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HOW MULTILEVEL ELITE LOYALTY STRENGTHENS ELECTORAL AUTHORITARIANISM: EVIDENCE FROM GUBERNATORIAL ELECTIONS IN RUSSIA

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Maintain autocratic regimes is widely acknowledged to require elite loyalty. However, does this imply that various elite groups equally contribute to the daily performance of an autocratic regime and to winning elections? Based on empirical evidence of recent gubernatorial elections in Russia we explore the effect of multilevel elite disloyalty on gubernatorial electoral results and voter turnout. Having examined the impact of major regional elites, we find that only conflicts between governors and the mayors of regional capitals have significant and robust negative effect on both electoral turnout and the voting for governor. Encouraging the loyalty of these mayors secures smoother political machinery in the most electorally significant areas of the region and thus can determine the outcome of an electoral campaign. This finding provides another confirmation of the paramount role of covert rather than open inter-elite competition for electoral autocracies maintenance.

Key words: electoral autocracy, Russian politics, Russian regions, regional politics, gubernatorial elections, elites

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1. Introduction

Political scientists have widely observed that the loyalty of the elite strengthens autocracies (see, for example, Blaydes, 2008, 2011; Gandhi & Przeworski, 2006; Han, 2007; Wright, 2008). The overall logic behind the importance of nourishing elite loyalty is based on the set of unspoken rules, following which is beneficial to both the autocrats and the elites. Loyal elites support autocratic regimes on a daily basis while gaining benefits from the status quo system of allocating resources and preferences (Lust-Okar, 2006). The status quo then is secured by guaranteeing privileges for core supporters in exchange for their continued service (Boix & Svolik, 2007; Magaloni, 2008; Wintrobe, 2000). However, when supporters feel that it will be more advantageous betraying or overthrowing the dictator, they might break the unspoken agreement and become disloyal (Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2003; Gehlbach & Keefer, 2010). Albeit even if elite disloyalty does not always result in a coup, it can affect regime stability and the particular ruler's sustainability (Gandhi & Przeworski, 2006; Geddes, 2004).

Many scholars have convincingly demonstrated that autocratic elections are not the type of elections to define the worthiest candidate (Lust, 2009). Competition is kept under strict control, while the true goal of the race—to create a façade of legitimate elections (Schedler, 2006)—is achieved by demonstrating through campaigning and the voting outcome how the autocrat is superior to any rivals (Magaloni, 2006; Simpser, 2005, 2014). Other research say that elections are not simply a non-competitive procedure to name the pre-decided winner, but rather an inter-elite exercise of "competitive clientelism", when candidates struggle for promotion in patron-clients relations (Gandhi and Lust-Okar, 2009; Lust-Okar, 2006). At the same time, autocrats are no less interested in feeding their clientele. Maintaining clients loyalty is especially crucial during the election cycle, when the autocrat banks on well-cultivated patron-client chains and client resources, which support him during the entire course of the campaign and secure the most favourable outcome. Although autocrats generally strive to co-opt elites (Gandhi, 2008; Smith, 2005) and praise them for good campaign results (Blaydes, 2011; Boix & Svolik, 2008), sometimes elites refuse to obey. For instance, if elites possess enough resources to maintain independence from the autocrat or when the monitoring of their loyalty is difficult, this might buy them more autonomy and thus scope for disobedience (Ross, 1973). Conflict with the autocrat, as a radical form of disobedience, might even impede campaigning and bring about poor mobilization results.

This article seeks to contribute to the broader debate on the role of elite loyalty in the maintenance of autocracies and provide new evidence on the impact of different elites on the autocratic election outcomes. The vast majority of works investigate the mechanism of strengthening or loosening autocrats under elite disobedience, but few of these studies explore different elite groups separately, distinguishing their logic of serving and differentiating their interests one from another. This approach we consider highly significant since treating elites solely as pro-and anti-autocrat overlooks the wide variety of elites in contemporary autocracies and distorts our understanding of how they influence the autocrat's daily performance and election results. Even fewer studies explore elites on multiple levels, which could shed more light on how differently elites express their disloyalty at various levels of government and how this affects the autocrat.

Russian regional autocracies provide a unique opportunity to investigate the impact of multilevel elite loyalty to a governor when he becomes vulnerable during an election cycle. First, Russian regions fit well for comparison, as they are subnational autocracies grown within a common institutional framework established by the federal government. In particular, regional autocracies act under the same set of informal rules imposed by the

federal leadership and thus follow similar strategies for survival (Lankina, 2009). Second, Russian regions have the same set of the elites, who, however vary in their strength and impact on decision-making from region to region. Third, governors are permanently involved in different kinds of relationships with different members of the elite, which shapes the balance of power in the regions. If any, a breach in relations between the governor and elites acquires greater effect during the election period, when governors are compelled to prove their right to governorship via popular vote. Given that the elites one way or another participate in the electoral campaign, their loyalty to the governor could be crucial for election result.

To address this question, we collected data on 1402 municipalities in 43 Russian regions holding direct gubernatorial elections for the first time since their reintroduction in 2012, after a seven-year hiatus. We show that overall multilevel elite loyalty matters for securing both a clear victory for the governor and a high turnout. More particularly, we found that both municipal and regional elite loyalty contribute to the efficiency of the gubernatorial political machine, though the only statistically significant impact on the elections outcome was from the disloyalty of the regional capital's mayor, while disloyalty of other elites proved to have no statistically significant effect. This finding confirms that the biggest threat for the governor comes not from strongest official opponents, which is more intuitive since they participated in the elections and thereby could struggle the governor directly, but from the mayors of regional capitals, who in the case of disobedience have a crucial negative impact on the governors' electoral result and voter turnout.

The explanation comes from the nature of how mobilisation is generally conducted: since these mayors head the most electorally important areas in the regions (which concentrate up to the half of all voters registered for elections), losing that support means a significant drop in mobilization results, which converts into an up to 20 percentage point decrease in support for the governor and a 15 percentage point fall in turnout. The political consequence of this drop might be crucial for the regional autocrat: at least it might lead to a second round or defeat as a maximum. Thus, in case a governor should make a decision, which elite loyalty to secure in the first place – securing the loyalty of the regional capital's mayor will produce the greatest electoral benefit.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 contains a brief overview of the role of elites in electoral autocracies and more particularly in establishing an effective political machine for voter mobilisation, and shows how these theoretical arguments find evidence in the Russian regions. Section 3 describes the evolution in relations between the governor and regional elites and discusses the role of elites in the gubernatorial political machine. Section 4 explains the study design and the coding strategy, and provides data description and measurement results, which define the impact of elite disloyalty on the governors' elections outcome. In Section 5, we present the results, which we discuss in Section 6.

2. Gubernatorial Elections, Elites and the Regional Political Machines

Multiple research show that elections contribute to the maintenance of autocracies (Gandhi & Przeworski, 2007). Namely elections supply the autocrat with information about the share of his and the opposition's supporters, signal the autocrat's invincibility when he beats the opposition by large margins (Magaloni, 2006), legitimise his rule (Schedler, 2002), helping to co-opt various social groups (Gandhi, 2008). Elections contribute to the autocrat's clientele

(Lust, 2009) and serve as an instrument of power sharing (Svolik, 2012: 3) whereby the autocrat needs to share power and resources with his supporters out of fear of disloyalty and betrayal (Boix & Svolik, 2010; Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2003; Magaloni, 2008, Svolik, 2010). By reinforcing power-sharing and proving its credibility the autocrat strengthens his support by repeatedly co-opting powerful elites (Blaydes, 2011), while the elites use elections as an instrument to gain access to resources and positions in return for mobilising voters.

Subsidizing the target groups on a daily basis generates higher support for the regime (Magaloni, 2006), but does not automatically convert into votes for the autocrat. There needs to be a smoothly working mechanism to lead loyal voters to the polls. To ensure that mobilization will be activated on demand, electoral autocracies resort to "machine politics" (Stokes, 2005), which ensures that voting mobilization will not be a short-lived interaction but will produce benefits for participants in the future. The need to feed the system continually, even when it is not active, establishes on-going interaction between operatives and their constituents, which contributes to integration of the political machines into broad social networks (Stokes, 2005). Gradually the system of constant patronage wins the central role in redistributing goods to "machine workers" (Stokes, 2005) and motivates them to deliver their vote with mechanical regularity (Stone, 1996), while the elite role is to fuel political machines with management and mediation (Schmidt, 1980).

Contemporary political machines in Russia are responsible for delivering high voter turnout for the ruling party and the president using diversified authoritarian techniques (Frye et al., 2014; Sharafutdinova, 2013). Hale (2003) states that the logic of Russian machine politics was inherited from the Soviet period and is produced by path-dependence in the concentration of resources and power. Sharafutdinova (2014) shows on the evidence from Tatarstan that patronage involves elites at various levels, including businessmen, state officials, and leaders of local communities, to mobilize electoral support for the machine (Gosnell, 1968) and defines the balance of power between the elites involved in the political machine work. In this respect, inter-elite configurations have always played the central role in the political machinery in the Russian regions as do the personal characteristics of the governors who within new economic and political realities either better handled political machines or worse (Myagkov & Ordeshook, 2001). In the 1990s regional governors accumulated power and resources to buy more independence from the federal government and dominate other elites in the region (Hale, 2003). Hale (2006: 246) states that the formula for the governors' electoral success was based on effective manoeuvring between the three centres of power: the branch ministries directed from Moscow, the regional party bosses ("prefects"), and business. However, those regional heads who could build inter-elite coalitions and find grounds for cooperation with a diverse range of regional elites were more likely to achieve success in heading political machines (Hale, 2006: 248).

Until recently Russian regional autocracies did not elect regional heads by public vote. Russia switched from direct gubernatorial elections to the presidential appointments of governors in 2005 and returned to direct elections in 2012. Turning back to electing governors by public vote was the Kremlin initiative aimed to make governors more accountable to the citizenry, who voiced their demand for putting Russian authorities under greater public control during a series of protests in late 2011 (Elder, 2011). Acting governors actually did not opt to switch to being directly elected as the existing system of appointments implied that the length of the governors' tenure depended mainly on the Kremlin's impression of whether the governor is effective or not—while the major criteria of gubernatorial effectiveness was high electoral results of United Russia (UR), the party of power, in both

federal and regional parliamentary elections (Reuter, 2010). The first five regions chosen for trial gubernatorial campaigns were ones with consolidated political regimes, which were expected to deliver the most predictable voting outcome (Polunin, 2012). To insure landslides, the incumbents were equipped with a diversified menu of manipulations (Schedler, 2002) including the widespread tactic of limiting competition, promising posts and rewards, intimidation and blackmail (Matveeva, 2012). Candidate registration procedures presumed a built-in institutional mechanism for limiting competition through the municipal filter ("Munitsipal'nyi fil'tr", 2015), which stated that to register for elections candidates were required to collect a particular number of signatures from municipal heads and deputies. As the majority of heads and deputies in all municipalities were UR members, only the governor was able to pass through the filter by himself, compelling others to negotiate with him for permission to participate in the elections. Predictably, true opposition candidates refused to make concessions with the governor, so the strongest of them failed to pass the municipal filter and dropped out of race (Temerina, 2014).

The main goal of the gubernatorial elections was to demonstrate that governors won in a legitimate vote (Vinokurova, 2013). Given that fraud and vote buying are more risky and costly than administrative grass-root mobilization (Blaydes, 2011; Magaloni, 2006)—as they attract more public attention and can trigger mass protest and opposition mobilization against the rigged elections (Bunce and Wolchik, 2009; Tucker, 2007; Van de Walle, 2002, 2007)— wins for regional incumbents by large margins were mainly established using more inconspicuous means: total control over the electoral procedure through authoritarian practices (e.g. the municipal filter) (Temerina, 2014) coupled with effective grassroots mobilisation through extensive clientele chains.

Though many scholars have confidently shown that elite disloyalty undermines gubernatorial political machines, we still have little knowledge about the extent of this damage. The reason is, that besides the reputational damage, which is more approximately indicated, the true damage arising from conflict with elites is difficult to identify until elections. Following Hale's assumption about the role of elites in the political machine and the related literature, we hypothesise that the strongest political machines are produced in the regions where governors confidently lead or cooperate with the elites, while in cases when the governor conflicts with elites or encounters other manifestations of disloyalty, he will fail to establish effective mobilisation and will finish with a lower voter turnout and poorer electoral results. However, conflicts between governor and various elites should intuitively have dissimilar impact on the voting outcomes.

3. How Governors Conflict with Regional Elites

Relations between the governor and regional elites dramatically evolve over time (see for example Gel'man & Ryzhenkov, 2011; Lankina, 2009; Moses, 2002; Ross, 2011). With regime transformation in Russia, from more competitive to more authoritarian, the weight in decision-making in the regions has considerably shifted towards the governors. Though without the power of the governor to influence regional politics, elites still widely struggle for domains according to their power and resources.

UR Elite
Over the last decade, UR has confidently extended its influence over regional politics. Established in late 2001 the party later encompassed every region marginalizing the

opposition and systematically excluding them from the top positions in regional politics (Gel'man, 2006a, 2006b; Ross, 2007; Slider, 2010). From the outset the party's strategy was to establish priority access to resources and posts for the party members, which logically motivated the strongest power-seeking elites to affiliate with the party as soon as possible (Golosov, 2004; Hale, 2006; Reuter, 2010). Those who joined the party faster saw better career development than those who joined later (Lankina, 2009; Reuter & Turovsky, 2014). Gradually UR co-opted almost all regional heads and put party executives into top positions at the local level (Reuter & Remington, 2009; Ross, 2007). Having co-opted the majority of regional elites, it became the main arena for the elites in covert struggles (Konitzer & Wegren, 2006; Slider, 2010). However, the patronage system built was meagre in the regions compared to the national level (Remington, 2008), so that even with the increasing influence of UR, governors long remained the most influential politicians leaving the party interests by the wayside (Slider, 2010).

In contrast to the late 1990s when governors could freely choose the party affiliation or stay independent (Shvetsova, 2003), today the vast majority of regional heads go to elections as UR candidates. When the interests between the governor and the party leaders are misbalanced, they get drawn into either covert or open confrontations and both suffer losses. On practice, public conflicts frequently spoiled the party image during campaigning and led to significantly poorer election results of UR (Cox, 1997; Shvetsova, 2003; Vinokurova, 2015; "Partija vlasti: konflikt jelit", 2015). A vivid illustration might be taken from the 2011 inter-UR conflict in Volgograd Oblast, which led to significantly lower party results in the regional assembly elections (Mel'hisedekov, 2012; "Za voljuntarizm Merkushkina", 2015). In Samara Oblast, the fact that Governor Merkushkin promoted his close supporters to high positions in the party bypassing the party primary results brought about public resentment of the party functionaries who undermined his leadership in the region (Nagornyh et al., 2015). These episodes of creeping confrontations occasionally come to the surface and demonstrate that the governor loses the support of the leadership of the party, though such confrontations do not usually convert directly into the governor's dismissal.

During the election period, the party seeks to resolve the commitment problem via the activation of clientelistic exchange and the mobilization of core party constituencies. Since voters are geographically immobile and are decentralized, the incumbent relies on the local party organizations to conduct grassroots mobilization. As Stokes (2005: 317) points out, the party political machine is bottom-heavy and relies on an army of grassroots workers. The grassroots party cells are overall better informed about the local individual preferences than federal cells and are better able to establish constant communication with voters, which helps more accurately predict their reactions to vote-buying and other forms of stimulations to vote (Cox & McCubbins, 1986). On the other hand, party chains in poorly institutionalized party systems might lack developed grassroot party organizations, so that they are not able to provide either reliable information on local supporters, or conduct effective mobilization (Hale, 2006). In either event, the higher-level organization of grassroots mobilization is conducted by the top party officials who design the campaign, give orders to lower levels, and provide funding for mobilization. Conflicts at the top party level in the region might result in the failure to give coordinated orders and thus spoil mobilization.

Ex-rulers or Counter-elite
The conflict potential between the ruling and ex-ruling elite is intuitively clear. The controversies between the two generally arise when the new governor's team replaces the ex-

governor's supporters and restricts their priority access to the resources they used to possess. This might be especially sensitive for regions where the ex-governor had long been in power and long secured privileged access to resources and power for particular elites groups (Institut sotsial'no-ekonomicheskikh i politicheskikh issledovanii, 2014). For instance, in Zabaykalsky Krai, after the resignation of governor Geniatulin, who had headed the region for about 15 years[3], the newly appointed governor Ilkovskiy immediately encountered obstruction from Geniatulin's elite supporters ("Zabajkal'skij kraj", 2012).

With the introduction of direct gubernatorial elections conflicts between the ex-and acting ruling elites started to pose more danger for governors. The specific risk in conflicting with the ex-ruling elite is that they are potentially capable effectively opposing the new governor, since they have a dramatic resource advantage from the time in office (Greene, 2007: 5) and remain one of the most influential elite groups in the region, even when formally out of power. It has been empirically shown, that having public controversies with the governor, the counter-elite nominated and promoted the strongest governor's opponents in the recent gubernatorial campaigns (see for example Turovsky & Karandashova, 2014).

Theoretically, autocrats generally benefit more when they compete in elections with weaker opponents and win convincingly (Magaloni, 2006). On the other hand, opposition voters can support a strong governor's opponent and thereby redistribute votes from the puppet-competitors to a real one. To secure the most predictable campaign, governors made every effort to disqualify the counter-elite candidates early, so that in the majority of the regions the counter-elite candidates failed to reach the participation stage (Kynev et al., 2014, 2015). In the three years since the first direct elections, only six counter-elite candidates (out of sixteen nominated) participated in the elections. However, gubernatorial elections are designed to securely lead to the incumbents' victory (Galimova, 2015)[4], so that under the best scenario the counter-elite candidate could only spoil the incumbents' result rather than truly gain the upper hand in elections (Turovsky & Karandashova, 2014).

Business Elite
Russian business elites build relations with the political elites following the logic of business survival in autocracies. Generally, client and patronage chains (Hicken, 2011; Robinson & Verdier, 2002) establish a network of loyal business authorities, who exchange money, votes, or other support for patronage (Bryan & Baer, 2005: 10; Kettering, 1988). For this, business elites get prioritized admission to power and resources and then strive to limit access for others to maintain their advantage. Guriev and Rachinsky (2005) show that in Russia, large corporations strive to first establish a mutually beneficial relationship with the government and then limit access to the market for other participants. In this way the "corporative oligarchy" has become a dominant actor in regional politics, even pressuring federal-level authorities (Petrov, 2007).

Today as routine practice, business owners protect their domains within unsteady institutions by seeking to influence legislation (Turovsky, 2010; Yadav and Mukherjee, 2014). In particular, regional business elites aim to gain power by running for the regional assembly (Moses, 2002: 911) to receive priority access to regulatory policies and establish control over it. Outside the election cycle, having a strong coalition in the regional assembly, business elites

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[3] Before governing Zabaykalsky Krai he headed Chita region administration, which in 2008 merged with Agin-Buryat Autonomous Okrug to form Zabaykalsky Krai.
[4] The only exception found in Irkutsk Oblast in 2015, when CPRF candidate Levchenko outperformed Eroschenko, a UR candidate, in the second round.

might start to bargain with the governor for more advantageous positions, which induces a conflict. In contrast, at election time, even if severely conflicting with the governor regional tycoons rarely personally run for governor. More often, they get involved into pro- or anti-governor campaigning by financing the governor or his opponents and thereby influence the balance of power in the race (Orlov, 2014; Turovsky, 2002).

Municipal Elite

Intraregional political infighting between governors and mayors—the two major regional-level political actors (Golosov, 2014, 2016)—followed the restriction of the regional politics autonomy advanced by the federal government from the late 1990s to the early 2000s. Governor-mayor conflicts overall reflected the inconsistencies of institutional development in Russia (Evans & Ge'lman, 2004; Moses, 2002; Slider, 2004) and translated into the overlapping of the domains of power and resources, which provoked the two centres of power to struggle for these resources (Ryzhenkov & Vinnik, 1999; Turovsky, 2003). In the early 2000s, the Kremlin strived to put extensively autonomous provincial heads under control of the federal centre (Hale, 2003; Slider, 2004; Stoner-Weiss, 1997; Treisman, 1999) and co-opted mayors as the main ally in the regions to wage war against overly independent governors. Thereby the Kremlin invested in deepening the controversy, benefiting from alternately supporting either governors or mayors (Gel'man & Ryzhenkov, 2010; Gel'man et al., 2008). As Moses (2010) shows, governor-mayor confrontations often became political battles when mayors turned out the most visible political rivals for governors and even ventured to run for governor themselves.

As the power vertical strengthened, the Kremlin reversed its policies towards supporting governors while restricting the autonomy of mayors. The new federal law on local government (Federal'nyi zakon ot 6 oktiabria 2003 goda c 131-FZ) replaced direct elections with three models of empowering municipal heads, leaving it up to the regions to decide, which model to implement. The majority of regions gradually switched to models of indirect elections, which especially weakened strong city mayors in regions with potentially more conflict (Petrov, 2009; Slider, 2004; Turovsky, 2009). By removing direct mayoral elections in the interests of the power vertical (Ross, 2007), the Kremlin moved from introducing democratic features at the local level towards higher controllability and order (Lankina, 2003). The trend of bureaucratic rationalization (Gel'man, 2007; Gel'man & Lankina, 2008) gradually deprived municipalities of resources (Lankina, 2005) and therefore decreased their influence on the regional politics. However, conflicts between governors and mayors are still relevant for some regions and negatively affect governors' daily performance (Makarkin, 2007). An example of how open governor-mayor confrontations affect the governor's reputation is in Karelia, where pronounced public clashes between Governor Alexander Khudilainen and Petrozavodsk Mayor Galina Shirshina led to the Kremlin concern and its public questioning of the governor's ability to manage regional elites (Sokolov, 2014).

4. Research Design and Data
The main argument advanced in this paper is built on the assumption that elite disloyalty in various manifestations—open conflict or covert struggle—reduces the performance of the political machine and results in poor mobilization for the governor. However, we see that the elites in the Russian regions vary in their ability to influence and in their resource capacity, so we should expect that their disloyalty affects the voting outcome to various degrees.

To test our hypothesis, we collected electoral data for the dependent variables and coded qualitative data for the main explanatory variables. The limitation of this research strategy is that in coding conflicts and cases of disloyalty we relied mainly on qualitative data from open sources. To justify our coding, we refer to those who studied authoritarian elections and showed that an analysis of the formal institutions uncovers very little of how autocracies survive (see Blaydes, 2005; Koehler, 2008; Pioppi, 2007). Informal practices that include inter-elite conflicts are difficult to measure on a more sophisticated scale, so we substantially rely on indirect evidence of elite disloyalty to indicate the absence or presence of the categorical effect.

Since the vast majority of variables are dichotomous, we needed to establish a clear coding strategy to identify the presence and absence of the effects. To indicate *a conflict* between the governor and a particular elite we needed to find evidence of the conflict from at least three different media pieces or expert interviews. This makes sense for establishing reliably whether a governor's relations with elites is conflictual or otherwise. We indicate no conflict if no evidence of conflict is found. In the appendix we provide examples of how we indicated and coded conflicts with references to the media sources (see Table 6).

For the dataset of 1402 municipalities in 43 regions we used a hierarchical linear model (Steenbergen & Jones, 2002) to account for the variation on regional and municipal levels and control for possible regional-specific effects. A more common OLS regression is not applicable for hierarchical data as it ignores both inter-regional variation and some dynamic features that might exist in hierarchical datasets. Fan and Zhang (2008) provide detailed argumentation on the workability of hierarchical models for the analysis of cross-country growth. They show that some state-level growth characteristics are produced by the development of the lower-level units, which influences a particular country's growth. By the same logic, we have sufficient grounds to assume that the patterns of electoral support vary from region to region and are produced by the specifics of local politics. In addition, a multilevel analysis assesses the interaction within and between each level allowing the simultaneous investigation of factors, which are specific to regional and municipal levels.

Dependent variables

We estimate election outcomes with three specifications. The first one has turnout (*Turnout*) as the dependent variable. The results for incumbents are sufficiently affected by the size of the turnout, which distorts the real magnitude of governors' support. To account for this, we implemented two models for gubernatorial results: the one is governor's electoral result calculated from the total number of registered voters *(Governors Result (total))* and the other calculated from the turnout *(Governors Result (turnout))*. The variables are measured in percent and are taken on the municipal level from the Russian Central Election Commission website after the 43 gubernatorial elections held in 2012–2014.

Figure 1. Distribution of Turnout, Governors Result (total), Governors Result (turnout)
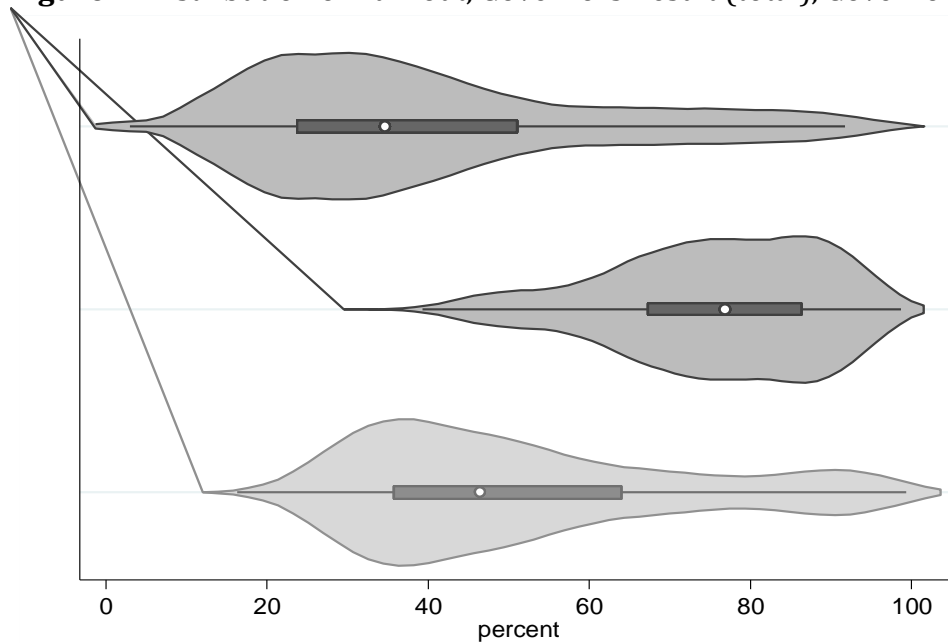
Explanatory Variables
Region-level elites
The most pronounced manifestation of insubordination to a governor is holding a public electoral campaign against him. The counter-elite, however, was the only type of regional-level elite who opted to participate in elections and weaken the governor through officially competing against him. Given that the registration procedure is thorny, nomination might produce a "signal-to-citizens" effect, while participation might directly lead to the electoral weakening of the governor. The counter-elite variable *Nomination* indicates that the counter-elite candidate was nominated but was not registered for participation and is coded 1, while *Participation* stands for participation in elections and is coded 2, and 0 otherwise.

We distinguished the "counter-elite candidate" by investigating biographies of all the nominated candidates[5]. As an indicator of the counter-elite candidate, we considered the candidate's previous work experience as governor, governor's staff member, minister, or chair of the regional assembly. We identify as counter-elite candidates as well those who had no previous experience in the regional leadership, though were supported by one or a few of the listed ex-ruling authorities[6]. Eventually, we succeeded to distinguish one counter-elite candidate for each region (See Table 1)[7]. This can be explained by the fact that nominating a candidate who is truly ready to compete against the governor is risky, therefore the counter-elite need to invest the maximum in the most advantageous candidate and to choose one consensus candidate to support.

Overall, the variable stands for measuring the extent of strength and resoluteness of the counter-elite for competing against the governor. The variable is on the regional level.

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[5] We use open sources of information and regional media in the main rather than the official information provided by the candidates at nomination.

[6] In some cases we point as "counter-elite" those candidates who were close advisers of ex-governors or had the relevant access to the top decision-makers in the region (See Table 1).

[7] However, we found the exception for Altai Republic, Kalmykia, Kirov, and Orel Oblasts. These regions had up to three counter-elite candidates nominated, however, one in each region finally participated in the elections.

Table 1. Counter-elite Candidates Nomination and Participation by Regions

Region	Counter-elite candidates	Nomination / Registration
Altai Republic	**Viktor Kaliuzhnyi** was nominated by the Great Fatherland party. He was Minister of fuel and energy of Russia in 1999-2000, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia in 2000-2003, and Ambassador of Russia in Latvia in 2004-2008.	Nomination
	Vladimir Petrov was nominated by the Civil force party. He governed Altai Republic in 1990-1997.	Registration
Bashkortostan	**Rail' Sarbaev** was nominated by the Civil Force party. He was Mayor of Sibay in 2000-2005, Minister of Property Relations of the Republic of Bashkortostan in 2005-2007, Ministry of Land and Property Relations of Bashkortostan in 2007-2008, Prime Minister of the Republic of Bashkortostan in 2008-2010.	Nomination
Kalmykia	**Evgenii Unkurov** was nominated by the People Against Corruption party. He served as Director of the Russian State Television and radio Broadcasting Company "Kalmykia" in 2003-2011 and adviser of the former head of Kalmykia Kirsan Ilumjinov.	Nomination
Udmurtia	**Andrei Markin*** was nominated by LDPR. He was a deputy of the State Duma and adviser of the former Prime Minister of the Republic of Udmurtia Yuri Pitkevich.	Registration
Yakutia	**Ernst Berezkin** was nominated by the Civic platform party. He was Deputy Minister of Finance of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) in 1998-2000, Deputy Chairman of the Government of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) in 2000-2002, Minister of Finance of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) in 2002-2005.	Registration
Zabaykalsky Krai	**Alexsey Koshelev** is a candidate of Civil Platform. He served as Deputy Chairman of the government of Zabaykalsky Krai in 2008-2013.	Nomination
Stavropol Krai	**Aleksandr Chernogorov** was nominated by the Party Action. He was Governor of Stavropol Krai in 1996-2008.	Nomination

Vladimir Oblast	**Aleksandr Filippov** was nominated by Civil Platform. He served as adviser of the former Governor of Vladimir Oblast Nikolai Vinogradov.	Nomination
Kirov Oblast	**Sergey Mamaev*** was nominated by CPRF. His nomination was supported by the counter-elite group of influential regional businesspersons Valery Krepostnov (former Vice-Governor) and Oleg Berezin (ex-member of the Nikolai Shaklein's team, former Governor of the Kirov Oblast).	Nomination
	Aleksandr Tarnavsky* was nominated by Fair Russia. He was supported by the same counter-elite group of Valery Krepostnov and Oleg Berezin.	Registration
Kurgan Oblast	**Ivan Evgenov*** participated in elections as a CPRF candidate. He was Deputy Governor of the Kurgan Oblast in 1998-2005.	Registration
Kursk Oblast	**Aleksandr Rutskoi** was nominated by the Democratic Legal Russia party; He was Governor of Kursk Oblast in 1996-2000.	Nomination
Murmansk Oblast	**Aleksandr Makarevich*** participated in elections as the Fair Russia party candidate. He was Chairman of the Committee for press, information and analytical work in the administration of the Murmansk Oblast in 1998-2000, Deputy mayor of the Murmansk in 2000-2003.	Registration
Novosibirsk Oblast	**Ivan Starikov** was nominated by the Civil Initiative party. He was Deputy Minister of economy of the Russian Federation in 1995-2000.	Nomination
Orenburg Oblast	**Sergey Katasonov*** was an LDPR candidate as well supported by CPRF and Fair Russia. He was a team member of Igor Udovichenko, the former main Federal inspector of the Orenburg Oblast.	Nomination
Orel Oblast	**Ivan Mosyakin** was nominated by the Patriots of Russia. He served as Secretary of Political Council of the UR regional branch in 2007-2011. He was Chairman of Orel Oblast regional parliament in 2007-2011.	Nomination
Ryazan Oblast	**Igor Morozov*** was nominated by the Patriots Of Russia. He was Deputy Head of the Federal Agency for Commonwealth of Independent States, compatriots living abroad and international humanitarian cooperation (Rossotrudnichestvo) in 2009-2012.	Nomination

*Stands for candidates nominated by the systemic opposition parties (CPRF, LDPR and Fair Russia) and by the pro-government People's Front for Russia (ONF)

Further, we collected and coded the following types of conflicts between the governor and the regional-level elites (for detailed information about conflicts, see Table 8 in the Appendix). *Governor vs UR* variable stands for the conflict between the governor and the chair of regional branch of UR[8]. The variable takes 1, where we identify the conflict and 0 otherwise. The *Governor vs Business* variable is coded 1 in the cases where we identify the conflict between the governor and regional tycoons and 0 otherwise. The *Governor vs Mayor* variable stands for the conflict between the governor and the mayor of the regional capital and is coded 1 when we identify the conflict and 0 otherwise. The variables are on the regional level and correspond to the state of governor-elite relations in the election year for each region. We put 1 for the cases when we find the conflict confirmation in minimum three different media sources.

Municipality-level elites
To operationalize municipal-level elite loyalty, we considered the three current models of empowering mayors introduced in 2003 (Federal'nyi zakon ot 6 oktiabria 2003 goda c 131-FZ)[9]: the Strong Mayor model, the City Manager model, and the Hybrid model. The Strong Mayor model and the Hybrid model imply electing municipal heads by direct public vote. However, in the latter the mayor shares authority (including budgeting) with the head of municipal administration who is contracted through an open tender. A mayor in the Hybrid model, thus, loses key levers of decision-making in the municipality and is considered a weaker administrative figure than the strong mayor. In the City Manager model, the head of municipality is merely a figurehead, chosen from among the deputies of the municipal assembly, while the contracted head of administration holds real power. The three models determine the scope for municipal independence from the regional government in the way the regional government buys independence from the federal government (Moraski and Reisinger, 2010). Considering the extent of freedom in the decision-making in each of the models, we assume that municipal heads elected via the Strong Mayor model should demonstrate the least loyalty of the three, which should negatively affect votes for the governor and turnout. Based on data from the Central Election Commission website on the latest elections of mayors[10] and municipal charters on the municipal websites, we collected and coded the type of mayor for each municipality. In *MayorType* variable 1 stands for the *Strong Mayor*, 2 stands for *City Manager,* and 3 for the *Hybrid* model.

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[8]We considered only conflicts between the governor and the regional party chairman as conflicting with lower-level functionaries might be just an interpersonal conflict and have no effect on the party politics.
[9] These three model existed up to 2015, then they were replaced with other models. See St. 36 in Federal'nyi zakon ot 6 oktiabria 2003 goda c 131-FZ
[10] For each municipality in each region we considered acting municipal heads at the year of gubernatorial elections, so that if elected by public vote municipal heads elections varied from 2009 to 2013.

Further, we expect that the party affiliation of the mayor might also affect the extent of his loyalty to the governor, so we include the *UR Member* variable to account for loyalty produced by the party affiliation. The variable takes 1 for mayors who are members of UR, and 0 otherwise. The data is on the municipal level.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of expressions of disloyalty

VARIABLES	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Municipality-level (N=1402)				
UR Member	0,95	0,21	0	1
Type of Model				
Strong Mayor Model	0,41	0,49	0	1
City Manager Model	0,54	0,50	0	1
Hybrid Model	0,03	0,18	0	1
Region-level (N=43)				
Counter-elite				
Nomination	0,24	0,43	0	1
Participation	0,12	0,32	0	1
Conflicts:				
Gov vs Business	0,30	0,46	0	1
Gov vs Mayor	0,32	0,46	0	1
Gov vs UR	0,17	0,38	0	1

Governor characteristic controls
Variation in the dependent variables can be explained by incumbent-specific characteristics, which affect governor mobilization capabilities. A varyag governor is a specific term in the Russian politics to denote for those governors who were appointed to head the region by the federal government and have no biographical roots with the region (see Podvintsev, 2009), which leads to that varyags have less deep-rooted relationships with the regional elite and have lower mobilization capabilities compared with the regions governed by locals (Dmitriev, 2010; "Minchenko: gubernatory-varjagi", 2013). To account for this possible effect, we include the *Varyag* variable, which is coded 1 for the regions with varyag incumbents and 0 otherwise. The longer the governor stays in power, the stronger his political machine (Reuter, 2010). We include *Tenure* in the model, which is measured in years and months a governor held office before the gubernatorial elections. A short tenure logically puts a governor at greater risk of a poor electoral result, so that the most vulnerable are those governors appointed just before elections. On the other hand, the federal government usually replaced unpopular governors just before elections to produce a honeymoon effect for the newly appointed governor (Karandashova, 2015; Reisinger & Moraski, 2013). *Replacement* ahead of elections is coded 1 for the regions, where the Kremlin replaced governors one year or less before elections, and 0 otherwise. The data for the three incumbents-specific variables are collected from open sources and are presented on the regional level.

Socio-economic controls

We included the following set of control variables. *Average wage per capita* is average monthly salary of employees in each municipality in each region*. Urbanization* stands for the percent of the urban population in each municipality in each region. We know from the previous scholarship, that state-employed workers, which are frequently called budzetniki in Russia, are mobilized at elections to establish the mass support (Frye et al., 2014). To control for this effect, we included the *Budzetniki* variable, which stands for the share of state-employed workers in education and medicine in each municipality in each region. The *HighEdu* variable indicates the share of population with higher education in each municipality for each region[11]. The relationship between voting outcome and these variables has been shown previously in numerous works (see, for example, Blaydes 2006b; Magaloni, 2006; Tezcur, 2008; White et al., 1997). All control variables are taken from the Rosstat website (the Russian State Statistics Service) for the year of elections or lagged maximum two years before or after the year of elections if the data on the year of elections is not available.

Based on empirical evidence that governors might have different strategies depending on the year they held elections we added a *Year* dummy. Moscow and Saint Petersburg are the two cities, which have a status of constituent federal subject, implying that their political organization differs from other regions[12]. To account for their specificity, we added a dummy for Moscow and Saint Petersburg (*MscSPb*).

5. Results

We start with including in the models only variables on elite disloyalty on municipal and regional levels controlling only for the year of elections and the Moscow and Saint Petersburg effect. In Table 3 we present the results for the three models using as dependent variables turnout *(Turnout)*, governors result calculated from the total number of registered voters (*Governors Result (total))*, and governors result calculated from turnout (*Governors Result (turnout))* and controlled for turnout.

Overall, we see that not all variables have the sign predicted in the theoretical assumptions. We see that participation of the counter-elite candidate has higher negative effect than nomination, though it produces a statistically significant effect only on the voting for governor results. On the municipal level, the *Strong Mayor* variable, which stands for municipal heads elected by public vote, contrary to what we expected in the theory, has positive effect on the voting results, while municipal heads from UR (*UR Member*) produce higher mobilization results as we predicted and increase turnout and governors result (total) by about 4 percentage points respectively. We see that conflicting with *Business* shows different signs, while conflicting with *UR* produces a negative though not significant effect on the three outcomes. The only significant negative effect for the three outcomes is produced by the conflict between the governor and regional capital's mayor (*Gov vs Mayor*).

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[11] Per 1000 people aged 15 years and over who reported level of education, ppm.

[12] Moscow and Saint Petersburg mayors have the status of governors and at the same time they act as regional capital mayors (see The Constitution of the Russian Federation).

Table 3. The impact of elites loyalty on the voting results (reduced model)

VARIABLES	Turnout	Governors Result (total)	Governors Result (turnout)
Municipality-level			
Turnout			0.289***
			(0.014)
Municipal Heads			
Strong Mayor	0.752	0.544	0.309
	(0.972)	(0.989)	(0.497)
UR Member	4.407**	3.994**	0.345
	(1.387)	(1.411)	(0.712)
Region-level			
Counter-elite			
Nomination	-2.011	-4.819	-1.287
	(5.125)	(5.372)	(2.574)
Participation	-6.217	-11.008	-9.279**
	(6.471)	(6.782)	(3.252)
Conflicts			
Gov vs Business	8.676	9.311	-0.971
	(5.620)	(5.890)	(2.825)
Gov vs Mayor	-11.541*	-15.995**	-5.343*
	(4.784)	(5.014)	(2.408)
Gov vs UR	-4.421	-3.941	-0.222
	(6.818)	(7.140)	(3.427)
MscSPb	yes	yes	yes
Year	yes	yes	yes
Constant	55.271***	45.677***	62.044***
	(6.728)	(7.043)	(3.466)
Random intercept variance	2.597***	2.644***	1.903***
	(0.111)	(0.111)	(0.111)
Variance for residuals	2.345***	2.363***	1.674***
	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.019)
BIC	10698.384	10749.779	8844.752
Number of municipalities	1,386	1,386	1,386
Number of regions	43	43	43

Standard errors in parentheses, *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, + p<0.1

To test whether these results are stable, we included in the models socio-economic and governor-specific controls[13], which might account for alternative explanations of the results (See Table 4). We find that in regions where governors have conflicts with the elites or encounter other manifestations of elite disloyalty, both governors' electoral results and voter turnout are lower and the signs are the same as we expected from the theory.

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[13] Since ROSSTAT, our main source for social-economic statistics, does not provide socio-economic data for Saint-Petersburg we have to include socio-economic controls and the control for Moscow and Saint Petersburg in separate models. Those models with the control for Moscow and Saint Petersburg can be found in Table 10 in the Appendix.

Table 4. The impact of elites loyalty on the voting results (main results)

VARIABLES	Turnout	Governors Result (total)	Governors Result (turnout)
Municipality-level			
Turnout			0.295***
			(0.016)
Municipal Heads			
Strong Mayor	-0.888	-1.400	-0.003
	(1.074)	(1.128)	(0.541)
UR Member	2.542+	2.064	0.221
	(1.522)	(1.602)	(0.780)
Control variables			
Urbanization	-13.041***	-12.228***	1.104*
	(0.964)	(1.014)	(0.535)
Average wage	-0.000*	-0.000**	-0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Budzetniki	48.911***	44.894**	7.853
	(14.298)	(15.042)	(7.338)
HighEdu	-0.000**	-0.000**	-0.000+
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Region-level			
Counter-elite			
Nomination	-3.429	-8.103	-2.907
	(5.792)	(5.766)	(2.111)
Participation	-4.008	-2.137	-1.398
	(7.965)	(7.933)	(2.915)
Conflicts			
Gov vs Business	-0.821	-2.528	-1.268
	(5.975)	(5.948)	(2.179)
Gov vs Mayor	-15.641**	-20.642***	-4.448*
	(5.227)	(5.205)	(1.927)
Gov vs UR	-13.582	-16.484+	-2.777
	(9.103)	(9.062)	(3.327)
Governor characteristics			
Tenure	1.420*	1.735*	0.097
	(0.688)	(0.685)	(0.252)
Varyag	12.315*	16.863***	2.796
	(4.991)	(5.050)	(1.811)
Replacement	-4.015	-2.511	4.800*
	(5.801)	(5.776)	(2.118)
Year	yes	yes	yes
Constant	42.099***	27.123*	58.599***
	(10.568)	(10.553)	(4.005)
Random intercept variance	2.456***	2.450***	1.441***

	(0.131)	(0.131)	(0.134)
Variance for residuals	2.247***	2.298***	1.576***
	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)
BIC	7366.474	7462.635	6052.540
Number of municipalities	970	970	970
Number of regions	31	31	31

Standard errors in parentheses, *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, + p<0.1

On the municipal level, municipalities headed by municipal heads elected directly via *Strong Mayor* model have lower turnout by approximately 0.9 percentage points, and governors electoral result lower by 1.4 and 0,003 percentage points compared with municipalities where heads are elected through *Hybrid* and *City Manager* models (See Tables 11, 12, and 13 in the Appendix). Further, in the municipalities headed by *UR Member* the results are higher in voting for governors by about 2.0 and 0.2 percentage points and in turnout by about 2.5 percentage points.

Figure 3. Governor vs Mayor Conflicts in Municipalities by Turnout
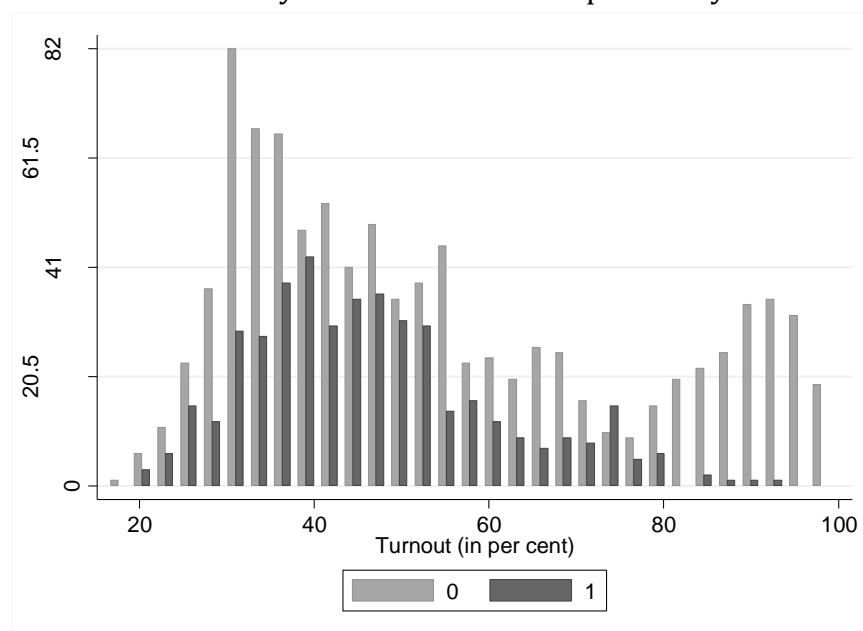
We see that the nomination of a counter-elite candidate decreases turnout while participation of a counter-elite candidate decreases it even more (the same was found in the reduced model in Table 3). However, for the governor result, nomination has a higher negative impact than participation. The explanation might be that many strong counter-elite candidates were disqualified before elections but still managed to mobilize voters against the governor (Ljubarev, 2012). Conflicting with *Business*, *UR*, and *Mayor* negatively affects governors political machine and produces lower mobilization results.

However, the analysis shows that even if conflicts overall negatively affect turnout and governor results, few of them prove to have a statistically significant effect on the dependent variables. Our main finding is considerably high negative influence of the conflict between the

governor and the mayors of regional capitals on governor results and voter turnout. We find that in the regions where governors are involved in pronounced open confrontation with mayors their electoral result decreases by up to 20 percentage points (when calculating from the total number of registered votes) and by about 4 percentage points (when calculating from turnout and controlled for turnout), while turnout is up to 15 percentage points lower. This result is robust and the only statistically significant.

Figure 4. Governor vs Mayor Conflicts in Municipalities by Governors Result (turnout)
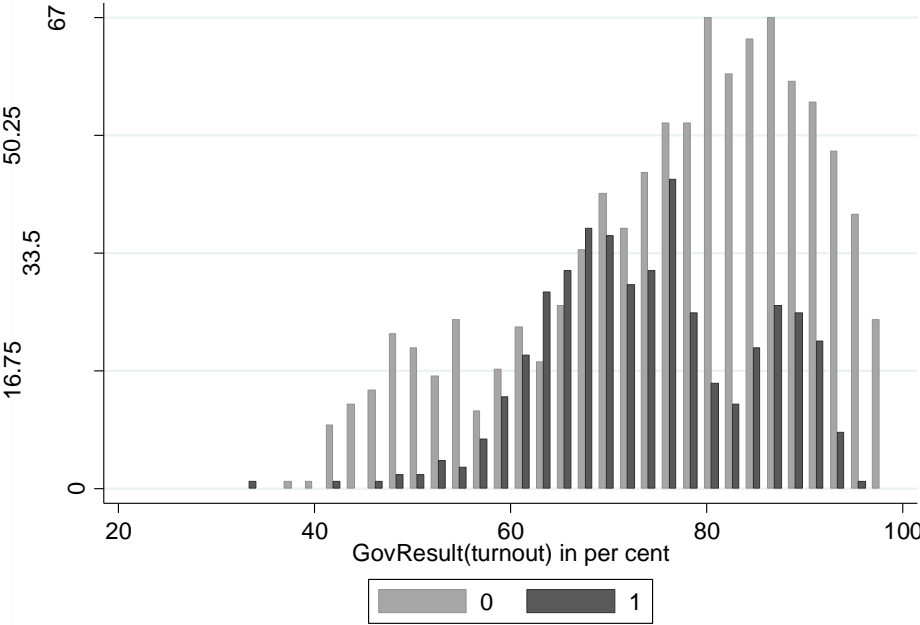
Figure 5. Governor vs Mayor Conflicts in Municipalities by Governors Result (total)
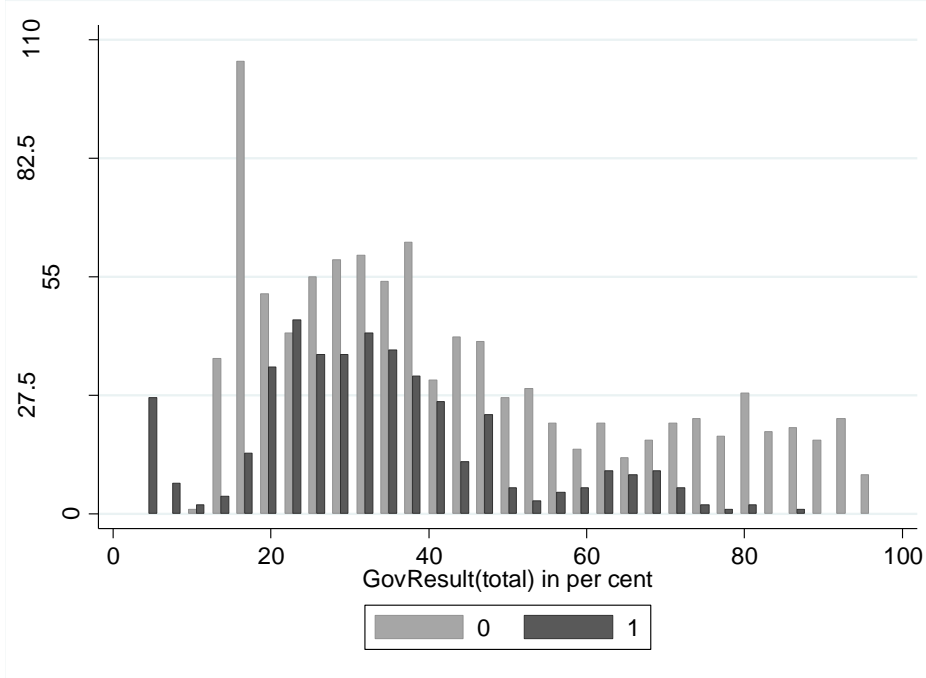
The main explanation of the size of the effect comes from the size of territory the mayors control. Given that, the majority of voters concentrate in the capital (See Table 7 in the Appendix), conflicting with the mayor is vote-sensitive for the governor, as the conflict questions the leadership of the governor in the most electorally resourceful area of the region. If we calculate the ecological effect from the *Gov vs Mayor* and number of voters living in the capitals (*PopCapital)*, we see that the effect from the conflict is even larger, while *Gov vs UR* conflict receives significant and negative effect on the governors' result (total) and turnout (See Tables 5 and 6).

Table 5. Ecological effect of the Governor vs Mayor Conflict and the number regional capital voters (total)

VARIABLES	Turnout	Governors Result (total)	Governors Result (turnout)
Municipality-level			
Turnout			0.297***
			(0.016)
Municipal Heads	yes	yes	yes
Control variables	yes	yes	yes
Region-level			
Counter-elite	yes	yes	yes
Conflicts			
Gov vs Business	-3.674	-3.342	-0.449
	(6.017)	(6.211)	(2.231)
Gov vs Mayor	-24.989+	-26.874+	-0.542
	(15.149)	(15.640)	(5.648)

PopCapital (total)	0.301	0.030	-0.068
	(0.274)	(0.283)	(0.102)
Mayor * PopCapital (total)	0.247	0.174	-0.106
	(0.408)	(0.422)	(0.152)
Gov vs UR	-19.606+	-19.597+	-0.537
	(10.836)	(11.188)	(4.048)
Governor characteristics	yes	yes	yes
Year	yes	yes	yes
Constant	31.970*	25.561+	60.995***
	(12.882)	(13.309)	(4.891)
Random intercept variance	2.414***	2.445***	1.435***
	(0.132)	(0.131)	(0.133)
Variance for residuals	2.247***	2.298***	1.577***
	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)
BIC	7371.664	7469.542	6046.870
Number of municipalities	970	970	970
Number of regions	31	31	31

Standard errors in parentheses, *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, + p<0.1

Table 6. Geographical effect of the Governor vs Mayor Conflict and the number regional capital voters (turnout)

VARIABLES	Turnout	Governors Result (total)	Governors Result (turnout)
Municipality-level			
Turnout			0.296***
			(0.016)
Municipal Heads	yes	yes	yes
Control variables	yes	yes	yes
Region-level			
Counter-elite	yes	yes	yes
Conflicts			
Gov vs Business	-1.439	-3.255	-1.147
	(5.940)	(5.983)	(2.146)
Gov vs Mayor	-26.372+	-31.105*	-1.694
	(14.927)	(15.037)	(5.420)
PopCapital (turnout)	0.124	-0.120	-0.118
	(0.377)	(0.380)	(0.137)
*Mayor * PopCapital (turnout)*	0.362	0.368	-0.087
	(0.495)	(0.499)	(0.180)
Gov vs UR	-17.981+	-19.720+	-1.239
	(9.988)	(10.062)	(3.631)
Governor characteristics	yes	yes	yes

Year	yes	yes	yes
Constant	37.854**	29.772*	62.074***
	(14.552)	(14.682)	(5.392)
Random intercept variance	2.435***	2.441***	1.404***
	(0.131)	(0.131)	(0.134)
Variance for residuals	2.247***	2.298***	1.577***
	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)
BIC	7372.834	7469.247	6058.768
Number of municipalities	970	970	970
Number of regions	31	31	31

Standard errors in parentheses, *** $p<0.001$, ** $p<0.01$, * $p<0.05$, + $p<0.1$

Limitations of the study are that we cannot definitely conclude that the weakness of the governors are produced by elite disloyalty, so we do not solve the reverse causation problem: weak governors might more often encounter elite disloyalty. However, we confidently conclude that the governors' electoral weakness measured in the electoral result and turnout logically comes from elite disloyalty and the justification for that is the following.

The majority of conflicts which are described in the paper lasted for up to a decade before the governors went to elections. Belykh, the governor of Kirovsk Oblast, was in conflict for about a decade with two influential business clans, the Berezin-Krepostnov alliance and the Valenchuk business group. The conflict between Kirovsk governor with Berezin and Krepostnov started when Belykh was appointed governor in 2009, because Berezin and Krepostnov used to work as close advisors of Shaklein, the ex-governor of the region, who had headed the oblast from 2004 to 2009. With the new appointment, they lost influence in regional politics. The apogee of the conflict happened in 2013, when Berezin was accused of buying a stake in the Urzhum distillery at the regional government for at a discount, which was called illegal ("Oleg Berezin arestovan", 2013). To prevent criminal proceedings, Krepostnov, as a deputy of the regional assembly, initiated the procedure of no confidence to governor Belykh (Malyshev, 2013). These episodes definitely had effect on the governor's leadership in the region (Azar, 2014), though did not lead to his resignation. Another illustration of a long-lasting conflict between a governor and a mayor can be derived from Nizhny Novgorod Oblast, where governor Shantsev and Nizhny Novgorod mayor Sorokin were in clear conflict in 2012, two years before the gubernatorial elections. The conflict began to unfold when the regional government refused to fund a city sports building. The governor and the mayor then conflicted on urban development issues (the city opposed the construction of underground shopping centres in Nizhny Novgorod, while the regional government supported and funded the project). The conflict ended up with a shift of the urban development powers in the regional capital from the capital authorities to the regional government, which weakened the mayor and redistributed power to the governor.

We see that the development of conflicts does not result in the unambiguous weakening of the governor. Even in the cases when conflicts weakened the governor, they might have weakened him long before the elections. However, the electoral weakness of the governor became evident only after the gubernatorial elections. Since we are not able to solve the problem of indigeneity, our findings relate only to the electoral weakness of governors. And we conclude that those who are in conflict with elites, receive lower results. And those who

conflict with mayors have the most dramatic and robust drop in turnout and voting for governor.

6. Concluding Remarks

Is the impact of all elites equal in helping an autocrat win elections? The intuitive answer is 'no', however, very few studies examine this issue, making it difficult to identify the types of elites who matter more. This paper was driven by the fact that in the existing literature the mainstream understanding of elites as for and against an autocrat considerably simplifies the elite setups in modern autocracies. Given that the majority of autocracies consist of multilevel elites, regarding elites as a consolidated actor leads to erroneous understanding of how they work and conceals the real effect of the size of their influence on the autocrats daily performance and during elections. Even fewer studies analyse multilevel elite setups on the subnational level, which, however, can shed more light on how autocracies are maintained from the bottom-up.

In this study, we examined Russian subnational autocracies to estimate the role of elite loyalty on the regional autocracy sustainability. What distinguishes our study from others is that based on the empirical evidence and the theoretical findings of previous scholars, we distinguish the elites on multiple levels of governing and measure their impact on autocrat electoral performance. We collected a unique dataset containing data on 1402 municipalities in 43 Russian regions and used a hierarchical linear model to determine the effect of the major elite groups disloyalty on the gubernatorial elections outcome.

Going to direct elections, a governor faces the focal point of his leadership in the region and at the same time tests the readiness of the elites to support him in establishing the façade of a legitimate win. Analysing 43 direct gubernatorial elections in Russia after their reintroduction in 2012, we find that in regions where elites express lower loyalty to the regional leaders, governors' electoral results and turnout are lower. Though we find that elite disloyalty has a negative impact on the governors performance at elections, we cannot conclude that the results are statistically significant. However, conflicting with the mayor of the regional capital does have a statistically significant and negative impact on both the number of votes for the governor and turnout. Governors who face open conflicts with mayors risk lowering their results by up to 20 percentage points and turnout by up to 15 percentage points, which in the negative scenario might result in the second round of voting or even the governor's defeat. This effect is robust.

Our main finding contributes to a broader understanding of the survival of autocracies when their leaders encounter direct elections (i.e. Blaydes, 2011; Magaloni, 2006; Svolic, 2012). On the new empirical evidence, we demonstrate that even if not officially competing with the regional autocrat (i.e. at elections), influential elites can spoil his results by refusing to mobilize voters for him. And what is remarkable, this indirect influence on the campaign is of greater electoral importance for the governor than outperforming official contenders at elections. Overall within limited competition and staged uncompetitive elections, the main opposition is not the one who officially participates in the elections but the one who accumulates the majority of resources to spoil governors political machine even while not officially campaigning against him.

The findings contribute to the literature on patron-client mobilization (Lust-Okar, 2006) and the political machines in autocracies (Stokes, 2005) and provide confirmation that from the technical viewpoint the territories which concentrate the majority of voters in a state

should receive higher attention from the autocrat during the mobilization campaign, while disloyalty of the authorities controlling these territories strongly impedes effective voter mobilization and brings about lower electoral results for the autocrat.

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Appendix

Table 7. The List of Regions, which held Gubernatorial Elections in 2012-2014

Date	Region
14 October 2012	Amur Oblast, Belgorod Oblast, Bryansk Oblast, Novgorod Oblast, Ryazan Oblast *(5 regions)*
8 September 2013	Chukotka, Khabarovsk, Khakassia, Magadan Oblast, Moscow Oblast, Moscow (city), Vladimir Oblast, Zabaykalsky Krai *(8 regions)*
14 September 2014	Astrakhan Oblast, Altai Krai, Altai Republic, Bashkortostan, Chelyabinsk Oblast, Ivanovo Oblast, Kalmykia, Kirov Oblast, Komi, Krasnoyarsk Krai, Kurgan Oblast, Kursk Oblast, Lipetsk Oblast, Murmanskm Oblast, Nenets Autonomous District, Nizhny Novgorod Oblast, Novosibirsk Oblast, Orenburg Oblast, Orel Oblast, Primorsky, Pskov Oblast, Samara Oblast, St. Petersburg, Stavropol Krai, Tyumen Oblast, Udmurtia, Volgograd Oblast, Vologda Oblast, Voronezh Oblast, Yakutia *(30 regions)*

Table 8. Description of Conflicts between Governor and Elites and the Coding Strategy

Region	Governor vs Business	Governor vs Mayor	Governor vs UR
Altai Krai	Governor Karlin has an old long-lasting conflict with the regional businessperson Mr. Bannih, a head of financial and industrial group (FIG) Sibma (Chernyshov, 2013). Governor Karlin is involved in multiple conflicts with small businesses in the region as well ("Karlin i reiting", 2013).	Governor Karlin conflicts with Mr. Savintsev, head of administration of Barnaul. The confrontation resulted in Mr. Savintsev son arrest for corruption in 2014, which casts a shadow on Mr. Savintsev himself and might develop in his criminal prosecution in future ("Opal'nye mery", 2014).	NA
Volgograd Oblast	NA	Governor Bocharov conflicts with Volgograd Mayor Guseva. The conflict resulted in that city utility services stopped transportation and disposal of garbage from the streets which provoked a garbage collapse shortly before the elections ("Konflikt Bocharova", 2014).	NA
Voronezh Oblast	Governor Gordeev conflicts with Iskander Makhmudov, head of Ural Mining and Metallurgical Company (UMMC or UGMK) (Orlov, 2014a).	NA	NA

Kalmykia	Head of Republic Orlov conflicts with the former head of republic and regional tycoon Ilyumzhinov (Orlov, 2014b).	NA	NA
Kirov Oblast	Governor Belykh has a latent conflict with businesspersons Mr. Berezin, president of group of companies "System" Globus", Mr. Krepostnov, co-owner of agricultural holding "Doronichi", and Mr. Valenchuk, co-owner of a holding "Sputnik", which includes a chain of stores, a number of companies, and real estate listings (Azar, 2014).	NA	Governor Belykh conflicts with Mr. Suraev, a regional party chain heavyweight, who even presumably aimed to nominate for governor from UR instead of Mr. Belykh (Danilova, 2014).
Krasnoyarsk Krai	NA	Governor Tolokonskiy conflicts with Krasnoyarsk Mayor Akbulatov. The recent developments of the conflict evolved in Governor Tolokonskiy prohibited of introduction of paid parking in Krasnoyarsk downtown, which mayor Akbulatov had long lobbied (Kliavina, n.d.).	NA
Kursk Oblast	Governor Mikhaylov conflicts with the regional agribusiness, mainly with Mr. Greshilov, owner of JSC "Corporation" GriNN", and Mr. Chetverikov, founder of the	NA	Governor Mikhaylov has long conflicted with ex-secretary of the regional party cell Mr. Karamyshev, who left the post in 2012 but retains influence

	"Agroholding" group (Marinin, 2010).		on the party politics (Iniutin & Nagornykh, 2013).
Lipetsk Oblast	Governor Korolev has a lingering conflict with Mr. Lisin, head of Novolipetsk Steel, or NLMK (Orlov, 2014b).	NA	NA
Murmansk Oblast	NA	Governor Kovtun conflicts with Murmansk Mayor Veller. Murmansk mayor even appealed to the regional court to resolve the conflict on housing standards with the regional government ("V Moskve nazvali", 2013).	NA
Nenets Autonomous Okrug	NA	NA	Before 2012, Senator Koshin, one of the regional party leaders, maintained high influence on the regional branch of the party. Following the appointment of regional assembly deputy Mr. Kotkin as UR secretary and Mr. Koshin as acting governor their relations strained. Very soon after Mr. Kotkin's appointment he replaced the leadership of the party executive committee, who were loyal to acting governor Koshin (Molotov, 2014; Semenov, 2014).

Nizhny Novgorod Oblast	NA	Governor Shantsev conflicts with Nizhny Novgorod Mayor Sorokin. As the Nizhny Novgorod Duma dismissed City Manager Oleg Kondrashov, the governor's appointee, on Mr. Sorokin initiative, governor Shantsev intends to proceed to the removal from office of Mayor Sorokin (Kriazhev & Nagornykh, 2015).	Governor Shantsev has a standing conflict with the UR top regional officials. Even given that the regional UR secretary Mr. Kavinov is loyal to the governor, other influential party functioners resist Governor Shantsev's decisions (Bocharova, Kovaleva, 2010; Kriazhev et al, 2015;).
Novgorod Oblast	NA	Governor Mitin conflicts with Novgorod Mayor Bobryshev. The Novgorod Presidium of United Russia, controlled by Governor Mitin, suspended Mayor Bobryshev's party membership. Simultaneously, the Russia's Investigative Committee repeatedly accused the mayor of negligence (Varlamov, 2015b).	Governor Mitin conflicts with the regional party cell secretary Fabrichnyy. However, Mr. Fabrichnyy refused to participate in the party primaries before the gubernatorial elections and supported Governor Mitin in public (Romanov, 2012).
Novosibirsk Oblast	NA	Novosibirsk Governor Gorodetsky conflicts with Novosibirsk Mayor Lokot' and puts pressure on him forcing him to leave KPRF for UR membership (Varlamov, 2014).	NA
Oryol Oblast	Governor Potomsky conflicts with small regional business groups. Regional businessperson Mr. Rybakov and Moscow	NA	NA

	businessman Mr. Isakov, associated with the former Governor Stroyev, nominated as opposition candidates for gubernatorial elections (Orlov, 2014b).		
Primorsky Krai	Governor Miklushevskiy conflicts with multiple business groups in the region including the financial and industrial group (FIG) "Primorje" (Aleksandrov, 2013; "Politicheskie strategii", 2013).	Governor Miklushevskiy conflicts with Vladivostok Mayor Pushkarev. In Vladivostok, siloviki opened a criminal case on corruption on municipal contracts. Mayor Pushkarev is predicted to be proved to be involved in the scandal (Varlamov, 2015a).	NA
Pskov Oblast	NA	Governor Turchak conflicts with Pskov Mayor Tsetserskiy. He publicly criticizes Pskov City Duma and the mayor in the press (Kamaliagin, 2013).	NA
Altai Republic	NA	Head of Republic Berdnikov conflicts with Gorno-Altaysk Mayor Oblogin. Russian Investigative Committee launched an investigation of the criminal case against the City Hall officials including the mayor ("Glava Gorno-Altaiska", 2016).	NA
Ryazan Oblast	NA	Governor Kovalev conflicts with Mayor Artyomov ("Ukhod	NA

Artemova", 2014).

Samara Oblast	Governot conflicts with local financial and industrial groups, in particular with Mr. Avetisyan, deputy head of RUSNANO, owner of "Volgopromgaz" holding (HSV), chairman of the Samara Regional Engineering Union (Turkov, 2013). A year before elections, the Federal Antimonopoly Service filed a criminal case against the governor and the government of Samara Oblast on violating competition laws and trade (Aleksandrov, 2013).	NA	NA
Khakassia	NA	Chair of the Government of the Republic of Khakassia Zimin conflicts with Mr. Bulakin, head of administration of Abakan. Against the latter a criminal proceedings for abuse of power was initiated in 2011 (Respublika Khakasiia, 2012).	NA

Table 9. Share of Voters Living in the City Capital and their Support for the Incumbent[14]

Regions	Voters living in the regional capital (calculated from the total number of registered voters), in percent	Voters living in the regional capital (calculated from turnout), in percent	Regional capital voters supported incumbent calculated from the (from total number of registered voters), in percent	Regional capital voters supported incumbent (calculated from turnout), in percent
Altai Krai	27,33	26,20	24,92	75,71
Amur Oblast	18,37	11,54	17,12	67,94
Astrakhan Oblast	50,68	45,15	26,84	74,35
Bashkortostan	26,52	19,55	38,90	70,52
Belgorod Oblast	22,87	15,62	30,30	74,59
Bryansk Oblast	34,91	32,42	21,05	48,28
Vladimir Oblast	24,00	24,00	19,42	68,13
Volgograd Oblast	39,11	33,28	27,77	89,13
Vologda Oblast	25,28	21,26	13,34	53,41
Voronezh Oblast	43,59	23,66	25,91	83,47
Zabaikalsky Krai	29,98	29,54	23,66	72,37
Ivanovo region	38,49	28,48	21,05	77,24
Kalmykia	40,80	30,41	30,55	66,77
Kirov Oblast	37,00	26,07	18,86	73,86
Krasnoyarsk region	33,82	27,87	14,30	55,56
Kurgan Oblast	37,28	26,36	22,82	81,23
Kursk Oblast	37,23	26,18	15,41	56,24
Lipetsk Oblast	43,40	21,63	13,45	56,86
Magadan Oblast	66,00	58,92	20,08	69,75
Moscow	100,00	100,00	16,46	51,37
Moscow Oblast	0,58	0,59	17,66	65,52
Murmansk Oblast	39,57	39,44	18,45	59,82

[14] The data is taken from the Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation (http://cikrf.ru/eng/)

Nenets Autonomous Okrug	49,59	49,35	31,25	73,33
Nizhny Novgorod Oblast	37,16	27,28	36,05	87,47
Novgorod Oblast	35,06	28,98	26,84	75,87
Novosibirsk Oblast	54,21	41,18	14,32	61,43
Orenburg Oblast	26,33	20,89	25,25	72,13
Orel Oblast	32,04	21,73	35,34	82,82
Primorsky Krai	30,63	14,60	12,07	63,23
Pskov Oblast	14,62	10,19	22,74	76,39
Altai Republic	27,42	23,91	23,90	50,62
Komi	25,96	24,90	43,43	78,17
Ryazan Oblast	45,00	38,80	20,04	53,41
Samara Oblast	38,09	31,39	44,80	88,51
St. Petersburg	100,00	100,00	30,30	79,30
Stavropol Krai	14,75	12,87	33,74	80,84
Tyumen Oblast	14,97	18,71	59,11	80,00
Udmurtia	41,12	30,21	25,00	78,98
Khabarovsk Krai	43,20	39,28	18,96	61,63
Khakassia	31,82	28,87	20,12	58,67
Chelyabinsk Oblast	31,96	26,70	29,27	82,63
Chukotka	28,09	19,20	70,97	83,18
Yakutia	28,54	25,98	24,18	50,42

Table 10. Main results with the control for Moscow and Saint-Petersburg

VARIABLES	Turnout	Governors Result (total)	Governors Result (turnout)
Municipality-level			
Turnout			0.290***
			(0.014)
Municipal Heads			
Strong Mayor	0.795	0.606	0.349
	(0.970)	(0.987)	(0.495)
UR Member	4.284**	3.889**	0.400
	(1.387)	(1.411)	(0.711)
Region-level			
Counter-elite			
Nomination	-0.899	-4.896	-3.501
	(4.716)	(4.875)	(2.307)
Participation	-2.102	-6.108	-8.994**
	(5.932)	(6.131)	(2.904)
Conflicts			
Gov vs Business	1.863	3.062	2.178
	(5.560)	(5.748)	(2.719)
Gov vs Mayor	-13.495**	-18.455***	-5.232*
	(4.427)	(4.576)	(2.173)
Gov vs UR	-9.122	-8.946	0.500
	(6.262)	(6.468)	(3.073)
Governor characteristics			
Tenure	1.409*	1.382*	-0.300
	(0.575)	(0.594)	(0.282)
Varyag	11.380**	14.539**	1.472
	(4.309)	(4.453)	(2.115)

Replacement	-1.952	0.574	6.155*
	(5.078)	(5.249)	(2.484)
Year	yes	yes	yes
MscSPb	yes	yes	yes
Constant	38.779***	27.978***	63.674***
	(8.229)	(8.501)	(4.066)
Random intercept variance	2.472***	2.506***	1.755***
	(0.112)	(0.112)	(0.112)
Variance for residuals	2.346***	2.363***	1.675***
	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.019)
BIC	10704.577	10753.765	8848.691
Number of municipalities	1,386	1,386	1,386
Number of regions	43	43	43

Standard errors in parentheses; *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, + p<0.1

Table 11. Robustness checks for Turnout

VARIABLES	Turnout	Turnout	Turnout	Turnout	Turnout	Turnout	Turnout	Turnout	Turnout
Municipality-level									
Strong Mayor			-0.974						
			(1.077)						
City Manager				0.512					
				(1.106)					
Hybrid					2.650				
					(2.514)				
UR Member						2.501+			
						(1.503)			
Region-level									
Counter-elite Nomination	0.264								
	(6.311)								
Counter-elite Participation		-4.979							
		(8.285)							
Gov vs Business							1.357		
							(7.060)		
Gov vs Mayor								-14.652**	
								(5.285)	
Gov vs UR									-15.451
									(9.464)
Governor characteristics	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Year	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Constant	45.376***	46.819***	45.795***	45.073***	45.141***	42.867***	45.759***	47.369***	40.915***
	(11.312)	(11.499)	(11.210)	(11.240)	(11.226)	(11.373)	(11.490)	(10.166)	(11.192)
Random intercept variance	2.647***	2.642***	2.638***	2.641***	2.640***	2.645***	2.653***	2.647***	2.636***
	(0.129)	(0.129)	(0.129)	(0.129)	(0.129)	(0.129)	(0.130)	(0.129)	(0.129)
Variance for residuals	2.249***	2.249***	2.248***	2.249***	2.248***	2.248***	2.249***	2.249***	2.249***
	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)

BIC	7386.160	7385.803	7332.649	7333.250	7332.353	7383.397	7386.125	7379.317	7383.607
Number of municipalities	977	977	970	970	970	977	977	977	977
Number of regions	31	31	31	31	31	31	31	31	31

Standard errors in parentheses; *** $p<0.001$, ** $p<0.01$, * $p<0.05$, + $p<0.1$

Table 12. Robustness checks for Governors Result (total)

VARIABLES	Governors Result (total)	Governors Result (total)	Governors Result (total)	Governors Result (total)	Governors Result (total)	Governors Result (total)	Governors Result (total)	Governors Result (total)	Governors Result (total)
Municipality-level									
Strong Mayor			-1.492						
			(1.134)						
City Manager				1.115					
				(1.164)					
Hybrid					2.349				
					(2.646)				
UR Member						2.047			
						(1.581)			
Region-level									
Counter-elite Nomination	-3.836								
	(6.851)								
Counter-elite Participation		-1.855							
		(9.082)							
Gov vs Business							0.319		
							(7.704)		
Gov vs Mayor								-18.425***	
								(5.524)	
Gov vs UR									-18.450+
									(10.236)
Governor characteristics	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Year	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Constant	30.942*	31.803*	31.944**	30.697*	31.040*	29.220*	31.352*	33.785**	25.953*
	(12.268)	(12.593)	(12.195)	(12.228)	(12.237)	(12.387)	(12.527)	(10.627)	(12.095)
Random intercept variance	2.730***	2.734***	2.724***	2.727***	2.728***	2.733***	2.735***	2.578***	2.684***
	(0.129)	(0.129)	(0.129)	(0.129)	(0.129)	(0.129)	(0.129)	(0.130)	(0.129)

Variance for residuals	2.299***	2.299***	2.299***	2.299***	2.299***	2.298***	2.299***	2.299***	2.299***
	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)
BIC	7486.228	7486.499	7432.793	7433.604	7433.733	7484.865	7486.539	7477.069	7483.452
Number of municipalities	977	977	970	970	970	977	977	977	977
Number of regions	31	31	31	31	31	31	31	31	31

Standard errors in parentheses; *** $p<0.001$, ** $p<0.01$, * $p<0.05$, + $p<0.1$

Table 13. Robustness checks for Governors Result (turnout)

VARIABLES	Governors Result (turnout)	Governors Result (turnout)	Governors Result (turnout)	Governors Result (turnout)	Governors Result (turnout)	Governors Result (turnout)	Governors Result (turnout)	Governors Result (turnout)	Governors Result (turnout)
Municipality-level									
Turnout	0.299***	0.299***	0.301***	0.301***	0.302***	0.299***	0.299***	0.296***	0.298***
	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.016)
Strong Mayor			-0.103						
			(0.542)						
City Manager				0.352					
				(0.555)					
Hybrid					-1.289				
					(1.282)				
UR Member						0.253			
						(0.768)			
Region-level									
Counter-elite Nomination	-1.764								
	(2.101)								
Counter-elite Participation		-0.814							
		(2.810)							
Gov vs Business							-0.754		
							(2.377)		
Gov vs Mayor								-3.457+	
								(1.916)	
Gov vs UR									-3.978
									(3.258)
Governor characteristics	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Year	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Constant	58.868***	59.232***	58.952***	58.750***	58.941***	58.754***	58.776***	59.596***	57.930***
	(3.908)	(4.027)	(3.966)	(3.980)	(3.956)	(4.011)	(3.999)	(3.793)	(3.963)

Random intercept variance	1.538***	1.548***	1.551***	1.557***	1.552***	1.549***	1.548***	1.500***	1.526***
	(0.132)	(0.132)	(0.132)	(0.132)	(0.132)	(0.132)	(0.132)	(0.132)	(0.132)
Variance for residuals	1.575***	1.575***	1.577***	1.577***	1.577***	1.575***	1.575***	1.575***	1.575***
	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)
BIC	6050.265	6050.878	6012.565	6012.202	6011.591	6050.853	6050.862	6047.852	6049.504
Number of municipalities	977	977	970	970	970	977	977	977	977
Number of regions	31	31	31	31	31	31	31	31	31

Standard errors in parentheses; *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, + p<0.1

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