

**Oppositional parties in hybrid regimes:
Between repression and cooptation
(A case of Russia's regions)**

Introduction

Russian party system has formally turned into the dominant one and the 2011 Duma elections were to prove it as United Russia has won for the third consecutive time (thus meeting Sartori criterion on dominant party rule; Sartori, 1976), despite the decline even in officially calculated electoral support from 64.2 in 2007 to 49.3%. United Russia's political domination looks strong on the regional level as almost all the governors are party members (or supporters) and the same is true for the majority of the regional deputies. In terms of elite recruitment United Russia has become an important career tool and at the same time, it reflects the structure of regional elite with its different groups, being an oversized governing coalition (as some researchers call the hegemonic or dominant parties, see Magaloni, 2006). While United Russia includes most of prominent figures and clienteles, the party's electoral support is limited and falling after its 2007 peak, and this leaves significant space for the other parties, at least in terms of electoral participation and party/faction-building. How the opposition's political resource is used and/or wasted in hybrid (or explicitly authoritarian) regimes, is a very interesting topic for political studies.

Since every party looks for the way to come to power, in general theory at least, the opposition in authoritarian Russia's regime has to make the hard choice between being incorporated into the existing system of power distribution or openly resisting the authorities in hope to get the mass support and to win it all someday. Comparative studies of authoritarian regimes still lack in evidence and explanation of this choice between incorporation (collaboration) and resistance. In turn, United Russia and its patrons from presidential/executive power make the choice of their own to decide what parties (and personalities) have to be included or excluded in each case, be it State Duma, regional legislature or municipal assembly. There is a growing debate in the literature on the reasons why some authoritarian regimes coopt the opposition while others repress it (see Gandhi, 2008). For example Gandhi argues that the opposition that is strong enough to threaten the regime but not so strong to take power is more likely to be coopted.

As our study shows, Russian party system is not simply polarized by "party of power – opposition" cleavage but presents many different cases of inter-party relations instead ("party of power" being a Russian term meaning not just officially existing party but rather a ruling elite institutionalized by means of parties and other political movements in search for electoral victories; see also Liechtenstein, 2002). Opposition in Russia may be both repressed and coopted (on the level of parties as a whole or certain political leaders in these parties), and this fact reflects in our opinion the complicated nature of Russian authoritarianism. Russian regions present an excellent laboratory for different cases. The same parties can be included into the ruling bloc in one region while repressed in another. Or the same party in the same region can be one time included and excluded for another time, for example, after new elections. This makes us wonder why this power distribution is ever changing.

The overall reason is probably in the emerging and developing, but purposefully unfinished authoritarianism that has a strong need in democratic legitimacy both for the relations with the West and to ensure the public support. Russian political elite is not ready yet to recognize its authoritarianism preferring to talk about another kind of democracy instead (concept of sovereign democracy worked out by Surkov who was considered one of key ideologists of this regime; see Chadaev, 2006). So, open and straightforward repression of the opposition is not the way for the Russian regime that is now. This feature reflects the unfinished

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and then reversed legacy of democratic transition started with *perestroika*. Thus, the opposition has always some room for cooptation, and its size is what changes. One should remember that the prominent oppositional politicians used to be coopted even into the federal government under Yeltsin (examples of Tuleev and Maslyukov) and all left-wing Duma speakers (Rybkin, then Seleznev) were commonly accused of collaboration with the “regime”.

Then, the uneven power distribution between two branches (executive and legislative) and tiers (regional and municipal) allows us to analyze the deeper differences in the politics of opposition’s inclusion/exclusion. We argue that the opposition is more likely to be included into the power distribution inside the weaker power bodies bearing in mind that the Russian political system unevenly distributes the power in favor of executive power and higher territorial levels of power. So the opposition is more likely to be represented in ruling positions in the legislative power.

Our analysis of the legislative power in all the 83 regional cases shows that the place of three other bigger parties (left CPRF, populist LDPR, and centre-left Fair Russia) in regional politics is very different and ever changing (Reuter, Turovsky, 2011). These parties are not truly oppositional, nor are they loyal to United Russia and/or regional governors. Very different is their attitude towards governors, when deputies vote on approval of the candidate, proposed by the president (under previous system of governors’ nominations). In more than the half of the regions, United Russia decided to grant other parties with some spoils. At the same time regional executive power is closed for opposition.

Regional differences significantly depend, as we suggest, on the place of the political leaders within regional clientelist networks. Russian party system is not a product of classic Western-style party-building described by Lipset, Rokkan etc. (Rokkan, Lipset, 1967). Rather it is a historically new and unstable combination of parties appeared due to both “usual” ideological cleavages and activities of influence groups striving for political institutionalization (formed around business and other interest groups, certain personalities etc). Clientelism lies in the core of many political connections and enables informal ties, mutual interests and pragmatic deals both inside the parties and in interactions of different parties’ affiliates. Alternatively, conflicts in this system can produce a severe party struggle. Most experts believe that patron-client networks based on personal relationships are what count most in structuring of the regional party systems. However, there is a serious methodological problem in verification of arguments based on personal-level explanations. Evaluations of regional experts and political actors can be extremely fruitful for this but they do not give the full and reliable explanation. Another way is the simple analysis of biographies in order to find when and where individual actors got together, but it has its obvious flaws as it proves only the personal connections but cannot reveal their character and depth. The theory of patron-client relations also goes well in argumentation but there is a strong need to explain what attracts certain clients to their patrons, how strong are the bonds and what interests are they based upon. Very often these bonds are based on corruption that is apparently not that kind of thing that outsiders are allowed to analyze in detail, political scientists among them. Anyway we have no choice but to sophisticate our knowledge and understanding of inter-personal (or patron-client, and in most definite cases of affiliations - principal-agent) relations to get more accurate analysis of regional political interactions and their outcomes such as the place and the role of opposition in power or beyond.

Oppositional parties themselves maneuver between two strategies, each of them having its reasons (we emphasize that this is not a choice that is made but a maneuver that ever changes). They need to look oppositional to attract the voters and they need to play their role in the political recruitment giving their activists an opportunity to catch some positions in existing power. However, still without chances to win the elections (except for the municipal level) oppositional parties usually cannot do without double-dealing with United Russia. For the party opposition in Russia this is still a sort of a closed circle with a possible negative outcome in loss of public support as the society starts to heat up again (it became clear at the 2012 presidential elections when the leaders of all three supposedly oppositional parties performed poorly).

In this paper, we use results of our studies in Russian regional politics in post-Soviet times in order to understand what “oppositionness” as we prefer to call the subject we study means and how it changes in the course of regime’s change. Regional tier of Russian politics is especially interesting since the victories of oppositional parties and candidates have always been possible in some regions and municipalities, where oppositional electoral behavior is combined with less rigid authoritarian control. “Oppositionness” also covers the continuum of cases of opposition’s cooptation into the ruling regime, ranging from zero to full loyalty. In the system with dominant party we tackle only issues concerning parties other than United Russia and significant in their political representation, leaving oppositional civic movements for other studies.

Opposition in Comparative Political Studies

Comparative political studies of authoritarian and hybrid regimes usually focus on the overall regime features and the rise and sustainability of dominant parties. For example, Magaloni in her study of Mexican party system reveals the mechanics of hegemonic party autocracy. She focuses on the institutionalization and monopolization of mass support, role of economic performance, mentioning also electoral fraud and barriers to entry as common places in such studies (Magaloni, 2006).

The oppositional parties in authoritarian regimes are less studied. Very often they are idealized as “freedom fighters” but this underestimates their opportunistic behavior and even their role in *de facto* supporting this regime. Robust party competition (as Grzymala-Busse calls it) becomes a matter of favorable conditions (meaning unfavorable trends for the ruling party) as different from the new post-communist democracies where such a competition has become a constant and serious constraint to the state exploitation by ruling parties (Grzymala-Busse, 2007).

Sub-national level of such studies proves to be extremely fruitful as it enriches them with lots of cases and enables to identify typical situations as well as exceptions. Cross-regional comparisons are still rare and it is very important to fill this gap.

The theme of opposition in Russian politics is widely discussed. Since the 1990s, the discourse has included the theme of so-called “system” opposition as contrary to the “non-system” or “anti-system” opposition (presented by a bunch of non-registered radical organizations). In the 2000s, opposition started to look very weak and has compiled a huge record of collaboration with the authorities thus provoking to say about its extinction (Gel’man, 2004).

On the other hand, it would be wrong to say that the very phenomenon of opposition does not exist in Russia. One of the main reasons is electoral. The authorities enjoy rather high but not the overall support, as all polls and most electoral results show. The share of unsatisfied voters is significant and will probably rise further, as revealed by 2011 and 2012 national elections. Besides, ideological cleavages are still relevant and controversies over Russian future and reforms still go on even inside the dominant party. So, oppositional activists are surely not cynical pragmatics ready and willing to be “bought” by the rulers anytime.

However, it is impossible to divide Russian politicians and parties into ruling and oppositional ones as it could probably be in democratic / pluralist regime (like those studied in the Western societies long ago; see Dahl, 1971; Dahl, 1973). Opposition in pluralist democracy does not hold power but has a chance to come to power by means of fair elections. Regular democratic change of power is in the core of any democracy.

In authoritarian regimes it is different. In our view, the “oppositionness” is a more adequate phenomenon to study in authoritarian regimes than the opposition, understood as a group of political actors willing to take on the power from the rulers. “Oppositionness” derives from the Russian *oppozitsionnost’* and it is about the scale of for/against relation towards the ruling elite and inclusion into this elite.

Our study leads to the conclusion that under authoritarian (or hybrid) regime the local electoral victory is a trap for opposition as it increases the level of political instability (not to be

confused with the democratic power change), since local opposition-led regime cannot co-exist with the federal rulers and their loyal supporters on spot. Moreover, as our studies show any change of governor in the regime that is based on patron-client relations leads to more complicated network of clienteles and usually to more conflicts. That means that the “oppositional” regional regime is less stable both inside and in its relations with the federal centre. In reality, to get rid of alienation and fragility many of such regimes search for the adaptive tactics up to the change of their party of choice and demonstration of full loyalty toward the federal centre (sometimes even more explicit than in “regular” regional regimes). If no adaptation takes place, the oppositional-turned-ruling local leader fails and the difference is only in the countdown of the failure, be it fast lost of power or a long story of tries to find a way. But in legislative power cooptation is still widespread contrasting repression that took place in executive power.

Under Medvedev even successful adaptation of former oppositional politicians among regional governors has ceased and most of them have lost their power. The reason is in the beginning of the next period of elite transformation when younger generations started to come to power replacing older generation of both opposition and loyalists. But it should be mentioned that the threat from the federal center is not the only one for the opposition-led regional/local regime. Its amorphous and divided internal structure is another problem that should be studied better. But we should start with the regional legislative power where one can find much more cases of opposition’s presence and its accommodation in the existing regime.

Regional Deputies: An Easy Way to Surrender?

The legislative power in Russia has a certain political diversity but gives fewer opportunities for the political career. The case of executive power shows polarized structure when it is almost impossible to keep this power for the oppositional party without losing either power or the loyalty of the winner (see below). Legislative power is much more flexible, despite the formation of dominant party system analyzed in many studies both in Russia and abroad (Bogaards, 2004; Liechtenstein, 2002; Reuter, Turovsky, 2011). Russian regional legislatures still enjoy limited multiparty diversity due to both legislation (at least two parties should be presented according to law) and widespread oppositional voting resulting in a number of mandates (mostly obtained by means of party list voting).

Before analyzing the oppositional presence in the regional legislatures, we should start with the electoral results and the shares of party factions. Now United Russia completely dominates the regional party systems. However, its electoral results still can be very different. In this paper, we cover all the existing regional legislatures elected from 2007 up to December 2011.

United Russia is an obvious leader dominating both the voting and the deputies’ number. The magnitude of United Russia electoral results differs from 30.1% in Karelia up to 90.4% in Mordovia. In 46 regions, United Russia got more than a half of the votes (among them in nine regions it got more than two thirds). The number of regions where its result could not reach 50% is smaller; it decreased significantly after more successful 2007-2010 elections, but started to rise again in 2011. It is interesting that in 40 regions, i.e. in about half of Russian regions the result of United Russia was around 50% (at 40-60%).

Nevertheless, the positions of United Russia within the legislatures are much stronger. The main reason is the widespread use of so-called mixed electoral system (in most Russian regions half of the seats are kept by those elected in single-mandate (or sometimes multi-mandate) districts where United Russia candidates usually win). However, taking into consideration rather high electoral threshold (usually 7%) party lists voting usually gives United Russia an opportunity to win more than a half seats too. Combining those elected on party lists with those elected in districts, United Russia can easily create the biggest faction in the legislature. Now in all the regions except for Saint-Petersburg, Karelia, and Amur region United Russia holds an absolute (more than 50%) majority (in three regions mentioned it has the biggest

faction though). It is worth to mention that in most regions United Russia's factions have more than two thirds of the seats (in 55 regions as our calculations show). The disproportion ratio (share of faction in the legislature divided by share of votes at the elections) is significant and reaches 1.89 in one of the regions.

Such a party structure of regional legislative bodies might have led to the deep polarization between "party of power" and opposition. This could create situation typical for many regimes with dominant parties in Africa and Middle East, where the electoral authoritarianism combines one-party rule with the presence of much smaller opposition.

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

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

Our analysis shows that the regional legislatures fall into a system of patronage rather than reflect "typical" cleavage between the ruling party and the opposition. That is the system of United Russia's patronage over the party system, as a subsystem of executive power's patronage over both United Russia and all other parties. In other words, it is a system of multi-tier patronage executed by federal authorities, regional governors and United Russia's federal and regional structures.

In our opinion, Russian party system cannot be called a classic dominant (or hegemonic) party system. We mentioned before that the privileged people like Abramovich (or president Putin himself) do not need to join United Russia. The executive power being strongest as compared with its legislative counterpart still forms on non-party basis. It is most clear on the federal level where president does not join the party. The principal feature of such party system is that the role of "dominant" party is limited. Its "dominance" is confined to the weaker power bodies, such as the legislative power, regional governors and municipal heads. On the federal level, "non-party" presidential and executive structures influence on United Russia staying above and behind the party. Moreover, they try to manipulate the whole party system and all the parties, not just one. Parties play their specific roles at the elections and for the elite recruitment. Such features differ Russian party system from many well-studied and more typical examples in Africa, Asia, and post-communist states of Central Asia, Azerbaijan etc. (Bogaards, 2004; Magaloni, 2006)

Recently there has been change in widespread expert opinion on the possible long-term development of Russian party system. In the 1990s and in the beginning of the 2000s experts used to talk about possible two-party system based on strong left and centre-right parties, with its precursors found in CPRF and "party of power" subsequently. Such party system was meant to produce "normal" polarization between two leading parties, i.e. typical opposition known by many examples in the established democracies. More recently, experts started to compare Russian party system with formal multiparty systems in communist states, such as former GDR, where Putin used to work. Such opinion reflected the creation of United Russia's satellites and cases of cooperation between United Russia and all other parties.

Hardly Russia's party system resembles GDR or China, since the oppositional parties and their activists are still rather different from United Russia and radical in their critics. But the truth

is that United Russia carries on the distributive politics in spoils distribution. Such politics is no news for studying of authoritarian regimes where cooptation of opposition is often seen as a primary tool to enhance political stability and regime's legitimacy. Some authors point out at the very importance of elections in authoritarian regimes for its legitimating (though, there is another point that democratic elections can undermine the regime). At the same time researchers of the Middle East mention that the importance of elections for authoritarian regimes is explained also by the fact that the elections has become a tool to manage elite (Blaydes, 2011). Elections are also seen in terms of competitive clientelism (Lust-Okar, 2004) rather than multiparty competition, and this point seems useful for Russian studies too. Blaydes analyzes Egyptian elite under Mubarak's rule as rent-seeking elite. However, not only rent-seeking but also struggle for social status and prestige influenced elite's political participation (this is very important for post-Soviet Russia with its newly emerging political establishment where personal ambitions and culture of emphasized supremacy in social relations still shape the political environment).

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

The analysis shows that United Russia uses two opposite strategies instead of the choice in favor of one. This is another proof of historical incompleteness and in-betweenness of Russian dominant party system. In some cases, it is "the winner takes it all" strategy (an analogue of majoritarian rule); while in others, it is a consensus rule. By now the score is in favor of consensus rule (48 regions use consensus rule, and in 35 regions, the winner really took it all).

On the federal level, it is a standard to distribute leadership positions among all the presented parties. In previous convocation all the parties in State Duma kept at least one vice-chairperson position and one committee chair position. In fact, though, CPRF, LDPR and Fair Russia got only one vice-chairperson and one committee head each (United Russia's share in State Duma leadership was 88%). After 2011 elections it was decided to give more concessions to the parliamentary opposition and United Russia's share in the leadership dropped significantly: United Russia holds positions of chairman, first vice-chairman, four vice-chairmen, 15 committee heads, CPRF got another first vice-chairman and 6 committees, Fair Russia – vice-chairman and 4 committees, LDPR – vice-chairman and 4 committees too (United Russia's share dropped to 55%). From this point, regional party systems are more polarized and behind the times, because in 35 regions there are oppositional parties deprived of any significant leadership positions (it may be correct to take into consideration also deputy chairpersons of committees and commissions, but these positions are of too small importance).

In most regions, where consensus rule is applied, United Russia pleases not all the other parties with leadership positions but chooses its partners among them. In other words, for Russian regions State Duma is not a standard, while regions tend more to one-party rule. But cases of non-polarized systems and multiparty groupings are wide-spread meaning more intricate structure and diversity of "power – opposition" relations.

Rare use of "full" coalition indicates another important feature. United Russia patronage is not at all a guarantee that each party presented will get some important spoil. Rather it is a

regional/local choice of “friends” and “foes” depending on the relations between regional party organizations and their loyalty or readiness for collaboration. This is the better way to divide and rule the party system. The reasons for: a) the choice of strategy itself, and b) the choice of specific partners are very interesting.

“Full coalition” is not frequent, in 9 regions all four “parliamentary” parties do hold leadership positions (including Karelia where there are five such parties including Yabloko). Of course, leadership distribution is far from fair as it is disproportional as compared with the seats distribution. Therefore, it is not a proportional distribution but a decision of patron to grant some parties with a very few positions and try to make clients out of them. Usually such party gets only one leadership position reminding of previous State Duma example. Often it is a rather formal post of one of vice-speakers. Or it may be one of less important committees. All that means that even consensus rule means an unrivaled dominance of United Russia. The only example of a region where United Russia keeps less than half of leadership positions is Karelia.

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

One striking feature is the role of communists who claim to be the one and only oppositional party in Russia. However, in 32 regions they have their not so fair but still a share of leadership positions. Fair Russia has it in 24 regions. 25 regions are favorable for LDPR from this point. Other three officially registered parties are weak and underestimated and they are very rarely presented in regional legislatures. Left-nationalist Patriots of Russia have leadership position in one region; socio-liberal Yabloko in one region too, liberal Rights Cause has nothing.

Let us understand why United Russia prefers to make a choice in favor of other parties at the time of leadership distribution. In our opinion, this is a “soft” kind of strategy for the dominant party (being different from the “hard” strategy when the winner takes it all and represses the others). Such “soft” strategies do not mean more or less proportional consensus rule resembling Swiss party system or consocial democracies studied by Lijphart in plural societies (Lijphart, 1997).

The main task of authoritarian dominant party in Russian regime is to neutralize an opposition giving it a small (or even the smallest) piece of power. This helps reduce public critics of United Russia. Also United Russia shares responsibility for unpopular policies. One more reason for the dominant party is the legitimacy of unfair elections. Smaller parties often claim the elections to be unfair and fraud. Joining the coalition with United Russia, they actually legitimate the electoral results and refuse to talk about their injustice. Therefore, the neutralization of opposition comes together with the legitimacy of elections being among the main goals of “consensus” strategy. One more goal as we will show later is the distribution of leadership positions not only on the party level but also on the personal level in order to satisfy certain meaningful personalities, clienteles, their leaders and representatives standing behind the parties.

On the regional level almost all the governors, though, are United Russia members and as a result the party is usually ruled by governor’s clientele. This is the reason why the regional executive power tends to spread one-party rule for the legislatures (and why other clienteles can join other parties). However, many governors prefer to manipulate as many parties as they can in order to control the political process in the region. Such policy became typical at the time of governors’ elections when governors tried to minimize the presence of oppositional candidates. In many regions, incumbent governors escaped the competition with communists after some bargaining, and sometimes even got an open support from CPRF. Now it is easier to control Fair Russia and LDPR turning them into loyal and weak political groups. Game with the communists is more sophisticated. However, in many regions governors and United Russia are still able to work out a peace treaty with the communists as the case of regional legislatures shows.

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

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

Inclusion has its own set of motives. Under electoral authoritarianism, it gives a chance to win a spoil (i.e. the power and the status). This creates a motive for higher-ranking party leaders (who usually get the spoils). Also opportunism helps to attract elites (business elites mainly) that may seek the way to get a mandate and a spoil and are ready to sponsor the party for that goal. The party proving its ability to win mandates can just go for sale as many cases in the history of LDPR and Fair Russia show. Rent-seeking elites sometimes face electoral and clientelist confines of United Russia and look for easier (and cheaper) ways to get power through other parties. Being rational in its decision-making business elite can choose and “buy” (sometimes literally) almost any party branch in the region. Again, it is another kind of co-adaptation strategy, as parties turn down their ideologies and try to look pragmatic in order to attract sponsors. It is especially interesting in the CPRF case when Zyuganov talks about its support of “patriotic” business. As a result, our analysis of deputies’ biographies shows that most LDPR and Fair Russia deputies come from business. Ideologically biased CPRF tries to keep balance between party activists and businesspersons. The problem of business elite’s inclusion is that the business can be extremely vulnerable in a corrupt and state-controlled system and no businessperson can be successful while openly criticizing the authorities. Resolving the urgent sponsorship problem an oppositional party has no other way than to collaborate with the authorities since most sponsors cannot and do not want to withstand the state’s pressure.

Collaboration means less pressure on the party and its sponsors and gives more access to media (due to lack of independent media) and to the electorate (since police can block oppositional gatherings and regional/local authorities can disapprove meetings for whatever reason). But choice in inclusion’s favor creates new problems. The electorate may turn away from such party. The very distribution of spoils builds pressure within the party, since only party elite and rent-seeking newcomers get a handful of spoils.

Thus, each party makes its hard choice. United Russia decides to take it all or to select the partners. Opposition decides whether to take a spoil or refuse. However, the latter choice is not that hard. Our expert interviews did not reveal any cases when the opposition openly turned down the invitation. Rather it tries to explain its voters and activists why it deals with the “enemy”. So, it is important only to understand the reasons of United Russia’s choice. As both United Russia strategies are widespread, it is important to hypothesize on the reasons of their choice (see also Reuter, Turovsky, 2011).

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

In our analysis, we calculated the effective number of electoral parties (ENP) using formula of Juan Molinar (this formula better suits dominant party systems, as it returns indices, which are very close to the real number of relevant parties; see Molinar, 1991). In 33 regions, ENP is less than 1.5, a proof of United Russia dominance. In 17 regions out of these 33 United Russia uses majoritarian rule. If the level of electoral competition rises, United Russia starts to use consensus rule more often. If ENP exceeds 2.0 there are only 10 regions out of 32 where United Russia takes it all.

Therefore, the situation seems clear at the first glance. If the electoral competition is low, it stimulates United Russia decision not to share leadership positions with the others. However,

one should remember that United Russia controls most legislatures, and there is no urgent need to share the leadership positions. However, under higher electoral competition, United Russia feels that it is better to let the steam off. But, as United Russia is not obliged to do so, it can keep all the leadership positions even if it got less votes and the competition was rather high. On the contrary, there are regions with very low electoral competition and high United Russia support but characterized by consensus rule.

Despite many exceptions, the level of electoral competition is the strongest factor explaining the choice of United Russia strategy. The correlation coefficient between United Russia share of leadership positions and share of its faction is at 0.53. Correlation with the share of popular votes is a bit smaller but is still at 0.41. However, since this factor is not so strong and exceptions are many it is intriguing to calculate the disproportion of United Russia leadership. The share of United Russia leadership positions divided by the share of votes is unsurprisingly high. It reaches 2.7 in Pskov oblast (and it is more than 2.0 in 25 regions). The share of United Russia leadership positions divided by the share of United Russia faction is more moderate. Disproportion is at its highest in Saint-Petersburg (1.8) and exceeds 1.5 in 7 regions. In 18 regions the share is quite fair and differs from 0.9 to 1.1. This coincides with the significant correlation between shares of leadership positions and faction members.

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

The most interesting case is CPRF with its un-linear connection between voting and leadership gaining. It looks like if CPRF wants to get a leadership position it should get neither too much nor too little votes. Stronger CPRF is more probably an openly oppositional party, and the bad news is that in this case it cannot get any leadership position in the legislature. Only in 14 regions out of 30 where CPRF got more than 20% of the votes, United Russia decided to share leadership positions with its rival. To be weak, however, is not good too. With seven up to 10 per cent in five regions, CPRF got a leadership position only in Kabardino-Balkaria. Thus, stronger CPRF means higher polarization within party system and fiercer competition between United Russia and CPRF. In a more “average” electoral situation, United Russia and CPRF are more likely to cooperate. However, high popularity of CPRF can also make United Russia more eager to cooperate with communists, but it depends. That was one of the most fascinating findings in our study. It may seem to coincide with Gandhi’s argument. But this coincidence is only partial. Actually the truth is that weak CPRF is no partner for United Russia.

Fair Russia and LDPR usually get fewer votes than CPRF does. Not like in CPRF case, for them it is better to do the best in order to get leadership positions. Since these two parties are much more pragmatic than the communists are, and often sponsored by regional business, they really need the leadership positions and want them from United Russia. That means a bit stronger correlation between their votes and leadership positions as compared with CPRF. Cases when LDPR gets a leadership position are rather evenly distributed, including both regions where it hardly got over the electoral threshold and the regions where it performed much better (again, this “better” performance means 10-15% and rarely more). But being in the place of CPRF in Ryazan oblast and openly fighting United Russia and the governor LDPR got 18.65% of the votes which was very good for this party and no leadership positions for punishment.

Said above is true for Fair Russia too. For example, in 7 out of 9 regions where it got more than 20% of the votes it got leadership positions too. Data shows that for Fair Russia it is important to exceed 10% voting results if it wants to get a leadership position.

Thus, more accurate descriptive pattern connects United Russia strategy not with overall competition but with its relations with parties and the level of these parties’ support. Too strong oppositional party can stay without spoils, but no parties are considered too strong with their current electoral results (very rarely exceeding 30%). Too weak parties are usually neglected. CPRF case shows that for getting a spoil a medium-level result is better but really good result can be a reason for successful bargaining.

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

Our analysis shows that it is famous persons and representatives of certain clientele who usually get the leadership positions and are included into the system. The case of Fair Russia that was often seen as United Russia’s “second column” is very clear. Often it is presented in legislatures’ leadership by persons, loyal to governors and actually with the same loyalty as most of United Russia. In Belgorod *oblast’* this is Novikov, CEO of large agrarian enterprise. It is him, who got the only seat of Fair Russia in recently elected Duma and despite his party’s bleak result, he retained his position of committee chair, the only position that United Russia gave to any other party. Another example is Kemerovo *oblast’* where Fair Russia was the only other party presented in the legislature, and its deputy Volchek loyal to governor became a committee chair.

LDPR often finds itself in the same situation. One of the most interesting cases was Chekotova’s in Irkutsk *oblast’*. She is an important businessperson in Irkutsk who joined LDPR to become a deputy and had an informal support from regional authorities. Unsurprisingly she also became a committee chair. However, recently she left LDPR, proving that her party affiliation was no more than a tactics.

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

On the personal level, such examples are Salov in Adyghea and Grishin in Arkhangelsk *oblast’* (both are former State Duma deputies), Semenov in Kaliningrad *oblast’* (former CPSU leader of the region, then chairman of the regional Soviet and then vice-chairman of all post-Soviet legislatures), Sergienko in Krasnoyarsk *krai* (former chairman of regional *ispolkom*, i.e. executive branch in Soviet times), Sazhinov in Murmansk *oblast’* (formerly long-serving chairman), Karpov in Novosibirsk *oblast’* (long-serving vice-chairman), Sablin in Nenets autonomous *okrug* (one of the most experienced local politicians, formerly mayor of *okrug* capital). Moscow City is an especially interesting case because the main public person for CPRF at the elections here is Gubenko, head of the famous theatre and former Soviet culture minister. He proved to be loyal to former long-serving mayor Luzhkov and got the position of vice-chairman under his rule.

Strong oppositional leaders are less likely to get spoils. However, sometimes regional governors and United Russia neutralize active communist leaders giving them some power, as it was in Karachaevo-Cherkesia with Bidzhev who protested against electoral results but got

committee chair position then. And in Ivanovo *oblast'* the governor Men' forced former convocation to dissolve and after new elections United Russia gave leadership positions to well-known leaders of CPRF (Kovaleva) and LDPR (Sirotkin) trying to legitimize the new legislature. Yakutia is an interesting example of CPRF organization which is active and cooperative at the same time and gets leadership positions in turn (two at the moment, and CPRF is the only party except for United Russia that gets it). The situation in Vladimir *oblast'* is unique because its governor Vinogradov was a communist until recently. Quitting CPRF (but not joining United Russia), he let his former party-mates retain their positions in the legislature. Again, these are not just any communists but personally vice-chairman Bobrov (former chairman at the better times) and committee chair Sinyagin, both loyal to the governor.

Thus, personal loyalty towards governors, great and well-deserved political experience and/or representation of influential interest groups are the factors that favor certain deputies from CPRF, Fair Russia and LDPR to get leadership positions. Another factor is a readiness of a rather influential oppositional deputy (party branch leader for example) to strike a deal with United Russia and get some power along with it.

Overall, the evolution of choice between consensus and one-party rule is still unclear (see table 1). Legislatures elected in 2006 were split almost evenly, in 2007, the score was even. In 2008, with the rise of United Russia support one-party rule was more wide-spread.

Especially interesting was the situation under Medvedev who made some steps towards higher party competition. His intentions were reflected in United Russia behavior in 2009, when it formed coalitions in nine regions out of 12. But the strange thing happened later. With his address to the federal parliament in 2009, Medvedev started small-scale political reform that was aimed to give other parties more opportunities to be presented in the regional legislatures and to form its leadership. On the 12th of November, 2009 in his address Medvedev said that: "All the parties presented in regional parliaments will have an opportunity to create factions. It should be guaranteed for all that their representatives will work on constant basis and have leadership positions" (<http://www.kremlin.ru/transcripts/5979>, accessed on the 29th of May). The first part of this phrase really became a law. Now even if a party has only one deputy, such deputy has the same rights as a faction. But the second part is almost void. As it was before United Russia in regions decides how to distribute leadership positions (and who works on professional basis as well). After 2010 elections in seven regions, United Russia chose one-party rule and in seven regions it formed coalitions. In 2010, the balance became even worse as several regions turned from coalitional to one-party rule.

However, the year 2011 became an important turning point for cooptation policy and stimulated United Russia to share its legislative power with the others. The clear reason was electoral, as United Russia started to lose support. From this point December 2011 elections were more important than March's. The former went better for United Russia and its distributive policy did not change. But after December 2011 the number of regions where United Russia did not get an absolute majority of deputies increased to three and United Russia's factions diminished in most regions. This made United Russia become more flexible in its relations with the others.

Table 1. Number of regions chosen coalitional or one-party rule in legislatures².

Year of Election	One-party rule	Coalition
2006	8	7
2007	12	12

² Author's calculation based on the official data taken from the web sites of the regional legislatures.

2008	9	6
2009	3	9
2010	7	7
2011	14	24

Oppositional Governors: The Way to Extinction

Politics on regional level is crucially important both for formation and for the constraints of opposition-building in Russia. With the beginning of governors' and mayors' elections in 1996, the left-wing opposition as well as other oppositional groups got an opportunity to grab some power. More favorable institutional conditions (fairer elections) and higher level of communists' electoral support made that short period of time the starting point for the "oppositional" regional governments (almost all of them were headed by CPRF and its supporters).

There is extensive literature on the transformation of Russian political regime after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Initially the authors used the theory of democratic transition viewing Russia as a political system on its way to democracy (Karl, Schmitter, 1994; Linz, Stepan, 1996). The governors' and mayors' elections were understood as one of the crucial turning points to democratic development. But obvious flaws in the democratic transition has led to the change of main paradigms as the transition to democracy stopped on the way and failed. As a result, Russian political regime has been analyzed ever since in terms of hybrid regime, or authoritarian regime (with the use of new-born concepts of electoral authoritarianism, competitive authoritarianism and alike; see Levitsky, Way, 2002; Schedler, 2006; Golosov, 2008; Ross, 2009). In our studies of sub-national Russian politics, we argued that the elements of centralization (instead of federalization) and the formation of hybrid regime marked the post-Soviet regional politics from the very start in 1991 (Turovsky, 2007).

Two strong limitations for "oppositional" rule on sub-national level appeared almost from the very start. The first is the limitation on political pluralism that led to the impossibility to create any sub-national regime that could differ ideologically from the national regime. Kremlin clearly opposed those politicians who ran for governors from the oppositional side, as was shown at 1996 governors' elections, when the presidential administration supported its list of candidates (mainly the incumbents, appointed by Yeltsin before). It easily proved to be impossible to create any isolated local regime that could promote the program of CPRF or any other oppositional party.

The second limitation is the inability of autonomous and self-sustained sub-national rule. This limitation is caused by deep socioeconomic contrasts of Russian regions and by centralized resource redistribution needed badly to decrease these contrasts and help the backward to survive. Such distributive policy also had clear political and electoral reasons, since it helped to boost the support for the regime in the vast periphery. It has become a common knowledge that such distributive policy was heavily influenced by patron-client ties between the centre and the certain governors, was seen as a reward for loyalty and electoral results, as the elections started to show even from 1993 referenda and Duma elections. Oppositional regional/local regimes started with populist and paternalist programs, which gave them a popular support. However, lack of resources and financial dependence on the federal government made impossible vast expenditures that such programs needed.

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

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

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

In most cases, “oppositional” governors originally came to power with the limited electoral support, because they won highly competitive elections defeating more or less strong incumbents and usually did it in the second round only. The support for CPRF that usually backed them was not so high and many candidates lacked personal charismas to attract more voters than CPRF support could bring them by itself. However, after the victory their support usually decreased even more. Those who won their second term usually had big problems with their re-election, like mentioned above Lyubimov, famous communist leader Starodubtsev in Tula region etc.

The second outcome was the loss of own party support. The “oppositional” governors tended to non-party rule rather than to “communist” rule. Among the reasons were the search for more legitimacy for new regime and the need to build the professional (in terms of Weber’s bureaucracy), rather than “political” regional government in order to tackle the regional economy that was usually in shambles.

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

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

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

Two mentioned above outcomes merged in fact. The problem of “realistic”, pragmatic policy grew along with the problem of professionally trained oppositional politicians ready to work in the governments. It was only part of former Soviet nomenclature that could fill the gap in the “red” governors’ administrations. But many experienced bureaucrats stayed away from the parties after the ban on CPSU and many of them continued to work in power bodies after 1991. On the other hand, there were rather few Soviet bureaucrats who joined CPRF in order to regain power with its help. When Yeltsin appointed regional governors in 1991 and after, he recruited experienced, but loyal officials rather than newcomers from democratic movement, building up the system of pragmatic loyalty (Turovsky, 1998). Surely, such governors formed their administrations with their kind. That created initial conditions under which Soviet-born centre-left nomenclature could be included into the ruling elite on the regional level or could wait for the chance to be appointed without going to the opposition and revenging at the election, if lucky enough (let us remember that very few gubernatorial elections were held before 1996, and the election was not the way to regional power for a long time).

New “strange” phenomenon appeared; it was the communist opposition to the “communist” governor. Often regional branches of CPRF split into loyalists and critics and this internal struggle could lead to the instability within CPRF and changes of its regional leaders. Such instability within CPRF existed even in Tula region where the famous federal-level communist leader Starodubtsev came to power in 1997. Therefore, while the color of the “red” governor faded he faced the new opposition from his former supporters. As a result, the ruling group in “oppositional” regional regime could be criticized from all sides, both from loyalists to the federal government and from more radical left opposition.

Finally, the fourth outcome derives from the clientelist structure of power relations in Russia, which has become one of the main features of Russian politics (Biryukov, 2009). The “oppositional” regimes were usually the most fragmented in terms of elite cohesion. The elections won by new governors were usually highly competitive and the losers with their clienteles did not disappear after them. Moreover, the regional opposition towards the “oppositional” governor could be very strong and supported by business and/or federal centre. Rarely the “red” governor could arrange all the clienteles existing to an order. Rather, he built his own clientele that just complicated the structure. Apparently, after the governors’ elections were abolished, the struggle for appointment in such regions was usually the fiercest, with the strong candidates on the official list, not to mention the fight “under the carpet”.

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

So, if the hybrid political regime and centralist politics in the formal federation did not allow the “oppositional” sub-national regime, those who came to power from the opposition did not have much choice either. We suppose that the only way to the success (i.e. stability in power) for the “oppositional” governor was the choice of adaptation strategy and usually break-up with

the oppositional party. The goal was to fit more or less smoothly into the regime, both on institutional and individual levels. In our opinion, there were four reasons to fit:

1. economic reasons (in order to get more financial support and sustain the development),
2. electoral/appointment reasons (to have Kremlin support at the elections and to prevent the participation of candidate more suitable for Kremlin; the same kind of reason started to apply when the period of appointments came in 2005),
3. integration of former opposition leaders into the political/financial establishment (more and more important as the hopes to change the regime itself disappeared).
4. coordination problem as the leftist governors could not create any coalition of their own (the reason is in an overall weakness of inter-regional ties in Russia due to both communication/transportation problem and the financial dependency on the central government which no horizontal interactions could help overcome; coordination problem was also covered by Solnick, 2000; Shevtsova, 2003; Sakwa, 2003).

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

In terms of the famous Hirschman triad of reactions on unstable organizational conditions (voice, exit, loyalty), Russian “oppositional” governors chose the last one (Hirschman, 1970). The voice (of opposition) in theory could bring more electoral support at the next elections, but under authoritarian regime could lead to an end, one way or another. The critics of the federal authorities at the sub-national elections of 1995-1999 could be very fierce even from the side of the established regional officials. But it was self-censored anyway and meant to attract voters at the certain electoral periods. Besides, Yeltsin back at the time of 1993 political crisis showed that he was ready to fire openly disloyal governors.

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

Undoubtedly, the loyalty is the main way of adaptation for the “oppositional” governor. The loyalty towards the federal government was obviously the most needed one that should be combined with the building of clientelist ties with the federal bureaucrats.

Back in 1996, those governors who came to power with the support of the opposition but were not party members found themselves in more flexible situation to shake off an undesirable leftist support. Soon after elections, in 1996, Gustov from Leningrad region and Tsvetkov from Magadan region held press conference where they expressed explicit loyalty towards the federal centre (Turovsky, 1998). Both were rewarded. Tsvetkov found federal support for his project of free economic zone in Magadan. Gustov became federal vice prime minister in 1998 (in the 2000s he was a senator).

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

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

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

Secondly, the “oppositional” governors under new “capitalist” regime were inevitably engaged in privatization processes (that was going on under bureaucratic control) and could not escape relations with business (otherwise risking to get it in opposition to them which could be fatal). Business-power relations is the theme widely discussed in Russian and international sources. Often the authors come to conclusion that the business groups have been playing very important role in regional politics and even controlling regional governments (Zubarevich, 2002). The case of a “red” governor is specific from this point, since such governors “in theory” should stay away from oligarchs. But some “communist” governors created close links with “capitalist” tycoons. One of the examples is found in Volgograd where experts say that governor Maksyuta, CPRF member, who ruled from 1996 until 2010, was a supporter of LUKOIL, one of the biggest Russian oil companies. LUKOIL owns oil refinery and deposits in the region and is a chief taxpayer there. LUKOIL managers got job in Maksyuta government, while the company itself employed the governor’s own son. Another example was Lyubimov with its ties with TNK (Tyumen Oil Company) that owns the oil refinery in Ryazan. Lyubimov used to be a member of its directors’ board.

Expression of loyalty and integration into the emerging political and economic regime was one part of the adaptation strategies used by the “oppositional” governors. Another part can be found in their party politics and role in the transformation of party system. The institutionalization of post-Soviet parties has been a gradual process. In the 1990s as the electoral results showed, CPRF was the most popular party but its public support was limited due to widespread anticommunist sentiments. Executive power heads preferred to stay “beyond” or “above” parties seeing parties as the limitation for the legitimacy of the personalist regimes. Most regional regimes also tended to be personalist and clientelist as studies of the 1990s’ regimes examined (Gel’man, Ryzhenkov, Bri, 2000).

Focusing on “oppositional” regimes one can see the same trend in their party and electoral politics, despite the fact that some governors were the members of CPRF. “Red” governors changed their policy towards the federal elections. It was naïve to think that they would support CPRF and grant it with their “administrative resource”. Even in the early times at the 1996 presidential elections, the only CPRF affiliate of that time, Ryabov in Tambov region stayed away from the campaign while letting two of his deputies head campaigns of two main rivals, Yeltsin and Zyuganov. Later on, at 1999 Duma elections “red” governors usually let the communists campaign freely but rarely gave them open or any support. After 2000, such support became even more limited or ceased. Thus, “red” governors also preferred to build “above party” personalist regimes in order to strengthen their shaky legitimacy. Anyway, most of them could

rely on CPRF support at the elections, since CPRF did not risk a “revenge” with other candidates. However, it was interesting that on the individual level certain communists could run against “red” governor posing him a “traitor”, but usually they were excluded either from the run or from the party.

Regional clientelism of the “oppositional” governors sometimes led to the creation of their own centrist “parties of power”, which they supported along with CPRF or instead. When regional legislatures were elected in single-mandate districts governor-supported candidates did not match completely the list of CPRF candidates. At the regional elections when party lists were introduced after 2003, communist governors could split their support. Starodubtsev in Tula region, while being CPRF member, created his own “party of power”, bloc “For Tula *krai*” with his deputy Bogomolov in the lead. In terms of elections, this bloc took away votes both from CPRF and United Russia. It is worth to remember that Starodubtsev was one of the symbols of communist movement. This example showed that each governor preferred to create centrist “party of power” (be it United Russia branch or regional bloc) rather than support a party with ideological bias. In other words, clientelist politics (hidden behind the centrist phraseology) always prevailed over party politics.

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

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

After Putin’s centralization and the introduction of dominant party regime, the factor of political dependency became relevant for all the regions. This factor also meant the empirical test on the very allowance of the governors from “other” parties in more centralized system of executive power.

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

Under the new party system, the communists faced the hardest decision ever. Some of them decided to leave the party. In 2003, before the first Duma elections with United Russia participation, CPRF was abandoned by Krasnodar governor Tkachev (who joined United Russia without any hesitations as he was not considered a true communist before) and Nizhny

Novgorod governor Khodyrev. The latest of all was the controversial case of Kursk governor Mikhailov who had a long story of active communist (he had been elected Duma deputy since 1993 and was a member of party's Central committee at the time of his governor election in 2000). However, even Mikhailov left CPRF for United Russia and in reward he got another term being appointed by Putin in 2005 (and then by Medvedev in 2010).

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

However, the communist opposition is not the only one of the kind. But no oppositional liberals were elected governors and we cannot judge their behavior. The most famous liberal governor Nemtsov was Yeltsin's appointee and his regional policy was rather conservative indeed. Nemtsov recruited old Soviet nomenclature in his government (the key person after him was former local CPSU secretary Sklyarov) and tried to build his power vertical pressing over Nizhny Novgorod mayor Bednyakov.

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

On the other hand, the showcase of clear pragmatism was businessman Kanokov who became Duma deputy from LPDR in 2003 but moved to United Russia soon and was appointed president of his native Kabardino-Balkaria. Another case of successful adaptation is Markelov in Mariy El who started with LDPR and was victorious at the presidential election but moved to United Russia and went on with his governance being appointed by president.

So, probably the best way of adaptation after the change of party system was to join United Russia. But apparently not all the "oppositional" governors were ready for that because of their ideological views and fearing to lose all the public support (despite the abolishment of elections they did care about it) after such a radical overturn. Here we come to the second phase of co-adaptation strategy. The main aim of Putin's regime was not to exclude communists or "pinks" completely but rather to adapt those who proved to be adaptable, at least for a while. As we argued, initially Putin tried to change the system of center-regional relations rather than to change the governors on the personal level, and that brought about a lot of decisions in favor of different incumbents (Turovsky, 2009). This showed in the case of two communists who were

appointed governors in 2005 (Vinogradov in Vladimir region, Chernogorov in Stavropol region). Putin demonstrated his readiness to work with communists, a sort of goodwill.

However, most “reds” could not survive long in the new regime. The main reason, as we suggest, was not the ideology, but the inability to fit into the new clientelist system. Analysis of those governors, who lost power under Putin, shows that the federal centre threw away many populists and political activists with bad record of regional conflicts and mismanagement. On the first stage, the new authoritarian regime used dependent judicial power and electoral commissions to get rid of unwanted governors before the elections. Firstly, Rutskoï in Kursk region and then Lodkin in Bryansk region were excluded from the run, which seemed impossible before for the incumbent governor in his “own” region. Others could not survive appointment policy and were replaced (Starodubtsev, Mashkovstev)³. Even public conflict with CPRF did not pay off to some of the governors who missed the chance for another term (Khodyrev, Tikhonov).

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

The centralization and the dominant party regime brought about the new and final step in the evolution of “oppositional” regional regimes – the extinction. Studies prove that the electoral performance became the main reason for governors’ appointments. Surely, that meant the performance of United Russia. As Reuter and Robinson argued, the loyalty of governors and the electoral results as its proof opened the way to re-appointments (Reuter, Robinson, 2011). After changes to the legislation on the governors’ appointments under Medvedev it became even clearer, because the party winning the regional elections (i.e. United Russia) got the right to propose candidates to the president. For “reds” all that meant forced “exit” (they usually were not included in the list of candidates) rather than the new term. For success, the loyalty had to be at its fullest (Mikhailov case in Kursk region) and even such loyalty was not a guarantee (hence the continuous talks about Mikhailov’s soon resignation).

Managing regional elites, the federal centre, however, used policy that was a little bit more sophisticated than it could be in a “regular” dominant party regime. Kremlin never wanted all the governors to be United Russia members. We see two reasons for that. The first coincides with Reuter’s point on the sequence of governors’ membership. It is also based on the suggestion that United Russia has limited power and is a political tool rather than a strong party. So, some influential federal-level politicians have a privilege not to join and feel free with it. Another reason is the policy of the federal authorities that is still aimed at the demonstration of the presence of formal democratic institutions and ideological diversity. Such policy was typical under president Medvedev. This results in policy allowing very limited but still a diversity among the governors. Now they cannot be members of any other party except for United Russia, but “independents” being former affiliates of oppositional parties are still possible. As a result, “frozen communist” Vinogradov was appointed for the second time. Also Medvedev appointed

³ The “oppositional” governors were the target of campaigns launched by the law-enforcement bodies. For example, in 2004 there was an investigation against Mashkovtsev. Leader of Agrarian party Lapshin, while in the office of Altay Republic governor, was also suited. Such cases had obvious political reasoning and were aimed at weakening the governor and stopping him on the way to appointment. Indeed, no governors who were investigated got their new term appointments.

former leader of liberal Union of Right Forces Belykh governor of Kirov region⁴ creating a new case of supposedly liberal governance.

So, it is very hard to find a successful story of “oppositional” governor in authoritarian regime as in Russia. Mainly it is a story of failures and conflicts. The only “real” communist (though with frozen party membership) who is still a governor and has been appointed twice (being elected twice before) is Vinogradov. Of course, he could not escape adaptation policy. He used to control partly the United Russia branch in the region, while keeping good relations with CPRF. In other words, he started to play with two parties instead of one gradually making concessions to United Russia (for example, the communist Bobrov used to head the regional legislature in Vladimir but after new elections he ceded to United Russia’s member). Probably, his “secret” was in his political experience, and the federal centre needed to keep a certain political diversity among governors and Vinogradov was a showcase. But this story may also come to an end, as Vinogradov finds himself under growing pressure from United Russia claiming his resignation.

We suggest that the loyalty and United Russia membership could not guarantee new appointment. As we pointed out, governor’s fate depended mainly on his/her involvement in the clientelist system. More radical “reds” (communists) were usually alien to the patron-client system and this led to their failures while they were alienated and pressed to leave sooner or later. Among more pragmatic “pinks” (i.e. left-leaning independents), there are few cases of successful adaptation. All of them meant joining United Russia. These are Korolev in Lipetsk region (elected governor in 1998), Tuleev in Kemerovo region (since 1997) and Bogomolov in Kurgan region (since 1996). All of them used to have CPRF support and control this party’s branches. The federal centre appreciated great electoral support of Tuleev and Korolev, who in their turn created an effective network of relations on the federal level. Korolev used to be a deputy of Federation Council head. Tuleev created his very strong authoritarian regime and enjoyed good relations with most of the companies working in his important industrial region. Also former CPRF member Tkachev in very important Krasnodar region has become one of the strongest governors. But Tkachev has a long story of his own adaptation strategy, changing many parties (before CPRF he had close relations with Agrarian Party and “Our Home is Russia”) on his way.

Recently the process of extinction has been forced by the reasons relevant for Medvedev’s rule. New president trying to ensure his power wanted to change the governors both on individual and generational levels. This led to the change of the main part of governors, and former “reds” and “pinks” among them, who were also too old in terms of age and needed replacement from the younger president’s point of view. The new phase of governors’ change gradually wiped away all the former “oppositional” governors, including “pinks” and communists-turned-loyalists. Such reason as the age has become very important and obviously long-serving and old governors had slight chances to go on. Even with the new phase of governors’ elections due to start in the end of 2012 one should not expect victories of opposition not only because of serious limitations on the election procedure but also because of the huge deficit of popular political leaders.

Our analysis shows that the regional/local victory of the opposition turned into a trap for the winner. Resulting regime was very weak, fragmented and widely criticized from almost all of the sides. In their adaptation strategies, the “oppositional” governors came to three results: the full loyalty, the failure or what we would call the failed loyalty, i.e. the inability to adapt to the new Putin/Medvedev regime, despite serious attempts to do so. And the regime itself starting under Yeltsin and changing further in the 2000s did not allow oppositional parties to rule in the

⁴ It is worth to mention that his deputy governor Scherchkov joined United Russia in 2010. Formerly he was a leader of SPS (URF) branch in Perm’. This shows that liberals go the same way as they come to power.

regions. It is different from federal regimes of PRI's Mexico and modern Nigeria with their strong oppositional governors.

Why so Much Love (or Fear) for Governors?

The procedure of governors' appointment (now abolished in favor of authoritarian-styled elections of regional governors due to start in October 2012) has become recently one of the key issues of Russian regional politics. The role of the regional legislature has proved to be very limited. Actually, in terms of our study that was another test on "oppositionness" in regional politics. The matter is the president's right to dissolve the oppositional legislature if it does not approve the candidate proposed for the second or the third time by president. Practice of appointments has shown that most deputies have never even tried to put to risk their mandates voting against the presidential nominee. However, the oppositional parties can vote against without much risk knowing that the majority of United Russia would vote for the candidate anyway. So, it's up to them to decide.

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

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

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

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

Our analysis proves very high level of Fair Russia's loyalty to the governors. In 56 regions, this party voted for the candidate proposed by the president. Only in two regions, Fair Russia definitely voted against (Chuvashia and Leningrad *oblast'*) and in one region (Saint-Petersburg) it split. LDPR looks more "oppositional", as it voted for the proposed candidates in 45 regions, while in eight regions it voted against. In other regions their factions either do not exist or their position could not be identified for sure.

CPRF is the most interesting case. As contrary to Fair Russia and LDPR, the score of its positions is in favor of negative. In 34 regions, CPRF faction was against the presidential nominees. But in 23 regions communists did approve the governor. There are many controversial cases which cannot be identified clearly. In a number of regions part of communist deputies voted for the approval despite the official decision. In two regions positions of federal party leadership and the regional branch appeared to be contrary. This could lead to scandals and in some regions even to the exclusions from the party.

So, the result of CPRF voting is very complicated and different. Our analysis proves that Fair Russia and LDPR in their behavior in legislative bodies are close to the status of United Russia's satellites and governor's loyalists. CPRF case shows that this party is often open to dialogue with governor and ready to accept its political supremacy. We suggest that CPRF strategy after this party lost the chances to win at the federal elections is not a strategy of open "oppositionness" but a strategy of survival. Unfortunately, the studies of CPRF are very few. But those authors who are specialized in communist studies (Chernyakhovsky, 2003) argue that CPRF leaders have always wanted to cooperate with the "regime" and refused from any kind of revolutionary strategy leaving it for the rhetoric only.

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

Only in 2010, CPRF federal leaders decided to put an end to this regional mess feeling that such politics undermined the status of "truly" oppositional party. CPRF's presidium of Central Committee ruled that all the factions in regional legislatures and all the communist deputies must vote against United Russia's candidates for governors. Otherwise, they run the risk of being excluded from the party. This decision strengthened party discipline for a while but could not erase the politics of regional reciprocity and actually failed and was forgotten.

Hard choice between "oppositionness" and "collaboration" leads to the numerous conflicts both within the CPRF regional branches and between its central and regional leaders. For example, in Sverdlovsk region communists decided to vote against the presidential nominee Misharin. But party leader Zyuganov insisted that they should vote in approval of this candidate due to some possible consultations on the federal level. The opposite case is the denial of Central committee's decision and approval of the governor by some communist deputies in the regions. As a result, there were reported cases when such deputies were excluded from the party but others stayed in the party and the scandal was finished soon. It seems that the central leadership of CPRF cannot fully control the regional deputies or just let it go.

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

So, CPRF is actually very far from Fair Russia and LDPR on the scale of the "oppositionness". But it gives too many examples of collaborative politics in the regional legislatures.

One of the most interesting tricks is that politics of reciprocity looks asymmetrical. It is not an expected rational bargain when voting for the governor is exchanged for the spoils in the legislature and vice versa. On the contrary, in 13 regions out of 23 where CPRF approved the governor it did not have any spoils. Fair Russia and LDPR vote for the governor in many regions where they are not represented in the legislature's leadership. As we could see these two parties are often underrated and do not get spoils but they vote for the governor in most cases anyway. There are two possible reasons. One of them is a possible "shadow" deal between the governor and the party. But actually governors do not have to go this way, since they control the majority of deputies through United Russia. As we suppose, there is another, institutional reason: "the refusal from oppositionness" is a widespread form of behavior of "oppositional" parties. It is a demonstration of readiness to cooperate with the regional leader and the acceptance of the hierarchical political relations. The negative effect of such politics is that it often does not pay

off, since the “oppositional” parties do not get any spoils in turn and can lose disappointed voters. Still the “oppositional” parties do not feel the danger and prefer tactical deals in the existing political environment that helps them to survive one way or another and gives them either motives or illusions for further political careers. However, as we emphasized such asymmetrical politics in “power - opposition” relations has no strategic political outcomes for the “opposition”.

Conclusion

All the cases of oppositional governors show that under Putin/Medvedev regime there is much less sense in joining the oppositional parties for those seeking the leading place in executive power. As our study shows the structural features of electoral authoritarianism not only ensure the victories of “approved” candidates but also make the rare oppositional winners to adapt to the existing regime and change the political affiliation.

The elections give the opposition opportunity (or its illusion) to win but a number of possible elections to win diminished with the (temporary) abolishment of governors’ elections and of many mayors’ direct elections. Moreover, authoritarian practices led to numerous cases when unwanted candidates were refused to run or the counting of votes was “corrected”. Obviously such cases lead to widespread disbelief that the oppositional candidate can win an executive office anywhere at all.

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

External reasons are ideological to a small extent. Rather it is an impossibility to include oppositional regime into the system of patron-client relations. Russian politics, especially in the 2000s, tend to produce simple mechanisms of power relations based on close personal ties and distribution of resources within such closed systems. Even those who tried to fit in using formal ways (United Russia membership etc), were often rejected. Since ruling elite still needs high level of control over regional finances and privatization it uses all the ways to block unwanted newcomers into the executive power. The complication of regional clientelist structure in “oppositional” regimes has usually become a problem and source of conflicts which were decided by administrative (appointment of new governor, abolishment of elections) and authoritarian (criminal charges, electoral manipulations) ways.

But there are also internal reasons, such as low legitimacy of oppositional regimes and loss of their leaders’ popularity, weak and unprofessional governance, and impossibility to change the regional policy.

So, in authoritarian regime the oppositional party can still be a tool to win the local election, but its affiliation is too heavy a burden to bear after the victory. After being elected, the winner finds himself in another political environment of existing patron-client relations, and has no other choice than to become a dependent member, or an agent (according to principal-agent theory) in higher-level clientele.

As a result, oppositional party has become useless in the recruitment of influential executive power elite. However, while blocking unwanted “invasion” of opposition into the executive power the regime allows opposition to be presented in the leadership of regional legislative power. This policy reflects the necessity to make an opposition more loyal and included into the system of power relations in most safe and efficient for the ruling elite way.

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