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Political and economic outcomes depend, in part, on the quality of the officials making policy. Many scholars argue that the free and fair elections are the best method for selecting competent officials. Others, however, argue that elections can lead to the selection of amateurs, demagogues, and political sycophants. Under this view, sub-national officials should be appointed by centralized planners who are insulated from local popular pressures. In this paper, we use original data on the biographies of Russian regional governors to determine whether the backgrounds of governors elected between 1992 and 2004 differ from the backgrounds of appointed governors post-2004. We find that the two groups are surprisingly similar on many dimensions. Elected and appointed governors have similar career backgrounds, ages, educational profiles, and ethnicities. But there are some important differences as well. Elected governors, are more likely to have held elected office and be from the region where they serve. Appointed governors are also more likely to be federal bureaucrats, hold a graduate degree, and have education in economics. Finding that the selection mechanism explains only a small portion of the variance in governor backgrounds, we conclude the paper by speculating on other possible explanations for variation in governor background.

Keywords: gubernatorial elections, gubernatorial appointments, regional elites, elite selection, Russia.

JEL Classification: R59.

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Introduction

To improve the quality of political and economic outcomes much of the literature in political economy focuses on designing incentives that encourage self-interested officials to eschew opportunism (Mayhew 1974; Buchanan 1989). This “incentive” argument assumes that public officials are largely motivated by the extrinsic value of their position and thus are driven by concerns about tenure, wages, rents, and other material benefits. In recent years, however, scholars have begun to pay more attention to how the quality of public officials influences outcomes independent of the incentives they face. According to this “selection” argument, policy outcomes depend on the individual characteristics of office-holders. Whether as a result of differences in skill, public spiritedness, education, life experience, or gender, the assumption is that some officials are either better able to carry out their tasks or have intrinsic motivations to pursue policies for their own sake (c.f., Besley 2006). To achieve better economic and political outcomes, the “selection” argument holds that it is important to select higher quality public officials. Indeed, selecting high quality public officials may be especially important in developing countries where institutional constraints are less binding and meritocratic incentive schemes function poorly.

In this paper, we focus on Russia, a country where there has long been speculation about how characteristics of leaders and officials might influence their governing style. Peter the Great’s Europeanization policies were said to have had their genesis in his trips to the Netherlands as a young man. In the Soviet period, the debate on “reds” and “experts” was grounded in speculation about how cadres with specific career skills might differ in their approach to industrial and political management (e.g. Moore 1950; Rutland 1993). In post-Soviet Russia, many analysts have attributed the style and substances of Putin’s rule to his years in the KGB. At the sub-national level, *young* reform-minded Russian governors were initially thought to be more capable at navigating the transition in the early and mid 1990s. In the Putin era, observers believed that the introduction of direct elections would lead to the mass appointment of governors with backgrounds in the security services, who, as a result, might rule in a more authoritarian fashion. Unfortunately, speculation on such topics in contemporary Russia is more prevalent than hard data and empirical tests.

A focus on Russia also allows us to engage a second broad debate in political economy by examining whether the traits of public officials vary according to their method of selection. More specifically, we examine whether and how elected regional governors differ from appointed region governors. From 1991-2004, Russia’s governors were elected in a popular vote, but in 2004, then-President Vladimir Putin pushed through a reform cancelling direct gubernatorial elections and replacing them with a system of centralized appointments. One

argument is that elected officials are more likely to be of high quality because voters prefer high quality candidates (e.g. Besley 2006). On the other hand, other lines of research suggest that appointed officials may be of higher quality either because majoritarian failures result in political amateurs being elected (e.g. Linz 1994) or because the social planners making appointments have long time horizons and seek the public rather than the private good (e.g. Evans 1995). Indeed, President Putin justified the decision to cancel gubernatorial elections in 2004 as a way to purge criminals, political amateurs, and incompetence from the gubernatorial corpus. So is it true that elected officials are more likely to be incompetent? Or is it the case that the most effective way to select capable public officials is at the ballot box?

To explore these issues, we take advantage of a novel dataset that includes biographical information on the universe of regional governors in Russia from 1991 until the present. These data include information on the social backgrounds, career trajectories, and demographic characteristics of Russia's regional executives. In preliminary analyses, we find that appointed and elected governors have many features in common. They are statistically indistinguishable in their age; are just as likely to have worked in the regional or local administration; and are equally likely to have worked most of their career in the private or state sector of the economy. Their educational profiles are quite similar, and their ethnicities differ little. Moreover, elected and appointed officials are returned to office at the same rate.

There is some evidence, however, that appointed governors are less likely to be born in the region in which they serve, are more likely to have economics degrees and to hold a graduate degree. Appointed governors are also more likely to come directly from the federal bureaucracy than elected governors. These results give some impression that appointed governors have a more technocratic background, but more research is needed to determine if this result is robust.

These initial findings suggest three broader points. First, it implies that in an environment of weak institutions the impact of selection method on the traits of the officeholder may be muted. Elections for governors in Russia were often marked by low levels of political competition and a very uneven playing field between incumbents and challengers, which may dampen the selection effects of elections (Konitzer 2006). This suggests a need to examine the details of the selection method and the context in which it operates. Moreover, other analyses have found that presidents in Russia have tended to appoint governors who are able to mobilize high vote totals for the regime and/or who have high approval ratings (Reuter and Robertson 2011). Social planners in many settings cannot credibly commit to appointing competent economic managers because they are compelled by circumstances to appoint competent political managers or take into account the preferences of the median voter.

Second, in contrast to much of the received wisdom in Russia, we find little evidence that members of the security forces are overrepresented among appointed governors (Kryshtanovksaya and White 2005). Eight percent of elected governors and 9 percent of appointed governors had a plurality of their work experience in the power ministries.

Third, it is important to note that just because we find that elected and appointed governors share many commonalities in their background and work experience, it does not mean that the method of selection is inconsequential for policies or outcomes. It only means that differences in policies and outcomes between elected and appointed governors are probably not occurring via “selection.” Elections and appointments may still have large impacts on policymaking and outcomes via the incentives that each of these two types of officials face for retaining their office.

We begin by providing a theoretical justification for studying political selection before introducing the details of the methods of selection of governors in Russia. We then examine how the background of governors varies with the method of selection using simple, bivariate comparisons and conclude by exploring several possible areas for future research.

Theory

This section focuses on two related questions to motivate our study of the backgrounds of regional governors in Russia under different appointment procedures. Does the quality of politicians matter for political and economic outcomes? Do different methods of appointment lead to variation in the quality of politicians?

Historians have long emphasized the importance of individual leaders in concrete historical circumstances and there is also a long tradition in normative political theory on the design of institutions to induce the “best” people to take up public office. Yet, most social scientists have preferred to study how variation in incentives influences outcomes rather than to examine how variation in the traits and quality of individuals making these decisions influences outcomes. The reluctance to address this issue is driven in part by the difficulty of the task. Identifying which specific qualities matter for which policies specific policies is a challenge as is finding objective indicators of the quality of public officials. In addition, the quality of leaders is rarely randomly assigned, which makes identifying the causal impact of different leadership traits difficult.

In recent years, however, a number of scholars have argued forcefully for the importance of studying the quality of public officials. Most prominently, Besley (2006) argues that two features of politics make the quality of leaders an important determinant of policy outcomes.

First, if there are limits to the extent to which state officials can commit to policy positions, then the quality of the official picked for public office is consequential. If officials have considerable leeway over policy choice, it matters greatly what type of official is doing the choosing. The ubiquity of commitment problems in politics therefore suggests the importance of studying the quality of public officials. Second, where elections are a weak tool to control politicians, then public officials also will have many opportunities to choose policy largely independent of voter preferences. Building on Besley's insights one might argue that the quality of public officials is especially important under autocratic rule where commitment problems are exacerbated and meaningful elections absent.

Recent studies have brought empirical evidence to bear on how the traits of leaders influence outcomes. Besley et al. (2011) find that more educated state leaders are associated with higher growth rates. Carnes (2011) demonstrates that legislators from business backgrounds exhibit more conservative economic voting behavior. Pande (2003) finds that reservation for scheduled castes at the state level in India affected policies toward those groups. Similarly, Chattopadhyah and Duflo (2004) find that issues especially relevant to women were more likely to be raised in village governments where more women were members. And a number of authors find that technocratic bureaucrats generate better governance outcomes than political cronies (c.f., Evans and Rauch 1999, Geddes 1994). These findings would be familiar to scholars of the Soviet Union who long debated the impact of having "reds" or "experts" in positions of decisionmaking authority (Moore 1950; Friedrich and Brzezinski 1956; Rutland 1993). In sum, there are good theoretical and empirical grounds for expecting that the different qualities of leaders may influence important political and economic outcomes.

A second body of literature with a somewhat longer pedigree examines how methods of appointment influence the quality of public officials. Scholars have examined this question in two general ways. One body of work examines differences in the quality of leaders between democracy and autocracy.⁴ On this view, the type of regime can shape the size of the pool of possible candidates with citizens in democracies having a larger reservoir of candidates from which to choose their leaders. In support of this argument, Besley et al. (2011) use a panel of countries from 1848 to 2004 and find that leaders in democracies tend to have higher levels of education than their counterparts in autocracies. Similarly, Galasso and Nannici (2009) examine how political competition influences the quality of public officials. Using data from single member district elections from 1994 to 2006 in Italy, they find that politicians with higher ex-ante quality – as measured by years of schooling, previous market income, and local government

⁴ A large body of work examines differences in policy outcomes between democracy and autocracy that may be attributable to differences in the quality of leaders between these two contexts. (c.f., Jones and Olken 2005).

experience – were more likely to run in a contestable district. That is political competition shapes the quality of the candidates that parties choose to run for office. In addition, they find that politicians elected in contestable districts are more likely to attend votes in parliament and that result this is driven more by a selection effect than by incentives alone.

Other studies have examined how whether officials are appointed and elected shape the quality of officeholders. For example, Veronese (2004) finds that a move to directly elected mayors in Italy led to selection of a group with higher levels of human capital.⁵ In China, Luo (2010) finds that compared to their appointed counterparts, elected heads of village councils in China have more years of schooling and greater experience in business. This result is especially relevant to our paper given that it is one of the few quantitative studies of how the method of appointment influences the qualities of a regional leader in an authoritarian setting. Similarly, Ma and Wu (2011) find that appointments mechanisms influence fiscal transparency across China's region. In sum, there are good reasons to believe that the quality of a public officials are an important determinant of public policy and that methods of selection can shape the quality of public officials in democracies and autocracies alike.

The Case of Russian Regional Chief Executives

Contemporary Russia is a good case to study the impact of selection rules on the quality of political officials for several reasons. First, Russia has over 80 regions headed by chief executives, permitting comparison across a large number of like units.⁶ Second, Russia's regional chief executives are important figures who exert extensive influence over political, economic, and social life in their regions. Third, the method of selection of these officials has changed over time. From 1992-1996, some of Russia's regional executives were elected, while others were appointed. From 1996-2004, almost all of Russia's regional executives were directly elected. Since 2005, all of Russia's governors have been directly appointed by the President. In the following section, we provide necessary background on these changes.

In the Soviet Union, executive power at the regional level was vested in the first secretaries of the regional committees of the CPSU (Obkom First Secretaries). As the Soviet

⁵ There is a long literature examining how method of appointment influences policy outcomes that may work via the quality of the public official making the policy decision. Besley and Coate (2003) find that appointed regulators take more pro-consumer positions than do appointed regulators. Enkilopov (2006) shows that elected chief executives of local governments in the United States favor higher public employment than their appointed counterparts as the latter need worry about the median voter while the former only need worry about the official who appointed them. Even in autocratic regimes whether officials are appointed or elected may influence outcomes. In Russia, Vasilyeva (2011) examines three types of appointed regional governors to determine how a leader's background influences choices over education and health spending at the regional level from 2004-2009. She finds that the method of appointment influences spending choices, but that these effects are conditional on the level of political competition. More specifically, appointed governors who had not been previously elected spend less on health and education when facing higher levels of political competition.

⁶ From 1991-2007, Russia had 89 regions. Between 2007 and 2009, the number was gradually decreased to 83.

Union collapsed, de facto executive power in the Russian Republic passed briefly to the chairmen of regional Councils of People's Deputies (popularly elected for the first time in March 1990), and then to newly created "head of administration" posts, which were formally established in August 1991. These heads of administration quickly became known as *governors*, except in the Autonomous Republics, most of which called their chief executives presidents. Republics were given the right to elect their chief executives while governors in other regions were to be either appointed or elected at the discretion of the President. By the end of 1991, seven republics had held direct elections, and by March 1992, Yeltsin had appointed governors in all other regions.

The appointment of governors in non-republics was, from the beginning, intended to be a temporary scheme. Federal law required that governors be elected, but left open the time table and gave Yeltsin wide discretion to determine when the first elections would be held. In 1993, Yeltsin allowed elections in six oblasts only to see five of his appointees lose, while Chelyabinsk simply defied Yeltsin and held elections without the President's permission. In 1994, Yeltsin permitted elections only in Irkutsk Oblast. By the end of 1994, meanwhile, most republics had elected Presidents. In 1995, Yeltsin permitted elections to be held in 12 oblasts, where his appointees stood a good chance of winning. Yeltsin also permitted Sverdlovsk to hold elections after it credibly threatened to hold elections without his blessing.

Yeltsin was reluctant to allow gubernatorial elections, many of which were sure to be won by the Communist opposition. By late 1995, however, Yeltsin found it increasingly difficult to resist calls from the Duma opposition and regional leaders for direct elections in the remainder of Russia's oblasts and krais. Yeltsin, however, was able to ensure that almost all of these elections would be postponed until after the Presidential elections. Thus, in the fall of 1996 and spring of 1997, direct elections were held for the first time in most of Russia's non-republics. In 1999, a federal law was signed that established uniform rules for the election of regional governors, and abolished the President's right to appoint or remove governors.

Russia's governors were chosen by direct election for the remainder of the Yeltsin era and for the first four years of the Putin era. In December 2004, however, President Putin pushed a reform through the Duma that cancelled direct elections for governors. Elections were replaced with a system of appointments whereby the Russian president would nominate a candidate to be approved by the regional legislature. The regional legislature has the right to reject the candidate, at which point the President has the right to renominate the same candidate or propose a different candidate. If the legislature rejects the President's proposed candidate three times, then the legislature is dissolved and new elections are called. In the same law, the President was given the authority to dismiss governors with a decree and name an interim governor. The law also

provided elected governors with the option of appealing to the president to make a decision on reappointing them prior to the end of their elected terms. The option of early appeal was reserved solely for governors who had never been appointed or reappointed by the president and was utilized by 43 governors between 2005 and 2007.

Also in December 2004, President Putin issued a decree that established a formal procedure for vetting candidates. The President's special representatives to the Federal Okrugs (*polpredy*) were tasked with submitting two candidates to the President's Chief of Staff who would then submit those candidates to the President. In December 2005, the law was changed again so that, in addition to the *polpredy*, the largest party in a region's regional legislature (or the largest *parties* if two or more parties received the largest and equal shares of mandates or participated together in an electoral bloc) would have the right to propose a candidate for governor to the President.⁷

This procedure for appointing governors existed from January 2005-December 2008. In April 2009, it was amended again when President Medvedev pushed through a new amendment to the law on gubernatorial appointments that gave the largest party in regional legislatures the exclusive right to propose candidates to the president for appointment in their respective regions.⁸ Under the new law, the largest party provides the president with a list of three candidates that the president can choose from. The President then chooses a candidate from among that list and submits it to the regional legislature as under existing law. Since 2008, United Russia has been the largest party in all regional legislatures, so the new law, on paper at least, gives the ruling party a direct say in the gubernatorial appointment process. The new amendments went into effect on July 1, 2009 and the first formal application of the new law occurred on August 20, 2009 when United Russia presented President Medvedev with three candidates to fill the governor's post in Sverdlovskaya Oblast. Since then, the central party leadership has proposed candidates to President Medvedev for nomination. Insider accounts suggest, however, that the party consults closely with the Kremlin when drawing up these lists (e.g. Ivanov 2011).

⁷ Importantly, parties and the *polpredy* were not given the right to propose new candidates at any time. Their right of proposal only existed when a governor's term had expired, when a governor had been dismissed by the President, or when a governor left office voluntarily for other reasons (or died).

⁸ This amendment to *law* thus juridicially superseded President Putin's decrees on how candidate lists for governors would be drawn up.

Description of Data

In this paper we introduce and employ a novel dataset consisting of detailed biographical and political data on every individual who has held elected or appointed office as head of a Russian ‘subject of the federation.’ We collected data from a variety of sources including the Labyrinth repository, current and past (via web archive ‘The Wayback Machine’) regional administration websites, Wikipedia, and others. From this we built career histories for each governor, coded educational history and political characteristics like party membership, and assembled demographic data and other measures. Our data encompasses all Russian regions (up to 89, depending on the year) and all years after creation of the Russian Federation in which each region had an official head, such as governor or president. The structure of our dataset allows us to analyze this universe of Russian governors in terms of region-year, term in office, election/appointment event, or individual.

The data in our dataset falls into several general blocks. Basic personal and demographics characteristics like age, place of birth, and nationality form a foundation. A substantial set of variables capture educational attainment, as well as a rough coding of type of education and place of higher (university) education. The core of our dataset consists of a maximally comprehensive recording of each governor’s career trajectory. Using the sources listed above, several rounds of data collection and coding were undertaken to ensure that we located as much of this data as possible. We attempted to include place of work, location, and dates of employment for the most recent 20 positions for each governor, or the full career history if the governor has not had 20 places of work. While these variables are necessarily incomplete and imperfect, we located and mapped a substantial percentage of governors’ career trajectories. From this data we constructed a number of measures that allow us to succinctly characterize each governor’s career. We then derived years working in the private sector, in state-owned enterprises, in elected office, and so on.

Important political variables are also included in our dataset. Membership in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, United Russia, and other political parties, including year of entry in to each, was noted where available.

Comparing Elected and Appointed Governors

In this section, we compare the characteristics of governors who took office in each election or appointment from 1992 to 2010, excluding appointments made by President Yeltsin from 1991-1996. Thus, we are comparing elections that occurred between 1992 and 2004, with

appointments that occurred from 2004-2010. Table 1 provides some basic descriptive statistics on the data we are using.

Table 1. Description of the dataset

	N
Number of governors	200
Number of election events	223
Number of appointment events	138
Number of regions	85
Minimum year	1993
Maximum year	2011

We examine the characteristics of governors along a number of dimensions: insider-outsider status, education, career experience, ethnicity, and age. As most of our measures are binary variables, we present the percentage of elections that resulted in a governor with each characteristic taking office and the percentage of appointments that resulted in a governor with each characteristic taking office. When variables are continuous (as with years work experience in the region and age), we present averages for elected governors and appointed governors. Comparing these means allows us to identify the raw variation in each measure between election events and appointment events. We conducted “t” tests on the differences in means for both binary and continuous variables to allow us to make inferences about the differences between governors who take office via elections versus appointments. A statistically significant “t” statistic gives us some confidence that the difference between these two groups is not simply random chance.

We describe below our results in more detail, but overall, governors who take office via election and governors who take office via appointment do not vary substantially. Some differences are found along the insider-outsider dimension and in education. But the two groups of governors do not vary in terms of career experience and political experience.

Insider-Outsider Status

Are elected governors more likely to be from the regions where they serve? If appointments are made on the basis of technocratic competence, then there would be no reason for social planners to prefer local candidates. Or, more cynically, if those making appointments prefer to appoint their cronies, then we would expect that locals will actually be disadvantaged. Indeed, many observers believed that the introduction of appointments in Russia would lead to

the wholesale appointment of outsiders, who would repress the local political elite. We examine whether this is the case.

We operationalize insider-outsider status using measures of each governor’s life experiences in the region that they take office in. As shown in Table 2, elected and appointed governors do indeed differ in terms of work experience. However, appointed governors are no more or less likely to be born or be educated in their governed region than elected governors. Nevertheless, our theoretical and empirical priors are confirmed: appointed governors are significantly more likely to be from outside the region. On average, appointed governors have nearly a third less work experience in their governed region than do elected governors, and even if they do have work experience in the region, it is more likely to have been in the more distant past.

We also emphasize, however, that a majority of appointees have ties to the region. Sixty-five percent were working in the region immediately prior to being appointed. Furthermore, only 22% of appointees had never worked in the region where they were appointed.

Table 2. Regional governors’ ties to the region

	Elected	Appointed	t value
Born in the region	47	47	-0.05
Years work experience in the region	13	10	3.23
Most recent place of work is in the region	81	65	3.29
Higher education in the region	36	30	1.19
Worked in regional executive immediately prior to taking office	31	26	0.89
Worked in regional executive at any time prior to taking office	92	72	2.38

Career and Political Experience

Having established that elected governors are more likely to have local work experience, what is the nature of this work experience? Table 3 explores the work histories of Russian governors in more detail. The second and third columns contain the percent elected and appointed governors, respectively, who spent a plurality of their careers in the given sector. The categories are exclusive, except for the last row, which combines the first two rows to examine differences in total experience in the economic sector.

Examining Table 3, we see that there are surprisingly few differences between elected and appointed governors. Elected governors are just as likely as appointed governors to come from the security services, and less than 10 percent of governors in either era have such a career background. Appointed governors are slightly more likely to have made their careers in the federal bureaucracy, but the overall frequency is very low. Most governors made their careers as

elected officials, in SOEs, the CPSU, or in the regional administration where they served as governor. This holds true for both elected and appointed governors.

The only categories for which appointed and elected governors differ are private sector experience, state-owned enterprise experience, and experience in the CPSU. These differences are not surprising. Appointed governors are more likely to have spent a plurality of their career in the private sector, because the private sector existed in Russia for a longer portion of their pre-gubernatorial careers. Also, because elected governors were more likely to reach the peak of their pre-gubernatorial career in the Soviet era, they are more likely to have spent most of their careers in working in party work or working in SOEs.

In the last row of Table 3, we combine private sector and SOE experience into one category. Here we see that elected and appointed governors do not differ in the extent to which they make their careers in the economic sector.

Table 3. Governors' work experience

Plurality of work experience...	Elected	Appointed	t value
in private sector	8	18	-2.80
in state-owned enterprises	25	14	2.74
as elected official	16	17	-0.24
in the CPSU	22	12	2.66
in a power ministry	8	9	-0.36
in the federal bureaucracy	1	4	-1.58
in the federal bureaucracy in the regions	0	1	-0.90
in regional administration	12	13	-0.26
in regional administration in another region	0	2	-1.74
in local administration	8	9	-0.36
in local administration in another region	0	1	-0.90
in private or state-owned enterprises	33	32	0.17

In Table 3 we can see that appointed governors are far less likely to have a plurality of work experience in the CPSU, while in Table 4 we can see that they are also much less likely to have been a member of the CPSU at all.

Table 4. Governors' specific experience

	Elected	Appointed	t value
Held elected position immediately prior to taking office	59	44	2.24
Held elected position at any time prior to taking office	95	78	2.37
Was member of a previous governor's executive team	18	20	-0.38
Re-elected or re-appointed	55	55	0.02
Member of CPSU	73	47	5.00

What about experience in electoral politics after the fall of the USSR? Interestingly, we find that elected governors have more experience with being elected into office. This is peculiar, because appointed governors have had more time to gain experience in electoral politics than elected governors. While most elected *and* appointed governors had held an elected position, this is much more likely to be the case for governors who were elected into office for the terms we are considering in our data. This can be interpreted as suggestive evidence that appointed governors are more likely to be apolitical and technocratic.

Table 5 shows a slightly different perspective on the career backgrounds of Russian governors. It shows the percent of governors in a given selection category (elected or appointed) whose most recent place of work was in the given sectors. Because many officials advance through the ranks of SOEs, the CPSU, or private business and then move to high-level political positions, this table gives a slightly different picture of the backgrounds of Russian governors, but the general theme is the same: elected and appointed governors are surprisingly similar in their observable characteristics.

Table 5. Governors' career backgrounds

	Number of Elected Governors	Percent of Elected Governors	Number of Appointed Governors	Percent of Appointed Governors
Regional Administration (Home Region)	36	16	22	16
Regional Administration (Diff. Region)	0	0	7	5
Regional Legislature	54	24	20	14
State Duma	31	14	18	13
Federation Council	20	9	10	7
Local Executive (including mayors)	20	9	15	10
Local Legislature	7	3	4	3
Party Work (non-KPSS)	4	2	1	1
Business	21	9	16	11
Presidential Administration	3	1	3	2
Federal Government	12	5	18	13
Force Structures	9	4	3	2
Academic	4	2	0	0
Television	1	0	0	0
Election Commission	1	0	0	0

Overall, the most common pre-gubernatorial career step in Russia is in the regional administration where governors are served. Deputy governors are very often appointed to governor and voters also tended to select such governors frequently. In the appointment era 7% of governors were deputy governors in another region, whereas this type of governor was never selected in the election era. Governors in the elected era were more likely to be employed on a full-time basis in the regional legislature prior to being elected, but this difference is somewhat

artificial, because many elected governors were the chairmen of the regional soviets in the late transition period, when this position became the de facto chief executive. These chairmen were either appointed as governor by Yeltsin (and then reelected) or leveraged their de facto incumbency status to get elected. This difference may also pick up on the fact that regional legislatures were less important arenas for exerting influence on policy in the Putin era than they were in the Yeltsin era.

Both elected and appointed governors were very likely to come from the State Duma, but there is no difference between elected and appointed governors in the frequency with which this occurred. The same is true of the Federation Council, positions in local (municipal) politics, and post-Soviet party work. Nine percent of elected governors and eleven percent of appointed governors came directly from the business world, but these differences are not statistically significant. Very few governors come from the Presidential Administration.

One of the only category for which there is a significant difference between appointed and elected governors is Federal Government. Many more appointed governors had their most recent work experience in the Federal Government. Finally, relatively few governors came directly from the security services.

On the whole, this table paints a picture of a gubernatorial corpus that hails mostly from the political elite. The difference of interest of note is the Federal Government category. There does seem to be an increase in the number of federal bureaucrats who are finding employ as regional governors in the appointment era.

Education and Demographics

Elected and appointed governors may also vary according to fundamental personal characteristics such as education and age. We find that in fact appointed governors are substantially more likely to be well-educated. This provides evidence for the idea that appointed governors are more competent and more technocratic than elected governors. As shown in Table 5, they are much more likely to have a graduate (*kandidatskaya* or *doktorskaya stepen'*) degree. Their education itself is substantially more likely to be in the realm of economics, supporting the idea that appointed governors are more technocratic. Furthermore, supporting our earlier conclusions about insider-outsider status, appointed governors are more likely than elected governors to have received their higher education in the elite institutions of Moscow or Saint Petersburg.

Table 6. Governors' educational background

	Elected	Appointed	t value
Holds graduate degree	35	45	-1.96
Agricultural education	14	5	2.82
Economics education	8	16	-2.07
Humanities education	6	4	0.82
Legal education	7	10	-0.98
Military education	6	4	0.63
Pedagogical education	3	3	-0.36
Technological or engineering education	57	57	-0.13
Higher education in an elite university	6	5	0.32
Higher education in other Moscow/SPb university	28	38	-1.57
Higher education in a regional university	66	57	1.37

Perhaps surprisingly, there is no difference between elected and appointed governors in terms of age when they take office. While we might expect that appointed governors, by virtue of their technocratic status, would be younger than their elected counterparts, this is not the case -- in fact, they are slightly older, on average.

Table 7. Governors' nationality and age

	Elected	Appointed	t value
Non-Russian nationality in a titular republic	82	89	-0.96
Age at time of election or appointment	53	54	-1.00

Discussion

Appointed and elected governors in Russia are surprisingly similar in many respects, but there are some differences as well. Elected governors differ from appointed governors in terms of insider-outsider status, graduate education, experience in the CPSU, and elected experience. Why does the selection method produce these differences in type? Further research is needed, but it appears that the Kremlin displayed a small preference for more technocratic types of governors that had higher levels of education, degrees in economics, and immediate career backgrounds in the federal bureaucracy. They were also more likely to prefer outsider governors than voters, but, overall, insider governors were more likely to be appointed than outsiders.

Even though there are only slight differences between appointed and elected governors, there is significant variation in the background, demographics, and education of the gubernatorial corpus. What explains these differences aside from the selection mechanism? In the following sections, we offer some thoughts on these questions.

Democracy. One important mediating factor in the relationship between economic and political demands and governor characteristics may be the extent to which politics in a region are democratic or authoritarian. Besley et al. (2011) find that democratic countries are more likely to select educated leaders. This assumes that voters have an intrinsic preference for high quality leaders. On the other hand, when the population is involved in choosing its leaders the prevalence of populism and clientelism may increase and result in less capable leaders with stronger political machines.

Demand Side Factors. The type of challenges facing a region may determine the type of governor selected. Will voters in a region facing acute economic challenges be more likely to select a technocratic governor who has the background and skills necessary to effectively manage the economy? Will central planners respond to the same incentives? The same question arises for political challenges. Will regions that face particularly thorny problems of social unrest, civil strife, or political polarization be more likely to support leaders with the background and skills necessary to address those problems? Indeed, what are the characteristics that predispose an official to being competent at solving a specific problem? The question has not been addressed in the literature. Our data can be used to shed light on it.

Political Machines. Governor characteristics may also be affected by the characteristics of the regional political elite. This may occur in several ways, such as if the previous governor implicitly or explicitly ‘chose’ his successor or if the policy preferences of previous governors are transmitted to subsequent office holders. Sticky policies, hold-over vice governors and ministers, or clientelistic debts and capture may all serve as means of allowing an outgoing governor to influence the traits of his successor.

Though it is difficult to identify the presence of these inter-temporal mechanisms, our data may offer insights into how clientelistic or personal networks, entrenched political machines, and policy inertia operate at a sub-national level in Russia. Russian regional governors are well known for the elaborate patron-client networks that they constructed in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Slinko et al. 2005; Hale 2006). Are regions with strong political machines more likely to select insiders? Is this true just for the appointment era as well? Or is it the case that the Kremlin preferred to break up strong political machines by replacing the leadership with outsiders? These are all questions for future research that we hope to address with our data.

Conclusion

The capability of public officials is thought to be an important determinant of the quality of policy output. What then determines the quality of official selected in a political system? One

important candidate explanation is the selection mechanism. Elected officials are thought to be of higher quality because voters prefer more competent and educated candidates. Detractors argue that central planners are better than voters at selecting high quality officials. This debate cuts right to the heart of debates about the relative merits of democracy, decentralization, and development. In this paper we used original data on the backgrounds of Russian regional governors from 1992-2010 to examine whether elected governors differ from appointed governors in important ways.

Perhaps surprisingly, we find that they differ little. Elected and appointed governors are equally likely to come from the regional administration where they serve as governor; are equally likely to have made their careers in the legislative arena; and are similar in their business experience. They do not differ in their age and turnover rates are similar under appointments and elections. Their educational profiles are broadly similar as well. Finally, neither elected nor appointed governors are likely to come from the security services.

But there are some important differences as well. Elected governors are more likely to have experience in the CPSU, have been elected to another office, and be from the region where they serve. Appointed governors are more likely to be federal bureaucrats, hold a graduate degree, and have education in economics. These findings suggest that appointed governors are slightly more technocratic, but the difference is slight and the majority of both elected and appointed governors are not from technocratic backgrounds.

We make no strong claims about the exogeneity of our findings. All elections in our sample occurred from 1992-2004 and all appointments occurred after 2004. It is certainly possible that political circumstances, unique to the post-2004 era, created the differences in gubernatorial type that we observe across time. This is a challenging issue that we hope to address in the future. In addition, our analysis has focused only on simple bivariate comparisons between elected and appointed governors and more sophisticated statistical analyses may turn up somewhat different patterns, although it is surprising that we find so few differences even in simple pairwise comparisons.

Nonetheless, the similarities between elected and appointed regional executives are striking. We believe that these similarities highlight two broader points of interest for institutional analysis. First, the extent to which elections generate differences in the type of official selected is likely dependent on the quality of those elections. Non-competitive elections do not give voters control over outcomes and may mute the impact of elections on candidate quality. Elections in Russia's regions certainly varied in the quality of democracy and the level of competitiveness and may have dampened the power of elections as a selection mechanism. It is possible that elections with more competitive races will result in the selection of different

types of candidates than flawed elections. Further research is needed to examine this proposition. Fortunately, we have collected data on the competitiveness of regional elections that may provide some leverage for answering this question.

Second, the notion that central planners are wholly freed from popular pressure seems unfounded in most political settings. In most authoritarian regimes, autocrats are compelled to respond to popular and political pressures in some fashion. In Russia, the Kremlin clearly takes into account popular opinion and the need to win elections in making its gubernatorial appointments. As a result, this concern for public opinion may reduce the differences in the impact of elections and appointments on the characteristics of public officials. Further research is needed to determine the extent to which these imperatives influence the exact type of governor selected, but again they point the insight that public opinion may serve as a constraints on public officials even in an autocratic setting.

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