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This research is focused on the issue of differences in results received in elections for regional and federal legislatures that are held according to the proportional system. In particular, the question of whether the authorities' decision to favour the combination of synchronous regional and federal elections has proved effective. This research showed that, in simultaneous elections held at different territorial levels, United Russia always delivers better results at a federal level than at a regional level, while oppositional parties, conversely, perform better at a regional level than they do at a federal level. This can be explained by the phenomenon of strategic voting, according to which voters prefer to cast their votes for more stable and major players in federal elections, and that they are more likely to vote sincerely in regional elections. However, in separate elections these trends are not retained, and United Russia in particular has been noted to perform better in regional campaigns held during the inter-election period, than it did in the preceding and subsequent federal elections. Analysis of the degree of competitiveness showed that differences in the level of competitiveness in federal and regional elections are almost always lower in combined elections than in separate elections.

JEL Classification: D72.

Key words: regional elections, federal elections, electoral support, competitiveness, effective number of parties, party system, strategic voting, nationalisation.

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Introduction

This research is dedicated to a study of the differences between how the electorate votes in elections for regional and federal parliaments on party lists, and also looks at the influence on these differences of having different types of elections held on the same day. The first half of this research will analyse the trend towards a reduction in the number of election days in the regions and the gradual transition to having a single election day. To this end, an election calendar for regional and federal parliaments from 1991 to 2016 will be drawn up, and conclusions will be drawn regarding the number of times the regional elections coincide with federal campaign dates. This section will show the presence of a clearly demonstrated trend towards combining election days, which results from an initiative by the Russian authorities to combine federal and regional elections as more effective in their interests.

The second and third sections will analyse the extent to which this policy has been a success, and whether it leads to an increase in electoral support for the party of power and also to a reduction in competition between the parties at other types of election. To achieve this, the second section will include an analysis of the results for Russia's four main political parties (United Russia, KPRF, LDPR, Just Russia), in various types of election from 2003 to 2016. To ensure the differences are identifiable, regional elections held on the same day as federal elections will be analysed separately. Accordingly, elections held in the gap between federal election campaigns will also be analysed separately. Where elections take place simultaneously, the difference will be identified between electoral support for the 'party of power' in regional and federal campaigns, and electoral support for opposition parties at these elections, based on a comparison of the percentage of votes received by the same parties on the single voting day.

These same differences will be identified for inter-election periods based on party results in regional elections in a particular year, and also – for comparison – in the previous and subsequent years' federal elections. To simplify the process, we analyze differences in electoral support for each party at different types of election each year (the difference in regional and federal results on a single voting day for simultaneous elections, and the difference between a regional result and the preceding and subsequent federal result for separate elections). Thus, it will be possible to identify which political actors perform better in regional elections, and which perform better in federal elections. In addition, party voting trends from 2003 to 2016 will be analysed for both regional and federal elections, and inter-regional differences in the parties' electoral support will be identified.

The third section will focus on the level of competition in different types of election, as calculated by two different methods: the ‘effective number of parties’ (ENP) (Laakso, Taagepera 1979); and Juan Molinar’s alternative effective number of parties’ index (Molinar 1991). Using the above indices to analyse elections held simultaneously will enable us to differentiate between the mobilisation of pro-government and opposition electorates in regional and federal elections (using an analysis of the difference in ENP, calculating equivalent differences in electoral support for political parties). For the inter-election period, we will analyse changes in ENP in the period between federal election campaigns to examine whether there are significant differences in the level of competitiveness in simultaneous and separate elections. In addition, we will analyse overall ENP trends in the period under examination, i.e. from 2003 to 2016, and national trends and inter-regional differences will be identified.

In our work we apply the concept of “strategic voting”, based on the understanding that “A voter is considered to be “strategic” or “sophisticated” if she maximises expected utility by casting a ballot for a candidate who does not rank first in her preference ordering” (Ferrara et al. 2005). Thus, voters vote strategically when they try to maximise the effect of their vote, rather than following their political or ideological preferences. Thus a voter may vote for more established, weightier political figures, even though his/her personal preference may lie with weaker candidates or smaller parties. Strategic voting as a concept has been the subject of a significant volume of research regarding mixed electoral systems, in which the differences between strategic and sincere voting patterns in proportional and plural (SMD – single member district) systems was analysed (Farquharson 1969; McKelvey and Ordeshook 1972).

In our research, we expand the application of “strategic voting” as a concept to reflect the differences between voting in simultaneous elections by party lists and in SMD, as this was the approach taken in Western literature, and to reflect the differences between regional and federal voting (both on single election days and those held separately) in the proportional electoral system. Our hypothesis is that, when voting in federal elections, voters are more inclined to strategic electoral behaviour, and consequently, when voting at a regional level, voters are more inclined to sincere electoral behaviour. This hypothesis will be tested using empirical data, including election results for the four main political parties in Russia in elections held at different levels from 2003 to 2016.

Other key concepts applied in this study include that of the nationalisation and inflation of party systems. A high level of nationalisation of politics involves national socio-political divides (Lipset, Rokkan 1967) and is more important for voters than local splits and conflicts

(Caramani 2004). Thus, the level of diversity and extent of competition evident in elections in different regions of the country are directly dependent on the level of nationalisation of the party system: “Competitiveness is here an indicator of homogeneous electoral forces across the country” (Caramani 2004). If there is a high level of nationalisation, then all regions of the country will display similar features regarding to the party system and citizens’ electoral behaviour, coinciding with the characteristics of the broader national party systems.

Inflation is understood as the opposing force to nationalisation, in this instance a difference appears between the levels of competitiveness in regional and national elections (Cox 1999); and competitiveness at a national level, under the approach to assessing inflation accepted in Western literature, can only be larger, and the focus is on the degree of this difference. Western scholars use only national elections to measure the level of inflation, both overall and region-to-region.

As with strategic voting, in this research we will take our own approach to studying inflation. Instead of the regional characteristics of national elections, we will use results from elections to regional parliaments in dozens of constituent entities of the Russian Federation. Under this approach, competitiveness in elections held at different territorial levels may differ significantly, and it is interesting to gain an understanding of where there is more competitiveness – at national elections or regional elections. To measure this competitiveness we use indicators of the effective number of parties calculated in two variants: a classical ENP indicator as developed by Laakso and Taagepera, and the one further developed by Juan Molinar, in which competitiveness is calculated taking into account the role of the dominant party. Thus, third section will analyse the comparative competitiveness in regional and national elections from 2003 to 2016, and will identify the dominant trend in contemporary Russia.

If the electoral support indicators for the party of power and opposition parties are very similar or close to identical (if the difference in percentage of the vote received for all or the majority of parties at regional and federal elections is close to zero), and if the level of competitiveness in regional and federal elections is close to identical (prevailing trend towards the nationalisation of the systems), then we can talk about the gradual institutionalisation of Russia’s party system in its contemporary iteration.

Towards a single election day

The first federal elections took place in Russia in 1993, and the first mass wave of elections to regional parliaments started in 1994. However, some regions opted to elect deputies in 1993 or even in 1992. The first and only elections to a regional parliament in post-Soviet Russia in 1992 took place in the Republic of Khakassia. Then, on 12 December 1993 elections to the State Duma were held. Regional elections were held in the following 10 constituent entities of the Russian Federation at the same time as the State Duma elections: the Republic of Altai, the Republic of Mari El, the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), the Republic of Tuva, the Arkhangelsk Region, the Volgograd Region, the Moscow Region, the Tula Region, Moscow City, and the Komi-Permyak Autonomous District. There were no separate elections in 1993.

In 1994 we finally saw the first real wave of elections to regional parliaments in the constituent entities of the Russian Federation – with elections held in 62 regions. These elections were held on different days – the most popular dates were: 20 March 1994 and 27 March 1994, however many regions went to the polls on other days (30 January, 13 March, 10 April, 29 May, 28 June, 20 November, 27 November etc). Therefore one could not talk about the existence of any uniformity regarding election date, and in the overwhelming majority of cases the regions did not, at this stage, see federal and regional elections coincide.

In 1995, regional elections took place in 10 constituent entities. Most did not coincide with the dates of federal elections, and were held on very different dates (22 January, 5 March, 10 June etc). On 17 December 1995 elections were held to the State Duma, and at the same time parliamentary elections in Adygea and Ulyanovsk Region were held, as were by-elections in Primorye Territory (low turnout had prevented regional parliament elections being held before then). Thus, in 1995, elections took place in 10 constituent entities, while only three campaigns coincided with federal elections.

In 1996 elections were held for regional legislatures in 27 constituent entities. The dates chosen for these elections covered a huge range: 31 March, 16 June, 6 October, 24 November, 1 December, 8 December, etc. There was an occasional overlap with the 1996 presidential election campaign held in June. In 1997, elections took place in 32 regions. Election dates were mainly set for December (7, 14, 26, 28 December), however in many regions elections took place on other dates (31 March, 29 June, 12 November etc). In 1998, elections took place in 15 regions. Most were in March (22 or 29 March) however this cannot be described as complete unity, as for example in Lipetsk Region regional elections took place on 31 May.

In 1999 elections were held in 12 regions, and in 4 cases were held alongside federal elections, but the remaining 8 saw regional and federal elections held on different dates (28 February, 7 March, 14 March etc). On 19 December 1999 elections took place to the State Duma, with simultaneous elections held to regional legislatures in Karachaevo-Cherkessia, Mordovia, Tatarstan, and Ulyanovsk Region.

In 2000, elections to legislatures in 23 regions were held. The election dates chosen included March (26 March, coinciding with the presidential elections), November and December (1 November, 22 November, 3 December, 24 December etc). In 2001, elections were held in 26 regions and in 2002 elections took place in 17 regions, over a similar range of dates.

Analysing the electoral calendar for this period (1991-2002), we cannot identify any unity governing the choice of Election Day. The practice of combining elections for regional legislatures and for the State Duma already existed, however it was far from ubiquitous. Regions took independent decisions regarding election date, and as a rule sought to hold their elections on a separate date, thus stressing their independence. The federal authorities did not insist on combining election days. Separate elections made it possible for a particular alignment of political forces to develop in regional parliaments, depending on how active the different local political party offices and different groups of regional elites were, including those who supported the governors and usually seemed strongest.

Table 1. Number of combined and separate regional elections, 1993-1999.

	1993	1995	1999
Number of regions where elections took place to regional legislatures	10	10	12
Number of regions where elections to regional legislatures coincided with the State Duma elections	10	3	4

Source: Central Election Commission, authors' archives.

First, our calculations show (see Tab. 1) that regional elections took place the same year as federal parliamentary elections in a very small number of regions. While State Duma elections were held for the first time in 1993, soon after the dissolution of the Soviets, elections to regional legislatures started to take place a little later – in 1994. This initial time lag also had an impact on

the possibility for future elections to be combined – the number of constituent entities in which elections took place in the same year as federal elections barely increased from 1993 to 1999.

Second, not all the constituent entities that held regional legislature elections the same year as federal elections opted to hold both on the same day. If in 1993 the coincidence rate was at 100% (given the small number of campaigns, since elections everywhere took place due to the dissolution of the Soviets in autumn 1993), then by 1995 this proportion has already fallen dramatically, and in 1999 did not show any significant increase.

The picture for the inter-election period is rather diverse. There was no date (or dates) on which elections were held to all legislatures across the country. There were a lot of election days and although in some regions they coincided, this did not happen to such an extent that we could identify a general trend or any kind of coordination of the electoral process. The only region that, throughout the 1990s, combined elections for regional legislatures and federal elections was Ulyanovsk Region.

The period after 2003 represents the main focus of interest for this research, since that is when we start to see a uniform transition to regional elections held under the mixed system, and the newly created, dominant party United Russia takes the lead. But federal and regional election campaigns could not be combined or coordinated immediately, due to the extensive inherited diversity in election dates, and the associated expiry of terms of office for the regional legislatures. In 2003 there were elections for regional legislatures in 11 regions, and in 7 of these cases regional and federal elections coincided, with both held on 7 December 2003. This was the moment when the first discernable sense of unity started to colour the election calendar. In the 4 remaining regions where regional elections did not coincide with federal elections, elections were held in March, although not on one day – two elections were held on 16 March, one on 2 March and another on 30 March.

Then, in 2004, elections for regional legislatures took place in 19 constituent entities of the Russian Federation across 9 different dates. The most commonly selected date was 14 March 2004 (chosen in 8 constituent entities and combined with the presidential elections). In 2005, elections took place in 20 constituent entities of the Russian Federation on 12 different days. And here it is not possible to identify any overarching pattern.

In 2006, elections took place in 17 regions. This was the first year in which we can identify a clear trend towards consolidation in Election Day selection, but trend of combining regional and federal elections has yet to emerge. This development was due to a Russian ruling

introducing two election dates – one in March and the other in October. All elections to regional legislatures that took place in 2006 fall on one of these two dates: 12 March (8 constituent entities) or 8 October (9 constituent entities).

In 2007, elections were held in 24 constituent entities. Of them, 16 campaigns did not coincide with their federal counterparts, as the spring election date was selected. But an impressive 15 out of these 16 elections took place on one day: 11 March. Other elections, in Krasnoyarsk Territory, were held on 15 April 2007, a special date triggered by the creation of a new constituent entity resulting from the unification of Krasnoyarsk Territory and the Taimyr (Dolgano-Nenets) and Evenki Autonomous Districts. Then, on 2 December 2007, the State Duma elections took place, and simultaneously – elections to regional legislatures were held in 8 constituent entities, out of a total 24 regional elections held in 2007. It is worth noting that since 2007, when United Russia achieved its peak results in federal elections, the trend towards holding elections the same year as federal elections and towards increasing numbers of simultaneous campaigns started to rise. If over the period 1993-2003, 10-12 elections took place the same year as federal elections – in 2007 this figure doubled.

In 2008, elections took place in 16 regions. In line with the trends that began in 2006, all elections took place on one of two dates: 2 March (in 11 regions, simultaneously with the presidential election) or 12 October (5 regions). In 2009, elections to regional legislatures were held in 12 regions, with 9 regions selecting 1 March and the remaining 3 holding their votes on 11 October. In 2010, elections were held in 14 regions, with 8 regions choosing 14 March and the remaining 6 selecting 10 October.

Finally, in 2011, 38 regions held elections to regional legislatures, 12 did not coincide with federal elections and were held on 13 March 2011. However, it was in 2011 that the political and legislative decision was taken to significantly increase the number of combined elections: to this end, special amendments were made to the laws, providing greater freedom to move or change election dates where the goal was to combine them. On 14 December 2011, elections were held for the State Duma, and simultaneously, for regional legislatures, in 26 constituent entities out of the 38 that held regional elections in 2011. This was the year in which the trend that can trace its origins back to 2007 was finally established, and there was a clear increase in the number of regions in which regional and federal elections took place at the same time.

Later, Russia's single election date was set for autumn, making it possible to increase the number of simultaneous elections. In 2012, elections to regional legislatures took place in 6 constituent entities, and they were all held on 14 October. In 2013, elections to regional legislatures took place in 16 constituent entities, and all were held on 8 September. In 2014, elections to regional legislatures took place in 14 regions, and all were held on 14 September. In 2015, elections to regional legislatures took place in 11 constituent entities, and all were held on 13 September.

The next federal elections were held in 2016, and there were no separate regional elections, since the springtime Election Day had been revoked. On 18 September 2016, elections to the State Duma were held along with the elections to regional legislatures in 39 constituent entities. This was the first and only time in Russia's history that all regional elections held the same year as federal elections, took place simultaneously. This was also the most significant year in terms of the number of regional elections that coincided with federal elections.

Thus, from 2007, i.e. the second federal campaign in which United Russia took part, we see a clear and sustained trend towards holding increasing numbers of elections to regional legislatures on the same day as federal elections. In 2011 there was also an increase in the number of simultaneous elections, a figure which in 2016 amounts to 100% due to only one voting date.

Tab. 2. Number of combined and separate regional elections, 2003-2016.

	2003	2007	2011	2016
Number of regions where elections took place to regional legislatures.	11	24	38	39
Number of regions where elections to regional legislatures coincided with federal elections	7	8	26	39

Source: Central Election Commission, authors' archives.

A general figure for the period 1993 to 2016 looks as follows (see Fig. 1):

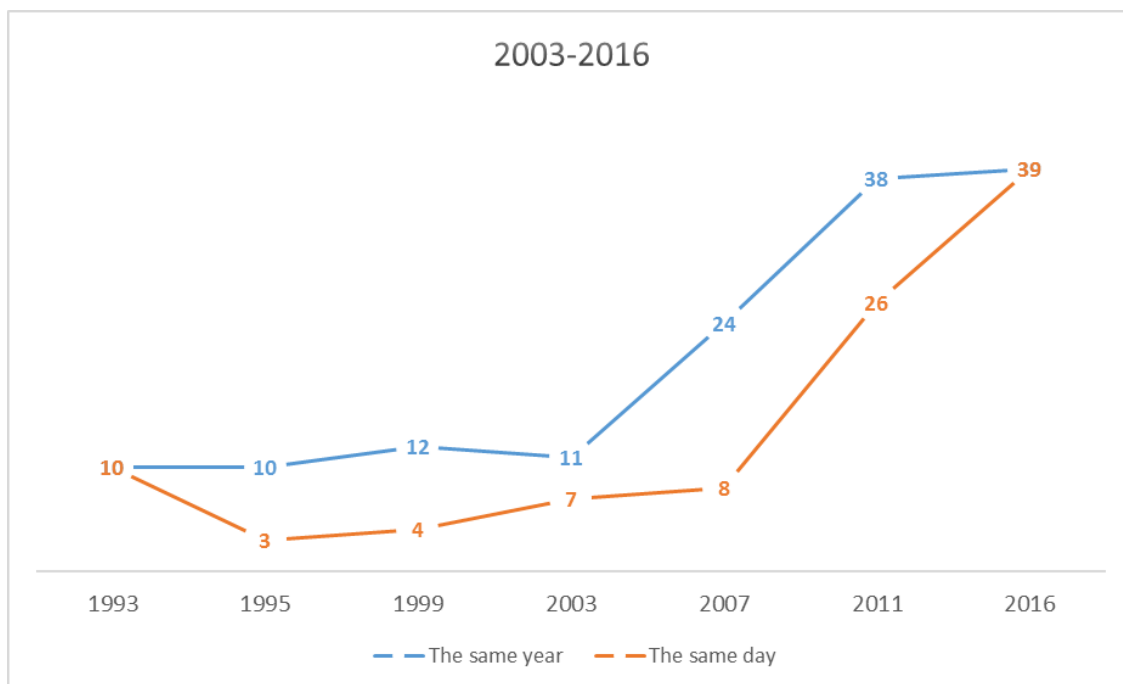


Figure 1. Number of joint and separate regional elections 1993-2016.

From 2006 it is also possible to identify a trend towards a reduction in the number of voting days used for regional elections.

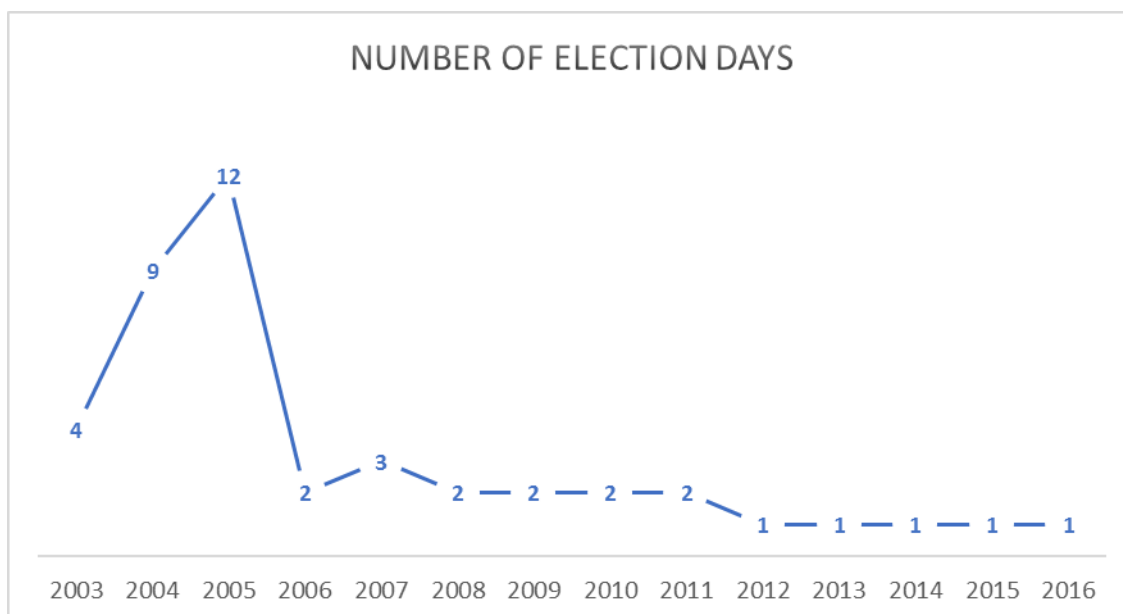


Figure 2. Number of election days for regional legislatures from 2003 to 2016.

As the figure above shows (see Fig. 2), after elections in 2011, the regional election calendar was completely unified and from 2012 all regional elections took place on one day.

Despite this increase in the number of regional elections that took place on the same day as federal elections, there are some interesting examples of places where regional elections have never coincided with federal elections. They include:

- 1) **Bashkiria.** Although parliamentary elections in Bashkiria took place in 1995, 1999, and 2003 (the same years that federal elections were held), in none of these years was there a combined campaign. Subsequent elections to the legislature in Bashkiria were held in 2008 and 2013.
- 2) **Komi Republic.** Elections in the Komi Republic from 1995 to 2011 took place in the same year as federal elections, however no combined elections were held. Subsequent elections took place in 2015.
- 3) **Khakassia.** Elections in the Republic of Khakassia never coincided with federal election years, they were held in 1992, 1997, 2001, 2004, 2009 and 2013.
- 4) **Zabaykalye Territory.** Zabaykalye Territory was created in 2008, and elections have been held twice, in 2008 and 2013.
- 5) **Khabarovsk Territory.** Elections in Khabarovsk Territory have never been held the same year as federal elections, they were held in: 1994, 1997, 2001, 2005, 2010 and 2014.
- 6) **Belgorod Region.** Similarly, elections in Belgorod Region have never been held the same year as federal elections, they were held in 1994, 1997, 2001, 2005, 2010 and 2015.
- 7) **Bryansk Region.** Elections in Bryansk Region have always been held in a different year from federal elections, in 1994, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2009 and 2014.
- 8) **Voronezh Region.** Similarly – 1994, 1997, 2001, 2005, 2010, and 2015.
- 9) **Ivanovo Region.** Similarly – 1994, 1996, 2000, 2005, 2008, and 2013.
- 10) **Irkutsk Region** (including the previous constituent entity of the Russian Federation – Irkutsk Region, before unification with Ust-Ordynsk Buryat Autonomous Region). Similarly – 1994, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008, and 2013.
- 11) **Kaluga Region.** Similarly – 1994, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2010, and 2015.
- 12) **Kostroma Region.** Similarly – 1994, 1996, 2000, 2005, 2010, and 2015.
- 13) **Kurgan Region.** Similarly – 1994, 1996, 2000, 2005, 2010, and 2015.
- 14) **Magadan Region.** Similarly – 1994, 1997, 2001, 2005, 2010, and 2015.

- 15) **Novosibirsk Region.** Similarly – 1994, 1997, 2001, 2005, 2010, and 2015.
- 16) **Rostov Region.** In Rostov Region, elections were held in 1994 and 1998. Then elections were held in 2003, the same year as federal elections – but they were not combined. Subsequent elections took place in 2008 and 2013.
- 17) **Ryazan Region.** In Ryazan Region, elections have never coincided with federal elections – 1994, 1997, 2001, 2005, 2010, and 2015.
- 18) **Sakhalin Region.** Similarly – 1994, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012 and 2017.
- 19) **Chelyabinsk Region.** Similarly – 1994, 1996, 2000, 2005, 2010, and 2015.
- 20) **Yaroslavl Region.** Similarly – 1994, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008, and 2013.
- 21) **Nenets Autonomous Region.** Similarly – 1994, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2009 and 2014.
- 22) **Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Area.** Similarly – 1994, 1996, 2000, 2005, 2010, and 2015.
- 23) **Aginsk Buryat Autonomous Area.** This constituent entity was dissolved in 2008. Prior to that, legislative assembly elections took place in 1994, 1996, 2000 and 2005 – i.e. on no occasion did elections coincide with federal elections.
- 24) **Perm Region.** This constituent entity was dissolved in 2005. Prior to that, legislative assembly elections took place in 1994, 1997 and 2001.
- 25) **Kamchatka Region.** This constituent entity was dissolved in 2007. Prior to that, elections took place in 1994, 1997 and 2001.
- 26) **Evenki Autonomous Area.** This constituent entity was dissolved in 2007. Prior to that, elections took place in 1994, 1996 and 2001.
- 27) **Ust-Ordynsk Buryat Autonomous Area.** This constituent entity was dissolved in 2008. Prior to that, elections took place in 1994, 1996, 2000 and 2004.
- 28) **Chita Region.** This constituent entity was dissolved in 2008. Prior to that, elections took place in 1994, 1996, 2000 and 2004.
- 29) **The Republic of Crimea** and 30) **Sevastopol.** These regions took on the status of Russian Federation constituent entities in 2014, that same year elections to regional parliaments were held.

Thus, a significant number of Russian Federation constituent entities have never combined elections to regional legislatures with elections to the State Duma. These include 23 that are currently part of the Russian Federation. It is notable that in many unified regions,

regional elections were not combined with federal elections, a practice that in some places continued after their formation (e.g. the case of Irkutsk Region and Zabaykalye Territory).

There are still a sizable number of regions that have never combined regional and federal elections, while we cannot name any that have always held combined elections. The only region to have held combined elections since 2007 is the newly formed Kamchatka Territory. However, there are a significant number of regions that held simultaneous elections in 2011 and 2016 – Ingushetia, Karelia, Mordovia, Chuvashia, Altai Territory, Kamchatka Territory, Krasnoyarsk Territory, Perm Territory, Primorye Territory, Amur Region, Astrakhan Region, Vologda Region, Leningrad Region, Lipetsk Region, Moscow Region, Murmansk Region, Novgorod Region, Omsk Region, Orlov Region, Pskov Region, Samara Region, Sverdlovsk Region, Tomsk Region, Tyumen Region, St. Petersburg, and Jewish Autonomous Region, i.e. all 26 regions that held simultaneous elections in 2011 did so again in 2016.

It is also worth noting the practice of combining elections to regional legislatures with presidential elections. In 2004, 4 regions chose to do this, in 2008 – 11 regions, in 2012 and 2016 – none did. But we will not include these cases in our calculations, since we are focused on analysing parliamentary elections, and therefore need to ensure that data is comparable.

Overall, from 1991 to 2016, there is a clear tendency towards unifying the election calendar. 2006 can be called a landmark year, as it saw unification around first two dates, then one date for all regional elections. 2011, a no less crucial year, saw the first significant number of regions moving to adopt a combined regional and federal election day, and then there is 2016, a groundbreaking year in which all regions that held elections to their legislature did so at the same time as federal elections.

Given this trend, we can conclude that the unification of the election calendar, the favouring of a single election day, is part of government policy. Combined elections are, by definition, convenient from an organisational point of view, the campaign expenses are significantly reduced and they are cheaper for the government as well. However, is the key factor in this success a growth in support for the ‘party of power’ in combined elections? And will this lead to a fall in the level of competitiveness? These are questions that we will answer in the following two sections.

Electoral support for political parties in elections held at different territorial levels

Simultaneous elections

This section considers the difference in party votes when federal and regional elections are held on one day. In 2003, regional elections took place in 11 constituent entities of the Russian Federation, of which 7 regions held joint federal elections on 7 December 2003.

The average proportion of the vote that went to United Russia based on data from 7 constituent entities amounted to 46.93%, the average proportion of the vote for United Russia in federal elections in the same 7 constituent entities amounted to 51.8%. Thus, the difference (between regional and federal figures) amounts to 4.86 points. The average vote for the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF), according to information from 7 constituent entities amounted to 12.94%, and 11.06% at federal elections in the same 7 constituent entities (a difference of +1.89 points in favour of regional elections). The average vote for the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) in 7 regions amounted to 9.45%, and 11.02% in federal elections in the same constituent entities – a difference of 1.5 points.

As these calculations show, the largest negative difference (when regional and federal elections are compared) can be seen in the United Russia statistics. This testifies to the fact that support for United Russia in regional elections is lower than during federal elections held simultaneously. The difference in statistics for the LDPR is also negative, although less markedly so than for United Russia. At the same time, the Communist Party boasts greater support at regional elections than in federal elections.

Let us now look at whether these trends continued in the 2007 parliamentary elections. In 2007, regional elections were held in 24 constituent entities, including 8 regions that held them at the same time as the federal elections, on 2 December 2007. The simple average calculated for United Russia in regional elections in these 8 constituent entities was 64.59% against 68.33% in federal elections in the same regions. The difference is again negative, but slightly smaller, at -3.74. By comparison, the Communist Party again proved more popular in regional elections: the simple average calculated for the KPRF in data from 8 constituent entities was 13.44% for regional elections against 10.58% at federal elections (a difference of +2.86 in favour of regional elections). The simple average calculated for the LDPR in data from 8 constituent entities is 7.33% in regional elections, and 7.18% in federal elections. The difference was again positive, at

+0.15. The simple average for Just Russia on data from 8 constituent entities amounted to 9.91% in regional elections, while in federal elections it was 6.81%, delivering a positive difference of +3.1.

A comparison of the 2003 and 2007 election results shows that, broadly, the level of support for United Russia and the Communist Party does continue to depend on the level at which elections are held.

As before, United Russia had the largest negative difference, indicating greater electoral support in federal elections than it can muster at regional ones, when elections are held on the same day. By comparison, the KPRF saw a positive difference, which increased since the 2003 election. The position of the LDPR has changed, since in 2003 it had a negative difference, while in 2007 it saw a small (less than 1 percentage point) positive difference, which in this case indicates it experienced a greater fall in support at a federal than at a regional level – although in both cases, the levels of support fell.

The first time Just Russia took part in a joint election campaign in 2007 a very significant positive difference was recorded, indicating that it had greater support in regional elections than at federal ones.

Moving on, we will consider the two most recent federal election campaigns. In 2011, regional elections took place in 38 constituent entities, of which 24 regions held them together with federal elections on 14 December.

The simple average for United Russia in regional elections, according to data from 24 constituent entities, was 43.30% while in federal elections in those same regions the figure was 43.59%. This is a difference of -0.3.

The KPRF's simple average result, according to data from 24 constituent entities, was 19.70%, while in federal elections in those same constituent entities, the figure was 19.14%, a difference therefore of +0.56.

The simple average for the LDPR in regional elections was 14.96%, against 14.04% in federal elections – a difference of +0.92.

And finally, the simple average for Just Russia in regional elections was 16.64% against 15.76% in federal elections – a difference of +0.88.

2011 saw a sharp dip in support for United Russia at both regional and federal elections. At the same time, we see increased electoral support for parliamentary opposition parties. There is also a strengthening trend towards combining federal and regional elections. Given these circumstances, the difference in electoral support for parties at regional and federal elections reduces – remaining close to zero for the party of power and for parliamentary opposition parties. Nonetheless, the difference for United Russia remained negative, which as before indicates that there is greater support for the party in federal elections than in regional elections. By contrast, the differences for the KPRF, LDPR, and Just Russia parties remain positive, meaning that they garner greater support in regional elections. However, both positive and negative differences for all parliamentary parties in 2011 amounted to less than one percentage point, which, when seen in the context of the electoral changes that took place at a system-wide level, indicates a trend of moving towards the gradual nationalisation and institutionalization of Russia's party system.

Finally, in 2016 regional elections took place in 39 constituent entities of the Russian Federation, of which 39 combined them with federal elections on 18 September.

The simple average figure for United Russia in these 39 constituent entities amounted to 48.81%, while this figure in federal elections was 49.98%, giving a difference of -1.17. The KPRF had a simple average (based on data from these 39 constituent entities) of 15.27%, and 13.16% in federal elections – a difference of +2.12. The LDPR saw a simple average in regional elections of 16.24%, and 15.66% in federal elections – a difference of +0.58. The simple average for Just Russia based on data from these 39 constituent entities was 9.01%, and 6.97% in the federal elections held at the same time – a difference of +2.04.

In the 2016 parliamentary elections we again see nationwide growth (although not particularly intense) in electoral support for United Russia, and an overall fall in electoral support for parliamentary opposition parties (however we did note that, in the regional sample data we analysed, there was also an increase in support for the LDPR). This process, our research indicates, was accompanied by a new increase in the difference between regional and federal electoral support for almost all parties. United Russia retains its negative difference – and in fact it significantly increases compared to 2011. The KPRF keeps its positive difference, and also notes a significant increase. The LDPR also sees a positive difference, but is the only party for which this difference falls. Just Russia continues to win greater support in regional elections, increasing this gap. These results indicate the ongoing trend towards greater support for the party

of power in federal elections than in regional elections, and the reverse situation for parliamentary opposition parties.

Now we will analyse this situation regarding simultaneous federal and regional elections, using data from 2003 to 2016 for each party (see Fig. 3-6):

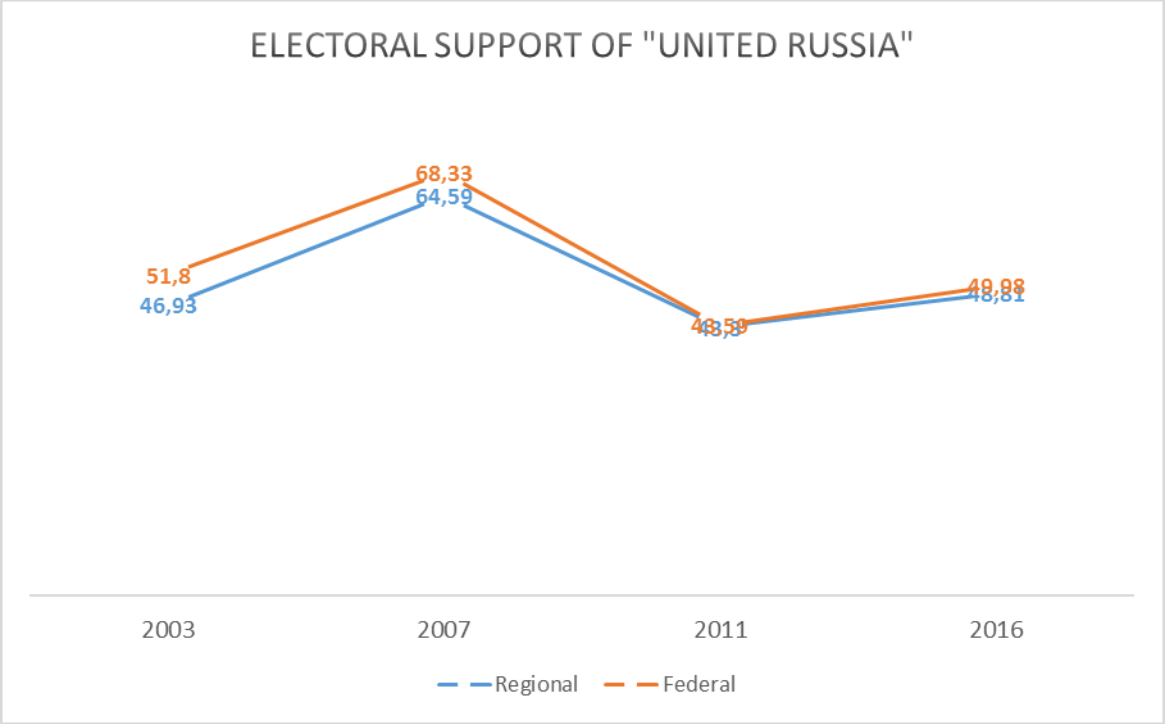


Figure 3. Electoral support for United Russia in elections 2003-2016.

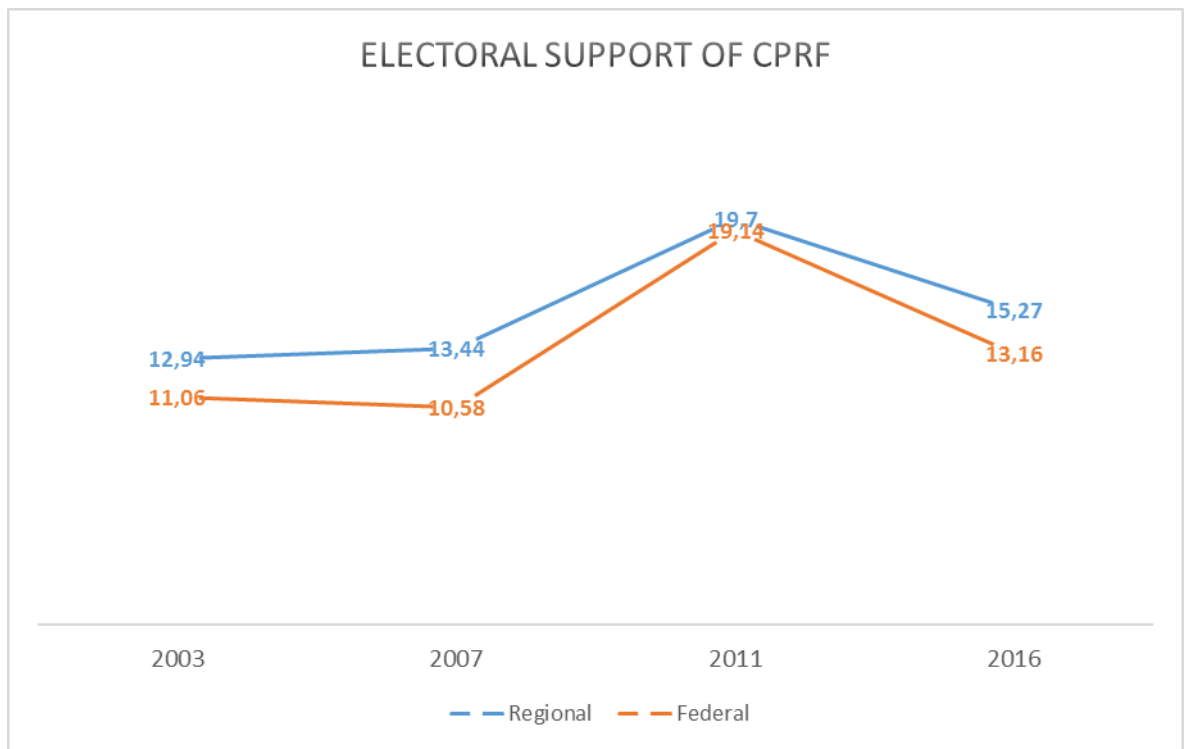


Figure 4. Electoral support for the KPRF in elections 2003-2016.

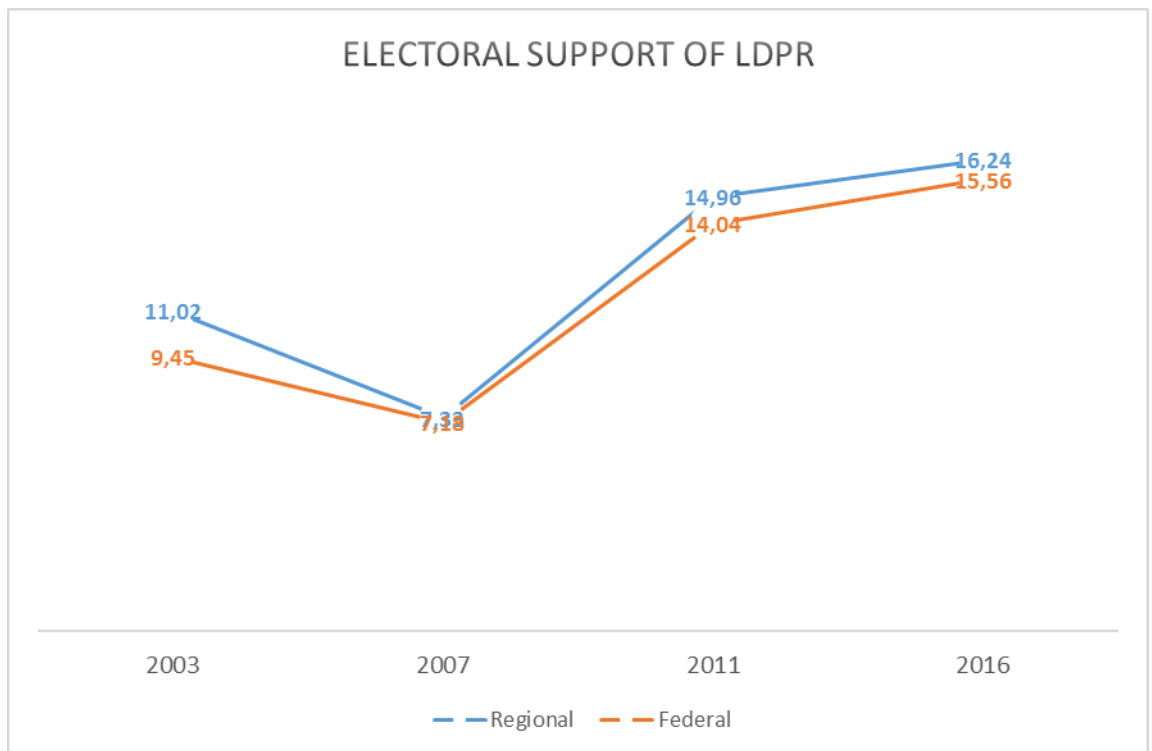


Figure 5. Electoral support for the LDPR in elections 2003-2016.

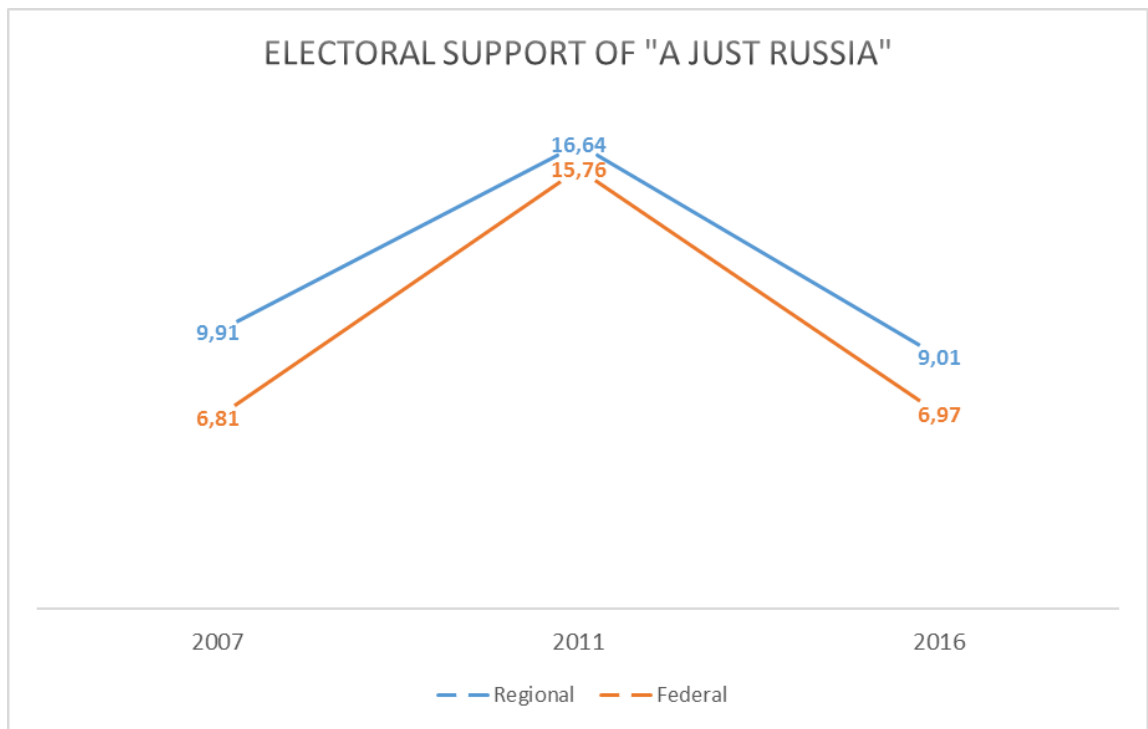


Figure 6. Electoral support for Just Russia in elections 2003-2016.

Thus our research makes it possible to draw the following conclusions:

- Where federal and regional elections are held simultaneously in the same constituent entities, United Russia always receives a higher percent of the vote in federal elections than it does in regional elections.
- By contrast, the KPRF always received a smaller percent of the vote in federal elections than in regional elections held at the same time. A similar trend is observed regarding Just Russia, which started participating in federal elections in 2007. The LDPR's results also confirm this trend, except for the 2003 elections, in which its regional results were lower than its federal results, which confirms the notion that it has a badly developed regional network.

In order to clarify the conclusions reached regarding the relationship between the Russian electorate's voting behaviour in simultaneous federal and regional elections, we have also identified the overall result for each party at regional elections. The overall result is calculated by dividing the number of votes received by a party in particular regional sample by the total turnout in those regions. Unlike the simple average presented above, this result reflects the region's size, and is interesting in that it shows the overall volume of support for a party in the sample under observation. By comparing overall results in regional and federal elections, we are

able to draw conclusions about whether combining elections benefits United Russia or other parties.

In 2003, United Russia received 37.56% of the vote in State Duma elections. The simple average for the 7 regions that held simultaneous elections was 51.8%. The overall figure for these same regions stood at 45.6%. It is clear that there is greater support for United Russia in those constituent entities that saw simultaneous federal and regional elections. The KPRF that year won 12.61% of votes in State Duma elections. The simple average for those 7 regions stood at 11.06% and the overall figure for those regions was 12.36%. In 2003, the LDPR received 11.45% of the vote in State Duma elections. The simple average for those regions that held simultaneous elections was 11.02%, against an overall figure in the same regions of only 10.13%. Opposition parties' results indicate that simultaneous elections do not result in an increased level of support. The results for the KPRF and the LDPR show that holding simultaneous elections does not help these parties gain more votes.

In 2007, United Russia received 64.30% of the vote in State Duma elections. The simple average for 8 regions in which simultaneous elections were held was 68.33%, while the overall figure across these same regions was 66.1%. This again indicates a positive difference in votes in those constituent entities that held simultaneous elections, albeit a rather modest one. The same year, the KPRF received 11.57% of the vote in State Duma elections. The simple average for 8 regions that held simultaneous elections was 10.58% and the overall figure for the same regions was 12.16%. The LDPR in 2007 received 8.14% of the vote in State Duma elections. The simple average for those 8 regions was 7.18%, while the overall figure for these regions stood at 7.22%. Just Russia in 2007 received 7.74% of the vote in State Duma elections. Its simple average for those 8 regions amounted to 6.97%, and the overall figure for these regions – 7.44%. As in 2003, results for opposition parties in regions that held simultaneous elections do not demonstrate a trend towards greater electoral support during simultaneous elections.

In 2011, United Russia gathered 49.31% of the vote in State Duma elections. The simple average for 24 regions in which simultaneous elections were held was 43.59%, and the overall figure in these same regions was 38.54%. Unlike in previous years, in 2011, United Russia received a smaller percent of the vote in those regions where simultaneous elections were held than it did overall nationwide. That year the KPRF received 19.19% of the vote in State Duma elections. The simple average for those 24 regions was 19.14% of the vote and their overall figure was 19.39%. The LDPR in 2011 received 11.68% of the vote in State Duma elections. The simple average for those 24 regions was 14.04%, the overall figure for the same regions –

13.77%. Just Russia in 2011 received 13.25% of the vote in State Duma elections. The simple average for those 24 regions was 15.76%, and the overall figure for the same regions – 16.23%.

2011 is an interesting case study. Support for the ‘party of power’ fell, and opposition parties took a greater share of the vote than they had in previous years – a departure from the previous years’ results. While United Russia receives a lower share of the vote in regions that hold simultaneous elections than it does in the country as a whole, opposition parties such as LDPR and Just Russia receive significantly greater percents of the vote (a trend also faintly reflected in the fortunes of the KPRF). Therefore, it cannot be said that the transition to the general combination of elections since 2011 aided United Russia, or that it boosted its overall support. However, of course, a great deal depended on the regional sample, which grew in number in comparison with 2007 and turned out to be more pro-opposition than before.

In 2016 we saw the same trend. United Russia received 54.2% of the vote in State Duma elections for a single federal district. The simple average for the 39 regions that held combined elections amounted to 49.98%, while the overall average for the same regions amounted to 49.74%.

The KPRF in 2016 received 13.34% of the vote in State Duma elections. The simple average for the 39 regions that held combined elections amounted to 13.16%, while the overall figure for the same regions was 13.82%. The LDPR won 13.14% of the vote in federal elections. The simple average amounted to 15.66%, and the overall figure to just 12.64%. Just Russia’s result in the federal elections nationwide was 6.22%, with a simple average for the 39 regions that held combined elections of 6.97%, and an overall figure in the same regions of 6.65%

So, in 2016, United Russia again received reduced electoral support in those regions that held combined elections. Regarding opposition parties, no discernable difference between the results in the country as a whole and the regional sample of areas that held combined elections was identified this year. United Russia only achieved a significantly larger percentage in those regions that held combined elections than it did nationwide back in 2003.

Overall, on the basis of the data received it is not possible to draw concrete conclusions about the existence of a clearly defined dependence of electoral support for these political parties on whether or not combined federal and regional elections are held in specific regions. The level of support may also depend on nuances relating to the concrete sample of regions that held combined elections. Therefore one can only draw general conclusions that combined elections themselves have not led to any increase in United Russia’s support, which corresponds to the

conclusion we reached above, that United Russia performed worse in combined regional elections than in federal elections.

In other words, holding regional elections at the same time as a federal election campaign can even have a negative impact on the ‘party of power’ performance.

Separate federal and regional elections

Before moving to an analysis of regional election results in the inter-election period, and their differences from federal election results, we would like to note nationwide voting trends in federal elections.

In 2003, United Russia received 37.56% of the vote, after which it experienced a sudden climb to 64.30% in 2007. It then fell sharply to 49.31% in 2011 before rallying to 54.2% in 2016. In 2003, the KPRF gathered 12.61% of the vote in federal elections, which was followed by a slight decline in electoral support to 11.57% in 2007. Thereafter it saw significant growth to 19.19% in 2011, before falling again to 13.34% in 2016. The LDPR in 2003 received 11.45% in federal elections, which was followed by a collapse in electoral support to 8.14% in 2007. It then rose to 11.68% in 2011 and 13.14% in 2016. Just Russia in 2007 received 7.74% of the vote, and then grew significantly to 13.25% in 2011, before falling dramatically to 6.22% in 2016.

We analysed differences in electoral results for parties in regional elections 2004-2007 (obviously not including the combined elections of autumn 2007), and in federal elections in 2003 in the same regions. The charts below use the overall party result for the corresponding regional selections (defined for each election year as the entire set of regions in which separate regional and federal elections took place, and for the same regional sample we calculate the results for the federal election campaign).

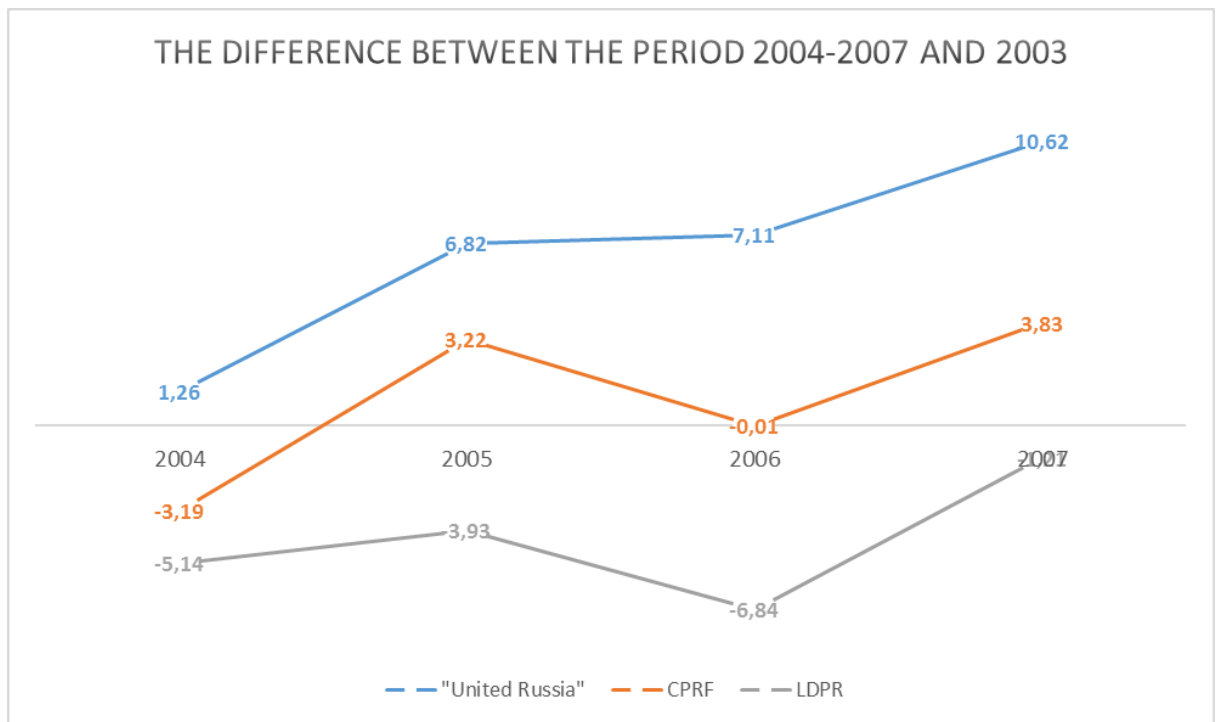


Figure 7. Difference in electoral support for United Russia, KPRF, LDPR, Just Russia in the inter-election period 2004-2007 compared to 2003.

As this illustration shows, a negative difference, i.e. a smaller vote in inter-election period at regional elections than in the 2003 federal elections in those same regions for the whole period is only seen for the LDPR. This indicates the frailty of support for the LDPR in regional elections, where they are held separately from federal elections. United Russia's difference is always positive, and displays a clear rising trend, indicating continual growth in United Russia's regional election results from 2003 to 2007; after which this trend can only be said to continue in the significant leap in United Russia's results seen in the 2007 State Duma elections. As for the KPRF, over this period, no stable trend was identified as its performance in regional elections fluctuated. Nonetheless, the regional campaigns in 2005 and 2007 were successful, and did deliver an increase in support for this party.

For a fuller picture, we will compare those same regional results in the inter-election period with results from – not previous – but subsequent federal elections of 2007 in those same constituent entities of the Russian Federation.

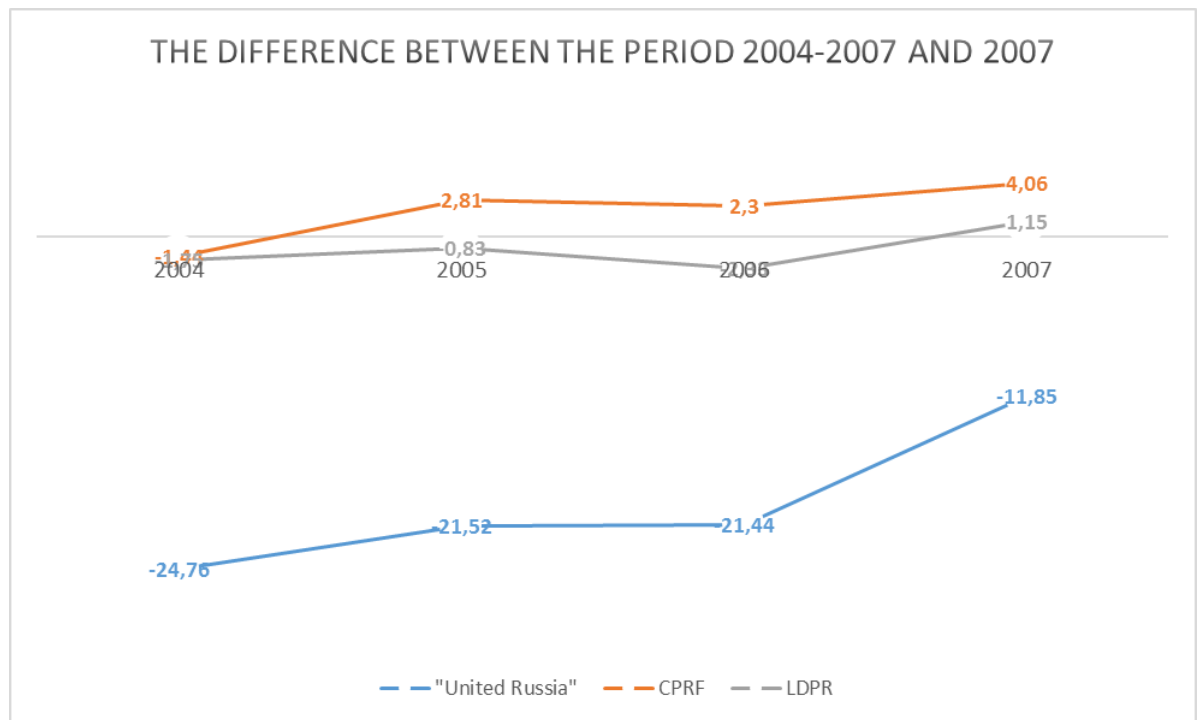


Figure 8. Differences in electoral support for United Russia, the Communist Party, the LDPR, in the inter-election period 2004-2007 compared to 2007.

This chart shows that the trends in the differences in United Russia's performance in the inter-election period 2004-2007, compared with its performance in the federal election of 2007, are positive, although all the differences involved were, in fact, negative. In other words, in all regional elections in the 2004-2007 period, United Russia received a smaller share of the vote than in the subsequent federal elections of 2007, its regional results grew and then the biggest increase came with the 2007 federal elections. It is also worth noting the differences in regional elections held in spring 2007 separately from federal elections – but several months before them: it is -11.85 points. This difference for elections held simultaneously was -3.74, which highlights that simultaneous elections show reduced differences between regional and federal results. The LDPR continues to lag behind in regional elections (compared with both 2003 and 2007), except for spring 2007, in which it showed a positive difference. The KPRF results just fluctuated.

We provide a similar chart for the inter-election period of 2008-2011. We start with a comparison of results in regional elections held during this period with the preceding federal elections of 2007.

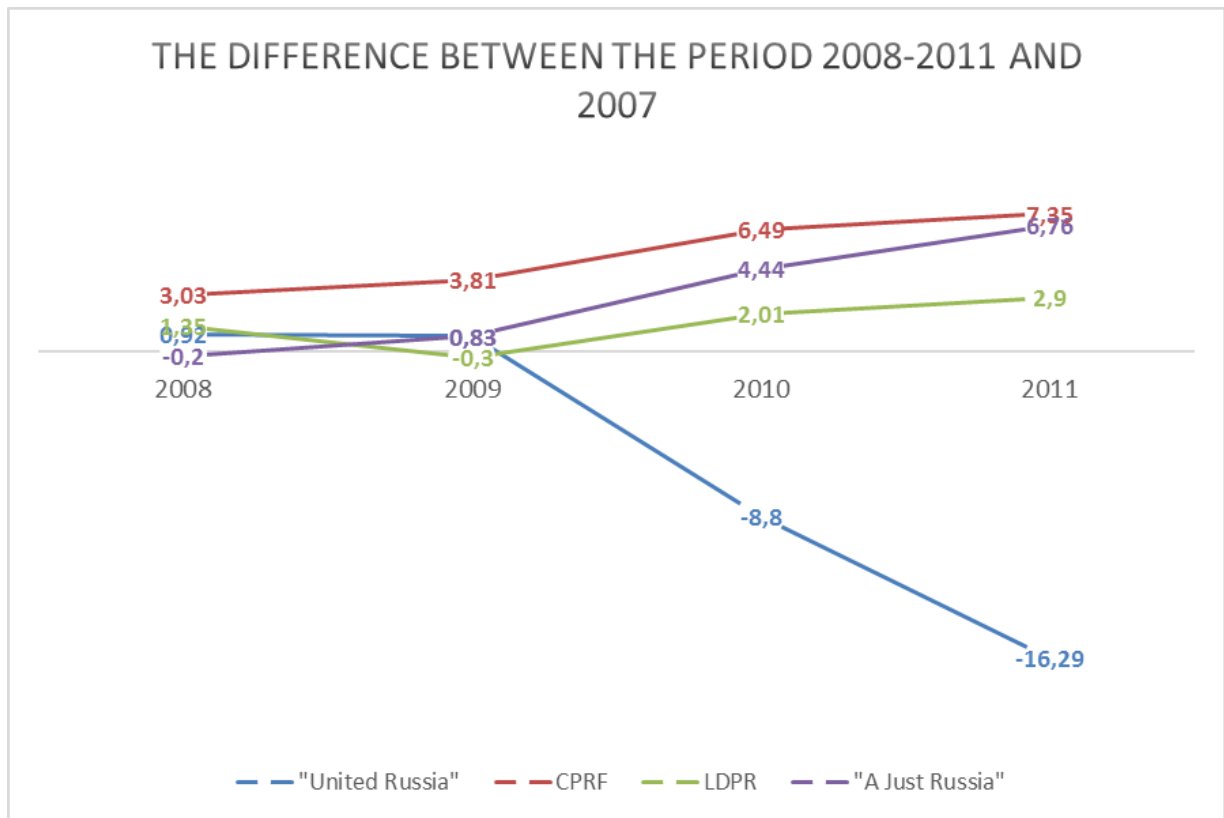


Figure 9. The difference in electoral support for United Russia, the Communist Party, the LDPR, Just Russia, in the inter-election period 2008-2011 compared with 2007.

Figure 9 is very indicative. It shows the difference in party support at regional elections held in the inter-election period of 2008-2011 compared with the 2007 federal elections. United Russia's difference for two years remains positive at just above zero, and there is a high result for party support itself (about 65%). The turning point – for the worse in the party's fortunes – comes in 2010, when the difference slips into the negative and falls to more than 8 points. In 2011 the situation deteriorates further. This fall in the level of electoral support for United Russia was further expressed in the 2011 federal elections. As for the other parties, throughout the period in question, the CPRF retained a positive difference, which increased year-by-year. This trend was reflected then in the higher results the party got in the 2011 federal elections. The differences seen for Just Russia were also positive, and growing, from 2008 to 2011. Having moved from negative to positive in 2009, it then continued to increase – bringing Just Russia closer to the sizable electoral support received in the federal elections coming after. The LDPR results fluctuated, underlining the party's unstable position in regional elections. In 2008 the difference was positive, but in 2009 it was negative, and only increased in 2010-2011, having influenced the overall result nationwide in the 2011 State Duma elections.

We have made a similar chart for the period, comparing the results for regional party support with federal results in the subsequent 2011 elections.

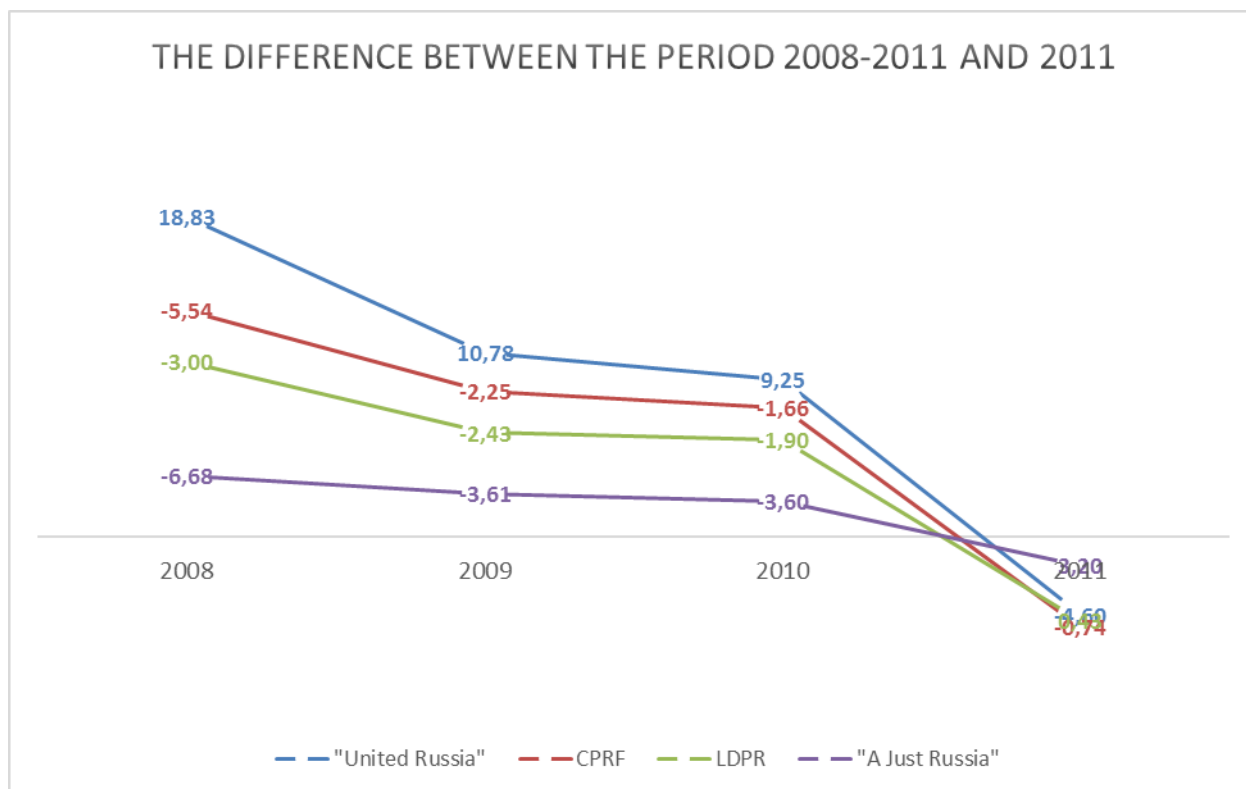


Figure 10. Difference in electoral support for United Russia, KPRF, LDPR, Just Russia in the inter-election period 2008-2011 compared to 2011.

This chart (see Fig. 10) shows how the difference for regional elections 2008-2011 gradually reduces over the period, and falls into the negative, when in regional elections in spring 2011 United Russia received even fewer votes than in the federal elections that followed later that year in those same regions. The difference between separate regional elections and federal elections in spring 2011 was -4.6 points, while in combined elections the same year this figure was -0.3. Thus it follows that, in the 2011 federal elections, despite the decline in United Russia's ratings, the combination of elections acted as a corrective, since support for United Russia could have fallen further as the preceding regional elections showed. The difference for the KPRF throughout this period remained in the negative, i.e. in regional elections the KPRF received fewer votes than in the 2011 federal elections, during which it performed better.

The LDPR and Just Russia also saw a gradual reduction in this difference and a gradual movement towards the 2011 results, however, in 2011 these parties saw the difference moving into the positive – meaning that their results in the regional elections of spring 2011 were higher than in the federal elections the same year in the same regions.

We provide a similar graph for the inter-election period over the years 2012-2015. This period was not extended to include 2016, as that year did not see any regional elections held separately.

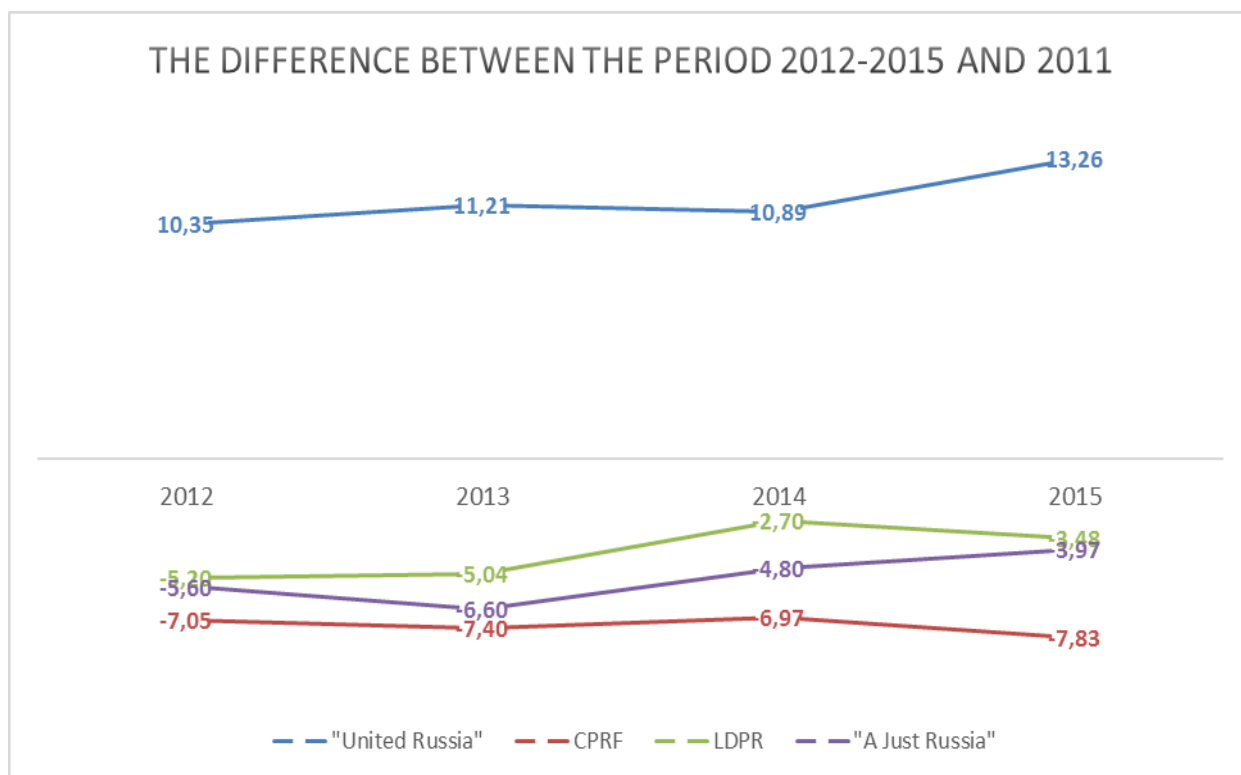


Figure 11. Difference in electoral support for United Russia, KPRF, LDPR, Just Russia in the inter-election period 2012-2015 compared to 2011.

United Russia has demonstrated a consistent positive difference in results, notably without any sharp rises or falls throughout the entire 2012-2015 period, compared to the 2011 federal elections. Throughout the period under observation, United Russia's regional results were significantly higher than the result achieved in the 2011 federal elections, and by 2015 there was even stronger growth. It is important to note that United Russia had already overcome its negative trends by autumn 2012. In stark contrast to this, all three parliamentary opposition parties have negative differences in their results compared to 2011 throughout this period, and their results are already falling in late 2012. After a very successful showing in the 2011 federal elections, all three parties have been losing ground rapidly.

Here we provide a chart for the period that illustrates the relationship to the last federal elections (in 2016).

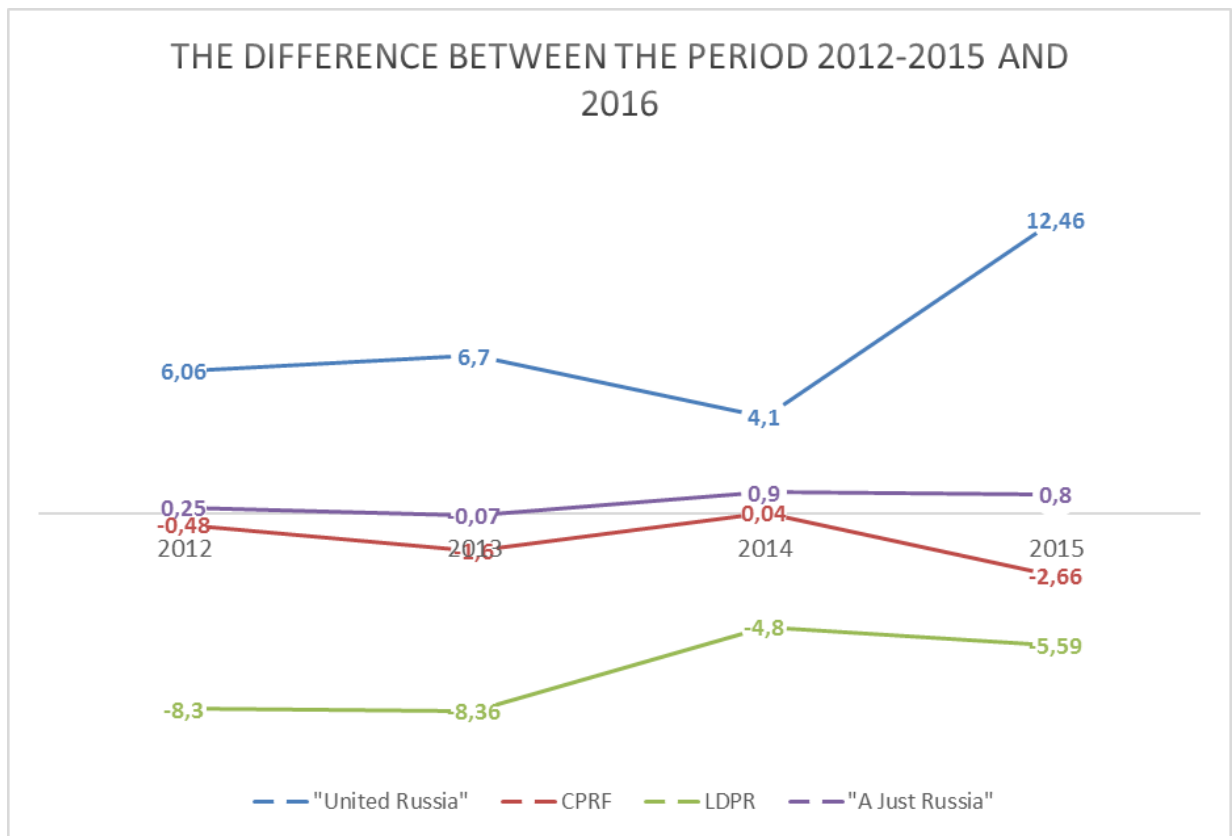


Figure 12. Difference in electoral support for United Russia, KPRF, LDPR, Just Russia in the inter-election period of 2012-2015 compared to 2016.

Compared to 2016, in elections over the 2012-2015 period, United Russia demonstrates higher results in regional elections than in federal elections. This may seem paradoxical, since in the 2016 federal elections United Russia's electoral support grew significantly by comparison with 2011. But it turns out that in those regions during the inter-election period its support was even higher than in 2016, and, notably, this transition was not smooth. Thus, in the 2012-2015 inter-election period, United Russia was the only example of a party getting a larger share of the vote in regional elections than in all the 'bordering' federal elections, i.e. those conducted just before and after these regional campaigns. Nonetheless, in regional elections held simultaneously with the 2016 elections, United Russia went on to receive fewer votes than in the federal elections held at the same time. This means that separate elections were much more beneficial to the 'party of power' than combined elections.

The KPRF by comparison nearly always has a negative difference, the only exception being 2014, when there was virtually no difference. This party received a smaller proportion of the vote in regional elections over this period than it did during federal elections in 2016. Data for the LDPR from regional elections over this period reflects this trend; the party won fewer

votes than in the 2016 federal elections. Just Russia shows a small difference, with deviations on both sides. This correlates with the sharp fall in electoral support for it as early as in the 2012 regional elections.

A comparison of the results achieved by the 'party of power' and parliamentary opposition parties in simultaneous regional and federal elections clearly shows the following consistent trend: United Russia always gets a higher percentage of the vote in federal elections than at regional elections. Opposition parties, in turn, receive a higher percentage of the vote in regional elections than in federal elections. This can be explained by the concept of strategic voting as described in this research. Voters in federal elections tend to vote for a tried and tested major political player, able to ensure state stability. In regional elections, however, they are more likely to vote more sincerely according to their personal preferences and considering local problems associated usually with regional authorities.

So, the regional agenda is usually more problematic for the electorate, which is why the level of discontent with the authorities is higher at a regional level than at a federal level. Voters who cast their ballots strategically usually select the 'party of power' in federal elections and opposition parties in regional elections. Usually, this is particularly clearly pronounced in combined elections, in which the theory of strategic voting defines the relationship between the different types of vote that are cast on any one day.

Interestingly, these observations do not extend throughout the entire inter-election period, i.e. they do not apply to those regional elections that do not take place alongside federal elections. We cannot claim that United Russia always receives a lower percentage of votes in regional elections in the inter-election period than in federal elections before and after the period. By contrast, in 2012-2015, United Russia becomes the only example of a political party receiving more votes in regional elections each year by comparison with its performance in the preceding and following federal elections. We believe this indicates a more effective mobilisation of a loyal electorate during the separate elections of 2012-2015, which were almost always held amid falling turnout and reduced support and mobilisation for the parliamentary opposition. But this situation only came to pass after 2012.

Degrees of competitiveness in elections held at different territorial levels

Simultaneous elections

In this section, we calculated the effective number of parties (ENP) using both Laakso-Taagepera and Juan Molinar methods. In order to analyse the difference in degrees of competitiveness, we compare data for regional and federal elections – concurrently and in the inter-election period – by calculating the simple average ENP for the regional sample each year. Let us start by analysing the degree of competitiveness in combined federal and regional elections. We will calculate the indicators of electoral inflation in our version, i.e. in the form of the difference in degree of competitiveness, by using the difference between the average regional and federal ENP. The higher the ENP, the higher the election competitiveness, and consequently a positive difference indicates that competitiveness may be higher at a regional level. LT denotes the Laakso-Taagepera index and JM – the Juan Molinar index.

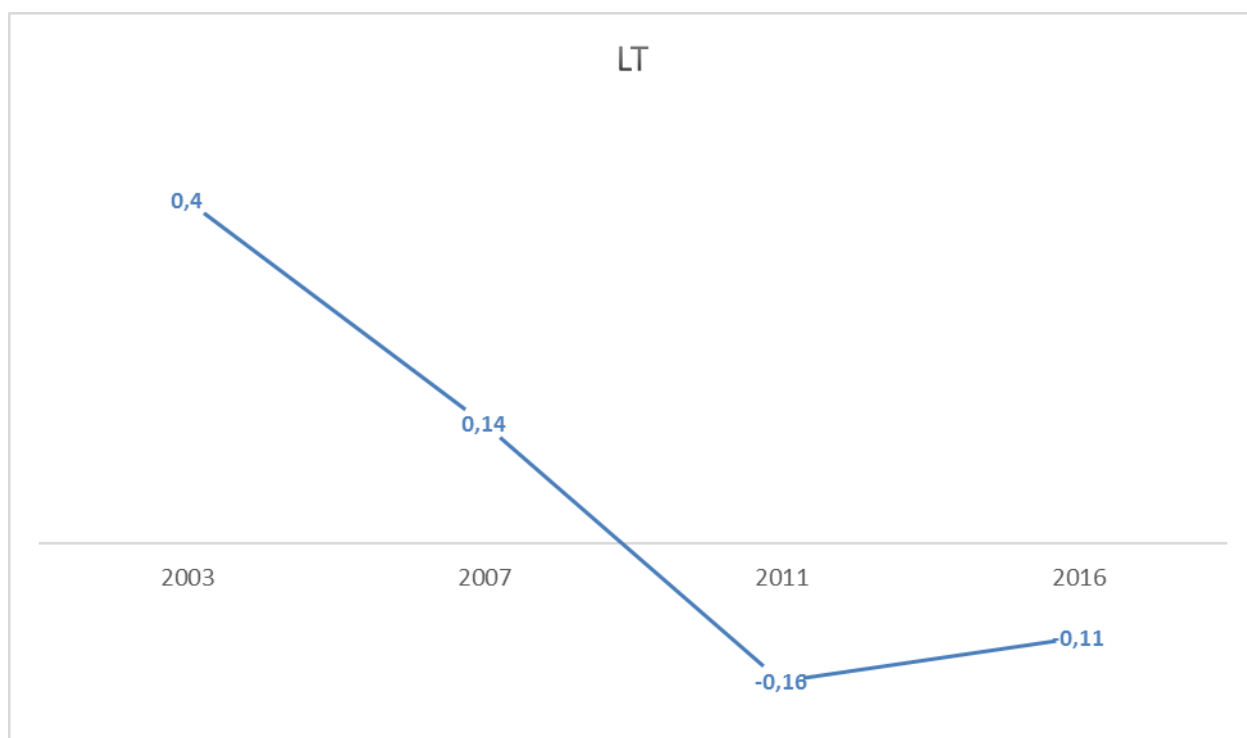


Figure 13. Difference in competitiveness (LT) in simultaneous elections 2003-2016.

If we calculate ENP trends using the Laakso-Taagepera method, we see that in 2003 and 2007 competitiveness at a regional level was higher than at a federal level, while in 2011 and 2016 – the reverse was the case (Fig. 13). That said, in general, the amplitude of this difference indicates a high degree of coincidence in the level of competitiveness in combined elections, however with the 2003 elections showing a larger gap.

We also compare the same data using the Molinar ENP method (Fig. 14).

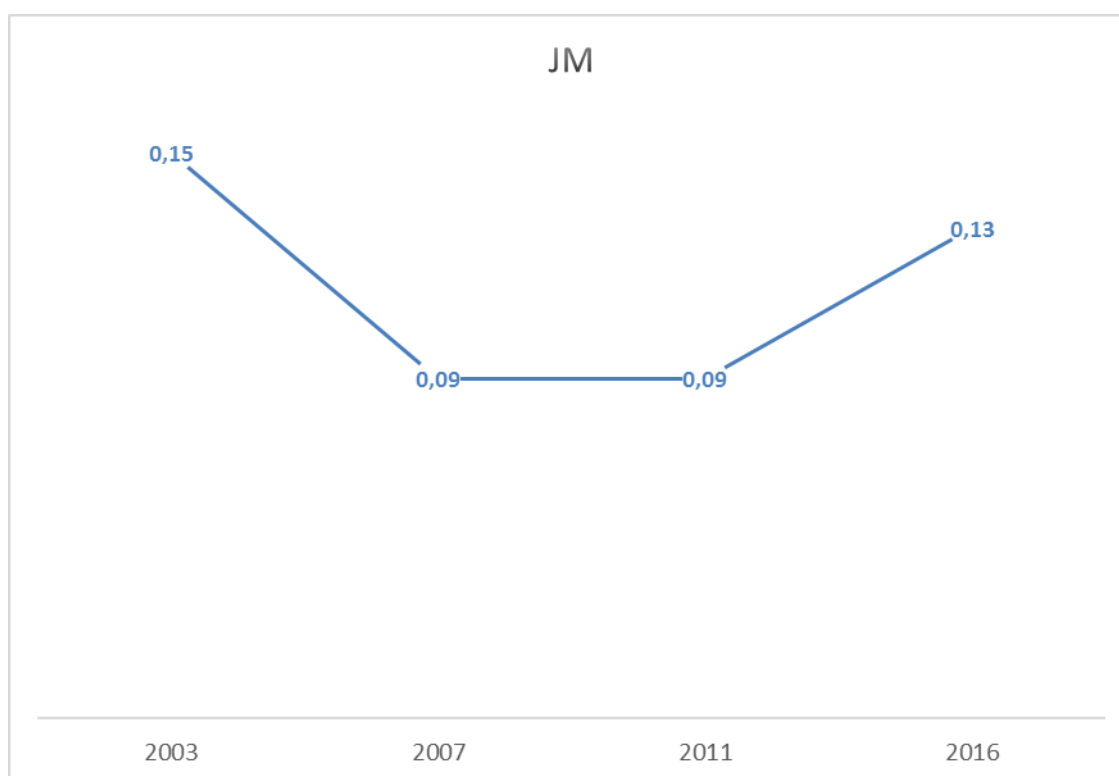


Figure 14. Difference in competitiveness JM (Juan Molinar) in simultaneous elections 2003-2016.

This graph is similar to the previous one; the only difference is that the range of differences is significantly lower. In addition, the Laakso-Taagepera index gave us a significant fall in the difference in competitiveness from 2007 to 2011, when it moved from positive to negative. Using the Molinar index for all elections under review, we always see higher competitiveness at a regional level than at a federal level. Clearly, this is due to differences between the two methods. The Laakso-Taagepera index is more sensitive to the number of election participants (some of them receiving extremely small results), while the Molinar index works better when the elections involve one clearly dominant player.

Based on these charts, one can conclude that the difference in degree of electoral competitiveness for combined elections in different territorial levels is rather small. But the

trends in differences are of significant interest. The 2003 and 2007 campaigns clearly testify to a higher level of competition in regional elections. Regarding the 2011 and 2016 results, the different methods for calculating ENP deliver a different result, which means it is not always possible to come to a clear conclusion. If the Molinar ENP methodology is applied, since it is better suited to situations in which there are dominant parties, then one can conclude that competition remains higher in election campaigns at a regional level. This conclusion chimed with what we observed earlier regarding the level of support for United Russia being lower at regional elections than at federal elections held simultaneously.

Separate federal and regional elections

We will now move to an analysis of the trends in difference in degree of competition in regional and federal elections for each inter-election period. We will start with the 2004-2007 period, first creating a chart showing the difference between regional ENP results for the period 2004-2007, and the ENP indicator from the 2003 federal election in the same regions (Fig. 15).

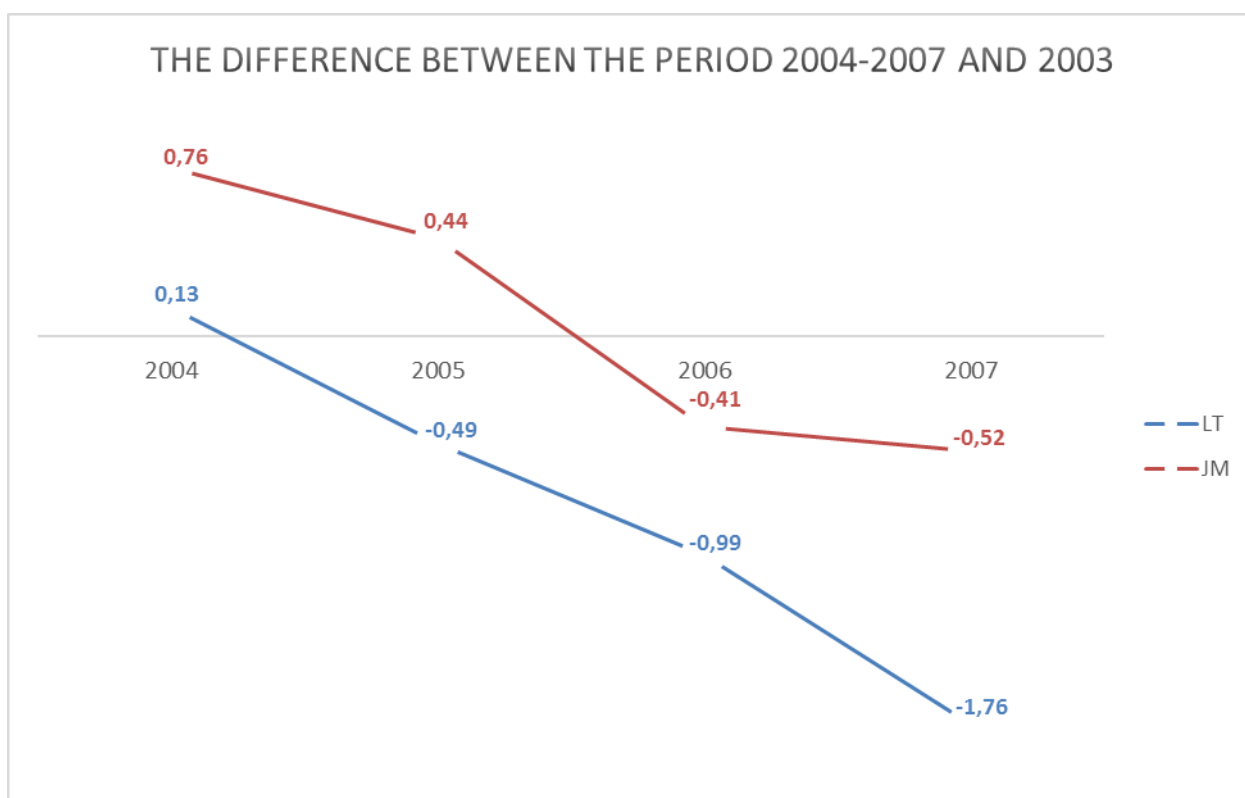


Figure 15. Difference in competitiveness in the inter-election period of 2004-2007 compared to 2003.

This graph shows a trend towards a reduction in the ENP difference between regional elections of 2004-2007 and the preceding federal elections of 2003, and the transition of these figures from positive (towards more regional competitiveness) to negative (when the degree of competitiveness was higher in the preceding federal elections). Using the Laakso-Taagepera methodology, it is clear that in 2004-2005, regional elections saw higher competitiveness than federal State Duma elections of 2003, while in 2006-2007 the situation changed, and competitiveness in federal elections was higher than at preceding regional elections. The Molinar index shows the same trend at a faster pace – competitiveness in regional elections falls below that seen in the federal elections of 2003 as early as 2005.

We will now analyse the same period in comparison with the following 2007 elections (Fig. 16).

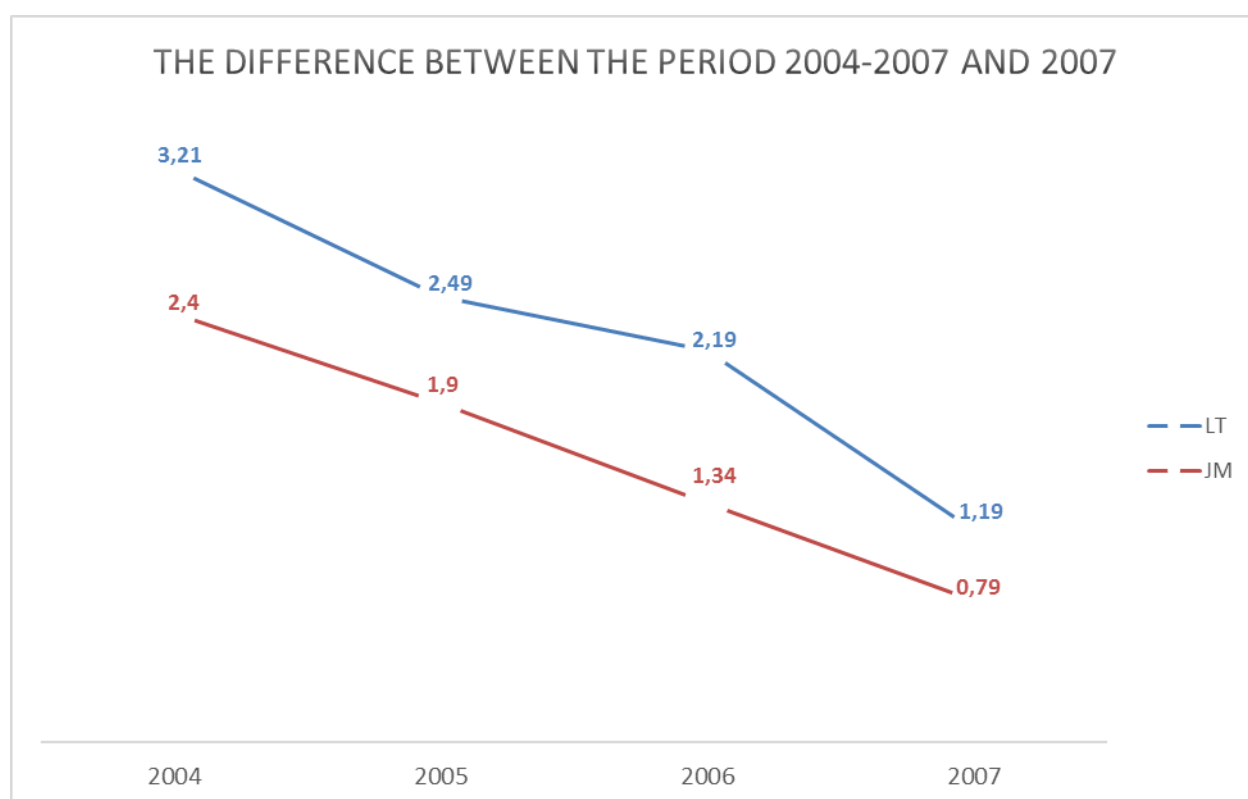


Figure 16. Difference in competitiveness in the inter-election period 2004-2007 compared to 2007.

Both the Laakso-Taagepera index and the Molinar index give a similar picture here – and it is consistently positive (i.e. competitiveness in regional elections was higher than in the 2007 federal elections, at which, notably, United Russia support peaked). Nonetheless, a clear negative trend is discernable: the indicator value declines consistently year on year, and the degree of competitiveness slowly approaches that seen in 2007.

Focusing on the difference in the degree of competitiveness in the inter-election period of 2004-2007, the conclusions are identical for both indices, and as anticipated show that during simultaneous elections the difference is always smaller than in the inter-election period.

We will now look at the inter-election period of 2008-2011. First we will consider the graph that shows degree of competitiveness in regional elections in comparison with the preceding federal elections of 2007 (Fig. 17).

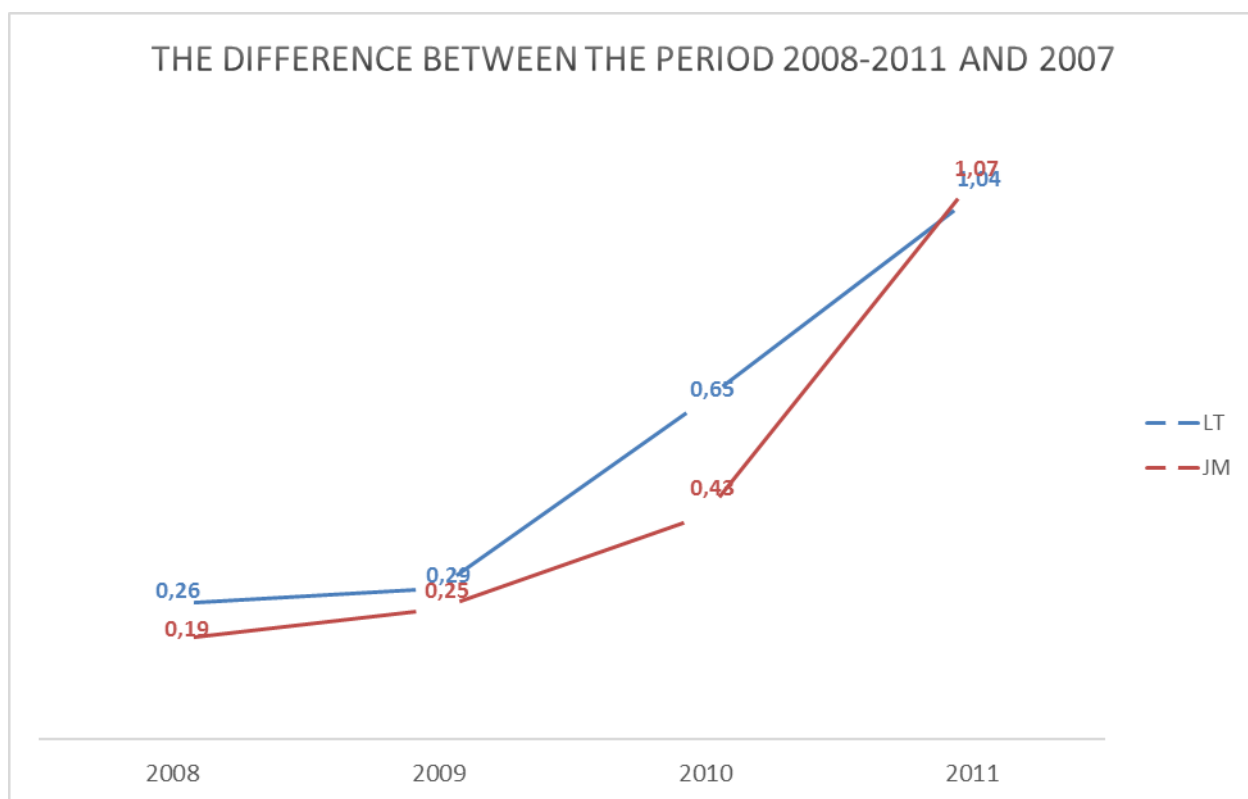


Figure 17. Difference in competitiveness in the inter-election period 2008-2011 compared to 2007.

Competitiveness in regional elections held in the period 2008-2011 was always higher than in 2007. Further, it can be noted that during this period we observe a consistent trend towards increased differences, i.e. the later the elections were held, the greater the competitiveness in regional elections was as compared with the 2007 federal elections. This is in line with the trend towards a strengthening in electoral competitiveness in Russia ahead of the 2011 federal elections.

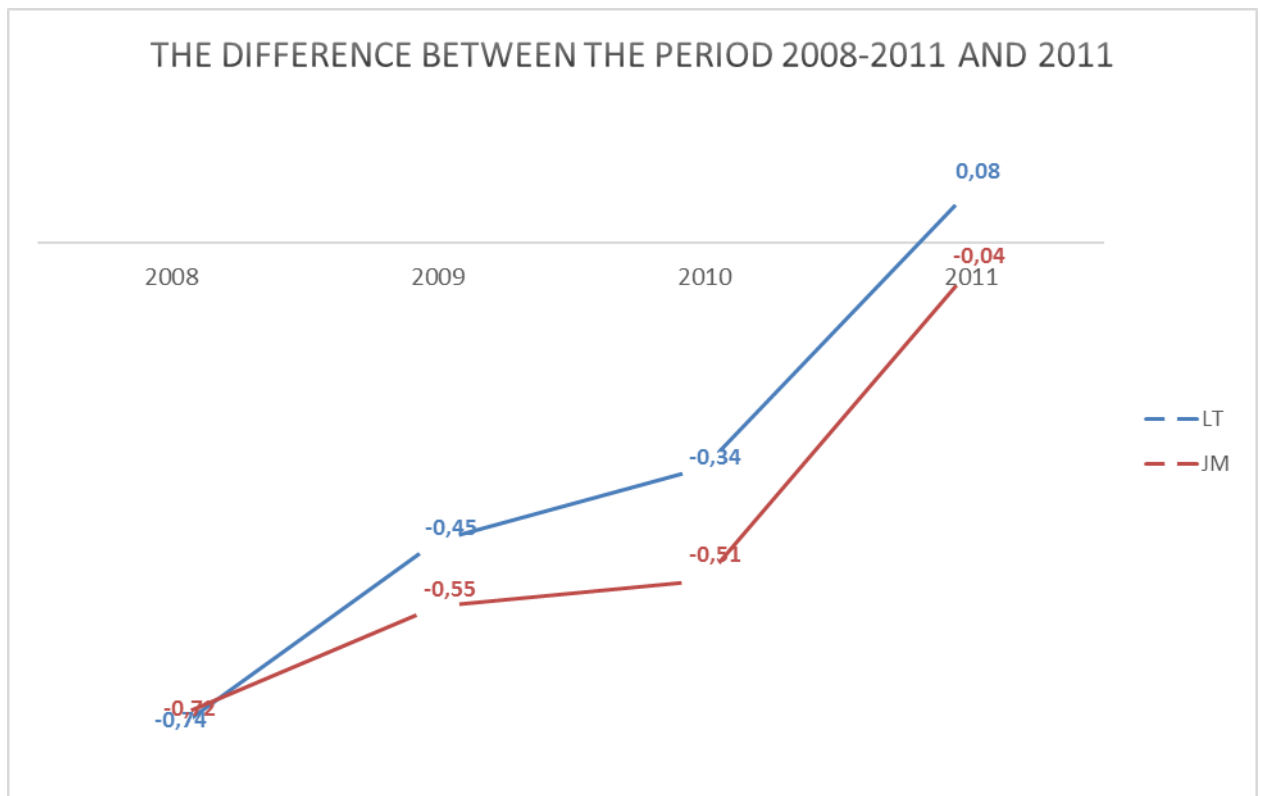


Figure 18. Difference in competitiveness in the inter-election period 2008-2011 compared with 2011.

If we compare this same period with the subsequent federal elections of 2011, then the picture appears quite different (Fig. 18). It does, despite this, in fact support the same conclusions. First, virtually all difference indicators are negative, which confirms the fact that competitiveness in these regional elections was still lower than in the 2011 federal elections. However, the later elections were held, the lower the amplitude of difference between regional and federal elections, therefore – we see that competitiveness has gradually increased in the regions, close to the level reached in 2011. The Laakso-Taagepera index shows consistently higher results than the Molinar index, and supports the thesis that competitiveness in spring 2011 in the regions was even slightly higher than in federal elections later that year.

Comparing the range of differences in ENP in a single inter-election period with the differences seen during simultaneous elections at federal and regional levels, one can note that in 2007 the difference for simultaneous elections was clearly smaller, as anticipated. However, in 2011 the difference for separate elections was smaller than for simultaneous elections. Therefore there is no clear evidence to support the idea that simultaneous elections always lead to closer competitiveness indicators than separate elections, although that is usually the case.

Now we will consider the situation in the inter-election period of 2012-2015 in comparison with the federal elections of 2011 (Fig. 19).

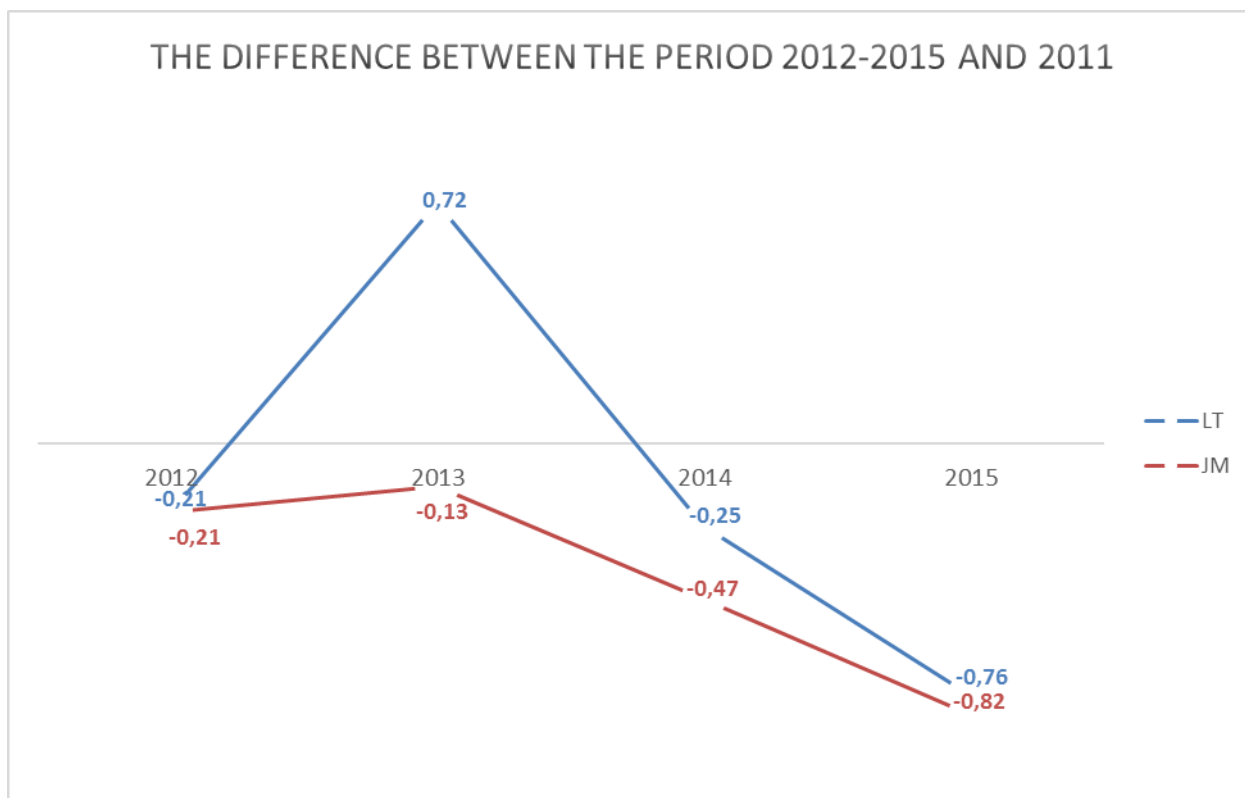


Figure 19. Difference in competitiveness in the inter-election period of 2012-2015 compared to 2011.

If during the preceding inter-election periods, it was most common to see gradual trends in one clear direction, this period is by contrast defined by fluctuation and change – with the year of 2013 clearly standing apart from the general trend. According to the Laakso-Taagepera approach to ENP, the degree of competitiveness in the regions in 2013, compared with that seen in the 2011 federal elections, in fact – even grows. The Molinar index shows it falling, but less sharply than in 2012. After that point, competitiveness in regional elections consistently falls by comparison with the federal campaign – right to 2015.

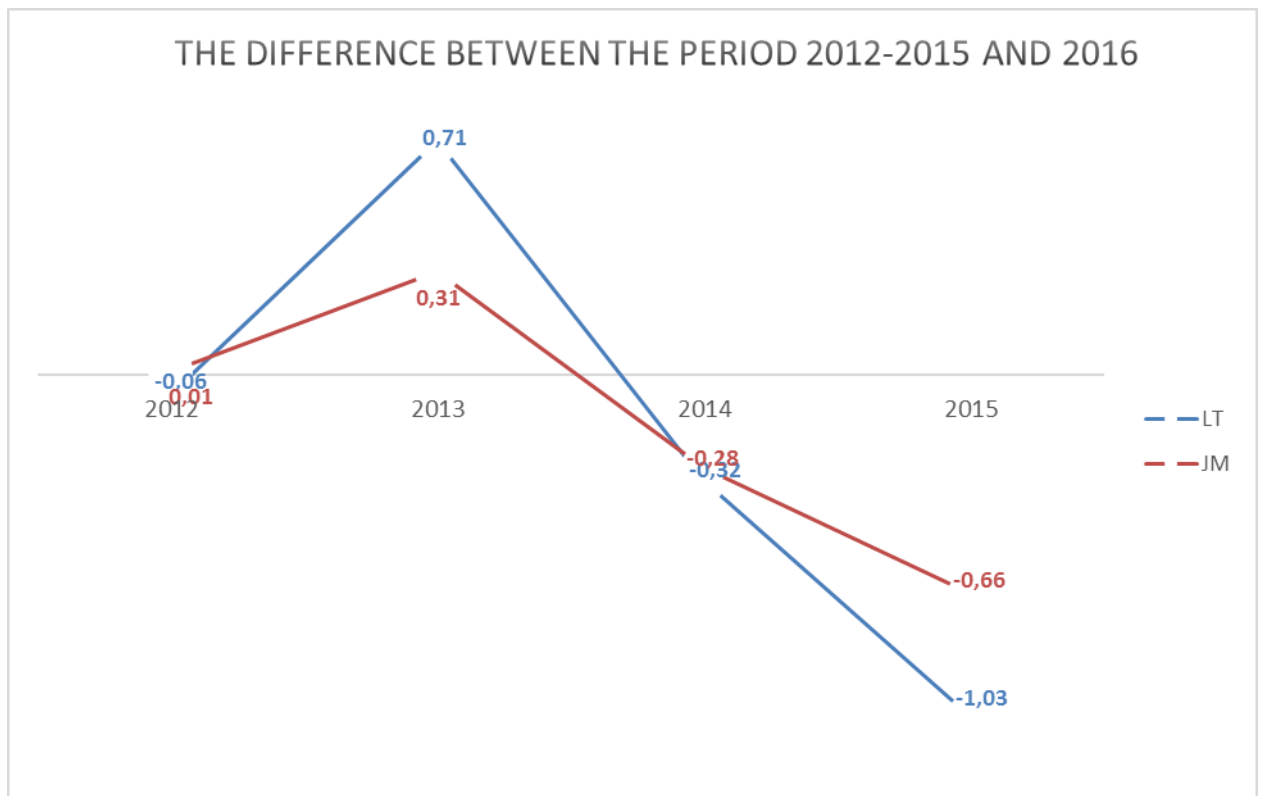


Figure 20. Difference in competitiveness in the inter-election period 2012-2015 compared with 2016.

Similar conclusions allow us to analyse the relationship between competitiveness in regional elections 2012-2015 in comparison with the 2016 federal elections (Fig. 20). In 2012, the ENP has reached levels broadly similar to those seen later on – in the 2016 elections. However, the 2013 elections showed higher degrees of competitiveness, compared to those seen in 2016 in the same regions. The 2014 and 2015 elections, however, show lower competitiveness than was seen in the same regions in 2016. So, competitiveness even rose in the 2016 federal elections, as in preceding two years it was very low indeed at a regional level.

These calculations and analysis do not permit us to come to clear conclusions about the dependence of competitiveness on simultaneous or separate elections at different levels. It is not surprising that, in most instances, the degree of competitiveness in simultaneous elections is higher than in separate elections, i.e. simultaneous elections in the regions echo both the national features of the party system and citizens' electoral behaviour. This trend is not only due to combining elections, it is also rooted in the ongoing process of nationalisation of the party system – which is further stimulated by the Kremlin through combining election campaigns.

As for inflation, i.e. the gap between the competitiveness seen at a regional and federal level, and the extent of this difference, one can note that the closing of this gap is a clear trend,

which also corresponds to the nationalisation of the party system. It should also be noted that Russia does not display any general trend regarding the growth or contraction in the degree of competitiveness in regional elections compared to federal elections. Some regular features can be identified as part of an analysis of a particular inter-election period, but they are then subject to further change.

Conclusion

This research addressed the issue of the effectiveness of the government's approach – favouring the combination of elections held at different territorial levels on a single day; in particular – federal and regional elections. Effectiveness in this sense means the ability to deliver increased support for the party of power and a reduction in competitiveness as a result of combining elections. In order to test these hypotheses, we applied specially processed party election results from elections to regional and federal parliaments from 2003 to 2016, held under the proportional system, and also calculated the level of competitiveness (ENP). The influence of combined elections on electoral support for the different parties was also considered. It was found that when regional and federal elections are held at the same time, United Russia always receives more votes in federal elections than in regional elections; parliamentary opposition parties almost always (with the exceptions characteristic for the LDPR) receive more votes in regional elections than in federal elections.

However, an analysis of the various inter-election periods, i.e. of separate elections to regional legislatures, shows that other rules apply. Opposition parties often receive a smaller proportion of the vote in inter-election periods than they did in the preceding or subsequent federal election in the same regions. It is clear in the period of 2012-2015 when United Russia was the only case in which the 'party of power' received a higher percentage of the vote in regional elections than in the preceding (2011) and subsequent (2016) federal elections. Thus, in President Vladimir Putin's third term, regional elections have become much less beneficial for the opposition than before.

In conclusion, during simultaneous elections at different territorial levels, United Russia always receives more votes at a federal level than at a regional level. We link this with the strategic voting phenomenon, in which voters are more inclined to cast their votes for a more stable and weighty player. We believe that the federal election campaigns prompt people to vote strategically, and that they are more likely to vote sincerely in regional elections. Nonetheless,

after 2012, despite the more problematic nature of the regional agenda, the vote for United Russia in regional elections started to yield very good results, which testifies to the fact that strategic voting for this party probably extended to a regional level in the election campaigns.

Then we compared degrees of competitiveness in parliamentary elections at different territorial levels, both for simultaneous elections and for inter-election periods. Unlike the previous section of our research, here it was not possible to receive any clear picture from the results attained. In addition, the differences in degree of competitiveness were almost always lower in combined election than in separate elections. As for the influence expressed by the campaign level, it can be concluded that a higher degree of competitiveness is seen at the regional level than at the federal level.

Thus, the more frequent combination of elections makes it possible to extend the common features of a national party system to all constituent entities of the federation, a process that can be termed the nationalisation of Russian politics. However, the structure and degree of competitiveness may change in different directions. As research shows, one cannot say there has been any consistent or dynamic reduction in the differences in degrees of competitiveness at federal and regional elections. A reduction in the difference or gap between these indicators would mean that we could discuss the gradual institutionalisation of Russia's party systems, but this has not yet taken place. If the entire period under consideration is examined as related to the party system and the dominant party, then there is no clear unidirectional trend towards synchronous political development of the country and its regions, which is, in fact, unstable and often changes course.

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