

Regional Governors in Russia: Resources, Strategies, and Electoral Outcomes

Abstract

Nowadays, Russian political regime is widely considered as electoral or competitive authoritarianism, and the political structure with the top-down command principle called “power vertical” had been successfully established. At the same time, subnational regimes in Russia still give an illustration of different political development trajectories. This becomes intriguing in the given national institutional context. This research is supposed to reveal the factors which determine the heterogeneity in subnational political systems through the prism of regional executive power. In particular, I analyse the following three aspects of the governorship: the differences in Russia’s gubernatorial tenures’ longevity, the difference in strategies regarding pre-election resignation since 2012, and the role of governors in the difference of electoral loyalty between republics and non-republics. The basic theoretical foundation of the research includes the cronyism theory, the “political machines” concept, and the postulates of the rent-seeking theory (and the political aspects of the resource curse concept). The empirical strategy and the chronological framework of the study varies in accordance to the goals of each part: the first research is the comparative panel data study of two periods of popular gubernatorial elections in Russia (1991-2005 and 2012-Present); the inquiry of pre-election resignations is based on the logistic regression model and devoted to the period after elections’ restoration (since 2012); and the comparison of governors’ role in different electoral outcomes in republics and non-republics is a panel data analysis and is chronologically framed by the period of 1999-2016 (including both parliamentary and presidential elections)¹.

¹ This part of the thesis might be later replaced by the study of gubernatorial party affiliations. In this case, the research question will be as follows: why does Kremlin allow their subnational agents to be not from the party of power, but from the loyal opposition or without a party membership at all? The chronological framework is planned to be from 2005 to Present with a separate analysis for appointed and elected governors.