

The Oppositional Parties in Russian Regions: The hard choice between inclusion and exclusion.

Introduction

Russian party system is inevitably turning into the dominant one. United Russia domination looks real on the regional level as almost all the governors are party members and the same is true for the majority of the regional deputies. United Russia has become an important tool for political recruitment and at the same time, it reflects the structure of regional elite and its different groups. Despite the fact that United Russia includes most of prominent figures and clienteles, the party's electoral support is limited and probably falling, and this leaves some significant space for the other parties. But since every party looks for the way to come to power, the opposition in Russia have to make the hard choice between being incorporated into the existing system of power distribution and openly resisting the authorities in hope to get the mass support. In turn, United Russia and its patrons decide what parties have to be included or excluded in each case, be it State Duma, regional legislature or municipal assembly. As a result, Russian party system is not simply polarized on "party of power – opposition" basis but presents many different cases of inter-party relations.

Our analysis of all the 83 regional cases shows that the place and functions of three other bigger parties (left CPRF, populist LDPR, and centre-left Fair Russia) in regional politics is very different and ever changing. These parties are not truly oppositional, nor they are loyal to United Russia / regional governors. Very different is their attitude towards governors, when deputies vote on approval of the candidate, proposed by the president. Very often other parties vote together with United Russia. In 2010, the communists even banned such misbehavior of their deputies officially. Another case is the distribution of leadership positions in the regional legislatures. In half of the regions, United Russia decided to grant other parties with some spoils. The oppositional parties usually agree to join the coalition.

Russian regions are still very different in terms of what parties are incorporated into the ruling coalitions and what are left beyond and play the oppositional game. The "oppositional" parties may function as the "real" opposition or as UR smaller partners and it is all different in different regions depending on their place within regional clientelist networks. Such networks based on personal relationships are what count most in structuring of the regional party systems. Oppositional parties themselves choose between two strategies. They need to look oppositional to attract the voters and they need to play their role in the political recruitment giving their activists an opportunity to catch some positions in power. Party politics also strongly depend on the local business groups that sometimes move from one party to another, looking for their ways of political institutionalization. However, still without any chances to win the elections (except for the municipal level) oppositional parties usually cannot do without double-dealing with UR. For the party opposition in Russia this is a sort of a closed circle.

Opposition in Russian political studies

The theme of opposition in Russian politics is widely discussed in political science and in media as well. While the Russian political regime has been acquiring more and more authoritarian characteristics such discussions has led to many controversial points. There is a widespread talk among analysts what is the "real" opposition in Russia as though the opposition has been split into the "real" oppositional politicians and "pretenders". Often it leads to severe conflicts and quarrels inside the oppositional parties when some activists blame others in misconduct in terms of their "oppositionness". Since 1990s, expert discourse has included the theme of so-called "system" opposition as contrary to the "non-system" or "anti-system"

¹ Ph.D. (political science); Russian Political Science Association, vice-president; Higher School of Economics, professor; Moscow State University, professor.

opposition (now presented by a bunch of non-registered organizations). For example, communists even under Yeltsin rule were considered a “system” opposition as they moderated their rhetoric and looked “social-democratic” to some analysts. In 2000s, opposition started to look very weak and was caught in many dealings with the authorities thus provoking experts to say about its extinction (Gel'man, 2004).

On the other hand, it would be wrong to say that the very phenomenon of opposition does not exist and cannot exist in Russia. One of the main reasons is electoral. The authorities enjoy rather high but still not the overall support, as all polls and most electoral results show. The share of unsatisfied voters is significant and will probably rise again, as revealed by 2011 polls conducted by almost all sociological centers (Levada Centre, FOM, VCIOM). Ideological cleavages are still relevant and controversies over Russian future and reforms still go on even inside the dominant party.

Anyway, there is a certain place for opposition in Russian political regime. However, it is better to use specific kind of discourse, because it is impossible to divide Russian politicians and parties into ruling and oppositional ones as it could probably be in democratic / pluralist regime (like those studied in the Western societies; see Dahl, 1971; Dahl, 1973). Rather it is a phenomenon of opposition towards the core of ruling elite (with its political course and principal personalities) presented in different forms and degrees, or it is a character and degree of “oppositionness”, that can be analyzed. In our view, the “oppositionness” is a more adequate phenomenon to study in authoritarian regimes than the opposition. In this paper, we use results of our studies in Russian regional politics in post-Soviet times in order to understand what opposition and “oppositionness” means and how it changes in the course of regime’s change towards more authoritarianism. Regional and local tier of Russian politics is especially interesting since it gives a lot of different cases of “oppositionness” to explore and since the victories of oppositional parties and candidates have always been and even now are possible in some regions and municipalities.

However, our study leads to the conclusion that under authoritarian (or hybrid) regime the local electoral victory of opposition increases the level of political instability, as local opposition-led regime cannot co-exist with the federal rulers and their loyal supporters on spot. Moreover, as our studies show any change of governor or mayor in the regime that is based on patron-client relations leads to more complicated network of clienteles and usually to more conflicts. That means that the “oppositional” regional or local regime is less stable both inside and in its relations with the federal centre. In reality, many of such regimes search for the adaptive tactics up to the change of their party of choice and demonstration of full loyalty toward the federal centre (sometimes even more explicit than in “normal” regional regimes). If no adaptation takes place, the oppositional-turned-ruling local leader fails and the difference is only in the timing of his failure, be it fast lost of power or a long story of tries to find a way. Nevertheless, under Medvedev even successful adaptation of former oppositional politicians among regional governors has ceased and most of them has lost their power. The reason is the start of the next period of elite transformation when younger generations started to come to power replacing older generation of both opposition and loyalists.

The formation of Russian opposition can be analyzed with the use of combination of two types of political cleavages. First of dimensions is ideological, that is rooted in the times of USSR collapse and CPSU ban followed by liberal economic reforms. When the regime’s ideology was more liberal, the opposition tended to be left (communist etc) and nationalist. However, liberal opposition also started to form, since liberalization was incomplete. As a result, under ideologically polyvalent regime the completely possible bunch of ideology-motivated oppositions came into being. The movement of the ruling elite towards the political centre and its pragmatic and tactical policies as well as catch-all electoral policy eased the formation of opposition of any ideological kind.

Another dimension can be called instrumental. In our opinion, this means the access to the power resources, and the lack of such access creates the opposition struggling for resources

and not for any kind of ideologically biased political and economic course. Under conditions of elitist politics with the rent-seeking elite in its core (Blaydes, 2011), the formation of ruling elite controlling the resources has become one of the principal political processes since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

In this paper, we study and compare the cases when the opposition came to power by the way of elections. We analyze the regional executive power first, where representatives of opposition could win the governors' elections and go on with their governors' career up to the recent times (or even going on at the moment). Another case is about municipal heads, mayors of more or less significant towns, mainly of the regional capitals. Finally, we analyze the opposition in the regional legislatures. Our aim is to understand how the opposition and oppositional parties function within the Russian political regime on the sub-national level and what happens if the opposition comes to power.

Oppositional governors: an art to survive

Politics on regional and local level was crucially important both for formation and for the problems of opposition-making in Russia. With the came of governors' and mayors' elections in 1996 the left-wing opposition as well as other oppositional groups got an opportunity to grab some power. More favorable institutional conditions (meaning fairer elections) and higher level of communists' electoral support made that short period of time the starting point for the "oppositional" regional and local governments. Actually, most of regional governors who came to power with the CPRF support started their governors' careers in 1996.

There is extensive literature on the transformation of Russian political regime after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Initially the authors used the theory of democratic transition viewing Russia as a political system on its way to democracy (Karl, Schmitter, 1994; Linz, Stepan, 1996). The governors' and mayors' elections were understood as one of the crucial turning points to democratic development. But obvious flaws in the democratic transition has led to the change of main paradigms as the transition to democracy stopped on the way and failed. As a result, Russian political regime has been analyzed in terms of hybrid regime, or authoritarian regime (in latter cases with the use of concepts of electoral authoritarianism, competitive authoritarianism and alike; see Levitsky, Way, 2002; Schedler, 2006; Golosov, 2008; Ross, 2009). In our studies of sub-national Russian politics, we argued that the elements of centralization (instead of deep federalization) and the formation of hybrid and not "truly" democratic regime marked the post-Soviet regional politics from the very start in 1991. In most regions in 1991 the governors were appointed by president and the federal government clearly stated that the elections of governors were a threat as they could bring to power "the opposition to reforms". Mayoral elections also started much later than they could. In other words, it was the vertical of power that was introduced by Yeltsin right after the collapse of the Soviet Union (with the exception of republics, Moscow and Saint Petersburg) rather than competitive elections allowing opposition to take power.

So, the possibilities for the opposition to take power on the sub-national level were limited from the very start. The opposition to Yeltsin was strong in the regional Soviets elected in 1990, but dissolved in 1993. Clearly enough, Yeltsin administration did not want any more oppositional electoral victories, since it took the grip on power in 1991 and tried hard to suppress its opponents in 1991-1993.

Two strong limitations for "oppositional" governance on sub-national level appeared soon. They also showed that the Russian political regime was far from democratic and federalist even in the middle of the 1990s and could not include the oppositional local regimes without their transformation and adaptation to overall authoritarian and centralist conditions. As we argue the roots of limitations for sub-national oppositional governance lie in unfinished and insincere democratic reform of the 1990s and formation of hybrid regime from its very start.

The first is the limitation on political pluralism that led to the impossibility to create any sub-national regime that could differ seriously from the national regime. Kremlin clearly

opposed those politicians who run for governors from the oppositional side, as was shown at 1996 governors' elections, when the presidential administration supported its list of candidates (mainly the incumbents appointed by Yeltsin before). Those who came to power under CPRF banner were usually radical in their rhetoric (especially at the election time) and represented the political force that said that it wanted to change (or restore) the political system itself. In reality, it easily proved to be impossible to create any isolated local regime that could fulfill the program of CPRF. Ironically, the regional regime of 1990s that was considered to be "socialist" (with heavy government control over social politics of paternalist kind) and became a showcase for experts was Ulyanovsk regime of Goryachev who was criticized by local communists and opposed by them at 1996 governor's elections. Such case showed that personal relations and conflicts (like relations between Goryachev and CPRF leader Kruglikov) always meant much more than ideological ties while structuring the power relations in Russian regions.

The second limitation is the inability of autonomous and self-sustained sub-national rule. This limitation is caused by deep socioeconomic contrasts of Russian regions and by centralized resource redistribution needed badly to decrease these contrasts and help the backward to survive. Such distributive policy also had clear political and electoral reasons, since it helped to boost the support for the regime in the vast periphery. It has become a common knowledge that such distributive policy was heavily influenced by patron-client ties between the centre and the certain governors, was seen as a reward for loyalty and electoral results, as the elections started to show even from 1993 referenda and Duma elections (electoral loyalty of the poorest regions such as Kalmykia and Tuva). With the introduction of fiscal federalism after 1994-1995 clientelism in resources' distribution diminished a bit, but it never disappeared, since the federal government has a lot of different possibilities to reward the regions for reasons unclear in terms of "pure" economy. Oppositional regional/local regimes started with populist and paternalist programs, which gave them a popular support. However, lack of resources and financial dependence on the federal government made impossible vast expenditures that such programs needed. In fact, most of the promises made by opposition were void from the very start, no matter the oppositional leader himself understood it or not.

Such contradictions led to the very unpleasant situation for the oppositional leaders who became governors or mayors. Oppositional governors could not follow their ideology and their electoral promises without fatal conflicts with the federal authorities. Let us see what were the empirical limits to the "oppositionness" of regional governors, what they could or could not do in their policies or had to do under pressure of political circumstances.

In our point of view, there are four negative political outcomes for "oppositional" governors under overall regime conditions with their limitations on "oppositionness".

The first outcome is the low and falling legitimacy of "oppositional" regional regime. It led to the loss or low level of public support for governors, losses while running for the new terms. It may seem strange, but many empirical cases prove it. The "oppositional" governors started to lose popular support since they broke their promises. Most "oppositional" regimes had very limited and/or low legitimacy from the very start (as electoral data shows, see the table 1) and looked weaker and more fragmented than their "mainstream" counterparts did. That was clearly shown in the electoral history. Some of the "oppositional" governors failed quickly when they could not be re-elected for the second term (among CPRF members, these were Belonogov in Amur region, Shabanov in Voronezh region, Kislitsyn in Mariy El; among the left-wing non-members the examples were Ryabov in Tambov region, Prokhorov in Smolensk region). Some of them lingered longer and lost their third terms, like communist Lyubimov in Ryazan region.

In most cases, "oppositional" governors originally came to power with the limited electoral support, because they won highly competitive elections defeating more or less strong incumbents and usually did it in the second round only. The support of CPRF that usually backed them was not so high and many candidates lacked personal charisma to attract more voters than CPRF support could do. However, after the victory their support usually decreased even more.

Those who won their second term usually had big problems with their re-election, like mentioned above Lyubimov, famous communist leader Starodubtsev in Tula region etc.

Table 1. The rise and fall of the “oppositional” governors in Russia².

Region	Governor	First election	Following elections	Nominations
Buryatia	Potapov (CPRF member, for period unidentified)	1994 (46.2% 1 st round, 71.7% 2 nd round)	1998 won (63.25%); 2002 won (68.79%)	No, changed in 2007
Mariy El	Kislitsin (CPRF member)	1997 (47.37% 1 st round, 58.89% 2 nd round)	2000, lost (25.19% 1 st round, 33.4% 2 nd round)	
Altai krai	Surikov (CPRF support, then UR member)	1996 (46.9% 1 st round, 49.4% 2 nd round)	2000 won (77.41%); 2004 lost (47.46% 1 st round, 46.29% 2 nd round)	
Krasnodar krai	Tkachev (CPRF member, then UR member)	2000 (81.78%)	2004 won (83.98%), after leaving CPRF and joining UR	2007
Krasnodar krai	Kondratenko (CPRF support)	1996 (82%)	2000, did not participate	
Stavropol krai	Chernogorov (CPRF member, then excluded)	1996 (47.8% 1 st round, 55.1% 2 nd round)	2000 won (28.58% 1 st round, 56.57% 2 nd round)	2005 Resigned in 2008
Amur oblast	Belonogov (CPRF member)	1997 (60.51%)	2001 lost	
Bryansk oblast	Lodkin (CPRF member)	1993 (29.3% 1 st round, 51.4% 2 nd round), fired in October 1993. 1996 (54.54%)	2000 won (29.21%) 2004, registration denied	
Vladimir oblast	Vinogradov (CPRF member, freezed then)	1996 (62.2%)	2000 won (65.62%)	2005 2010
Volgograd oblast	Maksyuta (CPRF member, freezed then)	1996 (28.51% 1 st round, 50.96% 2 nd round)	2000 won (36.72%) 2004 won (41.42% 1 st round)	No, changed in 2010
Voronezh oblast	Shabanov (CPRF member)	1996 (48.97%)	2000 lost (15.21%)	
Ivanovo oblast	Tikhonov (CPRF member, excluded then)	2000 (48.54% 1 st round, 62.36% 2 nd round)		No, changed in 2005(after exclusion from

²

Official data of Central Electoral Commission, author’s sources.

				CPRF)
Kaliningrad oblast	Gorbenko (CPRF support in second round)	1996 (22.29% 1 st round, 49.56% 2 nd round)	2000 lost (21.54% 1 st round, 33.71% 2 nd round)	
Kaluga oblast	Sudarenkov (CPRF support)	1996 (45.76% 1 st round, 63.51% 2 nd round)	2000, did not participate	
Kamchatka oblast	Mashkovtsev (CPRF member)	2000 (20% 1 st round, 45.83% 2 nd round)		No, changed in 2005
Kemerovo oblast	Tuleev (CPRF support, UR member then)	1997 (94.54%)	2001 won (93.5%)	2005 2010
Kirov oblast	Sergeenkov (CPRF support)	1996 (39.64% 1 st round, 50.46% 2 nd round)	2000 won (58.03%); 2003, could not participate	
Kostroma oblast	Shershunov (CPRF support)	1996 (41.72% 1 st round, 64.1% 2 nd round)	2000 won (43.74% 1 st round, 63.09% 2 nd round)	2005 Killed in road accident
Kurgan oblast	Bogomolov (CPRF support, UR member then)	1996 (40.87% 1 st round, 66.29% 2 nd round)	2000 won (43.23% 1 st round, 50.38% 2 nd round) 2004 won (35.08%)	2010
Kursk oblast	Mikhailov (CPRF member, UR member then)	2000 (39.52% 1 st round, 55.54% 2 nd round)		2005 2010
Kursk oblast	Rutskoi (CPRF support)	1996 (76.85%)	2000, registration denied	
Leningrad oblast	Gustov (CPRF support)	1996 (53.37%)	1998, appointed to federal government 1999, lost (22.68%)	
Lipetsk oblast	Korolev (CPRF support)	1998 (79.28%)	2002 won	2006 2011
Magadan oblast	Tsvetkov (CPRF support)	1996 (45.96%)	2000 won (62.76%) Murdered in 2003	
Murmansk oblast	Yevdokimov (CPRF support, UR member then)	1996 (20.1% 1 st round, 43.45% 2 nd round)	2000 won (86.71%) 2004 won (76.99%)	No, changed in 2010
Nizhny Novgorod oblast	Khodyrev (CPRF member, excluded then)	2001		No, changed in 2005 (after exclusion from

				CPRF)
Orenburg oblast	Chernyshev (CPRF and APR support, UR member then)	1999 (23.86% 1 st round, 52.5% 2 nd round)	2003 won (63.38%)	2005 Changed in 2010
Pskov oblast	Mikhailov (LDPR member, Unity then)	1996 (22.71% 1 st round, 56.46% 2 nd round)	2000 won (28.01%) 2004 lost (29.71% 1 st round, 41.4% 2 nd round)	
Ryazan oblast	Lyubimov (CPRF member)	1996 (38.29% 1 st round, 56.06% 2 nd round)	2000 won (40.09% 1 st round, 65.14% 2 nd round) 2004 lost (21.08%)	
Smolensk oblast	Prokhorov (CPRF support)	1998 (46.52% 1 st round, 67.39% 2 nd round)	2002 lost	
Tambov oblast	Ryabov (CPRF member)	1995 (36.8% 1 st round, 52.62% 2 nd round)	1999 lost (29.29% 1 st round, 44.16% 2 nd round)	
Tula oblast	Starodubtsev (CPRF member)	1997 (62.82%)	2001 won	No, changed in 2005
Chelyabinsk oblast	Sumin (CPRF support, UR member then)	1996 (50.79%)	2000 won (58.68%)	2005 Changed in 2010
Koryak AO	Bronevich (CPRF support, OHiR support then)	1996 (47.13%)	2000 lost (32.99%)	
Evenk AO	Bokovikov (CPRF support)	1997 (49%)	2001, did not participate	

The second outcome was the loss of own party support, mainly of CPRF. Again, it may seem strange but the “oppositional” governors tended to non-party rule rather than to “communist” rule. Among the reasons were the search for more legitimacy for new regime and the need to build the professional, rather than “political” regional government.

On the regional level, the “oppositional” governors lost support from CPRF partly or fully, as they turned down ideology in their policies (fully or partly) and refused to fill the regional administration with communists. Considering their policies there is no clear evidence that “red” governors were different from the “mainstream” governors (Lavrov, Kuznetsova, 1997). Most governors, no matter how they were affiliated with the parties, tried to use their limited financial resources to please the public sector and get the electoral support by means of their social politics in order to win the next term. In other terms, most governors under poor economic conditions of the 1990s were “socially-oriented” due at least to the electoral reasons as much as they could under financial limitations. Meanwhile they could not change much in the region and it showed to the dissatisfaction of CPRF and its supporters. The result was in the widespread, sometimes open and harsh critics of governors from the side of CPRF activists and even the leaders of CPRF regional branches.

On the federal level, the “red” governors initially enjoyed the full support from the Central committee of CPRF. In the 1990s and after Zyuganov’s failure at the 1996 presidential elections, the official policy of CPRF was aimed at getting as much power on the sub-national level as it was possible (to grow into power from below, as it was commonly said by party officials. In conflicts, the highest party officials usually backed the governors protecting them from the critics. However, this “honeymoon” gradually ended, since the governors showed no signs of love towards the federal party leadership. The typical case of the 2000s was the growing tension between “red” governors and CPRF leader Zyuganov. Formerly the federal party leadership of CPRF tried to ease the tensions on the regional level that appeared from “red” governors’ pragmatism. Zyuganov saw the “red” governors as a valuable resource and sometimes helped them overturn oppositional regional leaders of CPRF. But in the 2000s, as the federal centre became stronger and CPRF weakened, some “red” governors started to criticize Zyuganov pleasing the federal authorities with such critics. Most prominent critics were Mashkovtsev in Kamchatka and Tikhonov from Ivanovo region. Tikhonov was one of the main players in an attempt to break up CPRF from within and change its leader. After that, he headed new left party VKPB, but it ended up soon.

The third outcome lies in the rather low competence of some “oppositional” regimes and/or their inadequacy in terms of changing economic regime. Many “oppositional” governors came to power as populists with no experience in regional governance. It was hard for them both to recruit party activists (who could be incompetent) and professional bureaucracy (that could be disloyal). The oppositional governor often lacked its own professional team. In our studies, we proved that in the 1990s most “red” governors either left untouched the significant part of the previous government (which they strongly criticized before the election) or recruited new officials from different elite groups but not from CPRF (Turovsky, 1998). Anyway, their administrations were often unstable. Obviously Russian regions could not be the examples of institutionalized opposition of the Western kind with “ready-to-go” shadow government etc.

Two last mentioned outcomes merged in fact. The problem of “realistic”, pragmatic policy grew along with the problem of professionally trained oppositional politicians ready to work in the governments. It was only part of former Soviet nomenclature that could fill the gap in the “red” governors’ administrations. But many experienced bureaucrats stayed away from the parties after the ban on CPSU and many of them continued to work in power bodies after 1991. On the other hand, there were rather few Soviet bureaucrats who joined CPRF in order to regain power with its help. When Yeltsin appointed regional governors in 1991 and after, he recruited experienced, but loyal officials rather than newcomers from democratic movement (Turovsky, 1998). Surely, such governors formed their administrations with their kind. That created conditions under which Soviet nomenclature could be included into the ruling elite on the regional level or could wait for the chance without going to the opposition and revenging at the election, if lucky enough.

Such pragmatic policy again loosened ties between “oppositional” governors and their parties and sometimes led to the conflicts and open critics from party-mates. New “strange” phenomenon appeared, it was the communist opposition to the “communist” governor. Often regional branches of CPRF split into loyalists and critics and this struggle could lead to the instability within CPRF and changes of its regional leaders. Such instability within CPRF existed even in Tula region where the famous federal-level communist leader Starodubtsev came to power in 1997. Therefore, while the color of the “red” governor faded he faced the new opposition from his former supporters. As a result, the ruling group in “oppositional” regional regime could be criticized from all sides, both from true loyalists to the federal government and from opposition that was more radical. Nevertheless, CPRF was in a trap as it continued to formally support “its” governor at the next elections without seeking an alternative and did not risk excluding the governor from party. Rare exclusions from the party came in the 2000s when some of such governors turned to United Russia and/or became useless for CPRF completely.

Finally, the fourth negative outcome derives from the clientelistic structure of power relations in Russia, which has become one of the main features of Russian politics and the theme of numerous studies (for the regional clientelism see works by Biryukov etc). The “oppositional” regimes were usually the most fragmented in terms of elite cohesion. The elections won by new governors were usually highly competitive and the losers with their clienteles did not disappear after them. Moreover, the regional opposition towards the “oppositional” governor could be very strong and supported by business and/or federal centre. Rarely the “red” governor could arrange all the clienteles existing to an order. Rather, he built his own clientele that just complicated the situation. Apparently, after the governors’ elections were abolished, the struggle for appointment in such regions was usually the fiercest, with the strong candidates on the official list, not to mention the fight “under the carpet”.

Thus, the “oppositional” governor had to meet and fight a lot of challenges that could be deadly for the career. In worst cases the governor had problems from all sides, i.e. in the relations with the public, the federal authorities, the own party (CPRF), the oppositional regional clienteles. That brought about instability and risks not only for governor but for the regional development.

So, if the hybrid political regime and centralist politics in the formal federation did not allow the “oppositional” regime, those who came to power from the opposition did not have much choice either. We suppose that the only way to the virtual success (i.e. stability) for the “oppositional” governor was the choice of adaptation strategy. The goal was to fit more or less smoothly into the national regime, both on institutional and individual levels. In our opinion, there were three reasons to fit well:

1. economic reasons (in order to get more financial support and sustain the development),
2. electoral/appointment reasons (to have Kremlin support at the elections and to prevent the participation of candidate more suitable for Kremlin; the same kind of reason started to apply when the period of appointments came),
3. integration of former opposition leaders into the political/financial establishment (more and more important as the hopes to change the power drastically disappeared).

As a result, avoiding the risk of pressure from almost everywhere and rationalizing the above-mentioned reasons, the “oppositional” governors started to look for their ways of political survival adapting to the dominant regime conditions and creating their own clientelist ties with the federal authorities, corporations and local elites.

In terms of the famous Hirschmann triad of reactions on an unstable organizational conditions (voice, exit, loyalty), Russian “oppositional” governors chose the last one (Hirschman, 1970). The voice (of opposition) in theory could bring more electoral support at the next elections, but under authoritarian regime could lead to the end, one way or another. The critics of the federal authorities at the sub-national elections of 1995-1999 could be very fierce even from the side of the regional officials. But it was self-censored anyway.

The exit was tried by some governors (and mayors), who refused to run for the second term. The best example probably was highly popular Krasnodar governor Kondratenko who did not participate at the 2000 elections. However, the exit actually was combined with the loyalty. Those who left the governor’s office and ceded to those who were backed by the federal authorities, were often rewarded by some smaller power positions. Kondratenko is still a senator from his region, appointed by the regional authorities. Besides, under conditions of corruption and manipulated law the exit can be risky since it leads to the loss of immunity. There are some cases of former governors who were charged with corruption and even spent some time in jail.

However, the loyalty is the main way of adaptation for the “oppositional” governor. Our analysis shows that the loyalty was used by all the “oppositional” governors and expressed in several ways.

The loyalty towards federal government was obviously the most needed one that should be combined with the building of clientelistic ties with the federal bureaucrats.

Back in 1996, those governors who came to power with the support of the opposition but were not party members found themselves in more flexible situation to shake off an undesirable leftist support. Soon after elections, in 1996, Gustov in Leningrad region and Tsvetkov in Magadan region held press conference where they expressed loyalty towards the federal centre (Turovsky, 1998). Both were rewarded. Tsvetkov found federal support for his project of free economic zone in Magadan. Gustov became vice prime minister of Russia in 1998 (now he is a senator).

Public rhetoric of “oppositional” governors also changed after the elections. New regional officials clearly expressed their loyalty to hierarchical power structure (let us remember that the oppositional leaders were mainly supporters of CPRF and descendents of the centralist while formally federative Soviet regime) and not to federalism and higher regional autonomy. While interviewed by the author, one of high-ranking regional bureaucrats, the leader of the regional CPRF branch pointed at the president Putin portrait saying that from now Putin became a supreme leader for him. Regarding the “new” policy of his administration Volgograd communist governor Maksyuta said in public once that it did not matter what method he would use, communist or capitalist. The main thing for him was to use the effective method.

The topic of centre-regional clientelist connections is still poorly examined by political scientists in Russia, being mainly the matter for experts and commentators. However, there is much empirical evidence proving that the “red” governors tried to become a part of the whole clientelist system. They understood that being alienated in this system would be political death for them. It is interesting that some of them indicated in public their psychological desire to be “like others” and not some kind of “red sheep in the family”. Communist governor of Bryansk region Lodkin in his interview to government’s “Rossijskaja gazeta” said that he was a “normal man” and not an “orthodox” (Turovsky, 1998). “Normal” was understood as being part of the system emerged.

The politics of clientelist integration had two dimensions. First, the governors were looking for their counterparts in the federal government. It would be correct to talk about co-adaptation strategies. While the federal government was becoming more conservative and pragmatic, it was easier to cooperate for both sides. It showed under Chernomyrdin and continued under Putin. One way or another, all the “oppositional” governors tried to be loyal and to be a part of big patron-client system that developed in place of formal federative relations. There is much evidence in media on the interactions of “red” governors and the Prime Minister Chernomyrdin who conducted more pragmatic policy in comparison with Gaidar.

Secondly, the “oppositional” governors under new capitalist regime were inevitably engaged in privatization processes and could not escape relations with business (otherwise risking to get it in opposition to them). Business-power relations is the theme widely discussed in Russian and international sources. Often the authors come to conclusion that the business groups have been playing very important role in regional politics and even controlling regional governments (Zubarevich, 2002).

The case of “red” governors is specific from this point, since such governors “in theory” should stay away from oligarchs. But some “communist” governors created close links with “capitalist” tycoons. One of the examples is found in Volgograd where experts say that governor Maksyuta, CPRF member, who ruled from 1996 until 2010, was a lobbyist of LUKOIL, one of the biggest Russian oil companies. LUKOIL owns oil refinery and deposits in the region. Former LUKOIL managers got job in Maksyuta government, while the company itself employed the governor’s own son. Another example was Lyubimov with its ties with TNK (Tyumen Oil Company) that owns the oil refinery in Ryazan. Lyubimov used to be a member of its directors’ board.

Expression of loyalty and integration into the existing regime was one part of the adaptation strategies used by the “oppositional” governors. Another part can be found in their party politics and role in the transformation of party system. The institutionalization of post-Soviet parties has been a gradual process with extensive literature on it. In the 1990s as the

electoral results showed, CPRF was the most popular party but its public support was limited. Executive power heads preferred to stay “beyond” or “above” parties seeing parties as the limitation for the legitimacy of the personalist regimes. Most regional regimes also tended to be personalist and clientelist as studies of the 1990s’ regimes examined (Gel’man, Ryzhenkov, Bri, 2000).

Focusing on “oppositional” regimes one can see the same trend in their party and electoral politics, despite the fact that some governors formally were the members of CPRF. “Red” governors changed their policy towards the federal elections. It was naïve to think that they would support CPRF and grant it with their “administrative resource”. Even in the early times at the 1996 presidential elections, the only CPRF affiliate of that time, Ryabov in Tambov region stayed away from the campaign while letting two of his deputies head campaigns of two main rivals, Yeltsin and Zyuganov. Later on, in 1999 Duma elections “red” governors usually let the communists campaign freely but rarely gave them open support. After 2000, such support became even more limited or stopped. In reality, CPRF could rely more on the neutrality of “their” governors than on their support (it was evident at 1999 and to a lesser extent 2003 Duma elections). Thus, “red” governors also preferred to follow or imitate “above party” personalist regimes in order to strengthen their legitimacy. Anyway, most of them could rely on CPRF support at the elections, since CPRF did not risk with other candidates. However, it was interesting that on the individual level certain communists could run against “red” governor posing him a “traitor”, but usually they were excluded either from the run or from the party.

Regional clientelism of the “oppositional” governors sometimes led to the creation of their own centrist “parties of power”, which they supported along with CPRF or instead of CPRF. When regional legislatures were elected in single-mandate districts governor-supported candidates did not match completely the list of CPRF candidates. It was interesting that at the regional elections when party lists were introduced after 2003, communist governors could split their support. Starodubtsev in Tula region, while being CPRF member, created his own “party of power”, bloc “For Tula *krai*” with his deputy governor Bogomolov in the lead. In terms of elections, this bloc took away votes both from CPRF and United Russia. It is worth to remember that Starodubtsev was one of the symbols of communist movement and no stranger to his party at all. This example showed that each governor preferred to create “party of power” (be it United Russia branch or regional bloc) rather than support a party with ideological bias like CPRF. In other words, clientelist politics always prevailed over party politics, and oppositional parties did not thrive under “their own” governors at the regional elections.

The change in adaptation strategies of “oppositional” governors came along with the change of party system and the creation of United Russia. Previously the party politics of the federal centre was much more flexible and allowed the governors being members of different parties, taking into consideration their loyalty first and foremost. Gradually it changed. Governors had to choose the new adaptation strategy. They could insist on their CPRF membership and run the risk to lose the job (in the meantime trying to combine CPRF affiliation with the loyalty to the centre). Alternatively, they could leave the “wrong” party and then to decide whether to stay beyond parties or join United Russia.

Direct change of party affiliation was not the news of the 2000s as it appeared in the 1990s as well. In 1997, Bronevich who in 1996 became governor in Koryak autonomous region with the support of CPRF headed the regional branch of that time’s “party of power”, Chernomyrdin’s “Our Home is Russia”. That was the first case of move from the status of oppositional party supporter to the status of “party of power” affiliate. It is worthwhile to mention that it appeared in the very beginning proving unease felt by “oppositional” governors. Koryak AO was a remote region fully dependent on the federal financial support, and its governor needed much attention from the federal government. So, Bronevich’s decision was strongly motivated by her region’s economic dependency.

After Putin’s centralization and the introduction of dominant party regime, the factor of political dependency became relevant for all the regions. This factor also meant the empirical test

on the very allowance of the governors from “other” parties in the more centralized system of executive power.

Choice of new strategy of survival should be analyzed in a broader context. Before United Russia, most governors preferred to stay away from parties and follow the lines of personalist regional regimes, while the dominant “party of power” was not created. They could cling to “Our Home is Russia”, “Unity”, “Fatherland – All Russia”, conditions depending, but they followed the most widespread tactics of Russian political leaders to be “above” parties in order to rise up the legitimacy in Russia (for the Russian presidentialism) or in the region (for governors). Drastic federal-influenced change in party politics forced “above parties” governors to join United Russia in 2003-2005 (Reuter, 2010). By the March of 2006, 70 governors had joined the party. Reuter’s study proved that the “weaker” governors tried to join United Russia first, and obviously most “oppositional” governors were among the “weaker”.

Under the new party system, the communists faced the hardest decision ever. Some of them decided to leave the party. For example, in 2003, before the first Duma elections with United Russia participation, CPRF was abandoned by Krasnodar governor Tkachev (who joined United Russia without any hesitations) and Nizhny Novgorod governor Khodyrev. The latest of all was the controversial case of Kursk governor Mikhaylov who had a long story of active communist (he had been elected Duma deputy since 1993 and was a member of party’s Central committee at the time of his governor election in 2000). However, even Mikhailov left CPRF for United Russia and got another term being appointed by Putin in 2005 (and then by Medvedev in 2010).

For the “pink” governors (we call the “pinks” those, who came to power with communist support but were not party members) the task was much easier both politically and psychologically. Usually they followed “pragmatic” path from the beginning of their governors’ careers and distanced themselves from CPRF (though the distance could be different). The most interesting was the case of very popular Kemerovo governor Tuleev who was included in the top CPRF party list at 1995 and 1999 Duma elections. However, Tuleev always had his own ambitions; he ran for president in 1991 and was going but refused to run in Zyuganov’s favor. Tuleev combined oppositional populist rhetoric with the search of the ways of adaptation, and that was clearly shown in 1996-1997, when he became federal minister in Chernomyrdin government (in charge of CIS integration) and was appointed governor in 1997 as a federal bureaucrat and not an oppositional leader. At 1999 federal elections, he was caught in double-dealing: while in CPRF party list he gave part of his support to “Unity” which did very well in his region. That was most painful for CPRF, because Tuleev had a huge popularity and could really manage voters’ behavior in his region. In 2000s, it was no surprise when Tuleev joined United Russia. Other “pinks” also joined United Russia without much hesitation. In 2004 Kurgan governor Bogomolov became a member and later was appointed for another term. The same happened in Orenburg region with Chernyshev (former supporter of CPRF and Agrarian party) and some others.

In addition, we analyze the strategies of regional leaders with former LDPR affiliations, which give the same results. Electoral support of joined opposition in the second round of elections was the reason for Mikhailov to become Pskov governor in 1996. In 1999, Mikhailov preferred to support Unity and then moved to United Russia. But the lesson from electoral outcomes is that he lost his popular support on the way of political maneuvering and could not survive elections in 2004. His successor Kuznetsov also started with LDPR Duma faction but was independent by the governor’s election time and joined United Russia after the election, in 2005. However, he also could not create a stable regime and lost in the struggle for appointment later.

On the other hand, the showcase of clear pragmatism was businessman Kanokov who became Duma deputy from LPDR in 2003 but moved to United Russia soon and was appointed president of his native Kabardino-Balkaria. Another case of successful adaptation is Markelov in

Mariy El who started with LDPR and was victorious at the presidential election but moved to United Russia and went on with his governance being appointed by president.

So, probably the best way of adaptation after the change of party system was to join United Russia. But apparently not all the “oppositional” governors were ready for that because of their ideological views and fearing to lose all the public support (despite the abolishment of elections) after such a radical overturn. Here we come to the second phase of co-adaptation strategy. The main aim of Putin’s regime was not to exclude communists or “pinks” completely but rather to adapt those who proved to be adaptable, at least for a while³. As we argued, initially Putin tried to change the system of center-regional relations rather than to change the governors on the personal level, and that brought about a lot of “conservative” decisions in favor of different incumbents (Turovsky, 2009). This showed in the sensational case of two communists who were appointed governors in 2005 (Vinogradov in Vladimir region, Chernogorov in Stavropol region). Putin demonstrated his readiness to work with communists, a sort of goodwill.

However, most “reds” could not survive long in the new regime. Co-adaptation failed for most sooner or later. The main reason, as we suggest, was not the ideology, but the inability to fit into the new clientelist system. Analysis of those governors, who lost power under Putin no matter how he tried, shows that the federal centre threw away many populists and political activists with bad record of regional conflicts and mismanagement. On the first stage, the new authoritarian regime used dependent judicial power and electoral commissions to get rid of unwanted governors right before the elections. Firstly, Rutsкои in Kursk region and then Lodkin in Bryansk region were excluded from the run, which seemed impossible before for the incumbent governor. Others could not survive appointment policy and were replaced (Starodubtsev, Mashkovstev who lost his office with the creation of the unified Kamchatka region)⁴. Even conflict with CPRF did not help some of the governors who missed the chance for another term (Khodyrev, Tikhonov).

The gradual formation of dominant party system could not make even co-adaptation last long. Chernogorov ended up badly being too unpopular and unable to stabilize the region. He lost at both ends, was excluded from CPRF and then was forced to leave the governor’s office finishing his political career. Vinogradov declared in the beginning of 2008, before Medvedev’s election that he froze his CPRF membership (the same was done by another “last communist” Maksyuta in Volgograd region) and was appointed again, that time by Medvedev, despite protests from some United Russia members. He is still the only case of “red” governor who really survived and did not change his “color”. Another “freezer”, Maksyuta left the office with the end of his term in 2010.

The centralization and the dominant party regime brought the new step in the evolution of “oppositional” regional regimes – the extinction. Studies prove that the electoral performance became the main reason for governors’ appointments. Surely, that meant the performance of

³ The same was true with United Russia policy, when it refused the membership to one of the governors. That was another former communist Korotkov in Amur region, who was excluded from CPRF long time before he won the election. But his rule was considered unprofessional (Korotkov was a former journalist and federal parliament deputy with no experience in governing). At the regional elections in 2004, Korotkov created his own bloc “For the development of Amur region” that split the loyalist electorate to the great dissatisfaction of United Russia (soon after this, the federal law banned regional blocs). As a result, he could not join United Russia and was fired soon from his office (later suffering the criminal charge).

⁴ The “oppositional” governors were the target of campaigns launched by the law-enforcement structures after very probable political decisions of the federal centre. For example, in 2004 there was an investigation against Mashkovtsev. Leader of Agrarian party Lapshin, while in the office of Altay Republic governor, was also suited. Such cases had obvious political nature and were aimed at weakening the governor and stopping him on the way to appointment. Indeed, no governors who were investigated got their appointments.

United Russia. As Reuter and Robinson argued, the loyalty of governors and the electoral results as its proof opened the way to re-appointments (Reuter, Robinson, 2011). After changes to the legislation on the governors' appointments under Medvedev it became even clearer, because formally the party winning the regional elections (i.e. United Russia) got the right to propose candidates to the president. For "reds" all that meant forced "exit" (they usually were not included in the list of candidates) rather than new term. For success, the loyalty had to be at its fullest (Mikhailov case in Kursk region) and even such loyalty was not a guarantee.

Managing regional elites, the federal centre, however, used policy that was a little bit more sophisticated than it could be in typical dominant party regime. Kremlin never wanted all the governors to be United Russia members. There are two reasons for that. The first coincides with Reuter's point on the sequence of governors' membership. It is also based on the suggestion that United Russia has limited power and is a political tool. So, some influential politicians have a privilege not to join and feel free with it. Another reason is the policy of the federal authorities that aimed at the demonstration of the presence of formal democratic institutions and ideological diversity (both for the West and for the Russian public). Such policy was typical under president Medvedev. This results in policy allowing very limited diversity among the governors. Now they can not be members of any other party except for United Russia, but "independents" being former affiliates of oppositional parties are still possible. As a result, Vinogradov was appointed for the second time. Also Medvedev appointed former leader of liberal Union of Right Forces Belykh governor of Kirov region⁵.

So, it is very hard to find successful story of "oppositional" governor. Mainly it is a story of failures and conflicts. The only "real" communist (though with frozen party membership) who is still a governor and has been appointed twice (being elected twice before) is Vinogradov. Of course, he could not escape adaptation policy. He used to control partly United Russia branch, while keeping good relations with CPRF. In other words, he started to play with two parties instead of one. Moreover, as a professional and experienced politician he performed rather well. Probably, his "secret" was in his political experience, and the federal centre needed to keep a certain political diversity among governors and Vinogradov was a showcase. But this story may also come to an end, as Vinogradov finds himself under growing pressure from United Russia claiming his resignation this year.

We suggest that the loyalty and United Russia membership could not be the guarantee of a new appointment. As we pointed out, governor's fate depended mainly on his/her involvement in the clientelist system. Among "pinks", there are only few cases of successful adaptation. These are Korolev in Lipetsk region (elected governor in 1998), Tuleev in Kemerovo region (since 1997) and Bogomolov in Kurgan region (since 1996). All of them used to have CPRF support and control this party's branches. But later on they joined United Russia. The federal centre appreciated great electoral support of Tuleev and Korolev, who in their turn created an effective network of relations on the federal level. Korolev used to be a deputy of Federation Council head (under Stroyev leadership). Tuleev created his typical and very strong authoritarian regime and enjoyed good relations with most of the companies working in his important industrial region. Also former CPRF member Tkachev has become one of the strongest governors under Putin and Medvedev, taking into consideration huge importance of his region. But Tkachev has a long story of his own adaptation strategy, changing many parties (before CPRF he had relations with Agrarian Party and "Our Home is Russia") on his way.

Recently the process of extinction has been forced by the reasons relevant for Medvedev's rule. New president to ensure his regime of power wanted to change the governors both on individual and generational levels. This led to the change of the main part of governors, and former "reds" and "pinks" among them, who were also too old in terms of age and needed replacement from president's point of view. The new phase of governors' change now gradually

⁵ It is worth to mention that his deputy governor Scherchkov joined United Russia in 2010. Formerly he was a leader of SPS (URF) branch in Perm.

wipes away all the former “oppositional” governors, including “pinks” and communists-turned-loyalists. Among those who were not appointed under Medvedev were Sumin in Chelyabinsk and Yevdokimov in Murmansk. Such reason as the age has become very important and obviously long-serving and rather old governors have slight chances to go on now.

Our analysis shows that very often if not usually the regional/local victory of the opposition turned into a trap for the winner. Resulting regime was very weak, fragmented and widely criticized from almost all of the sides. In their adaptation strategies, the “oppositional” governors came to three results: the full loyalty, the failure or what we call the failed loyalty, i.e. the inability to adapt to the new Putin/Medvedev regime, despite some serious attempts to do so.

Oppositional mayors: how it feels under pressure

The analysis of “oppositional” local regimes shows almost the same results. The main difference is in the electoral politics. Since mayors are still elected by popular vote in many municipalities, it is still possible to win elections with the help or being member of oppositional party. The level of public support for municipal heads in Russia is lower on average than that for the higher governmental tiers (as polls show). As a result, the probability of winning the mayoral election with the support of oppositional party is rather high in Russia. Actually, this is the only opportunity to win the executive office for the opposition now.

Sadly enough the oppositional parties rarely used this chance paying more attention to the more prestigious governors’ elections. In the 2000s, after party reform parties became deeper involved in mayoral elections, but still their presence there is limited due to lack of strong candidates or their support for acting mayors (Turovsky, 2010). Regarding mayoral elections less important and fighting for bigger prizes, oppositional parties have not managed to prepare well for municipal electoral competition.

Partly these are oppositional parties to blame for the lack of activity on the municipal level. Often oppositional parties supported the acting mayors preferring to strike some deal with them than to run and lose. There were many cases from the 1990 and up to now when the oppositional parties either supported the incumbent or abstained from any active role, in fact helping incumbent to win. With the electoral reform, however, “parliamentary” parties got an opportunity to participate in the elections with “automatic” registration of the candidate. Under such favorable conditions of registration, it would be strange not to run. Nevertheless, our analysis of the elections of municipal heads held in regional capitals from December 2007 until the end of 2009 gave humble results for oppositional parties (this analysis was presented by author at the international conference held in Higher School of Economics in April 2010). In 38 regional capitals where the elections were held in that period, CPRF participated only 16 times, and Fair Russia only 7 times. LDPR was formally the most active with 23 candidates, but with worse results. Overall, no party except for United Russia ever won in these 38 cases.

So, the number of cases of “oppositional” local regimes is just a few and it is striking being compared with many hundreds of cities and towns in Russia. The sustainability of such regime is even worse than the governor’s. After the successful election, oppositional mayor faces the same strategies to choose: failure, full loyalty or failed loyalty. Moreover, mayors find themselves under hardest pressure for several reasons: their financial resources are usually too small; governors (who are usually United Russia members or supporters) use any chance to suppress undesired mayors while the federal authorities do not care about most mayors; and mayors are vulnerable to criminal charges due to both real corruption and their political weakness. All this makes the story even more dramatic.

The politics of electoral failure shows in several cases. The most sensational case was “red” mayor’s of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky Golenischev who got 1.4% of the vote while running for the second term. Recently electoral failure happened in Samara, one of the biggest Russian cities, once headed by Tarkhov, a member of Fair Russia (and formerly of Russian party of Life). Running for the second term Tarkhov lost power to United Russia candidate Azarov

from the regional government. Among the biggest electoral fails is the case of former Voronezh mayor Skrynnikov who was so unpopular that even his party Fair Russia did not want him to run. He left the party right before the election and failed anyway getting one of the last places at the election won by United Russia candidate. In all these cases, United Russia used unpopularity and managerial weaknesses of “oppositional” mayors to its benefit.

Besides, the problems both with the low electoral support and with the pressurizing governors forced some communist mayors to choose the way of exit. They did not risk the re-election at all, or the direct mayoral elections were abolished with the change of local legislation. As a result, communists Yakush in Cherkessk and Sablin in Naryan-Mar served only one term.

So, on the municipal level it may be easier for the oppositional candidate to win the election even now, but such local regime becomes highly vulnerable. Monocentric character of governor-led regional political regimes and conflicts between governors and mayors are the popular themes and commonplace of Russian regional research. Intra-regional centralization has deep roots in Russian sub-national politics. In the first half of the 1990s, the local heads were even appointed. But the main reason for centralization lies in regional political economy and is caused by immense inequality of municipalities, most of them being poor and dependent on regional budget. More independent municipalities, in their turn, are considered “dangerous” by governors, and this leads to severe conflicts and attempts to subdue “strong” municipalities. It is interesting that conflicts, caused by economic reasons, existed within pairs of communist governors and mayors of regional capitals (Ryazan governor Lyubimov and mayor Mamatov, Kamchatka governor Mashkovtsev and Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky mayor Golenischev).

It is hard to say which tier of Russian politics is more corrupted. But in terms of a number and share of criminal cases the municipal level is definitely in the lead. For our paper, it is important that the “oppositional” mayors have become victims of authoritarian politics that formally was aimed at the corruption but politically erased unwanted mayors wherever possible. Partly such politics was made easy by the widespread coordination between governors and law-enforcement structures, especially typical for the 1990s. In the 2000s, when the central authorities took a grip on their regional substructures, they probably coordinated this politics with governors. Anyway, both federal and regional authorities were interested in minimizing the presence of “oppositional” mayors, especially in more or less meaningful towns.

However, most failures of oppositional mayors resulted from the investigation of their criminal charges. The 2000s are just packed with cases of this kind. All the regional capitals were literally “cleaned” in a matter of several years. For example, Ryazan mayor, CPRF member Mamatov lost his job in 2004 by the court decision and was charged soon after. Investigation started for another communist mayor, Priz in Krasnodar, in 2004 and that led to his resignation in 2005. After that, no communists were allowed in the mayoral offices of the regional capitals.

Even Fair Russia considered a loyal party faced the same attack on its mayors. Fair Russia was (wrongly) considered by some experts a party of mayors. The actual reason for this “conception” was in the victories of Tarkhov in Samara and Kuzmin in Stavropol. Events showed that even Fair Russia was not allowed to mayoral offices. One of the reasons is connected with clientelist politics. Usually mayors from any “other” parties represent other clienteles, different from the governor’s. Acquiring administrative resource in a big city such clientele becomes too dangerous as both cases of Samara and Stavropol revealed. In both cases, Fair Russia mayors had close connections with business and their own business experience. Another reason is electoral. United Russia is not interested in losing votes in favor of any other party in the municipalities run by “oppositional” mayors. Stavropol case became widely discussed because its mayor created large network of supporters throughout the region and United Russia sensationally lost regional legislative elections in spring 2007 to Fair Russia.

As a result, Fair Russia mayors were treated by regional regimes and federal authorities nor less hard than their communist colleagues were. Kuzmin went under investigation and even fled the country (United Russia candidate was elected instead). Among those who were charged

were other members of his clientele including other mayors such as Fair Russia's Biryukov from popular resort of Kislovodsk (where also United Russia candidate won).

One of the latest cases of victory-turned-prosecution was found in large industrial town of Bratsk in Irkutsk region. There Serov won mayoral election in March 2011 with the support of CPRF and very soon was charged with corruption. That was the fastest failure of communist mayor that took just a couple of months.

At the moment, only a handful of oppositional mayors holds power in some more or less important towns, but never in regional capitals. Regarding CPRF, these are Kondratenko in Novocherkassk (Rostov region), Potapov in Berdsk (Novosibirsk region), Pereverzev in Pervouralsk (Sverdlovsk region), Antropov in Apatity (Murmansk region). Antropov is considered an important mayor and politician by his party, since he is a member of CPRF Central Committee. Only few less important mayors still remain in Fair Russia (like in town of Ob' in Novosibirsk region with mayor Neshin).

"Oppositional" mayors found themselves under double pressure, both from federal and regional power. Representing other clienteles and lacking resources anyway, they hardly could prove loyalty and stay in power without extra measures. Too obvious cases of failures, both electoral and "criminal" make loyalty almost the only strategy for the newly elected. But even strategy of loyalty also failed in most important cases. The problem that in multi-tier structure of sub-national politics mayor could become successful in rare case combining two conditions: to have federal-level support and to create strong and self-sustainable local regime. And it is almost impossible to become really loyal to governor without being part of his clientele initially. In the 1990s researchers found many cases when the centre supported the mayors in order to counter-balance popularly elected and "too strong" governors. But in the 2000s with the municipal reform and the abolishment of governors' elections the federal centre refused from this strategy of regional counter-balancing. Direct relations between the federal centre and a certain mayor have become less widespread, as we can see from very rare cases of direct federal-local interaction (by president, prime minister etc). So, the mayors had to face the governors with little hope of support "from above". However, the centre (and the federal leaders of United Russia) intruded into the regional conflicts but often did it in appointed governor's favor.

The closest to success was the former Volgograd mayor Grebennikov who won as a communist and moved to United Russia soon. Grebennikov even managed to create his influence group within United Russia and held for some time an important job of the head of Putin's public reception office in the region. But after the governor's change (when Maksyuta left) the regime has become much harder and in 2011 Grebennikov was dismissed by governor in controversial case. This led to more turbulence in Volgograd politics but Grebennikov could not return in his former office. His federal support proved to be small and he lost public support in his city where he was elected as an opposition member.

Other two cases of failed loyalty among regional capitals' mayors can be found in Oryol and Smolensk. In Oryol businessman Kasyanov won the election in 2006 with CPRF support and soon he was charged with corruption at the previous job. He joined United Russia in 2007 but it was not helpful and he was charged with his case finally. United Russia elected new mayor in the meantime.

Another failed power struggle took place in Smolensk where local businessman Kachanovsky ran for mayor and was excluded from United Russia for that (party had another candidate). But it was Kachanovsky who won and United Russia returned him its membership. Nevertheless, new Smolensk mayor failed to fit into the system of regional power relations and went to jail in 2010 losing his office.

Successful loyalty is still a rare case. On the level of regional capitals probably one of them can be found in Irkutsk where businessman Kondrashov won the election with CPRF support but joined United Russia soon after that (the case of Bratsk in the same region showed that it was dangerous not to break with communists). But, Kondrashov's office term has begun not long ago, and it is too early to make conclusions. In addition, it is worth to mention

Astrakhan mayor Bozhenov who played on the side of different parties in his long story. In the 1990s, he had relations with Yabloko. He was elected as an independent mayor, but was considered a partner of Russian Party of Life (which became a base for Fair Russia later). Finally, he decided to join United Russia and got through rather easy re-elections, creating his own clientele in the city and relations with the federal centre on the way.

Among lesser-important mayors, there is widespread trend to leave their parties to become either United Russia members or independents. As for Fair Russia most of its prominent mayors did so. Tashkinov in Ust-Ilimsk (Irkutsk region) joined United Russia. Zalesov in Serpukhov (Moscow *oblast*) left Fair Russia becoming formally independent. In politically turbulent town of Volzhsky in Volgograd region mayor Afanasyeva claimed that she “froze” her Fair Russia membership.

All these cases of oppositional governors and mayors show that under Putin/Medvedev regime there is much less sense in joining the oppositional parties for those seeking the leading place in executive power. The elections give such opportunity (or its illusion) but the number of possible elections to win diminished with the abolishment of governors' elections and of many mayors' elections (because of the spread of so-called city manager model that is often introduced after the resignation of the “oppositional” mayor, as in Bratsk for example). Moreover, authoritarian practices led to numerous cases when unwanted candidates were refused to run or the counting of votes was “corrected”. For example, prominent Fair Russia leader Mikheev was not registered for Volgograd mayor election. In 2011, recounting of votes in important coal industry town of Vorkuta (Komi Republic) showed the lead of United Russia candidate by just 2 votes while preliminary results gave victory to CPRF candidate. Obviously such cases lead to widespread disbelief that oppositional candidate can win anywhere at all.

Thus, practices of both electoral fraud and pressure over oppositional winners have played an important role in strengthening regional authoritarianism and dominant party regime. There are both external and internal reasons for numerous failures of oppositional regional/local regimes, even if such regimes shifted to full loyalty.

External reasons are ideological to a small extent. Rather it is an impossibility to include oppositional regime into the system of local patron-client relations. Russian politics, especially in the 2000s, tend to produce more simple mechanisms of power relations based on close personal ties and distribution of resources within such systems. Even those who tried to fit in using formal ways (United Russia membership etc) were often rejected since they lacked needed personal ties and inevitably created their own smaller patron-client systems thus competing for resources with the others. Since ruling elite still needs high level of control over regional finances and privatization it uses all the ways to block unwanted newcomers into the executive power. The complication of regional clientelist structure has usually become a problem and source of conflicts which were decided by administrative (appointment of new governor, abolishment of mayoral elections) and authoritarian (criminal charges, electoral manipulations) ways. But there are also internal reasons, such as low legitimacy of oppositional regimes and loss of their leaders' popularity, weak and unprofessional governance, impossibility to change the regional policy.

So, the oppositional party can still be a tool to win the election, but its affiliation is too heavy a burden to bear after the victory. After being elected, the winner finds himself in another political dimension of existing patron-client relations, and has no other choice than to become a dependent member, an agent (according to principal-agent theory) in higher-level clientele. For a mayor it is rather a federal-level clientele, because governor's was not created for him and by him.

Alternatively, oppositional municipal heads can survive due to the politics of governor's “carelessness”. This happens in smaller and economically weak municipalities, considered fully dependent by governor. In such a case governor may not care who runs the municipality, since

he has no significant autonomy. On the regional level, such carelessness of the federal centre sometimes helped the “oppositional” governors to stay longer. Partly it helped to survive Vinogradov, Bogomolov etc.

As a result, oppositional party has become useless in the recruitment of executive power elite. Exceptions are found on the municipal level, where mayors are still elected by popular vote. But such local regimes suffer from internal conflicts, low popular support and are short-living.

Regional deputies: an easy way to surrender

The legislative power in Russia gives the politicians more freedom of choice among parties but fewer opportunities for political career. The interesting feature of party system is the organization of party interactions. The case of executive and municipal power shows polarized structure when it is almost impossible to keep this power for the oppositional party. Legislative power is much more flexible, despite the formation of dominant party system analyzed in many studies both in Russia and abroad (Bogaards, 2004; Liechtenstein, 2002; Reuter, Turovsky, 2011). Russian regional legislatures still enjoy multiparty diversity due to both legislation (at least two parties should be presented according to law) and widespread oppositional voting.

Before analyzing the oppositional presence in the regional legislatures, we should start with the electoral results and the shares of different party factions. Now United Russia completely dominates the regional party systems. However, its electoral results still can be very different. In this paper, we cover all the legislatures elected from 2006 until October 2010.

United Russia is an obvious leader dominating both the voting and the deputies' number. The magnitude of United Russia electoral results differs from 23.9% in Stavropol *krai* up to 90.4% in Mordovia. In 50 regions, United Russia got more than a half of the votes (among them in nine regions it got more than two thirds). The number of regions where its result could not reach 50% is smaller, and it decreased significantly after more successful 2007-2010 elections. It is 33 regions; in most of them (in 30 regions), the result was higher than one third. It is interesting that in 40 regions, i.e. in about half of Russian regions the result of United Russia was around 50% (at 40-60% in 41 regions out of 83). Therefore, United Russia controls literally half of all the Russian voters at the regional elections.

Nevertheless, the positions of United Russia within the legislatures are much stronger making it the real “party of power” everywhere. The main reason is the widespread use of so-called mixed electoral system (in most Russian regions half of the seats are kept by those elected in single-mandate (or sometimes multi-mandate) districts where United Russia candidates usually win). However, taking into consideration rather high electoral threshold (usually 7%⁶) party lists voting usually gives United Russia an opportunity to win more than a half seats too. Combining those elected on party lists with those elected in districts, United Russia can easily create the biggest faction in the legislature. Now in all the regions except for Saint-Petersburg United Russia holds an absolute majority. As for Saint Petersburg, the voting exclusively on party lists and not so bright result (37.4%) prevented United Russia from gaining an absolute majority but still let it be the biggest faction with 46% of all the deputies. It is worth to mention that in most regions United Russia has more than two thirds of the seats (in 59 regions). The highest shares reach and sometimes exceed 90% of the seats as in Bashkiria, Chechen Republic, Mordovia, Kemerovo, Penza, Rostov *oblasts*. “Single-mandate” part of legislatures is especially important for United Russia domination because most of “independents” winning the elections join United Russia faction.

Such a party structure of regional legislative bodies might have led to the deep polarization between “party of power” and opposition. This could create situation typical for

⁶ Recent amendments initiated by Medvedev give one mandate to any party getting 5-7%. But it only slightly changes the party structure of the regional legislature.

many regimes with dominant parties in Africa and Middle East, where the electoral authoritarianism combines one-party rule with the presence of much smaller opposition.

But the real political practices are much more complicated. Undoubtedly, United Russia has all the rights to take the leadership in regional legislatures under its full control. Actually, that is partly proved by the fact that almost all the speakers are United Russia members. The only exception is an exotic case of famous Russian business tycoon Roman Abramovich who keeps the office of regional Duma speaker in Chukotka (where he used to be a governor). Abramovich is a non-party speaker, but he and his team supported United Russia at the regional elections and United Russia is the biggest faction out of only two presented in Duma. His case only shows that some of the influential figures in Russian politics do not need to join United Russia for career boosting reasons. In other words, this is another case of political privilege not to join United Russia.

However, the situation with the whole leadership is different. In this paper, we analyze the distribution of the main posts in legislatures taking into consideration their chairpersons, vice-chairpersons and chairs of committees and commissions. Such group of leaders has been analyzed in all the existing legislatures.

Our analysis shows that the regional legislatures fall into another system of patronage rather than reflect “usual” cleavage between the ruling party and the opposition. That is the system of United Russia patronage over the party system. Or more correctly, since United Russia is itself under patronage of federal power and governors, it is a system of multi-tier patronage executed by federal authorities, regional governors and United Russia’s federal and regional structures. In our opinion, Russian party system cannot be called a classic dominant party system. We mentioned before that the privileged people like Abramovich do not need to join United Russia. The executive power being strongest as compared with its legislative counterpart still forms on non-party basis. It is most clear on the federal level where president does not join the party and even party leader Putin is not a party member. The principal feature of such party system is that the role of “dominant” party is very limited in fact. Its “dominance” is confined to the weaker power bodies, such as the legislative power, regional governors and municipal heads. On the federal level, “non-party” presidential and executive structures influence on United Russia. Moreover, they try to manipulate the whole party system and to manipulate all the parties, not just one. Parties play their specific roles at the elections and for the elite recruitment. Such features differ Russian party system greatly from many well-studied examples in Africa, Asia, and post-communist states of Central Asia, Azerbaijan etc.

Recently there has been change in widespread expert opinion on the possible long-term development of Russian party system. In the 1990s and in the beginning of the 2000s experts used to talk about possible two-party system based on strong left and centre-right parties, with its precursors found in CPRF and “party of power”. Such party system would produce “normal” polarization between two leading parties, i.e. typical opposition known by many examples in the established democracies. However, our analysis and other studies prove that in the 1990s political regime did not allow the opposition to act freely and according to its program after the electoral victories on sub-national level. Alternatively, it forced the opposition to cease in case of almost any victory. More recently, experts started to compare Russian party system with formal multiparty systems in communist states, such as former GDR, where Putin used to work. Such opinion reflected the formation of United Russia satellites and cases of cooperation between United Russia and all other parties.

Hardly Russia’s party system resembles GDR or China, since the oppositional parties and their activists are still rather different from United Russia and radical in their critics. But the truth is that United Russia carries on the distributive politics in spoils distribution, and the studies of Russian legislative power show it clearly. Such politics is no news for studying of authoritarian regimes where cooptation of opposition is often seen as a primary tool to enhance political stability and regime’s legitimacy. Some authors point out at the very importance of elections in authoritarian regimes for its legitimating (though, there is a point that democratic elections can

undermine the regime). At the same time researchers of the Middle East mention that the importance of elections for authoritarian regimes is explained also by the fact that the elections has become a tool to manage elite (Blaydes, 2011). Elections are also seen in terms of competitive clientelism (Lust-Okar, 2004) rather than multiparty competition. Blaydes analyzes Egyptian elite under Mubarak's rule as rent-seeking elite. However, not only rent-seeking but also struggle for social status and prestige influenced elite's political participation.

Clientelist nature and internal structure of United Russia is still an interesting topic for further research, as well as its internal system of spoils distribution. Oppositional parties as studies of regional elections reveal are also not free from clientelism. Fair Russia is in fact a smaller replica of United Russia in terms of elite representation. LDPR is also attractive for elite despite its populist and nationalist image (Kanokov's case proved it among others). With the electoral reform LDPR has become more attractive for elites. CPRF tries to balance its ideological nature with the cooptation of political and business elites. Many analysts come to the conclusion that the nature of Russian parties has changed from ideological to clientelist representation (we analyzed it on the example of regional legislative power and its elections, see Turovsky, 2006). So, competitive clientelism may be an appropriate concept to cover the structure of Russian party system. In this system, patronage relations evolve both inside United Russia as the biggest party with the large number of controlled spoils and in its relations with other parties. Spoils distribution is obviously a tool to buy off the opposition.

The analysis shows that United Russia uses two opposite strategies. In some cases, it is "the winner takes it all" strategy (an analogue of majoritarian rule); while in some cases, it is a consensus rule, a sort of multiparty coalition. By now the score is in favor of consensus rule (47 regions use consensus rule, and in 36 regions, the winner really took it all).

This strange as it may seem but in fact typical for Russian party system situation has always been found in State Duma. On the federal level, it is a standard to distribute leadership positions among all the presented parties. Now all the parties in State Duma keep at least one vice-chairperson position and one committee chair position. In fact, though, CPRF, LDPR and Fair Russia have got only one vice-chairperson and one committee head each (United Russia's share in State Duma leadership is 88%). From this point, regional party systems are more polarized, because in 36 regions there are "real" oppositional parties derived from any significant leadership positions.

In most regions, where consensus rule is applied, United Russia pleases not all the other parties with leadership positions but chooses its partners among them. In other words, in Russian regions State Duma is not a standard, and regions tend more to one-party rule, meaning more polarization. But cases of non-polarized systems and multiparty coalitions are wide-spread meaning more intricate structure and diversity of "power – opposition" relations. Rare use of "full" coalition indicates another important feature. United Russia patronage is not at all a guarantee that each party presented will get some important spoil. Rather it is a regional/local choice of "friends" and "foes" depending on the relations between regional party organizations and their loyalty or readiness for collaboration. This is the better way to divide and rule the party system.

So, regional legislatures are either ruled by United Russia only or ruled by a coalition of United Russia and its specially chosen partners. The reasons for a) the choice of strategy itself, and b) the choice of specific partners are the most interesting.

First important note: it is a United Russia policy of choosing of certain partners and not of giving all the parties some spoils. That means that the same party can be an opposition in one region and a coalition member in another. "Full coalition" is found in a handful of regions, and the deviant Stavropol *krai* is a rare example where all the parties presented have leadership positions. The reason for Stavropol exceptionality was the victory of Fair Russia, which also could not get an absolute majority (later part of its deputies moved to United Russia giving it 54% of the seats, but the consensus practice remained). It should be considered though that the formally "full" coalition often means that only two parties out of four Russian parliamentary

parties are presented both in legislature and in its leadership (as in Moscow City and Kemerovo *oblast*).

Of course, leadership distribution is far from fair as it is disproportional as compared with the seats distribution. Therefore, it is not a proportional distribution but a decision of patron to grant some parties with a very few positions and make clients out of them. Usually such party gets only one leadership position. Exceptions are few. CPRF keeps two leadership positions in seven regions (Yakutia, Vladimir and Sverdlovsk *oblasts*, Moscow City and Moscow *oblast*, Saint Petersburg, Nenets autonomous *okrug*). For Fair Russia the only exception is Stavropol *krai* where it holds 6 leadership positions. LDPR managed to get two positions in two regions (Murmansk *oblast* and Saint Petersburg).

All that means that even consensus rule means an unrivaled dominance of United Russia. In most regions where consensus is practiced, United Russia has more than 80% of leadership positions. It has less in only nine regions. The only example of a region where United Russia keeps less than half of leadership positions is Stavropol *krai*. This share is about two thirds or less in Saint Petersburg, Astrakhan *oblast* and Nenets autonomous *okrug*.

Nevertheless, if it is a sort of multiparty coalition it is important to understand what “oppositional” parties and why joined (or it is better to say that they were invited by United Russia) to such coalitions. The configuration of such coalitions is very different and changes from one region to another. There is no “main” partner for United Russia.

One striking feature is the role of communists who claim to be the one and only oppositional party in Russia. However, in 28 regions they have their not so fair but still a share of leadership positions. Fair Russia has it in 19 regions. 18 regions are favorable for LDPR from this point. Other parties are very rarely presented in regional legislatures. Right Cause has leadership positions in two regions; Patriots of Russia in one region, Yabloko has none.

Let us understand why United Russia prefers to make a choice in favor of other parties at the time of leadership distribution. In our opinion, this is a “soft” kind of strategy for the dominant party (being different from the “hard” strategy when the winner takes it all). Such “soft” strategies do not mean more or less proportional consensus rule resembling Swiss party system or consocial democracies studied by Lijphart in plural societies. The main task is to neutralize an opposition giving it a small (or even the smallest) piece of power.

One of the reasons is the legitimacy of unfair elections. Smaller parties often claim the elections to be unfair and fraud. Joining the coalition with United Russia, they actually legitimate the electoral results and refuse to talk about their injustice. Therefore, the neutralization of opposition comes together with the legitimacy of elections being among the main goals of “consensus” strategy. The third goal as we will show later is the distribution of leadership positions not only on the party level but also on the personal level in order to satisfy clientele, their leaders and representatives standing behind the parties.

On the regional level almost all the governors, though, are United Russia members and as a result the party is usually ruled by governor’s clientele. That is the reason why the regional executive power tends to spread one-party rule for the legislatures (and why other clienteles can join other parties). However, many governors prefer to manipulate as many parties as they can in order to control the political process in the region. Such policy became typical at the time of governors’ elections when governors tried to minimize the presence of oppositional candidates. In many regions, incumbent governors escaped the competition with communists after some bargaining, and sometimes even got an open support from CPRF. Now it is easier to control Fair Russia and LDPR turning them into loyal and weak political groups. Game with the communists is more sophisticated since they cannot give up in public. However, in many regions governors and United Russia are still able to work out a sort of a peace treaty with the communists as the case of regional legislatures shows.

The political opposition in such regional regimes faces the hard choice between more open and radical “oppositionness” and partial inclusion into the ruling group. Pros and contras are as follow.

Oppositionness (i.e. freewill or forced exclusion) has electoral and ideological reasons helping to mobilize the voters and local party activists. In case of fairer elections and stronger opposition, this can theoretically lead to victory. In fact, these victories can be found at the mayoral elections and in some part of single-mandate districts. This is not that much but still is an opportunity for many members of opposition.

Inclusion has its own set of motives. Under electoral authoritarianism, it gives a chance to win a spoil (i.e. the power and the status) if not winning the election itself. This creates a motive for higher-ranking party leaders (who usually get the spoil). Also opportunism helps to attract elites (business elites mainly) that may seek the way to get a mandate and a spoil and are ready to sponsor the party for that goal. Rent-seeking elites sometimes face electoral and clientelistic confines of United Russia and find easier ways to get power in other parties. Collaboration also means less pressure on the party and more access to media and to the electorate. But choice in inclusion's favor creates new problems. The electorate may turn away from such party. The very distribution of spoils builds pressure within the party, since only party elite and rent-seeking newcomers get a handful of spoils.

Thus, each party makes its hard choice. United Russia decides to take it all or to select the partners. Opposition decides whether to take a spoil or refuse. However, the latter choice is not that hard. Our expert interviews did not reveal any cases when the opposition openly turned down the invitation. Rather it tries to explain its voters and activists why it deals with the "enemy". So, it is important only to understand the reasons of United Russia's choice. As both United Russia strategies are widespread, it is important to hypothesize on the reasons of their choice (the analysis has been done for the 2005-2010 elections, without elections held on March 2011; see also Reuter, Turovsky, 2011).

First group of reasons are electoral. Let us see how the decision is connected with the electoral support of the party and the share of its faction. It may seem that the stronger the opposition the more reasons United Russia has to make it a partner.

In our analysis, we calculated the effective number of electoral parties (ENP) using formula of Juan Molinar (this formula better suits dominant party systems, as it returns indices, which are very close to the real number of relevant parties; see Molinar, 1991). In 38 regions, ENP is less than 1.5, a clear proof of United Russia dominance. In 23 regions out of these 38 United Russia uses majoritarian rule. If the level of electoral competition rises, United Russia starts to use consensus rule more often. Among 21 regions where ENP is "medium", i.e. between 1.5 and 2.0, United Russia uses majoritarian rule in 11 regions. In addition, if ENP exceeds 2.0 there are only seven regions out of 24 where United Russia takes it all.

Therefore, the situation seems rather clear. If the electoral competition is low, it stimulates United Russia decision not to share leadership positions with the others. However, one should remember that United Russia controls all but one legislature, and there is no urgent need to share the leadership positions in any region except for Saint Petersburg. Under higher electoral competition, United Russia feels that it is better to let the steam off and to form a coalition. However, as United Russia is not obliged to do so, it can keep all the leadership positions even if it got less votes and the competition was rather high. With ENP more than 2.0 United Russia preferred majoritarian rule in 7 regions such as Altai Republic, Karelia, Kirov, Kurgan, Kursk, Tver and Vologda *oblasts*. The extreme case of majoritarian rule was Kirov *oblast* with ENP at 4.1 and 28.5% votes cast for United Russia. On the contrary, there are regions with very low electoral competition and high United Russia support but characterized by consensus rule. These are 15 regions with ENP lower than 1.5. This long list includes Moscow City, Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachaevo-Cherkesia, Buryatia, Khakasia, Zabaykalski *krai*, Amur, Belgorod, Ivanovo, Kemerovo, Lipetsk, Penza, Tula, Voronezh *oblasts*. Republics of North Caucasus are found in this list due to their tradition of political consensus aimed at satisfying different ethnic clans. All the other decisions are result of local political calculations.

Despite many exceptions to the rule, the level of electoral competition is the strongest factor explaining the choice of United Russia strategy. The correlation coefficient between

United Russia share of leadership positions and share of its faction is at 0.47. Correlation with the share of popular votes is a bit weaker but is still at 0.37. However, since this factor is not so strong and exceptions are many it is intriguing to calculate the disproportion of United Russia leadership. The share of United Russia leadership positions divided by the share of votes is unsurprisingly high. It is always more than one, of course, and reaches 3.5 in Kirov oblast (also it exceeds 3.0 in Tver' *oblast* and is more than 2.5 in Adygea, Karelia, Perm *krai*, Kursk and Samara *oblasts* (and it is more than 2.0 in 25 regions). This share is slightly more than one in the regions where United Russia factions comprise almost all the legislature. The share of United Russia leadership positions divided by the share of United Russia faction is more moderate. There are even examples when it is less than one. The main "strange" case is Stavropol *krai* where United Russia initially did not have an absolute majority (0.8). Other cases are Kemerovo and Penza *oblasts*. However, both cases are explained by the fact that United Russia gave one leadership position to loyal Fair Russia. So, it does not mean anything so special. Disproportion is at its highest in Karelia (1.9) and exceeds 1.5 in 11 regions. In most regions as we can see the share is moderate and differs from 1.0 to 1.5. This coincides with the significant correlation between shares of leadership positions and faction members.

But the overall level of electoral competition (ENP) hides the differences in specific parties support. Our analysis shows that United Russia patronage over different parties has different electoral reasons.

The most interesting case is CPRF with its un-linear connection between voting and leadership gaining. It looks like if CPRF wants to get a leadership position it should get neither too much nor too little votes. Stronger CPRF is more probably an openly oppositional party, and the bad news is that in this case it cannot get any leadership position in the legislature. Only in five regions out of 14 where CPRF got more than 20% of the votes, United Russia decided to share leadership positions with its rival. To be weak, however, is not good too. With seven up to 10 per cent in eight regions, CPRF got a leadership position only in Caucasian republic of Kabardino-Balkaria (an example of North-Caucasian consensus politics). Most cases when CPRF got leadership positions are found between 13% and 19% of CPRF votes at the elections. Thus, stronger CPRF means higher polarization within party system and fiercer competition between United Russia and CPRF. In an "average" electoral situation, United Russia and CPRF are more likely to cooperate.

Fair Russia and LDPR usually get fewer votes than CPRF does. Not like in CPRF case, for them it is better to perform well in order to get leadership positions. Since these two parties are much more pragmatic than the communists are, they usually really need the leadership positions and want them from United Russia. That means a bit stronger correlation between their votes and leadership positions as compared with CPRF. Still it is a matter of United Russia decision. Most LDPR factions are very small in numbers (2-3 members) if the voting for this party is average. Cases when LDPR gets a leadership position are rather evenly distributed, including both regions where it hardly got over the electoral threshold and the regions where it performed much better (again, this "better" performance means 10-15% and rarely more and very small factions resulted). But being in the place of CPRF in Ryazan oblast and openly fighting United Russia and the governor LDPR got 18.65% of the votes which was very good for this party and no leadership positions for punishment.

Said above about LDPR is true for Fair Russia too. However, for Fair Russia the disproportion is smaller. For example, in 3 out of 4 regions where it got more than 20% of the votes it got leadership positions too. The only exception was in Vologda *oblast*. However, in the group of 10 regions where Fair Russia got 15-20%, it managed to hold leadership positions only in two regions. Nevertheless, data shows that for Fair Russia it is important to exceed 10% voting results if it wants to get a leadership position.

Thus, more accurate descriptive pattern connects United Russia strategy not with overall competition but with its relations with parties and the level of these parties' support. Too strong party would rather stay without spoils, but no parties are considered too strong with their current

electoral results (very rarely exceeding 20%). Too weak parties risk being neglected. CPRF case shows that for getting a spoil a medium-level result is needed. Such result does not irritate United Russia but the party is considered strong enough. Cases of Fair Russia and LDPR are different mainly because they get fewer votes than CPRF and their best results are medium from CPRF point of view. So, at the elections oppositional parties going for spoils should stay rather but not too low. That makes their task complicated.

Second group of factors consider regional political regimes and first of all the politics of the governor, since the governor keeps patronage over United Russia and the whole party system sometimes.

Let us see how the regional party system is connected with the regional status. Republics being more autonomous in the previous periods (Soviet and under Yeltsin) often formed more consolidated and authoritarian regimes. However, in multinational North Caucasus republics elites prefer consensus politics, as examples of Adyghea, Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachaevo-Cherkesia show (while in Chechen Republic, Ingushetia, North Ossetia where one ethnic group clearly dominates, United Russia use majoritarian rule). Therefore, the reason is not the republican status itself but the complexity of ethnic structure in the region. If this structure is simple, republic with its usually more consolidated regime is characterized by the majoritarian rule in its legislature.

In order to understand what governors prefer to use the "soft" strategy in shaping the party system and what governors do it the "hard" way, we classified all the governors. We looked at their electoral experience (elected or appointed) and at the time when they came to power (under Yeltsin, Putin and Medvedev).

Some of the results may seem strange. For example, there is no difference between governors who were elected and those who came to power recently by means of presidential appointment and never won competitive gubernatorial elections. Almost the same are the governors who came to power under Yeltsin, under Putin and under Medvedev. For example, among those 33 governors who came to power recently by means of presidential appointment 18 governors support consensus rule and 15 stand for one-party rule. 28 governors popularly elected some time ago are for consensus rule but 26 are against. Among 29 "Yeltsin" governors 15 supported one-party rule in the legislature, among "Putin" governors, they are 23 out of 46, among "Medvedev governors" they are 3 out of 8. Thus, such factors as the political generations the governors belong to, or his/her own electoral experience are not relevant. Only those who were elected for the first time with the support of left opposition more often prefer coalitional politics (6 out of 9).

The choice of partners in coalition differs greatly from region to region. The choice in CPRF favor is less typical for "older" generation. Among the regions where CPRF joined the coalition, in eight regions their governors came to power under Yeltsin, in 15 under Putin and in 5 under Medvedev (the shares are biased negatively for "Yeltsin governors" and positively for "Medvedev governors"). One of the probable reasons is that CPRF was usually in strong opposition to governors in the 1990s (except for the cases where it helped governors to come to power). Fair Russia is slightly more preferred by "Yeltsin governors" despite the fact that it was created under Putin and considered a Kremlin's project. Surprisingly enough, governors nominated under Medvedev has never supported Fair Russia ambitions in the legislatures yet. It contradicts the fact that Fair Russia needed Medvedev's support and hoped that under Medvedev party system would be more competitive. Probably it can be explained by the growing results of United Russia in recent years and very unstable and small electoral support of Fair Russia. That is why governors underrate Fair Russia and see no reason to support it.

However, LDPR with its rather long story is on the contrary. Only in three regions ruled by governors who came to power under Yeltsin it got leadership positions in the legislatures (out of 18 regions where LDPR is presented). In most regions favorable for LDPR bid for power, governors have been nominated in the 2000s. One of the reasons is that the older generation of governors never took eccentric LDPR seriously while party itself was very rarely represented in

legislatures. The crucial change came with the introduction of party lists for all the regions after 2003. Having enough support from voters LDPR started to win and form its small factions. Very quickly, governors or other groups of regional elites started to control or strongly influence LDPR regional organizations in order to get more seats for loyal deputies. Newer generation of governors appeared to be more flexible in that.

One way or another, governor's type is much weaker factor to explain the choice between "hard" and "soft" strategies of United Russia than the electoral results are.

There should be another group of factors to fill the gap in our explanation. There is a strong need for individual level analysis. It is important not only what parties get spoils but who personally gets them. The reason for it is the structure and character of Russian party system. Earlier we mentioned that even United Russia had limited influence being the biggest part of the party system manipulated and managed from "above". It is understood by elites, that the electoral support of United Russia is not unlimited and that other parties would always have its share of votes and mandates. Under such circumstances, governors need to control as much deputies as they can. Groups of regional elite also cannot get mandates they want from only United Russia. As a result, political parties represent groups of regional elite, and their ideology loses its importance. Another dimension of any regional legislature means not party/faction structure but a structure of clientele. United Russia may be divided into several such groups being a replica of most influential elites. Other parties may be partly or fully controlled by one such group, or a group can be represented both in United Russia and in other parties. Therefore, the strategy of clientele is to get seats in legislature using the party system as a whole and not only United Russia with its limitations (in terms of electoral support and in terms of its bias towards those groups that control its regional leadership, usually the governor's group).

Then the distribution of leadership positions on personal level is probably the most important. It is famous persons and representatives of certain clientele who get the leadership positions. The case of Fair Russia that was often seen as United Russia's "second column" is very clear. Often it is presented in legislatures' leadership by persons, loyal to governors and actually with the same loyalty as most of United Russia. In Belgorod *oblast'* this is Novikov, CEO of large agrarian enterprise. It is him, who got the only seat of Fair Russia in recently elected Duma and despite his party's bleak result, he retained his position of committee chair, the only position that United Russia gave to any other party. Another example is Kemerovo *oblast'* where Fair Russia was the only other party presented in the legislature, and its deputy Volchek loyal to governor became a committee chair. Usually Fair Russia deputies get leadership positions if they are part of governor's own clientele (like in Belgorod, Kemerovo, Kabardino-Balkaria⁷ etc) or represent more autonomous group loyal to governor and/or ready to ally with United Russia (Leningrad *oblast'*, Buryatia⁸, Krasnoyarsk *krai*, Oryol *oblast'* etc). Very much is decided on the very personal level. In Krasnoyarsk *krai*, vice-chairman and committee chair Romashov, representative of nuclear industry interest group got his positions in the legislature long before Fair Russia appeared. However, if leaders of Fair Russia are stronger and oppositional they usually get nothing (Altai Republic, Adyghea etc). So the descriptive pattern is close to the one we discussed for the electoral results.

LDPR often finds itself in the same situation. We mentioned above that it can or cannot get its leadership positions with virtually any electoral result, except for complete failure, of course. Therefore, this is a matter of personal-level decision. The fact that LDPR is presented in the leadership not so often than Fair Russia indicates that regional elites are more suspicious to use this party with its populist and sometimes notorious image. However, from pragmatic point, this is a party, anyway, and it gets votes and mandates. Therefore, the question is who gets them

⁷ In Kabardino-Balkaria, the leadership of Fair Russia was changed right before the elections in favor of republican president's people.

⁸ In Buryatia two brothers together hold important positions in United Russia (State Duma deputy) and Fair Russia (regional branch head).

personally. One of the most interesting cases is Chekotova in Irkutsk *oblast'*. She is an important businessperson in Irkutsk who joined LDPR to become a deputy and had an informal support from regional authorities. Unsurprisingly she also became a committee chair. In Saint Petersburg LDPR also was said to have a support from that time's city authorities and its rather well known deputies Ozerov and Sukhenko became vice-chairman and committee chair.

CPRF should be the most complicated case because in many regions it stands openly against governors and does not bargain with United Russia for leadership positions. Partly this is explained by the position of party members, the majority of them being against any double-dealing with regional authorities (while party leaders themselves are more likely to do so). If CPRF gets leadership positions then usually they are reserved for the well-known and experienced politicians who are also professional deputies and have many personal ties in regional elite. Many of them held political positions in Soviet nomenclature and would like to keep some leadership position, one way or another. "Partnership at the distance" with United Russia suits many CPRF regional leaders better than "true" opposition.

On the personal level, such examples are Salov in Adyghea and Grishin in Arkhangelsk *oblast'* (both are former State Duma deputies), Semenov in Kaliningrad *oblast'* (probably the best example, former CPSU leader of the region, then chairman of the regional Soviet and then vice-chairman of all post-Soviet legislatures), Sazhinov in Murmansk *oblast'* (committee chair, formerly long-serving chairman), Karpov in Novosibirsk *oblast'* (long-serving vice-chairman), Zelepukhin in Orenburg *oblast'* (representative of strong agrarian lobby), Sablin in Nenets autonomous okrug (one of the most experienced local politicians, formerly mayor of *okrug* capital), Suturin in Zabaikalsky *krai* (a person from governor's team). Moscow City is an especially interesting case because the main public person for CPRF and its electorate here is Gubenko, head of the famous theatre and former Soviet culture minister. He proved to be loyal to mayor Luzhkov and got the position of vice-chairman under his rule.

Strong oppositional leaders are less likely to get spoils. However, sometimes regional governors and United Russia neutralize active communist leaders giving them some power, as it was in Karachaevo-Cherkesia with Bidzhev who protested against electoral results but got committee chair position then. And in Ivanovo *oblast'* the governor Men' forced former convocation to dissolve and after new elections United Russia gave leadership positions to well-known leaders of CPRF (Kovaleva) and LDPR (Sirotkin) trying to legitimize the new legislature. Strategy of CPRF neutralization led to the decision in Samara region to make its active leader Musatkin a vice-chairman. Yakutia is an interesting example of CPRF organization which is very active and gets leadership positions in turn (two at the moment, and CPRF is the only party except for United Russia that gets it). The situation in Vladimir *oblast'* is unique because its governor Vinogradov was a communist until recently. Quitting CPRF (but not joining United Russia), he let his former party-mates retain their positions in the legislature. Again, these are not just any communists but personally vice-chairman Bobrov (former chairman at the better times) and committee chair Sinyagin, both loyal to the governor.

Thus, personal loyalty towards governors, great and well-deserved political experience and/or representation of influential interest groups are the factors that favor certain deputies from CPRF, Fair Russia and LDPR to get leadership positions. Another factor is a readiness of a rather influential oppositional deputy to strike a deal with United Russia and get some power along with it. If no such factors work then United Russia would rather rule alone.

Inter-personal relations and distribution of leadership positions in Russian regional party systems soften relations between United Russia and governors on one hand and other parties on the other hand. Nevertheless, this flexible politics gradually changes as United Russia strengthens its positions in legislatures, being replaced by the politics of one-party rule. After 10th October elections in 2010, for example, two regions out of six where elections were held, refused from consensus politics (Tuva and Magadan *oblast'*).

Overall, the evolution of choice between consensus and one-party rule is still unclear. Statistically it changes each year. Legislatures elected in 2006 are split almost evenly: eight

present one-party rule and seven coalitional. In 2007, the score was even (13 cases against 11). In 2008, one-party rule was more wide-spread (9 against 6).

Especially interesting is the situation under Medvedev. New president has made some steps towards higher party competition. His intentions were reflected in United Russia behavior in 2009, when it formed coalitions in nine regions out of 12. But the strange thing happened later. With his address to the federal parliament in 2009, Medvedev started small-scale political reform that was aimed to give other parties more opportunities to be presented in the regional legislatures and to form its leadership. On the 12th of November, 2009 in his address Medvedev said that: “All the parties presented in regional parliaments will have an opportunity to create factions. It should be guaranteed for all that their representatives will work on constant basis and have leadership positions”. The first part of this phrase really became a law. Now even if a party has only one deputy, such deputy has the same rights as a faction. But these rights are limited, and the second and most important part is almost void. As it was before United Russia in regions decides how to distribute leadership positions (and who works on professional basis as well). After 2010 elections in seven regions, United Russia chose one-party rule and in seven regions it formed coalitions. In 2010, the balance became even worse as several regions turned from coalitional to one-party rule. On the contrary, in 2011 after March elections seven regions introduced coalitional rule and five chose one-party rule.

The case of March 2011 election shows that changes of all kinds are still possible, reflecting instability in patronage system that helps to rule it. Most regions kept the previous system, though changes on party and personal level were made. Five regions remained with coalitional rule and four regions stayed with one-party rule. Two regions moved to coalitional rule (Kirov and Nizhny Novgorod regions), but Tambov region eliminated coalition in favor of one-party rule.

Table 2. Number of regions chosen coalitional or one-party rule in legislatures⁹.

Year of Election	One-party rule	Coalition
2006	8	7
2007	12	12
2008	9	6
2009	3	9
2010	7	7
2011	5	7

Cooptation of opposition in leadership of regional legislatures remains widespread but not common practice. Recently, the number of coalitions has increased, while before the score was almost even. At the same time, the formal coalitional rule in some regions often hides the decrease in number of parties and their members presented in the leadership.

⁹ Author’s calculation based on the official data taken from the web sites of the regional legislatures.

Why so much love (or fear) for governors?

The procedure of governors' appointment has become recently one of the key issues of Russian regional politics. The role of the regional legislature has proved to be very limited. Actually, that was another test on "oppositionness" in regional politics. The matter is the president's right to dissolve the oppositional legislature if it does not approve the candidate proposed for the second or the third time by president. Practice of appointments has shown that most deputies have never even tried to put to risk their mandates voting against the presidential candidate. However, the oppositional parties can vote against without much risk knowing that the majority of United Russia would vote for the candidate anyway.

But there was only one case when deputies disapproved the candidate. It happened in 2007 in Koryak autonomous *okrug* on its way to unification with Kamchatka region. Deputies in both regions had to approve the governor of the new emerging region. Koryak autonomous *okrug* was the only region with communist-controlled legislature (CPRF held half of the seats and elected its speaker). So, the legislature did not approve the presidential nominee Kuzmitsky, but did it at the second try when part of the communists changed their voting. All other cases showed that not only United Russia majority but other factions often voted for the nominated candidate, no matter that he/she usually was United Russia member.

Such behavior of "oppositional" factions may be seen logically as a reciprocity politics resulting from United Russia decisions to give other factions some spoils. If governors and United Russia buy off the deputies from other parties, they should be loyal in turn.

But before we come to any conclusions let us analyze the data. It should be said first that this data could not be accurate. Usually the deputies cast their ballots secretly. So the only way is to check the official position of the party/faction in their public reports to media and to compare it with the actual breakdown of the deputies voting. Sometimes the comparison gives "strange" results, as the number of negative ballots is less than the number of deputies that had to vote against. And often the party can not work out any position and let their deputies decide on their own. All these cases show that the voting against is also a matter of personal courage.

In our opinion, the voting at the governor's appointment is a clear case of low level of institutionalization of political opposition in Russia. More institutionalized is the practice of power hierarchy when most deputies agree that the executive power prevails over legislative and the federal power prevails over regional. Such a practice is deeply rooted in Russian politics with its imperial and Soviet legacy rather than federalist and democratic.

Our analysis proves very high level of Fair Russia's loyalty to the governors. In 52 regions, this party voted for the candidate proposed by the president the way United Russia did. Only in two regions, Fair Russia voted against (Tuva and Chuvashia) and in one region (Mordovia) it abstained from the voting. In Saint-Petersburg Fair Russia faction split at the voting. In 10 regions, this party position could not be identified accurately, and in 17 regions Fair Russia was not represented in the regional legislatures at the time of voting.

LDPR looks more "oppositional", as it voted for the candidates in 41 regions, while in six regions it voted against (Altay Republic, Mariy El, Kaliningrad, Orenburg, Sverdlovsk and Tver regions). In one region, LDPR abstained from voting. In eight regions, this party's position could not be identified and in 27 regions, no faction existed.

CPRF is the most interesting case. As contrary to Fair Russia and LDPR, the score of its positions is in favor of negative. In 33 regions, CPRF faction was against the presidential nominees. But in 22 regions communists approved the governor. In 12 regions, communists abstained and in three regions they did not participate. In 10 regions, we failed to identify the position of this party. Three regions are beyond the study, as CPRF does not have a faction there.

So, the result of CPRF voting is very complicated and different. Our analysis proves that Fair Russia and LDPR are very close to the status of United Russia satellites. CPRF case shows that this party is often open to dialogue with governor and ready to accept its political

supremacy. We suggest that CPRF strategy after this party lost chances to win at the federal elections is not a strategy of “oppositionness” but a strategy of survival. Unfortunately, the studies of CPRF are very few. But those authors who are specialized in communist movement studies (Chernyakhovsky for example) argue that CPRF leaders always wanted to cooperate with the “regime” and refused from any kind of revolutionary strategy leaving it for the rhetoric only.

Also voting for/against governors shows the wide spread of “shy” forms of “oppositionness”. Again, the CPRF case is the most typical for that. Sometimes deputies are afraid to vote against and do not want to clearly approve the candidate. Then they abstain from voting or do not participate and just do not come to the session. Often the official negative position of communists contrasts with other forms of their real voting. For example, in Tambov region with the official CPRF position against the governor Betin voting results showed that most communists probably voted for or abstained.

Only in 2010, CPRF federal leaders decided to put an end to this regional mess feeling that such politics undermined the status of “truly” oppositional party. CPRF presidium of Central Committee ruled that all the factions in regional legislatures and all the communist deputies must vote against United Russia’s candidates for governors. Otherwise, they run the risk of being excluded from the party. This decision strengthened party discipline but could not erase the politics of regional reciprocity. Indeed, voting against the presidential nominee has become a political ritual for CPRF. However, at the same time, nominees meet with communist deputies and often both sides show their satisfaction with the results of their talks. In public regional communist leaders can show their sympathy to the governor, despite their negative voting. In the end of 2010, for example, it showed up in Moscow with Sobyenin nomination and in Ivanovo oblast’, when Men’ was approved for his second term.

Hard choice between “oppositionness” and “collaboration” leads to the numerous conflicts both within the CPRF regional branches and between its central and regional leaders. For example, in Sverdlovsk region communists decided to vote against the presidential nominee Misharin. But Zyuganov insisted that they vote in approval of this candidate due to some possible consultations on the federal level. The opposite case is the denial of Central committee’s decision and approval of the governor by some communist deputies in the regions. As a result, there were reported cases when such deputies were excluded from the party but others stayed and the scandal was finished soon. For example in Kamchatka region some communists voted for new governor Ilyukhin despite the ban to do so.

Conflicts are also widespread within the regional branches of CPRF. For example, in Chelyabinsk region communists split in their relations to the new governor Yurevich. That led to the struggle for leadership in the regional organization and ended with the election of the leader loyal to Zyuganov and not to the governor. Split were the communists while voting at the approval of Voronezh new governor Gordeev, but they managed to keep the organization and its leadership untouched.

So, CPRF is actually very far from Fair Russia and LDPR on the scale of the “oppositionness”. But it gives too many examples of collaborative politics in the regional legislatures. Also its deputies were engaged in some scandalous bargaining on the municipal level just wasting their political influence. The strangest thing happened in the town of Angarsk in Irkutsk region where communist won the majority in local assembly but in some mysterious way, United Russia candidates were elected both the speaker and the city manager. In Ryazan, the strong communist faction split, giving the way to United Russia candidates to head the municipal power.

One of the most interesting tricks is that politics of reciprocity looks asymmetrical. It is not a rational bargain when voting for the governor is exchanged for the spoils in the legislature and vice versa. On the contrary, in 14 regions out of 22 where CPRF approved the governor it did not have any spoils. Besides, Fair Russia and LDPR vote for the governor in many regions where they are not represented in the legislature’s leadership. As we could see these two parties are often underrated and do not get spoils but they vote for the governor in most cases anyway.

There are two possible reasons. One of them is a possible “shadow” deal between the governor and the party. But actually governors do not have to go this way, since they control the majority of deputies through United Russia. As we suppose, there is another, institutional reason: “the refusal from oppositionness” is a widespread form of behavior of “oppositional” parties. It is a demonstration of readiness to cooperate with the regional leader and the acceptance of the hierarchical political relations. The negative effect of such politics is that it often does not pay off, since the “oppositional” parties do not get any spoils in turn and can lose disappointed voters. Still the “oppositional” parties do not feel the danger and prefer tactical deals in the existing political environment that helps them to survive one way or another and gives them either motives or illusions for further political careers. However, as we emphasized such asymmetrical politics in “power-opposition” relations has no strategic political outcomes for the “opposition”, as it just wastes its political resources and is often subjected by the regional authoritarianism.

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This paper is also based on the numerous expert interviews the author has conducted since the mid-1990s in the regions and/or with the oppositional (or maybe "oppositional") politicians.