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**HOW MULTILEVEL ELITE  
LOYALTY STRENGTHENS  
ELECTORAL  
AUTHORITARIANISM: EVIDENCE  
FROM GUBERNATORIAL  
ELECTIONS IN RUSSIA**

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# How Multilevel Elites Loyalty Strengthens Electoral Authoritarianism: Evidence from Gubernatorial Election in Russia<sup>†</sup>

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## Abstract

Maintain autocratic regimes is widely acknowledged to require elites loyalty. However, loyalty of which elites is more important to establish high voting for an autocrat? Basing on empirical evidence of gubernatorial election in Russia we explore how conflicts between the governor and the elites at municipal and regional levels affect incumbents election outcome. We find that conflicts between governors and the mayors of regional capitals have the only robust negative effect on both electoral result and turnout. Encouraging loyalty of these mayors secures smoother political machinery in the most electorally significant areas of the region (regional capitals) and thus has the most pronounced impact on the outcome of an electoral campaign.

**Key words:** electoral autocracy, Russian politics, Russian regions, regional politics, gubernatorial election, elites

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# Introduction

Multiple research have shown that elites loyalty strengthens autocracies (see for example, Blaydes 2008; Blaydes 2011; Gandhi and Przeworski 2006; Han 2007; Wright 2008). Loyal elites constantly support autocratic regimes for benefits from the set policy of distributing resources and preferences (Lust-Okar 2006). This status quo is secured by unending privileges for supporters in exchange for their continued service (Boix and Milan Svolik 2007; Magaloni 2008; Wintrobe 2000). However, when supporters feel that it will be more advantageous for them to betray or even overthrow the dictator they prone to turn disloyal (De Mesquita 2005; Gehlbach and Keefer 2012). Even if elites disloyalty does not always result in a coup, it can at least affect the regime's stability and the particular ruler's sustainability (Gandhi and Przeworski 2006; Geddes 1999).

The defeat of a dictator rarely comes from election<sup>1</sup>. Scholars have convincingly demonstrated that autocratic election is not the type of election to win over in a fair campaigning (Lust 2009). Competition is kept under control of a dictator, while the actual goal of the race is to window-dress legitimacy of election and legitimate winning of the particular autocrat (Schedler et al. 2006). This goal is achieved through patron-client chains and client resources, which support an autocrat during the entire campaign and stimulate voters come and cast their ballot for the autocrat. Patron-client chains fuel the political machine performance, which secures high voting for the autocrat. To reinforce political machines for voter mobilization, autocrats stimulate elites loyalty between election (Gandhi 2008; Schedler et al. 2006) and praise the elites for good campaigning results after voting (Blaydes 2011; Boix and M. W. Svolik 2013). This scheme consistently bears fruit. However, if the elites possess enough resources to maintain independence from the autocrat, they can buy more room for autonomy in decision-making and overall get more inclined to disobedience (Ross 1973). If this disobedience transforms into clear confrontation, political machines falter. Open conflicts between the elites and the autocrat during the election time might spoil the

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<sup>1</sup>The exception is stunning election (Huntington 1993).

autocrat's mobilization campaign. Given that conflicts between the autocrat and his subordinate elites definitely weaken the autocrat's leadership, will they bring tangible negative results for his reelection? Given that election in autocracies is more a sideshow attraction, autocrats should benefit more from tuning high electoral support for self and establishing high turnout (Magaloni 2008). Following this assumption, conflicts with which elites are more important in establishing high voting for the autocrat and establishing high turnout at his reelection?

Russian subnational autocracies provide an excellent ground to test, which elites play a more and a less significant role in establishing high voting and high turnout for regional autocrats (governors) at gubernatorial election. Gubernatorial election in the Russian regions is held under the common authoritarian framework and are designed to secure the victory of the incumbent (the head of the region appointed by the president) no matter how strong his competitors are. These governors perform within the common set of rules informally imposed by the federal leadership and pursue similar strategies for survival (Lankina 2009). The regions they govern have the same set of regional elites, which however, vary in strength and resourcefulness and thus their capacity to interfere in the regional politics.

To test, which elites disloyalty brings the most devastating losses to autocrats at election, we collected data on 1402 municipalities (the sub-regional level) in 43 Russian regions, which ran direct gubernatorial election in 2012-2014. We used a multilevel model to measure the impact of both regional and sub-regional elites disloyalty on the election results. The results demonstrate that overall loyalty of the elites at regional and subregional levels contributes to higher voting for the governor and higher turnout, while conflicting with the governor reduces election results. Though the only statistically significant and robust impact was from the disloyalty of the regional capital's mayor. Although the governor officially campaigns against multiple opposition candidates they do not pose a risk to the governor's reelection and even do not stimulate significantly lower voting for him. However, the capital mayors do pose. When being in open conflict with the governor during the electoral campaign, mayors have

a crucial negative impact on the governors' electoral result and voter turnout like no other elite.

The explanation comes from the mechanics of how authoritarian mobilization is generally conducted. These mayors head the most electorally important areas in the regions, which concentrate up to the half of all voters registered for election. Losing that support means for a governor a significant drop in mobilization results, which converts into up to 16 percentage points decrease in support for the governor and a 15 percentage points fall in turnout. The political consequence of this drop might be the second round or spending much more resources on falsifying election, though the design of authoritarian election in Russia would countenance that.

These findings contribute to a broader debate on the role of elites loyalty in the maintenance of autocracies and provide new evidence on the role of elites disloyalty in the autocratic election outcomes. The vast majority of works investigate the mechanism of strengthening or loosening autocrats under elite disobedience, but a few of these studies explore different elite groups separately, distinguishing logic of serving and interests of each elite independently. Even fewer studies explore elites at multiple levels, which could shed more light on how conflicts with elites of different administrative resources capacity could undermine authoritarian mobilization overall.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 contains a brief overview of the role of elites in political machines used for voter mobilization. Section 3 provides data description. In Section 4, we explain the study design and present the results, which we discuss in Section 5.

## **Political Machines at Gubernatorial Election in Russia**

Russia switched from direct gubernatorial election to the presidential appointments of governors in 2005 and returned to direct election in 2012. Turning back to electing governors by

public vote was a Kremlin initiative aimed to make governors more accountable to the citizenry, who voiced their demand for putting Russian authorities under greater public control during a series of protests in late 2011 (Elder 2011). Acting governors actually did not opt to switch to being directly elected since the existing system of appointments implied that the governors' tenure depended mainly on the Kremlin while the major criteria of the governors' effectiveness was securing high voting for United Russia (UR), the party of power, in both federal and regional parliamentary election (Reuter 2010).

Pioneer governors were barely prepared for direct election. The first five regions chosen for trial campaigns were the ones with consolidated political regimes capable to deliver the most predictable voting outcome (Polunin 2012). The incumbents insured landslides with a diversified menu of manipulations (Schedler 2002) including the widespread authoritarian tactics of limiting competition, promising posts and rewards, intimidation and blackmail (Matveeva 2012). Candidate registration procedures included a built-in institutional mechanism for limiting competition through the so-called municipal filter (Munitsipalniy filtr 2015). The filter implied that for registration candidates were required to collect a particular number of signatures from municipal heads and deputies. As the majority of heads and deputies in all municipalities were UR members, only the governors managed to pass through the filter on their own. Others needed to make painful concessions with the governor to participate in the election or pull out of the race (Temerina 2014).

Overall these direct election were designed to demonstrate that governors can win in a legitimate vote (Vinokurova 2013). Contemporary political machines in Russia are responsible for delivering high voting and high voter turnout for the ruling party and the president (Frye, Reuter, and Szakonyi 2014; Sharafutdinova 2013). Fraud and direct vote buying are generally costlier than administrative grass-root mobilization (Blaydes 2011; Magaloni 2006): mass vote rigging is more likely to incite protests and opposition mobilization against the rigged election (Bunce and Wolchik 2009; Tucker 2007; Walle et al. 2002; Van de Walle 2007). The safer is to restore to mobilization via political machine. To keep political machines op-

erable, machine workers reactivate mobilization channels and feed the system continually enhancing mutually beneficial interactions between the operatives and their constituents. This permanent connection facilitates integration of the political machines into broader social networks and instigates other constituents to join this patron-client cooperation (Stokes 2005). The elites role in such cooperation is to fuel political machines with management and mediation. Hale (2003) states that the logic of the Russian machine politics was inherited from the Soviet period and derives from the soviet legacy in the concentration of resources and power at the disposal of machine's operatives and its clientele. Clientele networks stimulate elites at various levels, including businessmen, state officials, and leaders of local communities, to get involved in the mobilization campaigns in support for the machine (Gosnell 1968).

Following Hale's assumption about the role of elites in the Russian political machines, we hypothesize that the strongest political machines are produced in the regions where governors confidently lead among the major elites or cooperate with them, while conflicts between the governor and the elites undermine voter mobilization. In the regions where governors have no open conflicts with the elites at both regional and municipal levels heir electoral results and turnout should be higher.

## Research Design and Data

### Coding Strategy

To test our hypothesis, we collected electoral data for the dependent variables and coded qualitative data for the main explanatory variables. Since the vast majority of explanatory variables are constructed basing on the qualitative evidence, we needed to establish a clear coding strategy to identify the threshold for detecting a conflict. To indicate *a conflict* between the governor and a particular elite we needed to find evidence for the conflict in the least three different media pieces (See detailed cases description with references to the media

sources in Table 7 in Appendix). We indicate no conflict if no evidence for the conflict is found in media.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of expressions of disloyalty

VARIABLES	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
<i>Municipality-level (N=1402)</i>				
UR Member	0.95	0.21	0	1
Type of Model				
Strong Mayor	0.41	0.49	0	1
City Manager	0.54	0.50	0	1
Hybrid model	0.03	0.18	0	1
<i>Region-level (N=43)</i>				
Counterelite				
Nomination	0.37	0.49	0	1
Participation	0.14	0.35	0	1
Gov vs Business	0.21	0.41	0	1
Gov vs Mayor	0.28	0.45	0	1
Gov vs UR	0.12	0.32	0	1

## Dependent variables

We estimate the outcome of the election with three specifications. The first one has turnout (*Turnout*) as the dependent variable. The results for incumbents are sufficiently affected by the size of the turnout, which distorts the real magnitude of governors' support. To account for this, we implemented two models for gubernatorial results: the one is the governors' electoral result calculated from the total number of registered voters (*Governors Result (total)*) and the other stands for the incumbents electoral result calculated from the turnout (*Governors Result (turnout)*). The variables are measured in percent and are taken from the Russian Central Election Commission website<sup>2</sup> after the 43 gubernatorial election held in 2012–2014. The data is presented at the level of municipalities.

<sup>2</sup>[www.cikrf.ru/](http://www.cikrf.ru/)



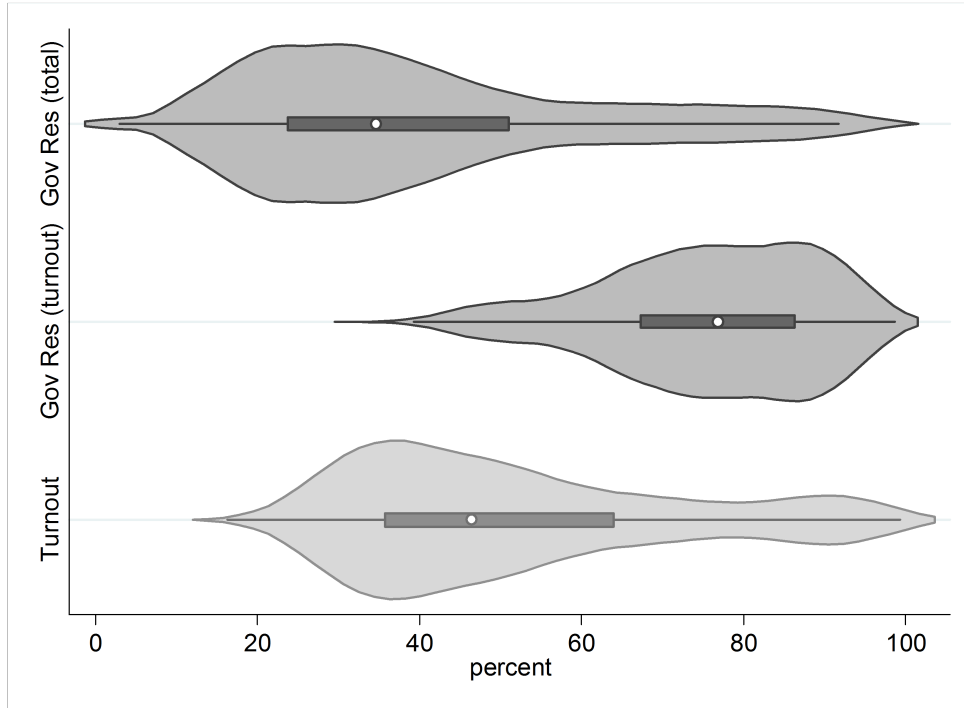


Figure 1: Distribution of Turnout, Governors Result (total), Governors Result (turnout)

## Explanatory Variables

### Region-level Elites: Governor versus Counterelite

Conflict tension grows when a new governor replaces ex-governor and restricts access to resources he used to possess. This is especially sensitive for the regions where an ex-governor had long been in power and long secured the privileged access to resources for himself and his support elite (Protivostoianie regional'noi i munitsipal'noi vlasti, 2014). When direct election of governors returned to the Russian regions, conflicts between the incumbent governor and much resourceful ex-ruling elite (counterelite) (Greene 2007:5) could transform into severe competition at election. Thus governors largely invested in disqualifying the counterelite candidates at an early stage of the campaign. While in the regions where the counterelite candidates were not disqualified via the municipal filter they proved to be the strongest governor's contesters at election (Kynev, Ljubarev, and Maksimov 2014; Kynev, Ljubarev, and Maksimov 2015).

We build a *Counterelite candidate* variable basing on biographies of all nominated candidates<sup>3</sup>. We considered candidates previous work experience as governors, governor's staff members, regional ministers, or chairs of the regional assembly as the primary indicator of the counterelite candidate. As well, we identified as counterelite candidates those who were supported by the listed elites<sup>4</sup>. However, we found maximum one counterelite candidate in each region (See Table 2)<sup>5</sup>, and the explanation for this might come from the riskiness of competing against the governor openly (while other governor-elites conflicts take place more in covert).

We hypothesize that given that the registration procedure was thorny (due to conservative operation of the municipal filter), nomination of the counterelite candidate signaled the citizens that the the ex-ruling elite claims to compete with the incumbent governor at election. While participation of the counterelite candidate could result more straightforward to the electoral weakening of the governor. In the Counterelite candidate variable *Nomination* indicates that the counterelite candidate was nominated but did not get registration for election, which is coded 1, while *Participation* stands for the regions, where counterelite candidate participated in election and is coded 2. 0 stand for otherwise. The data is at the regional level.

### **Region-level Elites: Governor versus United Russia**

Vast majority of governors participated in recent gubernatorial election as United Russia (UR) candidates in contrast to the trend of the late 1990s when governors freely chose party affiliation or more frequently ran as independent candidates (Shvetsova 2003). Incumbents relied on local party organizations to conduct grassroots mobilization. As the party polit-

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<sup>3</sup>We mainly rely on the open sources of information and regional media rather than the official information provided by the candidates at nomination.

<sup>4</sup>In some regions we identify as counterelite candidates those who were close advisers of ex-governors or had the direct access to the top decision-makers in the region (See Table 2).

<sup>5</sup>However, we found the exception for Altai Republic, Kalmykia, Kirov, and Orel Oblasts. These regions had up to three counter-elite candidates nominated, however, only one counterelite candidate in each region finally participated in the election.

ical machines were decentralized and bottom-heavy, they largely depended on an army of grassroots party cells (Stokes 2005: 317). Local party workers were better informed about the local context and were involved in sustained communication with the local voters. This sustained communication provided insights about the limits of the voters readiness to cooperate with the party operatives, e.g. vote-buying and other forms of simulations to vote (Cox and McCubbins 1986). We assume that conflicts between the governor and the regional leadership of United Russia undermined grassroots mobilization in the governors' campaign and thus led to lower voting for the governor. In the *Governor vs UR* variable we code the conflict between the governor and the regional United Russia leadership as 1, for regions where we found evidence on the open conflict, and 0 for otherwise. The data is collected at the regional level.

### **Region-level Elites: Governor versus Business Elite**

Large corporations strive to establish a mutually beneficial relationship with the government and exclude others from the market (Guriev and Rachinsky 2005). This is how corporate oligarchy in Russia became a dominant actor in the regional politics (Petrov 2007, November 21). Business elite protected its domains with gaining control over the regional legislation (Turovsky 2010; Yadav and Mukherjee 2015) and ran for the regional assembly (Moses 2002: 911) to secure priority access to regulatory policies. Later on having established control over it they restricted access for potential rivals (Gandhi and Przeworski 2007; Yadav 2011). Outside the election cycle, with a strong coalition in the regional assembly, business elites turned into an influential lobbying actor and bargained with the governor for more advantageous positions in the regional decision-making. At election time, regional tycoons rarely ran for governor, but supported pro- or anti-governor coalitions with financing. In the regions where business elites conflicted with the governor they provided the governor's opponents with financial support and thereby influenced the balance of powers in the race (Orlov 2014, July 9; Turovsky 2002). We indicate a conflict between the governor and the business elite

when find in media evidence of an open confrontation between the incumbent governor and a regional tycoon or a resourceful regional business group. *Governor vs Business* variable is binary. The data is at the regional level.

### **Region-level Elites: Governor versus Capital Mayor**

Governor-mayor conflicts are grounded in the inconsistencies of institutional development in Russia (Evans and Gelman 2004; Moses 2002; Slider 2004), which widely translated into overlapping of domains of power of the regional and the capital authorities, which provoked the regional leadership and the capital leadership to struggle for power and financial resources (Ryzhenkov and Vinnik 1999; Turovsky 2003). Moses (2010) shows that governor-mayor confrontations often turned into severe political battles when mayors ventured to run for governor (Makarkin 2007). However, if not campaigning against the incumbent governor at election, capital mayors could still impact voting through affecting the mobilization campaign. To test the impact of the governor-mayor conflicts on the recent gubernatorial election outcome we construct a *Gov vs Mayor* variable which takes 1 in cases where governors were involved in open conflicts with regional capital mayors during campaigning, and it takes 0 if the opposite is true. The data is at the regional level.

### **Municipality-level Elites: Models of Electing Municipal Heads**

At the municipal level, we considered three models of empowering municipal heads (Federal'nyi zakon ot 6 oktiabria 2003 goda c 131-FZ)<sup>6</sup>: the Strong Mayor model, the City Manager model, and the Hybrid model. The Strong Mayor model and the Hybrid model requires electing municipal heads by direct public vote. However, in the latter a mayor shares powers (including budgeting) with the head of municipal administration who is contracted through an open tender. A mayor in the Hybrid model thus loses substantial authorities in the municipality and is considered a weaker administrative figure than the mayor in the

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<sup>6</sup>These three models existed up to 2015, then they were replaced with another set of models. See St. 36 in Federal'nyi zakon ot 6 oktiabria 2003 goda c 131-FZ.

Strong Mayor model. In the City Manager model, the head of municipality is merely a figurehead, chosen from among the deputies of the municipal assembly, while the contracted head of administration holds the real power. The three models denote for the scope for municipalities independence from the regional government in the way the regional government buys independence from the federal government (B. Moraski and Reisinger 2010). And we assume that municipal heads elected via the Strong Mayor model should demonstrate the least loyalty to the governor as Strong Mayor heads are empowered directly by the people of the municipality and should have the least incentives for effective mobilization for the governor's reelection, while municipal heads in the two other models are more institutionally dependent from the regional authorities and should have the least scope for independence.

To identify the type of electing municipal heads we collected data from the Central Election Commission website on the election of mayors<sup>7</sup> and examined municipal charters on the municipalities websites to identify whether a municipality holds direct election or elects a municipal head from the members of the municipal assembly. In *Type of Model* variable 1 stands for the *Strong Mayor*, 2 stands for *City Manager* and 3 for the *Hybrid model*. The data is at the municipality level.

Party affiliation of a municipal head potentially affects his loyalty to the governor (who is also a UR member), so we include *UR Member* as a control variable. The variable takes 1 for municipal heads who are members of UR, and 0 for otherwise. The data is at the municipality level as well.

### **Controls: Governor Characteristics**

Variation in governors' results can be explained by incumbent-specific characteristics, which affect governors' mobilization capabilities. A governor from the region by descent has deep-rooted relationships with the regional elite (Podvintsev 2009) compared with the regions

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<sup>7</sup>The latest for each municipality before the year of gubernatorial election in each region.

governed by varyags<sup>8</sup> (Dmitriev 2010; Minchenko: gubernatory-varjagi ne prizhivajutsja v regionah, 2013). To account for this effect, we include the *Varyag* variable, which is coded 1 for the regions with varyag incumbents and 0 otherwise. The longer the governor stays in power, the stronger gets his political machine (Reuter 2010). We include *Tenure* in the model, which is measured in years and months a governor held office before the gubernatorial election. A short tenure logically put a governor at a greater risk of a poor electoral result, while the most vulnerable turn those governors appointed just before election. On the other hand, the Kremlin vigorously replaced unpopular governors just before election to produce a honeymoon effect for the newly appointed governors (Karandashova 2015; Reisinger and B. J. Moraski 2013). *Replacement* ahead of election is coded 1 for the regions, where Kremlin replaced governors one year or less before election, and 0 for otherwise. The data for these three variables is collected from open sources and is at the regional level.

### **Controls: Socioeconomic Factors**

We included the following set of socioeconomic control variables. *Average wage per capita* is average monthly salary of employees in each municipality. *Urbanization* stands for the percent of the urban population in each municipality. Government workers are frequently mobilized at election to establish high turnout and the facade of mass support for incumbent (Frye, Reuter, and Szakonyi 2014). To control for this effect, we included the *Budzetniki* variable, which stands for the share of the state-employed workers in education and medicine in each municipality<sup>9</sup>. The *HighEdu* variable indicates the share of the population with higher education. All control variables are taken from the Rosstat website<sup>10</sup> for the year of election or lagged maximum two years before or after the year of election in each region if other data is not available. We also added a *Year* dummy and controlled for Moscow and Saint Petersburg (*MscSPb*).

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<sup>8</sup>Varyag stands for those governors who were appointed to head the region by the federal government and have no biographical roots with the region.

<sup>9</sup>Per 1000 people aged 15 years and over who reported level of education, ppm.

<sup>10</sup>The Russian State Statistics Service. <http://www.gks.ru/>

## Model and Results

For the dataset of 1402 municipalities in 43 regions, we used a multilevel mixed-effects model (Steenbergen and Jones 2002) to account for the variation at regional and municipal levels and control for possible regional-specific effects. A more common OLS regression is not applicable for multilevel data as it ignores both inter-regional variation and some dynamic features that might exist in hierarchical datasets. Fan et al. (2004) provide a detailed argumentation on the workability of multilevel models for the analysis of cross-country growth. They show that some state-level growth characteristics are produced by the development of the lower-level units, which influences a country's growth. By the same logic, we have sufficient grounds to assume that the patterns of electoral support vary from region to region and are produced by the specifics of local political regimes as well. Also, a multilevel model with random effects that is implemented for this study assesses interaction within and between each level allowing simultaneous investigation of factors specific to the regional and municipal levels.

We start with including in the models (with the three outcome variables) only variables on conflicts at municipal and regional levels without controls<sup>11</sup>. We present the results in Table 4 in Appendix.

Overall, we see that not all variables have the sign we predicted in the theoretical assumptions. We see that participation of the counterelite candidate has a higher negative effect than nomination, though it produces a statistically significant effect only on the voting for governor. At the municipal level, the *Strong Mayor* variable, which stands for municipalities with the most independent municipal heads, has positive effect on the voting results, which contradicts to our theoretical expectation. While municipal heads from UR (*UR Member*) produce higher result as we predicted and increase turnout and the governors' result (total) by about 4 percentage points. We see that conflicting with Business shows different signs, while conflicting with UR counter-intuitively produces a positive though not significant ef-

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<sup>11</sup>We control only for the year of election and MscSPb

fect on the three outcomes. The only significant negative effect for the three outcomes is produced by the conflict between the governor and the regional capital's mayor (*Gov vs Mayor*).

To test whether these results are stable, we add socioeconomic and governors' characteristics controls<sup>12</sup> and present them in Table 2 as the main results. We find that in the regions where governors have conflicts with the elites, both governors' electoral results and voter turnout are lower and the signs are the same as we expected. Though the majority of conflicts proved not statistically distinguishable from zero.

Municipalities headed by *Strong Mayor* heads have lower turnout and voting result for the governor compared with municipalities where municipal heads are elected through *Hybrid* and *City Manager* models. Further, in the municipalities headed by *UR Members* turnout and the governor's voting result are higher. We see that nomination of a *Counterelite* candidate decreases turnout, however, participation of a counterelite candidate decreases it even more (the same was found in the reduced model in Table 4), but for voting for governors nomination has a higher negative effect than participation.

Our main finding is a significant negative influence of the conflict between the governor and the regional capital's mayor on the three dependent variables. We see that in the regions where governors are involved in the pronounced confrontation with mayors their electoral result decreases by up to 16 percentage points (total) and by about 4 percentage points (turnout). Turnout is up to 15 percentage points lower. This result is robust and the only consistently statistically significant.

The first explanation for the size of the effect of the governor-mayor conflicts comes from the size of the territory the mayors control. Given that the majority of voters concentrate in the regional capital, conflicting with the mayor is the most vote-sensitive for the governor. This conflict questions the leadership of the governor in the most electorally resourceful area

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<sup>12</sup>Since ROSSTAT does not provide socioeconomic data for Saint-Petersburg we have to include socioeconomic controls and the control for Moscow and Saint Petersburg in the separate models. Those models with the control for Moscow and Saint Petersburg can be found in Appendix.



Table 2: The impact of elites loyalty on the voting results (main results)

VARIABLES	Turnout	Governors Result (total)	Governors Result (turnout)
<i>Municipality-level</i>			
Turnout			0.295*** (0.016)
<b>Municipal Heads</b>			
Strong Mayor	-0.888 (1.074)	-1.354 (1.127)	-0.003 (0.541)
UR Member	2.542+ (1.522)	2.506 (1.600)	0.221 (0.780)
<b>Control variables</b>			
Urbanisation	-13.041*** (0.964)	-12.465*** (1.012)	1.104* (0.535)
Aver_wage	-0.000* (0.000)	-0.000** (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)
Share_budz	48.911*** (14.298)	47.901** (15.021)	7.853 (7.338)
HighEdu	-0.000** (0.000)	-0.000** (0.000)	-0.000+ (0.000)
<i>Region-level</i>			
<b>Counterelite</b>			
Nomination	-3.429 (5.792)	-4.076 (5.825)	-2.907 (2.111)
Participation	-4.008 (7.965)	-3.157 (8.013)	-1.398 (2.915)
<b>Conflicts</b>			
Gov vs Business	-0.821 (5.975)	-1.859 (6.009)	-1.268 (2.179)
Gov vs Mayor	-15.641** (5.227)	-16.414** (5.258)	-4.448* (1.927)
Gov vs UR	-13.582 (9.103)	-15.882+ (9.155)	-2.777 (3.327)
<b>Governor characteristics</b>			
Replacement	-4.015 (5.801)	-0.740 (5.835)	4.800* (2.118)
Tenure	1.420* (0.688)	1.598* (0.692)	0.097 (0.252)
Varyag	15.074** (5.090)	16.789** (5.120)	3.138+ (1.874)
<b>Year</b>	yes	yes	yes
Constant	42.099*** (10.568)	29.562** (10.653)	58.599*** (4.005)
Random intercept variance	2.456*** (0.131)	2.461*** (0.131)	1.435*** (0.133)
Variance for residuals	2.247*** (0.023)	2.297*** (0.023)	1.577*** (0.023)
Var-L1	135.973	136.893	17.859
Var-R	89.411	98.798	23.403
Intraclass correlation	0.603	0.581	0.433
-2LL	-3615	-3662	-2955
AIC	7268.928	7362.950	5950.117
BIC	7366.474	7460.496	6052.540
Snijders/Bosker R-squared Level 1	0.4670	0.4803	0.6267
Snijders/Bosker R-squared Level 2	0.5468	0.5728	0.7608
Municipalities	970	970	970
Regions	31	31	31

Standard errors in parentheses; \*\*\* p&lt;0.001, \*\* p&lt;0.01, \* p&lt;0.05, + p&lt;0.1

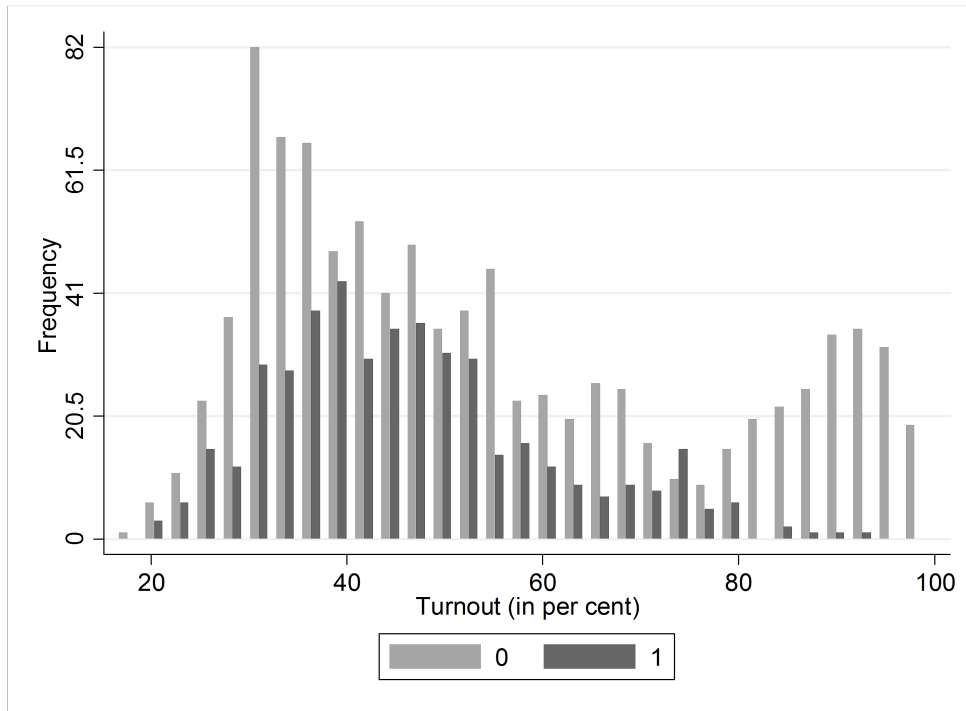


Figure 2: Governor vs Mayor Conflicts in Municipalities by Turnout

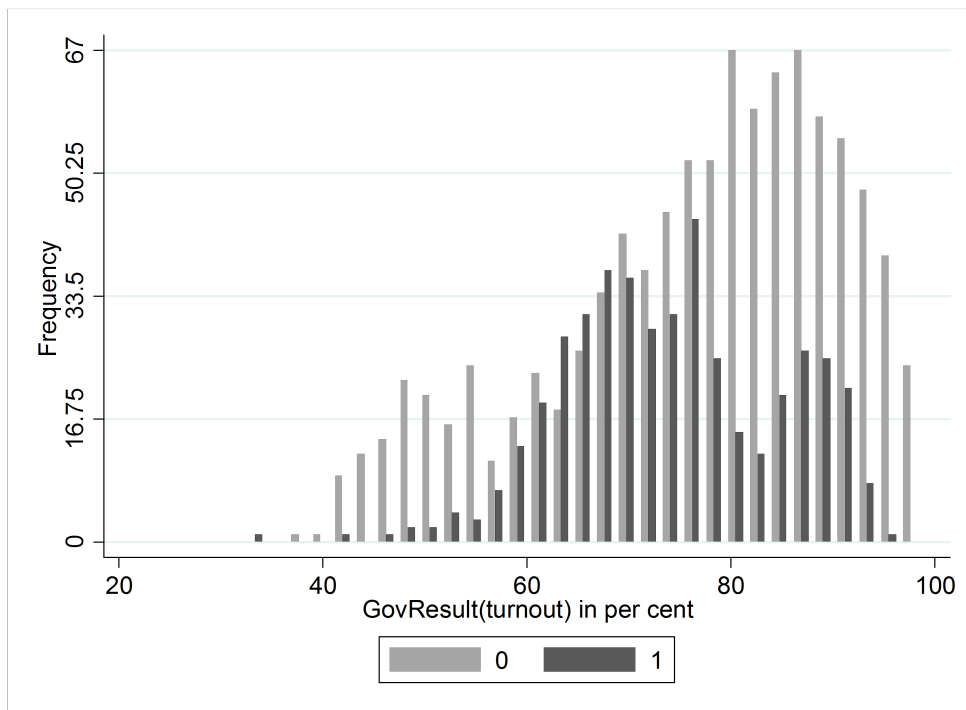


Figure 3: Governor vs Mayor Conflicts in Municipalities by Governors Result (turnout)

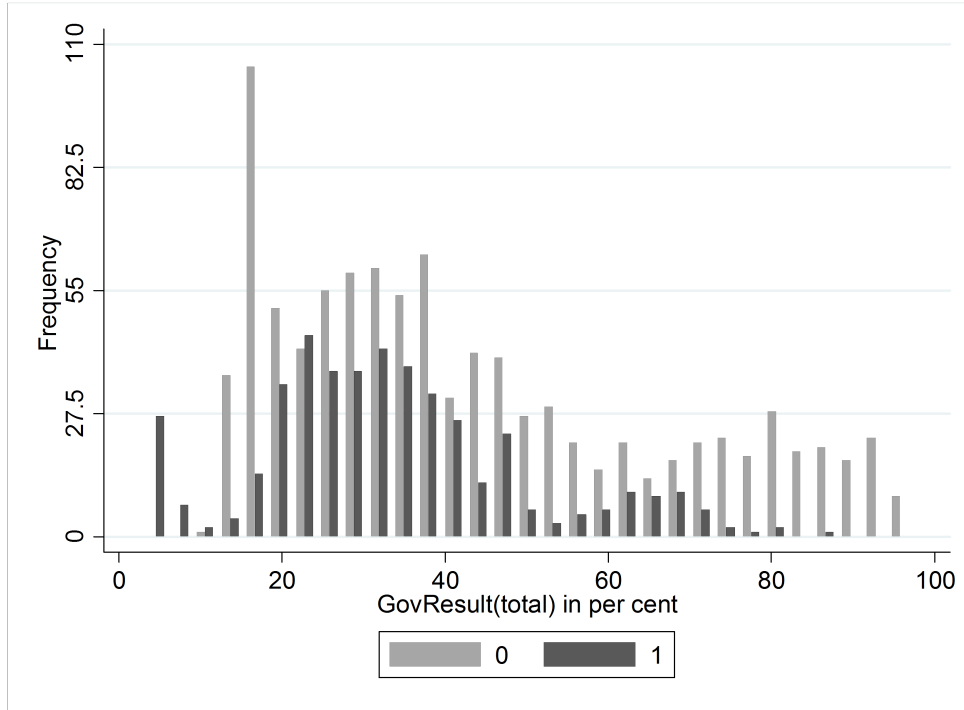


Figure 4: Governor vs Mayor Conflicts in Municipalities by Governors Result (total)

of the region, which is to a large extent controlled by the mayor. The governor’s political machine fails in the most electorally significant territory of the region as the governor-mayor conflict impedes effective work of this machine. If we calculate the geographical effect from the *Gov vs Mayor* conflict and number of voters living in the capitals, we see that the effect from the conflict turns even more pronounced (See Tables 5 in Appendix). However, the electoral weakness of the governors produced by conflicts with the elites became evident only after the direct gubernatorial election.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup>Limitations of the study are that we cannot definitely conclude that the weaknesses of the governors were produced by elite disloyalty and definitely we do not answer the reverse causation question. However, we can conclude that the conflicts weakened governors long before election since the majority of the analyzed conflicts lasted for up to a decade before the governors went through direct election. Belykh, Governor of Kirov Oblast, conflicted with the leaders of the Berezin-Krepostnov alliance and the Valenchuk business groups for more than ten years before election. Another illustration of a lasting governor-mayor conflict is from Nizhny Novgorod Oblast, where Governor Shantsev and Nizhny Novgorod Mayor Sorokin were in an open confrontation a few years before the direct gubernatorial election were held in 2014.

## Concluding Remarks

Is the impact of all elites equal in helping an autocrat win election? The intuitive answer is ‘No,’ however we have very few studies examining how conflicts between an autocrat and elites at multiple levels influence his performance at election and turnout. The widespread approach to elites as allies and adversaries of an autocrat considerably simplifies elite setups in modern autocracies. Given that the majority of autocracies consist of influential elites at multiple levels of governing, regarding elites as a consolidated actor leads to a misguided understanding of how autocracies are maintained from the bottom-up.

In this paper, we examined how conflicts between Russian regional autocrats and elites at regional and municipal levels impacted the gubernatorial election outcome. Switching to electing governors via public vote turned into a challenge for governors who needed to secure self reelection for the first time in the last ten years - while elites disloyalty could ruin these plans. We examined governor-elites settings in 43 Russian regions in the years they held direct gubernatorial election and find that in the regions where elites demonstrated lower loyalty to the regional leaders or conflicted with them, governors’ electoral results and turnout were lower. However, we cannot conclude that these results are stably statistically distinguishable. On the contrary, conflicting with the mayor of the regional capital does have a robust negative impact on both voting for the governor and turnout. Governors who face open conflicts with such mayors risk lowering their results by up to 16 percentage points and turnout by up to 15 percentage points, which in the negative scenario might have resulted in the second round of voting or even the governor’s defeat.

Our main finding enlarges a broader understanding of the autocracies maintenance when their leaders encounter direct election (i.e. Blaydes 2008, Magaloni 2006, Svoboda 2012). On the new empirical evidence we demonstrate that even if not officially competing with the regional autocrat (i.e. not running at election), influential elites can spoil his result by refusing to establish effective performance of the political machine. Overall within the limited competition and staged noncompetitive election, the most severe adversary to an autocrat

proves to be not the one who officially participates in the election against him (i.e. the counterelite candidate) but the one who accumulates the majority of resources to spoil the machine mobilization even while not officially campaigning against the governor. This finding contributes as well to the literature on patron-client mobilization (Lust-Okar 2006) and political machines work in autocracies (Stokes 2005). It confirms that from the mobilization perspective, the elites who control political machines work in the most populated territories, which are regional capitals in the Russian regions, should be of greater autocrat's attention. As disloyalty of this elite brings about the most tangible loss in voting for an autocrat and turnout.

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## Appendix

Table 3: Counterelite Candidates by Region

Region	Counterelite candidates	Nomination / Participation
Altai Republic	<b>Viktor Kaliuzhnyi</b> was nominated by the Great Fatherland party. He was Minister of fuel and energy of Russia in 1999-2000, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia in 2000-2003, and Ambassador of Russia in Latvia in 2004-2008).	Nomination
Altai Republic	<b>Vladimir Petrov</b> was nominated by the Civil Force party. He governed the Altai Republic in 1990-1997.	Participation
Bashkortostan	<b>Rail' Sarbaev</b> was nominated by the Civil Force party. He was Mayor of Sibay in 2000-2005, Minister of Property Relations of the Republic of Bashkortostan in 2005-2007, Ministry of Land and Property Relations of the Republic of Bashkortostan in 2007-2008, Prime Minister of the Republic of Bashkortostan in 2008-2010	Nomination
Kalmykia	<b>Evgenii Unkuurov</b> was nominated by the People Against Corruption party. He served as Director of the Russian State Television and radio Broadcasting Company "Kalmykia" in 2003-2011 and adviser of the former head of Kalmykia Kirsan Ilumjinov	Nomination
Udmurtia	<b>Andrei Markin</b> * was nominated by LDPR. He was a deputy of the State Duma and adviser of the former Prime Minister of the Republic of Udmurtia Yuri Pitkevich	Participation
Yakutia	<b>Ernst Berezkin</b> was nominated by the Civic Platform party. He was Deputy Minister of Finance of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) in 1998-2000, Deputy Chairman of the Government of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) in 2000-2002, Minister of Finance of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) in 2002-2005	Participation
Zabaykalsky Krai	<b>Alexsey Koshelev</b> is a candidate of Civil Platform. He served as Deputy Chairman of the government of Zabaykalsky Krai in 2008-2013	Nomination

\*Stands for candidates nominated by the systemic opposition parties (CPRF, LDPR and Fair Russia) and by the pro-government People's Front for Russia (ONF)

Region	Counterelite candidates	Nomination / Participation
Stavropol Krai	<b>Aleksandr Chernogorov</b> was nominated by the Party Action. He was Governor of Stavropol Krai in 1996-2008	Nomination
Vladimir Oblast	<b>Aleksandr Filippov</b> was nominated by Civil Platform. He served as adviser to the former Governor of Vladimir Oblast Nikolai Vinogradov	Nomination
Kirov Oblast	<b>Sergey Mamaev*</b> was nominated by CPRF. His nomination was supported by the counterelite group of influential regional businesspersons Valery Krepostnov (former Vice Governor) and Oleg Berezin (ex-member of the Nikolai Shaklein's team, former Governor of the Kirov Oblast)	Nomination
Kirov Oblast	<b>Aleksandr Tarnavsky*</b> was nominated by Fair Russia. He was supported by the same counterelite group of Valery Krepostnov and Oleg Berezin	Participation
Kurgan Oblast	<b>Ivan Evgenov*</b> participated in elections as a CPRF candidate. He was Deputy Governor of Kurgan Oblast in 1998-2005	Participation
Kursk Oblast	<b>Aleksandr Rutskoï</b> was nominated by the Democratic Legal Russia party. He was Governor of Kursk Oblast in 1996-2000	Nomination
Murmansk Oblast	<b>Aleksandr Makarevich*</b> participated in elections as the Fair Russia party candidate. He was Chairman of the Committee for press, information and analytical work in the administration of the Murmansk Oblast in 1998-2000, Deputy mayor of the Murmansk in 2000-2003	Participation
Novosibirsk Oblast	<b>Ivan Starikov</b> was nominated by the Civil Initiative party. He was Deputy Minister of economy of the Russian Federation in 1995-2000	Nomination
Orenburg Oblast	<b>Sergey Katasonov*</b> was an LDPR candidate as well supported by CPRF and Fair Russia. He was a team member of Igor Udovichenko, former main Federal inspector in Orenburg Oblast	Nomination
Orel Oblast	<b>Ivan Mosyakin</b> was nominated by the Patriots of Russia. He served as Secretary of Political Council of the regional branch of UR in 2007-2011. He was Chairman of Orel Oblast regional parliament in 2007-2011	Nomination
Ryazan Oblast	<b>Igor Morozov*</b> was nominated by the Patriots Of Russia. He was Deputy Head of the Federal Agency for Commonwealth of Independent States, compatriots living abroad and international humanitarian cooperation (Rossotrudnichestvo) in 2009-2012	Nomination

\*Stands for candidates nominated by the systemic opposition parties (CPRF, LDPR and Fair Russia) and by the pro-government People's Front for Russia (ONF)

Table 4: The Impact of Elites Loyalty on the Voting Results (reduced model)

VARIABLES	Turnout	Governors Result (total)	Governors Result (turnout)
<i>Municipality-level</i>			
Turnout			0.289*** (0.014)
<b>Municipal Heads</b>			
Strong Mayor	0.752 (0.972)	0.589 (0.993)	0.309 (0.497)
UR Member	4.407** (1.387)	4.298** (1.418)	0.345 (0.712)
<i>Region-level</i>			
<b>Counterelite</b>			
Nomination	-2.011 (5.125)	-2.150 (5.126)	-1.287 (2.574)
Participation	-6.217 (6.471)	-11.463+ (6.474)	-9.279** (3.252)
<b>Conflicts</b>			
Gov vs Business	8.676 (5.620)	8.062 (5.622)	-0.971 (2.825)
Gov vs Mayor	-11.541* (4.784)	-13.805** (4.786)	-5.343* (2.408)
Gov vs UR	-4.421 (6.818)	-4.475 (6.825)	-0.222 (3.427)
<b>Year</b>	yes	yes	yes
<b>MscSPb</b>	yes	yes	yes
Constant	55.271*** (6.728)	44.051*** (6.737)	62.044*** (3.466)
Random intercept variance	2.593*** (0.111)	2.592*** (0.111)	1.903*** (0.111)
Variance for residuals	2.346*** (0.019)	2.368*** (0.019)	1.675*** (0.019)
Var-L1	180.351	179.572	45.005
Var-R	108.840	113.803	28.465
ICC-L1	0.624	0.612	0.613
-2LL	-5298.553	-5328.436	-4368.120
AIC	10625.105	10684.871	8766.239
BIC	10698.384	10758.149	8844.752
Snijders/Bosker R-squared Level 1	0.2354	0.2829	0.4720
Snijders/Bosker R-squared Level 2	0.3224	0.3831	0.5502
Municipalities	1,386	1,386	1,386
Regions	43	43	43

Standard errors in parentheses; \*\*\* p<0.001, \*\* p<0.01, \* p<0.05, + p<0.1

Table 5: Geographical Effect from the Governor vs Mayor Conflict and the Number of Voters in the Regional Capitals (total)

VARIABLES	Turnout	Governors Result (total)	Governors Result (turnout)
<i>Municipality-level</i>			
Turnout			0.297*** (0.016)
<b>Municipal Heads</b>	yes	yes	yes
Control variables	yes	yes	yes
<i>Region-level</i>			
<b>Counterelite Conflicts</b>	yes	yes	yes
Gov vs Business	-3.674 (6.017)	-4.109 (6.148)	-0.449 (2.231)
<b>Gov vs Mayor</b>	-24.989+ (15.149)	-26.202+ (15.482)	-0.542 (5.648)
PopCapital (total)	0.301 (0.274)	0.199 (0.280)	-0.068 (0.102)
Mayor * PopCapital (total)	0.247 (0.408)	0.265 (0.417)	-0.106 (0.152)
Gov vs UR	-19.606+ (10.836)	-21.577+ (11.075)	-0.537 (4.048)
Governor characteristics	yes	yes	yes
Year	yes	yes	yes
Constant	31.970* (12.882)	22.478+ (13.178)	60.995*** (4.891)
Random intercept variance	2.414*** (0.132)	2.435*** (0.131)	1.409*** (0.134)
Variance for residuals	2.247*** (0.023)	2.297*** (0.023)	1.577*** (0.023)
Var-L1	125.001	130.300	17.645
Var-R	89.493	98.834	23.442
ICC-L1	0.583	0.569	0.429
-2LL	-3613.621	-3660.903	-2954.662
AIC	7269.241	7363.806	5949.324
BIC	7371.664	7466.229	6046.870
Snijders/Bosker R-squared Level 1	0.4927	0.4953	0.6348
Snijders/Bosker R-squared Level 2	0.5823	0.5936	0.7722
Municipalities	970	970	970
Regions	31	31	31

Standard errors in parentheses; \*\*\* p<0.001, \*\* p<0.01, \* p<0.05, + p<0.1



Table 6: Gubernatorial Elections in 2012-2014

<b>Date</b>	<b>Region</b>
14 October, 2012	Amur Oblast, Belgorod Oblast, Bryansk Oblast, Novgorod Oblast, Ryazan Oblast (5 regions)
8 September, 2013	Chukotka, Khabarovsk, Khakassia, Magadan Oblast, Moscow Oblast, Moscow (city), Vladimir Oblast, Zabaykalsky Krai (8 regions)
14 September, 2014	Astrakhan Oblast, Altai Krai, Altai Republic, Bashkortostan, Chelyabinsk Oblast, Ivanovo Oblast, Kalmykia, Kirov Oblast, Komi, Krasnoyarsk Krai, Kurgan Oblast, Kursk Oblast, Lipetsk Oblast, Murmansk Oblast, Nenets Autonomous District, Nizhny Novgorod Oblast, Novosibirsk Oblast, Orenburg Oblast, Orel Oblast, Primorsky, Pskov Oblast, Samara Oblast, St. Petersburg, Stavropol Krai, Tyumen Oblast, Udmurtia, Volgograd Oblast, Vologda Oblast, Voronezh Oblast, Yakutia (30 regions)

Table 7: Conflicts between Governor and Elites

Region	Governor vs Business	Governor vs Mayor	Governor vs UR
Altai Krai	Governor Karlin conflicts with the regional businessperson Mr. Bannih, a head of financial and industrial group (FIG) Sibma <sup>14</sup> .	Governor Karlin is involved as well in multiple conflicts with small business owners in the region <sup>15</sup> .	Governor Karlin conflicts with Mr. Savintsev, head of administration of Barnaul. As one of the results of severe confrontation was Savintsev's son arrest for corruption in 2014 <sup>16</sup> .
Volgograd Oblast		Governor Bocharov conflicts with Volgograd Mayor Guseva. As one of the results of the conflict the city utility services stopped transportation and disposal of garbage from the streets. This provoked a garbage collapse shortly before the elections <sup>17</sup> .	
Voronezh Oblast	Governor Gordeev conflicts with Iskander Makhmudov, head of Ural Mining and Metallurgical Company (UMMC or UGMK) <sup>18</sup> .		
Kalmykia	Head of Republic Orlov conflicts with the former head of republic and regional tycoon Ilyumzhinov <sup>19</sup> .		
Kirov Oblast	Governor Belykh has a latent conflict with businesspersons Mr. Berezin, president of group of companies "System" Globus ", Mr. Krepostnov, co-owner of agricultural holding "Doronichi", and Mr. Valenchuk, co-owner of a holding "Sputnik", which includes a chain of stores, a number of companies, and real estate listings <sup>20</sup> .		Governor Belykh conflicts with Mr. Suraev, a regional party chain heavyweight, who even tried to nominate for governor from UR instead of Mr. Belykh <sup>21</sup> .

<sup>14</sup><https://goo.gl/hWHMGK>

<sup>15</sup><https://goo.gl/zvfgDt>

<sup>16</sup><https://goo.gl/j2Ze91>

<sup>17</sup><https://goo.gl/vhY6q1>

<sup>18</sup><https://goo.gl/edu2iB>

<sup>19</sup><https://goo.gl/NiVdQt>

<sup>20</sup><https://goo.gl/v9jaQ1>

<sup>21</sup><https://goo.gl/ZAz79W>

<b>Region</b>	<b>Governor vs Business</b>	<b>Governor vs Mayor</b>	<b>Governor vs UR</b>
Krasnoyarsk Krai		Governor Tolokonskiy conflicts with Krasnoyarsk Mayor Akbulatov. Tolokonskiy prohibited paid parking in Krasnoyarsk downtown, which mayor Akbulatov had long lobbied <sup>22</sup> .	
Kursk Oblast	Governor Mikhaylov conflicts with the regional agribusiness, mainly with Mr. Greshilov, owner of JSC "Corporation" GriNN", and Mr. Chetverikov, founder of the "Agroholding" group <sup>23</sup> .		Governor Mikhaylov is involved in a lasting conflict with ex-secretary of the regional party cell Mr. Karamyshev, who left the post in 2012 but holds influence on the party politics <sup>24</sup> .
Lipetsk Oblast	Governor Korolev has a lingering conflict with Mr. Lisin, head of Novolipetsk Steel, or NLMK <sup>25</sup> .		
Murmansk Oblast		Governor Kovtun conflicts with Murmansk Mayor Veller. Murmansk mayor even appealed to the regional court to resolve the conflict on housing standards with the regional government <sup>26</sup> .	
Nenets Autonomous Okrug			Before 2012, Senator Koshin, one of the regional party leaders, maintained high influence on the regional branch of the party. After Mr. Kotkin was appointed regional UR secretary and Mr. Koshin became acting governor their relations strained. Very soon after Mr. Kotkin's appointment he replaced loyal to governor Koshin leadership of the party <sup>27</sup> .

<sup>22</sup><https://goo.gl/nCnBzU>

<sup>23</sup><https://goo.gl/qwMWwk>

<sup>24</sup><https://goo.gl/Dka2dk>

<sup>25</sup><https://goo.gl/XuSgkS>

<sup>26</sup><https://goo.gl/rn4DWm>

<sup>27</sup><https://goo.gl/rvcP4j>

Region	Governor vs Business	Governor vs Mayor	Governor vs UR
Nizhny Novgorod Oblast		Governor Shantsev conflicts with Nizhny Novgorod Mayor Sorokin. Nizhny Novgorod Duma dismissed City Manager Oleg Kondrashov, the governor's appointee. This happened on Mr. Sorokin initiative. In response governor Shantsev initiated Mayor Sorokin's dismissal <sup>28</sup> .	Governor Shantsev has a standing conflict with the UR top regional officials, who resist Governor Shantsev's decisions <sup>29</sup> .
Novgorod Oblast		Governor Mitin conflicts with Novgorod Mayor Bobryshev. Novgorod Presidium of United Russia, controlled by Governor Mitin, suspended Mayor Bobryshev's party membership. Simultaneously, the Russia's Investigative Committee repeatedly accused the mayor of malpractice <sup>30</sup> .	Governor Mitin conflicts with the regional party cell secretary Fabrichnyy. However, Mr. Fabrichnyy refused to participate in the party primaries before the gubernatorial elections and supported Governor Mitin in public <sup>31</sup> .
Novosibirsk Oblast		Novosibirsk Governor Gorodetsky conflicts with Novosibirsk Mayor Lokot' and puts pressure on him forcing him to leave KPRF for UR membership <sup>32</sup> .	
Oryol Oblast	Governor Potomsky conflicts with regional business groups. Regional businessperson Mr. Rybakov and Moscow businessman Mr. Isakov, associated with the former Governor Stroyev, nominated as opposition candidates for gubernatorial elections <sup>33</sup> .		

<sup>28</sup><https://goo.gl/ebsqBg>

<sup>29</sup><https://goo.gl/6j1JZ3>; <https://goo.gl/HDuAAH>

<sup>30</sup><https://goo.gl/n3HB4M>

<sup>31</sup><https://goo.gl/JEEVCA>

<sup>32</sup><https://goo.gl/QDoQMk>

<sup>33</sup><https://goo.gl/LchTnR>

<b>Region</b>	<b>Governor vs Business</b>	<b>Governor vs Mayor</b>	<b>Governor vs UR</b>
Primorsky Krai	Governor Miklushevskiy conflicts with multiple business groups in the region including an influential financial and industrial group (FIG) "Primorje" <sup>34</sup>	Governor Miklushevskiy conflicts with Vladivostok Mayor Pushkarev. In Vladivostok, siloviki (security forces) opened a criminal case on corruption on municipal contracts initiated by Mayor Pushkarev <sup>35</sup> .	
Pskov Oblast		Governor Turchak conflicts with Pskov Mayor Tsetserskiy. He publicly criticizes Pskov City Duma and the mayor in the press <sup>36</sup> .	
Altai Republic		Head of Republic Berdnikov conflicts with Gorno-Altaysk Mayor Oblogin. Russian Investigative Committee launched an investigation on the City Hall officials including the mayor <sup>37</sup> .	
Ryazan Oblast		Governor Kovalev conflicts with Mayor Artyomov <sup>38</sup> .	
Samara Oblast	Governor conflicts with local financial and industrial groups, in particular with Mr. Avetisyan, deputy head of RUSNANO, owner of "Volgopromgaz" holding (HSV), chairman of the Samara Regional Engineering Union <sup>39</sup> .		
Khakassia		Chair of the Government of the Republic of Khakassia Zimin conflicts with Mr. Bulakin, head of administration of Abakan <sup>40</sup> .	

<sup>34</sup><https://goo.gl/1a7Gi7>; <https://goo.gl/yAeM5L>

<sup>35</sup><https://goo.gl/6Mz4Ey>

<sup>36</sup><https://goo.gl/w4xGg1>

<sup>37</sup><https://goo.gl/gyWzhJ>

<sup>38</sup><https://goo.gl/sRnkfJ>

<sup>39</sup><https://goo.gl/RzmxTL>

<sup>40</sup><https://goo.gl/MnhXMF>