from their opponents.

The finding that the conflict within parties blurs the differences among parties' mean issue positions is strongly supported by the evidence from the other issues. Across the economic issues, the KPRF's positions are consistently distinct from all of its competitors except for FAR, with whom it shares a position on all issues except the mode of transition. Surprisingly, given its strong and often extremist rhetoric, the LDPR's economic positions are not distinct from any of its opponents on the right—the party has a record of supporting President Putin's policies in the Duma. SPS's means are distinct from its left competitors, KPRF, FAR, and the LDPR, but not its opponents in the right-leaning party family. Unity's center-right mean positions are not distinct from any other parties' positions. Thus, with the exception of the KPRF, to the extent that there is a difference among party populations, it appears to be across the regime divide but not within party families on the right or left.[22] Parties' mean positions on the issue of Russia's relationship with international alliances are even less discriminating.

On the whole, the variation among the issue placements of individual partisans violates the assumption that these parties speak with one voice. The lack of cohesiveness within parties has a number of implications for electoral politics. Most important, parties' central tendencies on issue positions may not provide the necessary information for voters to distinguish among organizations or to form stable bonds with an organization. Voters may support a party organization based on its issue positions in one round only to find that the organization pursues very different policies in office or reinvents itself in the next round of competition.

Given the disagreement within organizations, issue positions are not likely to be

218

good predictors of what the party will do in office, since the policies it pursues depend on the group of individuals who are elected. Once in office, parties may be paralyzed by internal conflict or, in the case of the KPRF and SPS, may be unable to form stable coalitions due to extreme positions. Finally, these data raise questions about whether the same diversity of interests exists at the voter level. For example, it is possible that United Russia voters impute very different positions to the organization than its leadership and that this variation will cause instability in the future. On the whole, future analysis should examine the interaction between mass and elite partisans and the effects of this interaction on the durability of partisan ties.

### Are Policy Positions Consistent across Bundles of Issues?

Most scholars argue that partisan bonds extend beyond simple issue congruence to a world-view or encompassing framework that incorporates consistent positions on a wide range of issues. Theories of electoral representation posit that parties' positions should be stable across bundles of similar issues comprising a program or brand name. The party's label then serves as an information shortcut for voters to predict its positions over issue bundles, including issues that emerge outside of the context of the electoral campaign. In order to test whether or not brand names are beginning to materialize in Russia, this section reports on a measure of party coherence based on a series of salient economic issues.

This measure is slightly more complex than the simple mean placements presented to this point. The cohesiveness scores presented in Figure 2 indicate the degree to which party members agree on the position of their party over a range of similar economic issues. The issues included in the analysis are to allow privatization and bankruptcy of unprofitable enterprises, to prioritize speed over social and political justice when creating property rights, to fight inflation over unemployment, to privatize health care and health insurance, and to preserve the collective farm system.[23] All of these issues deal with the level of state involvement in the economy, suggesting a consistent left-right scale. The higher the cohesiveness score is, the lower the agreement is.

Complete agreement across respondents yields a cohesiveness score of zero. Random responses generate cohesiveness scores of 2.87. The scores of all these organizations are closer to random than to zero, but in statistical terms they are all distinct from random. This finding suggests that all Russian parties exhibit some capacity to articulate a party program.

There are three ways to gauge the substantive meaning of the cohesiveness measure. The first is to focus on the relative scores among individual organizations. Party organizations appear to clump together in three groups. The KPRF and SPS exhibit high levels of coherence across economic issues, followed by Yabloko, Unity,

Figure 2 Cohesiveness Scores on Economic Issues
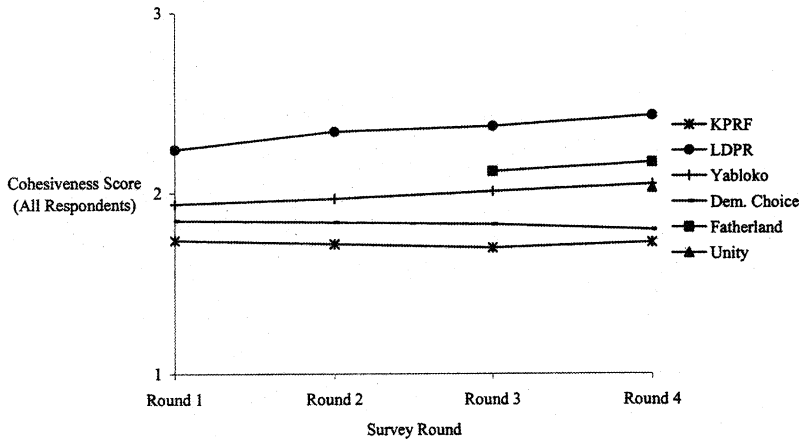
and FAR. The LDPR has the lowest level of coherence.[24] The second way to impute meanings to these scores is to compare scores on this bundle of issues to scores on other bundles. Cohesiveness scores on economic issues are lower than scores for all bundles considered in the larger project. For example, in the final round of data collection the KPRF scores rise to 2.3 and 2.4, respectively, when bundles of related social issues are considered. For the same issues, the SPS scores increase to 2.25 and 2.53. In other words, when the analysis expands to a wider range of issues, these organizations show even less agreement on their programs. Finally, compared with their counterparts in East Central Europe, Russian parties and the Russian party system were significantly less cohesive.[25]

The data show that even on this extremely salient bundle of issues insiders' assessments on similar issues are not consistent. Their placement of a party's position on one issue does not accurately predict their placement on other related issues. This finding suggests that the parties' brand names are not effective information shortcuts for ill-informed voters, short-circuiting one of the most important functions that parties play in models of democratic representation and accountability.

Perhaps more important, Figure 2 shows that there is very little deepening of capacity to articulate common issue positions. In fact, for almost all parties cohesiveness scores decline slightly over time. For some parties, this change is not surprising. For example, well-publicized schisms plagued KPRF, Yabloko, and the organizations that became SPS throughout the period. While these divisions resulted in some defections of key activists and leaders, the organizations have hung together in uneasy alliances but lost significant popular support.

220

These data present a sharp contrast between the pictures that emerge from analysis at the system level—in terms of the relative position of parties—and at the organization level—in terms of internal conflict and the capacity to bundle similar issues into a consistent position. System-level evidence based on average positions masks the turmoil within the party organizations. While these data can not mediate between the effects of these two sources of information for voters in new democracies, they point to an important arena for future investigation. On the whole, the level of disagreement over issue positions within parties raises serious questions about the durability of partisan ties based on issue congruence early in the transition.

Alternative Logics of Competition: Targeted Benefits and Leadership

The lack of issue-based coherence across the Russian party system suggests the potential importance of alternative mechanisms that tie voters to specific organizations. It is possible that parties' issue-based appeals are incoherent because their electoral strategies are based on some alternative basis. If this explanation is true, then conclusions drawn from analysis based on issue positions could grossly misrepresent the level of party development. Further, if party elites attempt to attract voters based on leadership or particularized benefits, then theories of partisan linkage based on ideology or issue congruence would be suspect. To address this possibility, parties' capacities to appeal to voters based on the distribution of state resources (targeted benefits) or strong leadership will be examined.

Targeted benefits may take the form of personal exchanges such as patronage or clientelism or the delivery of pork to key constituencies. Patronage can be conceived of as the capture and distribution of state resources in exchange for political support. In the early stages of electoral competition, the currency of patronage was readily available in the form of massive transfer of property rights in exchange for political support. Yet, despite the perennial presence of a state-sponsored party, there is evidence that the resources for patronage-based linkages were not available to national parties. Russia's privatization process was neither orderly nor centralized, and the devolution of property rights fragmented central political control over resources. Regional leaders used patronage in their own electoral bids, without extending these resources to party organizations. They thus posed a serious obstacle to party development.

Appealing to voters through a central leader provides an alternative foundation for party building. This strategy is extremely risky because the fortunes of the party rise or fall on the success of one man and his untested message. Even in the case of nonpersonal charismatic leadership, the party's success depends on the leaders' capacity to manage internal conflict and provide effective policy responses.[26] To impart durability to the organization, leadership-based parties must begin to forge structural mechanisms to quiet internal dissent.[27]

221

The data reported in Table 2 reveal whether party members identify alternative strategies as a viable basis for voter appeals. Table 2 presents evidence from the fourth round of data collection (December 1999). Across all of the party organizations, there is very little support for a targeted benefits strategy, even among the parties of power that have potential access to state resources. Moreover, the variance within parties on this question is lower than almost any other question included in the survey. Elites in the two organizations with access to national budgetary resources, Unity and SPS, exhibit more support for this strategy than their competitors, but these differences are not statistically significant. This finding presents an intriguing area for future research into the extension of the state patronage capacity to state parties in the Putin era.

In contrast to the low support for a targeted benefits strategy, there is some support within a few parties for leadership as a viable alternative to issue-based appeals. Not surprisingly, the KPRF and SPS, parties with high profile but relatively unpopular leaders, stress issue positions over leadership. The LDPR, an organization built around its leader, Vladimir Zhirinovsky, stresses leadership over issue-based appeals. Again, the data show significant internal disagreement over this strategy.

The variance in parties' support for issue-based brand names or some alternative appeal raises the question whether or not they constitute competing or complementary strategies. Figure 3 explores this question. Cohesiveness scores are plotted on the x-axis, and the degree to which party insiders stress alternative appeals on the y-axis. Figure 3 shows that, as the parties' capacities to speak with one voice increase, their elites place greater emphasis on programs in their appeals to voters. In other

Table 2 Mean Insider Evaluations of Alternative Linkages

	Leadership vs. Issues		Targeted vs. Universal Benefits	
	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev
KPRF	8.54	2.22	9.69	1.46
SPS	8.40	2.38	8.47	2.13
Unity	5.30	3.37	8.20	2.02
Yabloko	7.12	2.63	8.94	1.36
FAR	6.34	2.82	9.06	1.12
LDPR	4.91	3.90	8.88	1.94

For policy/leadership, low numbers = stress leadership. For benefits, low numbers = stress targeted benefits.

222

Figure 3 Importance of Policy versus Coherence (Insiders-only)
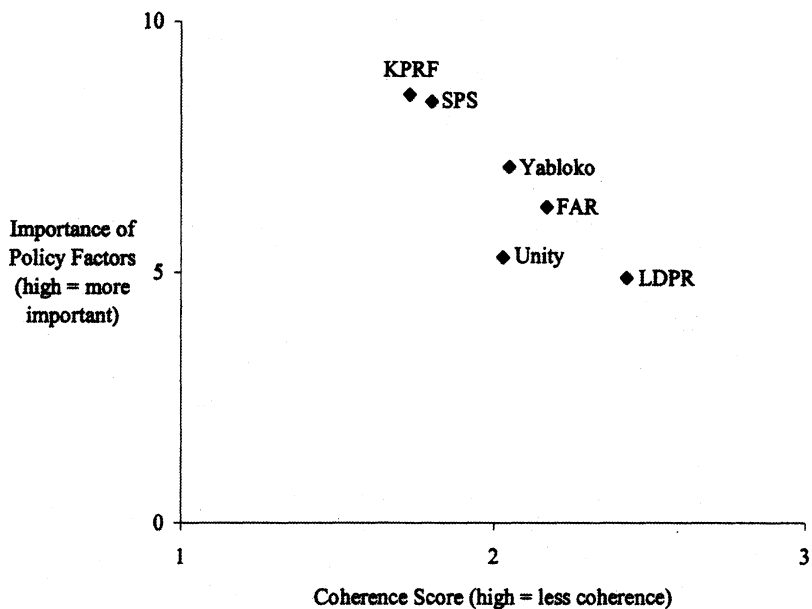
words, party elites who recognize the program as an important component of their electoral strategy work to increase the strength of the program.

These data show that, while Russian parties present voters with choices, with few exceptions these choices are not distinct in the context of the party system, nor do they reflect internal agreement about which policies a party will pursue if elected. In short, Russian parties do not live up to the assumption of teams of like-minded politicians who compete for office. Yet the data also show that there is significant variation across party organizations, with the KPRF a clear outlier on all measures suggesting that voters may form attachments to different parties at very different rates.

Implications and Conclusions: The Prospects for Party Development and Democratic Consolidation

This analysis offers two key findings. First, in the three years leading up to the 1999 elections core Russian parties exhibited remarkably stable issue positions. This finding holds for assessments by party members and is reinforced by conclusions drawn from other sources. It also holds despite the entrance of two new significant players

223

in the party system in 1999. Second, the stability in mean positions of organizations masks an extremely high level of disagreement among party elites. This evidence demonstrates that Russia's most developed political parties do not meet the criteria set out in studies of mass behavior. Party leaders do not make clear and consistent statements of the parties' positions on salient issues. Finally, the party organizations themselves do not seem to be organizing around alternative appeals. In other words, Russia's party organizations and party system provide very different types of information to voters. Likewise, this finding suggests the possibility that party organizations send different information to voters during the campaign period and while in government.

Where do these findings fit in the ongoing debate over the state of party development in Russia? Incorporating elite-level data into the discussion of mass attachments highlights a critical difference between transitional and established democracies. Theories of partisanship in stable democracies can safely make strong assumptions about cohesiveness and consistency within party organizations. However, in the context of transitional systems these assumptions need to be examined more closely by going beyond an analysis of the electoral propaganda of the party—platforms, statements, and websites—to an examination of the internal workings of the party as an organization and in government. Russia suggests that, rather than assume a role for parties in theories of mass partisanship, scholars need to focus their attention on the changing nature of transitional parties and party systems, their capacities to forge ties to voters, and the nature of the interactions between parties and voters.

The elite data suggest that Miller and Klobucar are right to raise flags about the durability of voters' attachments to parties based on issue congruence or ideologies before parties have proven their mettle in government. In so far as voters' attachments are driven by a running tally of partisan achievements, firm ties can be established only when a party's true nature is revealed through its involvement in the governing process. In longer-term assessments of partisan development, these data speak to parties' capacities to be effective in government. First, the evidence suggests that the deep divisions within party organizations will handcuff them in the policy process since adopting a clear position could provoke conflict among elected officials or the parties' leadership. Second, considered in the context of legislative roll call analysis, the data underscore an important disjuncture in the electoral strategies and actions in government across particular parties. The best example of this phenomenon is the LDPR. It espouses a leftist platform but frequently votes with the Kremlin's right leaning policies. Finally, the data suggest why some of the most internally coherent party organizations, the KPRF and SPS, may have been so ineffective in the parliament. The extreme issue positions espoused by these organizations render them unsuitable coalition partners for more moderate organizations.

More generally, it is very difficult for any party to forge stable coalition partners or

224

even bargain over policy without the information that is provided by clear, coherent platforms linked to durable voter bases. Internal cohesion is even more essential for parties in Russia, since the superpresidential structure, dual-track legislature, and mixed electoral system all disadvantage political parties relative to individual political actors.

In comparative context, these empirical findings suggest that mass studies may overestimate the stability of voters' attitudes early in the transition. Klingemann and Wattenberg argue that long-term analysis of West Germany demonstrates that it takes time for voters to develop lasting images of parties based on salient issues.[28] They also argue that voters' interim attachments to nascent parties based on very weak social group attachments or attachments to leaders will fade over time as reform provokes structural change and charismatic leaders rise and fall. Barnes, McDonough, and Pina found similar patterns in early electoral politics in Spain.[29]

These findings also suggest that theories of partisanship initiated to explain behavior in developed democracies need to be renovated in order to tailor them to new democracies. This step is warranted because existing theories of mass partisanship can not account for the patterns of attachments observed in Russia. Elite analysis suggests alternative explanations that rest on the interaction between voters and party organizations. It is plausible that mass attitudes in the early transition period were shaped more by short-term contextual factors such as the transient structure of the party system, salient issues, or candidates' personalities rather than longer-term determinants. It is also possible that stability and polarization within the party system may have provided important information for some voters in the early periods, but subsequent internal conflict, mixed messages, and ineffectiveness in government may have stymied further attachments and even weakened existing ties. These propositions can be tested by returning to the mass data in light of the elite-level findings.

These data alone can not discriminate among the approaches that have been used to examine mass partisanship, but they do provide some interesting clues about the efficacy of these theories. Internal cohesiveness is a core assumption of retrospective and prospective issue-based models of partisanship. Political parties must provide meaningful choices to potential voters as a yardstick to measure performance in office. Perhaps more important, scholars who engage in mass-level analysis stress that partisanship should extend beyond simple issue congruence to reflect a more comprehensive world-view. These data show that few Russian parties consistently articulate this deeper understanding of political events. They show that at the very least Russian parties provide voters with conflicting messages about their mandates, their likely actions once in office, and their capacity to pursue their priorities. It is thus very difficult for voters to evaluate particular organizations.

In contrast, explanations for unexpectedly high levels of partisanship early in the transition period rooted in the Soviet legacy, negative partisanship, and socialization are more easily reconciled with the data. In the end, the findings suggest a series of questions that can be addressed only by returning to the mass-level evidence. Are short-term

225

factors more important than long-term factors in determining partisan development in transition? How durable is pretransition socialization in framing political behavior? Do early partisan ties weaken as a party fails to be effective in government or demonstrates internal conflict? Does the effect of legacy fade over time as voters' interactions with party organizations or their experiences under the new system change their core beliefs? Perhaps most important, how do transitional voters incorporate new information about parties' goals and actions into their assessments?

The failure to form cohesive organizations and intensify mass partisan attachments in Russia speaks to the limited capacity of party organizations to mobilize, aggregate, or incorporate mass interests into the governing process and does not bode well for democratic consolidation. Prior to 2003 parties failed to solve either the elite- or mass-level collective action problems inherent in democratic governance. The party organizations and party system thus failed to provide an adequate challenge as President Putin used the superpresidential regime structure to eliminate rivals and weaken the parties themselves. The current rise of the Unity organization rests almost entirely on the president's monopoly over political resources and increasing levels of coercion. The long-term implications of weak parties for Russian consolidation remain to be seen, but the dramatic shifts in the party organizations and party system in the 2003–2004 election cycle underscore danger inherent in electoral competition that is not structured by institutionalized parties.

Appendix: The Survey Samples

I drew the samples for all surveys from the same populations but did not intend to construct a panel study. Interviewers targeted regional party functionaries such as chairpersons and vice-chairs of regional organizations and members of the party's advisory committee, working groups, and departments. All respondents were active in party work at the time of the survey. In the later two rounds of surveys, we asked whether or not the respondents were also candidates. Between one-fourth and one-third of the sample also ran for national office.

The survey includes a countrywide sample with more than 360 respondents in seventeen regions and eight to ten parties in each survey. The sample translates into roughly fifty-three respondents per party countrywide, or three respondents per party in each region. Practical considerations precluded the possibility of assessing all forty-three parties that participated in the Russian 1995 elections or even the twenty-six that participated in 1999. To restrict the number of parties sampled, we chose parties that successfully won seats in the 1993 Duma and had credible showings in the 1995 legislative election. This included the Communists (KPRF), the Liberal Democrats (LDPR), Yabloko, and Our Home Is Russia (NDR). We also included the rising Fatherland-All Russia and Unity parties because of the high

226

expectations placed on these parties during the campaign period and their proximity to state power.

We sampled equally from these party organizations in seventeen *oblasts* or regions geographically dispersed across Russia, including Vologda, Voronezh, Sverdlovsk, Republic of Tartarstan, Kemerovo, Kostroma, Krasnodarsk, Krasnoiarsk, Kursk, Moscow, Novosibersk, Republic of Karelia, Saint Petersburg, Saratov, Republic of Bashkortostan, Chelyabinsk, and Yaroslavl. Focus on the *oblast* maximizes contextual differences such as economic base (industrial, mining, or agricultural), demographic distributions such as ethnicity, age, and education, and variation in party success across regions. In addition, we included the large national centers of Moscow and St. Petersburg that have tended to be the focus of party development.

NOTES

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2. Ted Brader and Joshua A. Tucker, "The Emergence of Mass Partisanship in Russia, 1993–1996," *American Journal of Political Science*, 45 (January 2001), 69–83; Timothy Colton, *Transitional Citizens: Voters and What Influences Them in the New Russia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), ch. 4; Arthur H. Miller and Thomas F. Klobucar, "The Development of Party Identification in Post-Soviet Societies," *American Journal of Political Science*, 44 (October 2000), 667–86. Preliminary findings from 2003 are based on data collected by Timothy Colton, Henry Hale, and Michael McFaul, presented at the conference Kremlin Power and the 2003 Elections, February 28–29, 2004, at Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, and expanded in Timothy Colton and Henry Hale, "Context and Party System Development: Voting Behavior in Russian Parliamentary Elections in Comparative Perspective," paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, September 3, 2004.

3. John H. Aldrich, *Why Parties?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Samuel P. Huntington, "Political Development and Political Decay," *World Politics*, 17 (April 1965), 386–430; E. E. Schattschneider *Party Government* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1942).

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7. For discussion of the variation in measurement of partisanship, see Brader and Tucker, pp. 70–71; Colton, pp. 110–16; Miller and Klobucar, pp. 668–73; Stephen White, Richard Rose, and Ian McAllister, *How Russia Votes* (Chatham: Chatham House, 1997), pp. 135–141.

8. Richard Rose, Neil Munro, and Stephen White, "Voting in a Floating Party System: The 1999 Duma Election," *Europe-Asia Studies*, 53 (May 2001), 419–43.

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10.   Herbert Kitschelt and Regina Smyth, "Programmatic Party Cohesion in Emerging Postcommunist Democracies: Russia in Comparative Context," *Comparative Political Studies*, 35 (December 2002), 1228–56; Regina A. Smyth, "Building State Capacity from the Inside Out: Parties of Power and the Success of the President's Reform Agenda in Russia," *Politics and Society,* 30 (December 2002), 555–78.

11.   Brader and Tucker, pp. 78–79; Miller and Klobucar, p. 668.

12.   Colton, p. 136; Colton and Hale.

13.   Miller and Klobucar, p. 675.

14.   Brader and Tucker, p. 71.

15.   Miller and Klobucar, p. 684.

16.   Gary Cox, *The Efficient Secret: The Cabinet and the Development of Political Parties in Victorian England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

17.   Herbert Kitschelt, Zdenka Mansfeldova, Radoslaw Markowski, and Gabor Toka, *Post-Communist Party Systems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Stokes, pp. 243–67.

18.   Alan Ware, "Activist-Leader Relations and the Structure of Political Parties: 'Exchange' Models and Vote-Seeking Behaviour in Parties," *British Journal of Political Science*, 22 (January 1992), 71–92.

19.   For example, individual parties' assessments of salience for the issue of priorities during transition ranged from 7.94 (LDPR) to 9.66 (KPRF) on a ten point scale in the fourth round of survey. Means are not significantly different across parties. The salience on foreign policy issues in the same round ranged from 7.34 (Yabloko) to 8.34 (SPS). Fourth round system level salience ratings for the economic issues examined in this analysis were 8.4, 8.5, and 8.8. The average salience for the foreign policy issues is 7.8, placing it among the lowest ranked of all of the issues included in the survey.

20.   Timothy Colton and Michael McFaul, "Reinventing Russia's Party of Power: 'Unity' and the 1999 Duma Election," *Post-Soviet Affairs,* 16 (July-September 2001), 201–24; Smyth, "Building State Capacity," pp. 555–78.

21.   For a discussion of party platforms, see Michael McFaul, Nikolai Petrov, and Andrei Ryabov, *Primer on Russia's 1999 Duma Elections* (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999).

22.   For a definition of regime divide, see Anna Grzymala-Busse, "Coalition Formation and the Regime Divide in New Democracies: East Central Europe," *Comparative Politics*, 34 (October 2001), 85.

23.   This measure corrects for biases built into the assessment by differences in individuals' assessments of the end points of the scale.

24.   These differences are confirmed by f-tests that show that the cohesiveness scores of the parties are significantly different from the other groups.

25.   Kitschelt and Smyth.

26.   Christopher K. Ansell and Steven L. Fish, "The Art of Being Indispensable: Noncharismatic Personalism," *Comparative Political Studies*, 32 (May 1999), 383–12.

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