Elite Defection under Autocracy: Evidence from Russia*

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Abstract

Elite cohesion is one of the fundamental pillars of authoritarian regime stability. Defections from the ruling coalition can signal regime weakness, embolden the opposition, and, sometimes, lead to regime collapse. Using a unique dataset on 4,313 regional legislative candidates from Russia's ruling party, United Russia, this paper examines the determinants of elite defections in one prominent electoral autocracy. We believe this to be the first study to use quantitative, micro-level data to test hypotheses about the integrity of elite coalitions under autocracy. Our theoretical framework predicts that elites will be more likely to defect when there is increased uncertainty about the willingness and/or ability of the regime to provide electoral benefits, spoils, and career advancement. Regimes that limit points of access to spoils, share power with the opposition, and lack strong formal institutions see higher rates of defection. While opposition co-optation may help the regime assuage threats from outside the regime, it may also leave regime insiders disgruntled and prone to defect. Finally, elites with personal followings and private business connections are most likely to defect, since they are better equipped to pursue their political goals independently of the regime. This result suggests that allowing elites to accumulate autonomous resources can undermine an authoritarian regime's hold on power.

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1 Introduction

In almost all dictatorships the leader is supported by a group of elites. These elites provide essential political services to the dictator, and the breakdown of these elite coalitions is one of the main threats to authoritarian rule. Indeed, there are few instances of authoritarian breakdown that are not caused, precipitated, or accompanied by defections from the coalition of elites that support the dictator. But the consequences of elite defection are better understood than the causes. While there is a large literature on coups, we know much less about when and why civilian elites choose to abandon the regime. In this paper, we examine the determinants of elite defection in one prominent contemporary electoral authoritarian regime, Russia.

Focusing on electoral defections in Russia's regions, we develop a simple cost-benefit framework to explain defections from Russia's ruling party, United Russia (UR). Aligning with the regime offers significant advantages for politicians, including career advancement, state backing during elections, and access to rents. At the same time, however, affiliation can come at considerable cost. Regimes can force politicians to forgo their own political beliefs and constituency demands in order to toe the party line. Politicians also run the risk of being tainted by their association with an autocratic regime should the regime falter and rivals seek retribution.

How the regime manages the distribution of spoils and careers is key to understanding when and why individual elites defect. First, we argue defections should be more likely as the ability of the regime to help candidates win elections decreases. Candidates are more hesitant to affiliate with an unpopular regime that cannot ensure their electoral prospects. Second, accessing rents, spoils, and privileges is one of the main goals for politicians under autocracy. We argue that defections should increase when the regime places limits on the ability of regime cadres to access these benefits. Third, we argue that defections should increase in settings where cadres face greater uncertainty about the future provision of spoils and career advancement. Often times that uncertainty is driven by weak formal institutions that fail to constrain the arbitrary behavior of the autocrat. Finally, we argue that the individual characteristics of elites matter. Those with higher political rank should be less likely to defect since they have less uncertainty about future career advancement opportunities. In addition, those with significant autonomous political resources

should be more likely to defect. Such resources increase the chances that elites will be able to achieve their political goals independently of the regime.

Using a unique dataset that covers the universe of ruling party candidates in all Russian regional legislative elections between 1999 and 2016, we find evidence consistent with these claims. We find some evidence that United Russia cadres are more likely to abandon the party when the regional vote share of the party decreases and when economic performance declines. We take both as indicators of the regime's electoral strength.

We also find that defections increase significantly when the regime decreases the size of regional legislature. By shrinking the size of the legislature, the regime limits institutional points of access to spoils and thereby gives elites less incentive to stay with the regime. We also find that defections increase in legislatures where the regime shares more legislative leadership positions with the opposition. United Russia holds majorities in all of Russia's regional legislatures, but it often shares important posts with the opposition in order to co-opt its leaders (Reuter and Robertson, 2015). Our analysis reveals that this co-optation comes with a cost: by sharing more spoils with the opposition, the regime limits the spoils that are available to its own cadres. This leads to defections.

Next, our analysis reveals there are more defections in Russia's ethnic republics, which are run by regimes that are typically more personalist than in other regions. As a number of authors have argued, dictators in personalist regimes (i.e. regimes where leaders are relatively unconstrained by institutions) have more difficulty committing to share spoils with elites in a dependable manner (Geddes, 1999; Svolik, 2012). This increases uncertainty for cadres and increases their incentives to defect.

Finally, we find evidence that elites take their own relationship with the regime into consideration when deciding whether to defect. Candidates who have won elected office or occupy a high spot on United Russia's party list are less likely to defect. These candidates have more to risk by defecting. Moreover, we find that ownership of various autonomous political resources matters greatly. Business owners—especially those in the private sector—are less likely to defect than government bureaucrats and other professional deputies such as lawyers and administrators. Businessperson candidates can draw on their firms to help fund an independent political machine

and their employees to help drive their own personal vote. This makes them less dependent on the ruling party and more likely to drop their affiliation. Deputies who have previously won election as independents (before joining United Russia) are more inclined to defect. Being elected as an independent indicates that the deputy has (or was once able to build) a personal following in their constituency. Ruling party affiliation matters less if a politician can win office on his or her own.

This paper makes several contributions to the literature on authoritarianism. We believe it to be the first study to use micro-level, quantitative data to test hypotheses about the cohesion of elite coalitions under autocracy. In so doing, it offers a direct test of several competing perspectives on authoritarian stability. Some argue that authoritarian coalitions are held together by spoil-sharing among elites (Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2003). Others share this focus on elite spoil sharing but add that institutions must exist to make dictators' commitments to spoil-sharing credible (Brownlee, 2007; Magaloni, 2008). Still others focus on the regime's ability to co-opt or repress threats from the opposition (Gandhi, 2008; Svolik, 2012). We do not resolve this debate, though we do find evidence for a number of the propositions put forth by the neo-institutional literature on authoritarianism. For example, regimes with institutional constraints on the leader have an easier time keeping elites united than those run by personalist leaders. In addition, restricting the overall volume of spoils available to elites can spur defection.

Perhaps more importantly, we also point out some inherent contradictions in previous work on how autocrats build durable regimes. Spoils are finite and there are winners and losers in the competition for rents. This implies tradeoffs in the regime's co-optation strategy. Regime leaders may be inclined to share spoils with elite allies, but they may also feel the need to co-opt their rivals. The problem is that co-opting the opposition with spoils deprives some elite allies of those same spoils. Thus, dictators may find it difficult to co-opt their way out of a rising opposition, because opposition co-optation simultaneously threatens the integrity of ruling coalitions. We find that regime elites respond negatively to opposition cooptation by voting with their feet.

A second contribution is our focus on the behavior and resources of individual elites. Our results suggest that theorists of autocracy should think not just about the characteristics and strength of the "regime" and opposition but also about the composition, orientation, and resources of indi-

vidual elites. The resources of elites vary both across and within countries and the specific types of resources they hold affects their loyalty to the regime. We add to previous work showing how private sector resources can empower opposition coalitions (Arriola, 2012; Greene, 2010), while also identifying other types of resources that politicians can capitalize on to remain autonomous.

Finally, our study illustrates the usefulness of studying regional politics under autocracy. The literature no longer views autocracies as monoliths, but most of the literature still focuses on politics in the capital. Regional elites may be especially important in large and/or federal autocracies. Indeed, in a number of prominent decentralized autocracies (e.g the Soviet Union, Nigeria in 2015), regime breakdown was abetted by the defection of regional elites. But even short of regime breakdown, elite schisms at the regional level can provide useful insights into broader regime dynamics. By winning elections at lower levels, opposition forces can make regime change more likely (Lucardi, 2016; Cornelius, Eisenstadt, and Hindley, 1999), but in order to win at the local level they often need to lure elites away from the ruling coalition.

2 Authoritarian Stability and Elite Cohesion

Dictators do not rule alone. In all autocracies, the ruler is surrounded by a coalition of elites who render various political services. And beyond that inner circle there are usually hundreds, if not thousands, of elite allies—legislators, governors, administrators, mayors, military officers, party cadres, chiefs, oligarchs, employers, landlords, clan leaders and the like—who provide support to the regime. Such elites are important to the survival of the regime because they exercise influence and demand loyalty from citizens and other important political actors. They are opinion leaders and power-brokers. They use their influence to help the regime mobilize the masses, win elections, administer territory, collect taxes, battle insurgencies and so on. Often these elites are organized under the aegis of a ruling party, but sometimes they are not. Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003) refer to this group as the "winning coalition," but it is more commonly called "the ruling elite," "the ruling coalition," or just "the elite."

Elite cohesion is one of the fundamental pillars of authoritarian regime stability. Schisms among elites weaken autocratic regimes. Coups are perhaps the most obvious manifestation of

this, but armed revolt is not the only way that elite defection can undermine regimes. Non-violent defections may lead mechanically to the unraveling of the ruling coalition. For example, mass defection by high-level party cadres was one of the most important proximate causes of the Soviet Union's collapse (e.g. Solnick (1996)). Elites may defect to join the opposition, mobilize mass sectors against the regime or run against the regime in elections. Indeed, high-level electoral defections, the focus of our analysis, have contributed significantly to the breakdown of prominent electoral authoritarian regimes in Ukraine (2004), Taiwan (2000), Mexico (2000), Kenya (2002), and Nigeria (2015). Short of causing regime breakdown, defections can also weaken the regime by demonstrating its vulnerability, dividing the ruling party's vote share, and emboldening challengers.

Political scientists have long recognized the importance of elite cohesion to autocratic regime stability. In the democratization literature, transitologists argued that divisions within the regime were the starting point of most democratic transitions (O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead, 1986; Przeworski, 1991). Decades later, the neo-institutional literature on authoritarianism has almost unanimously emphasized the centrality of elite cohesion. For Geddes (1999), the most important distinction between various authoritarian regime types is the extent to which they are able to contain elite schisms. Similarly, Svolik (2012) argues that elite conflict is one of the two main threats to authoritarian rule (the other being mass uprising).

Such arguments are also found in many recent studies of authoritarian longevity. Brownlee (2008), for example, argues that the most durable post-Cold War autocracies are those that have been able to contain elite "factionalism." Hale (2014) argues that Eurasia's patronal regimes are most likely to falter when president's clients desert him. Lee (2014) argues that the key factor determining the success of popular protest in Asia is whether military elites remain loyal to the regime.

Given the far-reaching consequences of elite defections, it is important to know what causes them. Most of the research on this question has been concentrated in one of two areas. First, there is a large literature on the determinants of coups (e.g. Londregan and Poole (1990); Belkin and Schofer (2003)). Much has been learned about when the military intervenes in authoritarian politics, but this literature, quite obviously, is focused only on military elites. Moreover, it is

focused on a very extreme and specific type of defection. In this paper, we focus on electoral defections by civilian elites, a much more common occurrence, especially in the post-Cold War era.[1]

Another approach to studying elite defection comes from the recent literature on authoritarian institutions. A key insight from this literature is that dictators are often stymied in their efforts to maintain elite loyalty by a commitment problem. Leaders may try to keep elites loyal by promising to share power and spoils with them, but dictators have difficulty making those promises credible. Distrust of the dictator and uncertainty about the future give elites incentives to defect from the regime. Dictators who solve this commitment problem—usually by relinquishing some of their arbitrary authority to a political party or a legislature–are said to survive longer. In institutionalized regimes, regime elites have reasonable expectations—established by the norms and rules embedded in regime institutions—that loyalty in the present will be rewarded with spoils and career advancement in the future. In support of such arguments, scholars have demonstrated that autocracies with power-sharing institutions such as parties and legislatures are more durable (Gandhi, 2008; Magaloni, 2008; Svolik, 2012).

Such studies are persuasive and influential, but it is clear that institutions are not the only explanation for elite defection. If they were, we would never observe defections in dominant party regimes and personalist regimes would never survive past day two. Empirically, these studies approach the question of elite defection only indirectly. Elite cohesion is assumed to be the mechanism that links institutions to regime longevity, but it is not shown directly that institutions reduce elite discord.

Other empirical studies have examined elite defection more directly. Several have focused on economic factors. Using cross-national data from 227 chief executive elections in hegemonic party regimes, Reuter and Gandhi (2011) find that economic crisis is one of the main drivers of electoral defection. A prominent example is the case of Mexico, where economic crisis provided the structural opening for the defection of Cuauhtemoc Cardenas and his Corriente Democratico (CD) faction from the PRI in 1987 (Langston, 2002). But not all studies agree. Analyzing cases of

[1]Militaries hold a monopoly on violence and, in many regimes, have organizational autonomy. This makes the study of civil-military relations somewhat separate from the problem of intra-regime conflict that we study here.

democratic breakdown in Latin America, Haggard and Kaufman (1995) find that only splits within the military were more likely during economic crisis; defections from dominant party regimes did not increase during such downturns.

Others focus on the structure of the economy. In his study of authoritarian stability in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, Radnitz (2010) argues that elites in the former were more likely to defect because Kyrgyzstan had allowed for more privatization during the 1990s. According to Radnitz, elites with access to independent economic resources were more inclined to challenge the regime. In another study of post-Soviet elites, Junisbai (2012) shows that while most owners of private wealth have remained loyal to post-Soviet regimes, defections can happen when the state violates property rights in an egregious and repeated fashion.

Some studies examine the strategies that autocrats use to dissuade defection. In an innovative study of non-defection in Cuba during the Castro transition, Schedler and Hoffmann (2016) demonstrate how the regime used carefully calibrated communicative strategies to dramatize the power of the regime and stave off elite discord. Looking at the 2016 elections in Uganda, Khisa (2016) shows how President Museveni has used carrots (patronage) and sticks (repression) to dissuade high-level defectors. Other studies focus on how processes unleashed by autocrats can slip out from their control and lead to the unraveling of elite coalitions. Langston (2002), for example, argues that while economic crisis provided the opening for the defection of the CD, the proximate cause of their departure were electoral reforms that allowed smaller parties to win seats and then form coalitions. Increasing electoral competition between the regime and its rivals spurred elite defections from both the PRI in Mexico and KMT in Taiwan (Langston, 2006). Finally, in a case study of elite defection in Transdnistria, Balmaceda (2013) argues that privatization reforms initiated by the Smirnov regime in order to enrich itself ended up backfiring when the newly autonomous owners of those enterprises decided to support Smirnov's opponents.

In sum, the empirical literature on defections is surprisingly sparse. There are a number of quantitative studies that indirectly examine the institutional causes of elite defection indirectly and we have two quantitative studies that focus on the effects of economic growth. Case study research focuses on a broader range of factors, but those papers have not developed a general theory of elite defections that encompasses structural, institutional, and individual-level explana-

tions. We discuss such a theory below and test its implications with a micro-level, large-N dataset.

3 Theoretical Framework

In this section, we provide a simple theoretical framework for analyzing electoral defection in authoritarian regimes. We theorize the process from the perspective of a regime-affiliated candidate who is deciding whether to remain affiliated with the regime or to defect and run for office without a regime affiliation.[2] What are the goals of regime candidates? In the literature on democratic elections, it is often assumed that candidates care about three things: 1) maximizing votes, 2) gaining access to the benefits of office, and 3) achieving policy goals (Fenno, 1973; Müller and Strøm, 1999). This list is a good starting point, but it requires some amendment when applied to an authoritarian setting. With respect to the first goal, regime candidates clearly want to win votes in order to be (re)elected. More generally, the literature on autocracy usually assumes that regime cadres pursue *career advancement* as one of their primary goals. They make political decisions with an eye toward retaining their positions and seek promotion where possible. Winning votes is helpful in this regard but given that autocratic elections are not free and fair, votes are not the only thing that determine reelection.

The second goal—obtaining office—has slightly different meanings in the literature on democracies. Since winning enough votes leads to elected office, office-seeking is often conflated with vote-seeking in some positive models of party choice (Aldrich and Bianco, 1992; Laver and Benoit, 2003). For other authors, however, office-seeking refers to the desire of politicians to achieve

[2]This assumption simplifies the decision calculus of regime candidates in two main ways. For one, electoral defectors may run independently or join the opposition. For ease of exposition and analysis, we collapse these two into a single exit option. However, we return to this issue later in the paper and consider how relaxing this assumption affects our analysis. Our approach also focuses only on those who have decided to remain in regional electoral politics. But, of course, candidates may choose not to run again; they may seek appointed office or leave politics altogether. The former path is usually rare, since elections and legislatures are one of the few ways that non-regime politicians can participate meaningfully in politics under autocracy. It is unlikely, for instance, that a defector could part ways with the regime and wind up with an appointment in the executive branch. Regime candidates might also choose to exit formal politics altogether. This is quite common, but it also less challenging to the regime and, therefore, of less interest than electoral defections. An electoral challenge is brazen and threatening. Moreover the decision to leave politics altogether is analytically distinct from the decision to stay in politics and defect from the ruling party. We do not attempt to theorize these separate decisions in a single framework. In order to maintain a precise focus on electoral defections, we analyze the decisions of those who remain in electoral politics. In our main empirical models, all other decisions are effectively censored and not analyzed. However, in the appendix, we also present supplemental empirical tests that model a broader set choices facing candidates.

"power and prestige" within the chamber (Fenno, 1973) or to "maximize control over political office benefits, that is, private goods bestowed on recipients of politically discretionary ... appointments" (Müller and Strøm, 1999). These goals have clear analogues in autocracies. Candidates in autocracies want to win office in order to gain access to the benefits that elected office provides. In autocracies those benefits may include prestige, policy influence, access to patronage, and various corruption rents. Collectively, we call these benefits *spoils*.

The third candidate goal discussed in the literature on democracies is policy. Candidates have policy preferences and want to see their preferred policies enacted. This consideration is also relevant in autocracies, but given the diminished policy-making role of autocratic legislatures, it is probably secondary. Autocratic legislatures have limited influence over policy-making, since the executive branch usually sets policy direction. Spoil-seeking is probably a more salient motivation for most candidates.

To this list of candidate goals we might also add *autonomy*. Like entrepreneurs, many politicians want to be their own boss. Candidates desire the freedom to run campaigns as they see fit, vote how they want, and control their own clientelist networks. Freedom of maneuver and political flexibility are inherently valuable goods for candidates. Such considerations are no doubt also present in democracies, but they may be more relevant in autocracies, where the strictures of regime control can be especially tight. Autocracies in general demand conformity and allegiance from affiliated elites under fear that factions might undermine overall elite cohesion and lead to regime overthrow. They also exert sufficient control over state resources to reward compliance.

Summarizing the above discussion, we assume that ambitious regime candidates under autocracy seek spoils, career advancement, autonomy, and, to a lesser extent, policy. With this basket of motivations in mind, consider a regime candidate approaching an election campaign. Affiliation with the regime often brings dependable access to government largesse and patronage. And since the regime controls access to most political offices—both within the legislature and outside it—continued regime affiliation is helpful for career advancement. Regime affiliation may also come with electoral benefits. The regime can use state resources and administrative levers to help pro-regime candidates get elected. And if the leader and/or ruling party is popular, even in a manufactured fashion, affiliated candidates can ride those coattails in their own races.

Aside from spoils and career advancement, regime affiliation also comes with other benefits. Since the regime sets policy, regime affiliation may offer the best chance for influencing lawmaking. Finally, repression must also be considered. Although most opposition candidates in electoral authoritarian regimes are not repressed, joining a rival party carries a greater risk of harassment and intimidation than remaining under the regime's umbrella.

Given these benefits it is clear why an ambitious politician might want to maintain regime affiliation. But there are also costs. For one thing, defecting to the opposition may lead to a status improvement for the candidate. By definition, ruling parties in autocracies are larger and contain prominent elites. A low-level regime official may be a small-fish in the pool of regime candidates, but a big fish in a smaller opposition party. And clearly, becoming an independent—if such an option is possible—provides the candidate with more autonomy. Regime affiliation may also restrict a candidate's freedom of maneuver. For example, a candidate's political beliefs may diverge from those of the regime. Regime candidates may be forced to contravene their own beliefs, say things they do not believe, and support policies they do not actually support. At various times, the regime may also place limits on their rent-seeking, force them to vote for unpopular policies, or compel them to put their own political machines to work for the regime. Thus, membership in the ruling party may sometimes undermine a candidate's long term political goals. After all, what is good for the ruling party is not always good for an individual candidate. For example, if a candidate is forced to vote for a measure that is unpopular in his district, she may suffer at the polls for it. Or, a candidate may have to expend her personal resources–e.g. a business, political machine or personal wealth—on helping the regime win elections. Finally, being a member of the ruling party comes with significant restrictions on political autonomy. By being under the thumb of the regime, candidates are deprived of the flexibility to pursue their political goals as they see fit.

This simple framework leads to several propositions about how various factors affect these costs and benefits and, hence, the incentives of candidates to defect. First, we should expect more defections as the ability of the regime to provide electoral benefits—i.e. help candidates win elections—decreases. If the regime is on the brink of collapse, then defections will, of course, be widespread. But even when the regime is still firmly in power, candidates should be more likely

to defect if they do not view affiliation as an electoral asset. This might happen if the administrative capacity of the state weakens, the popularity of the ruling party fades, or the popularity of the opposition grows. This argument is consistent with works arguing that large vote margins convey an "image of invincibility" and help the regime deter defectors (Magaloni, 2006; Simpser, 2013). Among the external factors that contribute to regime popularity, economic growth is among the most important. Poor economic performance is an issue around which challengers might mobilize support, and the electoral viability of the opposition usually increases during economic crisis. Therefore, Reuter and Gandhi (2011) argue that poor economic performance should be one of the main drivers of defection.

H1: Defections should increase as the regime's electoral vulnerability increases.

Our framework also predicts that defections should increase as access to spoils declines. This could happen because of an external shock. An economic downturn, for example, might reduce the availability of corruption rents that are available. Alternatively, access to spoils might decline because of some political choice taken by the regime. Arriola (2009) finds that the size of the cabinet in African autocracies is positively correlated with regime longevity. He argues that regime leaders expand the size of their cabinets in order to co-opt key elites. Such an argument can be adapted to the study of elite defection. When the regime enacts reforms that limit points of institutional access to spoils—perhaps by decreasing the size of the legislature or limiting the number of legislative leadership posts—elites may have less incentive to stay with the regime. Conversely, when it increases points of access, candidates are more likely to see opportunities to win their desired share of the spoils.

H2: Defections should increase as institutional points of access to spoils decrease.

Defections also depend on the regime's spoil distribution strategy. In autocracies, most spoils are reserved for pro-regime elites, but recent literature has shown that the regime often shares some benefits with the opposition as well (Gandhi, 2008; Reuter and Robertson, 2015). Autocrats do this in order to placate opposition groups, buy off their leadership, and reduce the threat of mass unrest. This leads to a tradeoff. The size of the pie is not infinite, so by distributing spoils

to the opposition, the regime is depriving some insiders of spoils. And if ambitious regime cadres are snubbed in favor of outsiders, they may calculate that their future chances of receiving spoils from the regime are diminished. Furthermore, they may also conclude that joining the opposition will not result not in oppression, but also opportunities to access the same patronage they did as members of the ruling party.

H3: Defections should increase as the regime shares more spoils with regime outsiders.

Broadly speaking, the discussion above suggests that defections should increase when the regime fails to offer sufficient spoils and career advancement opportunities. But elites also care about the credibility of those offers. Can they trust the regime to follow through on its promises to reward them for loyalty and service? Dictators have difficulty making credible commitments because they are (relatively) unconstrained. One of the main contributions of the neo-institutional literature on authoritarianism is to point out that dictators who solve these commitment problems will find it easier to keep elites loyal. One way of making these commitments credible is by setting up institutions with some modicum of independence that can regulate the spoil distribution process. Legislatures and dominant parties are the institutions most often discussed in the literature. When such institutions are weak, the leader is more unconstrained and more likely to act capriciously in the spoil distribution process. This should make defections more likely.

H4: There will be more defections where institutional constraints on the leader are fewer (i.e. in more personalist regimes).

The characteristics of candidates will also affect their propensity to defect. For one thing, candidates vary in the extent to which they are uncertain about future access to spoils and career advancement. One important factor is political rank. Those who have already worked their way up the political ladder to achieve high rank should be less likely to gamble on defection. They have already secured access to high office and spoils and therefore have less reason to start afresh outside the ruling party. Moreover, their high rank ensures that even during periods of regime vulnerability, their stature and access to patronage is not going to be in jeopardy. On the other hand, candidates lower on the ladder might be concerned about the regime's commitment to their

own ambitions. They have a smaller investment in the regime and less to lose by casting their lot with the opposition.

H5: Candidates of high political rank will be less likely to defect.

Finally, candidates vary in the extent to which they can achieve their political goals without regime affiliation. Those candidates with their own political resources—such as personal followings, political machines, and economic assets—are better positioned to do this than those without such resources. Such candidates will find it easier to win elections on their own. Moreover, they have more to offer the opposition and therefore can demand higher standing. Some candidates may be so strong in autonomous resources that they can use their resources as bargaining chips and extract spoils from the regime. But if independence and flexibility figure higher than spoils in their calculus, then they have the means to both withdraw from the regime and continue pursuing their political ambitions.

H6: Candidates with more autonomous resources will be more likely to defect.

4 Research Design

4.1 Data Description: Defections from United Russia

Our primary goal is to identify the individual and region-level factors that determine when a politician decides to drop his or her electoral affiliation with a ruling autocratic party and run for elected office under another banner. We test these hypotheses using data on candidacies to regional legislative office in Russia during the period 1999-2016. Russia is a federal state containing 85 subnational units, colloquially called regions, each of which contains a directly elected legislature.[3] Why should an analysis of elite defection behavior look at regional legislators? First, Russian regional legislatures contain a vivid cross section of the most important elite groups and

[3]Specifically, there are 46 oblasts, 22 ethnic republics, 9 krais, 4 autonomous okrugs, 3 federal cities, and 1 autonomous oblast. Republics have higher administrative standing than the others and autonomous okrugs have slightly lower administrative standing. The oblasts, krais, cities and the autonomous oblast have nearly identical administrative standing. The total number of regions has decreased over time. It was 89 at the beginning of our sample, decreased to 83 by 2014 and increased again to 85 with the annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol.

actors in a region. This is especially true of business elites. The most prominent figures in the regional economic elite—directors of the largest industrial and agricultural enterprises, representatives of large federally owned corporations, and directors of major hospitals and research institutes—are all likely to be members of (or have representatives in) their region's legislature. Indeed, a number of scholars have found that regional legislatures are key fora of rent-seeking and spoil-sharing among the Russian regional elite (Turovsky, 2005; Reuter and Robertson, 2015). Regional legislators gain access to the perquisites of office (such as staff and offices), higher socio-political status, privileged access to regime leaders, and business lobbying opportunities. Indeed, as far as lobbying goes, one study has found that firm directors that win seats in regional legislatures can substantially improve their companies' financial success, largely by improving their ability to obtain state contracts (Szakonyi, 2016).

A second reason for examining Russian regional legislatures is practical. Given that the hypotheses in this paper make predictions about when elites leave the ruling party, 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 difficult to gather. For legislative candidates, the matter is simplified by the fact that candidates register their partisan affiliation when they run for office.

In order to understand the analyses below, a little background on these legislatures is necessary. Until 2003, most legislatures used single member district plurality (SMDP) electoral systems.[4] Prior to that time, partisan penetration of regional legislatures was minimal. Between 1995 and 1999, 79% of all deputies ran as independents (Golosov, 2003). Our data finds similarly that 79% of candidates running in elections held in 1999 had no partisan affiliation. Following a 2003 electoral reform, however, all regional legislatures were required to elect at least half their deputies on party lists. Since that time almost all legislatures have used a mixed-electoral system with an equal number of seats elected in unlinked tiers.[5] This reform drastically increased the role of parties in regional legislatures. While independents continued to compete (and sometimes win) in

[4] A few legislatures used multi-member districts and a handful used proportional representation or a mixed system (Moraski, 2006).

[5] Between 2007 and 2012, 11 regions switched to fully PR systems.

the SMD races, most deputies carried a party affiliation by the mid 2000s.

The other relevant development during this period was the rise of United Russia as a dominant party in Russia. From 1999-early 2003, central authorities had little involvement in regional legislative politics. Between 2001 and 2003, only 1.7% of candidates were affiliated with the new ruling party, United Russia. Only 6% of elected deputies were ruling party nominees. However, beginning in 2003, the federal center—and United Russia—significantly increased its role in regional legislative politics (Reuter, 2017). Between 2003 and 2005, the share of United Russia candidates increased to 17% and the share of UR nominated deputies reached 50%. By the late 2000s, all of Russia's regional legislatures had United Russia majorities and the vast majority had super majorities. This continues to be the case today. Between 2010 and 2016, 72% of all regional deputies were elected with a UR affiliation.

This research setting has a number of other advantages. The large number of regions in Russia provides a much larger sample size than could be obtained by studying a national legislature. Moreover, since Russian regions vary on important political dimensions—including institutional configurations, levels of political competition, and the institutional strength of United Russia's regional branch—we are able to examine several important hypotheses about how regime-level factors affect defection. Indeed, a number of scholars have made the convincing case that Russian regions can be treated as sub-national political regimes (McMann and Petrov, 2000; Petrov and Titkov, 2013; Hale, 2003; Remington, 2011; Lankina, Libman, and Obydenkova, 2016), a conceptual convention that is common in the study of other federations as well (Gibson, 2005; Gervasoni, 2010). At the same time, by looking at variation in defection rates within a single dominant party, in a single regime, we are able to hold constant some important factors such as the ideology of the party and national political conditions.

We now discuss how our dependent variable—defections from the ruling party—is constructed. Examining candidate defections from the ruling party first requires establishing the proper sample for analysis. We detail this process graphically in Figure 1. We begin by collecting basic data on the full list of candidates that were registered with the Russian Central Election Commission to compete for regional legislative office at any point during the period 1999-2016. This data was scraped from the websites of the Russian Central Election Commission and the online encyclo-

pedia compiled by the vote monitoring organization, Golos.[6] Over the period 1999-2016, 117,834 individuals participated in elections to 336 regional legislative convocations. We then proceed to narrow down our sample according to the following criteria. First, to be included in the empirical analysis, a candidate must have been affiliated with the ruling United Russia party during any regional election over this period. Candidates on both the SMD and the PR ballots indicate their party affiliation during the registration process. From 1999-2016, 19,131 individuals ran on the UR slate, or 16.2% of all candidacies. We exclude all other candidates, such as those running as members of opposition parties or as independents, since they never publicly established an association with the regime and are thus unable to have defected from it.

The second criteria to enter the sample is that regime-affiliated candidates face a choice about whether to remain with the ruling party or drop their electoral affiliation with the regime. We operationalize this decision by requiring that each candidate that enters our sample run in two consecutive regional elections. In the first election of each sequence, all candidates in our sample must have affiliated with United Russia. In the second election, a candidate decides which party affiliation to adopt. Each electoral sequence is a unique observation and individual politicians can be members of multiple electoral sequences. As indicated in Figure 1, 4,313 candidates fall into this regime-affiliated "Repeat Runners" category. In other words, these are candidates who a) have run for office at least twice and b) ran with a UR affiliation in their first balloting. The vast majority retained their UR affiliation in subsequent campaigns, but some choose to drop the UR affiliation and run with the opposition or as an independent. These are our defectors. We code an individual as having defected from the ruling party if he or she ran on a different party ticket or as an independent in the second election in each sequence.

As an illustration, consider the case of Aleksei Vereshagin. Vereshagin is long time deputy in the Arkhangelsk Region Council of Deputies and a former vice governor. In our data frame, he has run for a seat four times–in 2000 as an independent; in 2004 from United Russia; in 2008 again from United Russia; and in 2013 as an independent. This career path contains two electoral sequences that would be included in our empirical analysis: the 2004-2008 sequence and the 2008-2013 sequence. The 2000-2004 sequence is not included because Vereshagin ran as independent in

[6] www.cikrf.ru and https://candidates.golosinfo.org/, respectively

2000, so he could not, logically, defect from United Russia before the 2004 election. For the 2004-2008 sequence, Vereshagin affiliated with United Russia in the first election and remained with the party in the second. We code such a candidate as *not* having defected in 2008, since his affiliation did not change. For the 2008-2013 sequence, Vereshagin affiliated with UR in 2008, but then ran as an independent five years later. We code this as a defection from the regime in 2013.

Limiting our sample to politicians participating in consecutive elections reduces the time period we can effectively study.[7] The modal legislative term in Russia is five years. Therefore, all UR candidates running in elections after 2012 have not had the opportunity to declare their candidacies in a subsequent campaign and do not enter the sample. This helps explain why the percentage of UR candidates running in a subsequent election may appear low when looking at the raw levels from Figure 1. The date of United Russia's entry into regional politics also limits our sample size. As noted above, there were very few United Russia candidates prior to late 2003. Most of our sample is thus drawn from UR candidates with a sequence of elections that begins between 2004 and 2012.[8]

Our data indicates that defections are neither common nor rare. Of the 4,313 eligible candidacies in our empirical sample, we find that 361 candidates defected from United Russia. This translates to roughly 1 in 13 United Russia candidates defecting, or a rate of 8.3%. Defections occurred in 77 of the 87 regions in our sample. Smolenksk and Volgograd Region saw the highest number of defections at a rate of 29.7%, while regions such as Saratov, Rostov, and Kemerovo did not experience any defections over the period.[9]

Figure 2 plots the nationwide UR defection rate over time. From 2007-2011, the rate decreased by roughly 45%. This corresponds to a period when United Russia was consolidating its control

[7] Our primary empirical models focus on "repeat-runners" in regional elections, but, in the appendix, we also model a broader set of decisions including: leaving politics entirely, running from UR in local elections, defecting from UR in local elections, running from UR in federal and gubernatorial elections, and defecting from UR in federal and gubernatorial elections.

[8] Not all legislators in Russia finish out their terms in office. Special elections to replace these individuals can occur at any time during the convocation and many candidates who suffered defeat in the main elections opt to run in them. In our analysis, we include both main and special elections.

[9] Two autonomous okrugs had even higher rates of defection, Ust-Orda Buryat and Koryak Okrugs, but mainly each had fewer legislative convocations over the period due to merges with other larger regions. Appendix Table A3 presents a robustness test that excludes autonomous okrugs from the sample and returns similar results to those in the main tables.

over regional politics and when Putin's popularity was consistently high. Meanwhile, the marked increase in defections in 2012-2013 corresponds to the period when the regime's popularity was falling after the 2011-12 protests wave.[10] The regime's popularity was buoyed again in 2014 by the surge of patriotism that followed the annexation of Crimea. This surge in popularity has lasted until the time of writing, and in the data, we observe that defections decreased during this period.

We are pleased to see that our micro-level data on defections tracks with national trends. This suggests that our measure is capturing the underlying phenomenon. This belief is further strengthened by the fact that the temporal trends in our data match well with the pattern of defections revealed in data from Reuter (2017) on defections by governors, mayors, and legislative leaders. In those data, an uptick in defections around 2012-13 can also be observed.

Our coding scheme is quantitative and, as such, we cannot easily distinguish between cases when legislators left the ruling party voluntarily and cases when they were expelled. The two are often hard to distinguish. Our approach is to investigate available press reports on each of the 361 'defections' that are uncovered by our mechanical algorithm. A research assistant analyzed these press reports and coded each defection to determine if the candidate was expelled or defected voluntarily. This analysis revealed that 22 were potential expulsions. We prefer to treat these as *potential* expulsions because, in some instances, UR cadres that want to leave the party will not make the first move and explicitly exit. Rather they will register with another party or criticize UR publicly. They will then be expelled. Still, the most important takeaway from this exercise is that the vast majority of our mechanically revealed defections are likely real defections. Still, in the appendix, we show that all our results are robust to the exclusion of these 22 potential expulsions. Even with these precautions, it is still possible that our sample is contaminated by undetected expulsions. Thus, in the Results section, we discuss how such contamination could bias specific results.

Electoral defections are problematic for United Russia.[11] In extreme cases, defectors might

[10] A number of pundits observed an uptick in regional defections during this period. See, for example, See "Regional Elites See United Russia's Stock Falling," Moscow Times August 26, 2013. "Aleksandr Kynev: Rushayetsya Traditzionniye Skhemy Politicheskogo Manipulirovaniya" Golos Analytic Report. Accessed online at www.golos.org/ news/ 5861

[11] Indeed, the problem of defections is often raised at party congresses, where regional leaders frequently request more tools to help them shore up party discipline. See, for example, "'Edinaya Rossiya' podelitsya rukovodyashchei

unseat an incumbent. This is rare, but one high profile instance occurred in 2012 in Yaroslavl, where former UR legislator Evgenii Urlashov won direct mayoral elections, defeating the governor's favored candidate. In other instances, defections can peel away UR voters and weaken pro-regime candidates, as occurred in both the 2012 mayoral elections in Krasnoyarsk and the 2013 mayoral elections in Ekaterinburg. In Irkutsk in 2013, Alexandr Bitarov, a former UR regional party secretary and vice chairman of the regional legislature, led a group of prominent UR members away from the party and became chairman of the local branch of the right-leaning party, Civic Platform.[12] Drawing on Bitarov's name recognition and financial resources—he was head of the region's largest construction firm—Civic Platform drew votes from United Russia and won 9% of the party list vote in the regio, an impressive showing for a new opposition party in Russia. United Russia ended up with only 42% of the party list vote, which was the second worst showing for the party among the 16 regions holding elections that year. When UR candidates with business empires leave the party, they deprive United Russia of campaign funds and voters, which can strengthen the opposition (see, for example, Arriola (2012)). We find that 24% of the defectors from United Russia later won elected office to a regional legislature under a new political banner. Even though regional defections have not led to the breakdown of authoritarianism in Russia, we believe that they can teach important lessons from them about the foundations of elite cohesion in Russia.

To our knowledge, there exist no systematic studies of elite defections from United Russia.[13] However, our research is related to studies of elite conflict in the regions. Specialists on Russian regional politics have devoted significant attention to intra-elite schisms (e.g.Turovsky (2003); Lapina and Chirikova (2002)). Little is know about why these conflicts arise, but most observers agree that elite conflict weakens the regime. Indeed, at least two quantitative studies demonstrate a negative correlation between intra-elite conflicts and United Russia's vote share (Golosov, 2011; Reuter, 2013). Our research is also related to studies of party formation in Russia. Smyth (2006) analyzes how the characteristics of individual candidates affect their propensity to join parties in

rol'yu" *Kommersant* 4 October 2013.

[12]See "Aleksandr Bitarov vybral 'Grazhdanskuyu Platformu"' *Baikalskie Vesti* 24 June 2013

[13]Hale and Colton (2017) study defections by individual voters, but not elites.

Russia and Reuter (2017) examines the factors that lead individual elites to join United Russia. Neither, however, analyzes defections.

4.2 Independent Variables

We operationalize our hypotheses at both the regional and individual candidate levels. To test Hypothesis 1, we use two related indicators of regime electoral vulnerability. First, we measure United Russia's vote share on the PR ballot during the year of the first regional election in each candidate sequence. A decline in UR's regional vote share could be an indicator that the political machine of the regional government is weakening. Or it could indicate that the regime's is becoming less popular in the region, or that the opposition is becoming stronger. Whatever the cause, a falling regime vote share may indicate that the regime is losing some of its ability to mete out electoral benefits.

Second, we also treat economic performance as a measure of the regime's electoral vulnerability. We measure the rate of economic growth in the years immediately preceding the second election in each sequence (the year the candidate decides whether to remain with the ruling party). Economic data is taken from the Russian State Statistics Agency and is only available until 2014. We use two different measures: a one-year lag prior to the second election and a five-year moving average that improves data coverage.

We examine Hypothesis 2 with data on changes in the size of the legislature between the two elections in the sequence. An increase in the size of the legislature generates more access points for spoils and makes it more likely that candidates will be able to access spoils via United Russia. This should reduce elite incentives to defect. Conversely, when the number of seats in the legislature contracts, institutional points of access decrease, and this should increase incentives to defect.[14]

Formal responsibility for determining the size of the legislature falls on the legislators themselves, though governors play a major role and have been known to strong arm legislatures into passing major institutional reforms. Thirty-eight regional legislatures either expanded or con-

[14]This logic rests on the assumption that it is easier to gain access to the legislature on an opposition party list. In the context of Russian regional politics, we view this assumption as non-controversial. The opposition in Russia faces a perennial dearth of prominent candidates. Moreover, it is common practice for members of the regional elite to buy places on opposition party lists. A disgruntled UR member would almost certainly find it much cheaper to buy a top spot on an opposition party list than it would be to buy similar spot on a United Russia list.

tracted during the period under study. The reasons for these changes are varied and, often, idiosyncratic. Kynev (2014) argues that many of the legislatures decided to expand after the 2003 reform by simply adding PR seats. Several of the legislatures that later shrank were those that opted for a full proportional representation electoral system later in the decade. These bodies eliminated their SMD seats without increasing the number of spots allocated to PR candidates. The decision to move to a full PR system was often driven by a desire to prevent independent local politicians from holding onto their spots in legislature without joining a political party. In addition, changes in legislature size were spurred by a federal law passed under President Medvedev in 2010 that set minimum and maximum sizes for regional legislatures across the country. Whereas some regions were forced to increase the number of seats in order to comply with the law, others were forced to reduce the number of seats.

To test our hypothesis on spoil distribution, we use data collected by Reuter and Robertson (2015) on the allocation of legislative leadership positions during the convocation preceding the second election in the sequence. Legislative leadership offers special opportunities for legislators to push for desired legislation, secure perks such as offices and staff, and direct pork to their constituencies. We calculate the percentage of speakerships, vice-speakerships, and committee chairmanships given to United Russia deputies in each regional convocation.

United Russia holds a majority in almost all convocations during this period and has the right to keep all leadership positions for itself and indeed it often does. However, the regime sometimes distributes leadership positions to opposition leaders in order to co-opt them and keep them from mobilizing their supporters in the streets (Reuter and Robertson, 2015). The logic of our hypothesis suggests that there should be more defections when United Russia shares more leadership positions with the opposition because this signals to United Russia candidates that their chances of receiving future spoils through the party have decreased while their chances of receiving spoils as a member of the opposition have increased.

Hypothesis 4 suggest that defections should be more likely in personalist regimes. To date, we know of no research that has systematically categorized Russian regions over time on a scale of personalism. We proxy for personalism with an indicator for whether a region is an ethnic republic. Russia's ethnic republics often have strong identity-based social networks that were in-

stitutionalized during the Soviet Union (Hale, 2003). These networks survived into the post-Soviet period and provided ascendant regional leaders the opportunity to build powerful local machines. In ethnic republics, leaders enjoy a more loyal base of supporters for their ethnicity's titular claim to power, resulting in weaker political institutions and greater concentration of power in the executive branch. Whatever the cause, scholars note high degrees of personalism in Russia's ethnic republics (Matsuzato, 2001; Sharafutdinova, 2013). Indeed, many of Russia's well-known regional strongmen (e.g. Mintimer Shaimiev, Murtaza Rakhimov, Nikolai Merkushkin, Ramzan Kadyrov) are heads of ethnic republics. Given the overweening power of leaders in these regions, the institutional independence of United Russia is usually weaker. This means that spoil distribution is less likely to be governed by rules and norms embedded within the ruling party and more likely to depend on the arbitrary will of the regional leader.

We use the percentage of non-Russians living in each region as an our indicator for ethnic republics. In some republics, the titular nationality sometimes represents a small portion of the republic's population. These republics often have political institutions that are similar to non-republics. Thus, we follow convention in the literature and use an indicator that taps whether the region has a non-Russian majority.[15]

At the individual level, we operationalize candidates of high political rank with several indicators. First, candidates who have already achieved elected office (i.e. incumbents) have already achieved one of their major political goals, so should be less likely to defect. Second, we measure the candidates' rank on the party list component of the ballot. Those who are higher on the list should be less likely to defect because they are more assured of getting a seat on the UR list. Unfortunately, measuring this is not straightforward. Roughly half of regions allow parties to divide the party list into territorial groupings (Ross, 2014). Voters in regions with territorial groupings still cast a vote for a party, but votes are aggregated and seats allocated with each grouping. We first create a dummy variable ('Ran on Closed PR List') which takes a 1 if a PR candidate was placed on a common 'closed' list, and a 0 if there ran on a territorial grouping list. We also code an ordinal measure for all candidates on the 'closed' list to capture the rank ordering of each can-

[15]There are no non-republics with sizable non-Russian populations. As a robustness check, we also test a binary indicator for a region being designated formally as an ethnic republic within the Russian system.

didates within his or her party. Candidates lower on the 'closed' list have a lower likelihood of winning a seat.

Finally, we measure autonomous resources in three ways. All measures are taken from the year the candidate ran in the first election in the sequence. First, we include an indicator for whether the candidate has won election previously (prior to the first election in a sequence [described above]) *as an independent*. This would indicate that the candidate has the personal following and/or resources necessary to achieve elected office on his/her own. Such candidates have more to offer the opposition and are more likely to be able to be elected without regime support.

Second, we create a series of indicators that tap a deputy's occupational autonomy from the regime. Deputies who work for the state owe their careers to regime leaders and, therefore, should be less willing to risk defection. By contrast, those who work in the private sector should be more willing to defect from the regime.[16]

Finally, we also include indicators for whether a candidate has a background in business and for whether that business is in the private sector. Several studies show that businessperson candidates in Russia are less likely to join political parties because their businesses serve as "party substitutes" that provide many of the organizational resources necessary to win office (Hale, 2007; Smyth, 2006). Moreover, many businesses in Russia operate as political machines, with their managers mobilizing their employees to vote (Frye, Reuter, and Szakonyi, 2014). This provides businessperson candidates with a ready-made base of voters.

In order to create these variables, first we classify candidates by their 'self-described' occupation listed on their official candidate registration form. Our binary and mutually exclusive categories include Firm Director (part of the upper-level management of a company), Government Employee (working for the executive branch at any level or for a state institution such as hospital or school), Private Sector Employee (skilled workers of companies), Social Organization Employee (working in NGOs, unions, academia, the media, or trade associations), Political Party Employee (employed full time as an activist in United Russia), Professional Regional Legislator (legislative incumbent without other outside employment), and Unemployed (pensioner, student, etc.).

We also draw on recent work on businessperson candidates that matches regional legislators

[16] See Junisbai (2012) for an alternative view.

in Russia to the comprehensive SPARK firm database in order to uncover business ties (Szakonyi, 2016).[17] We code two additional indicators based on the ownership of the firms that candidates were affiliated with: private versus state-owned. These final two variables capture not only self-described businessperson candidates (from their official registration), but also the business connections of other candidates who did not list their affiliation publicly when submitting their documents. Affiliation data on SPARK is only available for candidates running from 2004 to 2011; the regressions that include these variables use the subset of candidacies occurring within that period.

We also include an indicator of the region's level of democracy, which we treat as a proxy for repression. Defections should be less likely in more repressive regimes. This data comes from (Petrov and Titkov, 2013) and is commonly used in studies of Russian subnational politics.

Another important control is governor turnover. Russian regional politics are highly clientelistic, and governors are the patrons in these networks. When governors turn over there is usually also high turnover among the broader elite. This turnover is particularly far-reaching when local governors—with ties to the region—are replaced with governors from outside the regime. Outsider governors are (in)famous for breaking up local patron-client networks. Turnover is also high when governors from Moscow are replaced with regional insiders, who often reinstall local networks upon taking office. Defections could be higher when governor type changes because such changes create uncertainty about future opportunities for political advancement. Thus, we include a variable equal to one for elections in which the governor has changed from being an insider to an outsider (or vice versa) in any of the years intervening since the starting election.[18]

Finally, we also include several other control variables, including the age of the candidate, ballot structure (i.e. whether the candidate ran on the PR or SMD portion of the ballot), their gender, and the share of the vote they received in the first election of the sequence (if they ran on the SMD portion).

[17] The SPARK Professional Market and Company Analysis System aggregates this official firm registration data from the federal government for the universe of firms operating in Russia. Szakonyi (2016) develops an algorithm to match individual candidates with their unique entries in the database in order to identify management positions held at the time of election.

[18] In the appendix, we also show a model that includes a simple control for whether the governor changed during this period

5 Models and Results

To assess the determinants of defection, we use linear probability models (OLS).[19] The main outcome variable, defection, takes a value of 1 if a United Russia candidate defected in the second election of a given sequence, and 0 if they ran in the second election under the UR banner. Each observation is an electoral sequence, as described above.

In Table 2, we first present models focusing on the individual(candidate)-level determinants of defection. These models include both fixed effects for region and the year of the second election in the sequence. The latter fixed effects help capture immediate time-specific shocks across Russia that might influence a deputy's decision to run again with United Russia. Results are also robust to including fixed effects for the year of the first election, instead of the year of the second election as is shown in the main text (see Appendix Table A4).

The results reveal support for several of our candidate-level hypotheses. First, a candidate's political rank is negatively correlated with defection. Candidates who held elected regional office at the time of the second election in the sequence are less likely to defect. These incumbents found success affiliating with United Russia and are hesitant to break ranks for fear of jeopardizing their position in the party. We also find that candidates who ranked lower on the party list were more likely to defect. These candidates are more uncertain about their future in the party and have less to lose by defecting. These results on party list are statistically significant even controlling for incumbency. And as Figure 3 indicates, this effect is quite large. While holding all other covariates at their means, a candidate ranked #1 on the party list has a predicted probability of defection of 7.1%. However, when a candidate is ranked near the bottom (#25), the probability of defection nearly doubles to 13.5%.

Next, we find that candidates with autonomous resources are more likely to defect from United Russia. Candidates that had previously won election as an independent in a single-member district are significantly more likely to leave the ruling party. The electoral resources they employed to win election at points in the past provide a level of independence from the party that may be

[19] We uses LPMs instead of Logit models in order to avoid issues of separation that arise in models that include both regional fixed effects and regional covariates that change slowly over time. Our results are robust to using logistic models for the same specifications found in Table 2; see Appendix Table A2.

transferrable to future contests. This result suggests that even well-developed ruling parties such as United Russia are still vulnerable to defections from popular candidates.

The situation is similar with firm directors, who have financial and staffing resources at their disposal to aid their electoral independence. We see that the point estimates on the measures capturing both self-described and officially registered (SPARK) upper management experience are both positive and statistically significant. What is interesting is that directors of state-owned enterprises do not enjoy such autonomy. The point estimate on this measure is no different than the reference category (all non-businesspeople such as government employees and professional legislators), and even possibly negative (with noise observed in the estimation). Private firm directors can claim a degree of independence from the state that gives them leeway to defect; SOE directors are more reliant on maintaining goodwill with the government, and thus the ruling party. Table A1 in the appendix helps illustrate the mechanism behind this finding. There we see that the positive effect on defection of being a firm director is even more pronounced among those who run in SMD races and there is no effect for PR deputies. This makes sense because firm directors are able to use their business resources to help them win candidate-centered, territorially-based elections on their own., but these resources are less helpful in region-wide races.

We also find that other types of employment also help predict the probability of defection. Government employees, defined broadly as individuals working for state institutions, are far less likely to defect than private businesspeople (the reference category in Column 4, Table 2). Defecting from the party could put a candidate's employment at risk. Likewise, candidates that were formally employed in the ruling party (i.e. party professionals) prior to running for office in the first election of the sequence are unsurprisingly much more loyal to that party down the road than other individuals. Finally, it appears that candidates that were unemployed, whether as a pensioner, a student, or just out of work, are more likely to change their party affiliation. This could be because they are less worried about the professional consequences of defection, though the number of such individuals overall in the sample is quite small, and we hesitate to draw a strong conclusion.

The results on some of the control variables are also of interest. Ballot structure, for example, has a large and significant effect. The likelihood of defection increases nearly six times for can-

didates running on the SMD portion of the ballot, from 2.5% to 14% (Figure 3). Deputies who ran on the SMD portion of the ballot were more likely to defect, even when controlling for their past electoral success. In Appendix Table A1, we further break down the analysis by ballot. PR candidates who ran on the territorial groupings are also more likely to defect. Such candidates are more likely to have cultivated a personal vote, which could make them more independent of the regime. We interpret these results as further evidence that candidates that had to campaign directly to constituents in order to win their seat (rather than lobbying party officials for a spot on the closed party list) retain a degree of autonomy. More generally, this suggests that defections will be more common in autocracies with candidate-centered electoral systems. Indeed, this insight is consistent with the Russian authorities' efforts to use electoral reform—specifically the expansion of PR—as a means of controlling pro-regime deputies in the early-mid 2000s.

We also find that defections are less common among candidates who won a larger percentage of the vote in their SMD districts. This result is harder to interpret. On the one hand, candidates who won large shares of the vote in their districts may have personal followings which should make them more autonomous from the regime and more likely to defect. At the same time, however, all of these candidates won their elections as UR nominees (by construction), so this could be a proxy for the popularity of the ruling party in their districts. If this is the case, then this finding is consistent with Hypothesis 1 (see below). Ultimately, we are unsure about how to interpret this variable. Finally, we also find that men are slightly more likely to defect than women, though the effect is not statistically significantly. Older candidates are also less likely to defect. This variable is statistically significant in some models. Candidates farther along in their careers are less likely to jeopardize the investments they have made in the ruling party by jumping ship.

In Table 3, we add region-level predictors to our models predicting defection. These are the variables that we use to test Hypotheses 1-4. We do not employ region fixed effects in these specifications because many of our region-level predictors are slow-moving, if not static, over the period. For example, of the 87 regions in the sample, 47 did not change the number of seats in their regional legislature. Instead in the main models, we cluster standard errors on region. As a robustness check in the appendix, we present models with region and year random effects.

The results indicate support for several of our main hypotheses. First, there is some evidence

that defections are more likely when United Russia's party lists vote share in the region is lower, although this effect usually falls short of statistical significance. The higher the ruling party's vote share, the lower the chance of defections. The results on economic growth are stronger. In line with the existing literature on defections, we find statistical evidence that higher growth in the year prior to the second election in the sequence decreases the likelihood of a defection. Interestingly, the overall rate of growth between the two elections is less important, as shown with the point estimate on the five-year moving average of regional growth affects defections. Candidates appear to pay more attention to recent economic trends, rather than assessing the ruling party's longer term record of success. However, as several models in the appendix show, the size of this effect is sensitive to how one models unit effects and to the type of individual-level covariates that are included.

We also find some support for Hypothesis 2. The negative coefficient on *Perc. Change in Seats* indicates that defections decrease (increase) as institutional points of access to spoils go up (down). This result is usually significant at the .1 level. Defections are more frequent in regions that decide to reduce the number of seats in their legislatures. In these settings, defecting politicians may calculate that, in a smaller legislature, they stand a better chance of gaining a seat on an opposition party list or as an independent. Their electoral odds may improve by defecting and trying for a higher spot on party lists elsewhere, rather than risking missing the cut within a ruling party that has less seats to allocate.

The choice of spoil distribution strategy also figures prominently in the decision about whether to defect. We find that in regions where key leadership posts are shared with opposition parties, United Russia candidates are more likely to quit their party affiliation (Hypothesis 3). When the regime takes spoils away from the ruling party and gives them to the opposition, UR members understand their chances of receiving spoils through UR have decreased, while the possibility of receiving spoils as members of the opposition have increased. The effect of this variable is quite large. As Figure 4 shows, the probability of a candidate defecting is 6.1% when United Russia keeps all leadership positions for itself. When United Russia shares 35% of leadership positions with the opposition, the predicted probability of defection jumps by two-thirds to over 10%.

One might object that this correlation is spurious, however, because the opposition's share of

leadership positions is just a proxy for the strength of the opposition, and a strengthening opposition should lead to more defections. This is a legitimate concern, but there are several reasons to be skeptical of this interpretation. First, it is worth noting that there is no mechanical relationship between the opposition's share of leadership positions and their vote share. UR controls majorities in all regions and decides whether/when to distribute leadership posts to the opposition. Second, regime change is not possible in the subnational context we study. So a strengthening opposition should only make defections more likely because it signals the electoral softening of the regime. And yet, we include a control for United Russia's regional vote share in all models. The results on *UR Leadership Share* come through even with the inclusion of this direct measure of opposition electoral strength. Moreover, the estimate is also robust to the inclusion of economic performance measures which could serve as another proxy for the latent electoral strength of the opposition. Finally, in Appendix Table A3, we show that results on this variable are robust while controlling for the number of protests staged by the opposition in the region–in particular the Communist Party of the Russian Federation and non-system opposition groups–which is a non-electoral measure of the opposition's level of mobilization. In sum, we feel reasonably confident that the partial effect of *UR Leadership Share* is tapping spoil distribution and not the underlying strength of the opposition.

More personalist regimes see greater rates of defections from the ruling party, although the statistical significance of this result is sensitive to model specification. Regions with larger non-Russian populations (i.e. ethnic republics) experience more defections over the period. The lack of institutional constraints on executives in ethnic republics exacerbate commitment problems for these regional leaders and make the promise of future spoil-sharing more uncertain. Where the ruling party is more institutionalized, elites can trust that their career advancement and access to spoils will be dictated by formal procedures.

Finally, we find that defections are higher when the governor changes type (from insider to outsider or vice versa). In a model presented in the appendix, we find that a simple dummy for governor turnover is positively associated with defection, but is not statistically significant.

In the above models, we treat defection as a binary choice: stay with United Russia or leave and run without a UR affiliation. But defecting candidates actually face multiple choices; they may

choose to run as an independent or they may choose to join any of a number of opposition parties. One the one hand, all these actions are defections from the ruling party, a fact that motivates our decision to model this decision as a binary choice. One the other hand, becoming an independent is qualitatively different from joining an opposition party. In fact, some independents may vote with the authorities on some measures and voice support for Putin and the government. But even the shift from ruling party member to "regime-aligned independent" signals the weakening of ruling coalitions. Such independents are not under the control of a centralized ruling party and, as a number of authors have shown, the Kremlin often finds it hard to control non-partisan legislators (Reuter 2017, Remington 2006, Smyth et al 2007).

Nonetheless, it useful to examine whether the factors that explain defections to opposition parties differ from those that predict becoming an independent. In Appendix Table A7, we adopt a different modeling strategy and estimate a multinomial logit model, in which the dependent variable is a categorical variable equal to 0 if the candidate does not defect, 1 if the candidate defects to the opposition, and 2 if the candidate defects to run as an independent. Results for most of our variables are consistent across these two types of defections, but some important differences are worth highlighting. For one, *UR Leadership Share* does a much better job predicting defections to the opposition than it does predicting defections to run as an independent. This makes sense. When the regime shares more spoils with the opposition, cadres calculate that they might be able to gain spoils with the opposition as well. Independents are less able to demand these spoils because they are not affiliated with social groupings that can credibly threaten unrest. *UR Regional Vote* and *Growth (1-year Lag)* also have more impact on defections to the opposition. This may suggest that when candidates are defecting because the ruling party's fortunes are fading, they seek join another party that might capitalize on the ruling party's weakness. Finally, firm directors are more likely to become independents than they are to join opposition parties. This also aligns with the analysis above; businessmen can draw on their business resources to maintain autonomy.

In closing this section, we return to the problem of expulsions discussed in Section 4.1. We have taken measures to ensure that our dependent variable is not contaminated by a significant number of expulsions. Still, some expulsions have likely gone undetected by our coding exercise. For most variables, however, the inclusion of involuntary expulsions in our set of defections should bias us

against finding significant results. It is hard to see how most of our independent variables could plausibly be associated with higher rates of expulsion. Indeed, our theory suggests that some of our variables—such as those that measure the autonomous resources of candidates—should be negatively correlated with expulsions. It is not clear why the regime would seek to drive away those with more to offer from an electoral standpoint. For other variables—such as *UR Leadership Share*, *Growth*, and *UR Regional Vote*—it is hard to envision a plausible theoretical story that could link them to exclusions. Thus, the presence of expulsions in our data should decrease the efficiency of our estimates. For two of our variables, however, one could draw a plausible link with expulsions. For instance, higher ranked candidates might be less likely to be expelled. It is also possible that expulsions could be more common in ethnic republics, which tend not only to be more personalist, but also more repressive. So special care must be taken in interpreting these results.

6 Conclusion

When do elite coalitions organized under the aegis of a dominant party breakdown? This is the overarching question that has guided the analysis in this paper. Of course, we are not analyzing a case of regime breakdown in this paper. Rather, like seismologists, who study not just earthquakes but also the vibrations that constantly reverberate through the Earth's crust, we study the strains and disruptions that occur beneath the surface in Russia's ruling party. And just as seismologists cannot predict the exact location of an earthquake, we cannot predict the exact date of regime breakdown in Russia or any other autocracy. Seismologists do, however, predict seismic hazard and can tell us where and when earthquakes are more likely to occur. Ours is a similar task. By studying trends and tendencies at the regional level in Russia, we hope to gain insight in the conditions that make autocratic elite coalitions more likely to collapse.

We developed a simple cost-benefit framework to explain electoral defections in Russia's regions. We found that defections were more likely when opportunities for accessing spoils, career advancement, and electoral benefits were jeopardized in some way. For instance we found that defections increased when the regime reduced opportunities to access spoils by reducing the size

of the legislature. We also found that defections increased when United Russia shared more spoils with the opposition in order to co-opt them. But it is not just the raw amount of spoils that matters: uncertainty surrounding the distribution of those spoils is also important. Thus, we found that defections were more likely in personalist regimes (ethnic republics) where the lack of institutional constraints on the regional leader increases uncertainty about how spoils will be distributed in the future. Finally, we found that the individual characteristics of candidates matter. Those who have already achieved high political rank—e.g. those who have already achieved elected office or a top spot on the party list—were less likely to defect. More interestingly, those candidates with political resources of their own, such as personal followings and business assets, were more likely to defect.

Our findings suggest several amendments to the current literature on authoritarianism. For one, more attention should be paid to the tradeoffs between various authoritarian survival strategies. The literature almost unanimously argues that rational autocrats should co-opt the opposition and take measures to keep elites loyal. But the literature seems to miss the inherent tradeoff between these two strategies. Spoils are not infinite, and by co-opting the opposition, the regime risks depriving insiders of spoils and leaving them disgruntled. Thus, a rising opposition leads not just to external pressure on the regime, but also to the collapse of elite coalitions from within. Conversely, leaders may not be able to satisfy all regime insiders without limiting the spoils that are available to co-opt the opposition. Thus, maintaining strong regime institutions can actually undermine the ability of the regime to fend off threats from the opposition. We have exposed this tension in this paper, but we have not provided a solution to it. Future research might profit in this area.

Finally, this projects points toward the need for more studies that focus on the attitudes, actions, and resource endowments of individual elites. Many models of autocratic politics treat the elite as a single actor or, at best, treat them as an undifferentiated group. But in every autocracy there are different types of elites, with varying interests and varying political skills and resources. The literature on autocracy could profit from more studies that investigate the implications of this variation, as well as of how elites can cultivate autonomous political resources.

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FIGURE 1: SAMPLE CREATION

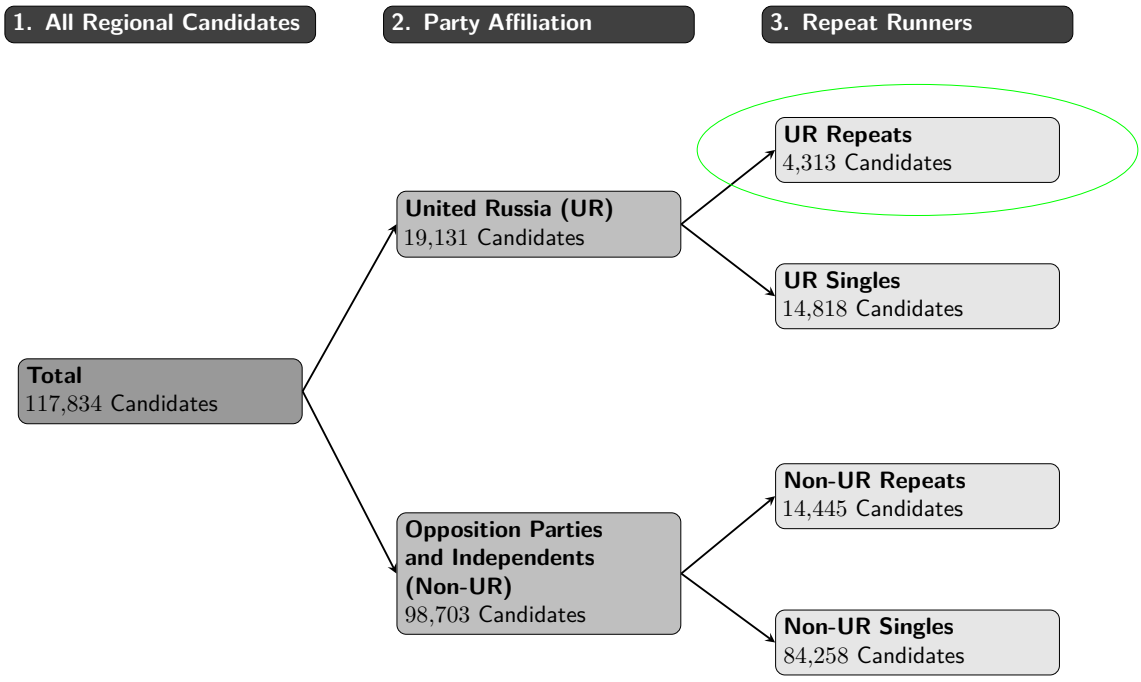

FIGURE 2: DEFECTION RATE BY YEAR

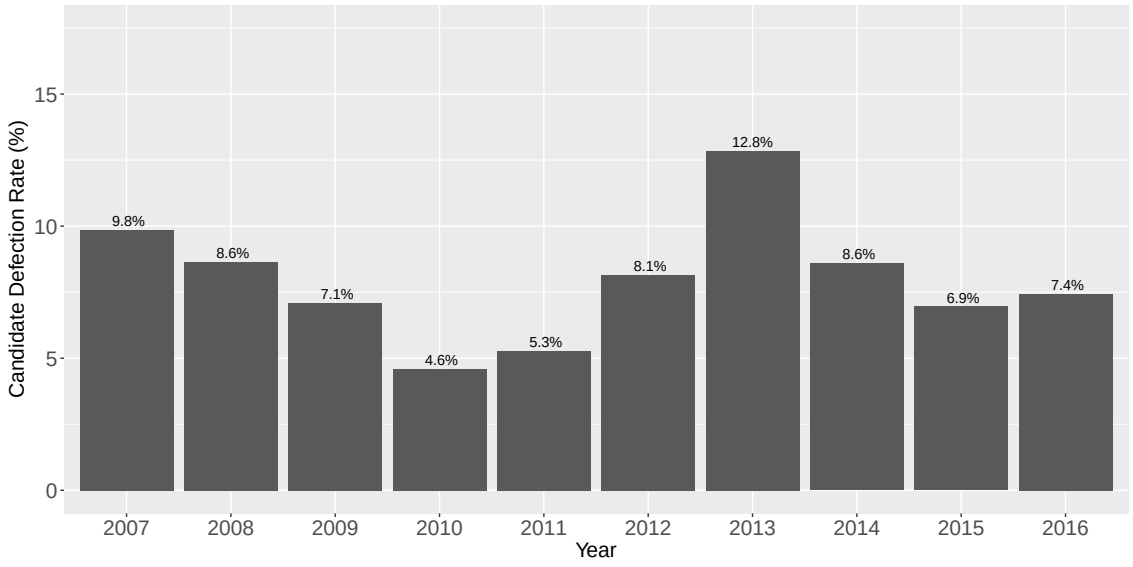

TABLE 1: SUMMARY STATISTICS

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Defected	4,313	0.08	0.27	0	1
Male	4,313	0.86	0.35	0	1
Age	4,313	48.98	9.13	21	79
Firm Director (self-described)	4,313	0.41	0.49	0	1
Private Firm Director (with SPARK data)	3,977	0.45	0.50	0	1
SOE Director (with SPARK data)	3,977	0.10	0.30	0	1
Government Employee	4,312	0.25	0.43	0	1
Private Sector Employee	4,312	0.02	0.15	0	1
Social Organization Employee	4,312	0.09	0.29	0	1
Political Party Employee	4,312	0.01	0.12	0	1
Professional Regional Legislator	4,312	0.02	0.12	0	1
Unemployed	4,312	0.16	0.37	0	1
Ran on SMD Ballot	4,313	0.46	0.50	0	1
Ran on PR Ballot	4,313	0.46	0.50	0	1
Ran on Both Ballots	4,313	0.08	0.26	0	1
Won Election	4,313	0.74	0.44	0	1
Vote Share (SMD)	1,961	0.50	0.18	0.01	0.99
Ran on Closed PR List	4,313	0.26	0.44	0	1
Low Ranked on Closed PR List	4,208	3.23	8.23	0	104
Resigned Seat	4,058	0.02	0.15	0	1
Refused Mandate	4,058	0.04	0.20	0	1
Next Election - Ran on SMD	4,313	0.47	0.50	0	1
Next Election - Ran on PR	4,313	0.59	0.49	0	1
Next Election - Won Seat	4,313	0.66	0.47	0	1
Ran in Previous Six Years	4,313	0.47	0.50	0	1
Ran as Independent Previously	4,313	0.22	0.41	0	1
UR Regional Vote Share	4,213	0.50	0.16	0.18	0.91
Percentage Change in Legislative Seats	4,254	0.02	0.16	−0.45	0.79
UR Leadership Share	3,911	0.86	0.16	0.10	1
Growth (t-1)	4,313	102.70	5.18	82.50	126.40
Percent Non-Russian	4,313	0.26	0.25	0.03	0.99
Democracy Score	4,299	30.45	6.34	16	44
Change in Governor Type	4,313	0.25	0.43	0	1

TABLE 2: INDIVIDUAL DETERMINANTS OF DEFECTION

	Dependent Variable: Defected (0/1)			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Male	0.010	0.013	0.014	0.011
	(0.011)	(0.013)	(0.012)	(0.011)
Age (log)	−0.030	−0.024	−0.025	−0.043*
	(0.024)	(0.023)	(0.025)	(0.026)
Ran on SMD Ballot	0.045***	0.046***	0.115***	0.101***
	(0.011)	(0.009)	(0.027)	(0.028)
Currently in Office	−0.083***	−0.090***	−0.083***	
	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.015)	
Firm Director (self-described)	0.019*			
	(0.010)			
Private Firm Director (with SPARK data)		0.019*	0.020*	
		(0.011)	(0.012)	
SOE Director (with SPARK data)		−0.014	−0.009	
		(0.015)	(0.016)	
SMD Vote Share			−0.138***	−0.175***
			(0.045)	(0.046)
Ran on Closed PR List			−0.018	−0.036***
			(0.013)	(0.013)
Low Ranked on Closed PR List			0.003**	0.003**
			(0.001)	(0.001)
Won Seat as Independent Previously			0.029**	0.026**
			(0.013)	(0.012)
Government Employee				−0.026**
				(0.011)
Private Sector Employee				−0.039
				(0.029)
Social Organization Employee				−0.005
				(0.017)
Political Party Employee				−0.063***
				(0.022)
Professional Regional Legislator				−0.012
				(0.014)
Unemployed				0.107*
				(0.060)
Repeat Election Year Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Region Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	4,313	3,977	3,871	4,184

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1 This table examines individual-level covariates, pooling both the PR and SMD candidates. Firm Director (self-described) is a dummy for whether the candidates indicated on their registration that they were part of a private firm's upper management on their candidate registration; Private Firm Director and SOE Director add further information to that category from the SPARK database. The reference category for all three firm-related variables is all other non-businessperson candidates. Likewise the reference category for the occupation dummies is all businesspeople. An indicator for whether a candidate ran on both the SMD and the PR ballots is included, but the point estimate is not shown. All models use OLS with repeat election year and region fixed effects and cluster standard errors on region.

TABLE 3: REGIONAL DETERMINANTS OF DEFECTION

	Dependent Variable: Defected (0/1)					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Male	0.013	0.014	0.012	0.013	0.015	0.012
	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)
Age (log)	−0.047*	−0.039	−0.048*	−0.049*	−0.042	−0.050*
	(0.026)	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.026)
Firm Director (self-described)	0.022**	0.023**	0.024**			
	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)			
Private Firm Director (with SPARK data)				0.017	0.019	0.018
				(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)
SOE Director (with SPARK data)				−0.014	−0.008	−0.013
				(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.016)
Ran on SMD Ballot	0.041***	0.113***	0.041***	0.044***	0.107***	0.045***
	(0.009)	(0.027)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.026)	(0.009)
Won Seat as Independent Previously	0.043***	0.042***	0.043***	0.042***	0.042***	0.042***
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.012)	(0.013)
Currently in Office	−0.097***	−0.086***	−0.099***	−0.098***	−0.088***	−0.100***
	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.014)
UR Regional Vote	−0.057	−0.022	−0.079*	−0.067	−0.034	−0.090**
	(0.042)	(0.044)	(0.043)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.042)
Perc. Change in Seats	−0.059**	−0.053*	−0.054*	−0.061**	−0.058*	−0.057*
	(0.029)	(0.032)	(0.029)	(0.030)	(0.033)	(0.030)
UR Leadership Share	−0.110***	−0.106***	−0.102***	−0.093***	−0.090**	−0.084**
	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.037)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.038)
Growth (1-year Lag)	−0.004**	−0.003**		−0.003**	−0.003*	
	(0.002)	(0.002)		(0.001)	(0.002)	
Growth (5-year Moving Average)			0.129			0.265
			(0.245)			(0.235)
Percentage Non-Russian	0.050**	0.034	0.057**	0.050**	0.034	0.054**
	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.026)	(0.025)	(0.024)	(0.025)
Democracy Score	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Change in Governor Type	0.024**	0.024**	0.028**	0.026**	0.027**	0.031***
	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)
SMD Vote Share		−0.146***			−0.129***	
		(0.046)			(0.043)	
Ran on Closed PR List		−0.016			−0.018	
		(0.013)			(0.013)	
Low Ranked on Closed PR List		0.001			0.001	
		(0.001)			(0.001)	
Repeat Election Year Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	3,870	3,760	3,870	3,731	3,629	3,731

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1 This table examines both individual-level and region-level covariates, pooling both the PR and SMD candidates. The reference category for is three firm director variables are all non-businessperson candidates. All models use OLS with repeat election year fixed effects and cluster standard errors on region.

FIGURE 3: INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL SUBSTANTIVE EFFECTS

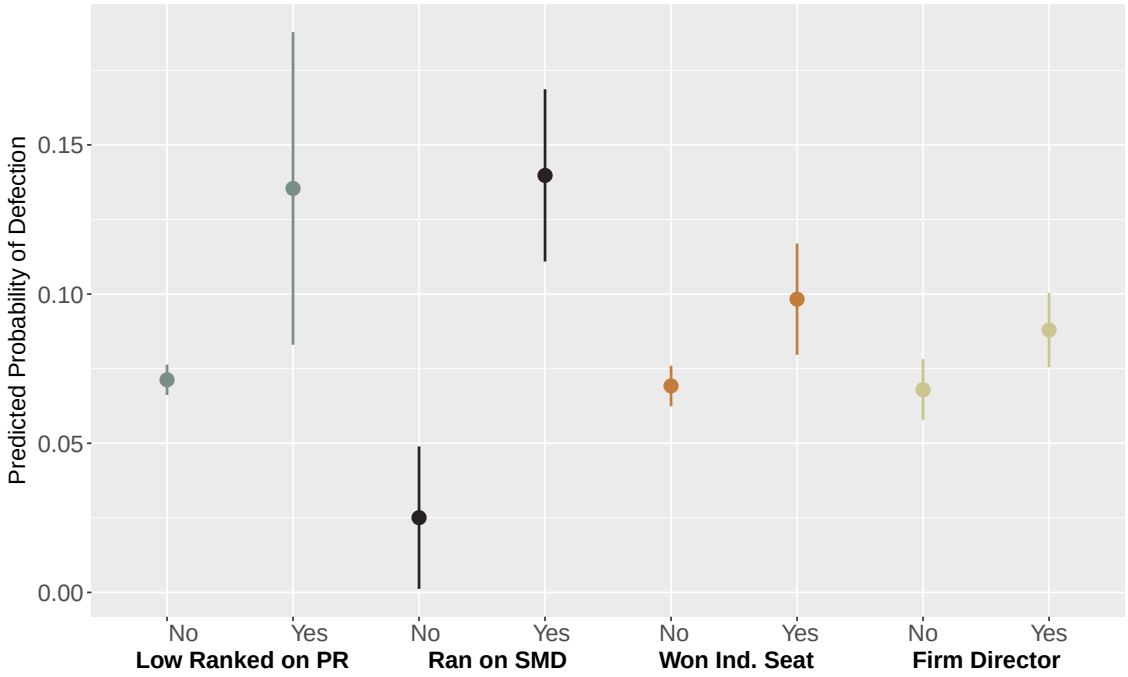

Figure 3 presents the predicted probability of defection based on different values of the predictors shown underneath the plot in bold. The linear model used to generate the probabilities comes from column 3, Table 2. The Yes/No category for binary variables Ran on SMD, Won Independent Seat and Firm Director correspond to 0/1 values. The Yes category for the variable Low Ranked on Closed PR List indicates that the candidate was ranked #25, while the No category indicates a rank of #1 on the same list. All other predictors are held at their means.

FIGURE 4: REGIONAL-LEVEL SUBSTANTIVE EFFECTS

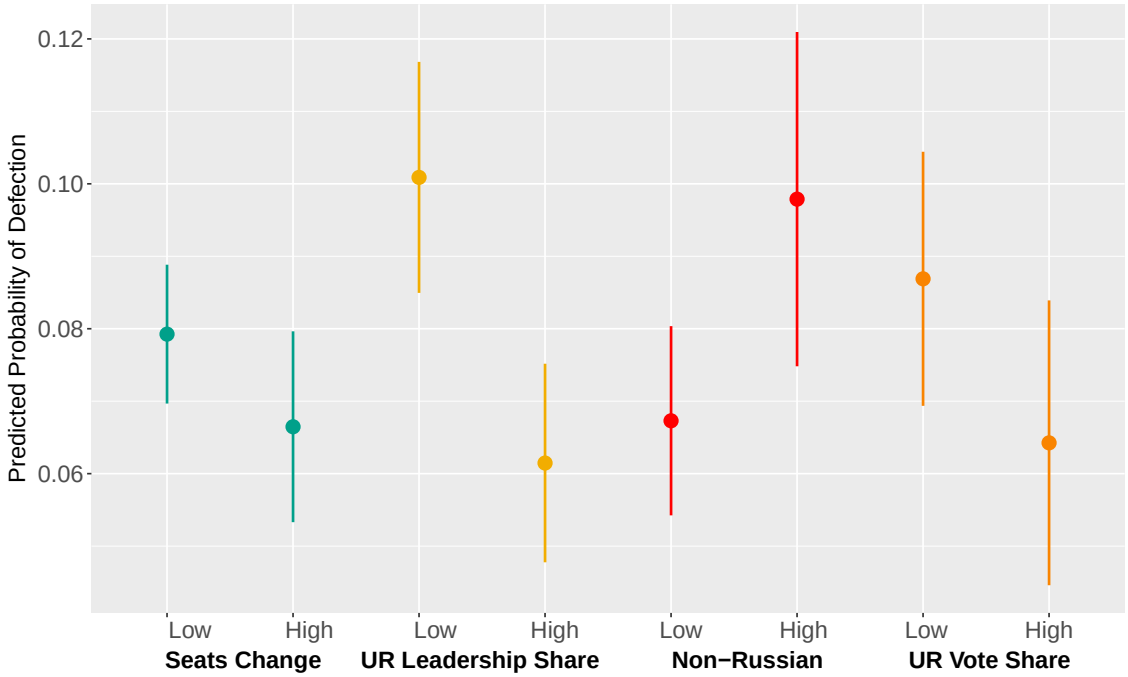

Figure 4 presents the predicted probability of defection based on different values of the predictors shown underneath the plot in bold. The linear model used to generate the probabilities comes from column 1, Table 3. The High category for the variable Seats Change indicates that the regional legislature increased by 19% (the 90th percentile) while the Low category indicates a decrease of 2.8% (the 10th percentile). A High level for the UR Leadership Share variable indicates that no positions were shared with the opposition (100%, 90th percentile), while the Low level indicates that 64% of positions were given to UR deputies (10th percentile). The Non-Russian categories match to real values of 4.9% non-Russian (Low, 10th percentile) and 66.4% (High, 90th percentile). Similarly, the UR vote share categories match to real values of 32.5% (Low, 10th percentile) and 71.8% (High, 90th percentile). All other predictors are held at their means.

7 Appendix

7.1 Robustness Checks and Empirical Extensions

In this supplementary appendix, we present several model specifications that check the robustness of our results. We also present several empirical extensions. In Table A1, we replicate the results from Table 2 in the text, but split the sample according to ballot structure. Relevant results are discussed in the main text.

In the main paper, we use linear probability models to avoid issues of separation that arise in logit models with slow-moving time-varying covariates. In Table A2, we present results from logit model showing that our main results are robust to using this modeling strategy, even though a number of regions are estimated inefficiently.

Table A3 presents a number of robustness checks for Table 3 in the main paper. In the first four columns, we adopt various approaches to modeling unit effects, including region random effects and alternative years for the year effects. In the last two columns, we control for opposition protest in the region, which was discussed in the main text as a possible confounder for *UR Leadership Share* The variables are the number of protest events held by the KPRF in a given year and the number of protest events held by non-system opposition groups. This data is fromReuter and Robertson (2015) and is described in more detail there. The number of observations drops dramatically in these models, because data on protest is only available from July 2007-July 2012. Results on *UR Leadership Share* are robust to the inclusion of these variables.

In the main paper, we model year effects using the year of the *repeat election*. To our minds, this makes the most sense because this is the year when defections are observed, and usually, occur. However, in Table A4 we also demonstrate that our results are robust to using the year of the *starting election.* Table A5 meanwhile presents the results of the multinomial logit models that disaggregate the party choice of defectors. These results are discussed in the main text.

Table A6 presents the results of multinomial logit models that examine a larger set of candidate decisions. In the main text, we examine the behavior of United Russia candidates who have run in two consecutive elections. In Table A6, we examine all UR candidates and model their decisions at the time of the next election cycle. The biggest group, in Column 1, consists of those who simply did not run for electoral office again. The second group, Column 2, is those candidates who stayed in UR, but ran for office at a lower level (local or municipal). The third column is those regional UR candidates who did not run again for the regional legislature but ran at a lower level from an opposition party or as an independent. The fourth column is the same as our group of regional legislative defectors in the main paper (i.e. includes those UR candidates who ran again for regional legislative office and defected from UR), but it also includes 46 cases in which the candidate ran for election at a higher level (State Duma or Governor) and defected from UR. The reference category for the models is the 4014 deputies who were repeat runners from UR in regional elections or ran from UR in a regional election and then ran at a higher level from UR. [20]

The results are of some interest, but must be interpreted with caution. We do not have strong

[20]We lack career background information on the full set of candidates, so the model specifications in Table A6 approximate, but are not identical to the model specifications in Table 3

theoretical expectations about why candidates might leave electoral politics, so we hesitate to interpret the results in the first column. Moreover, it does not make sense to treat these observations as defections. A few of these candidates may have left formal politics, joined the ranks of the non-system opposition, and worked to challenge the regime on the streets or through informal channels. But we expect that this is quite rare; most of these cases are instances of candidates simply leaving electoral politics.

We also not have a theory for why UR candidates might choose to abandon regional politics for local politics (column 2). Column 3 indicates that several of the factors that predicted defections at the regional level also predict the decision to enter local politics *and* defect. But several others do not. This is not surprising, given that two separate decisions are being conflated in this column—the decision to defect from UR and the decision to enter politics at the local level. In the main paper, we focus on defections at the regional level because they are more consequential and more threatening to the regime. Moreover, defections to lower levels must be interpreted with caution because, until very recently partisan penetration of local and municipal elections was very low. Thus, even pro-regime candidates usually ran as independents. Indeed, 90% of defectors at local and municipal levels became independents, compared to less than 50% of defectors at the regional level. The last column indicates that most predictors of defection perform similarly well when including defections at higher levels alongside regional defections.

Table A7 shows the results from a model that uses a more aggregated coding scheme. Here the second column is any type of defection by regional UR candidates–whether at the municipal, regional, or federal level. The reference category is remaining in UR at any level. Results are very similar to those in the main text.

Table A8 shows the results from two placebo tests that help provide additional evidence for the mechanisms behind our findings. Column 1 approximates our findings from Column 1 of Table 3 (we information on the career backgrounds of KPRF and LDPR candidates, so the model specifications are not identical to Table 3). Column 2 uses the same set of variables to model defections from the KPRF and Column 3 does the same for the LDPR. While the logic behind some of our hypotheses about the causes of defections from UR should apply to any party, the logic behind others should only apply to defections from UR. If we find evidence that these factors predict defections from UR, but not from opposition parties, it will add evidence to our contention that these findings are driven by concerns over intra-regime spoil distribution. KPRF and LDPR candidates mainly defect from their parties to run as independents or join other smaller parties. An appreciable minority do join UR.

There is evidence KPRF SMD candidates and LDPR candidates who had won seats previously as independents are also more likely to defect. This makes sense as our argument about the impact of autonomous resources on defection is not limited to ruling parties. Interestingly, it appears that sitting KPRF and LDPR deputies are actually more likely to defect. This contrasts with the findings on defections from UR. One plausible explanation for this finding is that high-level opposition figure are targets for cooptation by the ruling party.

As expected, the regional performance of UR has no statistically significant effect on defections from the KPRF or LDPR. The same is true for *Perc. Change in Seats*, *UR Leadership Share* and *Growth (1-year Lag)*. This gives us more confidence in the mechanisms we have posited for these findings. Indeed, interestingly, defections from the LDPR appear slightly more likely when UR holds more

leadership positions. This illustrates the flip-side of the logic we present above: opposition politicians see less reason to stay with systemic opposition parties if the regime is not sharing spoils with them.

One surprising finding is that defections from the LDPR and, to a lesser extent, KPRF are more likely in ethnic republics. This is the same for UR defections. We are unsure of how to interpret this finding, but it could reflect a level of institutional weakness that extends beyond the ruling party in these regions.

TABLE A1: INDIVIDUAL DETERMINANTS OF DEFECTION: BROKEN UP BY BALLOT

	Dependent Variable: Defected (0/1)								
	Only SMD Candidates			Only PR Candidates			Ran on Both		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Male	0.040**	0.056***	0.039**	0.004	0.003	0.001	−0.002	−0.007	0.045
	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.018)	(0.021)	(0.023)	(0.021)	(0.042)	(0.046)	(0.061)
Age (log)	−0.018	−0.017	−0.039	−0.036	−0.040	−0.042	0.136	0.197*	0.125
	(0.050)	(0.045)	(0.051)	(0.029)	(0.033)	(0.030)	(0.114)	(0.112)	(0.129)
Currently in Office	−0.186***	−0.187***	−0.154***	−0.075***	−0.072***	−0.073***	−0.213	−0.181	−0.183
	(0.051)	(0.043)	(0.043)	(0.018)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.129)	(0.139)	(0.128)
Firm Director (self-described)	0.058***			−0.002			−0.047		
	(0.016)			(0.015)			(0.042)		
Private Firm Director (with SPARK data)		0.058***			−0.007			−0.016	
		(0.017)			(0.018)			(0.033)	
SOE Director (with SPARK data)		−0.015			−0.012			0.064	
		(0.030)			(0.024)			(0.065)	
SMD Vote Share		−0.092	−0.131**					−0.252**	−0.265**
		(0.057)	(0.051)					(0.109)	(0.114)
Ran on Closed PR List					−0.038**	−0.024		−0.003	−0.014
					(0.019)	(0.020)		(0.033)	(0.037)
Low Ranked on Closed PR List					0.003**	0.003**		0.001	0.001
					(0.001)	(0.001)		(0.004)	(0.004)
Won as Independent Previously		0.036*	0.062***		0.029	0.018		0.030	0.037
		(0.018)	(0.020)		(0.023)	(0.021)		(0.038)	(0.039)
Government Employee			−0.050***			−0.027			0.011
			(0.020)			(0.019)			(0.053)
Private Sector Employee			−0.094***			0.014			0.164
			(0.031)			(0.047)			(0.159)
Social Organization Employee			−0.047			0.026			0.095
			(0.031)			(0.024)			(0.089)
Political Party Employee			−0.138***			−0.107***			−0.393***
			(0.050)			(0.021)			(0.085)
Professional Regional Legislator			−0.061***			0.033			0.064
			(0.020)			(0.024)			(0.054)
Unemployed			0.047			0.101			0.415
			(0.123)			(0.081)			(0.284)
Repeat Election Year Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Region Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,664	1,443	1,640	1,675	1,559	1,671	324	309	313

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1 This table examines individual-level determinants of defections using subsamples based on which ballot candidates ran on: in single member districts (Columns 1-3), on proportional representation lists (Columns 4-6) or both (Columns 7-9). All models use OLS with repeat election year and region and cluster standard errors region.

TABLE A2: INDIVIDUAL DETERMINANTS OF DEFECTION: LOGISTIC MODELS

	Dependent Variable: Defected (0/1)			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Male	0.009	0.011	0.009	0.006
	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.009)	(0.009)
Age (log)	−0.037*	−0.029	−0.035*	−0.050**
	(0.020)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.020)
Ran on SMD Ballot	0.046***	0.048***	0.107***	0.103***
	(0.010)	(0.009)	(0.024)	(0.022)
Currently in Office	−0.096***	−0.106***	−0.081***	
	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.015)	
Firm Director (self-described)	0.015*			
	(0.009)			
Private Firm Director (with SPARK data)		0.015	0.016*	
		(0.010)	(0.009)	
SOE Director (with SPARK data)		−0.016	−0.011	
		(0.013)	(0.013)	
SMD Vote Share			−0.129***	−0.183***
			(0.037)	(0.036)
Ran on Closed PR List			−0.023**	−0.039***
			(0.011)	(0.010)
Low Ranked on Closed PR List			0.001*	0.001**
			(0.001)	(0.001)
Won Seat as Independent Previously			0.030***	0.027**
			(0.012)	(0.011)
Government Employee				−0.024***
				(0.009)
Private Sector Employee				−0.024
				(0.020)
Social Organization Employee				−0.002
				(0.013)
Political Party Employee				−0.040**
				(0.016)
Professional Regional Legislator				−0.008
				(0.010)
Unemployed				0.055
				(0.066)
Repeat Election Year Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Region Fixed Effects	No	No	No	No
Observations	4,313	3,977	3,871	4,184

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1 This table examines individual-level determinants of defection in an identical manner to Table 2, but all models use logistic regression. Marginal effects are shown. Errors are clustered on region; repeat election fixed effects are included. Region fixed effects are excluded since ten regions have no defections and would drop out.

TABLE A3: ROBUSTNESS CHECKS: REGIONAL LEVEL

	Dependent Variable: Defected (0/1)				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Male	0.012	0.011	0.010	0.014	0.012
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.011)	(0.011)
Age (log)	−0.045**	−0.047**	−0.095***	−0.053**	−0.048*
	(0.021)	(0.021)	(0.031)	(0.026)	(0.026)
Firm Director (self-described)	0.022**	0.022**	0.022**	0.023**	0.021**
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.010)
Ran on SMD Ballot	0.041***	0.046***	0.043***	0.041***	0.041***
	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.011)	(0.009)	(0.009)
Won Seat as Independent Previously	0.041***	0.038***	0.055***	0.043***	0.043***
	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.012)
Currently in Office	−0.099***	−0.107***	−0.106***	−0.096***	−0.097***
	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.017)	(0.014)	(0.014)
UR Regional Vote	−0.040	0.047	−0.082	−0.075*	−0.062
	(0.052)	(0.048)	(0.055)	(0.043)	(0.043)
Perc. Change in Seats	−0.061	−0.048	−0.074**	−0.063**	−0.062**
	(0.040)	(0.042)	(0.032)	(0.031)	(0.028)
UR Leadership Share	−0.112***	−0.120***	−0.142***	−0.097***	−0.107***
	(0.035)	(0.037)	(0.035)	(0.034)	(0.033)
Growth (1-year Lag)	−0.003**	−0.001	−0.002	−0.003**	−0.004***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Percentage Non-Russian	0.048*	0.046	0.077***	0.054**	0.050*
	(0.029)	(0.032)	(0.023)	(0.027)	(0.026)
Democracy Score	0.001	0.002	0.001	0.002	0.001
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Change in Governor Type	0.020*	0.015			
	(0.011)	(0.012)			
KPRF Protests			0.003		
			(0.007)		
IKDP Protests			−0.0001		
			(0.004)		
Change in Governor (Any)					0.007
					(0.010)
Repeat Election Year Random Effects	Yes	No	No	No	No
Repeat Election Year Fixed Effects	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Starting Election Year Random Effects	No	Yes	No	No	No
Region Random Effects	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Observations	3,870	3,870	2,822	3,801	3,870

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1 Columns 1 and 2 introduce random effects models, varying whether the random effect on year was measured during the initial year that the UR candidate ran as a member of United Russia or the year of the election when they ran again. Column 3 includes a measure of the number of protests by the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF) and by non-system groups during the initial year that the candidate ran for office; fixed effects for that year are included. Column 4 excludes all defections from the sample that occurred in autonomous okrugs. All models use OLS.

TABLE A4: REGION DETERMINANTS OF DEFECTION: STARTING ELECTION YEAR FE

	Dependent Variable: Defected (0/1)					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Male	0.012	0.013	0.012	0.011	0.012	0.011
	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)
Age (log)	−0.053**	−0.044*	−0.054**	−0.054**	−0.045*	−0.054**
	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.026)
Firm Director (self-described)	0.021**	0.023**	0.022**			
	(0.011)	(0.010)	(0.011)			
Private Firm Director (with SPARK data)				0.017	0.019	0.017
				(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)
SOE Director (with SPARK data)				−0.012	−0.006	−0.012
				(0.015)	(0.016)	(0.016)
Ran on SMD Ballot	0.048***	0.132***	0.048***	0.051***	0.125***	0.051***
	(0.009)	(0.029)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.028)	(0.009)
Won Seat as Independent Previously	0.040***	0.040***	0.040***	0.040***	0.040***	0.040***
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.012)	(0.013)
Currently in Office	−0.106***	−0.091***	−0.106***	−0.108***	−0.095***	−0.108***
	(0.015)	(0.014)	(0.015)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.014)
UR Regional Vote	−0.081	−0.028	−0.082	−0.060	−0.008	−0.063
	(0.054)	(0.059)	(0.055)	(0.058)	(0.062)	(0.059)
Perc. Change in Seats	−0.046	−0.041	−0.046	−0.054*	−0.049	−0.053*
	(0.028)	(0.032)	(0.028)	(0.030)	(0.034)	(0.030)
UR Leadership Share	−0.111***	−0.101***	−0.106***	−0.097***	−0.087**	−0.092**
	(0.033)	(0.034)	(0.034)	(0.036)	(0.039)	(0.038)
Growth (1-year Lag)	−0.001	−0.001		−0.001	−0.001	
	(0.001)	(0.001)		(0.001)	(0.002)	
Growth (5-year Moving Average)			−0.076			0.004
			(0.254)			(0.260)
Percentage Non-Russian	0.060**	0.044	0.063**	0.053**	0.037	0.055**
	(0.025)	(0.027)	(0.026)	(0.025)	(0.027)	(0.026)
Democracy Score	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Change in Governor Type	0.025*	0.027**	0.025*	0.025*	0.028**	0.026*
	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.014)
SMD Vote Share		−0.166***			−0.151***	
		(0.049)			(0.047)	
Ran on Closed PR List		−0.016			−0.020	
		(0.014)			(0.014)	
Low Ranked on Closed PR List		0.002			0.002	
		(0.001)			(0.001)	
Starting Election Year Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	3,870	3,760	3,870	3,731	3,629	3,731

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1 This table examines both individual-level and region-level determinants using both the PR and SMD candidates. The reference category for all three firm director variables are all other non-businessperson candidates. All models use OLS and cluster standard errors on region. Fixed effects are included based on the year that candidate ran for office as a member of United Russia.

TABLE A5: DEFECTION AND PARTY CHOICE

	Became Independent	Joined Opposition
	(1)	(2)
Male	0.434	0.039
	(0.342)	(0.216)
Age (log)	−0.631	−0.745*
	(0.513)	(0.421)
Firm Director (self-described)	0.458**	0.233
	(0.214)	(0.193)
Ran on SMD Ballot	0.807***	0.442**
	(0.235)	(0.172)
Won Seat as Independent Previously	0.538**	0.730***
	(0.260)	(0.244)
Currently in Office	−1.138***	−1.451***
	(0.247)	(0.174)
UR Regional Vote	−0.050	−2.348**
	(1.018)	(0.958)
Perc. Change in Seats	−1.188*	−0.651
	(0.624)	(0.667)
UR Leadership Share	−0.496	−1.735***
	(0.745)	(0.524)
Growth (1-year Lag)	−0.025	−0.102***
	(0.027)	(0.028)
Percentage Non-Russian	0.112	1.421**
	(0.551)	(0.581)
Democracy Score	0.028	0.015
	(0.021)	(0.023)
Change in Governor Type	0.274	0.448***
	(0.199)	(0.170)
Initial Election Year Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes
Defections in Group	137	161
Total Observations	3,870	

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1 This table runs a multinomial regression using as the outcome the party affiliation that United Russia candidates adopted upon running for re-election. *Became Independent* indicates that the defecting UR candidate ran as an independent in the second election of the sequence. *Joined Opposition* indicates that the defecting candidate ran as a member of a non-ruling party. The reference category is No Switch, i.e. the United Russia candidate did not defect in subsequent elections. Cell entries are multinomial logit coefficients. Standard errors are clustered at the region level with fixed effects included for the year of the second election when the UR candidate ran for regional office.

TABLE A6: POLITICAL TRAJECTORIES FOR UR CANDIDATES AFTER REGIONAL ELECTIONS MODERATELY AGGREGATED CODING SCHEME

	Left Politics	Remained in UR (Lower Level)	Defected (Lower Level)	Defected (Reg/Fed Level)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Male	−0.121*	0.186	0.429**	0.392**
	(0.069)	(0.117)	(0.205)	(0.193)
Age (log)	0.151	0.086	0.069	−0.858***
	(0.099)	(0.157)	(0.247)	(0.286)
Ran on SMD Ballot	−0.102	−0.214	0.183	0.647***
	(0.073)	(0.156)	(0.191)	(0.140)
Won Seat as Independent Previously	−0.116*	−0.483***	−0.189	0.636***
	(0.065)	(0.135)	(0.223)	(0.163)
Currently in Office	−1.610***	−3.048***	−2.946***	−1.200***
	(0.075)	(0.171)	(0.212)	(0.166)
UR Regional Vote	−0.108	0.106	−1.864*	−1.094
	(0.437)	(0.869)	(1.011)	(0.898)
Perc. Change in Seats	−0.290	−0.129	0.758	−0.859**
	(0.308)	(0.551)	(0.888)	(0.409)
UR Leadership Share	0.068	−0.276	−1.109**	−1.183***
	(0.224)	(0.386)	(0.480)	(0.354)
Growth (1-year Lag)	−0.018**	−0.028*	−0.022	−0.014
	(0.008)	(0.015)	(0.020)	(0.018)
Percentage Non-Russian	0.601***	−0.366	0.331	1.178***
	(0.150)	(0.347)	(0.594)	(0.353)
Democracy Score	−0.011	−0.009	−0.022	0.004
	(0.008)	(0.011)	(0.016)	(0.017)
Constant	2.508**	2.402	2.349	3.281
	(1.146)	(1.960)	(2.669)	(2.230)
Initial Election Year Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations in Group	5,004	1,202	371	361
Total Observations		10,971		

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1 This table runs a multinomial regression using as the outcome the political decision that United Russia candidates made in the period after running for a regional legislature. Left Politics indicates that the UR candidate did not run for elected office at any level (local, regional or federal) within six years after initially running for a regional legislature as a member of UR. Defected (Lower Level) indicates that the UR candidate ran as a member of a non-ruling party or as an independent for a local or municipal election within six years. Defected (Reg/Fed Level) indicates that the UR candidate ran as a member of an opposition party or as an independent in a regional legislative or higher-level (gubernatorial or federal) election within six years. Remained with UR (Lower Level) indicates the United Russia candidate ran in a local or municipal election as a member of the UR party. The reference category is Remained with UR (Reg/Fed Level), i.e. the United Russia candidate ran in a regional or federal election, but continued to run as a member of the UR party. Cell entries are multinomial logit coefficients. Standard errors are clustered at the region level with fixed effects included for the year of the initial election the UR candidate ran for regional office.

TABLE A7: POLITICAL TRAJECTORIES FOR UR CANDIDATES AFTER REGIONAL ELECTIONS MOST AGGREGATED CODING SCHEME

	Left Politics	Defected (Any Level)
	(1)	(2)
Male	−0.182***	0.343**
	(0.053)	(0.144)
Age (log)	0.141	−0.378**
	(0.091)	(0.192)
Ran on SMD Ballot	−0.059	0.494***
	(0.066)	(0.117)
Won Seat as Independent Previously	−0.058	0.382***
	(0.063)	(0.143)
Currently in Office	−0.920***	−1.266***
	(0.075)	(0.129)
UR Regional Vote	−0.177	−1.502**
	(0.276)	(0.679)
Perc. Change in Seats	−0.264	−0.058
	(0.312)	(0.583)
UR Leadership Share	0.159	−1.040***
	(0.219)	(0.311)
Growth (1-year Lag)	−0.011	−0.010
	(0.007)	(0.014)
Percentage Non-Russian	0.719***	0.844***
	(0.120)	(0.323)
Democracy Score	−0.008	−0.007
	(0.007)	(0.013)
Constant	1.087	1.950
	(0.931)	(1.814)
Initial Election Year Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes
Observations in Group	5,004	728
Total Observations	10,971	

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1 This table runs a multinomial regression using as the outcome the political decision that United Russia candidates made in the period after running for a regional legislature. Left Politics indicates that the UR candidate did not run for elected office (local, regional or federal) at any level within six years after initially running for a regional legislature as a member of UR. Defected (Any Level) indicates that the UR candidate ran as a member of a non-ruling party or as an independent in an election, at any level—local, regional, or federal—within six years. The reference category is Remained with UR (Any Level), i.e. the United Russia candidate ran in a subsequent election, but continued to run as a member of the UR party. Cell entries are multinomial logit coefficients. Standard errors are clustered at the region level with fixed effects included for the year of the initial election the UR candidate ran for regional office.

TABLE A8: PLACEBO RESULTS - KPRF AND LDPR

	Defections from UR	Defections from KPRF	Defections from LDPR
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Male	0.019*	0.001	0.078***
	(0.011)	(0.017)	(0.027)
Age (log)	−0.052**	−0.088***	0.032
	(0.025)	(0.027)	(0.043)
Ran on SMD Ballot	0.043***	0.129***	0.030
	(0.009)	(0.025)	(0.045)
Won Seat as Independent Previously	0.042***	0.095	0.447***
	(0.012)	(0.061)	(0.107)
Currently in Office	−0.095***	0.038**	0.095***
	(0.014)	(0.019)	(0.030)
UR Regional Vote	−0.059	−0.069	−0.109
	(0.042)	(0.090)	(0.111)
Perc. Change in Seats	−0.064**	−0.116	−0.038
	(0.029)	(0.077)	(0.115)
UR Leadership Share	−0.108***	−0.110	0.135*
	(0.033)	(0.075)	(0.076)
Growth (1-year Lag)	−0.004**	−0.002	−0.002
	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.004)
Percentage Non-Russian	0.046*	0.109	0.249**
	(0.025)	(0.069)	(0.100)
Democracy Score	0.001	0.003	0.009***
	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.003)
Change in Governor Type	0.023**	−0.004	−0.001
	(0.011)	(0.030)	(0.035)
Repeat Election Year Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	3,870	2,360	1,136

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1 This table compares the determinants of defection from the United Russia party to those of defections from two prominent opposition parties. All columns use the same set of individual and region-level determinants but vary both the population of candidates analyzed and the outcome variable. Column 1 is most similar to the results in the main tables: the population is UR candidates and the outcome measure is a binary indicator if a candidate defected from United Russia in the second election of a regional sequence. Column 2 instead analyzes defections from the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) during the second election of a sequence. Column 3 examines defections from the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF). Standard errors are clustered at the region level with fixed effects included for the year of the initial election that candidates ran for regional office.