

Superpresidentialism and Political Party Development in Russia, Ukraine, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan

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SINCE THE COLLAPSE OF THE USSR many scholars have pointed to the weakness of the political parties in the states of the former Soviet Union.¹ Unlike some of the countries of post-communist Eastern Europe (such as the Visegrad states, Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic, as well as the Baltic States), where relatively stable patterns of partisan competition have emerged, in most of the states of the former Soviet Union, it has been argued, only 'pseudo parties' have arisen. These 'pseudo parties' are seen as largely shifting coalitions of individuals, unanchored in post-communist society and incapable of performing even the most basic functions of political parties.² Indeed, from this 'pessimistic' point of view, parties in the former Soviet Union are scarcely more than transient organisations with little continuity from one election to another, lacking coherent ideological programmes and reliable social constituencies.³ Many have argued that decades of totalitarian rule (more extreme and of longer duration in the Soviet Union than in Eastern Europe or the Baltic States) pulverised what little there was of civil society, a legacy that continues to retard the development of political parties. As Bielasiak notes, the 'numerous weaknesses of political society impede the formation and consolidation of a structured party system capable of providing informed choices to the electorate'.⁴

Others have pointed to the incentives generated by political structures, particularly the existence of 'superpresidentialism', which have also retarded the development of political parties.⁵ Unfortunately, most of the existing literature that relates superpresidentialism to party development in the countries of the former Soviet Union has focused only on single case studies, without the benefit of comparative perspective.⁶ Because of this tendency it is difficult to assess truly whether or not 'superpresidentialism' has the often cited retarding effect on party development. On the other hand, macro-comparative approaches that lump together all of the former communist states run the risk of conflating the effects of the electoral system and presidentialism on party development, especially since most parliamentary systems in post-communist Europe employ some form of proportional representation.⁷ The key then is to select cases that vary in terms of the degree of superpresidentialism but where variations in the electoral system are controlled. Finally, most studies that have pointed to the weaknesses of political parties in the countries of the former Soviet Union have relied

heavily on anecdotal or narrative evidence, rather than systematically evaluating how much political parties have developed.⁸

This article examines the development of political parties, comparing four cases: Russia, Ukraine, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan.⁹ In particular, we address the question of whether superpresidentialism explains variations in the levels of party development, or whether other institutional factors (such as the structure of the electoral system) account for differences observed across the four states. The four cases were selected in order to control for variations in electoral system. Each of the four states employed similar mixed electoral systems to govern the latest parliamentary elections, where a portion of the seats in the lower house was elected via single member districts and the rest elected via a proportional representation list.

To measure party development, we examined the degree to which the ‘continuous’ political parties were important in the party systems, the extent to which parties ‘penetrated’ the regions (or what Fish calls the *reach of the party system*), and the extent to which affiliation with a party improved the chances of a candidate winning election (or what Fish refers to as *gravity of the party system*).¹⁰

The development of political parties in the countries of the former Soviet Union

In general, there have been two points of view regarding party development in the states of the former Soviet Union. On the one hand, there is the ‘pessimistic’ view, which holds that the development of ‘strong’ or even ‘real’ parties is highly unlikely now or in the near future.¹¹ Several reasons are often offered as to why parties are unlikely to develop along the same lines in the former Soviet Union as they have in the West, or in Eastern Europe for that matter. One argument holds that a major impediment to the development of parties is the legacy of the totalitarian past, a past that resulted in the ‘well developed antipathy to the concept of party after 70 years in which it stood for political monopoly and sometimes repression’.¹² Further, because of Soviet totalitarianism, a civil society that could support political parties remains only very weakly developed, with ‘few of the autonomous business and labour associations that support parties in other countries’.¹³

Another argument contends that institutional arrangements militate against the development of parties in post-Soviet politics. In particular, it has been argued that superpresidentialism has acted as a major impediment to the development of political parties.¹⁴ According to Fish, superpresidentialism is characterised by the following features:

An apparatus of executive power that dwarfs all other agencies in terms of size and the resources it consumes; a president who enjoys decree powers; a president who *de jure* or *de facto* controls most of the powers of the purse; a relatively toothless legislature that cannot repeal presidential decrees and that enjoys scant authority and/or resources to monitor the chief executive; provisions that render impeachment of the president virtually impossible; and a court system that is controlled wholly or mainly by the chief executive and that cannot in practice check presidential prerogatives or even abuse of power. Superpresidentialism is a regime. It may be contrasted with autocracy, insofar as the chief executive does not enjoy total power and is subject to bona fide, periodic challenge in national elections.¹⁵

There are several reasons cited as to why superpresidentialism militates against the development of political parties. First, by concentrating authority in the hands of a single individual, the politics of personality prevails, making it more difficult for parties to develop coherent programmes and identities.¹⁶ Fish contends that this effect is exhibited throughout the states of the former Soviet Union where 'superpresidentialism chills party development in part by holding down incentives for important political and economic actors to invest in politics'.¹⁷ In a superpresidential system candidates have relatively little incentive to associate with political parties, when the legislature (the principal arena for party politics) has such little say in policy. Rather, individuals tend to focus on forming personal attachments with presidential hopefuls, bypassing association with political parties. Fish identifies four cases which approximate the superpresidential model to varying degrees: Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, Russia and Ukraine.¹⁸

However, some have argued that superpresidentialism (or presidentialism for that matter) has little to do with party development. Rather, it is argued, the electoral system has a more important and direct effect on party development.¹⁹ In particular, scholars of post-Soviet politics have pointed to the effects of the electoral law, particularly the use of single-member districts in Russia, Ukraine, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan, which acts as a major impediment to the development of coherent parties.²⁰ As Moser notes,

To be successful in plurality parliamentary elections, parties need to have a certain element of grass-roots organisation and a network of well-known local candidates to run under the party banner in districts across the country. When such parties exist, plurality systems reward large parties and punish small ones, as can be seen in the United States, Great Britain or India. But when no well-developed political parties exist, partisanship itself is devalued in plurality elections, and in its place there emerges the personal politics of candidate-centred elections in which parties have little to offer these candidates in terms of resources of party identification.... In short, the consolidating effect of the plurality system in parliamentary elections requires a certain level of party development that does not yet exist ...²¹

On the other hand, some scholars have adopted a more optimistic assessment concerning the development of political parties, both in parliament and in the localities.²² For instance, Remington & Smith argue that in Russia the parties 'have already shaped the procedures, structures and policy products of the Duma in basic ways'.²³ They argue that, although these parliamentary parties are dominated 'by the leaders of the parties in parliament', they are parties nonetheless, albeit a particular kind of party reminiscent of earlier 'cadre' parties which grew out of the parliaments of Europe in the 19th century.²⁴ At the local level, Brown argues that the claim that parties are non-existent, small, disorganised and powerless is based on surprisingly few data on the grassroots development of political parties in Russia. In fact, she argues, local party organisation is much more built up than the pessimists contend, and party politics had become a very important feature of local politics as early as the initial stages of the transition from Soviet rule.²⁵ More generally, Parrott suggests that the pronouncements regarding the permanent irrelevance of parties in post-Soviet politics are in part based upon faulty comparisons with already established party systems.²⁶ Indeed, he argues that inappropriate comparisons with states with estab-

lished party systems lead to misleading conclusions about the permanence of non-party politics in the states of the former Soviet Union.²⁷

Nonetheless, the pattern of development of political parties in post-communist polities does differ from the pattern of West European party development. For instance, the sudden expansion of the scope of participation in post-communist politics contrasted with the step-by-step expansion of the franchise in most countries in the 19th century. In post-communist politics 'the simultaneous admission of all social strata and economic groups into post-communist electoral systems has created an incentive to establish catchall parties that appeal to many constituencies'.²⁸ Although this has led to relatively low levels of programmatic coherence in many post-communist parties, as Parrott notes, this 'should not necessarily be equated with institutional weakness'.²⁹

How can we assess the extent to which party development has taken place in Russia, Ukraine, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan? One way is to examine the candidate recruitment behaviour of the political parties for the second legislative elections, from 1995 to 2000, for Russia, Ukraine, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan.³⁰ An important element of what parties do is to act as channels for leadership recruitment; hence, whom they recruit provides insight into how the parties as collective organisations are developing. Further, the analysis of candidate recruitment for the single-member district elections (as opposed to the analysis of national list seat elections) provides insight into the extent to which parties have penetrated the regions, and the degree to which they may act as the building blocks for future political integration. Indeed, the mark of developed political parties for Rokkan and for Huntington was their ability to penetrate the country outside urban areas.³¹

In addition, the extent to which the parties offer positive advantages to candidates is also an indicator of relatively more developed parties. Indeed, the extent to which candidates perceive political parties as important (and primary) vehicles for upward political mobility is an indicator of the level of development of the party system. The problem for the countries of the former Soviet Union, as Fish notes, is that candidates standing for election have relatively little incentive to invest in political parties, choosing to retain their independence.³² However, if parties can demonstrate to potential candidates that association with the parties improves their chances of being elected, then this is likely to increase the parties' salience as the primary channels for candidate/leadership recruitment.

Design and methodology

To assess the extent to which the major parties have become relevant in the politics of the four countries, we focus on three indicators of party development.³³ First, there is the extent to which parties are 'continuous' organisations, or whether they are able to maintain a degree of organisational and political continuity over more than one election. Since the maintenance of an organisation requires considerable resources across elections, the extent to which parties are able to maintain both a continuous existence and demonstrated voter appeal indicates more developed party organisations. The extent to which continuous parties predominate in a party system indicates a more developed system of political parties.

To measure this we examined the percentage of the seats in the lower house of the legislature received by the 'continuous parties' over the first two consecutive post-communist elections. Focusing on the lower house of the parliament rather than other institutions is justified, as Schlesinger has noted, because the single most important component affecting party development historically throughout the democratic world has been the legislative component, particularly the lower and more powerful house.³⁴ The major continuous parties were defined as those parties which had won seats in both elections and held enough seats to form a parliamentary faction in the legislative sessions following both of the first two post-Soviet elections. For the Armenian case these parties included the Republican Party of Armenia (Hayastani Hanrapetakan Kusaktsutyun—HHK), the Communist Party of Armenia (Hayastani Komunistakan Kusaktsutyun—HKK), the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Hai Heghapokhakan Dashnaktsutyun—Dashnak), the National Democratic Union (Azgayin Zhoghovrdavarakan Miutyun—AZM) and the Armenian National Movement (Hayots Hamazgain Sharzhum—HHS). In Kyrgyzstan the continuous parties were the Party of Communists of Kyrgyzstan (Partiya Kommunistov Kyrgyzstana—PKK) and the Socialist Party (Ata Meken). For Russia the major continuous parties were Yabloko, the Agrarian Party of Russia (Agrarnaya Partiya Rossii—APR), the Liberal-Democratic Party (Liberal'no-Demokraticeskaya Partiya Rossii—LDPR) and the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (Kommunisticheskaya Partiya Rossiiskoi Federatsii—KPRF). For the Ukraine the continuous parties were the Communist Party of Ukraine (Komunistychna Partiya Ukrainy—KPU), the Popular Front (Narodnyi Rukh—NR), the Peasants' Party of the Ukraine (Selyanska Partiya Ukrainy—SePU), the Socialist Party of the Ukraine (Sotsialistychna Partiya Ukrainy—SPU) and the Social Democratic Party of the Ukraine.

The second measure of party development is the degree to which parties are important to candidates in securing election in the single-mandate districts. We measure this by comparing the success rate of independent candidates with the success rate of continuous party-affiliated candidates running in the single-member districts in the second post-communist legislative elections.³⁵ Only the results from the second election are employed here, because in two cases (Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan) the electoral system governing the parliamentary elections changed from a single-member district system in the first election to a mixed system in the second election. Thus, for the sake of comparability, only the data from the second elections are examined. The greater the success rate the more 'gravity' the parties are likely to possess in attracting candidates, especially if it can be demonstrated that candidates have a higher probability of election if they are affiliated with a political party.

The third measure is the extent to which the continuous parties have penetrated the countryside. The degree to which the parties have penetrated the countryside is measured by the extent to which the continuous parties are able to attract votes in competition in the single-member districts. Although an ideal measure of penetration would be to examine the specific district level activities of parties, given the virtual impossibility of obtaining such data across all districts in each of the four countries under investigation, we employ an admittedly second best surrogate measure. This measure involves the proportion of the vote won by the candidates of the continuous parties. The larger the proportion of the vote won by the candidates of the continuous

parties in single-member districts, the more the parties are considered to have penetrated the localities.

In order to assess the extent to which the parties have penetrated rural areas, we differentiated between urban and non-urban electoral districts. To determine the degree to which the district was urbanised, the population in thousands of persons of the largest city or town in the district was identified and employed as the measure of the size of the district.³⁶ Non-urban districts were identified in two different ways. For the less populated and considerably smaller countries of Armenia and Kyrgyzstan, non-urban districts were those in which the largest city identified in the district had a population of less than 50,000. For Russia and Ukraine, non-urban districts were identified as those in which the largest cities had less than 100,000 population. The reason we employ different standards for the four countries is because of the great disparity in population size between Russia and Ukraine, on the one hand, and Armenia and Kyrgyzstan on the other. Indeed, in smaller countries (especially in sparsely populated Kyrgyzstan) a town of 50,000 is quite large and often a major district centre.

Our sample of cases for this part of the study includes the 1995 Russian State Duma election, the 1998 Ukrainian Supreme Rada election, the 1999 National Assembly election in Armenia and the 2000 Jogorku Kenesh (National Assembly) election in Kyrgyzstan. These four cases were selected because each was a former Union Republic in the Soviet Union, and each used a mixed electoral system in which one portion of the seats was elected via single-member districts using a plurality formula and the other portion via proportional representation. However, the relative proportions of district to list seats were different for each country. In Russia and the Ukraine (where both the State Duma and the Supreme Rada have 450 seats) half of the seats were elected via districts and the other half via a national list. In Armenia 75 seats were elected via districts and 56 via a national list. In Kyrgyzstan, of the 60 seats available, 45 were elected via districts and 15 via a national list. Thus, all four cases are relatively similar in terms of average district magnitudes (defined as the number of seats in the lower house of the legislature divided by the number of districts) with Russia and Ukraine at 1.99, Armenia at 1.72 and Kyrgyzstan at 1.30. Where the cases differ is not so much in the type of electoral system used but rather in the timing of the adoption of these mixed electoral systems. In Russia and Armenia mixed electoral systems were used in the first two competitive post-Soviet elections (in 1993 and 1995 respectively). In Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan single-member district plurality systems were employed for the first legislative elections (in 1994 and 1995 respectively). Further, although each country approximated the superpresidential model, there were considerable differences among them in terms of how powerful the presidencies were in each case, ranging from the extremely superpresidential regime in Kyrgyzstan to the only 'minimally' superpresidential system in Ukraine.

Analysis

Data were collected from the single-member districts for the second legislative elections for Armenia (1999), Russia (1995), Ukraine (1998) and Kyrgyzstan (2000). These included 75 districts in Armenia, 225 districts each in Russia and Ukraine, and

TABLE 1

DEGREE OF PARTY CONTINUITY: CONTINUOUS PARTY SEAT SHARES IN LOWER HOUSE OF LEGISLATURE IN FIRST AND SECOND POST-SOVIET ELECTIONS

	<i>Continuous party seat shares in lower house of legislature in first election</i> [seats won over total] (year of election)	<i>Continuous party seat shares in lower house of legislature in second election</i> [seats won over total] (year of election)
Armenia	29.9% [69/268] (1995)	42.8% [56/131] (1999)
Kyrgyzstan	3.8% [4/105] (1995)	25.0% [15/60] (2000)
Russia	45.6% [205/450] (1993)	60.7% [273/450] (1995)
Ukraine	31.33% [141/450] (1994)	48.4% [218/450] (1998)

45 districts in Kyrgyzstan. Data were collected on the number of candidates running in each district as well as the candidates' party affiliations.

Subsequently, aggregate percentages were calculated for each indicator for continuity, gravity and penetration. As indicated in Table 1, which investigates the extent to which the continuous parties won seats in the legislatures, the country in which the continuous parties exhibited the greatest degree of continuity across the first and second post-Soviet legislative elections was Russia. Indeed, unlike in the other cases, Russia experienced a substantial increase in the percentage of seats controlled by the continuous parties (from 45.6% to 60.7% between 1993 and 1995) with the seat shares of these parties in the second election far exceeding those for either the Armenian (42.8%) or Ukrainian (48.4%) cases. In these countries the proportion of seats controlled by the continuous parties also increased from the first to the second elections, although the increase was generally greater in the Armenian than the Ukrainian case. The Kyrgyz case also exhibited an increase in the proportion of seats controlled by the continuous parties (from a mere 3.8% to 25.0% between 1995 and 2000), although this increase was largely due to electoral gains made by one party, the Communist Party (PKK). Thus, the continuity of parties in Kyrgyzstan is extremely low compared with the other three cases.

In terms of party 'gravity' the results in Table 2 illustrate the success rates of independent and party nominated candidates. The highest rate of success for party affiliated candidates was in Russia, where 19.9% of the continuous party nominated candidates running for election in the single-member districts won election, compared with 4.8% of the independents. In Armenia, as well, continuous party affiliated candidates also had a relatively higher success rate than independents (17.3% compared with 11.8%), as was the case in Ukraine (10.1% versus 5.6%), although the differences were much smaller than for the Russian case. In the Kyrgyz case candidates affiliated with the continuous parties had a much lower success rate than

TABLE 2

DEGREE OF PARTY GRAVITY: CONTINUOUS PARTY NOMINATED AND INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES WINNING ELECTION IN DISTRICTS

	<i>Independent candidates winning district seats</i>	<i>Party nominated candidates winning district seats</i>
Armenia	11.8% (33/279)	17.3% (33/158)
Kyrgyzstan	17.4% (45/258)	0.0% (0/6)
Russia	4.8% (78/1640)	19.9% (93/465)
Ukraine	5.6% (114/2024)	10.1% (59/585)

independents (0.0% versus 17.4%). In the Kyrgyz case no continuous party affiliated candidates won any of the 45 contested district seats in 2000 (party affiliated candidates only won seats via the national list).

In Table 3 we investigate the degree to which the continuous parties penetrated the non-urban electoral districts. The greatest degree of party penetration of non-urban districts occurred in Russia, where the average percentage of votes received by the continuous political parties in the non-urban districts stood at 30.8%. The Armenian case was a distant second (15.7%). Indeed in both cases the percentage of the vote received by the continuous parties was actually slightly higher in the rural than in the urban districts. On the other hand, in Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan, the percentage of the vote received by the major parties was considerably less than in Russia (at 13.5% and 0.04%). Further, in both cases the percentage of the vote received by the major parties in the non-urban districts was considerably less than in the urban districts (in contrast to Armenia). These results suggest that in Armenia and Russia parties were relatively

TABLE 3

PARTY PENETRATION: MEAN VOTE RECEIVED BY CONTINUOUS PARTY CANDIDATES IN URBAN AND NON-URBAN DISTRICTS (%)

	<i>Vote received by major party candidates in urban districts (for Armenia and Kyrgyzstan community in which district located \geq 50,000; for Russia and Ukraine \geq 100,000)</i>	<i>Vote received by major party candidates in rural districts (for Armenia and Kyrgyzstan community in which district located $<$ 50,000; for Russia and Ukraine $<$ 100,000)</i>
Armenia	15.5 ($n = 38$)	15.7 ($n = 37$)
Kyrgyzstan	4.2 ($n = 17$)	0.04 ($n = 28$)
Russia	29.2 ($n = 144$)	30.8 ($n = 80$)
Ukraine	22.4 ($n = 103$)	13.5 ($n = 122$)

TABLE 4

RANK ORDERED SCORES FOR CONTINUITY, GRAVITY AND PENETRATION (4 = MOST DEVELOPED PARTIES.
1 = LEAST DEVELOPED PARTIES)

	<i>Continuity</i>	<i>Gravity</i>	<i>Penetration</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Overall rank</i>
Armenia	3	3	3	9	3
Kyrgyzstan	1	1	1	3	1
Russia	4	4	4	12	4
Ukraine	2	2	2	6	2

more developed (or at least developed enough to mobilise political support in the rural areas of these countries) than in Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan.

Table 4 summarises the results from Tables 1, 2 and 3. Each of the three indicators is rank ordered from 1 to 4, with 4 indicating the 'most developed' in terms of party development, and 1 indicating the least. The individual scores are summed and then rank ordered. The resulting order indicated that the greatest amount of party development among the four cases has occurred in Russia and Armenia, a lesser amount in Ukraine and the least in Kyrgyzstan.

To what extent are these results related to the degree to which these systems are 'superpresidencies'? To assess the strength of the presidencies, we employ the measure developed by Hellman and Frye, the Index of Formal Presidential Powers.³⁷ This value takes into account the constitutional powers invested in the hands of the president and whether the president is directly or indirectly elected. Such a composite measure provides a means to evaluate the relative strength of different presidencies cross-nationally in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. The measure evaluates symbolic, procedural, appointive and political powers and weights the presidencies by whether or not the president is directly elected. The resulting value ranges from zero to 27, with a high score indicative of a powerful presidency and a lower score a less powerful presidency. For our sample of cases, Kyrgyzstan stood at 14.5, with Russia and Armenia at 14. These values tend to correspond to Fish's categorisation of these three cases as superpresidential. Ukraine had a power score of eight and represented the least superpresidential case. Although it may be that formal powers do not necessarily directly measure actual presidential power, as Frye notes, formal powers are often enshrined in constitutions to legitimise powerful presidencies.³⁸ Thus, possession of many formal powers generally correlates with actual presidential power. Further, the measure appears to be correlated with Fish's own depiction of these four states.³⁹

In Table 5 we examine the purported relationship between the degree of superpresidentialism and the level of party development. Although this thesis argues that the level of party development should be lower in systems with more powerful presidencies, the evidence does not support this contention. Although it is not possible to claim conclusively that the power of a superpresidential system has little to do with party development in terms of continuity, gravity and penetration, given the very limited sample size, the cases do not generally fit the patterns anticipated by the

TABLE 5
SUPERPRESIDENCIES AND LEVEL OF PARTY DEVELOPMENT

	<i>Developed parties</i>	<i>Less developed parties</i>
Superpresidencies (power score ≥ 14)	Armenia Russia	Kyrgyzstan
Less powerful presidencies (power score < 14)		Ukraine

superpresidential thesis. Indeed, two of the three superpresidential cases (Armenia and Russia) had the highest levels of party development generally and scored highest on each of the three individual indicators. On the other hand, Ukraine, the least superpresidential system, scored quite low in terms of levels of party development. The only case (out of the four) that corresponds to the superpresidential thesis is Kyrgyzstan, with its very low levels of party development and extremely powerful presidency. However, this is probably due to other factors (such as high levels of political corruption and a tradition of politics based almost completely on personal attachments) rather than directly related to the existence of a powerful presidency. Whatever the reason, the limited evidence presented here does not generally support the superpresidential argument.

What of the contention that the single-member district plurality component of the mixed electoral system is the real culprit retarding the development of political parties in post-Soviet politics? At first glance, this thesis also does not appear to be supported. Indeed, given the distribution of seats, we would expect that the systems that have a higher proportion of seats allocated via the single-member districts (such as in Armenia and Kyrgyzstan) would also have the lowest levels of party development measured in terms of continuity, gravity and penetration. On the other hand, we would expect higher levels of party development in Russia and Ukraine, where there are proportionally fewer seats allocated via the single-member districts. However, as noted above, Armenia has a relatively high and Ukraine a relatively low level of party development, observations which do not support the contention that the single-member district component of the mixed electoral systems is the real culprit for retarding party development.

However, upon closer examination, if we take into account the fact that the first elections in Ukraine (1994) and Kyrgyzstan (1995) were conducted using *only* single-member districts, and that the first post-communist elections in Armenia and Russia used mixed systems with a proportional representation component (as they do currently), then low levels of party development in Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan can be explained by reference to the electoral system (see Table 6). Since proportional representation generally serves to strengthen parties, it is not surprising that parties are more developed in terms of continuity, gravity and penetration in the states that have more experience with mixed electoral systems, as opposed to states that only adopted a proportional representation component for the second post-Soviet legislative elections.

TABLE 6
INITIAL ELECTORAL SYSTEM AND LEVEL OF PARTY DEVELOPMENT

	<i>Developed parties</i>	<i>Less developed parties</i>
Initial electoral system mixed	Armenia Russia	
Initial electoral system single-member district plurality		Ukraine Kyrgyzstan

Conclusion

The findings above are only suggestive, given the relatively small sample of cases. However, the results do indicate that the commonly held notion that superpresidentialism is the culprit for the lack of party development in terms of continuity, gravity and penetration is not supported by the evidence from these four cases. This finding tends to support other work that has suggested that presidentialism's effects on democracy and party development are greatly overstated.⁴⁰

Others have suggested that the electoral system that governs legislative elections in post-communist states is the more important institutional factor in explaining party development and behaviour.⁴¹ The evidence presented in this article tends to support the contention that the systems that had employed only single-member district plurality rules in the initial post-Soviet election were more likely to score considerably lower on the three measures of party development (continuity, gravity and penetration) than systems that had employed proportional representation and a mixed electoral system.

Many scholars contend that parties are absolutely essential to the process of democratic consolidation. As Pridham notes, 'parties and party systems must remain a basic if not the central theme for examining ... progress towards and achievement of democratic consolidation'.⁴² Further, Linz has pointed out that there is 'no alternative to political parties in the establishment of democracy',⁴³ and Mair adds that 'however fragmented, weak, or undisciplined, however poorly rooted in society, however unstable and vociferous, parties are a very real and necessary part of the politics of new democracies'.⁴⁴ Given this, then, the adoption of mixed electoral systems in countries where parties are extremely weak should help in promoting the development of political parties. There is some evidence to suggest that this is already happening in Armenia, Ukraine and to a limited extent in Kyrgyzstan. Although still in their infancy, political parties are becoming part of political life in these countries.

However, in the Russian Federation there appears to be a trend towards less continuity in party politics. Although the 1999 State Duma election (the third post-Soviet election) was not part of this study, party continuity has become increasingly problematic. The only continuous parties that remained in the 1999 election (i.e. parties which won seats in the 1993, 1995 and 1999 elections) were the KPRF, the LDPR and Yabloko. However, these three parties accounted for only about 33.8% of the seats in the State Duma after 1999, and there was an overall increase in the number of seats held by independents (from 77 to 105). Whether this is a continuing trend in Russia depends on whether the new political forces on the

centre-right of the spectrum (Unity Bloc-Medved' and the Union of Right Forces) remain coherent for the next election.⁴⁵ Putin's embrace of the Unity Bloc as the 'presidential party' (unlike his predecessor's unfortunate tendency to 'stand above parties') may promote future continuity. More troubling to those scholars who value strong parties as a hallmark of modern democracy is the proposal, made by some scholars and politicians, that the PR component of the mixed electoral system be abolished to better represent the regional diversity of the country, promote party system stability, and 'destroy the illusion that one can win elections and govern entirely from Moscow'.⁴⁶ Such a move would undoubtedly destroy the incipient Russian party system, and, ironically, remove any check at all on the autocratic power of the presidency.

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¹ Alexander Dallin (ed.), *Political Parties in Russia* (Berkeley, 1993); M. Steven Fish, *Democracy from Scratch: Opposition and Regime in the New Russian Revolution* (Princeton, 1995); Ian McAllister & Stephen White, 'Democracy, Political Parties and Party Formations in Post-communist Russia', *Party Politics*, 1, 1, 1995, pp. 49–72; Stephen White, Matthew Wyman & Olga Kryshchanovskaya, 'Parties and Politics in Post-Communist Russia', *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 25, 2, 1995, pp. 185–202.

² McAllister & White, 'Democracy, Political Parties and Party Formations ...'; Richard Sakwa, 'The Development of the Russian Party System: Did the Elections Change Anything?', in Peter Lentini (ed.), *Elections and the Political Order in Russia* (London, 1995), pp. 169–201; Richard Sakwa, 'Parties and the Multiparty System in Russia', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 2, 28, 1993, pp. 7–15; Michael McFaul & Sergei Markov, *The Troubled Birth of Russian Democracy: Parties, Personalities and Programs* (Stanford, 1993); Michael McFaul & Nikolai Petrov (eds), *Previewing Russia's 1995 Parliamentary Election* (Moscow, 1995); M. Steven Fish, 'The Predicament of Russian Liberalism: Evidence from the December 1995 Parliamentary Elections', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 49, 2, 1997, pp. 191–220; Grigori V. Golosov, 'New Russian Political Parties and the Transition to Democracy: the Case of Western Siberia', *Government and Opposition*, 30, 2, 1995, pp. 110–119; Grigori V. Golosov, 'Russian Political Parties and the "Bosses"', *Party Politics*, 3, 1, 1997, pp. 5–21; Grigori V. Golosov, 'Who Survives? Party Origins, Organizational Development and Electoral Performance in Post-Communist Russia', *Political Studies*, 46, 3, 1998, pp. 511–543; Robert Moser, 'The Impact of the Electoral System on Post-communist Party Development: The Case of the 1993 Russian Parliamentary Elections', *Electoral Studies*, 14, 3, 1995, pp. 377–398; Robert Moser, 'The Electoral Effects of Presidentialism in Post-Soviet Russia', in John Löwenhardt (ed.), *Party Politics in Post-Communist Russia* (London, 1998) pp. 54–75; Robert Moser, 'Independents and Party Formation: Elite Partisanship as an Intervening Variable in Russian Politics', *Comparative Politics*, 31, 2, 1999, pp. 147–165; Vladimir Gel'man & Grigori V. Golosov, 'Regional Party System Formation in Russia: The Deviant Case of Sverdlovsk Oblast', in Löwenhardt (ed.), *Party Politics ...*, pp. 31–53; Evgenii Pashentsev, *Oppozitsionnye partii i dvizheniya sovremenno i Rossii* (Moscow, 1999).

³ Moser, 'Independents and Party Formation'; Golosov, 'New Russian Political Parties and the Transition to Democracy'.

⁴ Jack Bielasiak, 'Substance and Process in the Development of Party Systems in East Central Europe', *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 30, 1, 1997, p. 25.

⁵ M. Steven Fish, 'The Executive Deception: Superpresidentialism and the Degradation of Russian Politics', in Valerie Sperling (ed.), *Building the Russian State: Institutional Crisis and the Quest for Democratic Governance* (Boulder, CO, 2000), pp. 177–192; M. Steven Fish 'The Impact of the 1999–2000 Parliamentary and Presidential Elections on Political Party Development', paper presented at the 2000 meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, IL; Timothy J. Colton, 'Superpresidentialism and Russia's Backward State', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 11, 2, 1995, pp. 144–148; Eugene Huskey, 'Kyrgyzstan: The Fate of Political Liberalization', in Karen Dawisha & Bruce Parrott (eds), *Conflict, Cleavage and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 242–276.

⁶ Fish, 'The Executive Deception ...'; Colton, 'Superpresidentialism and Russia's Backward State'; Huskey 'Kyrgyzstan ...'.

⁷ See for instance Joel Hellman, 'Constitutions and Economic Reform in the Postcommunist Transitions', *East European Constitutional Review*, 5, 1, 1996, pp. 46–56; Timothy Frye, 'A Politics of Institutional Choice: Post-Communist Presidencies', *Comparative Political Studies*, 30, 4, 1997, pp. 523–552; John Ishiyama & Matthew Velten, 'Presidential Power and Democratic Development in Post-Communist Politics', *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 31, 3, 1998, pp. 217–234.

⁸ An important exception to this rule has been the work of M. Steven Fish; see Fish, 'The Executive Deception ...' and 'The Impact of the 1999–2000 Parliamentary and Presidential Elections ...'.

⁹ The conception of 'party' that I employ here is based upon the 'electoral image' of the party. Thus, Leon Epstein defines the political party as 'any group of individuals, however loosely organised, whose avowed purpose is winning elections'. Leon Epstein, *Political Parties in Western Democracies* (New York, 1967), p. 1. Similarly, Anthony Downs defines the political party as 'a team seeking to control the governing apparatus by gaining office in a duly constituted election'. Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York, 1957), p. 25. Kenneth Janda defines the political party as 'a set of organisations that pursue a goal of placing their avowed representatives in government positions'. Kenneth Janda, *Political Parties: A Cross-National Survey* (New York, 1980), p. 5. Thus any group, no matter how organised, qualifies as a political party if it seeks to run candidates for election. To be sure, there are other definitions of a party which are more restrictive (see for instance the definition provided by LaPalombara & Weiner) but defining a party only in terms of organisation ignores the wide variety of different organisational forms parties can take. In sum, there is no 'normal' model for a political party—some can be highly organised and internally disciplined (such as the Dutch Party of Labour) and others not much more than a collection of different factions (such as the Japanese Liberal Democratic Party prior to 1992). Joseph LaPalombara & Myron Weiner (eds), *Political Parties and Political Development* (Princeton, 1966).

¹⁰ Fish, 'The Impact of the 1999–2000 Parliamentary and Presidential Elections ...'.

¹¹ Fish, *Democracy from Scratch*; Golosov, 'New Russian Political Parties and the Transition to Democracy ...'.

¹² White, Wyman & Kryshatanovskaya, 'Parties and Politics in Post-Communist Russia', p. 199.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 199–200; Sakwa, 'Parties and the Multiparty System in Russia', p. 221; see also Fish, *Democracy from Scratch*.

¹⁴ Huskey, 'Kyrgyzstan ...'; Colton, 'Superpresidentialism and Russia's Backward State'; Philip G. Roeder, 'Varieties of Post-Soviet Authoritarian Regimes', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 10, 1, 1994, pp. 61–101; Fish, 'The Executive Deception ...'.

¹⁵ Fish, 'The Impact of the 1999–2000 Parliamentary and Presidential Elections ...', pp. 22–23.

¹⁶ White, Wyman & Kryshatanovskaya, 'Parties and Politics in Post-Communist Russia'; Moser, 'The Electoral Effects of Presidentialism'.

¹⁷ Fish, 'The Impact of the 1999–2000 Parliamentary and Presidential Elections ...', p. 23.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* However, according to Fish, Ukraine is 'an ambiguous case' that possesses some of the major features of superpresidentialism but in many ways is different from the other three cases.

¹⁹ Timothy Power & Mark J. Gasiorowski, 'Institutional Design and Democratic Consolidation in the Third World', *Comparative Political Studies*, 30, 2, 1997, pp. 123–155; Ishiyama & Velten, 'Presidential Power and Democratic Development ...'.

²⁰ Moser, 'Independent s and Party Formation ...'.

²¹ Moser, 'The Electoral Effects of Presidentialism', pp. 62–63.

²² Herbert Kitschelt, 'Formation of Party Cleavages in Post-communist Democracies: Theoretical Propositions', *Party Politics*, 1, 3, 1995, pp. 447–472; Thomas F. Remington & Steven S. Smith, 'The Development of Parliamentary Parties in Russia', *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 20, 3, 1995, pp. 457–489; Moshe Haspel, Thomas F. Remington & Steven S. Smith, 'Electoral Institutions and Party Cohesion in the Russian Duma', *Journal of Politics*, 60, 3, 1998, pp. 417–439; Frederic J. Fleron Jr, Richard Ahl & Finbarr Lane, 'Where now in the Study of Russian Political Parties', in Löwenhardt (ed.), *Party Politics ...*, pp. 224–252; John T. Ishiyama, 'Red Phoenix? The Communist Party in Post-Soviet Politics', *Party Politics*, 2, 2, 1996, pp. 147–175; John T. Ishiyama, 'Red versus Expert: Candidate Recruitment and Communist Party Adaptation in Post-Soviet Politics', *Party Politics*, 4, 3, 1998, pp. 297–318; John T. Ishiyama, 'Political Parties and Candidate Recruitment in Post-Soviet Russian Politics', *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 15, 1, 1999, pp. 41–69.

²³ Remington & Smith 'The Development of Parliamentary Parties ...', p. 457.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 483; see also Thomas F. Remington & Steven S. Smith, 'Theories of Legislative Institutions and the Organization of the Russian Duma', *American Journal of Political Science*, 42, 4, 1998, pp. 545–572; Haspel, Remington & Smith, 'Electoral Institutions and Party Cohesion ...'. Kitschelt also contends that parties are developing in Russia albeit not *programmatically*, or parties

that are built to advertise ideals 'about a desirable society as the collective good they promise to produce and to attract activists and leaders ready to propagate and to implement these ideas'. Rather, he argues that *charismatic parties* and *clientelistic parties* are likely to develop in Russia. The charismatic party is characterised by 'not much more than an unstructured mass of people rallying around a leader'. Kitschelt, 'Formation of Party Cleavages ...', p. 449. Such parties are inherently unstable and likely to disappear, given that in order to maintain allegiances of followers leaders must sooner or later provide selective incentives to their constituencies and enter upon trajectories of organisational development that are likely to result in clientelistic parties in the Russian context. Clientelistic parties are characterised by an emphasis on personal patronage, and invest much in creating an organisation which effectively disburse resources to followers. These parties, however, avoid the costs of coordinating the activities of followers since the role of the member is not to believe in a set of ideological goals but to be personally loyal.

²⁵ Ruth Brown, 'Party Development in the Regions: When Did Parties Start to Play a Part in Politics', in Löwenhardt (ed.), *Party Politics ...*, pp. 31–54.

²⁶ Bruce Parrott, 'Perspectives on Postcommunist Democratization', in Karen Dawisha & Bruce Parrott (eds), *Democratic Changes and Authoritarian Reactions in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova* (Cambridge, 1997).

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ For illustrations of similar analyses see Moser, 'Independents and Party Formation ...'; Ishiyama, 'Red Phoenix? ...'; Ishiyama, 'Red versus Expert ...'; Ishiyama, 'Political Parties and Candidate Recruitment ...', pp. 41–69.

³¹ Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, 1968), p. 440; see also Stein Rokkan, *Citizens, Elections, Parties* (New York, 1970).

³² Fish, 'The Executive Deception ...'.

³³ Fish, 'The Impact of the 1999–2000 Parliamentary and Presidential Elections ...'.

³⁴ Joseph A. Schlesinger, 'On the Theory of Party Organization', *Journal of Politics*, 46, 3, 1984, pp. 369–400.

³⁵ Candidate data for elections in Russia for 1995 were derived from *Vybory Deputatov Gosudarstvennoi Dumi 1995* (Moscow, Central Electoral Commission of the Russian Federation (1996)). For candidates in the 1998 Ukrainian Election see the Ukrainian Central Electoral Commission web site <http://www.cvk.ukrpac.net>. For the candidate information for the 1999 Armenian election see the Central Electoral Commission web site <http://www.elections.am/>: For the 2000 Kyrgyz election, candidate information reported at Kyrgyz Central Electoral Commission url <http://cec.bishkek.su/>.

³⁶ For the 1995 Russian election cities and towns identified as largest cities were obtained from the Russian Federation Electoral Commission Web site at www.fci.ru. Actual city and town populations were taken from *Demograficheskii ezhegodnik SSSR 1990* (Moscow, Finansy i statistika, 1990), pp. 14–26. For the 1999 Armenian elections, largest towns in districts were derived from precinct locations, reported at the Central Electoral Commission web site <http://www.elections.am/>: For the 2000 Kyrgyz election, the largest towns in districts were identified via precinct locations, reported at Kyrgyz Central Electoral Commission url <http://ccc.bishkek.su/>. Ukrainian largest cities in districts were reported in the Ukrainian Central Electoral Commission web site <http://www.cvk.ukrpac.net>.

³⁷ Hellman, 'Constitutions and Economic Reform ...'; Frye, 'A Politics of Institutional Choice ...'.

³⁸ Frye 'A Politics of Institutional Choice ...'.

³⁹ Fish, 'The Impact of the 1999–2000 Parliamentary and Presidential Elections ...'.

⁴⁰ Power & Gasiorowski, 'Institutional Design and Democratic Consolidation ...'; Ishiyama & Velten, 'Presidential Power and Democratic Development ...'.

⁴¹ Remington & Smith, 'The Development of Parliamentary Parties ...'; Ishiyama & Velten, 'Presidential Power and Democratic Development ...'; Haspel, Remington & Smith, 'Electoral Institutions and Party Cohesion ...'.

⁴² Geoffrey Pridham, 'Southern European Democracies on the Road to Consolidation: A Comparative Assessment of the Role of Political Parties', in Geoffrey Pridham (ed), *Securing Democracy: Political Parties and Democratic Consolidation in Southern Europe* (London, 1990), p. 2.

⁴³ Juan J. Linz, paper presented at conference on 'Political Parties and Democracy', Washington DC, 1996; see www.ned.org/pubs/reports/parties.html, p. 1.

⁴⁴ Peter Mair, paper presented at conference on 'Political Parties and Democracy', Washington DC, 1996; see www.ned.org/pubs/reports/parties.html, p. 1.

⁴⁵ There is of course considerable concern over whether these parties can remain as stable and

coherent formations. See Richard Rose, Neil Munro & Stephen White, 'Voting in a Floating Party System: The 1999 Duma Election', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 53, 3, 2001, pp. 419–443.

⁴⁶ Russell Bova, 'Political Culture, Authority Patterns, and the Architecture of the New Russian Democracy', in H. Eckstein, Frederick Fleron, E. Hoffman & William Reissinger (eds), *Can Democracy Take Root in Post-Soviet Russia?* (New York, 1998), p. 195.

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