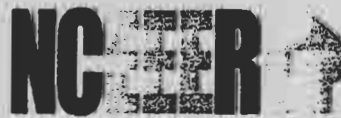


**Changing Russia's Electoral System
Assessing Alternative Forms of Representation and Elections**

Misha Myagkov
University of Oregon
&
Peter C. Ordeshook
California Institute of Technology



**The National Council for Eurasian and East European Research
910 17th Street, N.W.
Suite 300
Washington, D.C. 20006**

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Abstract

The is discernable sentiment, at least among the supporters of 'reform' for changing Russia's current electoral arrangement with respect to the basis of representation in the State Duma. National proportional representation in particular, which is used to fill one half of the seats in the Duma is widely seen as having benefitted the Communists and Yeltsin's other opponents in 1996 — at least when compared to what might have happened had single-mandate districts been used to fill all seats.. At the same time, though, the same system of PR appears to have worked in the opposite direction in 1995. But PR and single-mandate plurality elections are but two of a multitude of possible electoral arrangements that opponents and proponents of reform might consider. In this essay, then, we contrast a number of the most evident possibilities, including those based on oblast level returns as well as those that are made feasible by a redefinition of Russia's federal subjects. Our assessment, moreover, considers the consequences of a number of permutations of election returns, including a coalescing of parties as various shifts in voter sentiment in accord with various scenarios. Despite these manipulations, our general conclusion is that one's preference for electoral system depends critically on whether one believes that the 1995 or 1996 election returns are more representative of the general ideological orientation of the Russian electorate.

Considerable controversy surrounds Russia's current arrangements for electing deputies to its lower parliamentary chamber, the State Duma. Those arrangements, which elect one half of 450 seats by party list proportional representation (PR) and the other half in single-mandate constituencies, is similar in form to Germany's Bundestag electoral structure. However, the two systems are different in several important respects. First, parties in Germany necessarily campaign on regional (*Lande*) lists, whereas those in Russia need only submit a single national list. Thus, unlike Germany's decentralized party system, Russian parties are largely creatures of Moscow's political establishment with tenuous ties to regional and local party organizations. Second, whereas Germany links single-mandate and PR elections by making provision for an overall proportionality of representation, the allocation of PR seats in Russia is divorced from the results of the single-mandate contests. A party wins seats under PR there if and only if its vote exceeds 5%, regardless of its fortunes in the single-mandate contests, thereby increasing the separation between these two halves of the Duma. Third, parliamentary elections occur in the context of a presidency whose constitutional powers overshadow parliament's. Moreover, because Russia's parliamentary elections occur a mere six months prior to its presidential contest, those elections assume much the flavor of a primary in which presidential aspirants seek to establish themselves at the head of some party list while positioning themselves for the forthcoming contest.

These features of Russia's electoral system and its deviations from the German model doubtlessly contributed to the confusing array of parties (43) that confronted voters in 1995 and the fact that the total vote share of the four parties that passed the 5% threshold to secure PR seats barely reached 50% (and didn't if one counts invalid and blank ballots). However, even though we can debate the motives of those who designed Russia's electoral arrangements (see, for example, Kitschelt and Smyth 1998, McFaul 1998, Remington and Smith 1995), we can be fairly certain that such structural issues are not the

primary concern of the advocates of different electoral arrangements today or who would oppose any change in those arrangements. More important is the fact that those arrangements seemed to have benefitted the ultra-nationalist Zhirinovsky in 1993 and Yeltsin's opponents, most notably the Communist Party, in 1995.

Of course, even if existing procedures survive to the next scheduled round of elections in December 1999, someone, sometime later will have an incentive to seek change. Manipulating electoral systems under the guise of 'reform' so that they advantage those empowered to impose change is a time-honored 'democratic' tradition. The question we address here, then, is: What are the most feasible alternatives to current arrangements and what are the likely consequences of any specific change? What increased or decreased share of seats are communists, nationalists, and liberals likely to experience if Russia were, for example, to elect all of its Duma deputies using single-mandate constituencies, national PR, or some variant of regional PR?

Insofar as the alternatives we might consider, the world offers a vast menu of possibilities, and we examine only the simplest — several variants of plurality rule and alternative forms of proportional representation.¹ But while imagining alternatives is easy, identifying a methodology for assessing their impact is more difficult. First, we must decide if we are interested in long versus short-term consequences. Long term consequences, of course, are important because they include the coherence of Russia's party system, which in turn critically impacts the functioning of its federal system (Ordeshook

¹ A third alternative is majority rule with a runoff. Assessing this alternative, however, requires knowledge of the second, and perhaps even the third, fourth, etc. choices of voters. And although we can imagine methods for estimating these choices, they are based on a great many tenuous and, admittedly, sometimes arbitrary assumptions, which, when combined with the tenuous nature of extrapolating election returns to alternative electoral systems that we describe later, yields an assessment that is far less reliable than the ones we offer here of

and Shvetsova 1995), not to mention the general performance and stability of its democratic institutions (Schattschneider 1967). It seems premature, though, to concern ourselves with these consequences. Although we might like to suggest electoral systems better suited to Russia's long-term needs (see Ordeshook 1996), decisions in politics, like decisions in economics there, are likely to be made on the basis of two or three-month planning horizons. And, more to the point, until and unless we understand fully the short-term consequences of any proposed change we cannot predict long-term consequences if only because Russian democracy remains in a sufficiently precarious state that the short-term can preclude the relevance of a 'long-term'.

Unfortunately, even if we limit our analysis to the immediate fortunes of opponents and proponents of reform and avoid broader systemic issues, there is no well-established method for addressing the questions we might ask. First, changing the electoral system is likely to change the structure of parties and their electoral tactics and strategies, which, in turn, may change patterns of voting. We know the incentives to coordinate and consolidate parties depend importantly on how votes are counted, where majoritarian or plurality systems ostensibly encourage more consolidation than do proportional representation ones (Duverger 1954, Taagepera and Shugart 1989). Complicating matters further is the fact that if the system is changed to one that allows for only single- or double-member constituency contests, politics will almost certainly become more 'local' and less dependent on Moscow's political establishment (and money). Indeed, it is only reasonable to suppose that a greater number of candidates will prefer, as in the 1996-7 gubernatorial contests, to compete without party labels or with ambiguous partisan attachments, to disassociate themselves from parties that are seen as the instruments of a Moscow political elite, and to base their campaigns primarily on their local or regional reputations. In

plurality and PR systems.

addition, voters themselves may employ different strategies, depending on how their votes are counted and aggregated. The LDPR won 11.4% of the vote in 1995 with Zhirinovskiy's name on every ballot, whereas under a system of single or two-member constituencies, at most only one constituency would display his name and the rest would offer ballots with the label "LDPR" alongside a candidate whose identity may or may not be familiar to voters. Whether 225 candidates running in 225 districts under the label LDPR can win as many votes as can one national party list headed by a single visible figure is anything but certain. Thus, past electoral returns may be an imperfect if not misleading guide to the consequences of change.

Despite these cautions, our approach is to take election district and oblast-level data from the 1995 parliamentary elections (Section 1) and the 1996 presidential contest (Section 2), and assess what would have happened had a different method of aggregating those votes been employed.² The most evident justification for this approach is that it is the one most likely to be used by decision makers in Moscow when assessing alternatives. If, as is sometimes said of generals, military plans "refight the last war," then it is also true that politicians, when assessing the consequences of 'reform', compete anew in the last election. We can, however, get a sense of the problems with this approach by checking how well we can predict outcomes in the 1995 single-mandate elections using the 1995 PR results and the 1996 presidential balloting. For example, if, in 1995, the Communist Party won a plurality in some election district, then if voters do not change their voting strategies significantly when considering the single-mandate contests, we would predict that a communist candidate is most likely to have been elected in that contest.³ To assess this hypothesis, suppose we first divide the parties into two categories, "left"

² Throughout this essay we refer to all oblasts, autonomous regions, etc. simply as 'oblasts'.

(Communist, Power to the People, Agrarian, Anpilov's Working Russia, and Rutskoï's Dherzava) and "others", and apply a logit analysis to the 1995 PR elections to see how well we can predict the outcomes of the single-mandate elections. In this instance we find that in 82% of the cases we can correctly predict the election of a "left" candidate from a single-mandate constituency, while in 72% of the cases we can correctly predict an "other" candidate. Similarly for 1996, if we divide districts into those in which Yeltsin won and those in which he lost in the second round of balloting, then in 79% of the cases we can correctly predict that the district will elect a candidate from the "left" while in 85% of the cases we can correctly predict a candidate from the "other" category.⁴ The level of predictability here is not perfect, but it does show the strong relationship between how election districts voted in the PR contest or presidential election and how they voted in the single-mandate constituencies, hereby giving us some confidence in supposing that using either the 1995 or 1996 election returns are a reasonable basis for estimating how parties might fare under, say, a 450 seat single-mandate system. Of course, one problem these numbers do not address is the possibility that despite the remarkable stability the Russian electorate has exhibited thus far between 1991 and 1996 (Myagkov, Ordeshook and Sobyenin 1997), we should not presume that Russia's current political-economic turmoil will not result in a significantly different list of parties and party leaders, in new constellations of voting blocks, and significant shifts in voter sentiment. Thus, in Section 3 we consider the possibility that one contending

³ Many of the successful candidates in the 1995 single-mandate contests campaigned as independents and without explicit party affiliations listed on the ballot. Subsequently, though, most of them joined factions within the Duma explicitly aligned with one major party or the other. In this way, then, we can infer party attachments.

⁴ As a point of comparison, we note that if we use the 1993 parliamentary election data, we can correctly predict only 67% of the "left" winners, and 61% of the "others" (a score of 50%, of course, means that nothing can be predicted at all). These numbers, though, are generated from only 81 of 225 districts owing to missing data and redistricting.

side or the other — communists, nationalists, centrists, or reformers — increases its vote share or recombines with others in various ways. Our last section, 4, offers some general conclusions and reiterates that cautions that must be taken with our approach.

1. Data from the 1995 Duma Elections:

There are two broad classes of electoral systems that might be implemented in Russia: single or n-member districts with plurality rule and proportional representation within oblasts or within more broadly defined regions. Briefly, then, we consider here the following specific variations of these two procedures with respect to the 225 seats currently allocated by PR:

- (A): the current system.
- (B): a single member plurality system in which a seat is awarded to the party winning the most votes in the corresponding election district, where for election district boundaries we use the 225 districts that exist currently when assessing this and other similar alternatives.
- (C): a 2-member plurality system within each existing election district in which candidates run under party labels and seats are allocated according to a quota, $100/(s+1) = 33.3\%$. Thus, if a party wins 67% or more of the vote, it wins both seats. But if it wins 55% of the vote, it is awarded the first seat and the quota is subtracted from its support — in this case, $55 - 33.3 = 21.7\%$. If no other party wins more than 21.7% of the vote in that district, the first party is awarded the second seat, whereas if another party gets more than 21.7%, then it gets the second seat.
- (D): The preceding system contrasts with that of SNTV — the single nontransferable vote — in which only party-endorsed candidates appear on the ballot and parties are assumed to have sufficient organizational skill to allocate their support optimally among their endorsed candidates

(e.g., Japan). Thus, if one party wins 55% of the vote and its strongest competitor wins, say, 24%, then unlike (C), the first party is assumed to be able to divide its support between its two candidates so that each wins 27.5% and both are elected.

- (E) same as (D) except that each oblast (republic, autonomous region, etc.) is an election district that elects two members to the State Duma.
- (F): each oblast (republic, autonomous region, etc) fills as many seats as are currently assigned to it using a party-based quota like the one described in (C).
- (G) through (I): same as (F) excepts that a fixed number of seats are filled within each oblast (s = 1, 2 or 3), regardless of population.

There are a great many other variants that we might study, including SNTV at the oblast level, alternative treatments of fractional shares, and different preferential voting schemes (e.g., Hare voting).⁵ This list, though, allows us to address some of the most important questions. For example, in addition to offering a stark contrast between national PR and single-member district elections, we can also look at who might benefit from a double-member district system that would allow a party with 25% of the vote to win as many seats as a party with 55% versus a system that might award both seats to the strongest party in each district.

Insofar as the analysis of these electoral systems is concerned, we can employ two data sets when trying to answer the question 'what would have happened if ...?' – the 1995 parliamentary elections and

⁵ Notice also that we do not consider the important issue of gerrymandering — manipulating a district system by the strategic drawing of district boundaries. We suspect, in fact, that if pure PR as currently practiced is replaced by some other scheme, including PR at the regional level, the drawing of district or regional boundaries will become an important issue and the focus of much controversy and debate. Nevertheless, we suspect that such issues will arise only after the

the 1996 presidential contest.⁶ Of course, for reasons we discuss earlier, we know that this data can at best provide only an initial guess as to the answer to our question. But in addition, 1995 might by now seem like ancient history: a presidential election has passed; economic reform has been pursued and, to some extent, failed; Yeltsin's authority has declined precipitously along with the reputations of many of the 'reformers' associated with him, and gubernatorial elections have strengthened the regional basis of voting habits. Russia's politics, moreover, continues to revolve around personalities, and by December 1999 voters may confront a radically different menu of names — new reformers, new generals proclaiming Russia's greatness, and new leftists dressed as democratic socialists. Even the 1996 presidential contest might seem irrelevant by 1999 if Yeltsin is not a critical player and if elections become ever more the battlefield of the monied blocks that today seem to control Russia's 'democratic' processes.

Turning, then, to the 1995 parliamentary contests, Table 1 reports the seats that would have been won by each of the primary competitive parties or their candidates under the nine electoral systems described above if voters voted without regard for the electoral system and the framing of the alternatives before them, if the opportunities for fraud and the manipulation of ballot counts had remained constant, and if

more qualitative choice of electoral system is made.

⁶ The 1993 parliamentary election seems too far removed, given the pace of political events, while at the same time no official rayon-level data exists for this election. Notice, in addition, that we allocate only 207 seats under PR and consider only 88 federal subjects since our 1995 data set excludes Moscow. This omission derives from the unavailability of data at the rayon ('precinct') level that would allow an assessment of alternative election

the parties themselves and their candidates acted in precisely the same way as they did in 1995 (since the different systems entail filling a different size parliament, we report the percentage of seats won by each of the ten parties considered):⁷

Table 1: All parties considered using the 1995 Duma election data

	Duma districts as				Federal subjects as constituencies				
	(A) current system	(B) single memb. plurality	(C) 2-seat party list plurality w. quota	(D) 2-seat cand. Based plurality	(E) 2-seat cand. plural. in oblasts	(F) n-seat party-list plurality w. quota	(G) 1 seat per oblast	(H) 2 seats per oblast	(I) 3 seats per oblast
WoR	0	0	0	0	0	3.9	0	0	3.0
OHR	18.8	8.7	13.0	8.7	9.2	15.5	9.1	10.2	18.6
Yabloko	12.1	4.3	4.8	4.3	2.4	7.2	2.3	2.3	4.9
RC	0	0	0.5	0	0	1.0	0	0	0.8
Shakrai	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Communist	45.4	69.1	45.9	70.0	71.5	34.3	70.5	44.9	31.4
Lebed	0	0	1.9	0	0	2.9	0	0	1.5
LDPR	23.7	13.0	29.0	15.0	15.9	24.6	14.8	36.9	27.7
Anpilov	0	0.5	0	0.5	0	3.4	0	0.6	2.3
Agrarian	0	1.4	0.5	1.9	1.0	1.4	1.0	2.3	4.2
Others	0	2.9	2.9	0	0	4.6	0.5	2.8	5.7
Seats filled	207	207	414	414	176	207	88	176	264

systems based on a different configuration of election districts.

⁷ Although Shakrai's party hardly qualifies as a 'major' contender, we include it here as a point of contrast and as a means of ascertaining whether any of the wholly unsuccessful

The easiest way to make sense of this table is to first consider only those election schemes that use the current configuration of Duma election districts — (B), (C), and (D). Of these three it is evident that the parties explicitly supporting reform or Yeltsin — Our Home is Russia and Yabloko — should prefer the status quo, column (A), while Communists and their fellow travelers — Anpilov and the Agrarians — should prefer either single-member plurality rule contests (column B) or, providing they possess the ability to target their support at specific candidates, the 2-seat version of SNTV (column D). Choosing between B and D, then would seem to require an assessment of the Communist Party's relative ability to organize its support — relative to its strongest. Barring maintenance of the status quo, reformers and the LDPR would prefer a quota-based 2-seat plurality system, which derives doubtlessly from the fact that although the communists came in first in many more election districts than did the LDPR or OHR, they did not win enough votes (66+%) in those districts to win both seats outright using a quota. However, communists fare best if it is assumed that they can accurately target their support at candidates (column (D)). Thus, while reformers might have sought to mute their disadvantage in a plurality system by favoring a 2-seat district arrangement, communists could have countered this 'reform' by advocating a ballot structure in which candidates rather than parties per se competed and where the two strongest candidates were elected from each district. So in summary:

Conclusion 1: A single-member plurality system would have benefitted the communists in 1995 as would a system of 2-member districts that allowed parties to target support at specific candidates. On the other hand, if PR is abandoned, both the LDPR and OHR should prefer a double-member party-based plurality system (as opposed to a single-mandate system) since the communist

'reform' parties might have benefitted from a change in the electoral law.

party's strength was not always sufficient to elect two candidates per district outright under a quota arrangement.

An alternative to using anything like the preexisting district system is to elect deputies 'oblast - wide', and columns (E) through (I) assess a number of possibilities. As with elections using the preexisting system of election districts, the communist party should prefer electing a single deputy from each region using simple plurality rule (column G) or the application of SNTV with two seats per oblasts (column E). Our Home Is Russia, Yabloko, and Women or Russia, in contrast, are best served by having election districts as large as possible — if not national PR, then a plurality system with a quota that elects as many deputies for oblasts as possible (I) or a similar system that elects as many deputies from each oblast as currently represent it (F). Finally, and as before, Zhirinovskiy's LDPR does best under a quota based, two seat per oblast or per Duma district (columns C and H). Summarizing this analysis with two conclusions:

Conclusion 2: If elections are decentralized to the oblast level, the fortunes of the major parties in 1995 — OHR, communists, and LDPR — are essentially unchanged from the seat allocations that result from elections held within existing Duma election districts. That is, communists prefer single-mandate constituencies, while OHR prefers districts to be as large as possible.

Conclusion 3: The advantages and disadvantages to parties of eliminating PR and electing two deputies from each Duma district using plurality rule depends on precisely how that rule is applied. Under a quota system (column C), the parties do approximately the same as they do under PR, whereas if parties can target their support to their candidates (column D), the communists are greatly advantaged.

The patterns of preference portrayed in Table 1 are readily understood from the patterns of support garnered by the parties. Consider Table 2, which reports the number of times one party or another ranked first, second, third, and so on in a Duma district or region, as well as the number of districts and regions in which a party's vote total was greater than twice that of its closes rival. Notice first that of the 207 election districts in our data set, the communist party alone ranked first or second in 184 (88.9%), whereas the combined total for Our Home is Russia, Yabloko, and Russia's Choice is a mere 75 (36.6%). It is hardly surprising, then, that any single-member district system would greatly benefit, at least in 1995, the communist party. And a two-seat SNTV system would benefit them most of all since of the 143 election districts in which they ranked first, their support exceeded twice that of their closest competitor in 48 of them (23.2% of the total); the comparable figure for Our Home is Russia is a mere 4 election districts (1.9%). Much the same story pertains to the 88 regions in our data set. Our Home is Russia and Yabloko together rank first or second in only 22 (25%) regions whereas the Communists ranked first in 62 regions (70.5%) and first or second in 79 regions (89.8%). And while OHR's vote is twice that of the communist party in two regions, the communist party is twice that of its nearest competitor in 20 regions. This last fact, and the comparable one with respect to election districts readily explains why communists would have done best under a two-seat per district (column D in Table 1) or two seat per oblast (column E in Table 1) SNTV system. In contrast to these two extremes, Zhirinovsky's LDPR found its waning support leading to 98 (47.3%) second-place finishes in election districts and 52 (59%) in the regions. Thus, the LDPR would naturally have

Table 2: Rankings of Parties in 1995

	In Duma Election Districts						
	1 st place	2 nd place	3 rd place	4 th place	5 th place	6 th place	# times vote 2 x strongest opponent
WoR	0	0	15	28	30	50	0
OHR	18	35	60	35	24	21	4
Yabloko	9	10	35	26	27	17	0
RC	0	3	7	5	9	11	0
Shakrai	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Communist	143	41	9	7	3	4	48
Lebed	0	7	4	24	25	26	0
LDPR	27	98	28	16	12	11	1
Anpilov	1	0	16	31	33	28	0
Agrarians	3	7	17	15	15	12	0
	In Oblasts, Republics, etc						
WoR	0	0	7	20	17	13	0
OHR	8	10	31	17	8	8	2
Yabloko	2	2	9	10	13	13	0
RC	0	0	2	2	1	4	0
Shakrai	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Communist	62	17	4	1	2	2	20
Lebed	0	0	4	7	3	15	0
LDPR	13	52	8	3	4	3	0
Anpilov	0	1	5	14	19	10	0
Agrarians	1	3	7	10	9	9	0

avored a system that awarded two seats per district or region, but which did not allow a party to strategically target its vote as is the optimal strategy under SNTV; hence, its preference for a 2-seat party list plurality system (column C in Table 1).⁸

These results can, of course, be misleading for many reasons — an important one being the likelihood that parties will reconstitute themselves if a different electoral system is ultimately chosen. In particular, abandoning PR and moving to a plurality system is likely to yield some consolidation of parties and the disappearance of small uncompetitive ones — and indeed, with 42 lists in 1995, we might say that that number can only go down (Duverger 1954). To assess how such a consolidation might influence our conclusions, the simplest approach is to take the preceding data and ignore all parties except those we list. That is, we can suppose that no other parties compete and that the 10 listed ones account for 100% of the vote, which is equivalent to assuming that in any consolidation, those ten parties (or their equivalents) will uniformly increase their vote shares in proportion to the shares they enjoyed in 1995. Further, since consolidation is likely to eliminate even some of these 'parties', we combine these ten into four blocks: Reformists (Yabloko, Russia's Choice, and Shakrai); Centrists (Our Home is Russia, Women of Russia), Communist (Communists, Anpilov and Agrarians), and Nationalists (LDPR and Lebed). In some respect, of course, this combination does violence to the actual flow of votes, since not all of Lebed's supporters, for instance, came from or would gravitate to a nationalist candidate and

⁸ To clarify the difference in preferences between communists and the LDPR for the precise form of 2-member districts each would prefer, suppose the LDPR ranks second in a district, let X = the LDPR's share of the vote, and let Y = the vote share of the leading party in a district. Then even if $Y/2 > X$ (in which case the leading party elect two deputies if it could target its vote precisely, as we assume in the calculations under column D), it need not be the case that $Y - 33.3\% > X$, in which case the LDPR would be awarded the second seat under column C.

not all supporters of Women of Russia would vote for a party identified as the 'party of power' (Myagkov, Ordeshook, and Sobyenin 1997). Later, we consider these factors, but this recombination gives us a first approximation to the likely consequences of consolidation. Table 3, then, reproduces Table 1 for these four blocks.

Table 3: Ten Parties Consolidated Using the 1995 Duma election data

	Duma districts as constituencies				Federal subjects as constituencies				
	(A) current system	(B) single memb. plurality	(C) 2-seat party list plurality w. quota	(D) 2-seat cand. based plurality	(E) 2-seat cand. plurality.	(F) n-seat party-list plurality w. quota	(G) 1 seat per oblast	(H) 2 seats per oblast	(I) 3 seats per oblast
Reformers	12.0	8.2	5.3	8.2	2.4	15.0	2.3	6.8	14.3
Centrists	18.8	6.2	15.0	6.3	10.1	28.5	13.6	39.8	33.0
Communist	45.4	77.8	52.7	77.7	79.7	42.0	84.1	47.7	33.3
Nationalists	23.7	7.7	26.6	7.7	7.7	14.5	0.0	5.7	19.3
seats filled	207	207	414	414	196	207	88	176	264

The primary conclusion we can draw from this table is evident, namely:

Conclusion 4: If the ten parties in Table 1 are the only ones that survive an electoral change, if their vote shares remain in the same proportions as before, and if they subsequently consolidate into four groups, then reformers and centrists are best advantaged by plurality quota systems that award as many seats as are currently awarded in each oblast (F) or one that awards 3 seats per oblast (I). Plurality quota systems advantage communists only if one seat is awarded per election district district (B or G), or by 2-member districts that allow parties to target heir support at their candidates (D or E).

Indeed, if three seats are awarded in each oblast regardless of population, then centrists draw virtually even with communists.

In addition to the election systems considered in Tables 1 and 3, there is one additional possibility that we should consider — namely, the possibility that Russia will choose to move closer to the German model by requiring regional party lists use pre-defined regions that are more broadly defined than those of federal subjects. Luzhkov, Moscow's mayor, for instance, has proposed that federal subjects themselves be redefined and consolidated so that there are no more than a dozen or so such subjects.⁹ There are myriad possibilities here, but from among them we choose the simplest — electoral regions that correspond to Russia's eleven 'traditionally' defined economic zones.¹⁰ Table 4, then, summarizes our results using those zones after we add the additional electoral alternative of PR within each zone with a 5% threshold for representation, and after we modify our earlier electoral systems so that they are appropriate for these eleven larger districts.

The data in this table suggest that with any regional PR system, the primary parties in 1995 all suffer losses at the expense of the otherwise smaller, less competitive ones even with a 5% threshold required in each region to win seats. Indeed, parties other than the ten we consider here could secure upwards of one quarter of all Duma seats if the entire Duma

⁹ *Izvestia*, "Proposal for Russia's Redivision," September, 1998, p. 2

¹⁰ For the precise definition of these regions see *Russia's Regions After the 1996 Presidential Election, 1997*, Office of the Presidential Administration, Moscow (in Russian).

Table 4: Elections Using 11 Economic Regions and the 1995 Duma election data

		Only 10 parties competing					All parties competing				
	(A) current system	(B) PR in each region, 5% thresh.	(C) quota with each region having current # of seats	(D) quota with each region having 20 seats	(E) quota with each region having 30 seats	(F) quota with each region having 40 seats	(G) PR in each region, 5% thresh.	(H) quota with regions having current # of seats	(I) quota with each region having 20 seats	(J) quota with each region having 30 seats	(K) quota with each region having 40 seats
WoR	0	5.8%	6.2	6.8	7.6	7.3	4.4	5.3	5.9	5.5	5.5
OHR	18.8	12.9	11.6	13.1	12.7	12.7	13.8	9.3	9.5	9.4	9.5
Yabloko	12.1	5.8	7.1	9.1	9.4	9.1	7.1	6.2	7.7	6.7	6.8
RC	0	1.3	4.4	4.1	4.2	4.3	0	3.6	5.0	3.9	3.4
Shakrai	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Communist	45.4	32.0	29.8	32.3	31.8	31.1	34.7	22.7	24.5	23.9	23.4
Lebed	0	4.4	5.8	5.5	3.0	5.5	2.7	5.3	5.0	4.2	4.8
LDPR	23.7	16.9	15.6	18.2	17.6	17.5	18.2	20.1	12.3	13.0	13.2
Anpitov	0	6.7	6.7	5.5	6.4	7.0	4.4	5.8	5.0	5.5	4.8
Agranian	0	3.6	4.9	5.5	3.0	5.5	2.7	4.0	5.0	4.2	4.1
Others	0	-	-	-	-	-	11.1	16.8	20.0	23.6	24.5
Seats filled	207	225	225	220	330	440	225	225	220	330	440

were filled by a regional PR system. Most of that gain, moreover, comes at the expense of the Communist Party, though not necessarily to the advantage of reformers and pro-Yeltsin parties. Comparing column A to, for example, column G, notice that the seat share of Women of Russia, OHR, Yabloko, and Russia's Choice declines from 30.9% to 25.3% — a loss of little more than 5% of the

seats in the Duma, whereas the Communist Party's decline exceeds 10%. However, Anpilov plus the Agrarians increase their representation from 0% to 7.1%, so that the gap between communists and reformers actually widens a bit. This gap can be narrowed considerably, however, if plurality with a quota is implemented within each region (see column H): reformers get 24.4% of the seats, but the three communist party's have their representation reduced to 32.5%. So in conclusion,

Conclusion 4: Because otherwise uncompetitive parties can secure 5% or more of the vote regionally but not nationally, regional PR is likely to encourage party proliferation to a greater extent than even the current system. Regional quota-based plurality systems have a similar effect: WoR, RC, Anpilov, Lebed, and the Agrarians all benefit at the expense of OHR, Communists, and the LDPR, relative to national PR. But as in our earlier analysis, if a regional electoral system is implemented, reformers do best with a plurality quota system than with a PR arrangement..

2. Data from the 1996 Presidential Contest

The 1996 presidential contest stands in sharp contrast to the 1995 Duma elections if only because of the far smaller number of alternatives that confronted voters on the first ballot. And of that number, only five were assumed beforehand to be 'serious' candidates who might win enough votes to challenge Yeltsin or Zyuganov for second place in the event of a runoff. The 1996 contest differed from the Duma election also in terms of the resources devoted to securing Yeltsin's eventual reelection and the evident choice that confronted voters — a choice of a communist past (Zyuganov), a relatively popular and 'sane' nationalist who supported reform but whose ability to govern was unknown (Lebed), and the chief architect of a reform who was perceived as having left a sizable proportion of the population impoverished but who at the same time was seen by some as having led Russia to democracy. The

choices in 1996, in other words, seemed more clearly drawn than in 1995 and, we suspect, corresponded better to the party system likely to prevail if Russia's current menu of parties consolidates. Table 5, then, reproduces Table 1 as if each of the five primary contenders were a party seeking seats in the State Duma.

Table 5: All candidates considered using the 1996 1st round Presidential Data
(Only candidates winning a seat under one scheme or another are included)

	Duma districts as constituencies				Federal subjects as constituencies				
	(A) current system	(B) single memb. plurality	(C) 2-seat party list plurality	(D) 2-seat cand. based plurality	(E) 2-seat cand. Plural. in oblasts	(F) n seats per oblast plural. w. quota	(G) 1 seat per oblast	(H) 2 seats per oblast	(I) 3 seats per oblast
Yeltsin	37.3	53.3	56.0	53.3	51.7	29.3	38.2	48.3	33.3
Zhirinovskiy	6.2	0	0	0	0	7.1	0	0	7.0
Zyuganov	33.3	46.2	40.0	46.2	48.3	32.4	61.8	46.6	33.3
Lebed	15.1	0.4	4.0	0.4	0	13.3	0	5.1	29.2
Yavlinski	8.0	0	0	0	0	8.4	0	0	3.4
Others	0	0	0	0	0	9.3	0	0	0
seats filled	225	225	450	450	178	225	89	178	267

Our conclusions stand in sharp contrast to those drawn from the 1995 Duma election data:

Conclusion 5: Whereas supporters of Yeltsin would have preferred the status quo PR system in 1995, in 1996 their preferences are reversed so that they should then prefer a single-member constituency system based on existing Duma districts. No arrangement gives Yeltsin's 'party' fewer seats than the current system and no arrangement gives Zyuganov's more. Moreover, Zhirinovskiy's representation can be wholly eliminated and Lebed's reduced considerably with an 'appropriate'

electoral choice. On the other hand, centrists and reformers gain little clear advantage from eliminating PR in favor of a plurality system decentralized only to the oblast level.

Moreover, just as Conclusion 1 is largely sustained through the various permutations of electoral arrangements we consider in Tables 3 and 4, the implications of Table 5 are sustained through equivalent manipulations (which we do not report here). The source of this radical contrast between 1995 and 1996 is not difficult to find. Table 6 reproduces Table 3 for the three leading presidential contenders, and shows that, unlike OHR in 1995 (or even the combination of OHR, Yabloko, Women of Russia and Russia's Choice), Yeltsin not only came in first in a plurality of Duma election districts, but also won enough votes in those districts to often elect two candidates if an appropriate 2-member district system were implemented.¹¹ We should not be surprised, then, that Yeltsin's advisors today appear to favor changing Russia's parliamentary electoral system so as to wholly eliminate PR. The only decision they seem to confront on this score is whether they should try to gain maximal advantage by implementing a double-member rather than single-member district system of some type. On the other hand, Yeltsin's opponents -- most notably the Communists and supporters of Zhirinovskiy -- barring an unlikely move to full PR, should simply prefer the status quo. As Table 5 shows, however, these conclusions apply only when the basis of our calculation is the current system of Duma districts. If instead, elections are disaggregated to only the oblast level, then much of Yeltsin's advantage disappears, and, in fact, if three seats are filled per oblast using a quota system, Yeltsin, Zyuganov and Lebed draw essentially even in

¹¹ We note, moreover, that in 31 of the 33 election districts in which Zyuganov won an overwhelming victory, Yeltsin was the district's second choice in all but 2 cases, whereas Zyuganov is second to Yeltsin in Yeltsin's strongest districts only 70% of the time, with Lebed accounting for all but 3 of the remainder -- thereby suggesting that Lebed's voters, if forced to choose, would choose Yeltsin more often than Zyuganov, which is, of course, a supposition borne out by the second ballot returns.

terms of number of seats won. Table 6 holds the key to this reversal. Specifically, although Yeltsin won in a clear majority of Duma districts, Zyuganov holds a clear edge in terms of the number of federal subjects in which he secured a positive plurality as well as the number of subjects in which his vote is at least twice that of Yeltsin's. Thus, unlike 1995, Zyuganov should prefer the elimination of PR, but only if a form of plurality rule is implemented at the oblast level.

Table 6: Rank of Presidential Candidates, 1st Round 1996

	Duma districts							Oblasts				
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	# times vote 2X strongest opponent	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	# times vote 2X strongest opponent
Yeltsin	116	102	3	4	-	-	6	34	52	3	-	1
Zyuganov	104	90	27	4	-	-	3	55	28	6	-	2
Lebed	1	26	166	26	6	-	-	-	9	72	8	-

3. Sensitivity

As we note earlier, although the single-mandate results in 1995 correlate highly with party-list and presidential voting patterns, the turmoil we see in Russia today is likely to lead to significant shifts in party support as well as recombinations of parties and electoral alliances. At this time, of course, we do not know if such shifts will in fact occur or if they do, their magnitude. Nevertheless, it is essential that we try to assess the consequence of any change in the fortunes of parties on the conclusions we offer earlier. To this end, we consider four scenarios with respect to how votes in 1999 might change relative to those from 1995. Specifically:

Scenario 1: Reformists and centrists combine their support, while the support of nationalists is absorbed wholly by the communists

Scenario 2: Reformists and centrists combine, but owing to economic circumstances, 10% of their vote shifts to communists and nationalists in equal numbers

Scenario 3: 10% of the reformist and centrist vote shifts to communists and nationalists, but reformist and centrist parties, as in the past, fail to coalesce

Scenario 4: reformist and centrists coalesce, while the nationalist vote is split between this block and communists

Rather than examine the consequences of each scenario for all of the electoral systems we consider earlier, we focus here on the simplest versions of plurality rule – single and double-member districts – since, as our earlier tables show, the qualitative conclusions we reach here can be readily extrapolated to other (e.g., regionally based) systems. Table 7, then, summarizes our results when we apply the data from the 1995 Duma elections to our scenarios. Recall now that, based on the 1995 election returns, reformist and centrist parties fare poorly under any plurality system relative to the seats they won under national party list PR, and this conclusion holds true under the various scenarios we consider. The only circumstances under which reformists and centrists fare even modestly better under plurality rule is when they combine into a single political force while nationalists and communists remain separate (Scenario 2), or after combining, nationalist support is distributed evenly between this coalition and communists (Scenario 4) – and even in these cases, the gains of reformers plus centrists are at best modest. Indeed, in Scenario 2, any gains reformers and centrists might enjoy come at the expense of nationalists whereas the communists secure an outright majority of seats. Finally, recall from Table 3 that reformers and

nationalists do somewhat better at the expense of communists if Duma districts elect two rather than a single deputy. Scenarios 2 and 3 sustain this pattern. In general, then, even if reformers and centrists can set aside their differences and coalesce into a single party, the gains they are likely to enjoy from the implementation of a plurality electoral system are either modest or negative. That is, based on the 1995 election returns at least, our earlier conclusion that centrists and reformers should prefer the status quo remains unchanged.

Table 7: Sensitivity Analysis using the 1995 party list Duma election returns

	'Parties'	Current system	1-member districts	2-member districts quota system
Actual data	Reform	13.0%	4.3	5.3
	Centrist	20.8	8.7	13.0
	Communist	43.0	73.9	49.3
	Nationalist	23.2	13.0	29.0
Scenario 1	ref + cent	33.8	18.8	27.0
	com + nat	66.2	81.8	73.0
Scenario 2	.9(ref + cent)	30.4	35.2	30.2
	communist +	44.9	60.9	49.5
	nationalist +	24.6	3.9	20.3
Scenario 3	.9reform	11.7	3.9	3.6
	.9centrist	18.7	7.2	10.6
	communist +	44.9	77.3	53.6
	nationalist +	24.6	11.6	32.1
Scenario 4	ref + cent + .5nat	45.4	49.4	45.1
	comm + .5nat	54.6	50.6	54.9

Turning now to the 1996 Presidential returns, we consider four slightly different scenarios in which the number of voting blocks is reduced to three or two. Specifically,

Scenario 1: Yeltsin and Yavlinski's vote combine into a single centrist-reform block while the nationalist vote of Lebed and Zhirinovskiy combine

Scenario 2: Yeltsin and Yavlinski's voters combine with one half of Lebed's, while Zyuganov and Zhirinovskiy's voters combine with Lebed's remaining voters.

Scenario 3: Yeltsin and Yavlinski's voters combine with half of Lebed's, but 10% of the total goes to a coalition of Zyuganov's, Zhirinovskiy's and half of Lebed.

Scenario 4: Yeltsin and Yavlinski's voters combine but 10% of that vote is shared equally by Zyuganov and by a coalition of Zhirinovskiy and Lebed's voters.

Looking now at Table 8, which considers only the votes won by the five primary presidential contenders, notice that in all four scenarios, reformers and centrists do at least as well and sometimes better under plurality rule than with the current party list arrangement. Although the difference between party list and plurality is attenuated in two of the scenarios (#'s 2 and 3), the reversal of preferences we observed when contrasting 1995 and 1996 continues to hold.

4. Conclusions

Our analysis is, of course, merely preliminary. Any firm conclusions about the likely consequences of a change in the formula for representation in the State Duma should consider other scenarios. Such conclusions, moreover, should also consider other ways of manipulating the consequences of any particular electoral formula – gerrymandering in the

Table 8: Sensitivity Analysis for 4 scenarios using the 1996 presidential returns

	"Parties"	current system	1-member districts	2-member districts quota system
Actual returns	Yeltsin	37.3%	53.3%	56.0%
	Yavlinski	8.0	0	0
	Lebed	15.1	0.4	4.0
	Zhirinovsky	6.2	0	0
	Zyuganov	33.3	46.2	40.0
Scenario 1	Yeltsin + Yav	45.3	62.0	58.7
	Leb + Zhir	21.3	1.3	8.9
	Zyuganov	33.3	36.0	32.4
Scenario 2	Yel + Yav + .5Leb	52.8	54.7	56.9
	Zyug + Zhir + .5Leb	47.2	45.3	43.1
Scenario 3	.9(Yel + Yav + .5Leb)	47.5	47.1	48.7
	Zyug + Zhir + .5Leb +	52.5	52.9	51.3
Scenario 4	.9(Yel + Yav)	40.8	53.3	50.9
	Lebed + Zhir +	23.6	3.6	14.0
	Zyuganov +	35.8	43.1	35.1

case of a plurality-based system and alternative definitions of regions in any regionally-based system of party list PR. As we note earlier, there continues to be some sentiment for redefining Russia's federal subjects so as to reduce that number from 89 to, say, 15, and any such redefinition opens the door, of course, to a plethora of possibilities and manipulations. Nor should we ignore the possibility that the Russian electorate will find new combinations of support for 'right' versus 'left' as new candidates and parties appear on the scene. Nevertheless, our analysis does serve to emphasize one fact -- despite the relative stability of the Russian electorate between 1991 and 1996, the changes that did occur in voting patterns between 1995 and 1996 (most notably, Yeltsin's relative success at consolidating much of the centrist and pro-reform vote that eluded OHR and other pro-government parties), in combination with a significantly reduced number of alternatives, have profound consequences for the allocation of seats in the State Duma and the preferences over electoral arrangements of the primary ideological competitors in Russia's electoral politics. Indeed, one's preference over electoral arrangements -- if 'one' is an advocate of reform as that position is commonly identified or if 'one' is a supporter of the communist party and its fellow travelers -- depends critically on whether the 1995 or 1996 election returns are taken as representative of future voting patterns.

Of course, any move to eliminate PR at the national level and replace that system either with single or double member districts, as well as any attempt to redefine Russia's federal subjects and implement any electoral scheme based on that redefinition, opens the door to a new manipulative possibility -- gerrymandering. We cannot say whether the advantage that plurality systems might have offered on Yeltsin's opponents in 1995 or on Yeltsin's supporters in 1996 can be reversed or negated by the 'appropriate' redefinition of districts or subjects. Gerrymandering is a powerful tool of electoral manipulation, and given the reversal of preferences that appears to have resulted from the changing

patterns of voter choice between 1995 and 1996, we suspect that this is no less true in Russia than anywhere else. Thus, those who might choose to interpret our results as absolute guidelines of preference need to explore, as a second stage of inquiry, the extent of the manipulations that gerrymandering might allow.

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