



NATIONAL RESEARCH UNIVERSITY
HIGHER SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

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THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE PARTY SYSTEM IN RUSSIA: OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS AT THE ELECTIONS OF GOVERNORS

BASIC RESEARCH PROGRAM

WORKING PAPERS

SERIES: POLITICAL SCIENCE
WP BRP 17/PS/2014

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THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE PARTY SYSTEM IN RUSSIA: OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS AT THE ELECTIONS OF GOVERNORS ⁵

Does the level of party system institutionalization influence high-level incumbents' electoral support within subnational authoritarianism? Is it possible to ensure incumbent electoral success only with manipulative electoral practices? To what extent does this and other factors contribute to the incumbents' landslide victory? Contrary to scholarly thought in this field, this paper argues that manipulative practices are not the only determinant of incumbents' electoral success in an authoritarian regime. They are also insufficient. The research is based on the results Russian gubernatorial elections in 2012-2013.

JEL Classification: D72.

Keywords: party system institutionalization, incumbent, electoral authoritarianism, governor elections, regional regimes

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⁵ This article is prepared as part of the program of fundamental research conducted by Laboratory for Regional Political Studies of National Research University – Higher School of Economics (project "Structural Analysis of Regional Political Regimes and Electoral Space").

Introduction

With the re-introduction of direct gubernatorial elections in 2011–2012, regional governors' campaigns have restored their importance. The revival of gubernatorial elections has put the role of parties in the Russian political system again into question. However, does this mean that governors are willing to use party institutions to obtain high electoral support (in our study this is more than 70% of the vote)? And are they able to do this without the party support relying only on their personal rating? Overall, to what extent do parties and personal ratings matter in incumbent re-election?

Direct gubernatorial elections create a potentially destabilizing threat to party systems at the regional level. They contribute to the governors' legitimacy and make governors more independent in the decision-making. To avoid such threats, electoral law provides the institutional framework, according to which in most regions the candidates for governor have to be nominated only by political parties (except for Moscow City and Kirov Oblast). Within these limits, the governors are only able to run according to the established political party system.

Thus, we argue that the Russian party system was artificially institutionalized and standardized by the federal government (i.e. the regional characteristics were smoothed out), who failed to provide their high electoral support. In this regard, the candidates implemented three strategies of relations to the parties: 1) use of the party brand on the public level; 2) use of logistical and organizational base of the party on the non-public level; 3) the maximum distancing from all the resources of the party. As a safety net, candidates (especially incumbents) prefer to use 'manual control' techniques in conducting electoral campaigns, which is seen in the wide use of manipulative practices.

In this paper, we examine different policy strategies and conditional combinations (depending on political characteristics of the region) implemented by the incumbents to win the elections. For this purpose, we use the QCA method of qualitative comparative analysis.

Our paper is structured as the following. In the theoretical part, the authors analyze the existing approaches to the concept of institutionalization and party system institutionalization, especially considering party systems within free and fair elections, and 'managed' competition (electoral authoritarianism). Then we propose an approach to the operationalization of party system institutionalization. In the section describing the features of electoral support of regional leaders, we provide a calculation of party systems institutionalization and authoritarian manipulation cumulative indices to assess the competitiveness of regional gubernatorial elections. The authors conclude by explaining the results obtained and name the factors defining the regional grouping.

Theoretical concepts: institutionalization problems and electoral authoritarianism

The investigation of the crucial specific features of party system institutionalization in different regimes has been one of the central questions in comparative political studies. Samuel P. Huntington suggests in, 'Political Order in Changing Societies', the general 'analytical boundaries' of institutionalization. He conceptualizes them in four dimensions: 'adaptability – rigidity'; 'complexity – simplicity'; 'autonomy – subordination'; 'coherence-disunity' (Huntington 1968). All further researches developed Huntington's ideas, applying his most general definition of institutionalization to the analysis of legislatures (Polsby 1968) and the functioning of political parties (Janda 1970, 1980), calling into question the accuracy of the selected measurement (Keohane 1969; Randall and Sväsand 2002; et al.), criticizing his approach for the absence of clear criteria for the application of the theory in empirical studies (Panebianco 1988; Morlino 1998). However, small instrumental capacity of the Huntington model for application to the empirical research is caused by the traditional understanding of institutions as organizations and the lack of methodological clarity in the understanding of institutionalization.

The second wave of the institutionalization research was partly intended to address the problem of finding robust institutionalization measurements and had methodological focus directly on the analysis of the institutionalization of modern political systems. Douglass North (1990), the author of the now classic methodology of the new institutional approach, suggested a broader understanding of the institutions as a set of formal rules and informal political practices. The process of institutionalization he understood as a reaction of the institutions to the environmental change incentives within the existing rules and acceptable opportunities (North 1990: 83).

Further, parties and party systems as institutionalization analytical framework objects were examined thoroughly in V. Randall and L. Svaasand (2002), and S. Mainwaring and T. Scully (1995), A. Panebianco (1988), M. Welfling (1973). V. Randall and L. Svaasand investigated the effect of the party system components (parties) institutionalization on the overall system institutionalization taking party systems in post-communist countries as the empirical basis. S. Mainwaring and T. Scully emphasized the importance of a stable legislative framework (i.e. the rules of the game) and the stability of party competition as a key prerequisite for institutionalization (Mainwaring, Scully 1995). The authors measured the political stability index of electoral volatility by the Pedersen Volatility Index (Pedersen 1979). A. Panebianco (1988) first applied the concept of institutionalization to an organizational analysis of parties and party systems, mainly in Latin America and Eastern Europe. He regarded institutionalization as the basic element for a successful democratic transition. M. Welfling identified the independence of

parties from the environment as the key element of party institutionalization. She measured party independence through a number of independent candidates (and the stability of their number) in national legislatures, the features of geographical patterns of voting and turnout, parties' adaptability to electoral discrimination, i.e. illegal displacement from the political competition (Welfling 1973).

Researchers of party system institutionalization in hybrid and authoritarian regimes pointed out the following peculiarities of institutionalization. The success of the institutionalization can be determined by: 1) historical conditions of party formation (institutional legacies) and competition between them; 2) rootedness of parties under authoritarian elections and their ability to reproduce electoral support under such conditions (Hicken, Kuhonta 2011). Contextual frames of party formation and critical junctures in non-democratic regimes can determine the potential for institutionalization and the longevity of this process (Mainwaring, Zoco 2007). Thus, party system institutionalization is achieved easier in non-democratic countries with both strong opposition and limited access to resources. These factors make coalitions building and institutions necessary, as well as make the system stable (Smith 2005, 2007).

Researchers of the Russian party system evolution highlighted some specific threats of Russian parties. They pointed out, first, the weakness of individual Russian parties' institutionalization due to their low degree of independence from other political actors and institutions (Remington, Smith 1995; Meleshewich 2007). Second, it proved impossible to use the same analytical framework for Russian parties and parties in the Western countries (Remington, Smith 1995; Meleshewich 2007; Ishiyama, Velten 1998). In particular, the instability of party support by the political elites hinders parties' institutionalization and promotes their high electoral instability ('floating' party system), which is not the same for the Western parties' logic of institutionalization. The latter circumstance might have resulted from the specificity of non-democratic electoral practices at various levels of elections in Russia.

By the same token, Andreas Schedler (2006) analyzed the elections in comparable conditions with the Russian context, describing the 'nested' authoritarian practices as a part of the façade-democratic electoral procedures very common to Russian politics. Election procedures in such cases are minimally competitive. To imitate election competitiveness, the governmental authorities widely use the so-called 'menu of electoral manipulations', which implies built-in quasi-democratic institutional practices to minimize the uncertainty of the outcome of the vote. In particular, at the gubernatorial elections the incumbents widely use the following practices: restriction of civil liberties, discriminatory election legislature, reservation of items and domains, exclusion and fragmentation, deprivation of voting rights, intimidation,

and electoral fraud (Schedler 2002). Informal practices reduce competition by defining the winner before the elections, though staging façade democratic elections as if they are truly competitive. The intra-elite selection of the potential winner becomes the primary and the only determinant of the elections outcome.

Thus, besides Schedler's approach we assume that in the elections campaigns of 2012–2013 two additional factors determined the incumbent's victory. The first structural factor is the level of the party system institutionalization, which determined the balance of political powers and the stability of the balance of forces between the major players. The second procedural factor is the specific manipulation mechanisms used in the election campaigns. The relevance of these factors and their contribution to the incumbent victory were tested on thirteen gubernatorial electoral campaigns in 2012–2013.

We expect this paper to contribute to the studies of the electoral authoritarianism practices, investigating whether their logic could be applicable to the realities of the Russian gubernatorial elections. Second, we expect that this study results will enhance the understanding of the logic and mechanisms of the party systems institutionalization in authoritarian regimes.

Qualitative comparative analysis: operationalization of variables

The main part of the study is based on QCA, as we consider it important to take into account equifinality⁶, i.e. the phenomenon whereby the same outcome is achieved under various conditions. This allows determining the qualitative characteristics of the regions with high precision for their subsequent clustering. Taking a small number of observations (due to the limited number of regions running governmental elections in 2012–2013) we are limited in implementing the majority of methods of statistical analysis.

QCA is based on Boolean algebra, i.e. the establishment of a threshold value according to which all variables are coded '1' or '0'. The logic of the coding is the following. The incumbent electoral result is the dependent variable (response). An incumbent election result that is more than 70% means the over-electoral success threshold value (Magaloni 2006) and coded '1', otherwise '0'. Independent variables are the following: 1) the composite index of institutionalization (to be explained further); 2) the index of 'the authoritarian manipulation' (to be explained further); 3) replacement of the governor before the election (coded '1' and '0'); 4) the Herfindahl-Hirschman competitiveness index.

⁶ Equifinality is the dynamic characteristic of the system, which is in the stage of transaction from various initial states to the same final one. See Antinazi. Encyclopedia of Sociology, 2009.

The combinations of dependent and independent variables make configurations, which are presented in the truth table. ‘Truth’ here means the existence of specified criterion (1) according the threshold value; ‘lie’ means its absence (0). Then the logical algorithm systematizes cases, which demonstrate the same meanings of conditions – configurations⁷.

QCA provides three main types of configuration. First, the configuration with response ‘1’ highlights an incumbent’s result that is more than 70%. Second, the configuration with response ‘0’ highlights an incumbent’s result that is less than 70%. The third type is the conflicting configurations that occur when the same combination of predictors in one case leads to the response ‘1’ and in the other case results in the response ‘0’. Further, the conflicting configuration is to be explained by decoding or implementing new variables.

1. The first independent variable: cumulative index of party system institutionalization

Various researchers consider institutionalization a measurable parameter using such concepts as ‘level of institutionalization’ or ‘degree of institutionalization’ (Janda 1997; Rose, Makie 1988; et al). However, the operationalization of ‘institutionalization’ seems to be a difficult task for several reasons. Scientists argue about the locus of analysis and the relevant parameters important to consider when assessing the institutionalization level. The most common understanding of institutionalization implies the quality of interaction between the parties within a party system estimation, though there are different approaches to defining these parameters more precisely.

The ‘simple’ dimensions propose to analyze one or two parameters. Sartori (1976) examined party system institutionalization putting the first priority to the number of parties and their ideological polarization. However, this simple model cannot be used to examine the country-cases with middle- and low-level institutionalization, as well as for nondemocratic regimes. This is due to the mentioned parameters which are not sufficient enough to capture the logic of the institutionalization processes and fail to provide an appropriate understanding of the hidden mechanics of parties competition (Kitschelt 2003; Mainwaring 1999; Mainwaring and Scully 1995). Przeworski (1975) applied institutionalization to party competition and measured the level of institutionalization by the stability of party support (Pedersen 1983) so that the internal structural factors (party integrity, the role of its leader, etc.) were not considered relevant.

‘Complex’ measurements combine a larger number of factors, though still many of them lack clear operationalization. Huntington’s four dimensions failed to be implemented in empirical studies because they are not defined properly. The four criteria proposed by

⁷ In QCA terminology.

Mainwaring and Scully – the stability of the rules of the game, rootedness of parties in the society (the overall trust in the institution of political parties), the level of political parties legitimacy, parties' independence from the party leaders' personal interests – do not leave a clear measurement strategy either (Mainwaring, Scully 1995).

Thus, the complexity of the 'institutionalization' operationalization can be reduced to the following issues: 1) defining the unit of analysis; 2) picking those measurements that embody the key important features of institutionalization and exclude the irrelevant ones; 3) non-applicability of the same institutionalization criteria for democratic and non-democratic regimes or highly institutionalized and poorly institutionalized party systems.

In this sense, defining 'the best' approach to measuring institutionalization might be a tricky task. If you choose an approach, trying to take into account all the possible 'dimensions' of parties and party systems, first, there is a risk of overanalyzing overlapping measures. Second, there is a risk of employing corrupted data or facts, poorly accessible for closer pre-investigation. For party systems in non-democratic regimes, the dimensions like 'the level of a party's dependence from the state' or 'the share of the state in a party's funding' have high explanatory value but can be less important for party systems in democratic states (Katz 2002; Kopecký 2006; Sikk 2004).

Nevertheless, the majority of party system institutionalization studies put the first explanatory priority on the analysis of the quality of party support, that is, the analysis of the electoral results. This is the most easily verifiable parameter explaining: 1) voter loyalty level (their level of confidence in the parties); 2) the volatility of party support; 3) and the degree of predictability in the key actors' behavior.

In this paper, we propose a composite index of party system institutionalization. Following the tradition of those researchers who operationalized institutionalization mainly through the electoral results, we have abandoned the inner independence and parties' level of legitimacy criteria proposed by previous scholars, but retained the criterion of external adaptability. Adaptability of a party system (AP) serves as an indicator of a party's ability to enter and remain stable at the political market. Thus, we propose the number of participating parties in the 2012–2013 elections from the total registered potential participants as the criterion for party system adaptability. The more adaptive the party system is, the more the registered parties participate in the elections.

The Pedersen's index states for the stability of electoral support measurement as it is widely implemented in comparative political research (Pedersen 1979). It helps to capture a party system electoral volatility level:

$$\text{Pedersen} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n |p_{it} - p_{i(t-1)}|}{2} \quad (1)$$

where Pedersen is Pedersen's index, p_{it} is the quota of the party's support from the elections in period (t) and $p_{i(t-1)}$ is the quota of the party's support from the elections in period (t-1).

Incumbent Vote Change (IVC) (Bogaards 2008) measures whether the change in electoral support captures the change of the incumbent's support or the opposition. Thus, it shows the ratio of changes in incumbent's voting to the overall change:

$$\text{ICV} = \frac{|p_{xt} - p_{x(t-1)}|}{\sum_{i=1}^n |p_{it} - p_{i(t-1)}|} \quad (2)$$

where ICV is Incumbent Vote Change (for the ruling party); p_{xt} is the share of the ruling party's approval at the elections in period (t), $p_{x(t-1)}$ is the share of the ruling party's approval at the elections in period (t-1); p_{it} is the share of the (i) party's approval at the parliamentary elections in period (t), $p_{i(t-1)}$ is the share of the (i) party's approval at the parliamentary elections in period (t-1),.

In addition, we calculate the level of party support nationalization, which shows the uniformity of the parties support for all the regions of the country (Meleshevich 2007). High level of party system nationalization stands for territorial uniformity while low-level nationalization indicates that a party has the regions with extreme-high or extreme-low level of electoral support. The index for the individual parties' nationalization level is based on the Mainwaring-Jones formula (2003).

The measurement described above (with the coefficients significance in the overall measurement of the party system institutionalization) resulted in the proposed cumulative index:

$$I = 0,3 * AP + 0,5 * \text{Pedersen} + 0,1 * \text{IVC} + 0,1 * \text{PSNS} \quad (3)$$

where I is the cumulative index of a party system institutionalization level; AP, the parameter of adaptability of a party system; Pedersen, the Pedersen's index; IVC, Incumbent Vote Change; and PSNS, the index of nationalization of a party system.

2. *The second independent variable: the cumulative index of 'authoritarian manipulations'*

The second proposed index provides a qualitative assessment of the political processes of the regional gubernatorial election campaigns. The index of 'authoritarian manipulation'

(AMI) captures those electoral authoritarian practices (identified from open sources) widely used by the incumbents: administrative deprivation of strong candidates from participation (NP); political bargaining of the federal government with strong regional incumbents resulting in offering them political promotion to the federal governing bodies (M); the use of a municipal filter (MF); and the use of spoilers (S).

$$AMI=0,3*NP+0,25*M+0,25*MF+0,2*S \quad (4)$$

where AMI is the index of ‘authoritarian manipulations’; NP, the exclusion of strong candidates; M, offering federal level promotion; MF, municipal filter; S, spoilers’ participation in the elections. Every detected authoritarian practice in the campaigns was coded ‘1’, otherwise ‘0’.

Exclusion of strong candidates from participation (NP) implies administrative measures aimed at removing strong candidates from the campaign (frequently, the candidates fail to fulfill excessive requirements for registration). The proposal positions indicator (M) implies the use of political bargaining with opposition or quasi-opposition candidates in exchange for non-participation in the elections campaign. Typically, this mechanism is applied after the actual start of the elections campaign, after the acting governor was appointed, or the incumbent’s primaries were held.

The municipal filter indicator (MF) implies the need for all the participants to collect a required number of signatures to be registered for the campaign. According to Russian federal law, each region sets a multi-level municipal filter from 5% to 10% (the share of municipal signatures). A candidate must have a one signature of municipal deputy/ head of municipality with the total coverage of not less than 75% of the first-order municipalities. In Russia, the municipal filter is frequently used as a mechanism to exclude strong opposition competitors from the campaign.

The spoilers’ indicator (S) shows whether quasi-competitors aiming to spoil the other competitors’ results participated in the elections. This indicator is operationalized by the proportion of votes cast for a spoiler against the number of votes received by the opposition candidates. To explain the controversial configurations of QCA results, we add new variables in the calculation. So we find out whether the outcome (electoral support of candidates) is influenced by regional political processes,.

3. The third independent variable: the incumbent’s replacement before the elections (IR)

The third variable is introduced to account for the influence of the federal government on the election campaign in the region. It means that a governor could be replaced by federal center before the electoral campaign, so federal government shows the will to have this or that person as the governor. This variable determines the incumbent's campaign strategy. It might vary from a kind of 'referendum of confidence' to 'a request for new leaders'. If a region takes the first strategy it receives '1', otherwise '0'.

4. The fourth independent variable: Herfindahl-Hirschman index of competition

This index is used as the 'control' variable for the index of the party system institutionalization. The Herfindahl-Hirschman index of competition is based on the results of the latest parliamentary elections and is calculated by the formula:

$$I_{HH} = P_1^2 + P_2^2 \dots + P_n^2 \quad (5)$$

where HHI is the Herfindahl-Hirschman index of competition level and P_n , the quota of votes received by the candidate.

What conditions provided the governors with high electoral support?

With the indices described above, we studied the party systems and electoral campaigns in each of the thirteen regions where the gubernatorial elections took place in 2012–2013. All the federal «protégés», no matter which party they belonged to, won with rather high results: median voting value was estimated at 72,37%, but there was low turnout. Nevertheless, the gubernatorial campaigns in some regions were held under low turnout. As a result it did not solve the problem of the governor's legitimacy, but made the victory more predictable. Median turnout value was estimated at 38,16%. Chukotka Autonomous Okrug (64,41%) and Belgorod Oblast (59,47%) showed the maximum turnout.

Table 1. Results of the gubernatorial elections in 2012-2013

Region	Turnout, %	Change of governor	Votes for incumbent, %	Candidates rejected in registration
Amur Oblast	36,79	No	77,28	Yes
Belgorod Oblast	59,47	No	77,64	No
Bryansk Oblast	46,94	No	65,22	Yes
Vladimir Oblast	28,51	Yes	74,73	Yes
Magadan Oblast	33,28	Yes	73,11	Yes
Moscow City	32,00	No	51,37	Yes
Moscow Oblast	38,51	Yes	78,94	Yes
Novgorod Oblast	43,17	No	75,50	Yes
Ryazan Oblast	43,51	No	64,43	Yes
Republic of Khakasia	37,80	No	63,41	Yes
Zabaykalsky Krai	33,24	Yes	71,63	Yes
Khabarovsk Krai	33,83	No	63,92	Yes
Chukotka Autonomous Okrug	64,41	No	79,84	Yes

Source: Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation, authors' calculations.

First, we tried several combinations of conditions. The first combination of variables included only the values of composite indices without additional variables. However, two cases (Republic of Khakasia and Vladimir Oblast) were classified as having a conflicting configuration and were not included in a particular group of regions. The second combination of variables included all components of the index (without most indices) and additional variables. As a result, the second combination, where each case was classified as unique, determined the component redundancy analysis. The third combination of variables with four additional independent variables was as follows: 1) the cumulative index of party system institutionalization; 2) the index of 'authoritarian manipulation'; 3) replacement of the governor before the election; and 4) an index of competitiveness such as Herfindahl-Hirschman index.

The truth table – based on this combination of variables (see Table 2) – show seven types of grouping the regions. Configurations were reduced to five types in the logical operation of conditions. The data was divided into three sets of conditions: one set for positive configuration (i.e. the incumbent result was more than 70%) and two sets of conditions for a negative configuration (i.e. the incumbent result was less than 70%).

Table 2. The truth table

II	HHI	IR	IAM	Y	Regions
1	1	0	1	0	Moscow City, Ryazan Oblast, Bryansk Oblast
0	0	0	1	0	Khakasia
1	0	0	0	0	Khabarovsk Krai
1	0	1	0	1	Zabaykalsky Krai, Magadan Oblast
1	1	1	1	1	Vladimir Oblast
1	0	0	1	1	Novgorod Oblast, Amur Oblast
1	1	0	0	1	Belgorod Oblast, Chukotka Autonomous Okrug

Software: Tosmana

The calculations showed three types of conditions that led to incumbent electoral success.

1) Belgorod Oblast and Chukotka demonstrated both high-level institutionalization and party system consolidation. They showed deviant results in comparison with other regions as they both had high electoral support of the incumbent and high turnout. The level of party system consolidation in these regions rose as a result of their relative autonomy from the federal government autocracy (Turovsky 2009). To ensure the victory of the incumbent, the regional authorities avoided noticeable falsifications on the elections day, though electoral authoritarian arrangements were made before the voting.

Chukotka Autonomous Okrug is in the Far North region under the influence of the famous Russian tycoon, Roman Abramovich, who headed the region from 2001 to 2008. The population of the region is no more than 50,000 people. The majority of the region's population (30% of the total population) is concentrated in the administrative center of Anadyr. This political and geographical specificity determines high elites' mobilization potential. By 2011,

there were only two factions in the regional parliament: United Russia and LDPR. Regional branches of KPRF and Just Russia did not participate in the political struggle. This contributed to a rather low adaptability of the local party system ($AP=0,571$). Obviously, the emergence of new political actors in regional politics failed to influence the region's party system electoral volatility.

In Belgorod Oblast, Governor Yevgeny Savchenko has headed the region since the 1990s. According to the Ministry of Regional Development, he is one of the most popular and effective regional managers. Being a long-lived politician, Savchenko managed to consolidate the regional elite, both within the United Russia and in business. Regional United Russia strengthened in 2001 when Yevgeny Savchenko headed the district list of the party. At the same time, his friends headed the most successful businesses in the region. Thus, Savchenko left no chance for the opposition party to enter the campaign.

2) A high level of party system institutionalization and replacement of the governor before the elections were found in Zabaykalsky Krai, Vladimir Oblast, Magadan Oblast, and Moscow Oblast. In these cases, the incumbent was changed by the federal center a few months before the election. Given the dominance of informal institutions in the system of relations between the center and the regions (Il'chenko 2009; Lapina 2006), replacing the incumbent demonstrated the federal authorities' high attention to promoting incumbents with the process of intra-coordination, resource support and information support.

However, these regions show highly institutionalized party systems. The balance of power between parties is stable (see Pedersen index in Table 3) and intra-group differences do not affect it much. In Zabaykalsky Krai and Vladimir Oblast, the party systems are poorly adapted ($AP = 0,364$ and $0,464$, correspondingly), and in Zabaykalsky Krai and Magadan Oblast they are poorly consolidated ($HHI = 0,238$ and $0,307$, correspondingly).

In these regions, the federal center had to resort to additional safety measures that increased the probability of the incumbents' re-election. In Zabaykalsky Krai, the most likely winner (the acting governor) was supported by one party formally and by another informally. This showed the newly established technology of electoral mobilization. Konstantin Ilkovsky, the deputy of the lower house of the Russian Parliament from Just Russia, was appointed to the office of acting governor. He replaced Ravil Geniatullin, who had been in this post for 17 years. Ilkovsky lacked the support of rooted elites in the region. The previous governor had high-level loyalty of the elites and expected to be re-appointed for another term and even tried to participate in the elections campaign. Another high potential candidate, ex-Deputy-Governor Alexey Koshelev, tried to participate in the elections with the support of the Civic Platform party, but

failed to pass the municipal filter. Finally, the most influential factor that determined Ilkovsky runaway victory was the high-level of regional party system institutionalized.

In Vladimir Oblast, the replacement of the communist, Nikolai Vinogradov, by United Russia's *varyag*⁸ Svetlana Orlova, has become a way of achieving the intra-elite agreement. However, even within the campaign there was an intrigue about the participation of a regional businessman, Alexander Filippov (three spoilers struggled against him). Given that Filippov enjoyed high public recognition and financial resources and low-level personal disapproval rating, he had a good chance to represent the regional counter-elite and compete with Orlova. However, he failed to pass the municipal filter. On the contrary, Just Russia did not nominate Anton Belyakov, a middle-level recognizable candidate. Earlier he was proposed to become a member of the Federation Council (appointed by Svetlana Orlova after the elections as a result of inter-elite agreements).

In Magadan Oblast, Vladimir Pecheniy replaced Governor Nikolai Dudov in his post. Pecheniy was mayor of Magadan from 2004, so the succession of political elites was kept intact. Taking the intra-elite and human resources balance in the region (more than 60% of the population resides in the administrative center) and highly institutionalized party system, Vladimir Pecheniy's result was expectedly higher than a median one.

In Moscow Oblast, head of the United Russia faction in the State Duma, Andrei Vorobyov was appointed head of the region instead of Sergei Shoigu, who in turn was appointed minister of defense. Andrei Vorobyov succeeded in establishing the image of an active policy-maker (as he launched the regional development program 'Our Moscow Oblast') and successor of Sergei Shoigu's strategy. The balance of power among the elite groups in the region is extremely unstable. First, the regional political area is highly fragmented with local dominating groups of elites in major towns. Therefore, in several districts the authorities have remained in their posts for 20 years. Before the elections, Andrei Vorobyov avoided open conflicts with the municipal heavyweights and used dismissals and appointments only in extreme cases. Boris Gromov's group and his all-Russian public organization of veterans, 'The Battle Fellowship', (*Boevoye Bratstvo*) has a lot of influence on the regional policy. Third, criminal groups have established high control over some areas.

Gennady Gudkov (Yabloko's party candidate) played the role of non-systemic opposition candidate, unwilling to bargain with the candidate from the ruling party. Due to the financial and organizational difficulties, he failed to launch a full-scale electoral campaign, which led him, unsurprisingly, to the second place in the race. Other parliamentary parties, on

⁸ A politician who was appointed to a region, which he has no roots in.

the contrary, had organizational resources but lacked popular candidates. Thus, the election campaign in Moscow Oblast was rather passive and uncompetitive.

3) The campaigns of Novgorod and Amur Oblast demonstrated high institutionalization, low consolidation, and intensive use of informal practices. These cases showed the high significance of manipulative practices and institutionalization play in an incumbent's success.

In Novgorod Oblast, manipulative practices were widely used to insure Sergey Mitin's victory. The elections were accompanied by scandals and a highly visible replacement of opposition candidates with authoritarian administrative measures. Only the acting governor, Mitin, "Patriots of Russia" candidate Viktor Zakharov, and LDPR candidate, Viktor Mikhailov, were finally registered. High potential candidates, such as Olga Efimova from KPRF and Alexey Afanasyev from Just Russia, failed to pass the municipal filter.

In Amur Oblast, basic manipulative mechanisms were used long before the participants' nomination to ensure the victory of the incumbent, Oleg Kozhemyako, . They contributed to the overall passiveness and low-competitiveness of the election campaign. Two opposition party candidates from RPR-PARNAS and "Right Cause" were not registered, while Dmitry Zharovsky, a Just Russia representative, performed the role of the spoiler.

To conclude, there were also the configurations of the conditions that contributed to the incumbent receiving electoral support of at least 70% of the votes and risked not to be re-elected (i.e. negative configuration revealed by the results of the QCA analysis). These configurations are the following:

1) *High level of consolidation and widely used informal practices* (Moscow City, Bryansk and Ryazan Oblasts)

This group of regions is characterized by the combination of a sufficiently consolidated party system and fragmented elite. The presence of the latter necessitates the use of certain techniques, like 'menu of manipulation', in order to ensure the incumbent's victory and to avoid a second round of voting.

At the very start of the middle-competitive Moscow mayor elections, the intra-elite agreement between the acting mayor and the Communist Party candidate, Ivan Melnikov, became obvious as the latter demonstrated low activity and passive campaigning. Alexei Navalny, a popular opposition blogger, was the main opponent of the incumbent, Sergei Sobyenin. Navalny gained popularity for exposing high-profile corrupt officials in the government and affiliated institutions. He published these public corruption scandals on his blog. Nikolai Levichev, a candidate from Just Russia, and Mikhail Degtyarev, an LDPR candidate, played the role of spoilers to campaign jointly against Navalny.

Bryansk and Ryazan Oblasts showed the technology of competitors' removal within low consolidated elite background. In both cases, the incumbents were re-elected with a low level of citizens' confidence. In particular, the acting governor in Bryansk Oblast, Nikolay Denin, faced the opposition elite groups united around Vadim Potomsky, his rival from KPRF, and Vyacheslav Rudnikov, another rival from Just Russia. Rudnikov failed to pass registration, but Potomsky participated in the campaign. It is noteworthy that the latter even achieved Denin's legal withdrawal (later he was reinstated by the Supreme Court).

In Ryazan Oblast, the main intrigue concerned Igor Morozov, a "Patriots of Russia" candidate and a People's Front for Russia (ONF) member. His possible participation in the election would have been as the counter-elite candidate. He could have become the single opposition candidate; however, restrictions from the federal government did not permit him to enter the campaign. As a result of inter-elite agreements, Morozov announced his support for the acting incumbent, Kovalev. After this, KPRF's State Duma deputy, Vladimir Fedotkin, had the best chances to fight the incumbent, but he refused to campaign actively. The other candidates participated as 'technical' candidates without any intention to fight seriously for the governor's chair.

2) *Low party system consolidation* (Khakasia and Khabarovsk Krai)

In these regions, low-level party system consolidation was the main condition that influenced incumbents' results lower than in other regions. The intra-elite relationship in these regions showed the main influential conflict lines: between Governor Viktor Zimin and regional capital's mayor, Nikolay Bulakin, in Khakasia; and between Governor Vyacheslav Shport and ex-governor and presidential representative in the Far East federal district, Viktor Ishayev, in Khabarovsk Krai. Thus, even moderate party system institutionalization together with manipulative practices failed to establish the minimum needed conditions to ensure the incumbent's victory.

Conclusion

The conditions needed for successful party system institutionalization in non-democratic countries are a highly disputable issue in comparative studies. Comparing the character of party system institutionalization in Western democracies and authoritarian regimes, we have come to the conclusion that the initial conditions of their institutionalization were largely different. Thus, the analytical framework of 'electoral authoritarianism' that underlies the logic of this study has greater explanatory potential when researching authoritarian regimes. It gives high priority to informal factors and 'nested games' in competition and explains the mechanics of incumbent electoral success reproduction.

Two key approaches shape the logic of this paper. First, the cumulative index of party system institutionalization was implemented as a measurement of the level of volatility and reproduction of electoral support. Second, using Russia as a case study, the index of the authoritarian manipulations measured the impact of political processes defining the competitiveness level of the pre-electoral and electoral campaign's period. Further, qualitative comparative analyses and the interpretation of the results shed light on the most successful incumbent strategies to be re-elected. Thus, having analyzed the electoral campaigns and party systems of thirteen Russian regions in 2012-2013, we defined and grouped the major factors, which contributed to the incumbent re-election.

First, the incumbents won in the regions with high-level party system institutionalization and consolidation. Similarly, the regional political regimes represent consolidated autocracies with a strong regional leader and no serious competition. Therefore, they do not have recourse to authoritarian practices.

Second, the federal center's protégés win in the regions with high-level party system institutionalization if before the election a new replaces the previous incumbent. In such regions, the ruling party and its candidate have stable support. Specifically, the federal center appoints a new acting governor shortly before the elections to demonstrate the Kremlin's choice to the regional elites.

Third, in the regions with high-level party system institutionalization and low-level party system consolidation, authoritarian practices tended to be implemented more frequently to manage competition and contribute to the incumbent's victory. In these types of regions, United Russia (and its candidate) received stable low electoral support, which theoretically allows other parties (and their candidates) to get high electoral scores. However, real campaigning from opposition candidates occurs quite rarely due to the wide use of informal practices restricting the competition from the part of the regional government. The most used authoritarian practices were the following: refusing to register candidates, establishing an impossibly high threshold to be cleared without support of regional authorities, and manipulating with signatures of municipal deputies.

On the other hand, our study also revealed a combination of competition factors, which interfered with the incumbents' clear victory. First, in regions with high-level party system consolidation, the incumbent has a low chance of winning but he compensates with frequent use of manipulations. Second, incumbents tend to overuse manipulations in regions with low-level party system institutionalization and high electoral volatility together with high level of competition. In both cases, the poor starting conditions for the incumbent campaigns can be compensated only with the active use of authoritarian practices. It is noteworthy that in the first

type of regions, the incumbent has a minimal chance for re-election (or avoiding the second round, as it would mean the same as electoral failure), while in the second type of regions, even the overuse of authoritarian practices does not guarantee the incumbent re-election.

Finally, the pre-conditions of competitiveness in the region – the stable support of the main political actors and the level of competitiveness – could be ‘adjusted’ so that the incumbent easily wins, but with implementing electoral authoritarian practices. However, the use of these practices has its limits, as the strategic lowering of the competition still needs to maintain the facade of democratic elections. Therefore, in the regions where the pre-conditions were extremely unfavorable, even the overuse of authoritarian practices could not guarantee the incumbents victory.

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Table 3. Index of party system institutionalization

	AP	1-P	1-IVC	PSNS	II	Incumbent
Moscow City	0,857	0,821	0,468	0,910	0,806	0,51
Khakasia	0,154	0,822	0,692	0,900	0,616	0,63
Khabarovsk Krai	0,571	0,773	0,847	0,900	0,733	0,64
Ryazan Oblast	0,857	0,601	0,645	0,870	0,709	0,64
Bryansk Oblast	0,667	0,684	0,692	0,730	0,684	0,65
Zabaykalsky Krai	0,364	0,819	0,676	0,860	0,672	0,72
Magadan Oblast	0,857	0,800	0,469	0,870	0,791	0,73
Vladimir Oblast	0,434	0,777	0,844	0,880	0,691	0,75
Novgorod Oblast	0,571	0,610	0,913	0,900	0,658	0,76
Amur Oblast	0,857	0,546	0,692	0,890	0,688	0,77
Belgorod Oblast	0,857	0,842	0,576	0,880	0,824	0,78
Moscow Oblast	0,714	0,734	0,698	0,920	0,743	0,79
Chukotka	0,571	0,833	0,941	0,920	0,774	0,80

Source: Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation, calculated by the authors.

Table 4. Index of ‘authoritarian manipulations’

	NP	M	MF	S	AMI	Incumbent
Moscow City	1	0	1	1	0,750	0,51
Khakasia	0	0	1	1	0,500	0,63
Khabarovsk Krai	0	0	1	0	0,300	0,64
Ryazan Oblast	1	1	0	1	0,700	0,64
Bryansk Oblast	0	1	1	0	0,550	0,65
Zabaykalsky Krai	0	0	1	1	0,300	0,72
Magadan Oblast	0	0	0	0	0,000	0,73
Vladimir Oblast	1	1	1	1	1,000	0,75
Novgorod Oblast	1	0	1	0	0,550	0,76
Amur Oblast	1	0	0	1	0,450	0,77
Belgorod Oblast	1	0	0	0	0,250	0,78
Moscow Oblast	1	0	1	0	0,550	0,79
Chukotka	0	0	1	0	0,300	0,80

Source: Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation, calculated by the authors.

Table 5. Extra indexes

	Change of incumbent before elections (IR)	HHI
Moscow City	0	0,466
Khakasia	0	0,271
Khabarovsk Krai	0	0,308
Ryazan Oblast	0	0,331
Bryansk Oblast	0	0,362
Zabaykalsky Krai	1	0,238
Magadan Oblast	1	0,307
Vladimir Oblast	1	0,356
Novgorod Oblast	0	0,271
Amur Oblast	0	0,289
Belgorod Oblast	0	0,478
Moscow Oblast	1	0,240
Chukotka	0	0,529

Source: Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation, calculated by the authors.

Table 6. Dichotomization of variables

	AP (0,6) ⁹	1-P (0,8)	1-IVC (0,7)	PSNS (0,9)	II (0,65)	HHI (0,31)	MF	M	NP	S	ZG	AMI (0,4)	Y (0,7)
Moscow City	1 (0,857)	1 (0,821)	0 (0,468)	1 (0,91)	1 (0,806)	1 (0,466)	1	0	1	1	0	1 (0,75)	0 (0,51)
Khakasia	0 (0,154)	1 (0,822)	0 (0,692)	0 (0,9)	0 (0,616)	0 (0,271)	1	0	0	1	0	1 (0,5)	0 (0,63)
Khabarovsk Krai	0 (0,571)	0 (0,773)	1 (0,847)	0 (0,9)	1 (0,733)	0 (0,308)	1	0	0	0	0	0 (0,3)	0 (0,64)
Ryazan Oblast	1 (0,857)	0 (0,601)	0 (0,645)	0 (0,87)	1 (0,709)	1 (0,331)	0	1	1	1	0	1 (0,7)	0 (0,64)
Bryansk Oblast	1 (0,667)	0 (0,684)	0 (0,692)	0 (0,73)	1 (0,684)	1 (0,362)	1	1	0	0	0	1 (0,55)	0 (0,65)
Zabaykalsky Krai	0 (0,364)	1 (0,819)	0 (0,676)	0 (0,86)	1 (0,672)	0 (0,238)	1	0	0	0	1	0 (0,3)	1 (0,72)
Magadan Oblast	1 (0,857)	0 (0,8)	0 (0,469)	0 (0,87)	1 (0,791)	0 (0,307)	0	0	0	0	1	0 (0)	1 (0,73)
Vladimir Oblast	0 (0,434)	0 (0,777)	1 (0,844)	0 (0,88)	1 (0,691)	1 (0,356)	1	1	1	1	1	1 (1)	1 (0,75)
Novgorod Oblast	0 (0,571)	0 (0,61)	1 (0,913)	0 (0,9)	1 (0,658)	0 (0,271)	1	0	1	0	0	1 (0,55)	1 (0,76)
Amur Oblast	1 (0,857)	0 (0,546)	0 (0,692)	0 (0,89)	1 (0,688)	0 (0,289)	0	0	1	1	0	1 (0,45)	1 (0,77)
Belgorod Oblast	1 (0,857)	1 (0,842)	0 (0,576)	0 (0,88)	1 (0,824)	1 (0,478)	0	0	1	0	0	0 (0,25)	1 (0,78)
Moscow Oblast	1 (0,714)	0 (0,734)	0 (0,698)	1 (0,92)	1 (0,743)	0 (0,24)	1	0	1	0	1	1 (0,55)	1 (0,79)
Chukotka	0 (0,571)	1 (0,833)	1 (0,941)	1 (0,92)	1 (0,774)	1 (0,529)	1	0	0	0	0	0 (0,3)	1 (0,8)

Source: Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation, calculated by the authors.

⁹ Thresholds established for several reasons: the median and the optimal threshold value by Tosmana program.

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