

How Do Governors Build a Power Vertical in the Context of Mayoral Elections?

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Abstract

Although the spread of direct mayoral elections was weakened during the 2000s, they have survived in many municipalities until the present time. In the context of Russia's 'power vertical', regional authorities are strongly involved in local elections. As a rule, they have their own candidates and provide them with support during election campaigns. It is not surprising that most often the candidates of governors are incumbents. At the same time, there are many cases when a governor prefers not to support an incumbent. Based on data from Perm Krai, this article examines some competing explanations for the strategy employed by the Governor in mayoral elections. The analysis demonstrates that an incumbent's ability to provide the party of power with the best elections results is the most important factor determining the support of the governor. The second significant factor is the resources of the candidate. The policy implementation qualities of an incumbent are also taken into account but they are the least important. These results are in line with the general logic of an 'electoral authoritarian regime' that requires the building of 'electoral vertical'.

Keywords

local self-government – municipal elections – power vertical – governors – incumbents

In the 2000s, the construction of a 'power vertical' has become one of the main trends in Russian politics. In an 'ideal-typical' sense, such a political model presupposes a top-down pattern of executive recruitment, and this has been partially achieved by the cancellation of gubernatorial elections in 2005–2012,

and the direct elections of heads (mayors) in some municipalities.¹ At the same time, some institutional and political limitations have prevented the instigation of a top-down appointment system in all regions. In 2012, the direct elections of governors were restored with the addition of fairly strong barriers concerning the rules governing the nomination of candidates. Also, the direct elections of mayors still survives in a number of municipalities.

In the context of popular elections, building a power vertical requires additional measures. Specifically, it requires that chief officials of the higher level of a governmental system should be involved in the elections of the chief officials at lower levels. In this way we also see the creation of an 'electoral vertical'.² This article aims to study this process at the ground level of the vertical power structure: that is at the local (municipal) level. This study focuses on elections of the heads of municipalities in one of Russian region – Perm Krai. In particular, I examine a range of strategies of the Regional Governor concerning the selection of candidates. I focus on the Governor's position regarding the selection of incumbents. While in some cases regional authorities support incumbents, in other cases they nominate and move forward other candidates against the incumbent. Answering the question, what factor determines a governor's strategy, allows us to uncover important aspects of power vertical building at the municipal level.

In the first part of the article I briefly discuss the role of mayoral elections in the context of contemporary Russian politics. This is followed by a discussion of the factors which explain the Governor's position vis-à-vis the selection of incumbents. Next, the empirical data employed in the study are outlined. In the final section, the results of statistical analysis and their interpretation are presented.

Heads of Municipalities' Elections in the Context of a Power Vertical

Since the beginning of 2000s, many efforts have been made to limit political competition in Russian politics. Not being able to cancel elections, the ruling elite group sought to take them under control and to make them predictable and non-challenging for the regime. The policies of the regime are fully in

¹ The terms 'head of municipality' and 'mayor' are used as synonyms in the article.

² Cameron Ross, "Municipal Reform in the Russian Federation and Putin's 'Electoral Vertical'", *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization* 15, no. 2 (2007): 191–208.

accord with the logic of electoral authoritarianism.³ From the view of the ruling elite group, an essential function of elections is to ensure victory for the dominant party or its candidates. It is hard to deny that, at present, this goal has been achieved at least at the Federal level.⁴

Nevertheless, the sustainability of an authoritarian regime depends on not only on guaranteed results at the Federal elections, but also on the control over the political processes at sub-national levels. For this purpose, a specific party system, with a dominant 'party of power' – United Russia – was created.⁵ Although the dominance of United Russia varies greatly across the regions,⁶ the existing electoral and party systems allow the Centre to control regional legislatures.⁷

While the Center has mostly achieved the goal to control regional politics, the logic of the regime requires that a power vertical has to be built from the top to the bottom thus including the lowest level of government – the municipalities. However, some significant limitations have impeded the construction of the power vertical at the municipal level. While there are only 85 units at the sub-national level (subjects of the Federation), there are more than 20,000 municipalities at the sub-regional level. As a cartel of elite groups and an electoral machine, more than a unified political party with clear ideological grounds,⁸ United Russia has not been able to penetrate deeply into such a

3 Andreas Schedler, *Electoral Authoritarianism: The Dynamics of Unfree Competition* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2006).

4 Vladimir Gel'man, *Authoritarian Russia: Analyzing Post-Soviet Regime Changes* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015).

5 Vladimir Gel'man, "Party Politics in Russia: From Competition to Hierarchy", *Europe-Asia Studies* 60, no. 6 (2008): 913–930; Vladimir Gel'man, "From 'Feckless Pluralism' to 'Dominant Power Politics': The Transformation of Russia's Party System", *Democratization* 13, no. 4 (2006): 545–561; Grigorii Golosov, "Co-optation in the Process of Dominant Party System Building: the Case of Russia", *East European Politics* 30, no. 2 (2014): 271–285; Henry Hale, *Why not Parties in Russia: Democracy, Federalism and the State* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Ora John Reuter, "The Politics of Dominant Party Formation: United Russia and Russia's Governors", *Europe-Asia Studies* 62, no. 2 (2010): 293–327.

6 Petr Panov and Cameron Ross, "Sub-National Elections in Russia: Variations in United Russia's Domination of Regional Assemblies", *Europe-Asia Studies* 65, no. 4 (2013): 737–752.

7 Vladimir Gel'man and Cameron Ross, *The Politics of Sub-National Authoritarianism in Russia* (Farnham, Ashgate, 2010); Grigorii Golosov, "The Regional Roots of Electoral Authoritarianism in Russia", *Europe-Asia Studies* 62, no. 4 (2011): 623–40.

8 Grigorii Golosov, "Machine Politics: The Concept and its Implications for Post-Soviet Studies", *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization* 21, no. 4. (2013): 459–480; Henry Hale, "Explaining Machine Politics in Russia's Regions: Economy, Ethnicity, and Legacy", *Post-Soviet Affairs* 19, no. 3 (2003): 228–263. Timothy Frye, Ora John Reuter and

large number of municipalities. Additionally, unlike regional elections, where institutional rules facilitate political parties by means of proportional party list representation, most of municipal elections are based on the majoritarian system. As a result, in local elections, affiliation with United Russia is not as important for candidates as it is at the regional level.

Yet this limitation is not crucial, as parties and legislatures are not the key actors in Russian politics. Undoubtedly, the main load-bearing construction of the regime is the executive power vertical, i.e., a hierarchical spatial organization of power with a single chain of command extending from the federal center, via regional governors, to the level of local chief executives.⁹ In 'ideal-typical' sense, a power vertical presumes a top-down pattern of the recruitment of executives, but some institutional limitations make it impossible to fully achieve this level of control.

In particular, the Russian Constitution separates the local self-government system from the system of state government and declares a bottom-up pattern of the recruitment of local chief executives. The Federal legislation on local self-government of 2003 established some alternative models of local government and reserved the choice of which model to the discretion of the municipality. One of these options, the 'elected mayor model', where the head of the municipality is elected by the people and directly manages the local administration, was the most widely used system in the 1990s. In the second, alternative option – the 'council-manager model' – the head of the municipality is elected by municipal deputies among themselves, and the separate post of head of the local administration – the so-called 'city-manager' – is introduced. A city-manager is recruited by a special commission with half of its membership made up of representatives of the regional governor.¹⁰ Certainly, this model means that a governor gets much more direct influence on the personal composition of municipal executives than in the model with the directly elected mayor.

David Szakonyi, "Political Machines at Work: Voter Mobilization and Electoral Subversion in the Workplace", *World Politics* 66, no. 2 (2014): 195–228.

- 9 Cameron Ross, "Municipal Reform in the Russian Federation and Putin's 'Electoral Vertical'", *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization* 15, no. 2 (2007): 197; Grigorii Golosov, Kristina Gushchina and Pavel Kononenko "Russia's Local Government in the Process of Authoritarian Regime Transformation: Incentives for the Survival of Local Democracy", *Local Government Studies* 42, no. 4 (2016): 507–526.
- 10 The rule is applied for the second-tier municipalities – city okrugs and municipal districts. In municipal units of the first-tier (urban and rural settlements), half of the commission members are appointed by the head of the respective municipal district.

The 2003 Law¹¹ also allows sub-national authorities to cancel the direct election of local chief officials, who are perceived by many executives in both the Center and the regions as an obstacle to the power vertical project. Striving for a greater control over local governments, many regional leaders began to promote the council-manager model. As a result, while in the late 1990s, mayors were directly elected in almost all Russia's large cities, between 2001 and 2012, elections were canceled and replaced with appointment schemes in nearly half of the cities.¹² As Gel'man and Lankina demonstrate, United Russia served as a major 'agent' in transferring the model of direct elections to the council-manager model.¹³ Golosov, Gushchina and Kononenko argue that the council-manager model was more often introduced in more authoritarian regions, which were characterized by a strong personal rule, where the governor was able to keep regional and local politics under strong control.¹⁴

Nevertheless, not all Russian regions are featured by strong authoritarianism with personal rule by a governor. Besides, since the choice between the models of local government was at the municipality's discretion, pressure from governors has not always been successful. The council-manager model looks very attractive for a mayor with technocratic personal style, but it is much less beneficial for experienced public politicians with high leadership qualities and sufficient personal resources. As Reuter et al. find, 'mayoral elections were more likely to be retained in cities where elected mayors sat at a top strong political machines'. Apart from that, it allowed them to resist moving to the council-manager model, both the Center and governors need those mayors, 'who have a track record of helping the regime win elections at other levels (regional and national)'.¹⁵

11 The third possible model, which is a mix of elected mayor and council manager models, was also allowed by the 2003 Law. Here the directly elected mayor does not manage a local administration that is headed by a city-manager.

12 Ora John Reuter, Noah Buckley, Alexandra Shubenkova, and Guzel Garifullina, "Local Elections in Authoritarian Regimes an Elite-Based Theory with Evidence from Russian Mayoral Elections", *Comparative Political Studies* 49, no. 5 (2016): 664.

13 Vladimir Gel'man and Tomila Lankina, "Authoritarian Versus Democratic Diffusions: Explaining Institutional Choices in Russia's Local Government", *Post-Soviet Affairs* 24, no. 1 (2008): 40–62.

14 Grigori Golosov, Kristina Gushchina and Pavel Kononenko "Russia's Local Government in the Process of Authoritarian Regime Transformation: Incentives for the Survival of Local Democracy", *Local Government Studies* 42, no. 4 (2016), 507–526.

15 Ora John Reuter, Noah Buckley, Alexandra Shubenkova, and Guzel Garifullina, "Local Elections in Authoritarian Regimes an Elite-Based Theory with Evidence from Russian Mayoral Elections", *Comparative Political Studies* 49, no. 5 (2016): 664.

It should be noted that in 2014–15 some important amendments in the Federal legislation were adopted. According to these, the regional authorities are granted full discretion over the choice of the design of local government in their regions. Although they may give this choice up to municipal units, just a few regions have ceded this power to the lower levels. At the same time, a new model of local government – the ‘council-mayor model’ – was introduced by Federal Law. Under this system, the head of a municipality is selected by the deputies of the local council from the candidates who are nominated by a special commission. Similar to the council-manager model, a governor appoints half of the commission members; and direct elections are canceled.¹⁶ Moreover, the model requires that the mayor manages the local administration directly and, consequently, removes the co-existence of two powerful positions – the head of municipality and head of the local administration, which is a characteristic of the council-manager model. It is not surprising that the new model was greeted with enthusiasm by regional authorities. 15 regions have introduced the council-mayor model in all of their municipal units; 15 more regions have adopted it for selected types of municipality.¹⁷

Taking into account the fact, that many regions have retained the council-manager model, the number of regions, where mayors’ elections are held, has further decreased to 21. Nevertheless, the elections of mayors is still alive. In 4 regions (Yakutiya, Khakasiya, Kemerovskaya oblast’, and Tomskaya oblast’) heads are directly elected in all municipalities, and 4 regions use direct elections for the recruitment of the heads of the most important types of municipality (city okrugs and municipal districts).¹⁸ Consequently, although the relative spread of the mayoral elections has fallen over the period of the 2000s, they have survived until the present time.

Strictly speaking, as it has been argued by many scholars, elections are not a major threat to authoritarian regimes. On the contrary, they are useful for authoritarian rulers in maintaining a balance between different elite groups, allowing an enlargement of the winning coalition, and so forth.¹⁹ However, the

16 The rule is applied for the second-tier municipalities – city okrugs and municipal districts. In municipal units of the first-tier (urban and rural settlements), half of the commission members are appointed by the head of the respective municipal district.

17 Calculated on the basis of: “Uchastie Grazhdan v Mestnom Samoupravlenii v Rossiiskoy Federatsii: Analiticheskiy Doklad” (2015): 44–46.

18 Calculated on the basis of: “Uchastie Grazhdan v Mestnom Samoupravlenii v Rossiiskoy Federatsii: Analiticheskiy Doklad” (2015): 44–46.

19 Jennifer Gandhi, *Political Institutions under Dictatorship* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Beatriz Magaloni, *Voting for Autocracy: Hegemonic Party Survival and its Demise in Mexico* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Jennifer Gandhi

effective employment of elections for the purpose of strengthening authoritarian rule, requires that officials are able to handle such an instrument. In particular, elections should be embedded in a system of a 'power vertical', and executives of the higher level should be able to promote their agents by means of election, not only through direct appointments. Thus, concerning the elections of the heads of municipalities, the question arises how a governor behaves in the elections. In the context of a power vertical, a governor's strategy concerning incumbents is of special importance. What are the incentives for a governor to support or not support an incumbent?

How Does a Governor Make a Choice? Explanations and Indicators

Three explanations are likely to be the most plausible for the study of how a governor makes a choice.

The first explanation focuses on '*policy coherence*' between different levels of the governmental system. It is based on the assumption that the relations between a region and a municipality should be considered in the context of a correlation between 'part' and 'whole'. In other words, municipalities as sub-units of the region are integrated into the region as a 'whole' unit. Even in the situation of a high degree of municipal autonomy, both actors – a municipality and a region – are interested in good inter-governmental relations while they make policy implementation in several sectors. On the one hand, a municipality benefits from regional budget transfers for the purpose of local public goods provision (local infrastructure, housing, utilities maintenance, etc.). On the other hand, regional authorities need municipal officers as agents for the implementation of their own policy projects. Consequently, a governor is interested in ensuring that municipalities are headed by the leaders who share the regional policy agenda and make sufficient efforts to implement regional policies.

As an indicator of inter-governmental policy coherence, I use the activity of municipalities in the framework of the Fund of Joint Financing of Expenditures. The Fund existed from 2008 to 2012 and aimed to provide municipalities with financial support (transfers from regional to municipal budgets), in those

and Adam Przeworski, "Authoritarian Institutions and the Survival of Autocrats", *Comparative Political Studies* 40, no. 11 (2007): 1279–1301; Jennifer Gandhi and Ellen Lust-Okar, "Elections Under Authoritarianism", *Annual Review of Political Science* 12, (2009): 403–22; Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and Alastair Smith, "Political Survival and Endogenous Institutional Change", *Comparative Political Studies* 42, no. 2 (2009): 167–197.

programs which were defined by regional authorities as high-priority. In other words, the Fund was an instrument that regional authorities used to translate their policy agenda into the municipalities and to stimulate local governments to act in line with regional policies. The special feature of the Fund was that each municipality had a guaranteed amount of money that a local budget could get from the Fund, but in order to access the funds, a local government had to engage in co-financing. As a rule, if municipal executives shared regional policy priorities, they found the possibility to participate in respective programs. That is why the activity of municipalities in the framework of the Fund of Joint Financing of Expenditures may be considered as a suitable indicator for the evaluation of whether a municipality follows regional policies.

The second explanation – ‘*political loyalty*’ – strongly emerges from the logic of the ‘electoral vertical’. Since elections are considered as an instrument of keeping power in the hands of the ruling elite, all parts of the ‘executive vertical’ should ensure the best elections results of the ‘party of power’ and its candidates. As Reuter and Robertson demonstrate, the elections results of United Russia in the regions were the most important criterion for the reappointment of governors over the period 2005–12. They stress that, the ‘imperative of winning authoritarian elections forces authoritarian leaders to prioritize the appointment of politically loyal cadres, who can help the regime win elections. This choice often comes at the expense of appointing officials who are competent at making good public policy and promoting economic development’.²⁰

There is a good reason to propose that the same logic directs the strategy of a governor concerning municipal elections. Leaving aside electoral fraud in some regions of Russia, it is possible to suggest that the most common instrument for ensuring the required elections results is the so-called ‘administrative pressure on voters’ through intimidation, mobilization and monitoring. Some studies have demonstrated that such practices are particularly common in small companies connected with municipal authorities where employers have considerable leverage over the employees.²¹ Besides, such categories of voters as employees of public services (the so-called ‘budgetniki’ – teachers, doctors, and civil servants) are also vulnerable for administrative mobilization. Consequently, a governor is able to achieve the required elections results just

20 Ora John Reuter Reute and Graeme B. Robertson, “Sub-national appointments in authoritarian regimes: Evidence from Russian gubernatorial appointments”, *The Journal of Politics* 74, no. 4 (2012): 1023.

21 Timothy Frye, Ora John Reuter, David Szakonyi, “Hitting Them with Carrots: Voter Intimidation and Vote Buying in Russia”, *SSRN Portal*, 17 December 2015. http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2705075, accessed 17 March 2016.

by the efforts of local chief officials who have direct control over administrative mobilization. The extent to which a head of a municipality aspires to provide the party of power with the best elections results can be defined as 'political loyalty' – not only to the regime, but also to the governor. For the measurement of 'political loyalty' I use the results of United Russia in the respective municipal units in the 2007 and 2011 State Duma elections.

Finally, the third possible explanation is '*own incumbent resources*'. Local politics in the narrow sense of a political process in an individual municipality, tends to be relatively autonomous from the influence of the region. Each municipal unit is characterized by a special configuration of local elite groups, fairly strong social networks, informal personal ties, which generate more or less stable political coalitions.²² In other words, a head of municipality has their own resources, which can be converted into electoral support. A governor should take this factor into account when making a decision either to support an incumbent or to oppose him/her. In some cases, it is more profitable for regional authorities to support a popular local politician who has a guaranteed chance of winning, than to invest greater resources in the less popular candidate.

Measuring 'own incumbent resources', I rely on a very simple indicator that is his/her results at previous elections. It is undoubtedly not a perfect measure as incumbents could either increase or lose their own resources (support among local elite groups as well as the people) while in office, but it is the best proxy for the quantitative analysis.

Consequently, we have three possible propositions concerning the question – 'what factors influence a governor's support for an incumbent mayor?' Certainly, they are not mutually exclusive. In some cases, they may complement each other, but otherwise they are in conflict – if, for example, a governor has to make a choice between an effective public administrator (policy coherence proposition) and a weak manager who, however, is able to put pressure on voters and ensure the desired elections results (political loyalty proposition). Therefore we need to examine the extent to which a governor is guided by each of these logics.

Empirical Data

Perm krai is a typical Russian industrial region situated to the west of the Urals in the Kama river basin which had a population of over 2.6 million. 75 percent

22 Valeri Ledyayev, Alla Chirickova and Dmitri Seltser, "Who governs? Power in the Local Russian Community", *Journal of Political Power* 7, no. 2 (2014): 211–231.

of the population lives in urban areas. The region is rich in mineral resources (especially crude oil and potassium) and forestry. The regional center, Perm, is a large industrial city with many chemical and engineering plants, most of which were built during the 1930–1950s. The per capita Gross Regional Product is 238,822.8 roubles, which is the 20th best position among Russian regions.

The choice of Perm krai for this study is based on the following factors. Firstly, due to a high degree of economic diversification, the Perm political landscape is characterized by a fairly plural composition of regional political elite. Although United Russia dominates the regional party system, there is no a strongly dominant political actor in regional politics, and Perm krai is one of the regions which can be defined as a ‘competitive authoritarian’ region.²³ It means that the Perm governor does not completely control the political process in the region as well as in municipalities, as is the case in such regions as Kemerovo oblast, Belgorod oblast, Mordoviya, Bashkortostan, Tatarstan, and so forth. Consequently, there is a significant variation in the governor’s strategies on the issue of incumbent support, which is important for this study.

Secondly, the institutional design of the local government, which was established in Perm region after the reform of self-government in 2003, is also appropriate for the purpose of the study. In 2005, Perm krai was divided into 286 municipalities of the first-tier (urban and rural settlements) and 41 municipalities of the second-tier (city okrugs and municipal districts).²⁴ It has to be noted that the second-tier level of local government is much more important in contemporary Russia and that is why I focus on it in the study. In 2005, almost all city okrugs and municipal districts of Perm krai adopted the model of a directly elected head of municipality. In 2009–10, Governor Chirkunov promoted a campaign to cancel direct elections and to introduce the council-manager model, but it had very limited results, less than ten city okrugs and municipal districts followed the Governor’s recommendations. As a result, unlike in many other regions, elections of the heads of the second-tier municipalities survived in Perm krai until 2015. In 2015, when the Federal legislation, as it was noted above, passed the discretion over the choice of local government design to the

23 Petr Panov and Cameron Ross, “Patterns of Electoral Contestation in Russian Regional Assemblies: Between ‘Competitive’ and ‘Hegemonic’ Authoritarianism”, *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization* 21, no. 3 (2013): 369–399.

24 As a result of some transformations, by now, the number of municipal units has been reduced. Also, there were 78 rural settlements, 1 city okrug, and 6 municipal districts on the territory of the former Komi-Permyak Autonomous District that was merged into Perm krai. They are excluded from the study due to the special features of the territories of the former Komi-Permyak Autonomous District.

regions, Perm regional authorities made a decision to apply the new council-mayor model with a head selected by deputies of a local council for all municipal units of the region, which means that currently the direct elections of the heads of municipalities have been completely removed.

Hence, on the basis of Perm krai, I have a set of mayoral elections, the amount of which is sufficient for the analysis. At the same time, change in the Russian political landscape from 2005 to 2014 has to be taken into account. In particular, a party system with a dominant party in its ultimate form had been constructed and stabilized over the 2007–2008 electoral cycle. Previously, when the party of power was relatively weak, candidates for a head of municipality preferred to be nominated as ‘independent candidates’. The regional authorities’ support of candidates was rather unofficial and therefore hardly disclosed. Since 2008, conversely, United Russia began to nominate its own official candidates to all elected offices. As a rule, with some exceptions, such a nomination meant the governor’s support of a candidate. Certainly, in some cases there were strong disagreements and even conflicts between regional elite groups on the issue of which of the candidates has to be supported, but in most cases the sides achieved a compromise, so that a candidate, who was officially nominated by United Russia, can be identified as having the governor’s support. However, in some cases elite groups were not able to reconcile their conflict preferences. Sometimes it resulted in a situation whereby United Russia did not make an official nomination, although the governor supported his own candidate unofficially. In other cases different regional elite groups supported different candidates while a governor remained indifferent. All these special cases have been analyzed separately in order to identify the governor’s nominees.

Consequently, I examined elections of the heads of city okrugs and municipal districts in Perm krai from 2008 to 2014 excluding 2005–2007 period. In total I have 50 cases: 4 – in 2008; 11 – in 2009; 7 – in 2010; 13 – in 2013; 3 – in 2012; 6 – in 2013; and 6 – in 2014. Elections were held in 36 municipalities, including twice – in 14 units. In 5 municipalities, where council-manager model was used, there were no elections.²⁵

All elections have been analyzed from the view of the governor’s strategy concerning support of an incumbent which is the dependent variable in the study. I employ a binominal variable: the governor’s support of an incumbent is coded as ‘1’ and lack of support as ‘0’. As it is expected, the support of an incumbent is the most common strategy of the governor – 24 cases out of 50.

25 Initially, the council-manager model had also been introduced in Oktyabr’skiy, Dobryanskiy and Kizelovskiy municipal districts, but later these units returned to the model of the directly elected mayor.

The opposite variant, when a governor nominates his own candidate against an incumbent, took place in 5 elections. Also, we have 3 cases, where the governor maintained a neutral position, for one reason or another. However, from the perspective of the dichotomy 'support versus no support' such a position does not differ from the previous one, therefore in all 8 cases the value of the dependent variable is 'o'.

In 18 cases incumbents did not participate in the campaigns for various reasons. In 5 cases the mayors left their positions before the expiry of the terms of office. In Solikamskiy (2011) and Chaykovskiy (2014) districts they were dismissed by the local councils on the initiative of the governor. The head of Krasnokamsk district (2012) was found guilty and sentenced to prison by the court. The heads of Beriozovskiy (2008) and Ochiorskiy (2008) districts were forced by the regional authorities to resign their offices. The second class is of 6 cases, where incumbents decided not to participate in elections after finishing the terms of their offices. There is a good reason to suggest that their decisions can be explained, at least partially, by the position of the regional authorities. Finally, the head of Elovskiy district committed suicide in 2010, shortly after he was elected. In all these 12 cases it is reasonable that the dependent variable is assigned the value of 'o'.

Hence, I have a group of 6 cases, which are fairly ambiguous with regard to the governor's support of incumbents. In 3 cases – Vereschaginskiy (2011), Usolskiy (2013) districts, and special municipal unit Zvionozhnyi (2010) – the heads of municipalities did not participate in elections but, in contrast to the previous cases, they had good relations with regional authorities and were able to promote their own successors, which were supported by the governor. These cases were very similar to the well-known (in the Russian context) 'model of *preemnik*' (a hand-picked successor). A special kind of hand-picked succession took place in Berezniki, the second largest city of Perm krai, where some big businesses, first of all – Uralkaliy, one of the leading producer of mineral fertilizers in the world, keep city politics under their control. As a result, after the promotion of the former mayor to the office of Perm krai in Moscow, Uralkaliy recruited his successor, who was as expected, supported by the governor. Quite the opposite situation took place in Krasnokamskiy district (2009), where the incumbent tried to promote his own successor but did not succeed as the governor and United Russia nominated another candidate. Finally, in Uinskiy district (2009) the former head received a promotion and was posted to the office of the regional minister. He also tried to reserve the office of the head for his successor, but the governor preferred another candidate.

I suggest that support of a *preemnik* by a governor should be interpreted as approval of the activity of their predecessors. That is why the value of the

dependent variable in the first 4 cases is taken as '1' in spite of the fact that the incumbents did not participate in the elections. In Krasnokamskiy case the dependent variable is assigned the value of '0'. The Uinskiy case differs substantially from the previous one, as the promotion of the former head means that his activity was approved by the governor. At the same time, since he was not able to guarantee the appointment his own successor, it would be wrong to interpret the situation as either 'incumbent support' or 'lack of incumbent support'. Such an ambiguity forced me to miss this case in the analysis.

Consequently, 28 out of 49 cases are interpreted as elections, where a governor supported an incumbent, including 24 cases, when a governor directly supported an incumbent, and 4 – where the governor supported the incumbents' successors. In 21 elections, the governor did not support an incumbent: (a) nominating an opposite candidate against either an incumbent (5 cases) or his/her successor (1 case); (b) maintaining an indifferent position (3 cases); and (c) where the incumbents did not participate in the elections (12 cases).

There were only 6 out of 50 cases where the regional authorities did not have their own candidates. In all 44 cases they supported one of the candidates: 24 – incumbents; 4 – their successors; 7 – candidates opposed to the incumbents (hand-picked successors); 9 – candidates in the situation where there was an absence of incumbents. In almost all the cases the 'support of the governor' was accompanied by the nomination of a candidate from United Russia, with the exception of two cases – Ochiorskiy (2008) and Krasnokamskiy (2012) districts, where the candidates were clearly supported by the governor although they did not have an official nomination from the party.

Analysis and Discussion

The unit of analysis is the elections of a head of a municipality (49 units). Due to the dichotomous nature of the dependent variable, I use the logistic regression model for the analysis. My independent variables have been drawn from the explanations of a governor's strategies on mayoral elections, which were discussed in the second section of the article. Accordingly, three key variables are included in the regression equation.

1. The 'inter-governmental policy coherence' variable has been transformed into the *Policy Coherence Index* (PCI), which is based on the official budget statistic of the Fund of Joint Financing of Expenditures.²⁶

26 The data are not in open sources, they have been provided by the Analytical Department of the Legislature of Perm krai.

Since using the Fund by municipalities requires co-financing of regional programs, I assume that the more amount of money a municipal unit extracts from the Fund the more it follows regional policy priorities. So I calculate the share of funds, which a municipality receives out of the total amount of money reserved for it in the Fund.²⁷ As I suggest that a governor makes a choice either to support or not support an incumbent on the grounds of his/her previous achievements from the view of 'policy coherence', I use the value of PCI for the year preceding the elections.²⁸ Furthermore, mayoral elections were held in different years; and the changing economic context influenced the financial opportunities of municipal units. It would be wrong to use a PCI that is sensitive to the economic situation. Therefore, I calculate the deviation of a municipal unit's PCI from the average for the region for the respective year.

2. The 'political loyalty proposition' has been analyzed on the basis of United Russia's results in the 2007 and 2011 Duma elections in the respective municipal units (*URresults*).²⁹ For the municipal elections, which were held in 2008–11, I use the results of the 2007 Duma elections; for the mayoral elections of 2012–14 – the results of the 2011 Duma elections. At the same time, whilst in 2007, United Russia won 62.06% of votes in Perm krai, in 2011 the 'party of power' was able to win only 36.28%. We need to take into account such a difference, therefore, I measure *URresults* as a deviation of the share of votes of UR in the respective municipal unit from the average share of votes of UR in the region in 2007 and 2011 respectively.
3. The 'incumbent resources proposition' has been tested on the ground of the share of votes, which an incumbent won in the previous elections – *IncRes*.³⁰ So far, as I am interested in a governor's strategies concerning support of an incumbent, the indicator is likely to be valid even in cases

27 Strictly speaking, the calculation of the values of PCI is much more complicated due to the fact that the distribution of the Fund is a multistage process. Detailed description of the calculation of PCI is presented in: Anna Zyikina and Petr Panov, "Pochemu 'Bezdeystvuyt' Mestnye Vlasti? Priority Regional'nykh Vlastey i 'Politica Bezdeystviya' Organov MSU v Permskom Krae", *Vestnik Permskogo Universiteta*, no. 4 (2012): 90–106.

28 Since the Fund existed from 2008 to 2012, for 2008 elections I use PSI for the same year, for 2014 elections I use PSI for 2012. Also, it is necessary to take into account as the special case of the distribution of the Fund in 2009, when the Fund was cut significantly due to the crisis. That is why for the 2010 elections I used PCI for 2008.

29 The source of the data is an official website of the Russian Central Electoral Commission. <http://www.cikf.ru> (accessed 17 March 2016).

30 The source of the data is an official website of the Russian Central Electoral Commission. <http://www.cikf.ru>, accessed 17 March 2016.

where an incumbent did not participate in the elections. As it was noted above, in most cases, it was caused by an absence of support from the regional authorities. In three cases – Dobryanskiy (2011), Oktyabr'skiy (2012) and Kizelovskiy (2014) municipal districts – we have a very special situation, when direct mayoral elections, which had been canceled earlier, were restored. Therefore we do not have the data of the previous elections. In order to avoid losing these cases from the analysis, the values of IncRes are assigned as 'average value' that is '0.5'.

It has to be noted that the absolute values of all three variables (deviation of municipal unit's PCI from the average for the region; deviation of the share of votes of UR in the municipal unit from the average share of votes of UR for the region; and the share of votes the incumbent won in the previous elections) were so small that I multiplied them by 10.

Finally, I add one additional variable. In 2012, Governor Chirkunov was replaced by the new Governor Basargin, the former Minister of regional development of the Russian Federation. It is reasonable to test whether a personal change in regional leadership influences the strategies of regional authorities in mayoral elections. So I use the dummy variable *Basargin*, which is assigned '1' for the elections held under the new governor, and '0' for all other elections.

The results of the analysis are reported in Table 1. As follows from the table, all the propositions formulated above have been confirmed. All the coefficients have positive scores; consequently, a governor's support of an incumbent is explained by the combination of all three factors. The statistical significance of

TABLE 1 *Factors of incumbent support by a Governor (logistic regression coefficients)*

	B (Sig)	Exp (B)
Policy Coherence Index	0,173 (0,100)	1,189
URresults	0,948 (0,641)	2,581
IncRes	0,613 (0,288)	1,846
Basargin	-0,047 (0,731)	0,954
Constant	-3,037 (1,363)	0,048
Pseudo-Nagelkerke R2	0.271	
Chi-square (Sig)	11,030 (0,026)	
Percent of corrected cases	73,5	
N	49	

some coefficients is not very high but it can be explained by the relatively small number of cases in the analysis.

At the same time, the observed relationships vary in strength. The variable 'URresults' has the highest values of the coefficients. The value of Exp (B) for the variable is 2,581. Taking into account the fact that the figures of the deviations of the share of votes of UR in the municipal unit from the average share of votes of UR for the region have been multiplied by 10, it means that the improvement of the result, which United Russia receives in the municipality, by 10% increases the chances that the regional authorities support the incumbent in the next election 2.5 times. Consequently, the political loyalty of incumbents is the most significant factor of their support by the governor.

The second most important factor is the personal resources of an incumbent. An increase of the incumbent's results in the previous elections by 10%, enhances the chances to gain the governor's support by 1.8 times. The policy coherence explanation is the lowest in importance. Exp (B) for the variable takes the value of 1,189, which means that the efforts of an incumbent in implementation of the regional policy programs are awarded insignificantly.

It is noteworthy, that according to the results of regression analysis, a change of governors does not influence the strategies of the regional authorities concerning mayoral elections.

Conclusion

Despite the fact that elections have become common practices in contemporary authoritarian regimes, Russian chief officials would prefer the top-down appointment of executives rather than popular elections. If the legislation provides them with the opportunity to reject the direct elections of executives, they will use it in most cases. This may possibly be explained by the fact that electoral authoritarianism imposes additional requirements and skill demands on chief officials and not all of them feel able to satisfy these requirements.

Nevertheless, although the relative spread of mayoral elections was reduced in the 2000s, they have survived in many municipal units up until the present time. In the context of 'a power vertical', regional authorities are strongly involved in local elections. As a rule, they have their own candidates and provide them with support during campaigns. It is not surprising that most often a governor favors incumbents. However, there are many cases where a governor will prefer not to support an incumbent. In the article three possible explanations of a governor's strategy have been examined, and all of them have been confirmed. I find that a governor's support of an incumbent is generated by the

combination of three factors. Ideally, an incumbent should (a) follow regional policy priorities; (b) ensure desirable elections results for the party of power; (c) have their own resources for re-election.

Nevertheless, such a combination does not always happen. Sometimes, a governor has to choose which of these three factors is most important. My findings demonstrate that an incumbent's ability to provide the party of power with the best elections results is much more important than all others. The second significant factor is the personal resources of a candidate. Both factors may certainly complement each other, since if a candidate is politically loyal to the regime, his/her resources may be used for the victory of the 'party of power' in the elections. The policy implementation qualities of an incumbent are also taken into account but they are the least important.

These results are strongly in line with previous studies which were devoted to the appointment of governors in 2005–12, as well as with the general logic of electoral authoritarian regime. An 'electoral vertical' requires that, on the one hand, chief officials of the lower level are charged to ensure the 'correct voting' in elections at the higher levels. Thus, a governor is personally responsible for the results of the 'party of power' in Federal elections, whilst a head of a municipality should achieve the best election results of the party in both Federal and regional elections. On the other hand, in order to achieve this goal, the chief officials at the higher level should be involved in the elections of the chief officials at the lower levels. Thus, the Center ensures the victory of their candidates in gubernatorial elections and the governor – ensures the victory of his own candidates in local elections. The logic of the system is such that these two sides of the coin are strongly interconnected with each other.