

**Sub-national Appointments in Authoritarian Regimes: Evidence from Russian  
Gubernatorial Appointments**

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## **Abstract**

Elections are among the most important and least understood institutions in contemporary authoritarian regimes. Theoretically, electoral authoritarian regimes should have an informational advantage that makes them more robust than other types of authoritarian regimes, but much empirical evidence suggests otherwise. In this paper we offer a new perspective on why this might be the case. Specifically, we consider how authoritarian elections influence a ruler's choices in making cadre appointments. We argue 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, factors that may contribute to long-term regime stability. We test this theory using an original dataset of gubernatorial appointments in one leading contemporary authoritarian regime, Russia.

**Keywords:** Authoritarianism, elections, regime stability, appointments, regional governors, Russia.

The study of non-democratic regimes is undergoing a renaissance in comparative politics, as scholars and policy-makers try to understand a world in which authoritarianism seems robust, even after the so-called “third wave” of democratization. In particular, there is growing interest in the inner workings of authoritarianism and the implications of different strategies of authoritarian governance for economic and political outcomes (Malesky and Shuler 2010, Gehlbach and Keefer 2011). At the center of this research is a focus on elections. Formerly neglected as a sham, authoritarian elections are now seen as among the most important and least understood non-democratic institutions (Gandhi and Lust-Okar 2009). While there is much agreement that the presence of at least partly competitive elections makes a difference for authoritarian regimes, there is disagreement on just what that difference is. Scholars focused on the Middle East and other long standing authoritarian regimes have stressed the usefulness of elections to authoritarians (Brownlee 2007, Lust-Okar 2005), while those studying former communist states or sub-Saharan Africa tend to see elections as having the potential to undermine authoritarian regimes (Bunce and Wolchik 2011, Lindberg 2009).<sup>1</sup>

In this paper we offer a new perspective on the consequences of authoritarian elections that helps account for this apparent paradox. Specifically, we consider how semi-competitive elections influence an authoritarian ruler’s choices between elite appointment strategies that reward competent governance and those that favor political loyalty. Theoretical treatments of authoritarian appointments have dealt with the issue of competence and loyalty (Egorov and Sonin 2011), and extensive empirical studies in closed authoritarian regimes have implicitly examined the issue (Landry 2008), but the specific effect of elections on the type of cadres selected in an authoritarian regime has not been considered. We argue that the imperative of winning authoritarian elections forces authoritarian leaders to prioritize the appointment of

cadres who are willing and able to help the regime win elections. The tradeoff is that this choice may be made at the expense of cadres who are competent at making public policy and promoting economic development. Thus, authoritarian elections, rather than strengthening the incumbent regime, may undermine the ability of regime leaders to reward good governance and economic development, and in turn, undermine long term political stability.

To test our theory, we focus on sub-national, provincial-level appointments. Sub-national executives play an important role in the governance of advanced industrial democracies, but they are especially important in authoritarian regimes, which rely heavily on local cadres for maintaining order, for policy implementation and for information about political conditions in the provinces. Sub-national executives also play a key role in patron-client relationships, providing a connection between local and national elites, disbursing central funds and favors locally, and channeling tribute from the provinces back up the chain of command. Consequently, regional leaders often have considerable political machines that can be of tremendous value to the center in maintaining political order and support (Migdal 1988, Hale 2003). At the same time, even in formally highly centralized regimes, regional governors can develop considerable autonomy from principals, especially where monitoring is difficult or where local elites have access to resources (Ross 1973). For each of these reasons, sub-national executives play a crucial role in the politics and stability of authoritarian regimes.

This paper also seeks to contribute to broader theoretical debates in the literature on appointments and delegation in authoritarian regimes. Looking at patterns of gubernatorial appointments, we test a series of propositions about whether authoritarian leaders coopt elites (Smith 2005, Gandhi 2008, Malesky and Shuler 2010), repress them (Brzezinski 1956), reward them for electoral performance (Boix and Svolik 2008, Blaydes 2011), reward them for party

loyalty (Magaloni 2008), or reward them for fostering economic development (Li and Zhou 2005, Landry 2008). We suggest that where winning elections is a priority, authoritarian leaders will privilege electoral performance above most other cadre roles.

We test our theory, and a range of alternatives, with an original dataset of 139 gubernatorial appointments in post-Soviet Russia. We find that the appointment of Russian governors depends on their ability to mobilize votes for the regime. Thus, Russia's authoritarian leaders appear to be using elections—regional and national—as an informational mechanism for assessing the political loyalty of its governors. We also find some evidence of cooptation in Russian gubernatorial appointments, as governors with strong political machines were more likely to be reappointed initially. Good governance, as proxied by economic development, however, plays a more limited role in Russian gubernatorial appointments. These findings are in sharp contrast with studies of China, a non-electoral authoritarian regime where there is considerable evidence that cadre appointments depend largely on the ability of cadres' to generate economic growth (Li and Zhou, 2005, Landry 2008).

Our findings are consistent with the notion that authoritarian leaders use elections as devices for gathering information on the political loyalty of their elite supporters (Boix and Svoboda 2008). However, we improve upon existing research in a number of ways. First, our empirical models use a much larger dataset and control for a large number of possible confounding variables (including other possible manifestations of loyalty) than leading studies (Blaydes 2011). More importantly, by distinguishing between political loyalty on the one hand and policy competence on the other, our approach helps to illuminate some of the pathologies to which electoral authoritarian regimes might be prone. Given all the informational advantages claimed for electoral authoritarian regimes over other kinds of non-democracy, it is perhaps

surprising that the most prominent empirical studies find that electoral authoritarian regimes are no more robust than other authoritarian regimes (Brownlee 2010). In this paper, we shed light on why authoritarian regimes with elections may be no more stable than those without.

### **A Theory of Sub-national Appointments in Electoral Authoritarian Regimes**

Given the importance of sub-national appointments, one of the key issues in authoritarian regime design is creating a system that allows principals to gather the information they need to make good choices in appointments. Scholars of authoritarianism have suggested that contemporary authoritarians use elections as a key mechanism to gather information and in particular to help them identify who to promote and who to punish in making appointments. We agree with this claim, and demonstrate it empirically below. However, in this section we argue that most of the literature has neglected the problem of the trade-off between competence and loyalty that is a key issue in appointment decisions. In particular, given the imperative of winning multiple elections by large margins in electoral authoritarian regimes, we argue that political loyalty is generally a higher priority than competence. However, while favoring loyalty over competence solves a short-term political problem, it can lead to longer term difficulties in governance and does not necessarily lead electoral authoritarian regimes to perform better or survive longer than authoritarians without competitive elections.

A central issue in making any appointment decision is the availability and reliability of information on candidates. Some information problems, such as the fact that the principal usually has better information on incumbents than on potential replacements, are common to all political regimes (Huber and Martinez-Gallardo 2008). However, there are good reasons to believe that the information problems faced in authoritarian contexts are significantly more severe than they are in democracies. After all, authoritarian regimes usually lack basic mechanisms for conveying

credible political information, including a free press, viable opposition political parties, and rewards for credible public position-taking.

Solving such information problems is, many scholars argue, one of the key functions of elections in contemporary authoritarian regimes. In particular, elections are believed to play a crucial role in managing personnel and cadres in order to share power and retain the unity of the incumbent coalition (Magaloni 2006: 8-10). In this context, authoritarian elections are used to gather information about the loyalty and effectiveness of elite supporters in order to help identify those who need to be rewarded and those who need to be punished (Boix and Svolik 2008, Magaloni 2006). Blaydes (2011: 48-9) argues that the primary role of authoritarian elections is for “domestic political elite management” and specifically as a “device for the distribution of rents and promotions to important groups” and for rewarding “competence and loyalty”. This general line of argument is shared by others who see authoritarian institutions in general, and elections in particular, as a means of granting elites spoils, policy influence, and guarantees of career advancement in exchange for demonstrations of loyalty (Gandhi and Lust Okar 2009, Malesky and Schuler 2010).

However, while the existing literature suggests that authoritarian elections reward competence and loyalty, few authors distinguish between the two. This is a significant oversight since rewarding competence and rewarding loyalty are two quite different strategies, with quite different potential political consequences. It is one thing to give key jobs to *competent* candidates who have the technical and professional skills to make good public policy, and quite another to appoint *loyal* candidates, those who are politically close to the principal and can be relied upon to deliver political support. Moreover, while principals might want to reward both loyalty and competence, and candidates who have both qualities are likely to exist, there is no reason to

assume that competence and loyalty are positively correlated. Indeed, some have suggested that loyalty and competence should be negatively correlated since clever appointees may represent a real threat to the principal (Egorov and Sonin 2011). Hence, principals will often have to make a trade-off between the two.

In fact, even if competence and loyalty can go together, in electoral authoritarian regimes, even the most capable sub-national official will find it hard to combine building a political machine and pursuing economic development. This is because the combination of corruption, prebendalism, and patronage spending needed to build a political machine that can deliver the vote is also likely to have deleterious effects on the economy. Hence, structuring the incentives of sub-national officials in a way that promotes turning out the vote in elections as a demonstration of loyalty is likely to undermine economic performance whether the official in question is competent or not. As a result, the decision to reward loyalty or competence is likely to have far reaching implications for long-term regime stability.

While the distinction has yet to be made in the literature on electoral authoritarian regimes, the trade-off between competence and loyalty has been extensively studied in both democracies and in Communist regimes. In the voluminous literature on bureaucracy in democracies (Lewis 2009, Patterson and Pfiffner 2001), the trade-off between policy and patronage, or competence and loyalty, has been seen as a major issue for principals seeking to make appointments. Competence and loyalty trade-offs were also a major concern in the large literature on how appointments worked in the Soviet Union (Harasmyiw 1984, Hodnett 1978). Scholars of Chinese politics too have devoted significant effort to examining patterns of leadership recruitment. While some have found elite advancement to depend in part on clientelist networks and political loyalty (Zang 2004, Landry 2008), the Chinese *nomenklatura* system has



been notably successful in making performance-based criteria important determinants of career advancement. Several studies have shown that economic performance in a cadre's locality determines his/her chances of advancement (Bo 2002, Li and Zhou 2005, Landry 2008). Indeed, China's record of stability and economic growth has been attributed to a successful combination of meritocratic and political loyalty based promotion standards (Landry 2008).

If democracies and Leninist regimes have found ways to reward both competence and loyalty, how might we expect the modal category of contemporary authoritarianism, electoral authoritarian regimes, to fare in this regard? In thinking about how authoritarian elections might influence the trade-off between competence and loyalty, we follow the convention in the literature of defining competence in terms of the quality of agency output and loyalty as being the pursuit of the principal's political or partisan objectives. Specifically, we understand competence in a sub-national official to be demonstrated by achieving economic or social goals such as economic growth, low unemployment, improved housing, healthcare, education or other policy priorities. Loyalty, by contrast, consists of contributing to the success of the principal's political party, or the principal herself in authoritarian elections. Loyalty, in other words, is a question of political, not policy, efficacy.

So how would we expect central officials in electoral authoritarian regimes to manage the trade-off between loyalty and competence in making appointments? In electoral authoritarian regimes winning elections, and winning them well, is central to regime stability. Losing elections, or even losing ground to the opposition, can lead to elite defections, opposition coordination, and the crumbling of the incumbents' coalition (Levitsky and Way 2010, Reuter and Gandhi 2011). For example, after the ruling party won a mere 27 percent of the vote in Georgia's 2003 parliamentary elections, opposition groups sensed weakness and protestors took

to the streets, overthrowing a president who was not even on the ballot. Consequently, for most electoral authoritarians, elections are a very high stakes game and winning this game is likely to take precedence over delivering effective public policy and economic performance. As a result, while the economic competence of appointees may be taken into consideration, the first priority in electoral authoritarian political appointments is ensuring the selection of politically loyal officials who can ensure wide margins of victory in elections.

Moreover, while electoral factors are likely to matter in many appointment decisions, they will be especially salient in making sub-national appointments. This is because sub-national officials often shoulder direct responsibility for two key elements of electoral authoritarian regime stability – national and local elections. Most obviously, winning a national presidential or parliamentary election involves the ability to mobilize large numbers of people across large areas of territory. Consequently, having the right sub-national officials in place is likely to be crucial to success in national elections. However, as the Mexican PRI's demise showed, losing regional elections can also prove detrimental to regime survival, so sub-national officials will be expected to take care of local electoral mobilization even when the center's attention is focused elsewhere. Thus, the main argument that we test in this paper is that sub-national appointments in electoral authoritarian regimes will depend on the demonstrated ability of appointees to mobilize votes for the regime rather than on socio-economic performance.

Relatedly, if our main argument is correct, we might also expect to see some cyclical variation in the way the trade-off between competence and loyalty is made. Egorov and Sonin (2011) have argued that the choice between competence and loyalty will depend on the circumstances. Loyalty matters more the higher the stakes, and competence more the lower the stakes. We argue that electoral incentives are always likely to matter, but they are likely to be

strongest in periods before, or close to, national elections and weaker in periods after key elections. Consequently, we should expect to observe competence playing a bigger role in the aftermath of key elections when the electoral tasks have been accomplished and central incumbents are better able to risk some political shirking by agents if it means improved policy outputs. In the rest of the paper we develop an empirical test of these arguments and a range of alternative explanations in the context of one leading electoral authoritarian regime, Russia.

### **Research Design**

To test our theory we make use of an original dataset of gubernatorial appointments in Russia since 2005. The Russian case is particularly useful for examining appointments in electoral authoritarian regimes for both substantive and methodological reasons.

Substantively, as one of the largest and most successful electoral authoritarian regimes Russia is both paradigmatic of post-Cold War electoral authoritarian regimes and has been a model for others in the post-Cold War era. Moreover, like many sub-national authoritarian officials, Russia's governors have a large number of levers available to them for influencing politics and economics in their regions. In the 1990s, Russia's governors accumulated a great number of formal and informal powers that they used to construct elaborate political machines (Hale 2003). These political machines, which were based on a patchwork of patron-client ties and interlocking levers of influence in the economy, media, and civil society, were used by governors to mobilize voters in local, regional, and national elections. Although the strength of these regional machines began to wane slightly in the early 2000s, they remained significant well into the 2000s. For example, in the 2003 Duma elections, United Russia's success depended largely on the party's ability to secure the support of powerful regional governors and the prominence of governors in electoral politics has continued after governors became appointed. In

the 2007 State Duma elections and in most regional elections, governors have served widely as ‘poster-candidates’—candidates with name recognition who appeared on the ballot, with no intention of taking their seat (Tkacheva 2008).

Methodologically, the case offers advantages too. First, governors preside over well-defined administrative entities where political, social, and economic indicators are commonly aggregated, making assessing performance easier. Moreover, by the standards of authoritarian regimes, Russia’s relatively free print and internet media provide a wealth of information on gubernatorial appointments that allows for detailed analysis of different aspects of the theory.

Finally, as we detail in the appendix, Russia switched from a system of elected governors to direct gubernatorial appointments by central authorities in 2005. This provides an unusual opportunity to see how appointments are made in a context where the existing set of governors is not already endogenous to the preferences of the center. Finding a clean test of a theory of appointment strategy in authoritarian regimes is generally difficult because at any given point in time the appointment strategy being implemented will be a function of who appointed sitting officials and who is now making appointments. However, the switch from elections to appointments in the Russian case offers a rare opportunity to largely eliminate endogeneity from appointment decisions, because the incumbent group of governors was elected almost independently of the Kremlin’s preferences. By the time Putin came to power all governors (with the exception of the President of Dagestan) had been popularly elected at least once and in 48 of 88 cases, the governor had been in office before Putin assumed the presidency. In the remaining cases, the center could (and did) try to interfere in regional politics, but with mixed results. In elections between 2001 and 2004 only 15 Kremlin-backed candidates successfully challenged incumbents out of some 72 electoral contests (Goode 2007: 376). Indeed, some have argued that

the switch to appointments was the result of Kremlin frustration with its inability to get its own way in regional elections (Chebankova 2005: 941-2). Thus, the array of governors facing the Kremlin in 2005 consisted of a mix of friends, foes, non-aligned governors, ex-Soviet bosses, businessmen, insiders, outsiders, ethnic Russians, and ethnic minorities who provide an unusually good environment for analyzing appointment strategies.<sup>2</sup>

Given the centrality of appointments in post-Communist politics, it is perhaps surprising that there has been little work on elite appointment strategies in post-Soviet Russia. Konitzer (2005) showed that in the period when Russian governors were elected, economic factors played a major role, in contrast to Ukraine where gubernatorial appointments were strongly influenced by the partisan interests of President Kuchma's party. Literature on appointments in the Kremlin and federal executive suggests that personal relations and informal linkages play the most important role (Kryshtanovskaya and White 2010). Existing analyses of Russian gubernatorial appointments suggest a different logic. Several authors suggest that a co-optive logic explains Russian gubernatorial appointments under Putin. Because incumbency rates were so high after the cancellation of direct gubernatorial elections in 2004, it has been suggested that a bargain was struck with Russia's powerful governors, letting them to keep their positions in exchange for not protesting the cancellation of elections (Goode 2007, Sharafutdinova 2010). Indeed, it has been noted that Putin allowed governors to sidestep their term limits by reappointing them in 2005. Aside from this important insight, however, existing analysis have identified few consistent patterns in the descriptive data on Russia's gubernatorial appointments.

### **Data and Models**

*Dependent Variable* To test our theory we employ an original dataset of gubernatorial appointments from 2005-2010 in all of Russia's 89 federal subjects – a total of 140

appointments, including 64 replacements. We use two units of analysis in our models. Since under current legislation governors can be replaced by the President at any time, our primary unit of analysis is the region-year and our dependent variable is whether a governor is reappointed to his post in a given year. The dependent variable is coded 1 if a governor is replaced and 0 if he/she is not. However, since appointment events are a natural time for changes to be made we also test the results using only appointment events as observations.

Two issues to deal with in coding this variable are promotions and deaths in office. The three deaths in office that occurred in the sample, are simply coded as 0 (no replacement). Since the governor was not replaced before his death, the observation is censored and we treat it as if the governor was not replaced. Promotions present a slightly more difficult challenge. Political loyalty, competence, popularity, and economic performance may be rewarded not just with reappointment but also with promotion to a higher position. Since we assume that politicians want to maximize their power, which may mean seeking promotion to higher office, we count promotions as instances of governors “retaining” their office. Thus, a value of 0 on the dependent variable should be more precisely understood to mean a governor retaining his post as governor *or* being promoted to a higher office. The effect of mixing promotions and reappointments is minimal since governorships are usually peak-of-career positions in Russia and promotions are very rare. Indeed, of the 140 appointments made since 2005 only 5 resulted in the old governor being promoted to a higher position.<sup>3</sup>

Since the dependent variable in all specifications is binary, we use logit models in all analyses. Within regions, serial autocorrelation is possible since unmeasured unit-specific factors may increase or decrease the time it takes for a governor to be reappointed. With such small panels (average  $T=3.84$ ), lagging the dependent variable is not feasible nor are most FGLS

approaches. Thus, we cluster robust standard errors on region, which takes account of unit heterogeneity and the most likely source of autocorrelation in our data.<sup>4</sup>

### **Appointments and Loyalty: Measures**

For our purposes, as defined above, politically loyal governors are those that are effective at undertaking measures to ensure the regime's longevity. There are a number of dimensions to this, but, as we have argued, in an electoral authoritarian regime, such as cotemporary Russia, a cadre's success at generating high vote totals for the regime is a key metric and a crucial measure of political loyalty.

In using election results as a measure we follow others who have made the point that sub-national appointments sometimes depend on the ability of those officials to mobilize votes (Blaydes 2011). In Ukraine, Matsuzato (2001) finds that President Kuchma removed governors in oblasts that turned out for Kuchma's opponent in presidential elections. Konitzer and Wegren (2007) and Sharafutdinova (2010) also suggest that gubernatorial appointments in Russia may depend upon vote totals, though they never test this proposition. Press reports also suggest that gubernatorial appointments (as well as jobs in the State Duma deputies, Federation Council, and key jobs in the regions), depend on these elites' ability to secure favorable results for United Russia in regional elections.<sup>5</sup> United Russia leaders have also indicated that gubernatorial replacement may be linked to the party's performance in regional elections.

Thus, as an indicator of a governor's effective political loyalty we use United Russia's vote share in the party list portion of the most recent regional election that occurred under the governor's tenure after 2003 (when United Russia began competing earnestly in regional elections as the ruling party). This variable is called *UR Vote Share*. In some models, we use United Russia's vote share in the region in the 2007 State Duma elections, *UR 2007 Duma Vote*

*Share*. We prefer the former as the primary independent variable because it allows us to examine appointments that took place prior over the full sample, 2005-2010, whereas using *UR 2007 Duma Vote Share* requires us to limit the sample to the post -2007 period. Nonetheless we also run models using *UR 2007 Duma Vote Share* to show that our results are robust to using national level results. Negative coefficients on these variables would indicate that governors in regions where United Russia performs well are less likely to be replaced.

However, a governor's loyalty cannot be gauged just by looking at the aggregate vote totals for United Russia. United Russia's electoral performance depends on factors aside from the governor's political support and skill. Some regions are more disposed than others to voting for United Russia. They may have electorates that share United Russia's ideas or their electorates may be structurally predisposed to dependence on the state. Moreover, across regions there has been a broad improvement in United Russia's electoral performance over time. In 2004, its average share of the party list vote in regional elections was 34.8%. By 2008, its average share of the vote had grown to 63.7%. Whatever the reasons for this growth, what appeared a strong result for United Russia in 2004, would have been perceived as a very poor result in 2008.

It is plausible to assume that the Russian leadership understands these other factors that influence a governor's capacity to turn out the vote for United Russia, and so we argue that they need to be taken into account in assessing gubernatorial performance. For example, a governor who generates low vote totals for United Russia may not necessarily be punished for that poor performance if the region is one where, for some structural or idiosyncratic reasons, the opposition is very popular. Meanwhile, if a governor secures an *average* vote total for United Russia in a region that historically been very supportive of the ruling party, he/she may receive



sanction. Thus, the concept to be measured here is the governor's ability to generate votes for United Russia above some exogenously set baseline.

To ensure that we take into account the baseline, we control for factors that affect United Russia's regional electoral performance. These factors are determined in baseline OLS regressions, which are described in more detail in the web appendix. They are United Russia's party list vote total in the region for the 2003 Duma elections (*UR 2003 Duma Vote Share*), economic growth (*Lagged GRP Growth*), unemployment (*Lagged Change in Unemployment*), the percent of a region's population that is Russian (*Percent Russian*), the year in which the election was held (*Year*), and a dummy for the 2007 Duma elections when extra mobilizational effort lifted the vote totals for United Russia in concurrent regional elections.

As a further check we construct a measure of under/over performance by governors, *UR Relative Electoral Performance*, which combines regional and national election results into a single measure of United Russia's electoral performance. To construct this measure we first estimate separate OLS regression models of United Russia's performance in regional elections and in the 2007 Duma elections. These models generate predictions for United Russia's expected performance in these elections. Since the variables in these models are commonly known to affect the vote total for United Russia, these model predictions are construed as the baseline vote total that United Russia could be expected to achieve in a given election. We then use the residuals from these models as indicators of the extent to which United Russia over or underperforms in a given election. Positive residuals indicate that United Russia over-performed in the election, while negative residuals indicate that United Russia underperformed in the election. These residuals are then included as regressors in the main model. If a regional election is the most recent electoral contest in a given year, then the residual for the regional elections model is

used, if the most recent election is the 2007 Duma election, then the residual from that model is used. Since the two sets of residuals vary in scale, we normalize both variables before combining them into a single measure of under/over performance in elections. This measure is preferable to the other measures because it allows us to combine both sets of elections in a single measure, but it also forces us to rescale the dependent variable so that the results are less interpretable.

We also examine the impact of a second measure of loyalty, which recognizes that mobilizing votes for the ruling group is a short-term show of loyalty and not necessarily a sign of long-term commitment. Presumably, leaders would also prefer that their officials make long-term, sunk-cost investments in the regime, such as linking their political careers to the ruling party. In established one-party systems, cadres are advanced not just on the basis of transient fealty, but also according to their level of long-term commitment to the ruling party (Landry 2008). Thus, we construct an alternative measure of loyalty to United Russia that is the length of time (in years) that a sitting governor has been a member of United Russia. We call this variable *Duration of UR Membership*. *Ceteris paribus*, long-serving party members should be more likely to be rewarded and retained, so we expect a negative coefficient on this variable.

### **Alternative Explanations**

*Economic Competence* A long research tradition in political economy has been built on identifying why certain states are better than others at facilitating economic performance. Much of this research has focused on identifying the conditions under which government officials have the incentive to facilitate economic performance. Indeed, a central feature of the literature on Weberian bureaucracies is that competent economic managers are selected over politically loyal ones (Evans and Rauch 1999). In the absence of competitive elections, one way that authoritarian leaders can promote economic development is by making career advancement contingent on a

cadre's success at promoting economic development. Such a policy not only ensures that capable economic managers remain in positions of power, but also sends a signal to other cadres that their career prospects depend on socio-economic development in their region. Since appointees' behavior in office is largely determined by their promotion incentives, economic development is fostered by a cadre management policy that rewards economic performance. In China, it has been argued that central authorities have made such performance-based promotions a priority (Bo 2002, Li and Zhou 2005, Landry 2008). We test the same hypothesis for Russia.

We measure economic performance in several ways. First, we include a measure of the lagged growth in gross regional product, *Lagged Growth*, and the lagged change in unemployment, *Lagged Increase in Unemployment*, to capture recent macro-economic performance. These variables are missing if there is a change of governor for the year. Second, we include summary measures of “economic effectiveness” compiled by the Russian Ministry of Regional Development (Minregion). In June 2007, President Putin issued a decree tasking MinRegion with developing 82 criteria for assessing the socio-economic effectiveness of Russian regional chief executives. Minregion compiles reports that rank regions on their overall “effectiveness” and on the effectiveness of budgetary expenditures in specific policy areas. The indicators used in making these assessments are transparent and objective—in most cases, official statistics from the Federal State Statistics Service—but the method for compiling the rankings is not made clear in publicly available documents. Nonetheless, these rankings are useful, because they reflect the Russian government's quantitative assessment of economic performance in the Russian regions, weighted by the factors that they prioritize. We use both the overall ranking of the region provided in the reports, *Economic Ineffectiveness Ranking*, and rankings compiled on the effectiveness of budgetary expenditures in three policy areas,

*Ineffectiveness of Healthcare Expenditures, Ineffectiveness of Education Expenditures, and Ineffectiveness of Communal Services Expenditures.* Higher values on these variables indicate lower rankings, so a positive coefficient on this variable means that those regional executives that are deemed economically ineffective are more likely to be replaced.

*Cooptation* Leaders may want to coopt politically strong governors in order to take advantage of their resources and political skill. Cooptation is likely when the cost of repressing powerful elites and social groups is high (Gandhi 2008, Smith 2005). In the context of Russian governors, destroying the entrenched political machines of strong governors might be costly, so a more cost-effective appointment strategy might be to coopt these governors and rule through them (Goode 2007, Reuter 2010). However, governors with strong political machines may be politically effective, but they may not be loyal. A governor's autonomous resources may afford him the ability to stand up to the Kremlin. In other words, reappointing strong, independent governors who can use their local power bases to generate votes for the regime is different from appointing governors who are skilled at turning out the vote for United Russia *and* who are wholly dependent on the Kremlin. Thus, we test whether the Kremlin reappointed strong governors in spite of their potential for disloyalty.

We use the governor's margin of victory in his most recent election bid as a proxy for the strength of his political machine (*Margin of Governor's Victory*). While this measure has been used before to measure gubernatorial strength in other work on Russian regions (Reuter 2010, Robertson 2007), it is not without its drawbacks. Most notably, we only have data for governors who were previously elected and not for appointed ones. Assuming that appointed governors have no independent electoral resources, and therefore should receive a 0 on this variable is likely to miss the strength particularly of those appointees who were drawn from the region's

elite, and may inherit the previous incumbent's clientelist networks. Thus, in the appendix, we run robustness tests where we replace the value of *Margin of Governor's Victory* for appointed governors with the percent of the vote won by the previous governor if the new governor was vice governor under the old governor. The results are substantively unchanged.

Another version of cooptation is to reward not just strength but popularity. A benevolent regime leader may want cadre policy to reflect citizen preferences and so will reappoint more popular governors. More likely, regime leaders who want to ameliorate destabilizing social strife will reappoint popular governors. Either way, in this case what matters is not that the governor is good at winning elections, but rather that she has a popular mandate to govern. Election results could be, in the eyes of the Kremlin, a proxy for the popularity of the governor. To test this we include the popularity of the governor in the region, as measured by a series of opinion polls conducted under the aegis of the Public Opinion Foundation's (FOM) Geo-rating project. These surveys ask respondents in 68 regions: "Do you think the leader of your region is doing a good job or a bad job?" We use the percent of respondents who think their governor is doing a good job as an indicator of the *Governor's Popularity*. If we hold constant *Governor's Popularity* and still find that *UR Vote Share* is a significant predictor of reappointment chances, then we can be all the more certain that officials are replaced for their effectiveness at turning out the vote.<sup>6</sup>

*Coercion* Coercion constitutes an important alternative explanation for patterns of gubernatorial appointments. According to this theory, strong governors are not reappointed but instead may be sacked so that they may be deprived of their political machines. Governors may be rotated out of their positions so as to prevent them from building local power bases that could be used to challenge central authority (Migdal 1988). If this is true, then strong, resourceful governors should be more likely to be removed and the coefficient on *Governor's*

*Margin of Victory* should be positive. While this view is undermined by analyses of gubernatorial appointments that point to the high rates of reappointment in the early Putin years (Goode 2007, Sharafitudinova 2010), we examine it statistically here.

*Idiosyncrasy* Another possible alternative explanation is that appointments are determined by idiosyncratic factors. Observers of Russian politics frequently cite relations with key members of the leadership's inner circle as the key reason for why this or that cadre was chosen as governor. Such explanations are sometimes persuasive, given the informal relations that suffuse Russian politics. Thus, the null hypothesis is that appointments are so personalized and idiosyncratic that no systematic relationships can be uncovered.

*Controls* We include a series of control variables that capture other explanations. First, we control for whether the governor's term is expiring in a given year, *End of Term*. Although, governors can be fired before their term ends, the Kremlin typically waits until the end of a governor's term before making a change. Second, we control for both the *Age* of the governor and his length of time in office, *Tenure*. Elderly governors are more likely to retire and long-serving governors may be removed in order to limit the number of terms. Alternatively, tenure might be a proxy for a governor's political machine and governors with long tenures will be coopted and reappointed. We also include a control variable, *Medvedev*, coded 1 if the appointment comes after President Medvedev was sworn in. In addition, we control for the ethnic makeup of the region with a variable measuring the percent of the population that is Russian, *Percent Russian*. This variable distinguishes the ethnic republics, and particularly those with large non-Russian populations, from other regions.

## **Results**

Summarizing briefly, we find strong and consistent evidence that appointment patterns are primarily influenced by the degree to which United Russia over-performs in elections in the regions – governors who turn in strong UR performances in their regions are likely to be reappointed, while governors who do not are more likely to be replaced. By contrast, there is only weak and inconsistent evidence that appointments are related to the range of indicators of economic performance. In addition, there is some evidence of efforts to coopt strong governors, especially when the appointment process first was introduced, but little sign of systematic efforts to eliminate strong governors. All results are given in Table 1.

[Table 1 Here]

The evidence that electoral performance is the primary driver of appointments is strong and consistent across a range of models and measures. In Models 1 and 2, the negative and statistically significant coefficient on *UR Vote Share*, indicates that governors in regions where United Russia performed well in regional elections were less likely to be replaced in any given year (Model 1) or at the time an appointment decision is actually made (Model 2). Moreover, as Figure 1 illustrates, the substantive effects are large. Figure 1a shows the likelihood of replacement in any given year, depending on United Russia's results in the most recent regional elections. Holding all else constant, if United Russia won 68.58% (the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile in the data) of the vote the probability of replacement is a mere 2.3%. If United Russia managed only 25.7% of the vote (the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile), however, then the probability of replacement increases almost tenfold to 22.4%. Figure 1b shows that the effect is similar if we analyze only times when appointment decisions are actually made. Here, if the party won 69.2% (the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile), then the probability of replacement is 8%. However, if United Russia performed poorly, winning just 24.4% (the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile), then the probability of replacement is 84%.

[Figure 1 Here]

In Model 3, we use an alternative measure for United Russia's electoral performance, *UR Relative Electoral Performance*. This measure is also highly significant and substantively important and confirms the findings of our first models. If United Russia overperformed by 1.25 standard deviations in an election (~90<sup>th</sup> percentile), then the probability of replacement was 2.7% percent. If the ruling party underperformed by 1.25 standard deviations (~10<sup>th</sup> percentile), then the governor stood a 17% chance of being replaced in a given year.

While political loyalty plays a major role, the evidence that economic competence matters is weak. In Models 1-3, neither *Lagged Change in Unemployment* nor *Lagged GRP Growth* have a significant effect, indicating that regional economic performance has little direct effect on gubernatorial replacement. Nevertheless, it is possible that these results are misleading -- variation in economic performance may be such a strong predictor of United Russia vote that *UR Vote Share* actually operates as a proxy for economic performance. In other words, even if economic growth is insignificant, it could still have an indirect effect through *UR Vote Share*.

There is little evidence of such an indirect effect, however. First, economic performance is actually a very weak predictor of United Russia's regional vote totals (see Appendix). Second, if *Lagged GRP Growth* exerted an indirect effect on gubernatorial replacement through *UR Vote Share*, this effect should appear when we drop *UR Vote Share*. In Model 4, we estimate a model that includes only the control variables and economic performance measures, but still find no statistically significant effect. Nor is the coefficient on *Lagged GRP Growth* larger without *UR Vote Share* (Model 4) than with it (Model 1), as it would be if *UR Vote Share* was picking up the effect of growth.<sup>7</sup>



However, as we suggested above, the full sample might conceal cyclical variation in the way appointment decisions are made. Electoral incentives are, after all, likely to be strongest in periods before, or close to, national elections and weaker in periods immediately after key elections. To test this we divide the sample at 2008, taking a snapshot of the effect of economic variables at a time when the 2007 Duma elections had just given a comfortable legislative majority to United Russia, the popularity of Putin and United Russia was at its pinnacle, and the problem of presidential succession had just been solved. In this subsample, there is some evidence that economic performance had an effect. Model 5 shows these results. Figure 1c illustrates the substantive effect. When the economy expanded at 12% in a given year (the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile), a governor could expect to be replaced only 3% of the time. If, however, the economy contracted by 7.3% (the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile), then the probability of gubernatorial replacement jumped to 16%. The confidence interval is quite wide, however. By contrast, the results in Model 6 show that *Lagged GRP Growth* was not significant for the three years prior to 2008. A similar post-2007 effect is found using the officially published assessment of a region's "economic ineffectiveness" that began to be published by the MinRegion in 2007, such that more "economically effective" regions were less likely to see their governors replaced.

Nevertheless, as Model 5 indicates, even in the post-2007 period, the electoral performance of United Russia was still the key determinant of appointment decisions.<sup>8</sup> If United Russia performed relatively poorly in the 2007 elections, winning 56% (the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile), then the probability of replacement was 14.7%. If the party performed well, winning 81% (the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile), then the probability of replacement was a very low 1.5%. This substantive effect is much higher than that for any economic performance measure. The measure of electoral performance that we use in Model 5 is *UR 2007 Duma Share*, a measure of the share of United

Russia's vote in the 2007 Duma elections. This is a more appropriate measure of political loyalty in the 2008-2010 period given the elevated significance of the State Duma elections. In the appendix, however, we rerun model 5, replacing *UR 2007 Duma Share* with *UR Vote Share*, the measure of United Russia's performance in regional elections and find similar results.

In Model 7, we use MinRegion's rankings of the effectiveness of budgetary expenditures in three broad policy areas to see if governors are punished more for poor governance in some policy areas than in others. The results show that while ineffective health and education expenditures have no effect on a governor's reappointment chances, the positive and significant coefficient on *Ineffectiveness of Communal Services Expenditures* suggests that governors who did badly in the politically sensitive area of housing policy were more likely to be replaced.

We also considered cooptation and coercion as alternative explanations. Here we might expect governors with a strong personal following to be systematically more likely to be retained, consistent with a strategy of cooptation, or replaced, consistent with a coercive strategy. We test these theories by looking to see if governors who had strong machines, as measured by their own electoral margins, did better or worse than others. We find no evidence for the coercion hypothesis, and mixed evidence for cooptation. While most models show no effect for *Margin of Governor's Victory*, in Model 8 we interacted this variable with time. If cooptation has been part of the process, we should expect to see it in the early years when many noted that Russia's strongest governors were promised reappointment in for agreeing to the cancellation of direct gubernatorial elections and when governors enjoyed more independence.

The interactive term bears out our suspicions, and governors who won their own elections (prior to 2004) by large margins were more likely to be reappointed in 2005 and 2006, but not thereafter. In 2005, a governor who won his last gubernatorial election by a margin of 80% (the

90<sup>th</sup> percentile) had only a 1.6% chance of being replaced in that year, but a governor who won by a tight margin of 3% had a 17% of losing his position. This first difference in probabilities is reflected in Figure 1d. It also shows that the marginal effect (here the first difference in predicted probabilities between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 90<sup>th</sup> percentiles) is statistically significant for 2005 and 2006, but not thereafter. We take this as some evidence that governors with strong political machines were more likely to be reappointed immediately after the introduction of appointments.<sup>9</sup>

Another way to discriminate between cooptation and coercion is to look at the popularity of the governor. Unfortunately, popularity data on governors is patchy with non-random missing data and so we do not use it in our main models. However, in Model 9, we look at the limited sample of cases for which we do have data on the popularity of the governor. The negative coefficient on *Governor's Popularity* indicates that more popular governors are less likely to be replaced. Nevertheless, even controlling for popularity, *UR Vote Share* remains a substantively and statistically significant predictor of gubernatorial appointment. Moreover, an increase from the 10<sup>th</sup> to 90<sup>th</sup> percentile in a governor's popularity decreases the probability of replacement from 1.4% to 0.7%, while a similar increase from the 10<sup>th</sup> to 90<sup>th</sup> percentile in UR Vote Share decreases the probability of replacement from 14% to 0.6%.<sup>10</sup> This much larger effect strongly suggests that governors are rewarded specifically for their ability to generate votes for the ruling party, in addition to any advancement they achieve on the basis of their popularity in society.

The results on the control variables are also of note. The positive and significant coefficient on *Tenure* indicates that long-serving governors are more likely to be replaced. This variable is positively correlated with Age ( $\rho=.48$ ), and dropping *Tenure* reveals a positive and significant coefficient on *Age*. Consequently, we are unable to distinguish the effects of these two variables. *End of Term* is also significant and positive in both specifications. Despite the fact

that governors can be dismissed at any time, governors are, unsurprisingly, more likely to be replaced in the year that their term is set to expire. Contrary to the popular perception, however, once we control for *Tenure* and *End of Term*, governors were not more likely to be replaced under *Medvedev*. The higher number of gubernatorial replacements under President Medvedev seems merely a function of the fact that more governors were facing the end of their terms than under Putin and that the average length of their tenure was higher.

There is also some evidence that governors of ethnic Republics have a different fate from those in other regions. Although *Percent Russian* is negative but not significant in most specifications, it is significant in the post-2007 models, suggesting that governors in ethnic republics were less likely to be removed at that time. *Duration of UR Membership* is also negative, suggesting that long-standing UR members were less likely to be replaced, but the variable falls far short of conventional statistical significance levels.

We predicted that electoral authoritarian regimes such as Russia would privilege political loyalty over economic competence in their sub-national elite appointments. The imperative of winning elections by large margins, we argued, forces leaders to appoint politically effective cadres who may not be willing and able to promote economic development. Our results confirm this hypothesis, showing that gubernatorial reappointment decisions in Russia are based largely on the governor's ability to mobilize votes for United Russia. Throughout the period since appointments began, a governor's ability to do better than we might otherwise expect in turning out United Russia voters is consistently the best predictor of whether he/she will keep his/her job, and when United Russia performs poorly, governors are much more likely to be replaced.

By contrast, other major theories perform less well. There is some evidence that cooptation of strong governors took place just after the cancellation of gubernatorial elections.

More consequentially from a theoretical perspective, the evidence that economic performance determines reappointment is mixed at best. For the 2005-2010 period as a whole there is little evidence that strong economic performance improves a governor's chances of reappointment. However, if we divide the period into before and after the 2007 Duma elections, there is some indication that in the low stakes context of 2008-2010, economic factors did matter, though still far less than political factors.

### **Conclusion**

These findings have profound implications for how scholars and policy-makers view electoral authoritarian regimes. Electoral authoritarian regimes are said to possess informational advantages that may make them more robust (Blaydes 2011, Boix and Svolik 2008). However, the empirical literature has been unable to provide convincing evidence of greater stability (Brownlee 2010). In this paper we suggest that the reason may be that while authoritarian elections provide short-term political advantages, they may well have longer-term negative consequences. While authoritarian elections can provide helpful political information, they can undermine the long term stability of the regime by subverting economic development. Since sustainable economic growth is a major contributor to regime stability, a cadre management policy that leads cadres to neglect economic development is a recipe for long-term instability.

This argument is new in that, while others have suggested that electoral authoritarian regimes might feature economically destructive electoral business cycles (Magaloni 2006), our findings show how semi-competitive authoritarian elections can undermine economic performance directly through the choice of political appointees. The need to win elections induces state leaders to appoint politically loyal officials instead of rewarding those who foster good governance and economic development. Consequently, we would expect cadres who know

that their career advancement depends on election results to focus their efforts on winning elections and not on promoting economic development.

This incentive effect is crucial because sub-national officials in authoritarian regimes have a range of formal and informal tools for influencing consumption, investment, and the provision of public goods in their region. In pursuit of economic growth, governors might protect property rights, enforce contracts, ensure the efficient allocation of budgetary resources, provide stable regulatory environments and reduce the bureaucratic hurdles to doing business. However, pursuing economic development this way might not be compatible with maintaining a political machine. Political machines are generally not based on transparency and open competition but on corruption and favoritism. Governors reward their loyal clients with contracts, tax breaks, subsidies, permits, and/or legal protection, while denying such benefits to political outsiders. In return, these clients use their own resources and authority to mobilize support for the governor. This uncertainty, rent-seeking, and political favoritism can raise the costs of doing business, deter investment, and undermine economic growth. The key point is that the corrupt tactics used to build a political machine can have deleterious effects on the economy. Thus, even if economic development is one criterion in cadre advancement, using vote mobilization as a parallel criterion will have the unintended consequence of undermining economic performance. It is not hard to see, then, how electoral authoritarian regimes may become mired in development traps where, in trying to impress their superiors, sub-national officials attempt to build ever more effective vote producing machines and, consequently, undermine good governance in their regions.

Furthermore, in electoral authoritarian regimes, the practice of rewarding elites for turning out the vote may do little to encourage enduring loyalty to the regime, because elites can generate votes without making other more costly, long-term investments in the regime. Indeed,

the results in this paper suggest that mobilizing votes for the ruling party is a more important factor in personnel policy than long-standing membership in the ruling party. If one-time manifestations of loyalty are rewarded over long-term manifestations of loyalty, then elites have no incentive to make costly long-term commitments to the regime.

Finally, if it is true that authoritarian elections generate incentives that weaken long run economic performance without promoting durable commitment to the regime, an obvious question arises: why do authoritarians hold elections at all? The evidence presented here suggests that while elections can be a good way of gathering information on short-term political effectiveness, there may be substantial long-term costs. If so, then more research is needed on how different kinds of authoritarian rulers manage this trade-off. Perhaps authoritarian regimes with shorter time horizons are more willing to bear the long-term risk for the short term gain. For others, it may be that holding elections is a second-best outcome from the incumbents' perspective, a necessary risk forced on them for domestic or international reasons. Whatever the underlying logic, understanding more precisely the multi-dimensional nature of authoritarian elections is an important research agenda for scholars of contemporary non-democratic regimes.

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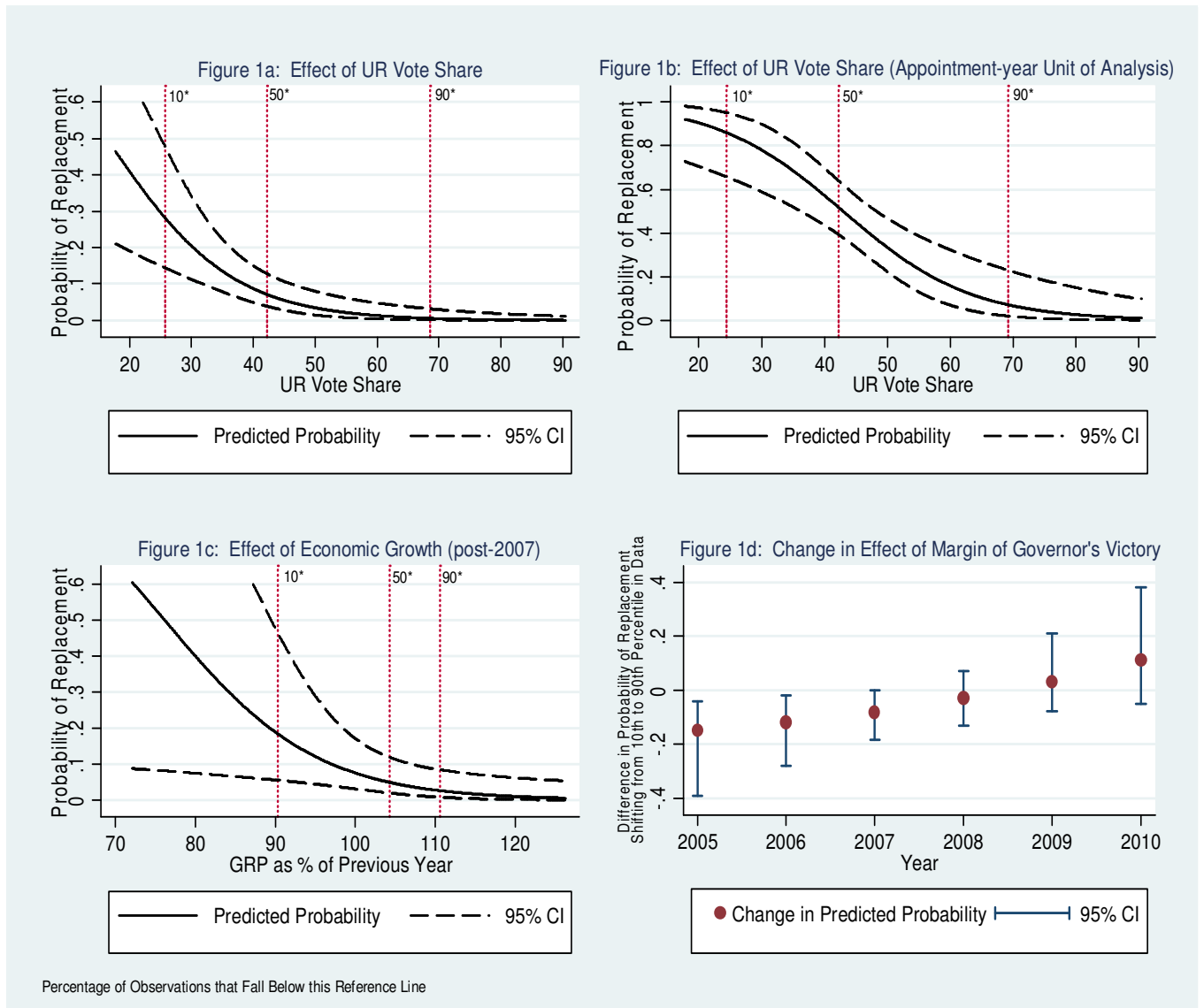
**Table 1: Logit Models of Gubernatorial Reappointment**

VARIABLES	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
<i>UR Vote Share</i>	-0.099* (0.027)	-0.115* (0.029)				-0.237* (0.106)			-0.094* (0.035)
<i>UR Relative Elec. Performance</i>			0.852* (0.283)						
<i>UR 2007 Duma Vote Share</i>					-0.115* (0.048)		-0.114* (0.049)		
<i>Year</i>	0.191 (0.314)	0.269 (0.390)		0.019 (0.300)	-0.462 (0.464)	0.490 (0.505)	-0.385 (0.467)	-0.185 (0.261)	0.193 (0.401)
<i>Margin of Governor's Victory</i>	0.003 (0.011)	0.004 (0.013)	0.004 (0.010)	0.000 (0.009)	0.013 (0.012)	-0.033 (0.027)	0.012 (0.011)	-19.512* (6.519)	-0.003 (0.014)
<i>Margin Gov. Victory*Year</i>								0.010* (0.003)	
<i>End of Term</i>	2.736* (0.521)	-0.099 (0.678)	2.857* (0.480)	2.683* (0.505)	3.040* (0.640)	2.643* (1.010)	2.977* (0.626)	2.490* (0.375)	2.950* (0.588)
<i>Medvedev</i>	0.075 (0.923)	1.792 (1.253)	-0.245 (0.570)	-0.498 (0.900)	-0.038 (1.384)		-0.565 (1.454)	-0.494 (0.838)	-1.064 (1.200)
<i>Tenure</i>	0.157* (0.066)	0.174* (0.077)	0.108* (0.050)	0.076 (0.052)	0.087 (0.054)	0.349* (0.139)	0.104 (0.057)	0.030 (0.039)	0.285* (0.100)
<i>Age</i>	0.066 (0.045)	0.081* (0.038)	0.036 (0.033)	0.043 (0.029)	0.051 (0.048)	0.087 (0.111)	0.040 (0.045)	0.063* (0.025)	0.052 (0.055)
<i>Percent Russian</i>	-0.027* (0.014)	-0.025 (0.017)	-0.009 (0.011)	-0.013 (0.010)	-0.048* (0.020)	0.010 (0.040)	-0.050* (0.019)	-0.011 (0.006)	-0.041* (0.020)
<i>Duration of UR Membership</i>	-0.125 (0.151)	-0.260 (0.185)	-0.093 (0.158)	-0.078 (0.124)	-0.108 (0.153)	-0.283 (0.298)	-0.119 (0.170)	-0.085 (0.116)	0.083 (0.192)
<i>UR 2003 Duma Vote Share</i>	0.043 (0.028)	0.055 (0.034)		-0.015 (0.021)	0.035 (0.034)	0.121 (0.063)	0.033 (0.034)	-0.004 (0.018)	0.017 (0.039)
<i>Duma Election 2007 Dummy</i>	4.728* (1.920)			2.967 (1.533)		8.265* (3.462)			5.600* (1.719)
<i>Lagged Change in Unemp.</i>	-0.036 (0.065)	-0.027 (0.120)	-0.080 (0.098)	-0.088 (0.104)	-0.043 (0.141)	-0.284 (0.451)	-0.049 (0.147)	-0.066 (0.087)	-0.142 (0.172)
<i>Lagged GRP Growth</i>	-0.066 (0.044)	-0.028 (0.048)	-0.056 (0.034)	-0.044 (0.039)	-0.105* (0.045)	-0.000 (0.056)	-0.098* (0.045)	-0.036 (0.030)	-0.097 (0.052)
<i>Economic Ineffectiveness Rank</i>					0.029* (0.011)				
<i>Ineffectiveness of Educ. Exp.</i>							0.013 (0.012)		
<i>Ineffectiveness of Health Exp.</i>							-0.005 (0.013)		
<i>Ineffectiveness of Housing Exp.</i>							0.025* (0.012)		
<i>Governor's Popularity</i>									-0.039* (0.020)
Constant	-380.667 (630.578)	-540.037 (783.092)	0.729 (3.586)	-38.264 (603.311)	939.640 (932.345)	-989.034 (1,016.282)	786.806 (939.130)	370.394 (525.293)	-377.620 (804.623)
Observations	319	91	337	319	204	128	204	445	271
Log PseudoLikelihood	-80.04	-46.45	-89.31	-90.68	-53.40	-23.39	-54.39	-117.8	-55.07

Robust standard errors clustered on region in parentheses

\* p&lt;0.05

**Figure 1: Substantive Effects of Key Variables**



<sup>1</sup> The authors are grateful to Tom Carsey, Matt Green, Cecilia Martinez-Gallardo, Georg Vanberg, Thomas Remington, Andrei Yakovlev, Mark Urnov, and David Szakonyi for helpful comments and suggestions. An online appendix is available at [www.cambridge.org/cjo/whatever](http://www.cambridge.org/cjo/whatever) and replication can be found at <http://sites.google.com/site/ojreuter/>

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<sup>2</sup> New legislation reintroducing elections for governors in Russia was signed in May 2012, however, restrictions written into the law make the implications of this change unclear at present.

<sup>3</sup> See the Web Appendix to this article for details.

<sup>4</sup> Other recent studies in using panel data with high unit(N) to time-period (T) ratios have adopted this approach to correcting for unit-specific autocorrelation (Golder 2006, Hicken 2009).

<sup>5</sup> See for example, “Pustyat izbrannykh” *Vedomosti* 29 April 2010, and “‘Edinoi Rossii’ ne khvatilo paravoznoi tyagi” *Kommersant* 17 March 2011.

<sup>6</sup> The popularity data has drawbacks related to coverage and question wording. See Appendix.

<sup>7</sup> Coefficients between nested logit models cannot be compared with precision, so these differences are an approximation. See appendix, for a more precise comparison.

<sup>8</sup> It is possible that economic performance translates into higher vote totals for United Russia giving economic performance an indirect effect through *UR 2007 Duma Vote Share*. We decompose the effects of *Lagged GRP Growth* in the appendix and show that that the indirect effect of economic performance through UR vote shares is modest, statistically insignificant, and, importantly, does not negate the independent effect of *UR 2007 Duma Vote Share*.

<sup>9</sup> We drop *UR Vote Share* to keep the many cases that had not yet held regional elections by 2005 and 2006, precisely when it seems that *Margin of Governor’s Victory* should matter most. *Margin of Governor’s Victory* and *UR Vote Share* are correlated at  $r=.15$ .

<sup>10</sup> The effect of Governor’s Popularity on a governors reappointment chances varies significantly with time, playing a larger role prior to 2008 than after. See appendix.