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Party Politics published online 15 June 2012
DOI: 10.1177/1354068812448689

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DOI: 10.1177/1354068812448689

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Abstract

Authoritarian dominant parties are said to ensure elite loyalty by providing elites with regularized opportunities for career advancement. This article uses data on the distribution of leadership posts in Russia's regional legislatures (1999–2010) to conduct the first systematic test of this proposition. Loyalty to the nascent hegemonic party, United Russia, is shown to be important in determining a legislator's chances of being promoted to a leadership position. These findings generate insight into how authoritarian institutions help maintain regime stability and provide a clearer picture of how Russia's ruling party works.

Keywords

authoritarianism, leadership, Russia, selecting leaders, statistical analysis

Paper submitted 29 October 2011; accepted for publication 19 April 2012.

Introduction

In the past ten years, political scientists have learned a great deal about institutional variation in non-democratic regimes. Important studies of authoritarian legislatures (Gandhi, 2008), elections (Blaydes, 2011; Magaloni, 2006) and parties (Brownlee, 2007; Magaloni, 2008) have demonstrated how these nominally democratic institutions

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can both fortify authoritarian rule and provide opportunities for opponents to undermine the regime. Yet many questions remain about how these institutions operate, and about the conditions under which they can bolster, as opposed to undermine, authoritarian rule.

In particular, much remains unclear about the inner workings of ruling parties in authoritarian regimes. Regimes with dominant parties are more long-lived than regimes without such parties (Geddes, 1999). One of the primary causal mechanisms suggested for this finding is elite cohesion. Specifically, it has been argued that ruling parties contain institutional norms of advancement, which give elites some guarantee that loyalty to the regime will be rewarded with career advancement (Brownlee, 2007; Magaloni, 2008). Cadres who have institutional guarantees about their career advancement opportunities are more likely to have a vested interest in supporting the current regime than cadres in regimes where such institutional guarantees are lacking. With higher elite cohesion, dominant party regimes are more stable, it is said.

This article presents the first systematic test of the key causal mechanism in this line of reasoning. Specifically, we use individual-level data on the distribution of leadership posts among 1399 legislators in 24 convocations of Russian regional legislatures elected from 2005 to 2010 to examine whether dominant parties reward loyal cadres with career advancement in these legislative forums.

Russia in this period makes an excellent case for testing such a theory because the dominant party, United Russia, emerged *de novo* and grew steadily over the period of analysis, with individual elites gradually joining the party. This offers two advantages. First, this new and weakly institutionalized dominant party presents a hard case for the theory. If loyalty influences career advancement here, then it likely plays an even larger role in more established dominant parties. Second, we can measure loyalty directly by comparing those who joined the party early with those who waited to join the party later. In more long-lived dominant parties, there is less variation in ruling party membership among the political elite because party membership has long been a necessary condition for political activity. We find that those who joined United Russia early, before the party had become assuredly dominant, have a higher probability of receiving a leadership post when controlling for possible confounding factors. Specifically, incumbents who joined the United Russia faction in a previous convocation, when the dominant party still did not have a majority, are more likely to receive a leadership post than incumbents who did not join the dominant party in the previous convocation. In addition to party loyalty, we find that prior legislative leadership experience, close relations with the governor and legislative expertise are important predictors of receiving a leadership position.

These findings provide the first quantitative evidence for a theory of how dominant parties ensure elite loyalty by providing elites with regularized opportunities for career advancement. But our findings also suggest that old patterns of political exchange die hard. Patron–client relations and the need to coopt strong elites still limit the extent to which United Russia exerts collective influence over rents, careers and spoils.

Our article also has important implications for the study of Russian politics. It is the first study that examines Russia's ruling party institutions with quantitative data. We reveal that United Russia rewards loyalty with career advancement. In this way, at least, United Russia operates as a dominant party institution that rewards loyalty with prospective career advancement. At the regional level, fealty to powerful patrons and informal

ties coexist as paths to power alongside more institutionalized channels that operate through United Russia. Thus, while United Russia's institutional significance should not be overstated, its institutional bite is significant.

Authoritarian ruling parties

An increasing number of studies show that the most robust non-democratic regimes are those that make use of nominally democratic institutions to coopt opponents and gather information. Legislatures, it is argued, provide a forum outside the inner sanctum of the ruler where opposition groups can be coopted with policy concessions and spoils (Gandhi, 2008). Some suggest that elections, by providing elites with a competitive opportunity to access rents, serve the same cooptive function as legislatures (Blaydes 2011; Boix and Svobik, 2008; Lust-Okar, 2005, 2006). Others suggest that elections serve an informational role, permitting incumbents to learn about the disposition of the opposition, demonstrate their dominance and assess the efficacy of their own elite allies (Blaydes, 2011; Magaloni, 2006).

But arguably the most important non-democratic institution is the dominant party. By dominant party, we mean a party in a non-democracy that controls access to many, but not necessarily all, important political offices, shares powers of policy-making and patronage distribution, and uses privileged access to state resources to maintain its position in power.² This is a minimalist definition, because under this conception the dominant party need not oversee an all-encompassing party-state in which all political decisions are made collectively by the party.

We prefer a minimalist definition for two reasons. First, the ideal type described above is approximated by few if any dominant parties in world history and, thus, is of limited analytical value.³ Second, this minimalist definition allows the analyst to differentiate among and compare strong and weak dominant parties. Gandhi (2008) has shown that autocratic institutions, even when they exist in regimes that are typically considered personalist, can have significant impacts on the type of policy that dictators make.

Since Huntington (1970) scholars have viewed strong ruling parties as structures capable of uniting fissiparous social forces and elites Brownlee (2007) argues that strong ruling parties 'bridle elite ambitions and bind together otherwise fractious coalitions. Anchored in an institutional setting that generates political power and long-term security, rival opportunists cooperate' (p. 33). In other words, by regularizing and directing the distribution of spoils, careers and policy, dominant parties give elites a reason to believe that they will receive a fair share of these goods in the future. This provides these elites with a vested interest in the regime.

In contrast, elites in regimes without such institutionalized means of spoil distribution have no credible guarantees that they will receive access to spoils in the future. This reduces their time horizons and gives them more incentive to challenge the leader for control of spoils. Since elite defections are known to be one of the primary drivers of authoritarian breakdown (Haggard and Kauffman, 1996; Reuter and Gandhi, 2011), the role of the dominant party in ensuring elite cohesion is crucial. Indeed, one of the most robust findings in the neo-institutional authoritarian literature is that dominant party

regimes are more long-lived than other types of regime (Brownlee, 2007; Gandhi and Przeworski, 2007; Geddes, 1999; Magaloni, 2008; Smith, 2005).

Theory

At the macro level, there appears to be a cross-national relationship between the existence of a dominant party and the lifespan of authoritarian regimes. But beyond this cross-national evidence, there is little direct evidence of the primary mechanism that is thought to lie behind this finding: namely, that loyal party cadres are rewarded with access to careers, rents and spoils. In studies of well-known dominant parties, such as the PRI, this process was often assumed or articulated vaguely (e.g. Langston, 2002, 2006). In studies of Leninist regimes, party membership simply was deemed a necessary condition for advancement, so most analysis focused on other channels of advancement within the monolith, most notably patron–client ties (Rigby and Harasmyiw, 1980).

In this article, we test the primary mechanism behind the finding that dominant parties survive longer than other regimes. We argue, quite simply, that elites who have demonstrated more loyalty to the ruling party will be more likely to receive career advancement opportunities. Why would regime leaders want to orchestrate a system where ambitious cadres are rewarded for their loyalty? We argue that regime leaders would do this because regularly and dependably rewarding loyalty in the present is a way of keeping elites loyal in the future. Magaloni (2008) situates this logic in the framework of a commitment problem that unfolds in the following manner. Dictators would like to ensure the long-term loyalty of elites, a goal they could achieve if they could credibly promise elites a fair share of the spoils from governing in the future. Unfortunately, dictators cannot credibly commit to distributing these spoils to elites; they may be short-sighted and renege on promises about how spoils will be distributed. Rulers can mitigate this commitment problem by delegating control of at least some spoils to a separate institution (e.g. a dominant party) that will develop rules, norms and understandings about how career advancement can be achieved.

A ruling party thus generates credible expectations for elites about that type of behaviour – loyal behaviour – that will be rewarded. In turn, this reduces uncertainty for elites and mitigates their incentives to defect from the regime. In an established dominant party equilibrium, the dictator is constrained from disrupting the rule governed distribution of spoils, because such infringement would lead to elite defections.

We argue that a dictator building a dominant party will want to allow the party to quickly establish a reputation for rewarding loyalty with career advancement.⁴ Such a policy will serve as a signal to other elites that their careers will be served by loyalty to the regime. Thus our primary hypothesis is the following:

Hypothesis 1: Elites who have demonstrated loyalty to the ruling party will be more likely to receive career advancement opportunities.

Authoritarian institutions and the case of Russia

There are several reasons why Putin-era Russia offers an excellent laboratory testing our hypothesis. First, the recent emergence of United Russia as a dominant party – the party

was founded in 2001 – allows us to measure loyalty in a more direct way than is possible in long-lived dominant party regimes. In the Soviet Union, for instance, party membership was considered a necessary condition for inclusion and advancement on nomenklatura lists (Harasmyiw, 1984; Rigby, 1968). Variation in party loyalty is difficult to measure and code since it is manifested in ways that are difficult to observe for a large sample of elites. An emergent dominant party, like United Russia, is useful in this regard because there are clear distinctions between those who linked their careers to the party early on and those who hedged their bets and postponed joining the party. Second, Russia is a large, important and influential electoral authoritarian regime that serves as a model for other authoritarian rulers, especially in the post-Soviet region. And finally, the recentness of United Russia's emergence makes collecting data easier.

In spite of all this, there are very few studies of Russia's authoritarian institutions. Comparativists know very little about how the Kremlin manages elites, opposition and patronage through elections, legislatures and parties. Most analyses of Russia's political institutions still view them through the lens of the literature on emerging democracies. We think this is a mistake. Analyses of contemporary Russian politics can be improved by considering Russia's elections and legislatures in light of the recent neo-institutional literature on authoritarian regimes and, in turn, the study of Russia's authoritarian institutions can contribute to the appraisal and refinement of theory on the operation of institutions in modern authoritarian regimes.

Russia's ruling party, United Russia, is particularly understudied. Its domination of elections and legislatures is well documented (Colton and Hale, 2009; Gel'man, 2006; Ivanov, 2008; Makarenko, 2011; Reuter and Remington, 2009; Smyth et al., 2007), but empirical studies of its role in the regime are lacking. At time of writing, the party holds a majority in the State Duma, 75 percent of the seats in the Federation Council, majorities in 82 of 83 regional legislatures, 78 of 83 gubernatorial posts in Russia, mayoral posts in 87 percent of Russia's 186 largest cities, and majorities in 88 percent of the city councils in Russia's 186 largest cities.⁵ The party has a large and growing presence in organs of local self-government, and, with 56,330 regional, local and primary branches, the party's organizational reach is extensive.⁶ The party's domination of legislatures means that spoils and rents distributed in those forums are channelled by the party to its members. Particularly in the regions, qualitative evidence suggests that the party plays a role as a forum for rent distribution and the making of careers (Reuter and Remington, 2009).

However, the party does not control the federal executive branch. President Medvedev and most of the government remain non-partisan. Prime Minister Putin is Chairman of the Party, but not formally a member. Party penetration also appears to be low in the federal bureaucracy, military and security services.

Given its lack of direct control over the executive branch, United Russia's state supervisory role is less than that of the CPSU or the PRI in Mexico. In the Soviet Union, decisions on policy formulation, staffing and, often, implementation were made in party organs and formally enacted by state structures. United Russia does not do this, except perhaps in legislatures.

But at the same time, the party appears to be more than an institutional shell.⁷ We should judge the significance of the party not just against ideal type dominant party

regimes, but also against the weak or non-existent party organizations that exist, or do not exist, in many personalist autocracies. Moreover, United Russia certainly carries more institutional significance than the fly-by-night parties of power that existed in Russia in the 1990s (Levitsky and Way, 2010; Reuter and Remington, 2009). Beyond this, we know little. But rather than assuming or dismissing United Russia's institutional strength with anecdotal evidence, we attempt in this article to evaluate it with systematic data.

Why Regional Legislatures?

To test our hypothesis, we use data on promotion to legislative leadership positions in Russian regional legislatures. Legislative leadership promotions are useful for testing theories about intra-dominant party career advancement for several reasons. First, these are important positions that bring with them opportunities for rent-seeking. In Western democracies, legislative leadership positions provide their occupants with special opportunities to secure perks and pork for their districts (Fenno, 1966, 1973). In Russia, leadership positions in the State Duma have been seen as translating into special influence over the legislative process and, thus, the distribution of patronage (Remington, 2001, 2008). Regional legislative leadership positions (especially Speaker and Vice Speaker positions as well as committee chairmanships) play the key role in guiding legislation, and serving in one of these is viewed as more prestigious than serving as a simple deputy without a leadership position.

But even if legislative leaders are privileged actors *within* legislatures, why are regional legislatures a useful arena for studying how patronage opportunities are distributed in Russia? As an increasing number of studies show, authoritarian legislatures can be important arenas for the distribution of spoils, patronage, rents and policy influence (e.g. Blaydes, 2011; Gandhi, 2008; Lust-Okar, 2006). In Egypt, Blaydes (2011) illustrates how parliamentary seats translate into access to state jobs, protection of one's business interests, access to ministers and preferential state loans. In sum, the comparative literature suggests that we should be cautious about dismissing authoritarian legislatures outright.

In Putin-era Russia, the executive branch sets much of the legislative agenda and formulates many policy initiatives, but the State Duma and regional legislatures continue to function as arenas in which organized interests can influence public policy (Remington, 2008; Tolstykh, 2008). In a study of lobbying conducted by the Center for the Study of the Interaction between Business and Politics, experts found that lobbying the executive branch was necessary to 'quickly decide a specific matter of an individual character' in Putin-era Russia, while lobbying the legislative branch permitted groups to defend their long-term interests (Makhortov, 2008: 4). In a representative survey of 1000 regional Russian firms conducted in December 2011 with the participation of the author, 30 percent of the firm directors who conducted face-to-face lobbying at the regional level reported that they preferred to focus their lobbying efforts on the regional legislature. This number is significant for an authoritarian regime, especially given the fact that, in both democracies and autocracies, lobbying a specific bureaucratic agency makes more sense when a business wishes to influence an administrative rule rather than a law.

More important for this article are the perks that legislators themselves receive. These include immunity from criminal prosecution, an elevated public profile and a platform for lobbying one's personal business interests. Indeed, according to our sample of 131 regional legislative convocations from 1999–2010, 48 percent of regional deputies were businessmen.⁸ In most cases, the largest enterprises in a region seek representation in the regional legislature. This indicates that economic actors see some significant benefit to being represented in a regional legislature, especially since regional election campaigns cost a great deal of money and, for United Russia politicians, are not funded by the party. The representation of important economic interests in regional parliaments sets these legislatures apart from Soviet legislatures where representation was based on class quotas (Vanneman, 1977).

Legislators' influence is either formal, in the form of legislative power over budgets, regulation and taxes, or informal in that legislators are given privileged access to the ear of regional ministers and the governor (e.g. Orttung, 2004). In interviews with regional legislatures, some regional legislators were quite frank about their desire to lobby their business interests inside the legislature. In one region, the owner of a large enterprise reported that being promoted to a committee chairmanship had helped him steer a bill that gave preferential access to the current renters of buildings owned by the regional government, which he numbered among, when they were privatized.⁹ In Yaroslavskaia Oblast, the head of United Russia's fraction reported that many deputies in his fraction ran for the Oblast Duma because deputy status would give them a platform from which to lobby their personal business interests with the governor.¹⁰ Indeed, using the mandate to win influence and authority in other circles is a major perk of office that many deputies reported in interviews.

In sum, we make no claim that the Russian legislative branch is a more important policy-making actor than the executive branch. But it appears to offer many of the perks and spoils that scholars of authoritarian legislatures have noted. We think it is important to judge the significance of Russian legislatures not just against legislatures in democracies, or even the State Duma in the 1990s, but against legislatures in other authoritarian regimes. In this light, Russian legislatures appear as fairly typical authoritarian institutions.

There are also highly important practical reasons for conducting this analysis in the legislative arena. Legislatures provide a clear universe of observations where we can analyse variation in how career advancement opportunities are distributed. Political loyalty may be rewarded with patronage opportunities in multiple settings (e.g. in gubernatorial appointments, in promotions to the Federation Council, in regional administrations), but when appointments are drawn from an undefined pool of candidates then we cannot know who to include in the sample. The selection pool is too amorphous for analysis. On the other hand, when analysing the distribution of legislative leadership posts it is clear that the unit of analysis should be the legislator and that the pool of potential candidates consists only of regional legislators in that region.

Moreover, given our interest in examining the effects of loyalty to United Russia on career advancement, we require an arena where data on partisan affiliations are available. While many members of the elite carry partisan affiliations, information on those affiliations is not public and is exceedingly difficult to gather. For legislators, the matter

is simplified by the fact that legislative factions make plain each deputy's partisan loyalties. Finally, regional legislatures provide a larger number of potential observations (5,106 deputies in our database) than the State Duma.

Data and variables

For this analysis we use individual-level data collected by the authors on the distribution of legislative leadership positions and faction membership in 131 regional legislative convocations elected between 1999 and 2010.¹¹ We classify speakerships, vice-speakerships and committee chairmanships as leadership positions. The data include the 83 regional legislatures elected between December 2005 and October 2010 and 48 convocations elected prior to convocations sitting in November 2010. For more recent legislatures, faction and leadership information is taken from the regional legislature's official website. Information on faction composition and legislative leadership positions in previous convocations is rarely archived on regional legislative websites for prior convocations and there is no known public repository of this information, so information on previous convocations had to be gathered directly from regional legislatures via a survey of regional legislative clerks conducted in the summer of 2010.¹²

As of November 2010, United Russia had an absolute majority in all regional legislatures except Saint-Petersburg and held more than two-thirds of the seats in 59 of 83 regional legislatures. But it was not always thus. United Russia's performance in regional elections has improved over time. Prior to 2003, almost all of Russia's regional legislatures were elected in single-member districts, and the vast majority of candidates ran as independents (Golosov, 2003). To the extent that United Russia factions formed, they consisted of independent deputies who banded together after the elections. During the period 2000 to 2003 United Russia factions rarely formed a majority (Glubotskii and Kynev, 2003), and the new dominant party struggled to secure commitments from independent legislators and the gubernatorial machines that supported them (Reuter, 2010a). In 2003, the average United Russia faction controlled just 26 percent of legislative seats.

In December 2003, Russia's electoral law changed and all regions were required to elect at least half of their legislature's members on party lists. This reform increased seat-shares for all political parties because half of all seats would now be reserved for party nominees. Over the course of 2004, 2005 and 2006, the Kremlin stepped up its investments in United Russia, channelling more resources to it and sending clearer signals that United Russia was its preferred party vehicle. In turn, regional elites increasingly made their own commitments to United Russia (Reuter and Remington, 2009). As vote-shares rose, an increasing number of previously independent deputies joined party factions and more and more SMD races were won by United Russia candidates. This trend is demonstrated in Figure 1.

Given its majority status in almost all regional legislatures, it should not be surprising that United Russia also controls most leadership positions. The average number of leadership positions in a regional legislature is 10. The largest number of leadership positions is in Moscow, which has 21, and several regions only have 6 leadership positions. On average, United Russia held 88 percent of leadership positions for convocations elected

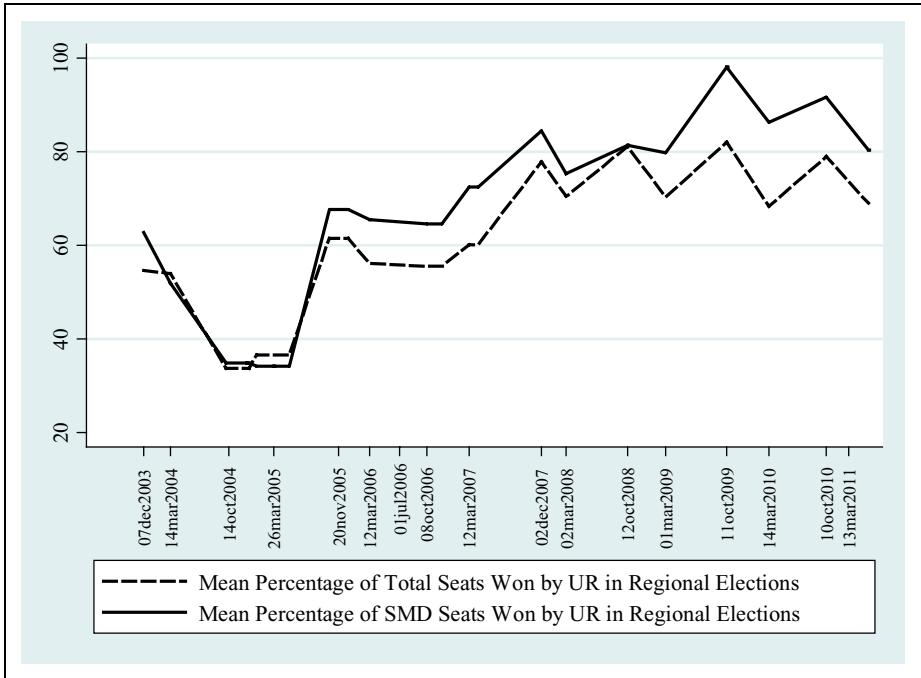


Figure 1. Cumulative Moving Average of Share of Mandates and SMD Seats Won by United Russia in Regional Legislatures

after 2005. In 2010, United Russia controlled all leadership positions in 41 legislatures. In the other 42 regions at least one position was shared with another party.

Dependent variable

The data we use for testing these hypotheses come from the database described in the previous section. The unit of analysis is the deputy-convocation. The dependent variable is coded 1 if a deputy holds a leadership position (chairperson, vice chairperson or committee chairperson) in the current convocation and 0 if he/she does not. Legislative leaders in Russian regional legislatures are selected from among the deputy corpus by the deputies in a majority vote. The central party leadership of UR often exerts influence on the choice of speaker, but our interviews suggest that local party organs are left to decide who receives other leadership positions, often in consultation with the governor.

The dependent variable is non-missing for 120 legislatures elected since 1999. This includes 67 of 83 of the convocations sitting as of November 2010, and 53 convocations elected prior to sitting convocations. Twenty-two percent of legislators have leadership positions in this sample. As we discuss in more detail below, however, our key independent variable can only be measured for convocations where we have full faction and leadership data on the previous convocation in the region as well. Thus, for the primary

models, we have data on 1399 deputies from 24 regions. For more details on this sample, see our web appendix.

Independent variables

Measuring loyalty to United Russia is difficult. In the regions, loyalty to United Russia means voting with the party in legislatures, not publicly criticizing the party, supporting party-nominated candidates in elections and making contributions of effort and financial resources. Unfortunately, collecting valid data on these items for a large number of legislators is impossible. We believe that an adequate proxy for loyalty to United Russia is the time that a given legislator has spent in the party. This measure closely taps the logic behind dominant party equilibrium: if an elite links her career to the party, he/she can expect to receive career advancement. However, data on a legislator's exact date of entry into United Russia are almost impossible to obtain, even from the apparatus of regional legislatures. Therefore, our measure of loyalty to UR is a dichotomous variable indicating whether the deputy was a member of the United Russia faction in the convocation prior to convocation that was sitting in November 2010. This variable is called *URin-LastConvocation*. Such an approach requires us to have full data on factions and leadership positions for two consecutive convocations in a region. We are able to gather such complete data on 24 of Russia's 83 regions.

This measure only examines sources of party loyalty that can be observed among incumbent deputies. Therefore, it is likely to understate the true extent to which loyalty influences the prospects for advancement, because it cannot tap variation in party loyalty among new deputies who came to the legislature from other political arenas. In addition, this measure is not appropriate in settings where vast majorities of deputies in the previous convocation were already United Russia members. In that case, United Russia membership is likely just a minimum condition for advancement and we would need to seek other measures that differentiate among levels of loyalty among deputies.

Luckily, the size of United Russia factions in those convocations elected immediately prior to those convocations sitting in late 2010 (elected from 1999 to early 2005) ranges from just 10 percent to 68 percent, with an average UR faction size of 41 percent. In the sample of 30 convocations that we use for testing the core hypothesis about the effect of joining UR early, only 10 had UR majorities in the convocations prior to the sitting convocations. As noted above, the early 2000s was a period when the future of United Russia as a dominant party was far from certain, and a majority of deputies (almost all of them independents) refrained from joining the United Russia faction or joined it at a later date. Thus, those who joined when United Russia was still a minority in legislative chambers (or an emergent majority) can be considered early joiners.

What is more, 42 percent of incumbents in the sitting convocations (where data exist for the previous convocation) were United Russia members in the previous convocation. Thus, as we emphasize in greater detail below, there are many incumbents who were not UR members in the last convocation. This provides excellent, almost ideal, variation in the dominant party affiliation history of sitting legislators. Moreover, most of the remaining 58 percent of incumbents who were not United Russia members were not, on average, hardcore opposition activists, but rather political pragmatists who were

bidding their time and making measured calculations about the advisability of relinquishing their political autonomy to the emergent dominant party. This is evidenced by the fact that a majority (53 percent) of those incumbent deputies who were not UR members in the last convocation joined UR in the current convocation.

We also attempt to control for the effect of patron–client linkages between governors’ administrations and regional legislators. In post-Soviet Russia, patron–client ties and informal networks are frequently cited as a key factor influencing career advancement at every level. At the regional level, governors’ political machines and clientelist networks formed the basis of their political power in the 1990s (e.g. Hale, 2003). These clientelist networks frequently extended to regional legislatures which governors would seek to pack with their own people. In the Putin era, this practice has continued and governors exert a major influence on the compositions of regional legislatures, both through their influence on United Russia regional branches and by supporting their candidates in single-member districts. Thus, we include a dummy variable called *Regional Administration* that indicates whether the deputy worked in the regional administration of the governor upon being elected to the legislature. Governors’ machines extend well beyond their own administration, but the inner circle of a governor’s political machine is likely to include his administration.

Another factor that is likely to determine a deputy’s chances of receiving a leadership position in regional Russia is her professional suitability for the position. Deputies with prior legislative experience should be more likely to receive leadership positions because they have a comparative advantage in skill and knowledge. Measuring legislative leadership experience is straightforward.

We include a dummy variable indicating whether the deputy is an *Incumbent*. We also include a dummy variable indicating whether the deputy held a leadership post in the previous convocation called *Leadership in Last Convocation*. Another control variable is a dummy variable indicating whether the deputy has any legislative experience, regional or otherwise. It is called *Professional Legislator*. Finally, we include a battery of controls for the deputy’s occupation. The breakdown of deputies among these occupational categories is presented in the appendix.

We also include a dummy variable indicating whether the deputy is in the United Russia faction in the current session, *UR Faction*. This control variable is important to ensure that consistent loyalty to UR is what is being rewarded and not simply the decision to join United Russia in the current convocation. We also control for whether the deputy was elected on a party list or in a single-member district with a dummy variable called *Party List* and for the *Age* of the deputy. Older deputies may be deemed to have more knowledge and experience and thus better suited for serving in leadership posts.

Empirical analysis

The dependent variable in this analysis is dichotomous, so we employ binary logit models throughout. The most important methodological concern is how to address region-level factors. The structure of the data is convocations nested within regions, but all

Table 1. Logit models of determinants of receiving leadership position in Russian regional legislatures

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
URinLastConvocation			0.747** (0.231)	0.670** (0.225)	0.641** (0.248)
UR Faction	0.887** (0.084)	1.287** (0.115)	1.01** (0.190)	0.911** (0.183)	0.947*** (0.309)
Incumbent	0.569** (0.085)	0.632** (0.104)	-0.182 (0.212)	0.013 (0.196)	
LeadershipinLastConvocation			2.191** (0.246)	2.405** (0.239)	2.563*** (0.249)
PartyList	-0.239** (0.084)	-0.081 (0.100)			
Age	0.004* (0.002)	0.005** (0.002)	0.002 (0.002)		
RegionalAdministration	0.879** (0.213)	1.144** (0.247)	0.418 (0.429)		
ProfessionalLegislator	0.948** (0.143)	1.198** (0.175)	0.544* (0.292)		
BudgetSphere	-0.618** (0.176)	-0.605** (0.219)	-0.280 (0.366)		
Military/Police	-0.448 (0.416)	-0.360 (0.484)			
Municipal/Local Self-Govt	0.496** (0.200)	0.777** (0.253)	0.916** (0.436)		
Oil/Gas	-0.673** (0.228)	-0.584** (0.270)	-0.121 (0.421)		
HeavyIndustry	-0.527** (0.215)	-0.585** (0.274)	-0.038 (0.422)		
LightIndustry	-0.931** (0.192)	-0.636** (0.228)	-0.532 (0.391)		
Mining	-0.954** (0.338)	-1.656** (0.586)	-0.306 (0.631)		
Transportation	-0.971** (0.293)	-1.029** (0.375)	-0.553 (0.573)		
Construction	-0.952** (0.256)	-0.765** (0.298)	-0.763 (0.515)		
Services	-0.618** (0.175)	-0.463** (0.209)	-0.481 (0.342)		
Agriculture	-0.742** (0.228)	-0.656** (0.278)	-0.266 (0.419)		
Journalism	-0.064 (0.312)	0.375 (0.387)	-0.077 (0.667)		
SocialOrganization/PoliticalParty	0.136 (0.190)	0.287 (0.230)	0.501 (0.344)		
Other/unemployed	-0.271 (0.260)	-0.046 (0.293)	-0.273 (0.527)		
Constant	-2.073**	-2.689**	-1.750**	-1.826**	-1.406***

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
	(0.482)	(0.511)	(0.399)	(0.312)	(0.449)
Fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
χ^2	818.26***	738.98***	386.12***	353.13***	247.28***
Pseudo R ²	0.15	0.19	0.25	0.23	0.31
Observations	5,106	3,755	1,392	1,399	603

Standard errors in parentheses.

*** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

variables of interest are individual-level variables. Region-level factors may affect the probability of a deputy receiving a leadership position. Thus, we include fixed effects in all models.¹³

The results of our models are displayed in Table 1. Model 1 provides the results of specifications that exclude our key independent variable *URinLastConvocation*.

First, it is not surprising that *URFraction* is a strong predictor of receiving a leadership post. From this initial analysis, it also appears that legislative experience, as captured by the *Incumbent* variable, is significant, although as we will see shortly there are several components to this variable that merit further examination. *Age* appears to be weakly correlated with receiving a leadership post. Being elected from a *PartyList* appears to hurt one's chances of receiving a leadership post, but this relationship is spurious because the full model includes convocations elected prior to the electoral reform requiring all legislatures to elect 50 percent of their deputies on party lists. Model 2 restricts the sample to the post-electoral reform period (December 2003 and after) and it is revealed that the mandate type of a deputy has no effect on the probability of receiving a leadership post.

The occupational categories offer more intriguing results. We omit *Academia* as a reference category. This occupational category makes a good reference point because it is near the median in both (1) the share of deputies within an occupational category that received leadership posts and (2) the total number of posts received by an occupational category. Coefficients and standard errors on the occupational category variables should be interpreted relative to this *Academia* reference category. Those occupational categories with positive coefficients are more likely than the median deputy (*Academia*) to receive a leadership position; those with negative coefficients are less likely.

There are several interesting findings here. First, the positive and significant coefficient on *RegionalAdministration* indicates that legislators coming from the governor's administration have a better than average chance of achieving a leadership position. Holding all variables at their means, a legislator has an 18 percent chance of receiving a leadership position when he/she is not from the governor's clientele. He/she has a 34 percent chance when he/she is from the regional administration. Being a professional legislator is also a significant predictor even when controlling for incumbency. Deputies in the budget sphere (teachers, doctors, etc.) are much less likely than the average deputy

to receive a leadership position. Deputies from municipal and local self-government are more likely to receive a leadership position, but further examination of the deputies in this category who received leadership positions indicates that many of them were speakers or vice speakers in the city council of the capital city, so this variable may be another proxy for legislative expertise. One striking finding is the fact that businessman deputies from every sector are less likely to hold leadership positions than professional politicians.

Model 3 includes our key independent variable, *URinLastConvocation*, which serves as our indicator of loyalty to the dominant party. We also include another measure of legislative experience here, *LeadershipinLastConvocation*. This variable is important not only for assessing the impact of legislative experience on receiving a leadership position, but also to control for the possibility that UR membership is coterminous with the existing power elite in the legislature. It could be the case that, in the prior convocation, all legislators with any standing or influence were simply forced to join United Russia (or chose to do so en masse). In this instance, *URinLastConvocation* would simply be a proxy for having legislative experience. Therefore, by controlling for *LeadershipinLastConvocation* we can separate the effect of legislative experience from the effect of party loyalty.

PartyList is excluded from these models as they were shown to be insignificant in the models with larger sample sizes. Results remain unchanged with its inclusion so it was dropped for efficiency. Sample size drops considerably in Model 3 due the fact, noted above, that the key variables in this model require full data on two consecutive convocations. *Military/Police* drops from Model 3, because there are no deputies with this background in the reduced sample.

The results confirm our hypothesis about the effect of loyalty to United Russia on the probability of receiving a leadership position. Even while controlling for incumbency, holding a leadership position in the last session, a deputy's current membership in UR and various occupational categories, joining United Russia early provides a substantively and statistically significant boost to a deputy's chances of being granted a leadership position. With incumbency set at a value of 1 and all other variables set at their means, a deputy has a 19 percent probability of receiving a leadership position if she was not a UR member in the last convocation. If he/she was a UR member, that probability jumps to 31 percent.¹⁴ This and other first differences of note are shown in Figure 2.

The other interesting finding is that *LeadershipinLastConvocation* is the strongest predictor of whether a deputy will receive a leadership position. Its effect swamps incumbency. Also noteworthy is the fact that *ProfessionalLegislator* (the occupational indicator for professional legislators) remains significant even when controlling for *LeadershipinLastConvocation* and *Incumbent*. At first glance this seems odd, since these variables should be perfectly correlated, but the *ProfessionalLegislator* occupational category also includes legislators whose previous place of work was the State Duma. We interpret this variable as a proxy for expertise, demonstrating that, even while holding constant the leadership experience of deputies and their incumbency status, legislative experience matters.

One other intriguing finding in this analysis is that *RegionalAdministration* drops below conventionally accepted levels of statistical significance. This appears to be due to the drop in sample size. It is not due to collinearity with *LeadershipinLastConvocation*

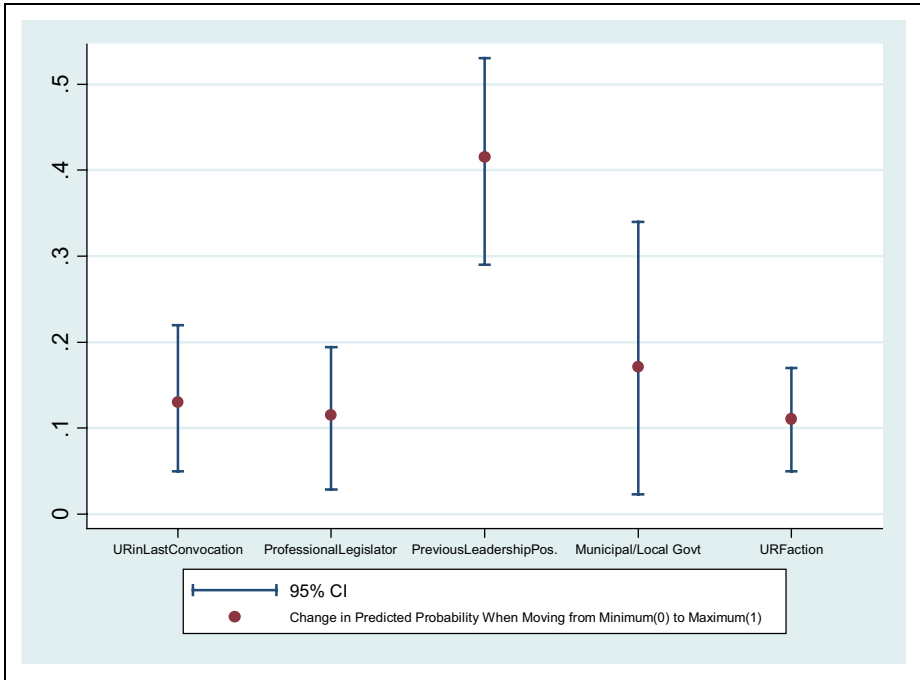


Figure 2. Substantive Effects of Key Variables
 Note: Incumbency is held at a value of 1. All other variables are held at their means.

or *URinLastConvocation* because removing these variables and running the model on the same sample returns an almost identical standard error on *RegionalAdministration*. In Model 4, we show the results on our key variables without the inclusion of the occupational dummies. These occupational dummies explain very little variation and most are insignificant, so we exclude them in this model. The estimates on our key variables of interest remain virtually unchanged.

One objection to these findings may be that *URinLastConvocation* is highly correlated with incumbency and that the effect of incumbency is simply masked by *URinLastConvocation*. Indeed, being an incumbent is a necessary condition for *URinLastConvocation* to equal 1. In Model 5, we run a reduced model only on the set of incumbents. *URinLastConvocation* remains statistically significant. *In other words, among current UR deputies, the only incumbents that stand a better than average chance of receiving a leadership position are those that either (1) already have a leadership position or (2) joined United Russia early.* Additional robustness checks can be found in the online statistical appendix to this article.

Discussion

The results support our hypothesis that loyalty to the dominant party determines leadership advancement in Russian regional legislatures. Incumbent United Russia deputies

who served in United Russia factions in the previous convocation and did not hold a leadership position in that convocation are more likely to be promoted to a leadership position than those who did not join United Russia in the previous convocation. In other words, early joining loyalists were rewarded for their loyalty with promotion to positions that offered more access to patronage. This finding slightly undermines views of United Russia as nothing but an institutional shell. Instead, it comports with the neo-institutional view of dominant parties, which sees them, among other things, as institutions that provide elites with regularized opportunities for career advancement.

Other findings are also worth discussing. First, a deputy's legislative leadership experience is an important factor determining whether or not a deputy receives a legislative leadership post. This finding can be interpreted in a straightforward manner; leadership and seniority translate into better access to the legislative agenda and patronage. We also found that other types of legislative expertise mattered. Holding constant prior leadership experience and prior dominant party affiliation, we found that deputies with legislative experience at other levels (national and municipal) were more likely to secure leadership positions.

Finally, we found some evidence for the proposition that membership in the governors' clientele increases the probability of a deputy receiving a leadership position. This finding is unsurprising and is consistent not only with decades of research on the prevalence of patron-client ties in authoritarian regimes, but also with lay conceptions of how politics works in Russian regional legislatures.

Conclusion

The institutional bonds of dominant parties are said to give elites reliable guarantees that their interests are served by remaining loyal to the regime. Norms and rules embedded within the dominant party ensure that loyalty is rewarded with access to spoils and career advancement. We present the first direct quantitative tests of this argument. Using data on the distribution of legislative leadership positions in 24 Russian regional legislatures, we find that loyalty to the dominant party – as measured by whether a deputy joined the party early – is a substantively and statistically significant determinant of receiving a promotion to a legislative leadership position. Thus, even United Russia, which is generally assumed to be less institutionalized than many dominant parties appears to reward loyalty with career advancement.

For scholars of Russian politics, this finding is significant because many popular accounts suggest that United Russia has not fulfilled any of the functions of a dominant party. The data analysed in this article suggest otherwise. Indeed, this article suggests that United Russia helped maintain elite cohesion during the 2000s by providing elites with regularized access to spoils and careers. Loyalty to Putin (or Medvedev) certainly trumps loyalty to the dominant party as a determinant of career advancement in the Kremlin or federal government, but loyalty to United Russia does have an independent and statistically significant effect on career advancement in lower elite strata, where personal links to Putin are not feasible.

Of course, other factors aside from loyalty to the dominant party also determine legislative leadership advancement. In particular, prior legislative leadership experience

and membership in the governor's clientele translates into a higher probability of receiving a leadership position. Thus, our findings remind us that institutionalized dominant parties, especially nascent ones, *can* coexist alongside patron–client relations and other paths to power. Patron–client ties are important, but the prevalence of informal and clientelist networks should not necessarily preclude the study of institutions, such as dominant parties, that coexist alongside and absorb these networks.

Our findings also provide insight into the future of the dominant party regime in Russia. In early 2012, amidst anti-regime protests that followed United Russia's lackluster performance in the 2011 State Duma elections, President Putin appeared to be distancing himself from the ruling party. Indeed, he relied upon an umbrella organization of social organizations and political movements to run his campaign. If Putin sends signals that United Russia will no longer be a mechanism for receiving access to spoils and careers (i.e. that it will no longer be the primary ruling party), then defections from the ruling party are likely. But thus far, Putin has distanced himself from the ruling party in front of the electorate, while simultaneously sending signals to the *elite* that United Russia will not be replaced. Answering a question about the future of the ruling party during a meeting with political scientists in February 2012, Putin stated: 'United Russia, as the basis of the State Duma, is absolutely necessary . . . in this convocation as well'.¹⁵ As of this writing, this dual approach seems to have met with modest success, as Putin won 64 percent of the vote in Presidential elections, and United Russia won sizeable majorities in all the city council elections that took place in March 2012, avoiding significant defections.

Finally, the findings in this article have important implications for the comparative study of ruling parties in hybrid and authoritarian regimes. By empirically illustrating how such parties reward loyalty with career advancement, we show how these parties keep elites loyal. The findings are especially relevant, given the fact that United Russia is less institutionalized than the handful of long-lived dominant parties, such as the PRI, that have received attention in the literature. Most dominant parties, like United Russia, are authoritarian institutions that coexist alongside clientelistic mechanisms of spoil management. In such regimes, the dominant party is not a closed shop, but, for many elites, party loyalty does offer special opportunities for career advancement.

Funding

This research benefited from funding by the US Department of Education's Fulbright Hays Program, ACTR/ACCELS Title VIII Research Scholar Program, and IREX's Individual Advanced Research Opportunity Program.

Notes

1. We provide full replication data, additional statistical information, further description of United Russia's institutional role and extended discussions of key variables in a Web appendix available at <http://sites.google.com/site/ojreuter/>.
2. This definition is similar to others used in the literature (e.g. Reuter and Gandhi, 2011; Magaloni, 2006). See Reuter (2010b) for more on defining and operationalizing these parties.
3. For example, personnel decisions in the Soviet Union were based as much on patron–client ties as they were on institutionalized performance criteria (e.g. Rigby and Harasmyiw, 1980). Similarly, numerous scholars have highlighted the overweening power that Mexican

presidents enjoyed at the expense of the PRI. Until recently, the PRI was viewed as nothing but the 'electoral ministry of the president' (Weldon, 1997: 226). Indeed, Castaneda (2000) describes the process of presidential selection in Mexico as a highly personalistic ritual where the President selected his successor without consulting the party collective. Slater (2003) describes how Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammed personalized UMNO by packing the ruling party with his own clients.

4. This article does not seek to explain why dominant parties emerge in some countries but not in others. Other recent work has argued that there are very specific conditions when leaders and elites invest in building a dominant party (Reuter and Remington, 2009; Reuter, 2010b).
5. Authors' database.
6. Accessed on UR website, 8 November 2010. Available at: <http://www.edinros.ru/rubr.shtml?110103#2>.
7. Qualitative evidence on this point is discussed in more detail in the supplementary appendix to this article.
8. This figure likely understates the true extent of business influence in regional legislatures since it only captures formal places of employment and not ownership.
9. Author's interview with deputy of regional legislature (region omitted to protect anonymity) 25 July 2008.
10. Interview with Head of United Russia fraction in Yaroslavskaia Oblastnaya Duma, Yaroslavl, 1 March 2010.
11. Each of Russia's 83 federal subjects elects a regional legislature once every 4–6 years.
12. Seventy-three head legislative clerks were faxed and emailed requests to provide information on the individual-level distribution of leadership positions and faction membership in their legislature for convocations elected after 1999 and prior to the current one. We received responses from 30 legislatures for a response rate of 41 percent.
13. Results from random effects models are substantively and significantly the same.
14. As we discuss in greater detail below, incumbency is a necessary condition for *URinLast Convocation* to equal 1, so setting it equal to 1 makes sense when drawing substantive inferences about its effect.
15. Stenogram of Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's Meeting with Political Scientists, 6 February 2012. Accessed online: <http://premier.gov.ru/events/news/18008/>.

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