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### Presidentialism and the Development of Party Systems in Hybrid Regimes: Russia 2000-2003

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# Presidentialism and the Development of Party Systems in Hybrid Regimes: Russia 2000–2003

TANYA BAGASHKA

## *Abstract*

This article addresses the relationship between presidentialism and democracy by examining the role of parties in legislative bargaining in the 2000–2003 Russian *Duma*. Using a novel methodological approach, I empirically identify legislative voting coalitions to investigate whether the president's preference for party-based legislative bargaining prevailed. I find that in contrast to the 1996–1999 *Duma*, legislative voting coalitions closely followed party lines and that factions representing narrow interests were less relevant. The results demonstrate that presidential politics dominates electoral incentives in this political system and, more broadly, that political parties could be indispensable for regimes in transition to authoritarianism.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF PRESIDENTIALISM FOR PARTY strength and democratisation in general have attracted significant scholarly attention in the field of comparative politics. Here I revisit this relationship focusing on the Russian case in 2000–2003, which defies the conventional wisdom. The Russian political system in the 1990s, when it was as democratic as it has ever been, was characterised by weak and fragmented parties and the political dominance of non-party actors such as oligarchs and regional governors. By contrast, parties became more influential in the electoral and legislative arena as Russia started sliding in an authoritarian direction after 2000. That political parties had out-competed non-party challengers by the mid-2000s has been well established by previous studies (Hale 2006; Gel'man 2008). I address the transition to a dominant party authoritarian regime, focusing on the 2000–2003 *Duma* convocation, where the president had not yet achieved a 'large and subservient majority' (Cox & Morgenstern 2002, p. 451).

In previous research, opinions are divided on whether the president's preference for a dominant role for political parties in the legislative arena prevailed (Thames 2007; Remington 2006b). Using a novel methodological approach, which empirically identifies legislative voting coalitions based on individual voting records, I revisit this question. Was the president able to impose his bargaining style given the complex institutional incentives and the prior dominance of non-party actors such as narrow

regional or business interests? Examining the question of whether parties had the dominant role in the 2000–2003 *Duma* can give us insights about the ability of presidents to influence legislative voting in a hybrid regime characterised by strong presidential prerogatives and personalist electoral incentives. Russia in the Yel'tsin period and the first Putin term could be characterised as an electoral democracy that lacked many of the features of consolidated liberal democracies. While most democratic norms were observed in the electoral arena, arbitrary practices that interfered with individual freedoms were widespread; civil society was weak; the parliament, the judiciary and political parties lacked strength or independence. Party competition was not competition among programmatic ideals, but competition among organisations representing narrow regional or business interests; clientelist practices were pervasive. Many political parties lacked developed party organisations and strong ties to broad societal sectors. Whether legislative bargaining in this convocation was party-based and whether the Russian President was successful in using the presidential party and its allies as a tool for achieving political monopoly in the legislative arena, can also shed light on the indispensability of parties for regimes in transition to authoritarianism. I find that in contrast to the patterns I identified in Bagashka (2008) in the 1996–1999 *Duma*, legislative voting coalitions in the 1999–2003 *Duma* follow party lines much more closely, which demonstrates that presidential politics in this system dominate electoral incentives and that strong parties could be indispensable for authoritarian leaders. The study of the Russian case provides valuable insights on the effects of presidentialism in hybrid regimes with mixed electoral rules and unconsolidated parties and on its consequences for democratisation more generally.

#### *Presidentialism and democratisation*

Whether presidentialism compared to parliamentarism is more conducive to democracy has been extensively studied. The debate is far from settled, but the bulk of the literature argues in favour of parliamentarism. These claims rest on a number of logical arguments and empirical findings. According to Linz (1990, 1994), the major perils of presidentialism are its rigidity, zero-sum elections and dual legitimacy. The fixed terms of office make removing unpopular presidents or keeping in office popular ones very difficult. Its 'winner-take-all' logic does not contribute to political stability because the direct election does not motivate presidents to make compromises and build broad political coalitions. The dual legitimacy of the executive and the legislature and the absence of a mechanism such as the vote of no confidence in parliamentary systems, reduce the ability of presidents to resolve conflicts through constitutional means and reduce the likelihood of compromise necessary for a democratic system (Linz 1990, 1994; Mainwaring & Shugart 1997; Stepan & Skach 1993). Recent empirical studies either find no evidence that one regime type is superior (Power & Gasiorowski 1997) or favour parliamentarism (Hadenius 1994; Przeworski *et al.* 1996).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Presidentialism has been defended by Horowitz (1990), Mainwaring (1993) and Shugart and Carey (1992), among others.

While there is some agreement on the negative consequences of presidentialism for democratisation, whether the disadvantages of presidentialism are reinforced by a multiparty system is the subject of a heated debate. According to Mainwaring (1993) and Jones (1995), presidentialism is more likely to lead to gridlock between the executive and the legislature in multiparty than in two-party systems. In multiparty systems, presidents lack legislative majorities and are forced to build *ad hoc* coalitions on important issues. Multipartism encourages ideological polarisation and makes it more difficult to maintain multiparty coalitions that support governments put together by the executive due to the lack of commitment by legislative parties, even by those with government posts (Mainwaring 1993, p. 200). Several works have recently challenged this perspective (Cheibub 2002; Cheibub & Limongi 2002; Cox & Morgenstern 2002). According to Cheibub (2002), minority presidents and governments are more likely in multiparty systems, but they are not associated with a greater likelihood of legislative deadlock or the collapse of democratic regimes. Contrary to the arguments of Mainwaring (1993) and Jones (1995) that presidential democracies are less likely to survive under multipartism, Cheibub finds that the relationship between the durability of presidential democracies and the number of effective parties is not monotonic: presidential democracies with more than five effective parties are more likely to survive than those with fewer than five effective parties (Cheibub 2002, p. 299).<sup>2</sup> Similarly, Power and Gasiorowski (1997) do not find empirical support for parliamentarism's superiority in sustaining democratic multiparty regimes.

Presidentialism is often seen not only as inimical to democracy in multiparty systems (Mainwaring 1992, 1997), but also as a major cause of fragmented multiparty systems and undisciplined parties such as those in Brazil, the Philippines, and more recently, in South Korea. As the Brazilian case demonstrates, reliance on particularistic cross-party coalitions could reinforce the fragmentation of the party system. According to Linz, 'the idea of a more disciplined and responsible party system is structurally in conflict, if not incompatible, with pure presidentialism' (Valenzuela & Linz 1994, p. 35). The lack of a presidential majority in the legislature in presidential systems forces presidents to encourage divisions within legislative parties or to distribute patronage to buy the support of individual deputies and build regional clientelistic alliances. A president's ability to divide political parties will depend on electoral rules, namely, on the extent to which they encourage the personal vote. Presidentialism is seen as especially inimical to strong parties, and thus to democratisation, in countries with personalistic electoral rules. Lamounier (1994) cautions against the introduction of presidentialism in electoral systems that discourage party discipline such as the Brazilian one. Ames (1995, 2001, 2002) finds that Brazilian presidents bought legislative support through pork-barrel spending, perpetuating the weak party system reinforced by personalistic electoral rules.

Whether presidents favour strong parties also depends on the strength of the presidential party in the legislature, party discipline and the ideological closeness of the opposition. According to Valenzuela and Linz (1994), presidents would favour party

<sup>2</sup>A system with three or four parties of almost equal strength is especially conducive to instability under presidentialism as each of these parties will strive to implement its own programme either alone or in alternating coalitions (Cheibub 2002).

strength only if they are assured a majority in the congress, wish to have a majority, or if parties other than the president's have policy platforms close to the president's (Amorim Neto 1995; Valenzuela & Linz 1994). While party weakness is blamed on presidentialism, even the critics of presidentialism acknowledge that presidents' reliance on anti-party tactics is often driven by the pre-existing fragmentation of the party system, which makes reliance on party channels impossible. Still, presidentialism is often seen as conducive to fragmented multipartism and given how essential parties are for the functioning of democracy, its effects on party systems could be another impediment to successful democratic consolidation.

While according to the dominant view in the literature, presidentialism is not conducive to strong parties in democratic systems, presidents in non-democratic regimes have often achieved political monopoly through establishing a single party, suppressing other forms of representation. The dominant party in such regimes secures electoral victories for the authoritarian leader, controls congress, mobilises broad political support for the leader, and resolves conflicts within the political elite. Examples of such regimes are the Soviet Union under the CPSU, Mexico under the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party), Zimbabwe under the Zimbabwe African National Union (before and after 1992), and Azerbaijan under the Aliyevs and YAP (New Azerbaijan Party) (Remington & Reuter 2009).

To sum up, according to the literature on presidentialism and democratisation, presidentialism is generally associated with democratic failure and weak parties, especially under multipartism, unless the president decides to consolidate his political position through the establishment of a dominant party system, which however, might lead to sliding in an authoritarian direction. In line with the dominant view in the comparative politics literature, many studies of Russia blame presidentialism for inter-institutional conflict, deadlock in the Russian parliament and the failure of parties to consolidate (Linz & Stepan 1996; Sartori 1997; Shugart 1998; Fish 2003; Shvetsova 2003). However, the Russian experience of the 1990s and 2000s defies the conventional wisdom about the relationship between presidentialism, party strength and democratisation. In the Russian case, parties were weak when the political regime was at its most competitive and strong when it was sliding in an authoritarian direction.

As much research argues, parties failed to achieve dominance in the organisation of the Russian polity in the transition to democracy and a market economy in the 1990s (McFaul 1999; Reddaway 1994; Rose 1995; Rutland 2003; Stoner-Weiss 2001). Russian presidential candidates avoided formal party affiliation in all presidential elections. Party affiliation played an insignificant role in regional elections and legislatures (Stoner-Weiss 2001). In national parliamentary elections, many parties lacked coherent platforms or appeared only to disappear in subsequent elections. While electoral volatility did not directly affect the cohesiveness of parliamentary parties in the 1990s (Chaisty 2005a), both the 1996–1999 and the 2000–2003 parliaments featured a high level of fragmentation: there were 9.3 effective parties in the 1996–1999 *Duma* and 5.9 in the 2000–2003 *Duma*.<sup>3</sup> Whether Russia's regime in the

<sup>3</sup>This is the number of effective parliamentary parties based on the number of seats in the *Duma*, based on Taagepera and Shugart's (1989) measure.

1990s was democratic or not,<sup>4</sup> it was the most competitive regime Russia ever experienced.

By the late 2000s, formal political parties had out-competed non-party politicians. The dominance of parties in the political arena was accompanied by a rapid decline of Russia's democratic institutions, which defies conventional wisdom. Russia's political regime experienced a deep transformation in the late 2000s: the emergence of a non-democratic party-based regime, characterised by the dominance of United Russia (*Edinaya Rossiya*). The dominant party encouraged the establishment of several satellite parties, such as *Rodina* in the 2003 election or Just Russia (*Spravedlivaya Rossiya*) in the 2007 election, and tolerated their existence, as long as they did not challenge the hegemony of the dominant party. The dominance of political parties in the electoral and legislative arena is seen by the students of Russia as a consequence of President Putin's preference for a 'dominant party-based authoritarian regime' (Gel'man 2008, p. 915), as opposed to personalist or military authoritarian regimes (Geddes 2003). Dominant party regimes are characterised by the dominance of a single party that has strong ties to the authoritarian leaders; has access to state power and resources and uses them to maintain its dominance; and violates the constitution to control electoral and other political outcomes (Gel'man 2006; Remington & Reuter 2009). In the aftermath of Yel'tsin's personalist semi-democratic regime, the Kremlin invested in the development of a dominant party, which ensured the preservation of Russia's authoritarian regime even after the presidential succession in 2008. The transition to authoritarianism in Russia is distinguished by the structure of its party-based regime, described by Wilson (2005, pp. 119–50) as a multilayered pie. The dominant party, United Russia, which has monopolised political life, is at the top of the hierarchy. Opinions on whether United Russia is a monolithic entity are divided. According to Remington & Reuter (2009), even though the legislative party is cohesive in its support for the government agenda, it has become a coalition of factions that represent particularistic interests and bargain before legislation reaches the floor. According to Gel'man (2008), the party is a highly centralised organisation where dissent is not allowed and even discussion is regulated by the Kremlin. The second layer is composed of United Russia's satellites such as the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (*Liberal'no Demokraticheskaya Partiya Rossii*, LDPR) and Just Russia. The existence of these parties is tolerated by the Kremlin if they are willing to either serve as loyal alternatives to the party of power or to split the vote for opposition parties. The opposition parties on the left and right, such as the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (*Kommunisticheskaya Partiya Rossiiskoi Federatsiya*, KPRF), or Union of Right Forces (*Soyuz Pravykh Sil*, SPS), which exerted significant influence on Russian political life in the 1990s, constitute the bottom layer of the pie. Whether due to institutional factors unfavourable to strong parties, such as presidentialism, and the institutional changes of the 2000s, such as the increase in the threshold for parliamentary representation or the 'imposed consensus' (Gel'man 2003) of elites,

<sup>4</sup>The Freedom House classified Russia as a 'partially free regime' (Freedom House, *Freedom in the World*, available at: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=439>, accessed 10 October 2011).

which was not conducive to opposition political protest (Tarrow 1994, pp. 88, 89), opposition parties have become politically irrelevant.

According to Gel'man (2008), Putin's preference for a dominant party authoritarian regime was a rational choice of the least costly strategy. The 'soft personalist' regime that emerged in Russia in the 1990s and was maintained until the early 2000s, an electoral democracy plagued by pervasive clientelism, was highly unpopular in the aftermath of Yel'tsin's unsuccessful rule. A major downside of the 'soft personalist' regime was that it allowed for the formation of alternative elite coalitions that could potentially outmanoeuvre the ruling coalition as demonstrated by the establishment of Fatherland-All Russia (*Otechestvo-Vsya Rossiya*). A 'hard personalist' or a military authoritarian regime, such as the one in Belarus or Turkmenistan, would have also been too costly for the ruling elites as it would necessitate investment in a significant coercive apparatus and would lead to the disapproval of the international community or to political turmoil in the case of leadership succession (Gel'man 2008).

According to most accounts, Russia turned into a dominant party regime in the late 2000s (Gel'man 2008; Remington 2008). Legislative dominance of the presidential party was achieved earlier: after the 2003 election, United Russia acquired a 'large and subservient majority' (Cox & Morgenstern 2002, p. 451). About 80% of the deputies were members of United Russia, which significantly reduced the coalition-building costs of the president and allowed him to implement important institutional changes that reinforced the dominance of the presidential party. Several studies have established the voting cohesion of the presidential party and its allies in that period (Remington 2006b; Chaisty 2005a, 2005b). At the beginning of the 2000–2003 convocation, the subject of the current investigation, the presidential party did not have a majority. Still, the 2000–2003 *Duma* was very different from its predecessors in several respects. Unlike the previous convocation, the leftist (anti-government) parties did not enjoy a legislative majority. The presidential approach to parties and legislative coalition building was also very different. In contrast to Yel'tsin, who avoided being associated with a political party and relied on buying the support of individual, usually single mandate district (SMD) deputies from different parties, Putin publicly committed to Unity (*Edinstvo*) and his staff attempted to build a party-based presidential majority (Remington 2003, 2006b). Putin openly declared his preference for a party-dominated political system. At Unity's convention in February 2000, Putin advocated a 'workable' party system based on two, three or four parties. In order to achieve this outcome, Putin's staff intervened in inter-party negotiations to build a minimal winning coalition that allocated the *Duma* speakership and committee chairmanships in a manner that favoured them. In addition, the president and his staff created a council in the *Duma* that would coordinate the voting of the four pro-presidential factions (Unity, People's Deputy (*Narodny Deputat*), Fatherland-All Russia and Russia's Regions (*Rossiiskie Regiony, RR*)).

What effect this party-based presidential strategy had on the strength of legislative parties is less clear. According to Thames (2007), while Yel'tsin's clientelist strategy led to divisions within legislative parties in the 1996–1999 *Duma*, Putin did not have to resort to providing individual SMD deputies with patronage they could use to build a personal vote. He was able to rely on a more efficient strategy, namely building a stable majority by relying on the support of the presidential party and other parties

whose ideological preferences were similar. As a result, parties were not divided over presidential support along electoral mandate lines. According to Remington (2006b), party membership had only 'some influence' on support for the president across issues, which demonstrates that the devices Putin used were not completely effective. While some members of the presidential 'Coalition of the Four' such as Unity and Fatherland-All Russia consistently supported the presidential agenda, others, such as Russia's Regions, did not. As a result, Putin had to resort to the votes of parties from outside this coalition that would provide ideologically-based or patronage-based bloc support.

Here I investigate whether the president's preference for stronger parties in the *Duma* led to the greater importance of formal parties in legislative bargaining. Did the presidential coalition-building strategy lead to a cohesive party-based majority through the use of 'institutional manipulation' and the distribution of patronage or on the contrary, was it unable to overcome the personalistic incentives that the SMD deputies from the deputy groups faced, as Remington (2006a) suggests? Did the reliance on patronage-based bloc support lead to intra-party divisions or cross-party coalitions? Would we describe the major actors in the 2000–2003 *Duma* as formal political parties or as non-party actors such as coalitions representing particular business or regional interests? Was the president able to impose his bargaining style given the complex institutional incentives and the political context?

Whether parties had the dominant role in this convocation can shed light on the ability of presidents to influence legislative voting in a hybrid regime characterised by strong presidential prerogatives and personalist electoral incentives. The role of formal parties in legislative bargaining in this convocation can also help us understand the process of building a dominant party authoritarian regime in a presidential system (Gel'man 2008). The 2000–2003 *Duma* was an important convocation not only because it was very productive and passed important reform legislation; it was also important because in this convocation Putin, through his 'manufactured' presidential majority, passed institutional reform legislation that contributed to the decline of non-party actors in Russian politics and the political hegemony of the presidential party.<sup>5</sup> As previous studies have shown, political parties could be indispensable not only for democracies, as conventional wisdom would suggest, but also for non-democracies (Gel'man 2008; Reuter & Remington 2009). Could they also be indispensable for regimes in transition to authoritarianism? Could political parties serve as a mechanism for monopolising political power?

While the conventional party-based approaches that analyse the behaviour of formal parties have provided many valuable insights, they cannot establish whether formal parties dominated legislative bargaining in the 2000–2003 *Duma*. They can establish whether presidential support or local pressures contributed to divisions within legislative parties or lead to variation in party discipline across political parties, but do not allow for a comparison of the relative influence of these factors, as they are based on political parties as the unit of analysis. The method we apply identifies voting

<sup>5</sup>For instance, in 2001–2003, the government and the State *Duma* launched a reform of regional electoral rules aimed at improving the performance of United Russia in regional legislatures (Golosov 2004).



coalitions, groups of deputies voting consistently across issues, based on the analysis of roll call data. I use this method in Bagashka (2008) to investigate the relative influence of party pressure, constituency influence and presidential politics on the structure of legislative coalitions in the 1996–1999 *Duma* and find that although party affiliation significantly structured legislative coalitions, constituency pressures and presidential support contributed to splits within clientelist legislative parties that lacked a coherent and unifying ideology. Employing this method to investigate the structure of legislative coalitions in the first Putin term allows us to address interesting questions that shed light on the relationship between presidentialism, multipartism and democratisation. Did Putin's party-based majority-building approach lead to a dominant role for political parties in the absence of major changes in the rules of the game, such as the electoral system or the distribution of power between the federal centre and the regions, but in the presence of much stronger legislative support compared to the Yel'tsin period? Did the change in the presidential bargaining approach in the Putin period lead to the diminished importance of clientelist sub-party or cross-party groups of SMD deputies that were important players in the 1996–1999 *Duma* (Bagashka 2008)? Should we expect a dominant role for political parties in this political system? Important factors that would affect the ability of the president to establish a working relationship with a small number of parties should be affected by different kinds of institutional incentives, the partisan composition of the *Duma*, the pre-existing strength or weakness of political parties, and the political context.

#### *Institutional incentives*

The president has the most powerful position in the Russian political system. The president nominates the prime minister who then nominates the government, but the nominee has to be approved by the *Duma*. In case the *Duma* refuses to approve the presidential candidate three consecutive times, the president can dissolve the *Duma* and hold new parliamentary elections. The *Duma* can hold a vote of no confidence in the government, which the president can ignore the first time it is passed, but upon a second vote of no confidence, he has to either dismiss the government or dissolve the *Duma*.<sup>6</sup> The president has veto power, but a presidential veto can be overridden by a two-thirds majority of the *Duma* and the Federation Council (the upper house of parliament). The president also has decree-making power, subject to the limitation that the decree does not contradict the constitution or existing legislation. However, the decree can be superseded by laws passed by the parliament. For this reason, legislation has been more stable when it was not introduced by a decree (Haspel *et al.* 1998; Remington 2003, p. 39). The president usually had to obtain the support of a parliamentary majority in order to pass legislation of interest (Haspel *et al.* 1998; Troxel 2003).<sup>7</sup> Thus, even though the powers of the president are exceptionally strong,

<sup>6</sup>There are some restrictions to this right. The president cannot dissolve the *Duma* within one year of its election, or once it has supported impeachment charges against the president, or once the president has declared a state of national emergency, or within six months of the expiration of the president's term.

<sup>7</sup>The president cannot put an issue to a popular referendum without the *Duma*'s approval, nor can he block one. The president is not made the chief executive, but he can appoint and remove deputy

the *Duma*, mostly due to its ability to pass legislation that supersedes presidential decrees, was able to serve as an important check on presidential power in the Yel'tsin period.

The ability of the president to command party discipline from the members of the presidential coalition and his ability to obtain support from individual members of the opposition depends also on electoral incentives. In the first four *Duma* elections (1993, 1995, 1999 and 2003), 225 deputies were elected in single-member districts. The remaining 225 deputies were elected from closed national party lists of the parties that cleared the 5% electoral threshold.<sup>8</sup> Thus, some legislative parties were composed of only SMD deputies, who had to win a local election and were more dependent on strong personal reputation. Some of the legislative voting in the Yel'tsin period indicated that SMD deputies were less disciplined than their fellow party members elected from party lists (Thames 2001, 2005), but others have found inconsistent support for differences in party discipline along mandate lines (Smith & Remington 2001). Remington (2006a) finds no evidence of differences in presidential support along electoral mandate lines in the 2000–2003 *Duma*. Other legislative parties had balanced numbers of PR and SMD deputies or were composed of only PR deputies, who faced stronger incentives to succumb to the party leadership as they were dependent for a placement on the national party list.<sup>9</sup>

The incentives to follow the party line vary not only by electoral mandate, but also by party affiliation, which was purely legislative affiliation for many SMD deputies. In the 1993–2003 period, parties did not control the nomination process in the SMD contests.<sup>10</sup> In the 1999 election, 38% of candidates ran as independents. The lack of party affiliation at the electoral stage did not deprive elected candidates of access to the privileges of party memberships. The deputies who ran unaffiliated could form a legislative party as long as they met the minimum size requirement of 35 deputies.<sup>11</sup> Both the parliamentary branches of electoral parties and the deputy groups are usually referred to as *fraktsii*, or factions. Here I will refer to both as legislative parties, in order to avoid confusion with the usual meaning of 'faction' used later in the discussion to refer to intra-party voting blocs.

prime ministers and other ministers without parliamentary approval. Still, these decisions have to be made 'on the proposal' of the prime minister.

<sup>8</sup>In all *Duma* elections from 1993 to 2003, Russian voters had two votes: one for a national party list and another for a representative in a single-member district. The two tiers were not formally linked: there were no compensatory seats. In 2005, electoral reforms proposed by President Putin eliminated the single-member district seats at the expense of the proportional representation. Thus, all 450 seats are filled on the basis of party lists competing in the all-Russian federal electoral district. The reforms also raised the electoral threshold to 7%. The new system became effective in the 2007 election.

<sup>9</sup>Studies of legislative voting in Ukraine and Hungary have not identified an electoral mandate divide (Herron 2002; Morlang 2004; Thames 2005).

<sup>10</sup>To compete in the SMDs, candidates could either meet the signature requirement equal to 1% of the number of registered voters in the district, or run as candidates for a political party. They could also run simultaneously on a party list and in a single-member district.

<sup>11</sup>The leaders of both kinds of legislative parties, those based on electoral parties and the deputy groups, could become members of the Council of the *Duma* (the steering body), and were entitled to office space, secretarial assistance, rights to recognition on the floor, and access to committee assignments. In the fourth *Duma*, elected in 2003, the minimum size requirement for factions was increased to 55.

The effects of these electoral incentives on the ability of the president to build cross-party majorities are not straightforward. On the one hand, the PR component of the mixed system should encourage party discipline that would allow the president to command discipline from his allies in a party-based coalition. On the other hand, the SMD component might motivate legislators to vote against presidential initiatives if they go against the interests of local constituencies. Given that most legislative parties included SMD deputies, these incentives might undermine the cohesiveness of a party-based majority. The particularistic incentives in the SMD component, however, might serve as an important political resource for the president. The president has significant access to patronage (material, electoral or policy benefits) (Remington 2006b, p. 8) that he could use to obtain the support of SMD deputies dependent on the personal vote.

*The legislative parties, 2000–2003*

In the 1999–2003 *Duma*, President Putin faced a much more favourable distribution of seats compared to the previous *Dumas*. In the 1993–1995 and 1996–1999 *Dumas*, it would have been very difficult to form a party-based coalition that excluded the Communists, their loyal allies the Agrarian Party of Russia (*Agrarnaya Partiya Rossii*) or *Yabloko* (*Rossiiskaya Ob'edinennaya Demokraticheskaya partiya YABLOKO*). In the 1996–1999 *Duma*, the joint percentage seat share of these three parties was about 50%. Maintaining a party-based coalition by obtaining the support of one or more of these parties' leaders would have been problematic due to the big ideological distance between them and the president and the potential high electoral costs of such an agreement. A formal agreement with Yel'tsin and any of these parties' leaders might have led to a significant drop in electoral support for the left or *Yabloko*, which criticised Yel'tsin's government for not being radical enough. An alliance with the Communists or the Agrarians, the descendants of the parties from the Soviet era, would have been especially costly for Yel'tsin, who rose to power 'wearing the hat of a crusader against Soviet tyranny' (Colton & McFaul 2003, p. 3).

In contrast, in the 1999–2003 *Duma* the Communists had a much lower percentage seat share, while the pro-government Unity had a much higher share (see Table 1), which allowed the creation of a party-based presidential coalition. It was now possible to build a majority based on a coalition of parties that were not ideologically opposed to Putin. While Fatherland-All Russia was a movement in opposition to the Kremlin, it was a newly created electoral alliance that lacked a coherent ideology: its only common cause was winning the election. The Liberal Democratic Party of Russia historically presented itself as an opposition party, but frequently supported Yel'tsin's bills, according to roll call analyses. SPS (Union of Right Forces), brought together liberals and competed with *Yabloko* for the democratic vote, but similar to Fatherland-All Russia was not a party with loyal membership; it was an electoral alliance. Thus, most opposition parties were either not based on ideology or were too young to develop a loyal membership. The only exceptions were the KPRF, the Agrarian Party and *Yabloko*. However, given the distribution of seats, their support was not essential. People's Deputy and Russia's Regions were deputy groups, purely legislative parties that did not contest the parliamentary elections. Party discipline in

TABLE I  
 FACTION COMPOSITION BY ELECTORAL MANDATE TYPE, JANUARY 2000

Faction	Independent	Russia's Regions		Communist Party of the Russian Federation		People's Deputy		Unity		Yabloko		Union of Right Forces		Fatherland-All Russia		Agramopromyshlennaya Gruppya (Agrarian Industrial Group)		Liberal Democratic Party of Russia		
SMD number	14	33	39	57	16	4	8	15	21	1										
%	78	87	44	98	23	19	24	23	68	6										
List number	4	5	50	1	65	17	24	30	20	16										
%	12	13	56	2	77	81	76	77	32	94										

those factions was further weakened by electoral incentives: the deputy groups were composed almost entirely of SMD deputies. Due to pressures from local constituencies, it was extremely hard to command party discipline from such parties, especially on distributive legislation. Given that their members did not rely on electoral support from the deputy group, their leaders had very few sanctions over their members. As a result, it was very difficult for the party leader not to break a commitment to support the president. Electoral incentives could affect party discipline in electoral parties as well because some of them, such as the Fatherland-All Russia and KPRF, had a significant number of SMD deputies (see Table 1).

### *The political context*

While political constraints such as the distribution of seats between pro-government and the opposition forces significantly affect presidential coalition building, we should not forget the role chance plays in politics, especially in new democracies (Hale 2004). The exogenous shocks to the political system in 1999 and the resulting extremely strong public support for Putin, provided incentives for the leaders of legislative parties to cooperate with him. The decisiveness Putin demonstrated in the aftermath of the 1999 bombings in Moscow and two other Russian cities by ordering a large-scale military operation in Chechnya, transformed a largely unknown administrator into a popular national leader who was perceived as capable of restoring stability and order (Hale 2004).

Putin's approval rating improved dramatically after the bombings: just 2% saw him as their presidential choice in August 1999, but by the end of the year he was the choice of 50%.<sup>12</sup> In 1999, Unity and Putin were seen by voters as the players that could best cope with the issues that had plagued Russia for a long time (Colton & McFaul 2003, p. 215). Under such conditions, cooperating with the president in the establishment of a workable and more institutionalised relationship was less likely to lead to electoral punishments, even for anti-government parties.

In the circumstances of the late 1990s, ending the conflictual relationship between the executive and the legislature was a 'pragmatic response' to the arrangements Putin inherited from the Yel'tsin era (Colton & McFaul 2003, p. 217). Yel'tsin, unwilling to commit to a political party that might constrain his future policy choices (Hale 2006, p. 54), built support by making concessions to regional governors and local business groups. This led to the unintended disproportionate power of these groups and the devolution of state power. In these circumstances, Putin tried to negotiate a less costly arrangement. Building a more institutionalised relationship between himself and the *Duma* by obtaining the *ex ante* bloc support of several party leaders was a step in this direction (Remington 2006b). This effort can be better understood in the broader context of Putin's function as a leader.

### *Hypotheses*

Putin preferred a legislature dominated by several disciplined parties, as his speeches and actions reveal. Relying on party-based bargaining was a rational decision: it was

<sup>12</sup>*Izvestiya*, 30 January 2000.

cheaper to obtain the *ex ante* support of one or more like-minded (or at least not ideologically opposed) party leaders than to build *ad hoc* majorities on important pieces of legislation through patronage (Remington 2006b; Thames 2007). Through institutional manipulation such as inter-party coordination and involvement in the distribution of committee chairmanship, the presidential administration could offer the members of the presidential coalition political benefits available only to political parties, which in turn allowed party leaders to command discipline from party members. Should we expect the presidential preferences to prevail given the political environment of the 1999–2003 *Duma*? A large and subservient majority was absent, but manufacturing one was possible given the favourable partisan distribution of the *Duma*. However, electoral incentives, such as the incentive to cater to local constituency pressures or regional business interests, might interfere with party discipline within the presidential coalition. This might undermine party discipline in parties with significant numbers of SMD deputies such as Fatherland-All Russia and especially in deputy groups such as Russia's Regions. While the implications of the complex incentives in the *Duma* are not straightforward, given the strong prerogatives of the president in the Russian system, I expect the effects of presidential politics to override the effects of constituency or special interests. It has been established that the Russian President has not only extensive formal powers, but also access to significant amounts of patronage. The president and his administration could reward loyal supporters with material, electoral and policy benefits, thus reducing the incentives for SMD deputies to support particularistic policies and defect from the party line (Remington 2006a). Thus, where institutional manipulation was unsuccessful due to particularistic incentives, the president could resort to using patronage, overriding the effect of electoral incentives.

#### *Methods and data*

To identify legislative voting coalitions, I use discrete latent variable analysis.<sup>13</sup> A deputy's voting record is modelled using several voting patterns. A voting pattern can be conceptualised as the probability of voting in a particular way for each roll call, assuming independence between individual deputies' votes. According to the statistical model, each deputy has proportional membership in a number of blocs and each bloc has its own voting pattern. Bloc membership is a latent variable and is estimated. The blocs are identified on the basis of similarities in voting behaviour, regardless of the deputies' formal party membership. In other words, instead of assuming that deputies vote along party lines, using this method I identify voting alignments empirically based on similarities in roll call records. The identified voting blocs, each described by its voting pattern, are the groups that best fit the data (for more details on the method, see the Appendix). The similarities in voting behaviour could be driven by ideological preferences, local constituency influences, or other factors. Because, in contrast to the conventional party-based approaches, this approach is not based on the assumption that parties are the relevant actors in the Russian legislature, it is the method best

<sup>13</sup>For more details on the methodology, see Buntine and Jakulin (2004, 2006), Bagashka (2008), and Spirling and Quinn (2010) for a similar methodology.

suiting to addressing the question of whether Putin was successful in his effort to make political parties the major actors in the legislative arena. After identifying the dominant legislative alignments, I examine the characteristics of the voting blocs and their voting behaviour to investigate which institutional incentives—local pressures or presidential politics—exerted the strongest impact on the structure of legislative voting coalitions. The appropriate number of blocs can be selected on the basis of post-estimation measures of model fit (see Figure A1 in the Appendix).

### *Empirical results*

The structure of legislative coalitions in the 1999–2003 *Duma* is very different from the one I identified in Bagashka (2008). Overall, legislative voting coalitions in the 1999–2003 *Duma* follow party lines much more closely. In the 2000–2003 *Duma*, only two out of nine parties split, as compared to four out of seven in the 1996–1999 *Duma*.<sup>14</sup> While in the 1996–1999 *Duma* only one voting bloc was party-based, namely the Liberal Democratic Party voting bloc,<sup>15</sup> in the 1999–2003 *Duma* I do not identify intra-party splits, except the one within the Communist Party and the Agrarian Party (see Table 1). To estimate how supportive of the president the identified blocs were and whether presidential support contributed to the identified intra-party splits and cross-party coalitions, I identify legislation important to the president using a list of presidential votes from Remington (2003). In addition to these votes, I identify presidential bills using analysts' opinions in multiple media sources, among which included *Kommersant*, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, *RFE/RE Newslines* and *East European Constitutional Review*. The presidential conformity score in Table 2 is calculated as the proportion of bloc members who voted according to the president's preference. Overall, the presidential conformity scores of the identified blocs are consistent with the generally accepted positions of the parties.

The only inter-party coalition is voting bloc 8, composed of members of Russia's Regions, a deputy group that represented the interests of the regions, and Fatherland-All Russia, the alliance created by regional elites shortly before the 1999 *Duma* election. Deputies from Russia's Regions, the deputy group of SMD deputies, traditionally lobbied for regional economic enterprises or governors. Coalescing in the legislative arena with Fatherland-All Russia, a party connected to the regional state apparatus and supported by regional financial and industrial groups, most likely helped the members of Russia's Regions advance local economic interest. Russia's Regions included many lobbyists for regional economic enterprises and executives (Thames 2000, 2001). The presidential conformity score of this voting coalition (54%), lower than that of Unity or the LDPR, demonstrates that while they supported most presidential initiatives as members of the presidential 'Coalition of the Four', the interests of their local constituencies made them defect frequently. In contrast to the 1996–1999 *Duma*, where Russia's Regions was divided over presidential support in

<sup>14</sup>Here I consider only groups of more than two deputies to be intra-party voting blocs. Decreasing the threshold for classifying a deputy to a voting bloc from 0.6 to 0.5 does not significantly change the observed patterns: a few additional deputies are classified to the already existing blocs.

<sup>15</sup>The rest were inter- or cross-party coalitions (see Bagashka 2008).

TABLE 2

	Agrarnopromyshlennaya Gruppya (Agrarian Industrial Group)	Communist Party of the Russian Federation	Yabloko	Russia's Regions	People's Deputy	Unity	Liberal Democratic Party	Fatherland- All Russia	Union of Right Forces
Bloc 1	4	1							
Bloc 2				1	20				
Bloc 3	4	22							
Bloc 4	17	39					14		
Bloc 5						69			
Bloc 6								2	
Bloc 7			5		2			40	
Bloc 8				9					24
Bloc 9	12	15	12	30	30	2	1	0	2
None*									

Notes: a deputy was classified to a bloc if he belongs to a bloc with probability equal to 0.6 or bigger.

\*The number of deputies from a party who belong to several blocs, i.e. do not belong to any of the blocs with high (40.6) probability.



TABLE 3  
PRESIDENTIAL CONFORMITY SCORE OF THE BLOCS, 1999–2003 *DUMA*

	<i>Score (%)</i>
Bloc 1	66
Bloc 2	50
Bloc 3	50
Bloc 4	54
Bloc 5	65
Bloc 6	60
Bloc 7	53
Bloc 8	54
Bloc 9	58

certain issue areas, in the 2000–2003 *Duma* there are no divisions within Russia's Regions. This is consistent with the argument that Yel'tsin's patronage-based coalition strategy, which relied on obtaining the support of individual deputies, contributed to intra-party splits, while Putin's party-based approach was conducive to party unity, even within the deputy groups. Unity, the Liberal Democratic Party and the Union of Right Forces have the highest presidential conformity scores (see Table 2). The high presidential conformity score of the LDPR is hardly surprising. It is well known that even though it presented itself as an opposition party, it was one of the most loyal Kremlin allies in the *Duma* that supported important government and presidential legislation and opposed initiatives of the opposition (Remington 2003). With the establishment of the parliamentary dominance of United Russia after the 2003 election, the LDPR's support in the *Duma* was not essential. In the 2000–2003 *Duma*, however, the LDPR was an important component of Putin's 'manufactured majority'.

The split within the Communist Party and the Agrarian Party does not seem to be driven by loyalty to the president: the presidential conformity scores of blocs 3 and 4 are indistinguishable from one another (50% and 54%, respectively).<sup>16</sup> The presidential conformity score of the KPRF estimated here is much higher than my estimate in Bagashka (2008) for the 1996–1999 *Duma* (37%). This is perhaps driven by the change in

<sup>16</sup>Examination of the voting behaviour of blocs 3 and 4 demonstrates that an issue that contributed to the divisions within the Agrarian and Communist parties was the federal dimension (the centralisation of power from the regions to the centre). Bloc 3 was more supportive than bloc 4 of the following presidential initiatives: the Law on Militia in its second reading, which allows the president to appoint the heads of the ministries of the interior of the subjects of the Federation without consulting the heads of their administration; the Law on Police (Agreement Commission Version), which similarly increased the prerogatives of the president to appoint and remove from office heads and chiefs of police departments in the Russian regions without consulting the regional heads; and the Principles of Organisation of Power in subjects of the Federation, which aimed at checking the devolution of power from the centre to the regions that started in the Yel'tsin period. Thus the federal dimension, which became much more salient in the Putin period, seems to have exposed divisions within the Communist Party. Nine deputies nominated by the KPRF joined the Agrarian Party, which explains the cross-party blocs 3 and 4. The Communist Party is known to have donated members to ideologically similar parliamentary parties such as the Agrarians in order to help them satisfy the minimum size requirement.

the KPRF bargaining power. The communists were the pivotal legislative party in the 1993–1995 and 1996–1999 *Dumas*. Aided by their ally, the Agrarian Party, they successfully blocked major government legislative initiatives, even though, according to Gel'man (2005), in 1996–1999 the KPRF tried to accommodate the ruling elites and changed from 'disloyal opposition' to 'semi-opposition' (Gel'man 2005, p. 234). After the 1999 election, the Communists lost their pivotal status. In the 2000–2003 convocation, the Communists attempted to become a junior coalition partner of the government and to that end they reached an agreement with Unity about the distribution of committee chairmanships and even managed to obtain control of the post of State *Duma* chairman. The gains for the Communists were minimal, however. After the Kremlin manufactured a majority which obtained control of all important committees, the KPRF had little bargaining power and turned into a 'cosmetic opposition' (Gel'man 2005, 2008; Remington 2003). After the 2003 election, when it lost almost half of its vote share, its influence further diminished without any prospect of serious political influence in the future. The KPRF's support for about half of the important presidential bills reflects its ambivalent position in the 2000–2003 *Duma*, as a party that has exhausted its potential as a mobilising anti-regime force that strives to be a coalition partner of the ruling group, but is not recognised as one due to its marginal status.

*Presidentialism and party development in Russia: some conclusions*

The results demonstrate that presidential politics had the strongest impact on the structure of legislative coalitions in this political environment. The presidential preference for party-based legislative bargaining seems to have prevailed. In the 1999–2003 *Duma* there were no intra-party divisions within the parties in the presidential 'Coalition of the Four'—Unity, Fatherland-All Russia, People's Deputy and Russia's Regions (see Table 1). The presidential proactive coalition-building strategy, which relied on active involvement in the distribution of committee seats, the promise of electoral assistance in future elections and negotiations over legislation before it was discussed on the floor of the *Duma* (Remington 2003, 2006a), ensured the cohesion of the parties in the presidential coalition. By helping the presidential coalition obtain political benefits available only to parties and distributing patronage where those were insufficient, the presidential administration motivated SMD deputies, including those from the deputy groups, to provide loyal support. This presidential strategy created pressures from local constituencies that made intra-party splits less relevant. Extending the analysis of legislative coalitions to the Putin period allows us to compare the structure of legislative voting coalitions under two very different majority-building styles, clientelist under Yel'tsin and party-based under Putin. While the former is associated with party fragmentation, the latter is associated with the dominance of parties in legislative bargaining and party cohesion within the presidential coalition. The contrast between the structure of legislative coalitions in the 1996–1999 and the 2000–2003 *Dumas* demonstrates that presidential politics in this system supersedes electoral incentives. In the absence of changes in the electoral system, incentives to build a personal vote stayed constant, but they were salient and led to intra-party splits only in the Yel'tsin period due to

his aversion to committing himself to a political party and to bargain with party leaders.

According to conventional wisdom, presidentialism is associated with or, alternatively, is the cause of, fragmented and undisciplined parties (Ames 1995, 2001, 2002; Valenzuela & Linz 1994). In the case under examination a president with very strong prerogatives was supportive of strong parties and was successful in establishing a party-based presidential coalition dominated by the pro-government party. This stands in contrast with most presidential systems, such as the Brazilian one, where the coalition-building efforts of minority presidents led to splits within legislative parties under personalistic electoral rules (Ames 1995, 2001, 2002; Lamounier 1994). Constructing such a majority in the Russian legislature was the optimal presidential response under the given partisan composition of the legislature and the political context. It was more efficient to use institutional manipulation to build party-based majorities based on the *ex ante* agreement of the leaders of the parties in the presidential 'Coalition of the Four' than to build *ad hoc* clientelist majorities based on patronage (Remington 2003; Thames 2007). Being loyal to the president was also rational for individual legislators as the presidential administration could supply them with electoral resources that nascent parties devoid of ideology or administrative resources could not (Hale 2006). In other words, the seeming paradox is a rational choice under the given political circumstances. This relationship between party strength and presidential support is consistent with Valenzuela and Linz's (1994) and Amorim Neto's (1995) argument that presidents would favour party strength if the opposition in parliament is ideologically similar.

The Russian case also defies conventional wisdom in another way. After the 2003 *Duma* election, Putin established a party-based authoritarian regime (Gel'man 2008). In the 1990s, Yel'tsin had established a regime characterised by weak parties that fell short of a consolidated democracy but was generally considered competitive. The finding that formal parties were the dominant actors in the 2000–2003 *Duma* demonstrates that transitions to authoritarianism can also be characterised by strong parties. Strong parties might be even more important for regimes in transition to authoritarianism than for consolidated authoritarian regimes. According to Remington (2009), United Russia, which ensured the passage of presidential legislation in the 2004–2007 *Duma*, was divided on a number of issues 'as a result of conflicts among interest groups representing diverse segments of the state administration or powerful private commercial interests' (Remington 2008, p. 979). While democratic competition has been eliminated under Putin, United Russia has become a 'target of intensive lobbying' for different interest groups (Remington 2008, p. 960). As the results demonstrate, such intra-party divisions were less salient while the future dominant party was still establishing its hegemony.

#### *Uncertain future*

The Russian experience illustrates the 'perils of presidentialism' (Linz 1990) in hybrid regimes with mixed electoral rules and fragmented party systems. The Yel'tsin and the

Putin periods exemplify different perils. Yel'tsin took advantage of the personalistic incentives in the SMD component of the mixed system and used presidential patronage to build *ad hoc* majorities by obtaining the support of individual deputies. The choice of this strategy, partially a personal preference, was also driven by partisan constraints. This coalition-building approach frequently led to legislative deadlock, as the critics of presidentialism would suggest, further weakened parties and had a negative long-term impact on democratisation. Putin, on the other hand, used institutional manipulation and made agreements with party leaders. This strategy was largely successful, despite the occasional difficulties with commanding discipline from the deputy groups. It established a working relationship with the *Duma* and enhanced party strength but was similarly bad for democratisation in the long run because cohesive parties were simply a mechanism for achieving the hegemony of the dominant party. Through institutional manipulation and patronage, Putin commanded loyalty from the members of the presidential 'Coalition of the Four'. However, this loyalty was later used to introduce institutional changes that consolidated the dominance of United Russia and his authoritarian rule, such as, for instance, the new electoral and party laws that increased barriers to entry for opposition parties. In the Russian case, as the dominant view in the comparative politics literature would suggest, presidentialism had a negative impact on democratisation (Linz 1990, 1994; Mainwaring & Shugart 1997; Hadenius 1994; Przeworski *et al.* 1996), even though, contrary to the conventional wisdom, it had a positive impact on party strength in the Putin period.

How stable is Russia's party-based authoritarian regime? On the one hand, party-based authoritarian regimes are the most stable authoritarian regimes (Geddes 2003, pp. 47–88). On the other hand, this complex hierarchy, the 'multilayered pie', might turn out to be a system that is difficult to sustain in the long run. As the political evolution of Just Russia has demonstrated, satellite parties are difficult to maintain. Just Russia's establishment in 2006 as a merger of the Party of Life (*Rossiiskaya Partiya Zhizni*), Motherland (*Rodina*) and the Party of Pensioners (*Rossiiskaya Partiya Pensionerov*) was a step towards the establishment of a managed two-party system. The expectations of electoral success in the 2007 State *Duma* election were not realised after Putin announced his decision to lead the United Russia party list in October 2007. Just Russia's leaders lost their basis of electoral support as opponents of United Russia given that they had declared their loyalty to Putin. Just Russia received only 7.74% of the vote and even though it received parliamentary representation, it has uncertain political future as a satellite party. If satellite parties lose credibility with voters, they cannot be used as a device for the government to create the facade of democratic competition, which makes the maintenance of the authoritarian party-based regime more difficult. Perhaps more serious challenges to Russian authoritarianism in general are exogenous shocks to the system such as the wildfires in the central part of the country in 2010. The obvious unpreparedness and ineffective response of the government led to huge economic losses and social disapproval. Most importantly, the crisis exposed the weaknesses of the power vertical based not on competitive elections but on loyalty to the leadership. During the recent crisis, local officials demonstrated their lack of professionalism when they frequently did not pass

information on to higher levels of the hierarchy or to other relevant agencies, worried about how their superiors might react. The weakness of civil society and the lack of civic organisations that would monitor bureaucrats and the use of federal funds also did not contribute to effective crisis management (Zlobin 2010). While due to the political apathy of society, the government's control of the media and the weakness of the opposition, the crisis might not damage the images of Putin and Medvedev, it is likely to intensify the slow erosion of their reputation in the minds of the Russian people (Stott 2010).

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### Appendix

#### *Selection of the number of blocs K*

To select the appropriate number of blocs, I use cross-validation (on this issue see Buntine and Jakulin (2004), Barbieri and Berger (2004) and Gelfand *et al.* (1992)) with a random sample of 30% of the data as a test set. Examination of the test scores of models with various number of blocs  $K$ , that is, the log-probability of the test set conditional on the model and the rest of the data, indicates that increasing  $K$  above 9 does not improve further model fit.

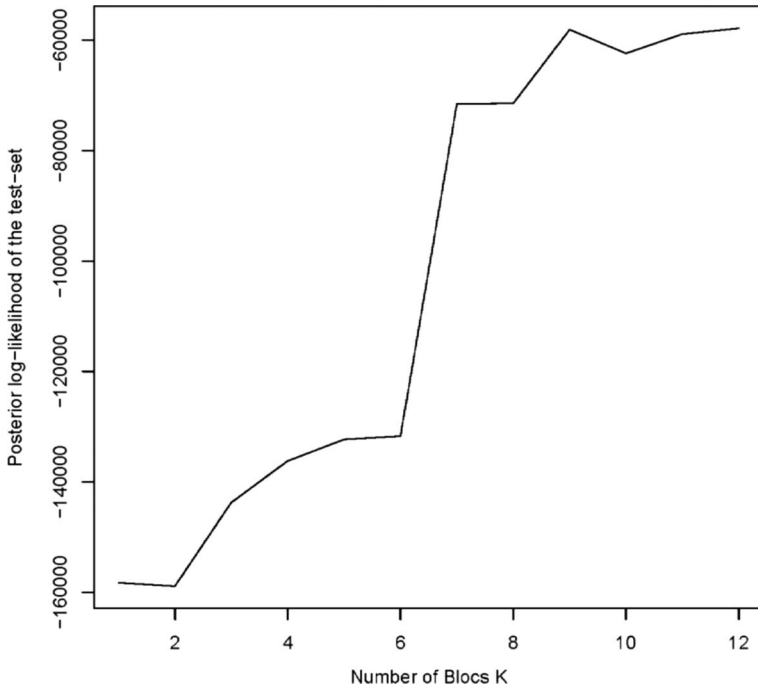


FIGURE A1. DISTRIBUTION OF DEPUTIES ACROSS VOTING BLOCS BY PARTY AFFILIATION, 1999–2003 *DUMA*.