

PATTERNS OF ELECTORAL CONTESTATION IN RUSSIAN REGIONAL ASSEMBLIES: BETWEEN “COMPETITIVE” AND “HEGEMONIC” AUTHORITARIANISM

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Abstract: This article examines the substantial variation in the degree of electoral support for the ruling party, United Russia, in regional legislative elections across Russia in the period 2007-2012, when Putin’s ability to manipulate the electoral system was at its height. Overall, United Russia candidates do better in single-member district races than in proportional list races. However, the level of competitiveness in the single-member district races is higher. But the election of non-party candidates does not increase actual competition as one might expect because the majority of these winning independent candidates join United Russia after their election.

In recent years, a number of scholars have pointed to the importance of the emergence of new hybrid regimes which “inhabit the wide and foggy zone between liberal democracy and closed authoritarianism.”¹ Many transitions have not led to democracy, “but instead have given birth to new forms of authoritarianism that do not fit into our classic categories of one-party, military, or personal dictatorship.”² Howard and Roessler define

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¹ Andreas Schedler. 2002. “Elections without Democracy, the Menu of Manipulation.” *Journal of Democracy* 13 (2): 37.

² Ibid.

three types of authoritarian regimes: In *closed authoritarian* regimes “leaders are not selected through national elections, opposition parties remain banned, political control is maintained through the use of repression, and there is little space for a free media and civil society.”³ By contrast, *hegemonic authoritarian* regimes “do hold regular elections as part of their system of governance, but in addition to widespread violations of political, civil and human rights, the elections are not actually competitive. Because no other party, except the ruling one, is allowed to effectively compete ...the dominant candidate or party wins overwhelmingly, leading to a de facto one-party state.”⁴ Finally, in *competitive authoritarian regimes*, as originally defined by Levitsky and Way, “democratic institutions are widely viewed as the principal means of obtaining and exercising political authority,” but the regime “fails to meet conventional minimal standards for democracy.”⁵ However, political competition is not completely absent, governments are able to manipulate the formal rules of the game, but “they are unable to eliminate them or reduce them to a mere façade.”⁶ In this type of regime, genuine competition between political actors does take place, but the final results of the elections are always guaranteed to deliver overall victory to the ruling party.

In this paper we examine variations in the degrees of electoral support for United Russia (UR) in Russia’s 83 regional assemblies. In contrast to previous studies of regional elections in Russia which have focused on the party list votes or aggregate results, we analyze and compare elections results and levels of electoral contestation in both the party list (PL) and single-member district (SMD) contests. By widening the traditional focus, the study brings to light variations in the patterns of UR’s electoral domination of regional assemblies. Moreover, it uncovers differences in the levels of support which UR candidates win in these two types of contest.

It is important to note that different levels of a polity may encompass different degrees of contestation, authoritarianism, and democracy. National level political practices may be more pluralistic than local level

³ Marc Morje Howard and Philip G. Roessler. 2006. “Liberalizing Electoral Outcomes in Competitive Authoritarian Regimes.” *American Journal of Political Science* 50 (2): 365-81, 367.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way. 2002. “The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism.” *Journal of Democracy* 13 (2): 52.

⁶ Ibid., 53. For an excellent discussion of hybrid regimes see, Garry Rodan and Kanishka Jayasuriya. 2012. “Hybrid Regimes: A Social Foundations Approach” in Jeffrey Haynes, ed., *Routledge Handbook of Democratization*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 175- 189.; M. Bogaards. 2009. “How to Classify Hybrid Regimes? Defective Democracy and Electoral Authoritarianism.” *Democratization* 16 (2): 399-423; Mikael Wigell. 2008. “Mapping Hybrid Regimes: Types and Concepts in Comparative Politics.” *Democratization* 15 (2): 230-250.

politics and vice versa.⁷ As Gibson and Suarez-Cao note, sub-national politics have their own party systems “with patterns of competition that are unique to them and that are shaped by the local institutional context in which they operate.”⁸ The Russian Federation is one of the most diversified federations in the world and its 83 regions vary widely in the size of their territories and populations, their socio-economic status, and ethnic composition.⁹ But do we find important variations in the levels of political contestation in Russia’s regions?

Patterns of Electoral Contestation

While the Putin administration has attempted to impose a power vertical in the country, there still remain important regional variations in electoral and party politics and in the types of political regimes that are to be found in such a large and ethnically diverse federation. The regions also demonstrate significant cross-regional variations in the degree of support for United Russia in federal and regional elections. While some regional authorities ensure the “party of power” overwhelming support and eliminate electoral competition completely (*hegemonic authoritarianism*), in other regions a limited form of party competition is allowed to take place, similar to that which occurs in the elections for the State Duma.¹⁰ In these *competitive authoritarian* regions, genuine competition between political actors does take place, but the final results of the elections are always guaranteed to deliver an overall victory for the ruling party.

The manner of electoral competition in Russia leaves no doubt that the electoral process is under the tight control of the ruling group in the Kremlin. The “party of power,” United Russia, dominates the federal parliament – the State Duma – and it primarily serves as an instrument of the Kremlin in the law-making process.¹¹ At the same time, the State Duma

⁷ See E. L. Gibson. 2005. “Boundary Control: Subnational Authoritarianism in Democratic Countries.” *World Politics* 58 (1); E. L. Gibson and J. Suarez-Cao. 2010. “Federalised Party Systems and Subnational Party Competition: Theory and an Empirical Application to Argentina.” *Comparative Politics* 43 (1).

⁸ Gibson and Suarez-Cao. 2010. 512.

⁹ See C. Ross. 2002. *Federalism and Democratization in Russia*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

¹⁰ See G. Golosov. 2004. *Political Parties in the Regions of Russia: Democracy Unclaimed*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.; G. Golosov. 2006. “The Structure of Party Alternatives and Voter Choice in Russia Evidence from the 2003–2004 Regional Legislative Elections.” *Party Politics* 12 (6): 707–25.; G. Golosov. 2011. “Russia’s Regional Legislative Elections, 2003–2007: Authoritarianism Incorporated.” *Europe-Asia Studies* 63 (3): 397–414; B. Moraski and W. Reisinger. 2003. “Explaining Electoral Competition across Russia’s Regions.” *Slavic Review* 62 (2): 278–301; C. Ross. 2011. “The Rise and Fall of Political Parties in Russia’s Regional Assemblies.” *Europe-Asia Studies* 63 (3): 431–450.; C. Ross. 2011. “Regional Elections and Electoral Authoritarianism in Russia.” *Europe-Asia Studies* 63 (4): 641–661.

¹¹ J. O. Reuter and T. F. Remington. 2009. “Dominant Party Regimes and the Commitment

is deliberately configured so as to ensure that some opposition parties gain access to the parliament and are permitted to win some shares of the parliamentary spoils. Opposition parties (the so-called “systemic opposition”) are tolerated as long as they do not step out of line and dare to challenge the supremacy of the “party of power.” However, although the victory of United Russia is guaranteed, the exact distribution of parliamentary seats in the center and in a majority of the regions is open to some degree of uncertainty, and all the parties, including United Russia, engage in a fierce struggle for the votes. The results of the elections to the State Duma in 2003, 2007, and 2011 showed volatility in the electoral support for United Russia and the “systemic opposition.” Moreover, the mass protests which erupted over the results of the December 2011 elections provides further evidence that the current configuration of parties is not self-sustaining and self-reproduced. On the contrary, the Kremlin continually has to make efforts to keep the party system under its control. New electoral and party laws have been adopted at almost every new round of elections to ensure UR’s dominance.

Unlike elections to the State Duma, which since 2007 have been based on proportional representation, a majority of Russia’s regions employ a mixed electoral system. In these regions two different types of election take place concurrently: elections for single-member districts (SMDs) and elections for party list (PL) seats. As noted above, while there has been a great deal of research into the party list votes, far less has been devoted to the study of SMD elections. In particular, it would be interesting to know how the electoral formula influences the degree of competitiveness. To what extent do cross-regional variations in the votes for United Russia also apply in the elections for SMDs? How do PL and SMDs elections correlate with regard to their degree of competitiveness? How do some of the special features of SMD races, such as the participation of non-party candidates, influence the overall degree of competitiveness? These are some of the key questions which we address in this study.

Before we turn to examine these issues, we begin our discussion with an account of the changes to party and electoral legislation and the consolidation of the Putin regime over the period 2003-7. We then turn to an analysis of the results of regional assembly elections in the post-consolidation period December 2007-October 2012. Finally, we provide a comparative study of the PL and SMD elections and we analyze the role played by independent candidates in the SMD contests.

The Basic Features of Russia's Sub-National Party and Electoral Systems

Putin's Consolidation of Power

In the wake of the Beslan Hostage Crisis of September 2004, President Putin was able to push through key amendments to election and party legislation which have strengthened the center's control over the regions. Major changes were made to the 2002 Federal Law on Elections (which by the summer of 2012 had been amended no less than 55 times),¹² and to the 2001 Federal Law on Parties.¹³ In particular, as Buzin notes, changes to electoral and party laws which were ratified over the period 2003-7 were designed to provide "uniformity and predictability" of elections results for the Kremlin's "party of power," United Russia (UR).¹⁴ The unprecedented use of administrative resources and the overwhelming nature of UR's success in the December 2007 elections radically changed the Russian political landscape and marked the beginning of a new era of Russian party and electoral politics. As Golosov observed, the December 2007 elections were held in entirely different, much more restrictive, political environments than was the case previously.¹⁵

By the end of 2007, the contours of a new party system had been laid down and the electoral system was now heavily biased in favor of the "party of power." Consequently, the latest cycle of regional legislatures' elections (2007-12) was held under these new circumstances and deserves a special analysis. As can be seen in Table 1, UR has been able to capture a majority of the seats in each of the electoral rounds held over the entire period December 2003-12. However, there is a noticeable increase in the percentage of votes for UR after the consolidation of the regime in 2007.

The Party System

First of all, it is important to stress that the party system is built around UR which is guaranteed a majority of seats in all regional legislatures. Second, during the period of this study, there have been three "second order" parties, the so-called "parliamentary opposition," that regularly participate in almost all of the regional assembly elections (and usually

¹² Federal Law No. 67. 12 June 2002. "Ob Osnovnykh Garantyakh Izbratel'nykh Prav i Prava na Uchastie v Referendume Grazhdan Rossiiskoi Federatsii." *Sobranie Zakonodatel'stva Rossiiskoi Federatsii* No. 24,

¹³ Federal Law No. 95. 11 July 2001. "O Politicheskikh Partiyakh." *Sobranie Zakonodatel'stva Rossiiskoi Federatsii* No. 29.

¹⁴ Andrey Buzin. "Election Legislation: How Elections Became Manageable." *Vedomosti*. June 8, 2012, 1.

¹⁵ G. Golosov. 2011. "Russia's Regional Legislative Elections, 2003-2007: Authoritarianism Incorporated." *Europe-Asia Studies* 63 (3): 398.

win some seats) - the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CP), Just Russia (JR) and the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LD). Third, there are some small parties that sometimes win seats: two of these, the Patriots of Russia (PR) and Yabloko (Yab), have contested elections over the entire period December 2007–October 2012. Two right-wing parties, Civil Union (CU) and the Union of Right Forces (URF), have also participated in a number of regional elections. In 2008 these two parties merged to create Right Cause (RC), which won a small number of seats in the period 2009–12. We should also mention the Agrarian Party of Russia (AP), which won some regional assembly seats in the period December 2007–08, but which later merged with UR in 2008.

Table 1: Average Percentage of Seats Won by Political Parties in Elections to Regional Assemblies

Date	UR	CPRF	JR	LDPR	PR	RC	Yabloko
14 Oct. 2012	82.38	7.32	2.17	1.90	3.79	0.0	0.0
4 Dec. 2011	64.30	14.13	11.07	8.18	0.0	0.91	0.08
13 Mar. 2011	68.37	12.61	8.96	5.85	1.83	0.18	0.00
10 Oct. 2010	76.15	11.15	6.54	4.62	0.0	0.0	0.00
14 Mar. 2010	67.66	13.01	8.18	8.18	0.0	0.0	0.00
11 Oct. 2009	79.26	14.07	5.19	1.48	0.0	0.0	0.00
1 Mar. 2009	72.97	10.02	6.05	3.59	1.32	-	0.00
12 Oct. 2008	77.07	6.34	5.85	3.90	0.0	-	0.00
2 Dec 2007 - Mar. 2008	76.69	9.12	4.94	3.61	0.38	-	0.00
7 Dec. 2003 - 15 Apr. 2007	52.15	10.81	4.48	4.36	0.39	-	0.27

Source: Central Electoral Commission Website (<http://www.cikf.ru>).

There were also a number of minor parties which participated in a small number of elections over the period December 2007- October 2008, but which were later merged with other parties or disbanded. Thus, for example, the Russian Party of Peace and Unity merged with Patriots of Russia, the Party of Social Justice merged with Just Russia, and two other parties (the Greens and People's Union) lost their legal status. Consequently, whilst there were 13 parties registered at the end of 2007, that number fell to 7 during the period 2009–11.

In 2012 new legislation relaxed the rules governing the registration of parties and this led to a sharp increase in their numbers. Thirty-three parties were registered by the end of 2012. However, none of these new

parties won more than a few odd seats in the October 2012 regional elections.

The Electoral System and Regional Elections

According to federal legislation, all the elections to regional assemblies were held twice a year – in March and October.¹⁶ There is no single date when all the regional legislatures are re-elected; each legislature has its own term of office. Over the period December 2007-October 2012 there were 96 elections. In 11 of these regions elections were held twice, and in Sverdlovsk Oblast⁷ – three times.¹⁷ In this study we examine electoral data from the latest elections in these regions, therefore our sample includes one election from each region. Details regarding the latest cycle of regional assembly elections which were held over the period December 2007-October 2012 and the main features of their electoral systems are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Regional Assembly Elections December 2007-October 2012

	Number of Elections	Mixed System	PR Party List System
December 2007	2	2	-
March 2008	7	6	1
October 2008	4	3	1
March 2009	9	7	2
October 2009	3	2	1
March 2010	7	6	1
October 2010	6	6	-
March 2011	12	11	1
December 2011	27	24	3
October 2012	6	6	-
Total	83	73	10

According to federal legislation, no less than the half of the deputies of regional assemblies are required to be elected by a PR party list

¹⁶ In 2012 some amendments were made to legislation, and from 2013 all elections will be held once a year, in September.

¹⁷ In Sverdlovsk Oblast⁷ up until 2011 there were two-chambers: the House of Representatives, 21 deputies of which were reelected every 4 years on the basis of a plural system (2008), and the Duma: half of the 28 deputies were reelected every 2 years in party list proportional representation races (2008 and 2010). Therefore, the 2010 election was based on only party list representation. In 2011 the institutional structure of Sverdlovsk regional legislature was changed to a one-chamber parliament, which now consists of 50 deputies: 25 are elected on the basis of PL, and the other 25 – on the basis of a plural system. The 2011 elections were held on the basis of the new rules.

system, and there are 10 regions which have adopted full PL systems: the 5 Caucasian republics of Dagestan, Ingushetiya, Kabardino-Balkariya, Kalmykiya, and Chechnya; the Nenets AO; Amur, Kaluga, and Tula oblasts, and the city of St. Petersburg. Seventy-three regions employ mixed electoral systems which combine two electoral formulas: party list proportional representation and pluralist single mandate elections. Usually the number of deputies elected by proportional and pluralist formulas is equal. In those assemblies where there are an odd number of seats, the number of deputies elected by PL is 50%+1. The only exception here is Volgograd Oblast', where 22 deputies are elected by PL and 16 by pluralist rule.

In most of the SMDs there is a plurality system, although in some special cases there are regions that employ elections in multi-member districts. The former autonomous districts in three regions – Krasnoyarsk Kray, Irkutsk, and Zabaikal'skii Kray - have been granted special status that guarantees them special representation in regional assemblies. As a result, one 4-member district is formed in Irkutsk, one 5-member district in Zabaikal'skii Kray, and there are two 2-member districts in Krasnoyarsk Kray. One 3-member district in Khanty-Mansi AO is formed in order to guarantee the representation of the indigenous population. Additionally, one 2-member district is formed in Smolensk. A very special case is Chukotka, where there are no SMDs. Here elections for the pluralist section of the regional legislature are held in two 3-member districts. One other special case is North Ossetiya, which is the only region to employ a two-round majority system in the SMDs. We should also note that there are wide variations in the size of regional legislatures which range from 11 deputies in the Nenets Autonomous Okrug (AO) to 120 in Bashkortostan.

Russia employs a parallel type of mixed system “where the two sets of elections are detached and distinct and are not dependent on each other for seat allocations.”¹⁸ Although the two types of election will influence each other, what we have in essence are two different electoral races. Thus, we would expect to see differences in the levels of contestation and the results of the PL and SMD elections. As party list voting is perceived as providing a direct indicator of the level of electoral support for UR, all members of the “power vertical” – governors and mayors – are made personally responsible for the size of the victory for UR. As regards SMD voting, the number of SMDs is so high that it is impossible to control all of them to the same degree as the seats contested in the party lists. Moreover, in a plurality system where the “winner takes all,” there will not be so much concern over the actual percentage of votes received by each candidate.¹⁹

¹⁸ Andrew Reynolds, Ben Reilly, and Andrew Ellis. 2005. *Electoral System Design: The New International IDEA Handbook*. Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 91.

¹⁹ See P. Panov and C. Ross. 2013. “Sub-National Elections in Russia: Variations in United

Therefore, we can hypothesize that the type of electoral system will have an influence on the level of electoral competition. Our assumption is that, all else being equal, the degree of competitiveness in SMD races will be higher than in PL campaigns. Also, there is good reason to suggest that cross-regional variations of competitiveness in the SMDs will differ from cross-regional variations in PL campaigns. Additionally, SMD elections differ from PL campaigns in that they allow participation of non-party candidates. In the 1990s, independent candidates (self-nominated) dominated regional assemblies and political parties were extremely weak in almost all of the regional parliaments.²⁰ The transition from a plurality first past the post system, which was employed in most regions in the 1990s, to a mixed electoral system from 2003, has strengthened the representation of parties. However, in those regions where a mixed system is employed, we still find a sizeable number of independent candidates. Since SMD elections provide the only opportunity for independents to participate in regional elections, the following questions naturally arise: what is the extent of their participation? What role do they play in the elections? To what extent do they influence the competitiveness of the elections?

The Competitiveness of Party List Elections

The results of party list elections in 83 regional legislatures are presented in Table 3. They provide additional proof that the constellation of parties in regional legislatures was stable over the period 2007-12 and consisted of: a) UR which was easily the dominant party, b) three parties of the “second order:” CP, LD and JR,²¹ c) minor parties who participated in the elections only occasionally. In most cases only four parties (“dominant” and “second order”) were able to win seats. In only 12 cases did a minor party win seats; and only in Dagestan in 2011 did two minor parties (PR and RC) win seats.

Russia's Domination of Regional Assemblies.” *Europe-Asia Studies* 65 (4): 737-752.

²⁰ G. Golosov. 2009. *Political Parties in the Regions of Russia...*; P. Panov. 2009. “Russian Political Parties and Regional Political Processes: The Problem of Effective Representation,” in C. Ross and A. Campbell, eds., *Federalism and Local Politics in Russia*. London, New York: Routledge, 150-183.

²¹ JR competed in almost all of these elections (Mordoviya and Yaroslavl oblast, where the party was denied registration, are the only two exceptions).

Table 3. Results of the Party List Elections

Region	Date	Num- ber of PL seats	UR vote share	UR seats	CP vote share	CP seats	JR vote share	JR seats	LD vote share	LD seats	Minor parties vote share	Minor par- ties seats	ENP- gol
Adygeya	2011.03	27	0.5804	17	0.1876	5	0.0953	2	0.1045	3			1.8515
Altay Kray	2011.12	34	0.3981	14	0.2540	9	0.1596	5	0.1656	6			2.8336
Altay rep.	2010.03	21	0.4443	10	0.2483	5	0.1652	4	0.1137	2			2.5205
Amur	2011.12	36	0.4421	17	0.1978	8	0.0893	3	0.2129	8			2.4677
Archangel'sk	2009.03	31	0.5185	19	0.1664	5	0.1784	5	0.1000	2			2.1164
Astrakhan	2011.12	29	0.5254	17	0.1497	4	0.1592	5	0.1157	3			2.0653
Bashkortostan	2008.03	60	0.8577	55	0.0724	5	0.0391	0	0.0218	0			1.1696
Belgorod	2010.10	18	0.6620	12	0.1768	3	0.0513	1	0.0725	2			1.5516
Bryansk	2009.03	30	0.5389	19	0.2368	7	0.0861	2	0.1035	2			2.0060
Buryatiya	2007.12	33	0.6287	22	0.1281	4	0.1196	4	0.0857	3			1.6726
Chechnya	2008.10	41	0.8840	37	0.0033	0	0.0920	4	0.0018	0			1.1129
Chelyabinsk	2010.10	30	0.5573	19	0.1181	4	0.1461	4	0.0916	3			1.8530
Chukotka	2011.03	6	0.7119	4	0.0483	0	0.0752	1	0.1190	1			1.4124
Chuvashiya	2011.12	22	0.4487	12	0.1965	4	0.1939	4	0.1077	2			2.4513

Dagestan	2011.03	90	0.6521	62	0.0727	6	0.1368	13	0.0005	0	0.0509** 0.0839***	1 8	1.6751
Ingushetiya	2011.12	27	0.7810	22	0.0713	2	0.0702	2	0.0206	0	0.0501**	1	1.3183
Irkutsk	2008.10	25	0.5072	15	0.1360	4	0.0832	2	0.1545	4			2.0107
Ivanovo	2008.03	24	0.6030	15	0.1534	4	0.1027	3	0.0861	2			1.7309
Jewish AO	2011.12	10	0.4975	5	0.2013	2	0.0966	1	0.1707	2			2.2203
Kabardino-Balkariya	2009.03	72	0.7229	52	0.0836	6	0.1226	9	0.0702	5			1.4535
Kaliningrad	2011.03	20	0.4078	9	0.2140	5	0.1009	2	0.1258	2	0.0849***	2	2.8356
Kalmykiya	2008.03	27	0.5458	17	0.2263	7	0.0497	0	0.0366	0	0.0789*	3	1.9452
Kaluga	2010.03	40	0.5345	22	0.2117	9	0.0840	4	0.1193	5			2.0047
Kamchatka	2011.12	14	0.4483	8	0.1763	2	0.1077	1	0.1977	3			2.4216
Karachaevo-Cherkessiya	2009.03	37	0.6961	29	0.1005	4	0.0502	0	0.0260	0	0.1136***	4	1.5142
Kareliya	2011.12	25	0.3012	8	0.1905	5	0.2225	6	0.1834	5	0.0713***	1	3.8384
Kemerovo	2008.10	18	0.8479	17	0.0347	0	0.0551	1	0.0466	0			1.1786
Khabarovsk	2010.03	13	0.4793	6	0.1893	3	0.1545	2	0.1363	2			2.3150
Khakasiya	2009.03	38	0.5733	22	0.1469	6	0.0718	3	0.1024	4	0.0727***	3	1.9322

Region	Date	Number of PL seats	UR vote share	UR seats	CP vote share	CP seats	JR vote share	JR seats	LD vote share	LD seats	Minor parties vote share	Minor parties seats	ENP-gol
Khanty-Mansi AO (KMAO)	2011.03	18	0.4407	9	0.1338	2	0.1388	2	0.2356	5			2.5033
Kirov	2011.03	27	0.3669	10	0.2235	6	0.2106	6	0.1714	5			3.0448
Komi	2011.03	15	0.5053	10	0.1606	2	0.1262	1	0.1483	2			2.1454
Kostroma	2010.10	18	0.5002	10	0.1957	4	0.1264	2	0.1450	2			2.2181
Krasnodar	2012.10	50	0.6947	45	0.0898	5	0.0415	0	0.0456	0			1.3252
Krasnoyarsk	2011.12	26	0.3689	11	0.2366	6	0.1793	5	0.1748	4			3.0036
Kurgan	2010.03	17	0.4123	8	0.2521	4	0.1720	3	0.1266	2			2.7049
Kursk	2011.03	23	0.4475	12	0.2154	5	0.1475	3	0.1232	3			2.4354
Leningrad Oblast'	2011.12	25	0.3514	9	0.1795	5	0.2793	7	0.1585	4			3.1400
Lipetsk	2011.12	28	0.3876	11	0.2346	7	0.1842	5	0.1647	5			2.8966
Magadan	2010.10	11	0.5002	7	0.1597	2	0.1124	1	0.1366	1			2.1077

Mar'ei	2009.10	26	0.6455	19	0.1953	5	0.0359	0	0.0720	2	1.5688
Mordoviya	2011.12	24	0.9099	23	0.0585	1	0.0000	0	0.0235	0	1.0939
Moscow	2009.10	18	0.6625	15	0.1330	3	0.0533	0	0.0613	0	1.4724
Moscow Oblast'	2011.12	25	0.3351	9	0.2716	7	0.1717	5	0.1543	4	3.1859
Murmansk	2011.12	18	0.3324	7	0.2291	4	0.2161	4	0.1953	3	3.2997
Nenets AO	2009.03	11	0.4303	6	0.2051	2	0.1246	1	0.1983	2	2.5887
Nizhegorod Oblast'	2011.03	25	0.4298	11	0.2879	8	0.1274	3	0.1281	3	2.6014
North Osetiya	2012.10	35	0.4420	18	0.1048	4	0.0717	2	0.0133	0	2.3804
Novgorod	2011.12	13	0.3698	5	0.2116	3	0.2718	4	0.1231	1	3.0122
Novosibirsk	2010.10	38	0.4482	18	0.2503	10	0.1624	6	0.1032	4	2.4779
Omsk	2011.12	22	0.3893	9	0.2611	6	0.1557	4	0.1386	3	2.8196
Orenburg	2011.03	24	0.4154	11	0.2144	5	0.1701	4	0.1546	4	2.6808
Oryol	2011.12	25	0.4055	11	0.3242	9	0.0980	2	0.1328	3	2.7079
Penza	2012.10	18	0.7064	16	0.1252	2	0.0287	0	0.0461	0	1.3451
Perm	2011.12	30	0.3789	14	0.2014	6	0.1524	5	0.1763	5	2.8309

Region	Date	Num- ber of PL seats	UR vote share	UR seats	CP vote share	CP seats	JR vote share	JR seats	LD vote share	LD seats	Minor parties vote share	Minor parties seats	ENP- gol
Primorsky Kray	2011.12	20	0.3365	7	0.2381	5	0.1984	4	0.1983	4			3.2653
Pskov	2011.12	22	0.3741	9	0.2477	6	0.1502	3	0.1417	3	0.0672****	1	3.1938
Rostov	2008.03	25	0.7188	20	0.1581	5	0.0506	0	0.0577	0			1.4340
Ryazan	2010.03	18	0.5058	10	0.1901	4	0.0615	1	0.1865	3			2.1176
Sakhalin	2012.10	14	0.5018	9	0.1833	3	0.0717	1	0.0836	1			1.9363
Samara	2011.12	25	0.4027	12	0.2257	6	0.1301	3	0.1624	4			2.6870
Saratov	2012.10	23	0.7792	21	0.0827	1	0.0501	1	0.0283	0			1.2422
Smolensk	2007.12	24	0.5127	15	0.1788	5	0.1355	0	0.1366	4			2.1517
St Petersburg	2011.12	50	0.3696	20	0.1369	7	0.2308	12	0.1017	5	0.1250****	6	3.2264
Stavropol	2011.12	25	0.4896	13	0.1953	5	0.1182	3	0.1737	4			2.2890
Sverdlovsk Oblast'	2011.12	25	0.3312	9	0.1745	5	0.2731	7	0.1587	4			3.2263
Tambov	2011.03	25	0.6510	19	0.1824	4	0.0575	1	0.0731	1			1.5874
Tatarstan	2009.03	50	0.7931	44	0.1115	6	0.0483	0	0.0308	0			1.2714
Tomsk	2011.12	21	0.3833	9	0.2284	5	0.1419	3	0.1869	4			2.8602

Tula	2009.10	48	0.5540	31	0.1833	10	0.1399	7	0.0600	0		1.8940
Tuva	2010.10	16	0.7741	14	0.0445	0	0.1022	2	0.0344	0		1.2716
Tver	2011.03	20	0.3979	9	0.2465	5	0.2127	4	0.1101	2		2.7989
Tyumen	2011.12	24	0.5448	14	0.1311	3	0.1009	2	0.1824	5		1.9886
Udmurtiya	2012.10	45	0.5319	29	0.1723	9	0.0507	1	0.1080	6		1.8428
Ulyanovsk	2008.03	15	0.5887	10	0.1595	3	0.0777	1	0.0739	1		1.6957
Vladimir	2009.03	19	0.5127	11	0.2775	6	0.0884	1	0.0885	1		2.1139
Volograd	2009.03	22	0.4945	12	0.2357	5	0.1334	3	0.0984	2		2.2207
Vologda	2011.12	17	0.3448	6	0.1827	3	0.2771	5	0.1692	3		3.2014
Voronezh	2010.03	28	0.6255	20	0.1852	5	0.0632	1	0.0893	2		1.6709
Yakutiya	2008.03	35	0.5180	20	0.1597	6	0.1493	6	0.0640	0	0.0853*	3 2.2157
Yamalo-Nenets AO (YNAO)	2010.03	11	0.6476	7	0.0857	1	0.0814	1	0.1335	2		1.5864
Yaroslavl	2008.03	25	0.5002	15	0.1460	4	0.0000	0	0.1258	4	0.0592***	2 1.9323
Zabaikal'skii Kray	2008.10	25	0.5481	14	0.1341	4	0.0929	2	0.1083	3	0.0689*	2 2.0252
Total		2225		1346		382		243		206		48

Source: Compiled from information provided on the Russian Central Electoral Commission Website (<http://www.cikf.ru>).

The results of minor parties are presented only if they overcome the electoral threshold. * = AP; ** = RD; *** = PR; **** = Yab.

Degree of Competitiveness

To measure the degree of competitiveness we use the “effective number of parties (ENP)” indicator. Initially this was proposed by Laakso and Taagepera.²² However, as many scholars have argued, Laakso and Taagepera’s ENP has some disadvantages, particularly for the measurement of party systems with a dominant party, since their method overemphasizes the weight of minor parties.²³ In order to eliminate this disadvantage, Golosov proposed a different formula for calculating the ENP.²⁴ The right column of Table 3 contains the values of the effective number of parties in all regional legislatures which we calculated using Golosov’s methodology (ENP_{gol}).

Cross-Regional Variations

UR is undoubtedly the most successful party in all of the elections. Overall, it won 1,346 PL seats, that is 60.49%. It has to be noted that ENP_{gol} was calculated on the basis of the share of the votes won by parties. A high electoral threshold (7% in most regions) results in a situation whereby an absolute majority of PL seats are usually guaranteed for UR, even if its share of the votes is less than 50%.

The average value of the ENP_{gol} in all 83 elections is 2.19. This score accords with a common scenario whereby UR wins approximately half of the votes and gains a stable majority of the seats in a legislature while all the other “second order” parties put together win the other half of the votes. Nevertheless, cross-regional differences in the degree of competitiveness are significant. There is a group of 14 regions where party list voting is totally non-competitive (the values of ENP are less than 1.5). These include a number of ethnic republics; Mordoviya (the lowest value of ENP – 1.09), Chechnya, Bashkortostan, Tatarstan, Tuva, Ingushetiya, Kabardino-Balkariya, and Chukotka. Additionally, some Russian regions with strong personalist (or clientelist) regimes also belong to this group: Kemerovo, Saratov, Krasnodar, Rostov, Moscow, and Penza.

On the other hand, some regions demonstrate a fairly high level of competitiveness. A study of the elections results demonstrates that where we find ENP_{gol} scores of 2.3 and higher, half of the PL seats will be shared among opposition parties, an indication that in these regions the elections have been more competitive: 34 regions fall into this category. Finally, in 12 regions the ENP_{gol} has a value of over 3. Here UR gets less than 40%

²² M. Laakso, and R. Taagepera. 1979. “Effective Number of Parties: A Measure with Application to West Europe.” *Comparative Political Studies* 12: 3–27.

²³ G. Golosov. 2010. “The Effective Number of Parties: A New Approach.” *Party Politics* 16 (2): 171-192; J. Molinar. 2001. “Counting the Number of Parties: An Alternative Index.” *American Political Science Review* 85 (4): 1383-91.

²⁴ G. Golosov. “The Effective Number of Parties...”

of the votes and less than half of seats in the assemblies. The highest value of ENPgol is in Kareliya (3.84).

The Dynamics of Party-List Contestation

In this study we divided all the regional assembly elections into three groups: those which took place between: 1) December 2007 – March 2011 (50 cases); 2) December 2011 (27 cases); 3) October 2012 (6 cases). Then we compared the degree of competitiveness in its dynamic aspects and in correlation with the relevant Duma elections (either 2007 or 2011). The results are displayed in Table 4 (the right column will be discussed below). As the table shows, the dynamics of the degree of competitiveness at the regional level are fully in accord with trends at the national level (the ENPgol for Duma elections), increasing significantly in December 2011 and falling back again in October 2012.

Table 4. The Degree of Party-List Competitiveness in National and Regional Elections

Duma	ENPgol	Regional Assemblies	Average ENPgol	Average SCN SMDs
2007 elections	1.7	December 2007 – March 2011	1.97 (50 elections)	0.5059 (42 elections, 1012 SMDs)
2011 elections	2.2	December 2011	2.8 (27 elections)	0.3180 (24 elections, 544 SMDs)
		October 2012	1.67 (6 elections)	0.6630 (6 elections, 184 SMDs)

The Competitiveness of Single Member District Elections

It is impossible to analyze the competitiveness of SMDs in all regions, as was the case for the PL elections, since only 73 of the 83 regions employ a mixed electoral system. As noted above, in the vast majority of cases, the plurality rule is applied in SMDs. The few elections where there are multimember districts are excluded from this analysis; these include 6 districts where 18 deputies were elected in 5 regions. Chukotka, where all the plurality districts are multi-member, must also be omitted. Finally, we exclude two SMDs (in Buryatiya and Kirov Oblast'), where the election was declared invalid. Thus, our sample comprises 1,740 SMDs in 72 regions. Elections results in these SMDs are displayed in Table 5.

Table 5. Results of the Elections in the SMDs

	Region	Date	Num- ber of SMDs	UR	CP	JR	LD	Non- party cand.	Minor parties	Non- Comp. SMDs	SNC SMDs	UR nom.	UR win	UR NC win
1	Adygeya	2011.03	27	24	1	0	0	2		15	0.5556	26	24	14
2	Altay Kray	2011.12	34	34	0	0	0	0		7	0.2059	34	34	7
3	Altay Rep.	2010.03	20	13	0	0	0	7		3	0.1500	19	13	3
4	Archangelsk	2009.03	31	21	0	3	0	7		13	0.4194	26	21	12
5	Astrakhan	2011.12	29	25	1	1	1	1		21	0.7241	28	25	21
6	Bashkortostan	2008.03	60	55	1	0	0	4		55	0.9167	56	55	51
7	Belgorod	2010.10	17	17	0	0	0	0		14	0.8235	17	17	14
8	Bryansk	2009.03	30	28	1	1	0	0		13	0.4333	30	28	12
9	Buryatiya	2007.12	32	21	1	5	0	5		9	0.2813	28	21	8
10	Chelyabinsk	2010.10	30	30	0	0	0	0		22	0.7333	30	30	22
11	Chuvashiya	2011.12	22	21	0	1	0	0		6	0.2727	22	21	6
12	Irkutsk	2008.10	21	15	0	1	0	5		11	0.5238	20	15	9
13	Ivanovo	2008.03	24	16	1	0	0	7		3	0.1250	17	16	3
14	Jewish AO	2011.12	9	9	0	0	0	0		2	0.2222	9	9	2
15	Kaliningrad	2011.03	20	15	1	0	0	4		4	0.2000	20	15	4
16	Kamchatka	2011.12	14	14	0	0	0	0		3	0.2143	14	14	3
17	Karachaovo- Cherkessiya	2009.03	36	20	0	2	0	14		26	0.7222	25	20	16

18	Kareliya	2011.12	25	11	3	7	0	0	1	3**	4	0.1600	24	11	3
19	Kemerovo	2008.10	18	18	0	0	0	0	0		18	1.0000	18	18	18
20	Khabarovsk	2010.03	13	12	0	0	0	0	1		0	0.0000	12	12	0
21	Khakasiya	2009.03	37	31	1	1	1	1	3		21	0.5676	35	31	17
22	Khanty-Mans AO (KMAO)	2011.03	14	14	0	0	0	0	0		4	0.2857	14	14	4
23	Kirov	2011.03	26	17	4	4	0	0	1		3	0.1154	26	17	3
24	Komi	2011.03	15	15	0	0	0	0	0		4	0.2667	15	15	4
25	Kostroma	2010.10	18	16	0	1	0	0	1		5	0.2778	18	16	5
26	Krasnodar	2012.10	50	50	0	0	0	0	0		47	0.9400	50	50	47
27	Krasnoyarsk	2011.12	22	18	2	0	0	0	2		8	0.3636	22	18	7
28	Kurgan	2010.03	17	14	1	1	0	0	1		9	0.5294	17	14	9
29	Kursk	2011.03	22	21	1	0	0	0	0		12	0.5455	22	21	12
30	Leningrad Oblast*	2011.12	25	22	0	2	0	0	1		0	0.0000	25	22	0
31	Lipetsk	2011.12	28	24	1	2	0	0	1		8	0.2857	28	24	8
32	Magadan	2010.10	10	10	0	0	0	0	0		6	0.6000	10	10	6
33	Mari El	2009.10	26	25	1	0	0	0	0		17	0.6538	26	25	17
34	Mordoviya	2011.12	24	21	0	0	0	0	3		23	0.9583	22	21	21
35	Moscow	2009.10	17	17	0	0	0	0	0		14	0.8235	17	17	14
36	Moscow Oblast*	2011.12	25	20	4	1	0	0	0		1	0.0400	25	20	1
37	Murmansk	2011.12	18	15	1	2	0	0	0		1	0.0556	18	15	1

	Region	Date	Num-ber of SMDs	UR	CP	JR	LD	Non-party cand.	Minor parties	Non-Conc. SMDs	SNC SMDs	UR nom.	UR win	UR NC win
38	Nizhegorod Oblast'	2011.03	25	20	4	1	0	0		5	0.2000	25	20	5
39	North Ossetiya	2012.10	35	26	1	3	0	2	3***	18	0.5143	35	26	14
40	Novgorod	2011.12	13	11	1	1	0	0		1	0.0769	13	11	1
41	Novosibirsk	2010.10	38	30	6	0	0	2		10	0.2632	36	30	10
42	Omsk	2011.12	22	18	4	0	0	0		9	0.4091	22	18	9
43	Orenburg	2011.03	23	21	1	0	1	0		4	0.1739	22	21	4
44	Oryol	2011.12	25	20	5	0	0	0		9	0.3600	25	20	9
45	Penza	2012.10	18	18	0	0	0	0		13	0.7222	18	18	13
46	Perm	2011.12	30	25	1	0	0	4		15	0.5000	30	25	13
47	Primorsky Krai	2011.12	20	16	4	0	0	0		3	0.1500	20	16	3
48	Pskov	2011.12	22	17	3	1	0	1		4	0.1818	22	17	4
49	Rostov	2008.03	25	25	0	0	0	0		22	0.8800	25	25	22
50	Ryazan	2010.03	18	15	0	1	2	0		10	0.5556	18	15	9
51	Sakhalin	2012.10	14	12	1	0	0	1		4	0.2857	14	12	4
52	Samara	2011.12	25	22	2	1	0	0		6	0.2400	25	22	6
53	Saratov	2012.10	22	22	0	0	0	0		21	0.9545	22	22	21
54	Smolensk	2007.12	22	17	1	1	0	3		7	0.3182	20	17	6
55	Stavropol	2011.12	25	24	0	0	0	1		17	0.6800	24	24	16

56	Sverdlovsk	2011.12	25	20	3	2	0	0	0	0	2	0.0800	25	20	2
57	Tambov	2011.03	25	23	0	1	0	1			20	0.8000	25	23	19
58	Tatarstan	2009.03	50	45	0	0	0	5			47	0.9400	47	45	45
59	Tomsk	2011.12	21	18	1	1	1	0			7	0.3333	21	18	7
60	Tuva	2010.10	16	15	0	0	0	1			14	0.8750	15	15	13
61	Tver	2011.03	20	17	3	0	0	0			5	0.2500	20	17	5
62	Tyumen	2011.12	24	24	0	0	0	0			14	0.5833	24	24	14
63	Udmurtiya	2012.10	45	38	2	0	0	5			19	0.4222	43	38	18
64	Ulyanovsk	2008.03	15	14	0	1	0	0			9	0.6000	15	14	9
65	Vladimir	2009.03	19	16	1	0	0	2			5	0.2632	19	16	5
66	Volograd	2009.03	16	15	1	0	0	0			6	0.3750	16	15	6
67	Vologda	2011.12	17	15	0	2	0	0			2	0.1176	17	15	2
68	Voronezh	2010.03	28	28	0	0	0	0			16	0.5714	28	28	16
69	Yakutiya	2008.03	35	16	1	0	0	15	3*		11	0.3143	31	16	8
70	Yamalo-Nenets AO (YNAO)	2010.03	11	11	0	0	0	0			9	0.8182	11	11	9
71	Yaroslavl	2008.03	25	16	0	0	0	9			6	0.2400	23	16	6
72	Zabaikal'skii Kray	2008.10	20	15	1	0	0	3	1*		5	0.2500	19	15	5
	TOTAL		1740	1474	73	51	6	126	10	807	0.4638	1680	1474	762	

Source: Compiled from information provided on the Russian Central Electoral Commission Website (<http://www.cikf.ru>).

Minor parties are included if they win seats.

* = AP; ** = Yab; *** = PR

Overall, one can see the absolute domination of UR, which won 1,474 of the 1,740 SMDs, or 84.7%. It is important to note that this is a much higher figure than the number of seats won by UR in the PL elections (1,346 and 60.5%). In sum, SMDs seem to be more profitable for the “party of power” than PL races, with the caveat that party deputies elected in SMDs are liable to be less dependent on their parties than those elected from the party lists. As was the case with the PL elections, the CP is the second most successful party (73 seats). JR also won a solid number of deputies (51), in contrast to LD (6 deputies), which seems to have success only in PL campaigns. 126 seats went to non-party candidates (NP). However, in this study we are interested not so much in who wins, but in the degree of competitiveness of the SMD elections. But how do we measure this?

Measuring the Degree of Competitiveness in SMDs

The very large number of SMDs (1,740) makes it problematic to use the same indicator (ENPgol) which we used to measure the PL campaigns. Besides, it seems to be unnecessary, as the patterns of contestation in the majoritarian SMDs are so different from those in PL elections that to conduct such a comparison would clearly not yield very meaningful results. So we need to find another type of measurement. A great deal of scholarly literature has been devoted to the measurement of the degree of competitiveness in SMDs. Generally, it is possible to distinguish two main approaches.²⁵ The first employs a “margin of victory indicator.” If the margin is equal to or more than a specific figure (which has been calculated as between 10 to 20 percent by different scholars), the elections are considered non-competitive. The second is based on the vote share of the winner. If the candidate wins above a certain percent of the votes (defined as 55 or 60 percent), the elections are considered non-competitive. Both of these methods correlate very well with one other. For purely technical reasons, in this article we use the second variant in a modified version. We surmise that levels of competition in the SMDs will differ in important respects as regards levels of fragmentation. In the case of fragmented competition, when votes are shared between many candidates, more than 50% of votes for the winner would appear to be high enough to recognize the elections as non-competitive. In the case of a polarized campaign, 50% and over is not high enough, as the runner-up may gain a share close to 50%. Therefore, for polarized elections the threshold of competitiveness should be 60% (here the margin of victory indicator would be 20% or more).

In accordance with these criteria, each of the 1,740 SMDs was defined as either competitive or non-competitive. Next we counted the

²⁵ S. Burshard. 2013. “You Have to Know Where to Look in Order to Find It: Competitiveness in Botswana’s Dominant Party System.” *Government and Opposition* 48 (1): 115-116.

share of non-competitive SMDs (SNC SMDs) in each regional assembly election. The values of this index are presented in Table 5.²⁶

Cross-Regional Variations

Overall, the share of non-competitive SMDs in Russian regions is fairly high: approximately half of SMDs (807 of 1,740, or 46.38%) were non-competitive. At the same time, there are high levels of cross-regional variations. The values of the SNC SMDs range from the minimum possible 0 (Khabarovsk and Leningrad Oblasts) to the maximum possible 1 (Kemerovo Oblast').

If we compare the average value of ENPgol (2.19) and the average SNC SMDs (0.46), both of these point to similar degrees of competitiveness. The value of the coefficient of correlation between ENPgol and SNC SMDs is also fairly high -0.803 (R-square is 0.644). This suggests that in general, the connection between the degree of competitiveness of PL and SMD campaigns is fairly high. Therefore, at first glance, our assumption that the degree of competitiveness is higher in SMDs is not confirmed. However, we need to examine the cross-regional variations in more detail.

We placed the values of the two indexes (ENPgol and SNC SMDs that indicate the degree of competitiveness in all 72 regions in the PL and SMDs respectively) on the plane presented in Figure 1. The vertical line divides the plane into two sections according to the average value of ENPgol (2.19). The horizontal line divides the plane into two sections according to the average share of non-competitive SMDs (0.46). The approximation line is also displayed in the figure (the numbering of the regions is the same as in Table 5).

The results for the individual regions and groups of regions are much more complicated and much more interesting than when we consider the picture as a whole. Four groups of regions, which are distinguished by the correlation between ENPgol and SNC SMDs, are clearly visible on the plane.

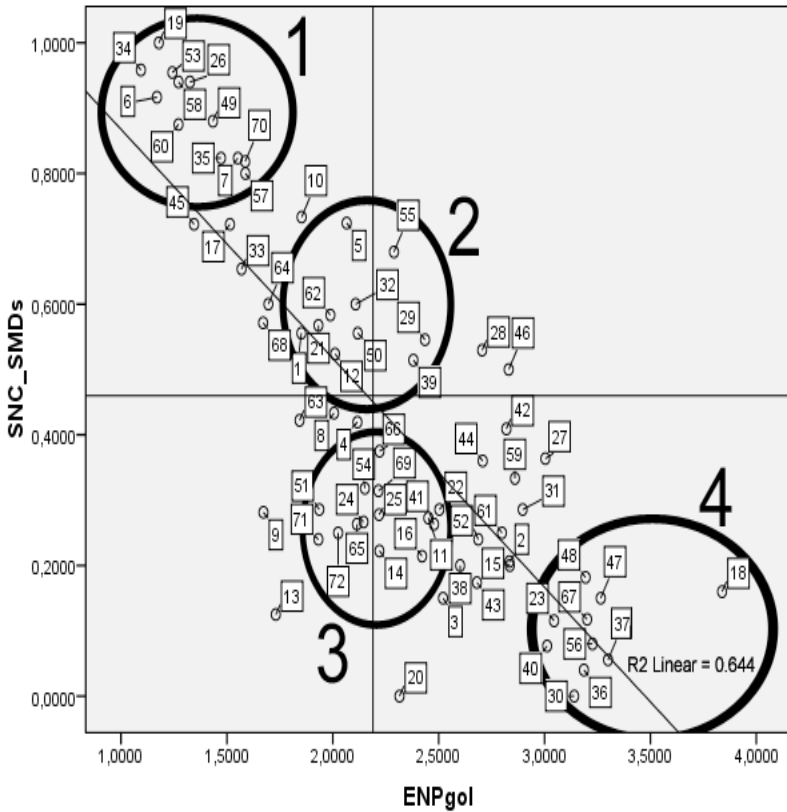
The first group consists of 12 regions: Kemerovo, Mordoviya, Saratov, Bashkortostan, Tatarstan, Krasnodar, Tuva, Rostov, Moscow,²⁷ Belgorod, Yamalo Nenets AO, and Tambov. In these regions there was zero competition, a qualitative distinction which we would argue means that these regions correspond more closely to the model of hegemonic *authoritarianism* than that of *competitive authoritarianism*. In addition, some other regions (Chechnya, Ingushetiya, Chukotka, and Kabardino-Balkariya), which do not have SMDs, should also be included in this

²⁶ For North Ossetiya, where a two-round majority system is used, we rely on the first round results.

²⁷ The elections in Moscow were held in October 2009 during the leadership of Yuriy Luzhkov, who was able to create a powerful political machine.

group. In these regimes, a dominant actor, usually a governor, is able to dominate the electoral field by controlling the nomination of candidates and the organization of the electoral campaign. Only candidates who have the backing of the authorities have any chance of winning elections in these regions. It should also be stressed that the position of all these regions on the plane in Figure 1 are above the approximation line. In other words, the degree of competitiveness in the SMDs is even lower than in the PL races (if it is possible to talk about competitiveness at all in this group).

Figure 1: Regional Groupings



The second group of regions is located in the opposite corner of the plane: Moscow Oblast', Murmansk, Novgorod, Kirov, Sverdlovsk Oblast', Vologda, Primorsky Krai, Pskov, Kareliya, and Leningrad Oblast'. Certainly, UR candidates usually win the elections in most of these SMDs, but here they compete in a genuine struggle for power, and their victories are not predetermined as was the case with the regions in the first group. In comparison with the first group there is no obvious tendency with regard

to the correlation between ENPgol and SNC SMDs; while some of the regions are located above, others are situated below the approximation line.

It should be stressed, however, that almost all the elections in this group (Kirov is the only exclusion) were held in December 2011, when the surge of anti-UR voting was at its peak. In this sense the SMD elections demonstrate the same dynamic as PL voting. As one can see in Table 4, the average SNC SMDs decreased from 0.5 to 0.3 in the December 2011 elections but in October 2012 it rose to 0.66 (which is even higher than it was initially). However, in some other regions the December 2011 elections do not demonstrate the same degree of competitiveness as is found in the regions of the second group. Therefore, we can explain the pattern of competitiveness in these elections as springing partially from the national-political context and partially from regional-specific factors.

Regarding the regions with a medium degree of competitiveness in the PL races, they can be divided into at least two groups. Group 3 in Figure 1 demonstrates an average level of competitiveness in the PL votes, in combination with a fairly high level of competition in the SMDs: Sakhalin, Yaroslavl, Zabaikal'skii Kray, Vladimir, Jewish AO, Komi, Kostroma, Smolensk, and Yakutiya. Group 4, on the contrary, comprises regions with an average level of competitiveness in the PL elections in combination with a fairly low level of SMD competition: Chelyabinsk, Astrakhan, Stavropol, Magadan, Tyumen, Ryazan, and Kursk.

Thus, we can conclude that our expectation that cross-regional variations of competitiveness in SMDs differs from cross-regional variations in PL campaigns is confirmed, though with some exceptions: a) the group of the 12 hegemonic authoritarian regions that form a very stable non-competitive realm of Russian politics, and b) the group of regions with the most anti-UR voting in the December 2011 elections. It is notable that if we exclude the regions where elections were held in December 2011 (24 sample cases) and the 12 strong (*hegemonic*) authoritarian regions, the correlation coefficient between ENPgol and SNC SMDs falls sharply (from -0.803 to -0.570).

Additionally, the value of -0.570 means that our other assumption about the higher degree of competitiveness of SMDs elections is also at least partially confirmed. The analysis of the plane in Figure 1 shows that all the regions of the hegemonic authoritarian group demonstrate a lower level of competitiveness in the SMDs; thus all of them are above the approximation line. If we exclude this group, the location of the points on the plane demonstrate that the competitiveness in the SMDs elections is higher than in the PL elections (most regions are located below the approximation line).

It should also be stressed that cross-regional variation in the degree of competitiveness can be explained more by "procedural" factors

(regional elite strategies) than by “structural” factors, such as the social and economic features of the regions. Thus, in the group of *hegemonic authoritarian* regions, we can see rich regions (e.g. Moscow, Tatarstan, Yamalo-Nenets AO, etc.), average (e.g., Kemerovo, Krasnodar, Rostov, Belgorod, etc.) and poor regions (e.g., Tyva). Examining the impact of social and economic features of regions on the degree of competitiveness, we find that the correlation coefficients between ENPgol and SNC SMDs, on the one hand, and regional GDP per capita, average per capita income, share of urban population, etc., on the other hand, are statistically insignificant. The only exception is the share of ethnic Russians in the population of a region, which has a positive influence on the degree of competitiveness, where the correlation coefficients reach the value of 0.3 – 0.5. However, this is not very high, so that we can find amongst the group of *hegemonic authoritarian* regions Russian oblasts (e.g., Kemerovo, Belgorod, etc.) and ethnic republics with a high share of non-Russians (e.g., Bashkortostan, Tatarstan, Tyva).

Non-Party Candidates in SMD Elections

The share of non-party candidates after undergoing a sharp reduction in the mid-2000s, has now stabilized. As official data from the Russian Central Electoral Commission (see Table 6) demonstrate, over the period 2009-12 their number fluctuated by approximately 20%. Although it dropped to 13% in the last set of regional elections, this may not necessarily indicate a trend, as there were only 6 elections in October 2012.

Table 6. Share of Party and Non-Party Candidates in Regional Assembly Elections

	Number of candidates	Party candidates	Non-party candidates	Share of NP candidates
2009 October	185	150	35	0.1892
2010 March	479	364	115	0.2401
2010 October	559	442	117	0.2093
2011 March	962	769	193	0.2006
2011 December	2451	2051	400	0.1632
2012 October	1204	1048	156	0.1296

Source: Compiled from information provided on the Russian Central Electoral Commission Website (<http://www.cikf.ru>).

After UR nominees, non-party candidates have been the next most successful group, winning 126 seats (7.24% of all SMDs) while all the other opposition parties together have only 140 seats (see Table 7).

Table 7. The Share of Non-Party Candidates Who Won Seats in Regional Assembly Elections, 2007-2012

	Number of SMDs	Number of Non-Party Candidates	% of Non-Party Seats
December 2007	54	8	0.1481
March 2008	184	35	0.1902
October 2008	59	8	0.1356
March 2009	219	31	0.1416
October 2009	43	0	0.0000
March 2010	107	9	0.0841
October 2010	129	4	0.0310
March 2011	217	8	0.0369
December 2011	544	15	0.0276
October 2012	184	8	0.0435
Total	1740	126	0.0724

Source: Compiled from information provided on the Russian Central Electoral Commission Website (<http://www.cikf.ru>).

One can observe that although from 2009-12 the share of non-party candidates was relatively stable, their effectiveness has significantly decreased. However, as can be seen in Table 8, cross-regional variations are very high. The share of non-party candidates ranges from 0.0345 in Astrakhan to 0.4286 in Yakutiya. Overall, non-party candidates won in only 35 of 72 regions. Significant numbers of non-party candidates (15% and more) are only to be found in 10 regional assemblies: Yakutiya, Karachaevo-Cherkessiya, Yaroslavl, Altay Republic, Ivanovo, Irkutsk, Archangelsk, Kaliningrad, Buryatiya, and Zabaikal'skii Kray. It should be stressed that in all of these regions (with the exception of Kaliningrad), elections were in the period 2008-2010. This confirms the conclusion that there was a drop in the number of independent candidates who won assembly seats in the period 2011-12.

Thus, it would seem that in a significant number of regions non-party candidates play an important role in elections. However, in order to understand their real importance, we have to examine the behavior of the non-party candidates after the conclusion of the elections. Our research shows that 74 of the 126 non-party deputies (58.73%) entered UR factions after the elections, 19 entered other factions, and only 22 maintained their independent status.²⁸ In some regions, all (or almost all) of the independents entered UR: for example, 7 of 7 in Ivanovo and 7 of 9 in Yaroslavl.

²⁸ There are no data on 11 of the non-party deputies.

Table 8. Non-Party Winners in Russian Regional Elections

	SMDs	NP wins	Share of NP wins	NP deputies after elections			
				Enter UR	Enter other factions	Indep.	n/a
Yakutiya	35	15	0.4286	9	4	2	
Karachaevo-Cherkessiya	36	14	0.3889	7	3	2	2
Yaroslavl	25	9	0.3600	7		1	1
Altay Rep.	20	7	0.3500	3		4	
Ivanovo	24	7	0.2917	7			
Archangelsk	31	7	0.2258	4	3		
Irkutsk	21	5	0.2381	3	1		1
Buryatiya	32	5	0.1563	4			1
Udmurtiya	45	5	0.1111	4		1	
Tatarstan	50	5	0.1000	1	2	1	1
Kaliningrad	20	4	0.2000		2	2	
Perm	30	4	0.1333			4	
Bashkortostan	60	4	0.0667	3			1
Zabaikal'skii Krai	20	3	0.1500	2	1		
Smolensk	22	3	0.1364	1			2
Mordoviya	24	3	0.1250	1		2	
Khakasiya	37	3	0.0811	2			1
Vladimir	19	2	0.1053	1		1	
Krasnoyarsk	22	2	0.0909		1	1	
Adygeya	27	2	0.0741	1		1	
North Ossetiya	35	2	0.0571	1	1		
Novosibirsk	38	2	0.0526	2			
Khabarovsk	13	1	0.0769	1			
Sakhalin	14	1	0.0714	1			
Tuva	16	1	0.0625	1			
Kurgan	17	1	0.0588		1		
Kostroma	18	1	0.0556	1			
Pskov	22	1	0.0455	1			

Tambov	25	1	0.0400	1			
Stavropol	25	1	0.0400	1			
Kareliya	25	1	0.0400				1
Leningrad Oblast'	25	1	0.0400	1			
Kirov	26	1	0.0385	1			
Lipetsk	28	1	0.0357	1			
Astrakhan	29	1	0.0345	1			
Total		126		74	19	22	11

Source: Compiled from the websites of regional legislatures.

Thus, the victory of a large number of non-party candidates does not automatically mean that the UR faction is weak. On the contrary, in most cases independent deputies bolster UR's domination of regional parliaments. This factor was also very important in the 2003 Duma elections, when precisely because of its ability to co-opt independents, UR was able to achieve an absolute majority of the seats in the Parliament.²⁹ Moreover, whilst Putin's political system was in the process of being constructed in the period 2003-07, the incorporation of independent deputies into "the party of power" was at that time a very important instrument of UR's domination. Currently, members of the Duma are elected wholly in PL elections and thus the role of independents is important only at the regional level.

In some cases non-party deputies serve as a direct substitute for UR candidates if UR does not nominate its own candidate. Such instances are not widespread, as according to UR policy, regional branches of the party have to nominate their own candidates in all SMDs. Nevertheless, in 60 SMDs UR had no formal nominees, and in 53 of these independent candidates were able to win seats.³⁰ Moreover, in 26 of the 60 districts, the elections were non-competitive, and in 24 of these, non-party candidate won seats.³¹

In some instances UR will deliberately fail to nominate its own candidates in order to clear the way for the victory of independent candidates. In other cases, UR will nominate a candidate who it knows will have no chance of victory. Moreover, sometimes a dominant actor (informally) supports candidates from other parties. For example, in the elections for the 2011 Perm Regional Assembly elections, Governor Chirkunov supported a top manager of the energy industry (formally non-party, but a former

²⁹ G. Golosov. 2005. "Sfabrikovannoe Bol'shinstvo: Konversiya Golosov v Mesta na Dumskikh Vyborakh 2003 g." *Polis* 1: 108-19.

³⁰ The CP has two wins, JR has five wins in the SMDs without UR candidates.

³¹ In 2 non-competitive SMDs without UR candidates the winners were from JR.

regional leader of the Union of Right Forces), who defeated the official UR candidate. In another SMD a businessman close to another influential regional politician, Trutnev (a former governor and federal minister) was nominated as a non-party candidate and he defeated the UR candidate. Interestingly, both Chirkunov and Trutnev were later included in UR's party list for the 2011 Duma elections. This demonstrates that personal affiliation and loyalty sometimes are more important than party discipline. It also reveals one more important factor, that of intra-party struggle, which often results in different factions within UR supporting different candidates. However, it should be stressed that the cases discussed above are not typical of the situation pertaining to most regional elections.

Non-Party Candidates and Competitiveness

In spite of the victory of a significant number of non-party candidates (in comparison with candidates from the CP and JR), most of the independent deputies are not genuine alternatives to UR candidates. This clarification of the "real" function of non-party deputies in the SMDs explains why the activity of independent candidates does not influence the degree of competitiveness of the elections. The coefficient of correlation between SNC SMDs and the share of non-party candidates who gained seats is insignificant, with a value of -0.0964. This is very different from the same coefficient for the candidates of other parties. For JR the coefficient is -0.3356, and for CP even higher (-0.4544). Whereas successful candidates of CP and JR help to increase the level of electoral competition in the SMDs, the participation of non-party candidates is unrelated to the degree of competitiveness.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that despite the attempts of the Putin regime to instigate an "electoral vertical," there are still variations in the pattern of electoral contestation in Russia's regions and also in the degree of UR's domination of regional assemblies. A majority of Russia's regions fully meet the criteria of the *competitive authoritarian* model. Here, as at the federal level, while the "party of power" is guaranteed to win a majority of the seats, real, if limited competition is permitted, although the degree of competitiveness of the elections differs in each region. It is also possible to distinguish a group of what we may classify as 16 *hegemonic authoritarian* regions: Kemerovo, Mordoviya, Saratov, Bashkortostan, Tatarstan, Krasnodar, Tuva, Rostov, Moscow, Belgorod, Yamalo Nenets AO, Tambov, Chechnya, Ingushetiya, Chukotka, and Kabardino-Balkariya. In these regions there is little or no contestation and the elections are merely "decorative" formal procedures which mask the absolute domination of UR and its candidates.

If we exclude the 16 *hegemonic authoritarian* regions, we can clearly see that the type of electoral system employed in a region has a major influence on the degree of electoral contestation. The level of competitiveness in the SMDs is higher than in the PL elections. Moreover, cross-regional variations in the SMDs are not the same as in the PL elections. Turning to our analysis of the role of the non-party deputies, our study demonstrates that they do not influence the degree of competitiveness. In most cases after taking up their seats they move over to support UR in the regional assemblies.

