



## RUSSIAN REGIONS AFTER THE ELECTIONS

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## Regime and the Opposition at the Regional Elections 2020: Between the Demand for Change and the Status Quo

Andrei Semenov (Center for Comparative History and Politics, Perm State University)

DOI: 10.3929/ethz-b-000458207

### Abstract

On September 11–13, 2020, Russians elected 18 governors and 11 subnational legislatures. The “single voting day,” which due to the Covid-19 pandemic stretched over three days, took place in the shadow of the economic crisis and mobilization in Belarus and Khabarovsk. Consequently, the Kremlin prioritized the results over what remains of electoral integrity, filtering out independent candidates, pressuring electoral observers, and doubling down on forced mobilization. This article describes the outcomes of the latest round of subnational elections and argues that although the results confirmed the dominance of regime-backed candidates, the long-term changes in the electorate’s preferences and the tactical innovations employed by the opposition foreshadow a major battle over the parliamentary elections next year.

The September 2020 regional elections in Russia were significant in many respects. First, these were the first electoral contests to test the legitimacy of the Putin regime since the constitutional vote; they came amid the pandemic and in advance of the looming economic crisis. Second, they were the last elections before the parliamentary elections scheduled for 2021, meaning that it was the last chance for political parties to get their golden tickets: being elected to regional legislatures allows them to avoid collecting signatures for the federal elections. Finally, the elections were held against the backdrop of major mobilizations in Khabarovsk and Belarus, changing electoral rules that further compromised the quality of the electoral process, and growing coercion from the regime. In short, the 2020 regional elections were the dress rehearsal for the major battle that will take place in the coming years between the regime and the opposition. And while the regime has thus far managed to retain the commanding heights, signs of voters’ dissatisfaction with the current system of political representation are emerging and threaten long-term regime stability.

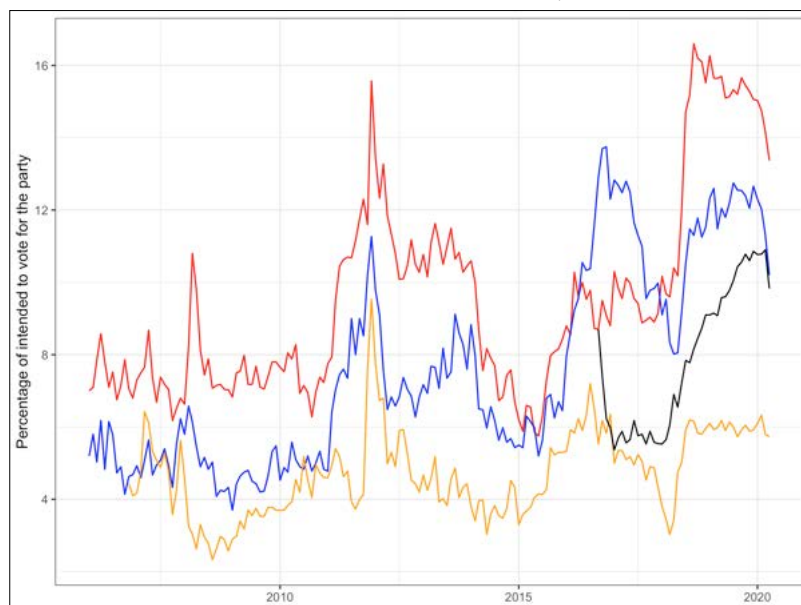
### The Context

The September 2020 elections were the last in the 2016–2021 parliamentary cycle. The economy has not improved during the cycle, with a sluggish annual growth rate of near 2% in 2017–2019 and a projected contraction of 6% in 2020. Real disposable income remained negative for the entire period. The economic downturn, coupled with the highly unpopular pension reform of 2018, negatively impacted Putin’s approval rating, which, according to the Levada Center, fell from an annual average of 82% in 2016 to 66.8% in 2019. United Russia’s (UR) electoral rating also plummeted from an average of 50.4% in 2017 to about 33% in 2018–2019, hovering slightly above 30% before the September elections, according to WCIOM.

More worrisome for the Kremlin was the growing demand for alternative political representation: VCIOM polls show that support for the systemic opposition has been at best stagnant since 2017, while the non-systemic opposition is increasingly attractive to voters. Figure 1 overleaf shows the monthly averages of voting intentions among opposition voters, demonstrating that the parliamentary parties initially benefited from the pension reform but subsequently lost their appeal: the Communist Party’s (KPRF) rating fell by nearly 3 percentage points between September 2018 and September 2020, the Liberal-Democrats’ (LDPR) rating remains at 11–12%, and Just Russia (JR) is on the precipice at 6%. By contrast, the popularity of the non-parliamentary parties has grown steadily, reaching the levels of the KPRF and LDPR. Buoyed by undecided voters, their share exceeded 28% in August 2020. In short, the long-run trends in public opinion indicate indifference toward—if not latent dissatisfaction with—the status quo. The absence of political alternatives freezes the situation but certainly does not eliminate demand for change to the status quo.

Adding fuel to the fire of the economic situation was the 2020 pandemic: soaring unemployment, low global demand for oil and gas—Russia’s most-traded exports—and a weak ruble do not portend improvements to the well-being of ordinary Russians. Those affected by the crisis turn against the incumbent: in a recent panel survey, Rosenfeld and her colleagues report that support for Putin is lower among those who have lost their jobs due to the crisis or are at risk of losing them. Citizens who were dissatisfied with the president’s handling of the pandemic or who blamed him personally for its severity were also more likely to withdraw their support.

**Figure 1: Dynamics of Voting Intentions (Monthly Averages) for Major Opposition Parties, 2006–2020. KPRF in Red, LDPR in Blue, Just Russia in Orange, and Non-Parliamentary Parties in Black.**



Source: VTsIOM

the voting process on the Unified Election Day 2020 was the worst in 25 years.” This was compounded by the CEC’s addition of a captcha to their webpage, which prevented observers from exposing electoral fraud via electoral forensics, as is their general practice. The general logic of the elections was to deliver the necessary results without concern for improving electoral integrity.

## Executive Elections

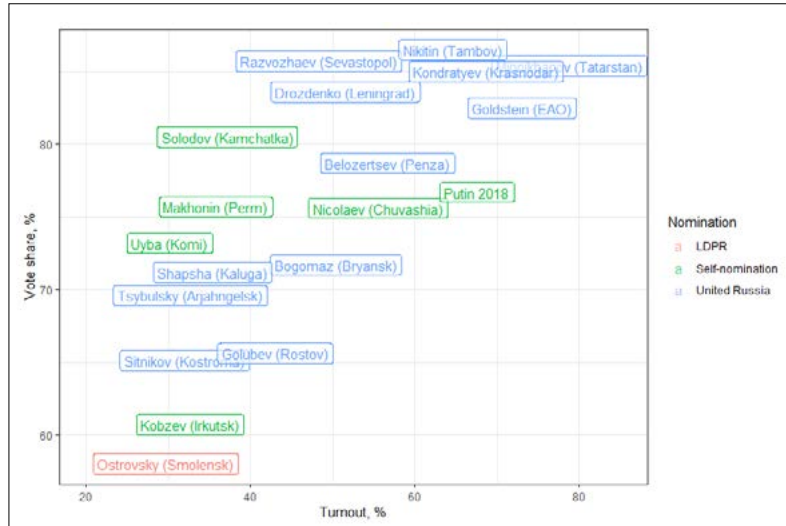
Regional executives occupy the most powerful position in Russian subnational politics. The regime’s primary goal was to ensure the victory of Kremlin-backed candidates; consequently, the incumbents did not risk even the slightest possibility of competition. Prospective challengers were filtered out at the early stages. For example, in Perm, the businessman Aleksandr Repin—who began campaigning aggressively during the pandemic, with massive advertising campaigns—was denied registration on the grounds that municipal councilmembers’ signatures were double-counted. In Arkhangelsk, another businessman, Shies ecoprotect supporter Oleg Mandrykin, won the nomination in an electronic primary organized by the Stop-Shies movement. Using the same clause about double-counting, the regional electoral commission denied him registration, leaving only safe contenders. In Sevastopol and the Jewish Autonomous Region, the authorities went one step further, disbanding municipalities to prevent them from supporting opposition candidates. Overall, the so-called “municipal filter”—alongside control over the municipalities—remained the key instrument at the regime’s disposal for managing entrance into the political races. Even a party’s status as “loyal opposition” did little to help its members survive this filter: seven Communist Party candidates failed to make it onto ballots.

Where filtering out opposition candidates was, for one reason or another, impossible, clandestine deals filled in. In Irkutsk, where Communist governor Levchenko resigned last year under pressure from the Kremlin, another red candidate, former FSB officer Mikhail Stchapov, challenged the “Varangian” from Voronezh, Ministry of Emergency veteran Igor Kobzev, who was parachuted into the region shortly before the campaign. Stchapov’s active campaign ended abruptly after he met with KPRF’s leader, Gennadii Zyuganov. Moreover, he avoided criticizing the acting governor altogether, effectively acting as a sparring partner rather than a real contender with strong leftist sympathies.

As a result, regime-backed candidates won all of the eighteen direct electoral contests for regional executive, with half of them receiving nearly the same or even higher shares of the vote than Vladimir Putin had in 2018. Figure 2 overleaf plots vote share against turnout. Apart from the clear correlation, which might indicate forced mobilization and a propensity for electoral fraud, another notable feature is that candidates not nominated by UR were generally located in regions with low turnout. Avoiding the dominant party’s label evidently served as a hedge against its anti-ratings in some regions.

Recognizing that the forthcoming regional elections would be difficult and threaten their dominance, the regime introduced a new wave of regulatory innovations that changed the electoral process. On the pretext of public health concerns and following a practice established by constitutional plebiscite in June 2020, the Central Electoral Commission established early voting outside polling stations for the two days before the “united voting day.” This novel approach hinders the work of electoral observers and invites falsification. In addition, the list of those criminal charges that serve as grounds for stripping citizens of the franchise was significantly extended. Moreover, the regime launched a smear campaign against independent electoral observers, with the result that, according to the electoral watchdog association Golos, “the regulation of

**Figure 2: Turnout and Vote Shares in the September 2020 Elections for Regional Executives.**



Source: Central Electoral Commission.

politicizing factors like an active municipal campaign in Novosibirsk City and gubernatorial elections in Komi, turnout was 27–28%. On the other hand, closed high-capacity regimes like Belgorod and Yamal-Nenets reported turnout close to 50%. On average, the ruling party garnered almost 48% of the vote via the proportional system—about 18 percentage points above its electoral rating. The opposition parties’ average electoral returns reflected their respective standing in the national polls. Surprisingly, the correlation between turnout and United Russia’s vote share was low and insignificant in this cycle (0.41, with p-value = 0.2)

### Legislative Elections

Legislative elections were held in eleven regions spanning the entire country: from Magadan in the East to Belgorod on the Western border. All the regions employed a mixed electoral system, with half of the seats allocated via party lists and the other half through single-member districts (the exception being Kostroma, where the ratio was 25 to 10). The size of legislatures ranged from 21 in Magadan to 76 in the Novosibirsk region. On average, 8.5 parties competed in elections, ranging from only five in Kurgan (parliamentary parties and the Russian Party of Pensioners) to 11 in Kaluga and Kostroma. Table 1 presents the main results of the party-list elections.

Turnout also varied considerably: in Novosibirsk and Komi, despite

**Table 1: Main Results of the Regional Legislative Elections, September 2020.**

Region	Turnout	Seats	Parties on the ballot	Parties in legislature	UR	KPRF	LDPR	Just Russia
Komi Republic	28.1%	30	8	5	28.6%	14.8%	14.5%	8.6%
Belgorod Oblast	53.4%	50	7	4	64.0%	13.2%	6.6%	3.8%
Voronezh Oblast	42.9%	56	8	4	61.5%	14.5%	7.3%	5.7%
Kaluga Oblast	33.7%	40	11	6	42.4%	12.9%	8.6%	8.0%
Kostroma Oblast	53.4%	35	11	6	31.9%	17.2%	12.1%	9.2%
Kurgan Oblast	30.1%	34	5	5	44.6%	19.1%	14.5%	10.5%
Magadan Oblast	31.7%	21	7	4	58.3%	10.3%	11.6%	7.3%
Novosibirsk Oblast	27.1%	76	10	6	38.1%	16.6%	13.6%	6.1%
Ryazan Oblast	31.7%	40	10	7	47.7%	9.1%	12.0%	5.7%
Chelyabinsk Oblast	32.5%	60	9	6	42.6%	11.9%	11.3%	14.8%
Yamal-Nenets	46.2%	22	7	4	64.6%	8.8%	15.3%	6.1%
Average	37.3%	42	8.5	5	47.7%	13.5%	11.6%	7.8%

Source: Central Electoral Commission.

Overall, it seems like the proportional system was used mainly to reflect the regional balance of interests. In the Komi Republic, UR performed poorly, receiving only 28.6% of the vote (almost 30% less than in the previous elections); it retained its majority in the legislature only due to 14 wins in SMDs. Its performance was likewise lackluster (below one standard deviation from the mean) in Kostroma. However, in light of the ruling party’s long-term dynamics and its low electoral ratings, the September 2020 elections do not look particularly bad.

Figure 3 overleaf plots average vote shares and the associated standard errors that United Russia has received in each round of regional elections since 2007. The September 2020 results were better than in 2011 and 2018, when major

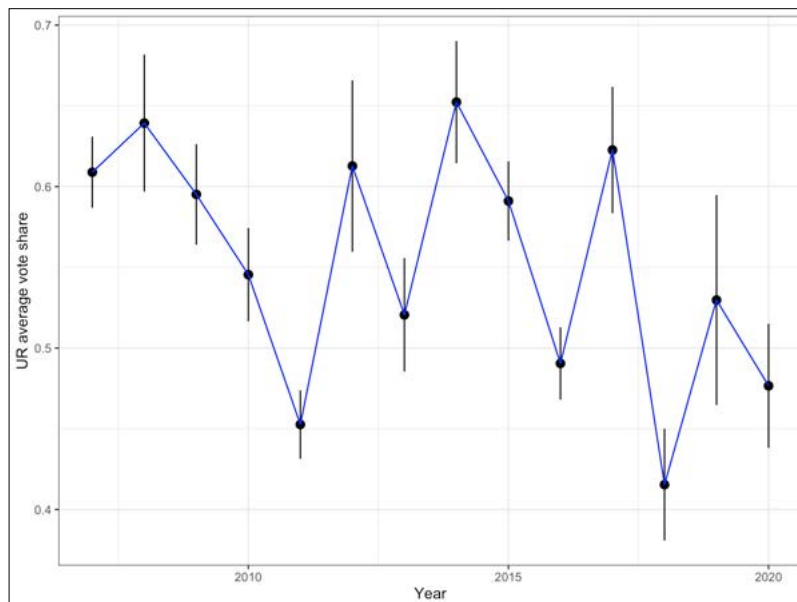
mobilization events happened, and almost identical to those in 2016. Given the unfavorable context, the absence of significant failures for the ruling party in this electoral cycle indicates that it will remain the key political player in the forthcoming federal elections.

The context did not much affect the opposition, either. As expected, KPRF performed best in those regions where the party had already gained a firm foothold. Even there, however, no breakthroughs occurred: in the Novosibirsk region, which has one of the strongest Communist Party branches in the country and where the regional capital is headed by the “red mayor,” Anatolii Lokot’, KPRF garnered only 16.6% of the vote (down from 24.5% in 2015). Victories in seven SMDs gave the party a sizable faction (14 members), but this was not enough to challenge UR’s hegemony. The LDPR capitalized on protest sentiment and economic deprivation in regions like Komi and Kurgan while retaining its status in traditional party strongholds like Yamal. Yet even the debacle with Khabarovsk governor Furgal, who was accused of murder and removed by the Kremlin in July 2020, sparking an unprecedented mobilization among locals, did not translate into additional votes for the Liberal-Democrats. Finally, Just Russia’s performance was quite volatile: it failed to surpass the threshold in Belgorod, with a mere 3.8%, but confirmed its substantial presence in Chelyabinsk (the stronghold of State Duma deputy Valerii Gartung) and improved its results in Kostroma, Kaluga, and Kurgan.

On several occasions, newcomers made their way into regional legislatures, thus avoiding the cumbersome signature collection process in the elections to come. The “Green Alternative” party received 10% of the vote in the Komi Republic, which translated into a single legislative seat. In Ryazan, the left-leaning “Za Pravdu!” party, headed by Zakhar Prilepin, and the ostensibly liberal “New People” party both surpassed the electoral threshold. The latter also managed to get elected to legislatures in Kostroma, Kaluga, and Novosibirsk. The best performer was, however, the Party of Pensioners for Social Justice, which received an average of 5.9% of the vote and achieved representation in seven legislatures. The results of liberal and democratic parties like “Yabloko,” “Party of Growth,” and “Civic Platform” were negligible.

The legislative elections mostly confirmed the status quo: United Russia managed to offset losses in the proportional system with its victories in SMDs and its cooptation of independents; the systemic opposition parties retained their position;

**Figure 3: United Russia’s Average Vote Shares in the Regional Legislative Elections. The Vertical Bands Represent Standard Errors.**



Source: Central Electoral Commission.

and the non-parliamentary groups tested their strength and were occasionally elected, supposedly with the tacit permission of or overt help from the authorities. Overall, the elections did not change the composition of legislatures, which mostly mimicked the national parliament.

## Conclusion

On the surface, the Kremlin seemed to navigate the uncertainties of the pandemic and the economic downturn relatively successfully. It retained control over the regional executives by removing even a modicum of competition and improvising with nomination procedures. For their part, incumbent governors signaled to the Kremlin that they are loyal and capable of steering the electoral process in the right direction. Despite a decline in the average vote

share received by its party list, United Russia performed much better than public opinion polls would have predicted. The SMD elections further buttressed its continued dominance in the regional legislatures.

The parliamentary opposition, on the other hand, did not benefit much from the situation. No breakthroughs akin to the LDPR’s 2019 performance in Khabarovsk occurred; the systemic opposition parties mostly reaffirmed their status. The non-parliamentary groups made some incursions into the regional legislatures, freeing themselves of the burden of collecting signatures in the next elections. Nevertheless, the balance of power remained mostly intact.

Against this backdrop, it is not surprising that the major headlines were made by the non-systemic opposition on the local level. In the Novosibirsk City Council elections, the “Coalition 2020” group led by Team Navalny head Sergei

Boiko won four seats while supporting several other elected candidates. In Tomsk, two members of Team Navalny were elected to the City Council. And in Tambov, UR lost 17 of 18 seats in the local Council. Team Navalny attributed these victories to the “smart voting” strategy, a reference to opposition voters’ coalescence around those non-UR candidates who are most likely to successfully challenge UR incumbents. While the real effects of the strategy in these elections are hard to establish, “smart voting” might become a key coordination device for the opposition in the next federal elections. In sum, the September 2020 “dress rehearsal” elections revealed the range of tactical choices that the regime and the opposition will be able to deploy in the key battle for the State Duma in 2021.

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- Preliminary statement on findings of citizen observation on the Single Election Day in Russia, 13 September 2020. Golos website, September 15, 2020. <https://www.golosinfo.org/en/articles/144710>

## ANALYSIS

# The 2020 Regional Elections in Russia: A Rehearsal for the 2021 Duma Elections

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DOI: 10.3929/ethz-b-000458207

### **Abstract**

The September 2020 regional elections in Russia employed a new three-day voting scheme. This change, along with biased electoral rules, helped the Kremlin to maintain control over all gubernatorial offices, as well as—via United Russia—over all regional parliaments and a majority of city councils in regional capitals. At the same time, Alexei Navalny’s “smart vote” initiative was effective in big cities. Multi-day voting will once again be used in the Duma elections next year, but there the Kremlin’s landslide victory is in jeopardy due to United Russia’s declining popularity among voters and the ability of the candidates backed by the “smart vote” campaign to defeat UR nominees in a number of single-member districts.

### **Main Actors and Results**

For the authorities and the opposition alike, the regional elections held in Russia in September of this year can be considered a rehearsal for the 2021 Duma campaign. The Kremlin’s primary goal was to test multi-day voting, with the main election day, September 13, preceded by two days of early voting. The official explanation for this change to the electoral process was that early vot-

ing would make the process “as comfortable as possible”<sup>1</sup> for voters. In reality, however, the authorities were trying to reduce the risk of unfavorable electoral outcomes at the regional level in advance of the national legislative races next year. Multi-day voting limits the effectiveness of electoral observation, facilitates the two-part task of mobilizing state-dependent voters to go to the polls and monitoring their activity, and simplifies the use

1 “V TSIK Rossii sostoyalos’ zasedanie ekspertnoi ploshchadki.” 16 July 2020. <http://www.cikrf.ru/news/cec/47052/>

of blatant forms of electoral malpractice. Moreover, it is nearly inevitable that three-day voting will be chosen for the next Duma elections (provision for this was made through Russian legislation signed on July 31), and conducting multi-day voting in advance of those elections helps to legitimize this new procedure in voters' eyes.

The opposition, for its part, has been continuing to test a new tool for coordinating voters against the United Russia party and regime-backed candidates: the "smart vote." The "smart vote" campaign was announced by Alexei Navalny, a major Russian opposition figure, in November 2018. It was first implemented during the Moscow City Duma elections and the St. Petersburg municipal elections last year, resulting in visible success for candidates backed by the "smart vote."<sup>2</sup> In 2020, it was important for the opposition to assess the campaign's potential outside the largest cities and to advertise it among voters.

Leaving aside by-elections to the State Duma in four single-member districts (SMDs), there were three main campaigns in September 2020: gubernatorial elections in 18 regions, legislative elections in 11 regions, and city council elections in 22 regional capitals. Taken together, the results of these races seem to have been favorable for the regime. Kremlin-backed candidates won all the gubernatorial contests, while United Russia maintained a comfortable majority in all regional assemblies and in most regional capitals, the exceptions being Novosibirsk, Tomsk, and Tambov. At the same time, relative support for the regime fell. The average share of votes for United Russia, as well as turnout, were lower in both the regional legislative elections and the most important local contests than they had been in the previous round of elections, held in 2015 (see Figures 1–2 on p. 9 and 10). United Russia was able to maintain its dominance only with the help of biased electoral rules and manipulations, the latter taking place mostly during the early voting stage. These factors also explain the electoral success of the Kremlin's nominees in gubernatorial elections.

### Overview of Gubernatorial Elections

The gubernatorial races were the only subnational campaigns in 2020 where the regime's candidates not only won, but did so with approximately the same average result as—and lower average turnout than—in the previous elections. This was made possible thanks to two principal factors: (1) biased registration rules, which

resulted in the complete absence from ballot papers of candidates the Kremlin considered undesirable; and (2) electoral abuses during multi-day voting.

As the "Golos" movement reports,<sup>3</sup> the 2020 gubernatorial elections were characterized by the absence of competition. Any candidate that posed a threat to regime-backed nominees was barred from registering by the so-called "municipal filter"—the need to collect the signatures of between 5 and 10 percent of the local deputies of a region.<sup>4</sup> Considering that most municipal deputies are affiliated with United Russia, it is no surprise that the only candidates who were allowed to be included on ballots were those who were not real challengers to the Kremlin's cadres.

Early voting also played a role. Figure 3 on p. 10 shows that the eventual winner's share of the vote is strongly positively correlated with the share of early voting but not with the share of turnout that came on September 13—the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient, denoted by the Greek letter  $\rho$  on the figure, is equal to 0.75. This may signal electoral abuse during the early voting phase of the gubernatorial elections. This intuition is backed by evidence provided by the "Golos" movement.<sup>5</sup> For instance, in Krasnodar city, where independent observers succeeded in covering a solid number of polling stations during all three days of voting, turnout was three times lower than in other parts of the region, and the share of votes for a KPRF-backed candidate was twice as large. "Golos" reported similar findings in a number of other regions.

### Overview of Regional Legislative Elections

The legislative elections paint a slightly different picture than the gubernatorial races. On the one hand, United Russia retained its majority in all regional assemblies. On the other hand, the official results of UR lists, the average results of UR nominees, and turnout rates were all lower in 2020 than in the parliamentary elections held five years ago. Two factors explain this reality: (1) biased electoral systems; and (2) manipulations at the early voting stage.

All Russian regions have to elect no less than 25 percent of all deputies by proportional representation (PR).<sup>6</sup> In 2020, 10 out of 11 regions used PR to elect half of their deputies, while the other half were elected in SMDs by plurality vote. The outlier was Kostroma Oblast, where just 10 of 35 deputies were elected by PR. Figure 4 on p. 11 illustrates the votes-to-seats conversion for United Russia in the PR and SMD contests, respectively. UR lists systematically

2 Grigorii Golosov and Mikhail Turchenko, "How Smart is Smart Voting?" Riddle. 13 August 2020. <https://www.ridl.io/en/how-smart-is-smart-voting/>

3 "Itogi vydvizheniia i registratsii kandidatov na vyborah vysshikh dolzhnostnykh lits sub"ektov Rossiiskoi Federatsii 13 sentiabria 2020 goda." Golosinfo.org. 18 August 2020. <https://www.golosinfo.org/articles/144615>

4 In addition to this barrier, self-nominated candidates also have to gather voter signatures (party-nominated candidates are exempt from this obligation).

5 "Itogi obshchestvennogo nabliudeniia za vyborami v edinyi den' golosovaniia 13 sentiabria 2020 goda." Golosinfo.org. 15 October 2020. <https://www.golosinfo.org/articles/144816#1-1>

6 The only exceptions are Moscow and St. Petersburg, where pure single-member plurality can be employed.

get a higher proportion of seats for their share of the vote under PR than other party lists; UR candidates' victories in SMDs are also disproportionate to their average vote shares in given regions. It is well known that SMDs are favorable for big parties, but United Russia also extracts benefit from PR. This is due to the five-percent legal thresholds, as well as biased seat allocation formulae such as the Imperiali highest averages and the Tyumen<sup>7</sup> method.

Kurgan Oblast provides a shining example of how United Russia takes advantage of biased electoral rules. Although the party's list received just 44.57 percent of the vote in the region and the average vote share of UR candidates in SMDs was 48.32 percent, United Russia won 58.8 percent of PR seats and 100 percent of SMD seats.

As in the gubernatorial elections, United Russia results in regional contests were boosted by early voting (see Figure 5 on p. 12). Moreover, the Spearman's correlation coefficient is even higher here—0.85. Early voting helped both UR list results and the average vote share of UR-affiliated candidates. Belgorod Oblast was the only region where United Russia improved its PR and SMD results in terms of both votes received and seats gained in comparison with the 2015 election. Unsurprisingly, it was also the region with the highest rate of early voting—40.39 percent. Since overall turnout in the region was 54.48 percent, it is easily apparent that about three-quarters of ballots were cast in advance. Immediately after the election, Belgorod governor Evgeny Savchenko, who had ruled the region since 1993, stepped down.<sup>8</sup> Within a week, he had been appointed to the Federation Council, the upper chamber of the Russian parliament.

### Overview of City Council Elections

In the city council elections, United Russia retained its majority in all but three regional capitals. These elections, however, had two main features that set them apart from the gubernatorial and legislative campaigns considered above. First, as Figure 6 on p. 13 reports,<sup>9</sup> early voting hardly influenced the outcomes of municipal races. This may be because city councils are comparatively less important to federal and regional authorities alike than are regional legislatures or governorships. In addition, it is much easier for candidates, parties, and independent organizations to observe local contests.

Second, city council elections, especially in Tomsk and Novosibirsk, were chosen by Navalny's team as a main target for the "smart vote" campaign. Figure 7 on p. 14 indicates the votes-to-seats conversion for United Russia in the PR and SMD parts of local elections. As in the regional elections, the conversion was favorable to UR—particularly in SMDs.<sup>10</sup> That being said, there are three capitals in which UR candidates failed to achieve a majority in SMDs in the city council elections, namely Tomsk, Novosibirsk, and Tambov. If in Tambov United Russia's poor results are due to the city's idiosyncrasies (a broad coalition has formed around a former mayor of the city), then in both Tomsk and Novosibirsk United Russia's relative failures can be attributed to the "smart vote" campaign. The number of "smart vote" candidates elected in these cities was larger than anywhere else except Tambov.

### Conclusion

Country-wide early voting, implemented in regular Russian elections for the first time, did not cause turnout to increase but helped the authorities to maintain control over the main regional branches of government: governorships and legislatures. There is no doubt, therefore, that this tool will be called upon again, as it is important for the Kremlin to maintain its stranglehold on legislative power during the Duma's next term. At the same time, the opposition-led "smart vote" campaign also enjoyed some successes, especially in big cities, where—with only a handful of exceptions—vivid manipulations are costly and observers are highly active.

The "Smart Vote" campaign seems to be dangerous for the Kremlin as it looks toward the 2021 Duma elections. The campaign has the potential not only to harm United Russia, but also to overcome the political apathy of opposition-minded voters by bringing them to the polls in hopes of defeating a UR-backed candidate. In sum, despite all attempts to reduce the uncertainty of electoral outcomes in the run-up to the 2021 national elections, the next Duma election will be much more challenging for the Kremlin than the previous campaign was, and the authorities have already admitted it.<sup>11</sup>

*See overleaf for information about the author, further reading, and figures.*

7 "Pravoye osobennosti vyborov 13 sentiabria 2020 goda." Golosinfo.org, 27 July 2020. <https://www.golosinfo.org/articles/144538#3>

8 "Belgorod Region Governor Evgeny Savchenko Steps Down after 27 Years in Office." Meduza, 17 September 2020. <https://meduza.io/en/news/2020/09/17/belgorod-region-governor-evgeny-savchenko-steps-down-after-27-years-in-office>

9 The growing lines on Figure 6 are due to Kazan, the capital city of Tatarstan. Tatarstan, in turn, is a region with one of the strongest political machines in Russia.

10 It is important to note that since 2015, eight cities have changed from municipal electoral systems with mixed PR and SMD components to pure SMD-plurality.

11 "Confident but Not Uncontested: Internal Campaign Documents Show that Russia's Ruling Political Party Has a Plan to Hold onto the State Duma and Beat Alexey Navalny's Strategic Voting Initiative." Meduza, 21 October 2020. <https://meduza.io/en/feature/2020/10/21/confident-but-not-uncontested>



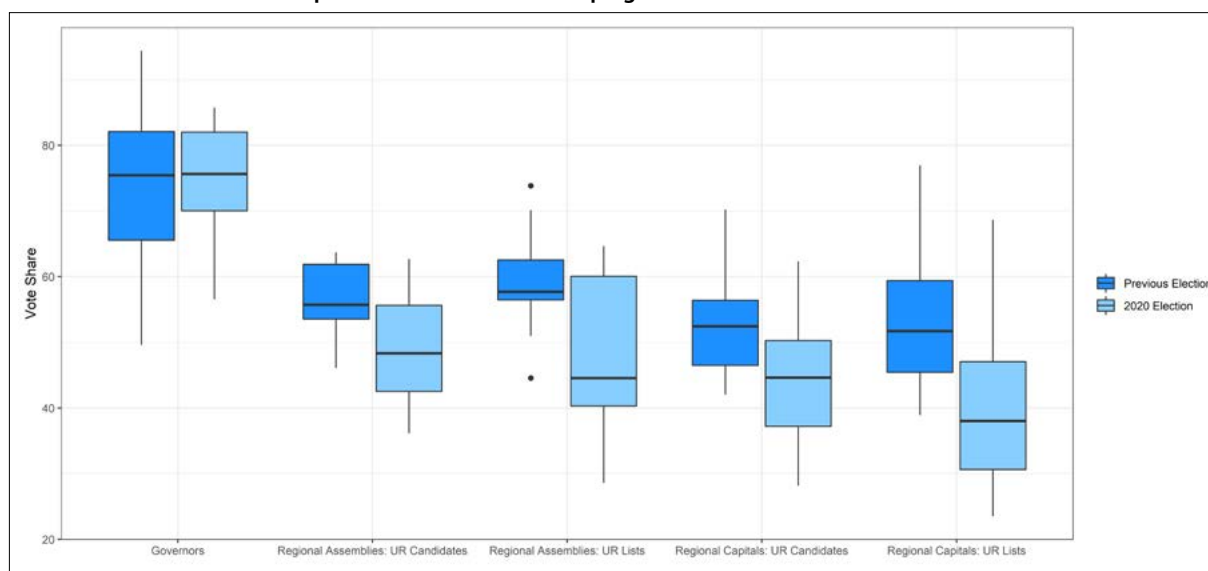
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### Further Reading:

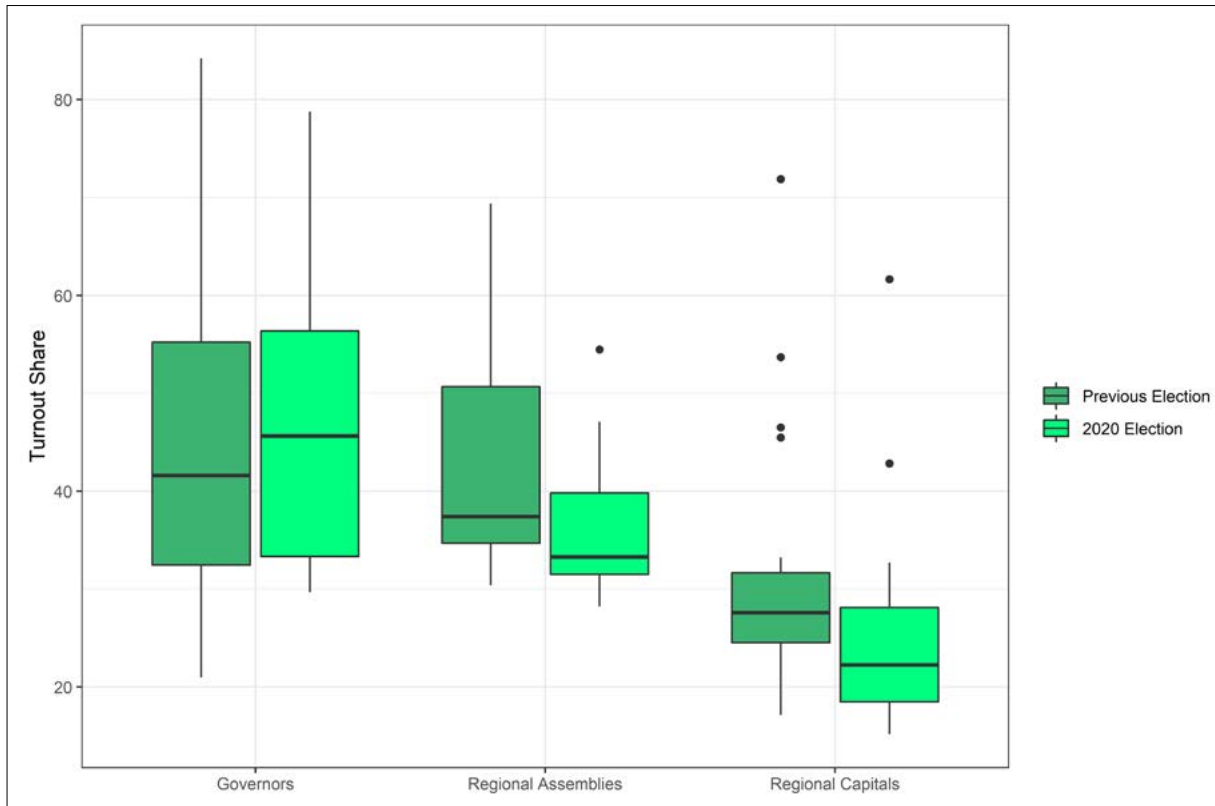
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**Figure 1: Results of the Kremlin’s Nominees in Gubernatorial Races and United Russia in Legislative and City Council Elections Compared to the Previous Campaign**



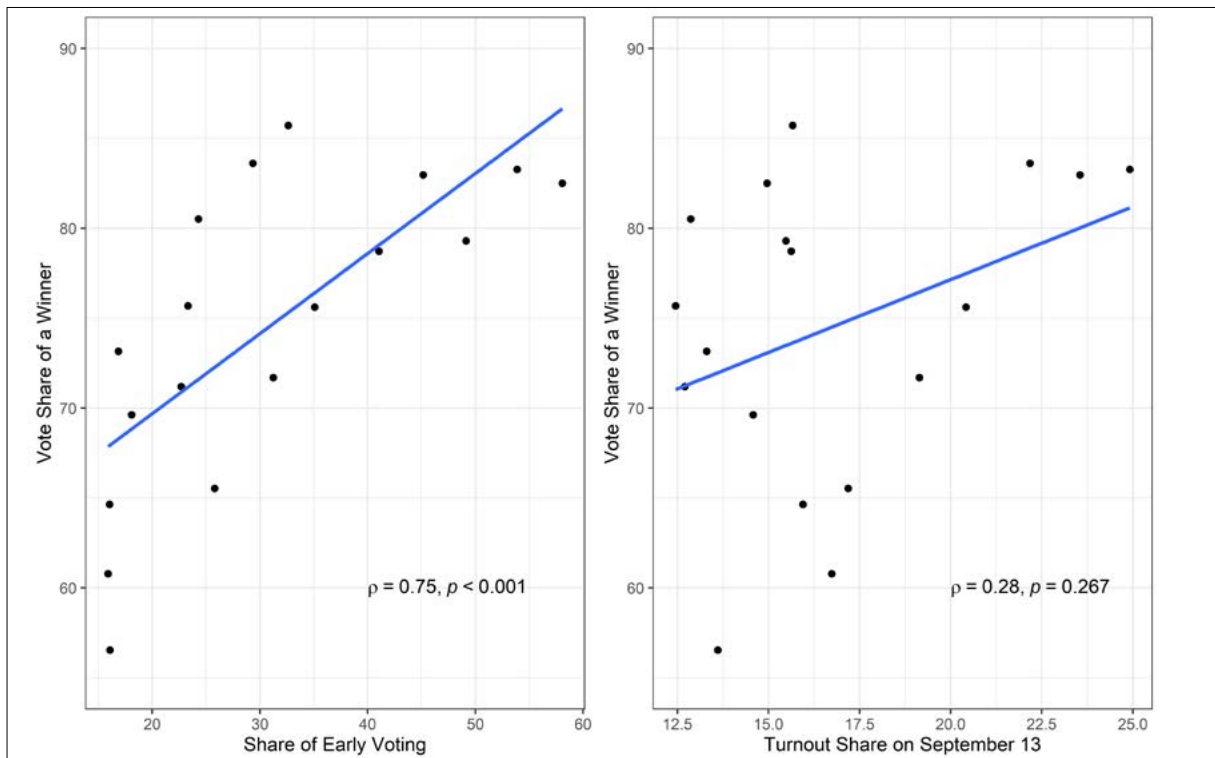
Source: Author's calculations based on data from the Central Election Commission of Russia

**Figure 2: Turnout Differences between the 2020 Elections and the Previous Campaign**



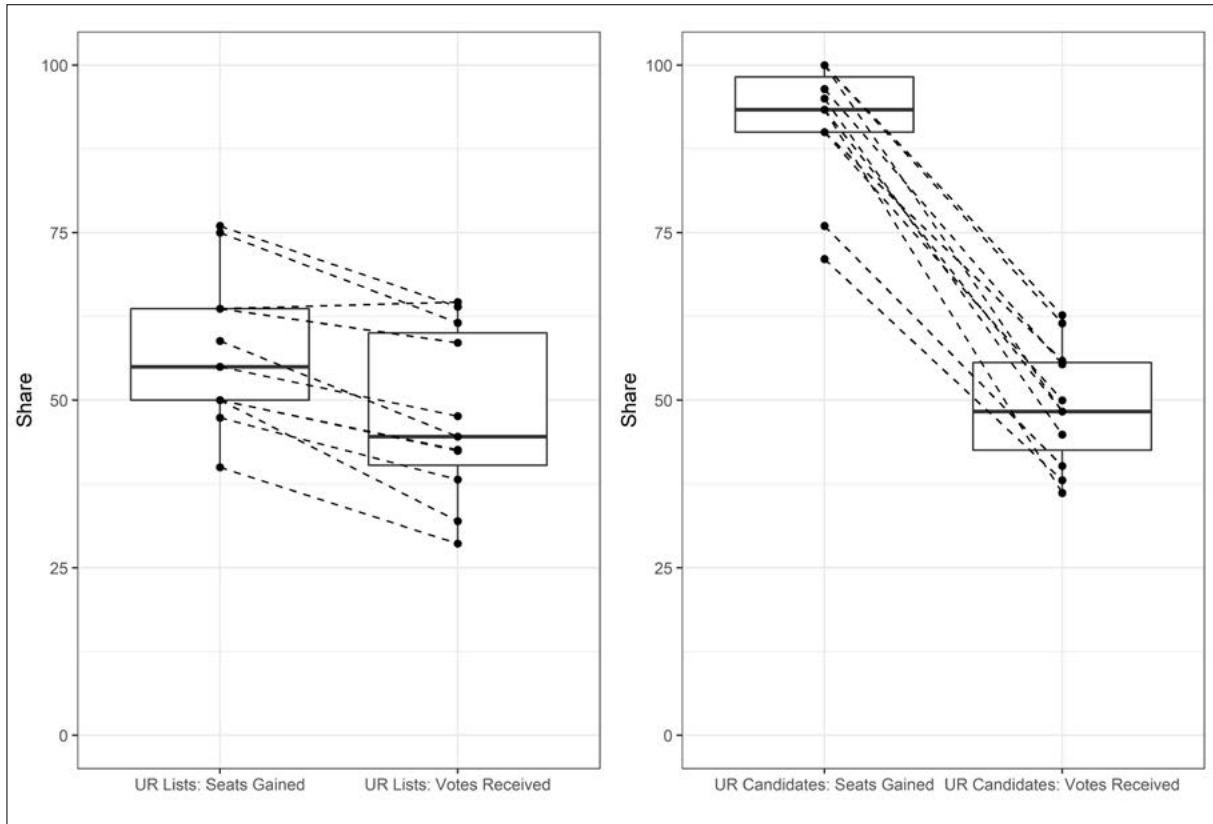
Source: Author's calculations based on data from the Central Election Commission of Russia

**Figure 3: Relationship between Winner's Share of the Vote in a Gubernatorial Race and Early Voting**



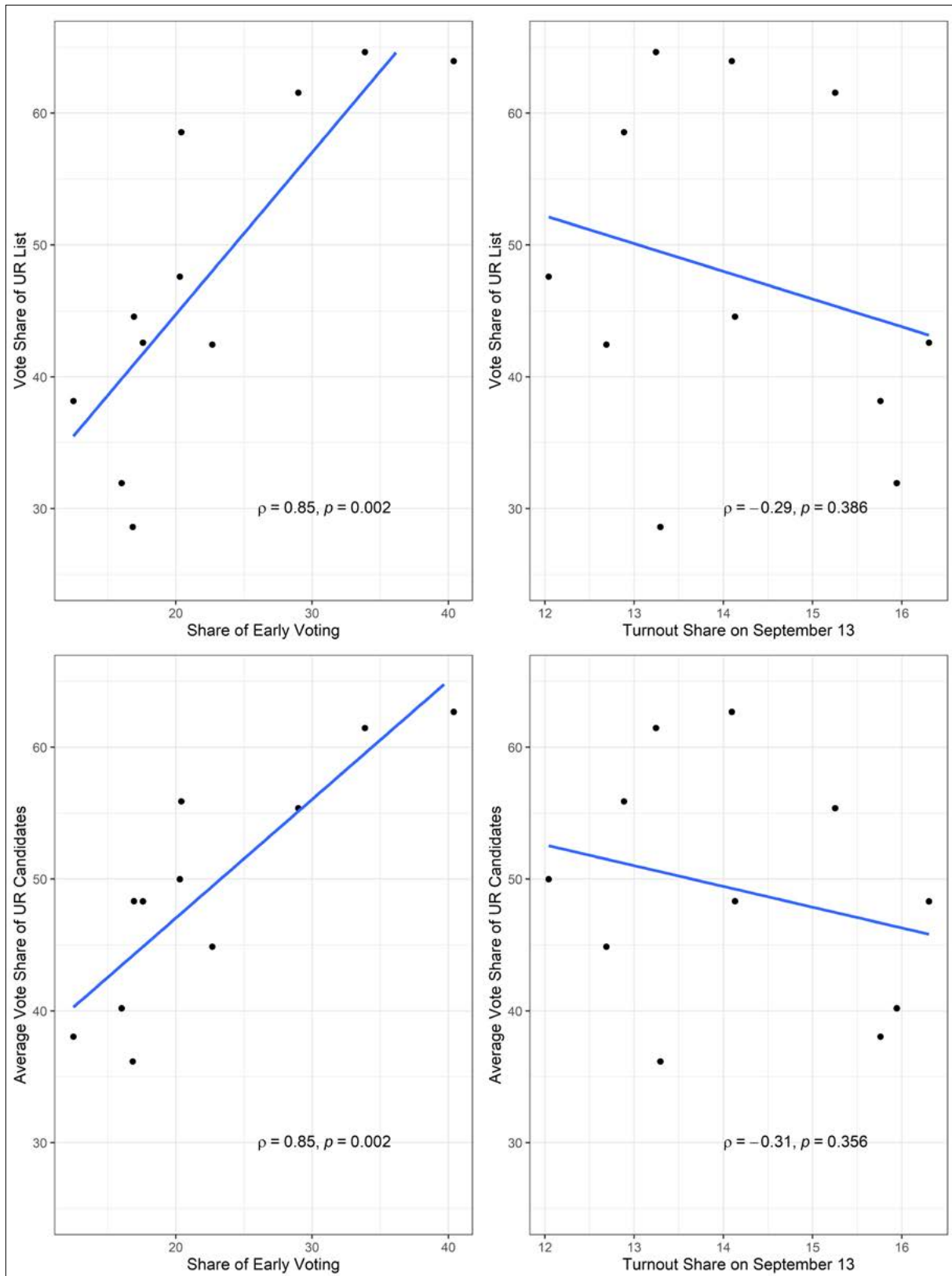
Source: Author's calculations based on data from the Central Election Commission of Russia

**Figure 4: Votes-to-Seats Conversion for United Russia in Regional Electoral Systems**



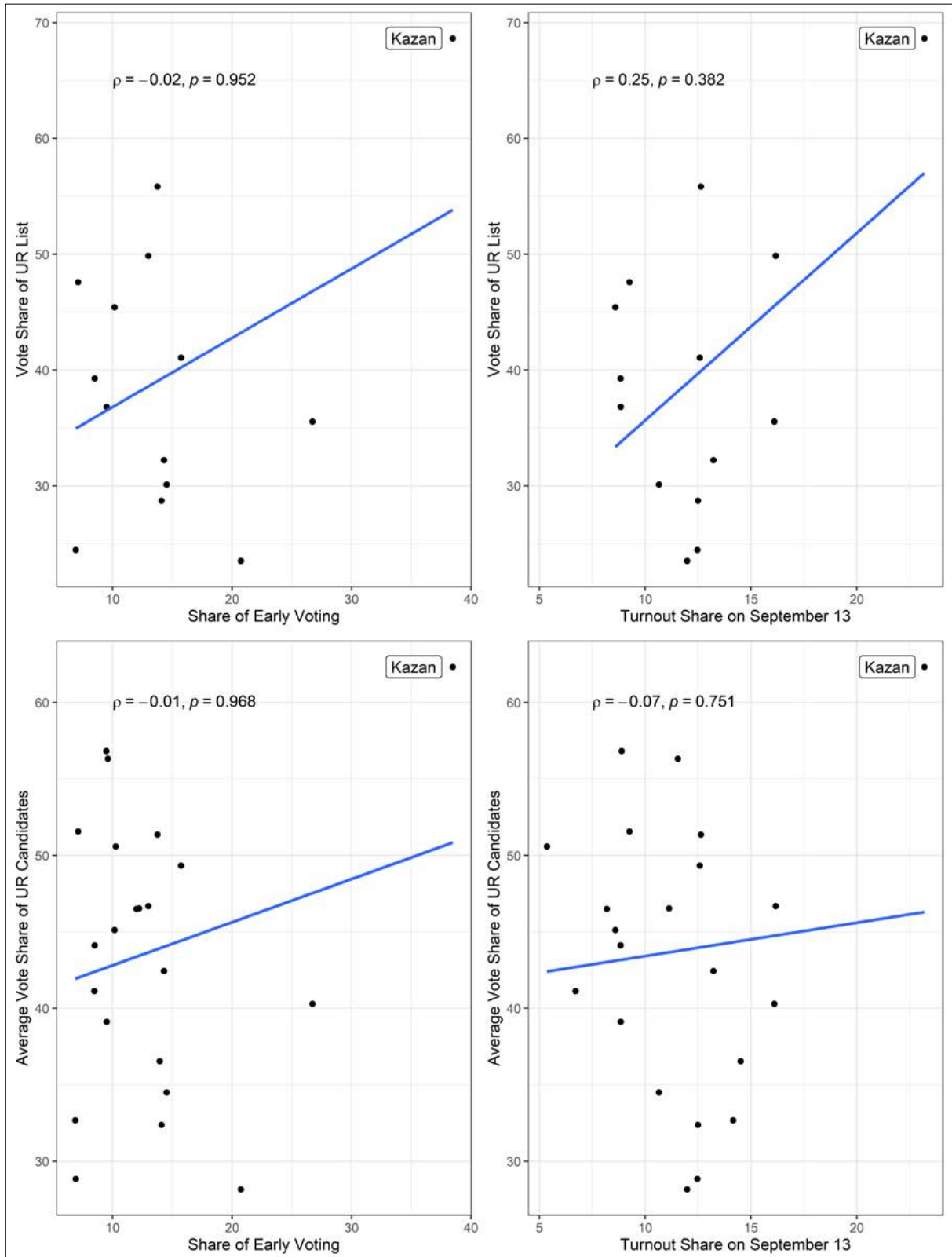
Source: Author's calculations based on data from the Central Election Commission of Russia

Figure 5: Relationship between United Russia's Results and Early Voting in Regions

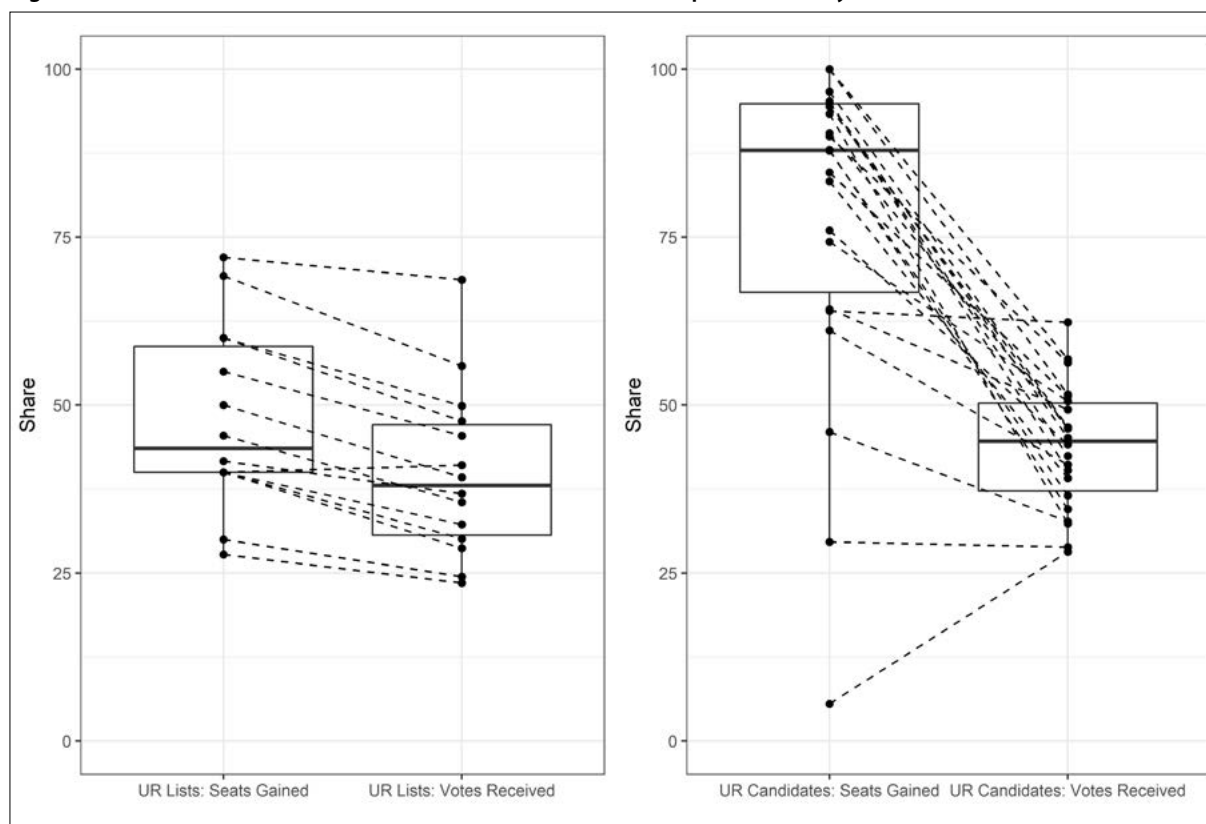


Source: Author's calculations based on data from the Central Election Commission of Russia

Figure 6: Relationship between United Russia's Results and Early Voting in Capitals



Source: Author's calculations based on data from the Central Election Commission of Russia

**Figure 7: Votes-to-Seats Conversion for United Russia in Municipal Electoral Systems**

Source: Author's calculations based on data from the Central Election Commission of Russia

## ANALYSIS

### The Quest for a Technocratic Utopia in Russian Subnational Governance

Guzel Garifullina (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Higher School of Economics (Moscow))

DOI: 10.3929/ethz-b-000458207

#### Abstract

Technocratic selection could help address two challenges faced by the Russian political regime: the need to prevent the opposition from mobilizing and gaining support through subnational competitively elected offices and the need to ensure popular legitimacy. What we see, though, is technocratic selection either being used for the wrong offices or being applied selectively, rendering it useless or even harmful.

#### Technocratic Politics, Politics and Regime Legitimacy

September was marked by two seemingly unconnected events. On the “single election day,” which this year went on for several days due to the extended voting period, most Russian regions voted in regional and municipal-level elections. Almost simultaneously, in

Solnechnogorsk (Moscow oblast'), the final round of the “Leaders of Russia” competition, an annual contest to determine the most promising public and private managers, took place. While different in scope and effect, those two events illustrate the use and limits of the technocratic approach to leadership at the subnational level in Russia.

Technocracy can be loosely defined as rule by experts who are unelected and unaccountable to voters. In the Russian context, the term is typically used to describe public officials and bureaucrats alike, as long as they were selected for their expertise in a particular sphere and not for their political skills or ability to gain popular support. For public office holders, such as governors and mayors, a shift to technocratic selection is driven by two considerations. First, replacing political competence with technocratic experience as the criterion for picking candidates is meant to bring in effective managers. Second, restricting competition during elections is intended to minimize the public accountability of elected politicians. Replacing popular elections with appointments is, in a way, an extreme example of the same trend. For bureaucrats, the technocratic approach involves an attempt to introduce a system of pure merit-based selection to fill key positions.

The technocratization of selection for both groups is compatible with two general goals of the federal authorities. The first is to minimize the political space available at the subnational level, where the opposition could mobilize and where challengers to the existing regime could appear. After all, it was through subnational offices that Mexico's hegemonic regime was eroded, as the opposition parties gained both recognition and the political and administrative experience to challenge the incumbent party. The second is to enhance regime legitimacy through effective governance, which explains the need for competent individuals in both higher public offices and bureaucratic positions.

### Elements of Technocratic Selection for Elected Offices

In mid-September, many Russian voters cast their ballots in various elections—including 18 gubernatorial races, 11 regional legislative elections, city council elections in 22 regional capitals, and municipal executive elections in 5 cities. With the exception of a few races at the city council level, the results of the elections were not surprising. In most cases, United Russia maintained its legislative majority. Most importantly, all the incumbent governors held onto their seats—unlike in several of the 2018 contests. The gubernatorial races best illustrate how technocratic principles are introduced into the selection process of even popularly elected political offices.

The first element of technocratic selection that can be seen here is the set of criteria used to select the candidate who will be backed by the regime. In 2020, 9 of the 18 gubernatorial elections featured active governors who were running as incumbents. Many of them had no prior electoral experience or connection to the region they were sent to govern. Selected based on their expertise and experience working in regional or federal

executive agencies, these individuals exemplify technocratic candidates.

The second element of technocratic selection for public offices is reflected in the efforts taken to minimize political competition and reduce the unpredictability of the electoral outcome. As a result, the voters have minimal effect on the elected officials, who instead depend mostly on support from elites. Lack of accountability to voters is one of the traits of technocracy. Here, the authorities used a series of strategies to increase their control over the elections. On top of existing candidate registration requirements, pandemic-related innovations (such as new forms of voting) were widely evaluated by experts as a major factor in the outcome. As noted by experts from the Golos voter rights organization, these elections were held under the worst electoral regulations in the past 25 years (Golos 2020).

Technocratic selection of public officials has important shortcomings. First, these offices are inherently political—they involve dealing with uncertainty and conflicting interests. Eliminating politics from selection results in officials who are unprepared and unqualified to face some of the key challenges they encounter.

Second, technocrats often have lower capacity when it comes to electoral mobilization. Research suggests that political leaders without electoral experience in a given locality will be less effective at mobilizing voters during federal elections because they do not control local political machines (Reuter 2013; Reuter et al. 2016). Additionally, outside technocrats are often in conflict with local elites, further impeding their ability to procure the required electoral results and ensure the social and political stability valued by the federal center. Finally, technocratic appointees at all levels often seem to lack the ability to build relationships with citizens. When Bashkortostan's president Khabirov says in an interview that he is “a man of the system” or, facing protesters on the Kushtau mountain in summer 2020, insists on protecting a municipal official from public anger because the latter is “one of our own,” he behaves as a technocrat and provokes hostility from citizens.

Besides shortcomings related to political management, technocratic selection for political positions has effects on governance. To date, there are no conclusive evaluations of the comparative efficiency of “politically competent” and “technocratic” public officials, but there is some suggestive evidence. A study by the “Petersburg Politics” (Peterburgskaia Politika) Fund shows that, as of 2019, socio-economic stability had declined in a large proportion of those regions that had new “technocratic” governors (Bocharova 2019). The main factor that works against technocrats is that their bureaucratic experience and the formal criteria on which they are selected are limited and do not reflect

the types of issues they have to deal with in a municipal or regional public office.

### Technocracy in Bureaucratic Appointments

Though it does not cover the entire regional bureaucracy, “Leaders of Russia” is an attempt to create a nationwide system of purely technocratic recruitment and promotion for leadership positions, mostly oriented toward public administration. The contest has been held annually for the past three years. Personally backed by Putin and part of his most recent electoral campaign, the project states its mission as promoting social mobility and creating a reserve of cadres for the country.

The competition selects winners based on objective, measurable criteria: participants take tests in social science, demonstrate familiarity with Russian geography and an ability to interpret tables and graphs, and display their problem-solving skills and initiative. The winners of previous rounds have been appointed to various positions within the municipal, regional, and federal authorities, as well as in private companies. The organizers claim that the contest is a tool of social mobility, boasting that 200 finalists have been appointed to managerial positions in the three years that the competition has been running.

When you look at the appointments, however, it appears that these individuals were already qualified for and moving toward a given position. For example, Petr Vaghin became vice mayor of Tyumen on October 12, 2020—but he had already spent 25 years building a career in the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) of Tyumen oblast. After winning the contest in 2019, he received a one-year appointment as a deputy head of MVD in the Republic of North Ossetia before returning to his home region and taking on the vice-mayoral position. Another experience—that of Ignat Petukhov—seems to contrast with Vaghin’s in the sense that Petukhov enjoyed incredibly rapid advancement at a young age, but even then, winning “Leaders of Russia” did not suddenly elevate him. Petukhov started his career at 22 in the Audit Chamber (Schetnaia Palata) of Sverdlovsk oblast and became a project manager in the Alabuga special economic zone in Tatarstan at 24. At 25, after

reaching the finals of “Leaders of Russia,” he became the head of the “Corporation of Development” agency of Orenburg oblast, having been personally invited to take the position by the regional governor. In both cases, the contest seems to have helped people who already had great career prospects to gain greater visibility. As the participants note in their interviews, participating in the competition is a good opportunity to meet equally ambitious and successful people and make useful connections: the finalists’ high-ranking mentors are the most obvious examples of such connections, but all participants who make it to the face-to-face rounds get to meet prominent politicians, bureaucrats, and businessmen. Despite being positioned as a merit-based opportunity, the contest assimilates itself into the system of Russian bureaucracy as a source of personal connections.

When evaluating the limited impact of the contest on cadre selection and promotion within the Russian subnational administration, it is important to remember what kind of a system the winners of “Leaders of Russia” are facing. Accommodating hundreds of meritocratically selected individuals every year cuts against the logic of the spoils system that governs most bureaucratic leadership appointments and promotions (Lapuente and Nisotskaya 2009).

### Conclusion

While very disparate, the two examples brought up at the beginning of this article illustrate the main problems of the technocratic approach to governance in the Russian regions. In the first case, we see the shortcomings of technocratic selection to inherently political offices: the set of skills that the selected individuals have is ill-suited for managing conflicting interests, dealing with uncertainty, and building a rapport with citizens. In the second case, technocratic selection makes perfect sense—but in a system predominantly built on spoils, it often turns into just another opportunity to make useful connections. It seems that technocratic solutions to the regime’s problems bring additional challenges or fall short of the promised success due to the restricted application of meritocratic principles.

#### *About the Author*

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## ANALYSIS

### Regional Public Finance in Russia in 2012–2019

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DOI: 10.3929/ethz-b-000458207

#### **Abstract**

Regional public finance in Russia has undergone some important transformations since 2012. Although the structure of revenues remained relatively stable between 2012 and 2019, the structure of expenditures changed, due in part to new unfunded mandates in education and healthcare, as well as to the increased use of extrabudgetary funds. Moreover, the federal government revised its transfer policy to make it less generous, forcing several regions to significantly increase their public debt or reduce social spending. The transparency of the intergovernmental fiscal system also declined during this period as budget credits and politically motivated federal transfers (including new forms of discretionary unconditional grants and “other transfers”) became widespread.

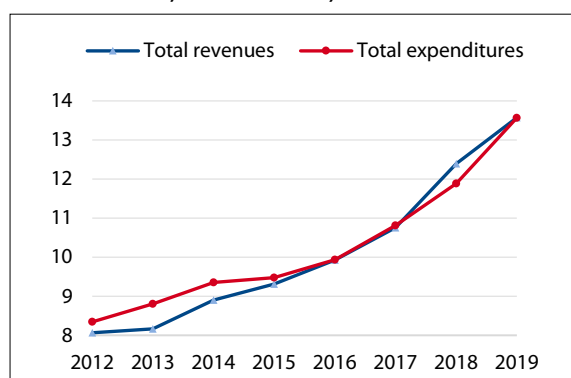
#### **Major Public Finance Trends in Russian Regions (2012–2019)**

Regional expenditure priorities, federal transfer policies, and subnational debt management in Russia have changed considerably since the start of Putin's third term in 2012. However, the composition of regional revenues (excluding transfers) has been relatively stable over this period. This analysis will summarize major trends in regional government revenues, expenditures, and debt, as well as intergovernmental fiscal transfers that regions receive from the federal government. Additionally, I will briefly discuss the state of public finance in regions that elected their governors in 2020.

Figure 1 shows the evolution of nominal revenues and expenditures of consolidated regional budgets since 2012. A consolidated regional budget in Russia is calculated as the sum of the regional budget and corresponding local budgets, including the budgets of cities, city districts, municipal raions, and urban and rural settlements. One clear tendency is that regional expenditures usually increase after presidential elections. They grew steadily in 2012–2014 and 2018–2019. The crisis of 2014–2015, meanwhile, prevented regional governments from keeping up this pace. In fact, the real expenditure of consolidated regional budgets (adjusted for inflation) declined in both crisis years.

Another noticeable trend is that regional governments, on average, experienced budget deficits in 2012–2015. This implies that at least some of the obligations imposed on regions by the Presidential Decrees of 2012 (known as the May Decrees) represented unfunded mandates. Even after receiving federal transfers intended to cover increased expenditures, some regions had to use deficit financing and issue various debt instruments to bridge the gap between their revenue capacity and their expenditure needs. After 2015, consolidated regional budgets were mostly balanced or ran a small surplus. This paradox can be partly explained by the fact that the richest regions, including Moscow, St. Petersburg, and the oil-extracting regions, were in surplus during this period. Federal transfers also began to play a more important role after 2017.

**Figure 1: Revenues and Expenditures of Consolidated Regional Budgets, 2012–2019 (Nominal, Trillion Rubles)**



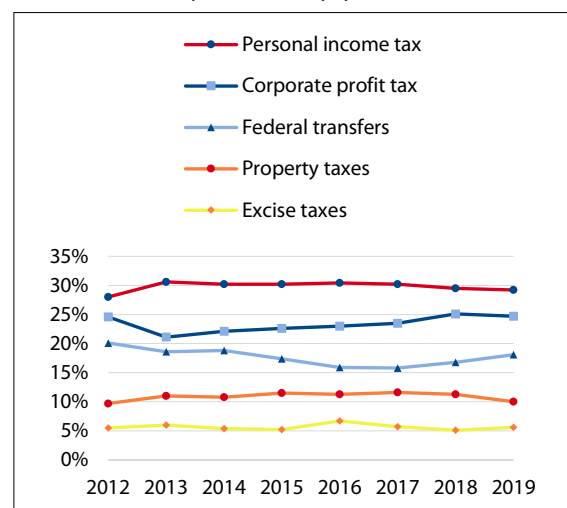
Source: Russian Federal Treasury

### Revenues

Since the early 2000s, two major sources of consolidated regional government revenues have been personal income tax and corporate profit tax. Although these taxes are considered federal under the Budget Code of Russia, the funds collected are almost entirely given to regional and local budgets (just 15% of profit tax revenue, for instance, remains in the federal budget). Together, they account for more than half of all consolidated regional revenues. Federal fiscal transfers constitute the third-largest revenue source, fluctuating between 15% and 20%. Property taxes remain much less important for regional and local budgets in Russia than in most other federations. In total, corporate and personal property taxes as well as the land tax account for slightly more than 10% of consolidated regional revenues, while excise taxes, mostly on gasoline and alcoholic beverages (except spirits), comprise a further 5% of regional and local revenues. Taken together, these five revenue sources account for about 85–90% of consolidated regional revenues. Other types of revenue that are important for some

regions include the mineral extraction tax (even though its oil and gas portion was almost entirely centralized in the mid-2000s) as well as various fees and charges. Figure 1 shows the composition of consolidated regional government revenues in 2012–2019, including the revenues of both regions and municipalities.

**Figure 2: Structure of Regional Government Revenues, 2012–2019 (%)**



Source: Russian Federal Treasury

Even though the structure of regional and local revenues was relatively stable throughout the period under study, two notable trends deserve attention. First, the corporate profit tax was a more volatile source of revenue than the personal income tax. In 2013, the corporate profit tax dropped from 25% of consolidated regional government revenues to around 20%; it remained at that level through the crisis years of 2014–2015, rising back to 25% only in 2018. This marked a significant decline from the mid-2000s, when the corporate profit tax comprised more than 30% of consolidated regional government revenues, reflecting the overall slowdown of the Russian economy in the 2010s.

Second, federal transfers have declined as a share of consolidated regional revenues. Somewhat surprisingly, the most substantial shock to federal transfers came between 2014 and 2016, when the economy was in stagnation. Alexeev and Chernyavskiy (2018) show that the federal government was much less generous during the crisis of 2014–2015 than it had been in 2009, when Russia faced the aftershocks of the Great Recession. Poorer regions were disproportionately impacted by the absence of federal financial support in the mid-2010s. Another explanation for the decline in transfers is that Moscow changed its intergovernmental fiscal strategy, starting to use alternative—and usually less transparent—mechanisms of regional financing, including federal budget credits (see the *Debt* section below).

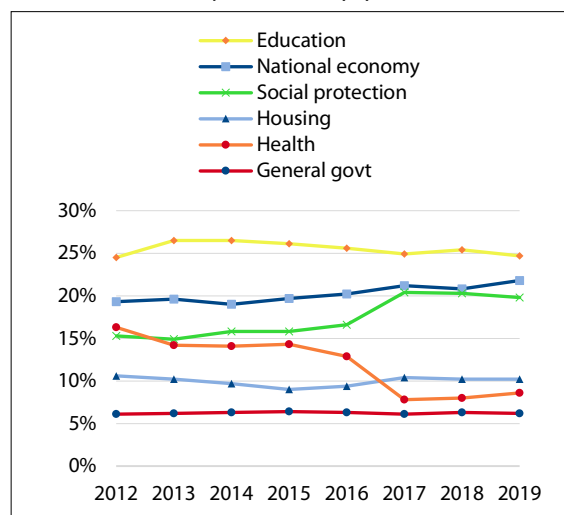
### Expenditures

Regional expenditures, particularly those related to human capital, were expected to change considerably after 2012, when Putin signed the May Decrees. These decrees obliged regions, among other things, to increase the wages of teachers, doctors, and other public-sector employees. However, as depicted in Figure 3, although spending on education and healthcare initially increased as a share of the total (healthcare spending rose in 2012 and education spending in both 2012 and 2013), this spending soon stabilized at 26% and 14%, respectively, of total expenditures. Healthcare spending later dropped sharply, falling to less than 8% of total spending in 2017. The reason for this dramatic change was that healthcare came to be financed largely through extrabudgetary funds (particularly the Federal Compulsory Medical Insurance Fund): as of 2017, 1.9 trillion of the 2.9 trillion rubles of regional medical spending came from extrabudgetary funds. This gave the federal government, which de facto managed extrabudgetary funds, more control and discretion over the healthcare sector. At the same time, regional social protection spending increased from 17% to 20% of total expenditures (from 2.2 to 2.4 trillion rubles). One plausible explanation is the political cycle: 2017 was the year before the presidential election of 2018 and regional governments were mobilized as agents of the federal government, charged with allocating much-needed financial support to the people. Other expenditure areas remained relatively stable in 2012–2019. Spending on the national economy (mostly roads and highways) and housing (mostly communal utilities) hovered around 20% and 10%, respectively, of the total.

### Transfers

Federal transfers were the least stable source of revenue for consolidated regional budgets in 2012–2019. While their total amount did not fluctuate much, the composition of transfers changed drastically, as Figure 4 shows. Since the early 2000s, the federal government has used both unconditional and conditional fiscal transfers to support regions and implement federal policies at the sub-national level.<sup>1</sup> Initially, unconditional transfers (*dotatsii*) were designed as formula-based grants aimed at equalizing fiscal capacity across regions without imposing any limits on their spending. Over time, however, the federal government divided unconditional transfers into formula-based equalization transfers (*dotatsii na vyравnivanie biudzhetoj obespechennosti*) and discretionary balancing transfers (*dotatsii na obespechenie sbalansirovanosti biudzhetov*) that were allocated monthly or quarterly

**Figure 3: Structure of Regional Government Expenditures, 2012–2019 (%)**



Source: Russian Federal Treasury

according to federal government decrees. Obviously, the second type was much less transparent and more politically motivated. These transfers were used extensively during the crisis of 2009 and peaked at 19% of all federal transfers in 2014. Later, however, their share declined sharply, falling to only 2% of total federal transfers in 2019. The reason for this was not the increased utilization of formula-based equalization transfers (although these increased from 24% of the total in 2012 to 36% in 2017) but the creation of several new types of unconditional transfers in 2017. Some of these new transfers—which comprised more than 8% of total federal transfers by 2019—were region-specific and inherently political (e.g., special transfers to Chechnya and Crimea), while others were conditional in nature (e.g., transfers aimed at increasing the salaries of public sector employees) and thus undermined the very concept of unconditional equalization. Overall, the share of unconditional transfers increased from 32% of the total in 2012 to 49% in 2018 before falling to 38% a year later. Predictability and transparency, the two most important principles of an intergovernmental fiscal system in a federal country, were clearly violated in Russia in the mid-2010s.

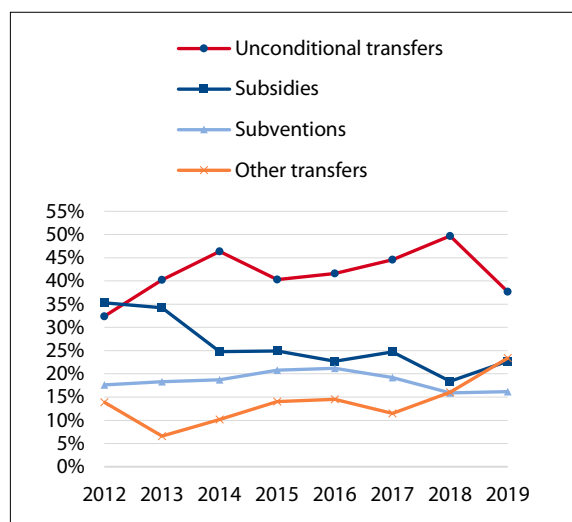
The most common type of conditional transfers are subsidies used to co-finance regional capital expenditures by providing matching federal funds. These tend to gradually decrease over time. After experiencing positive shocks in the years following presidential elections (particularly in 2012–2013), they stabilized at around 22–23% of total federal transfers.

<sup>1</sup> According to the normative fiscal federalism theory, unconditional grants should be based on an equalization formula and provided to those regions “with the greatest fiscal need and the least fiscal capacity” (Oates 1999), while conditional grants should be provided in the form of matching grants to internalize spatial externalities.

Another alarming tendency that can potentially be linked to political influence is the rapid increase of the share of “other transfers.” This type of transfers was almost negligible before the 2010s but then absorbed some former subsidies and subventions (which are used to finance federal responsibilities that are “transferred” to regions) and continued growing during the 2010s, peaking at more than 23% of all transfers in 2019. Other transfers are less transparent than subsidies and subventions since they 1) are allocated annually and are thus much less predictable; 2) are used to finance short-term projects, often involving funds from the Presidential Reserve Fund, instead of long-term government programs; 3) are discretionary in nature and can be used to achieve political goals; and 4) undermine regional fiscal autonomy since, unlike subsidies, they do not require co-financing.

Overall, the composition of federal transfers became even less transparent and more susceptible to political manipulation in the period between 2012 and 2019, which is just another step toward fiscal centralization and the reduction of regional and local autonomy.

**Figure 4: Structure of Federal Transfers to Regions, 2012–2019 (%)**



Source: Russian Federal Treasury

### Debt

As federal transfers declined in 2012–2016, Russian regions began issuing more debt to cover their growing expenditure needs and new unfunded mandates in education and healthcare. Over this five-year period, total regional debt increased from less than 1.5 trillion to more than 2.3 trillion rubles. Johnson and Yushkov (2020) show that regional debt, and particularly budget credits, during this period became a substitute for declining federal transfers. The composition of debt

also changed considerably (see Figure 5). The Ministry of Finance became more aggressive in providing cheap budget credit to regions: as a result, the total volume of such credits more than doubled in nominal terms, from 0.4 trillion to almost 1 trillion rubles, between 2012 and 2016. Compared to market debt instruments (e.g., government securities and commercial loans), budget credits have an exceptionally low interest rate (0.1%), with the result that when regions pay back the credit, they pay much less in real terms than they originally borrowed.

Commercial loans grew at almost the same rate as budget credits, as regions that were unable to attract federal financial support in the form of transfers or budget credits had to find other, usually much more expensive, sources of financing to cover unfunded federal mandates and move toward achieving the goals of the May Decrees. The interest rate of commercial loans was well above 10%, especially during the crisis of 2014–2015. Recent changes in the Budget Code further incentivized regions to reduce their debt burden by limiting regions’ access to transfers and other forms of federal support if they spend more than 10% of their total expenditure on debt service. This policy, however, can create a vicious circle, since highly indebted regions will lose access to some federal funding and will have to borrow even more to repay their current debts, potentially leading to a series of regional bankruptcies in the future.

**Figure 5: Subnational Debt in Russia by Category, 2008–2016 (Nominal, Trillion Rubles)**



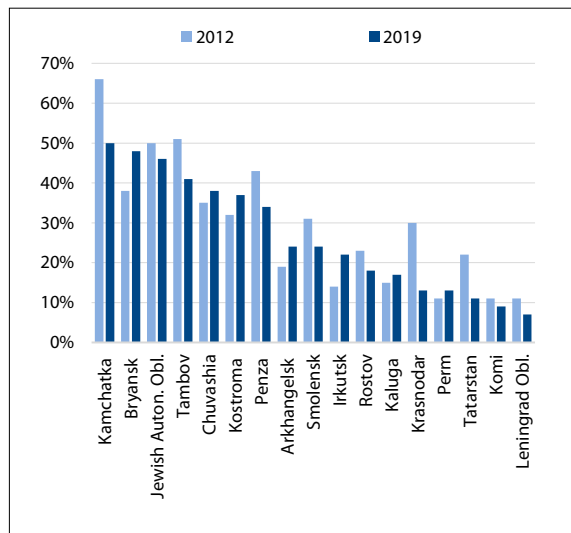
Source: Russian Ministry of Finance

### Public Finance in Regions with Gubernatorial Elections in 2020

Those gubernatorial elections held in 2020 were much less competitive than local elections in large cities (in particular, Tomsk and Novosibirsk) or even than certain

gubernatorial elections in previous years. All the incumbents and federal appointees managed to get themselves (re)elected, although the results were not totally uniform. One obvious reason for this is massive electoral fraud and data manipulation. Another, somewhat more sophisticated explanation is that the federal government deliberately targeted these regions over the last few years to ensure the (re)election of Kremlin-supported candidates.

**Figure 6: Federal Transfers as a Share of Regional Revenues, %**



Source: Russian Federal Treasury

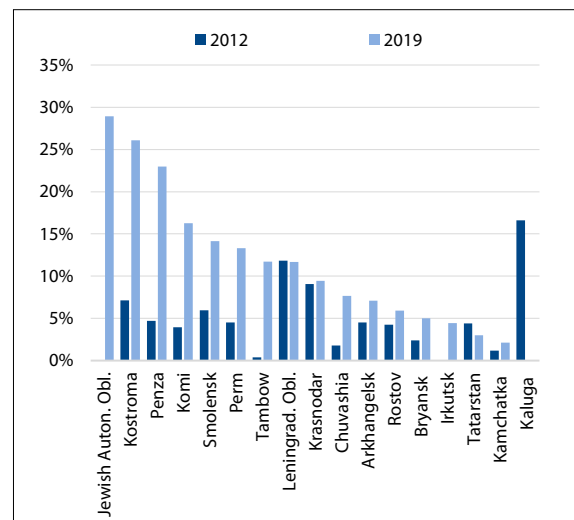
Figure 6 shows the dependence on federal transfers (in 2012 and 2019) of regions where gubernatorial elections were held in 2020. It seems that no overarching transfer policy specifically targeted these regions. Some regions actually improved their fiscal condition and reduced their dependence on transfers, primarily due to growth in the corporate profit tax (Leningrad Oblast, Komi, Tatarstan, Krasnodar Krai). Some other regions became slightly more dependent on federal financial support (Bryansk, Kostroma, and Arkhangelsk Oblasts, Chuvashia), a development that was apparently unrelated to political business cycles. Only one region seems to have been targeted by the federal government: Irkutsk Oblast, which has traditionally been one of the most protest-prone regions. The communist governor was recently replaced by a Kremlin-backed candidate, who presumably needed additional funding for his campaign. The share of transfers in this region was relatively low over the last several years but increased considerably—to 22%—in 2019.

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However, if we look more closely at the share of discretionary (not formula-based) unconditional transfers to these regions, a different picture emerges (see Figure 7). Discretionary unconditional transfers increased dramatically between 2012 and 2019. In part, this reflected the general trend discussed above. That being said, some regions seem to have been particular targets of these non-transparent forms of federal support. Interestingly, regions that received more of these transfers—which were not aimed at fiscal capacity equalization or co-financing of government programs, and thus could have more easily been used to finance the incumbent’s campaign—demonstrated significantly higher levels of support for the incumbent in the 2020 elections. With the exception of Smolensk Oblast, where the incumbent did not represent the ruling party, all regions with a share of discretionary unconditional transfers above 10% demonstrated more than 70% support for the incumbent. As such, either the federal government achieved its (re)election goals by using less transparent fiscal transfers that were used to finance the incumbents’ campaigns or else the regions that received more discretionary transfers used electoral fraud and data manipulation more frequently. Whatever the case may be, such discretionary financial flows from the federal center to regions serve as an important political mechanism of quasi-competitive electoral politics at the regional level.

**Figure 7: Discretionary Unconditional Transfers as a Share of Federal Transfers, %**



Quelle: Föderales Schatzamt Russlands

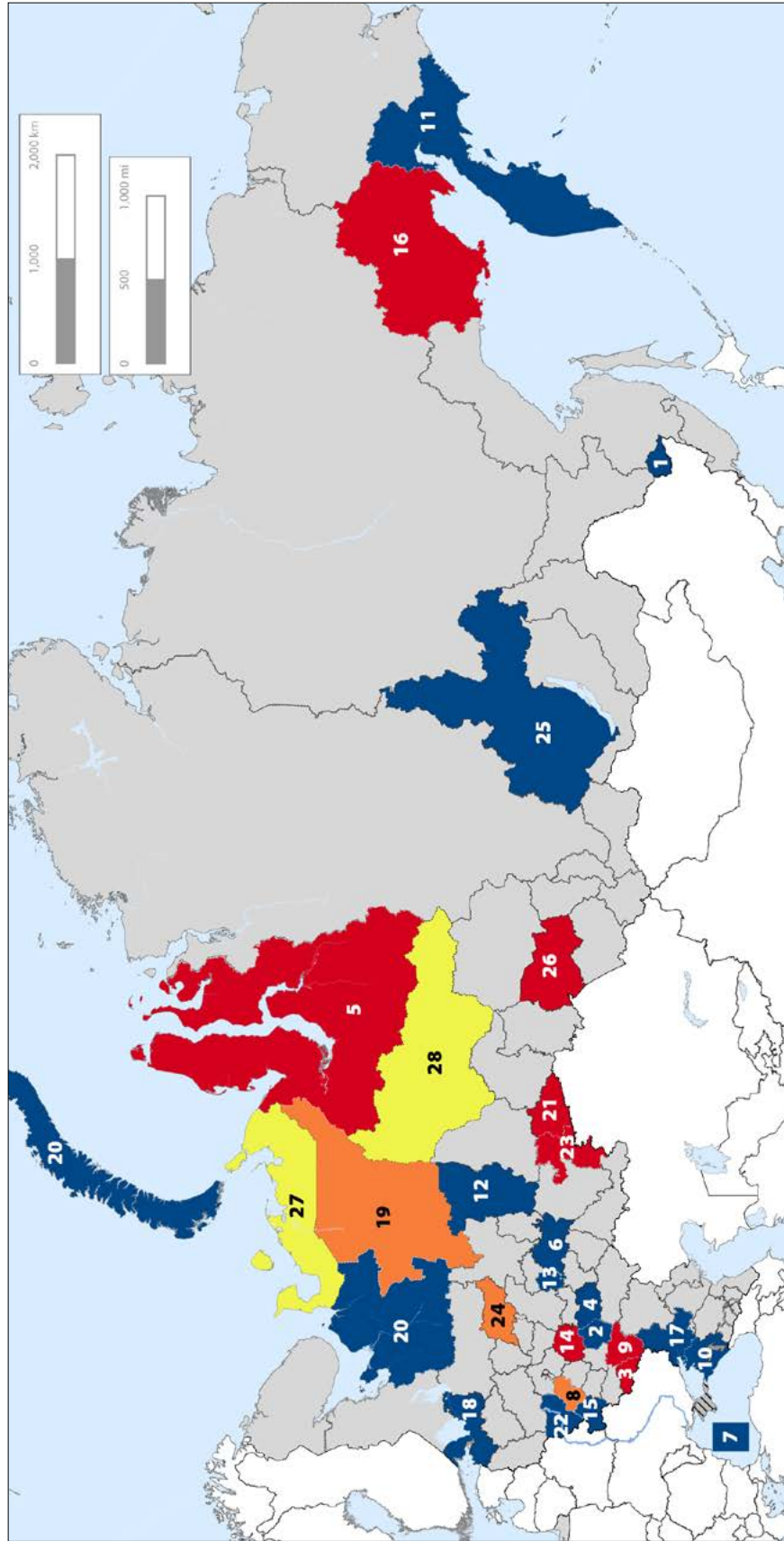
World Bank technical assistance projects related to public financial management and program evaluation in Russian regions and municipalities.

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# Regions and Cities of the Russian Federation Where Elections Were Held on Unified Election Day 2020

Map 1: Regions of the Russian Federation Where Elections Were Held on Unified Election Day 2020 (11–13 September 2020)

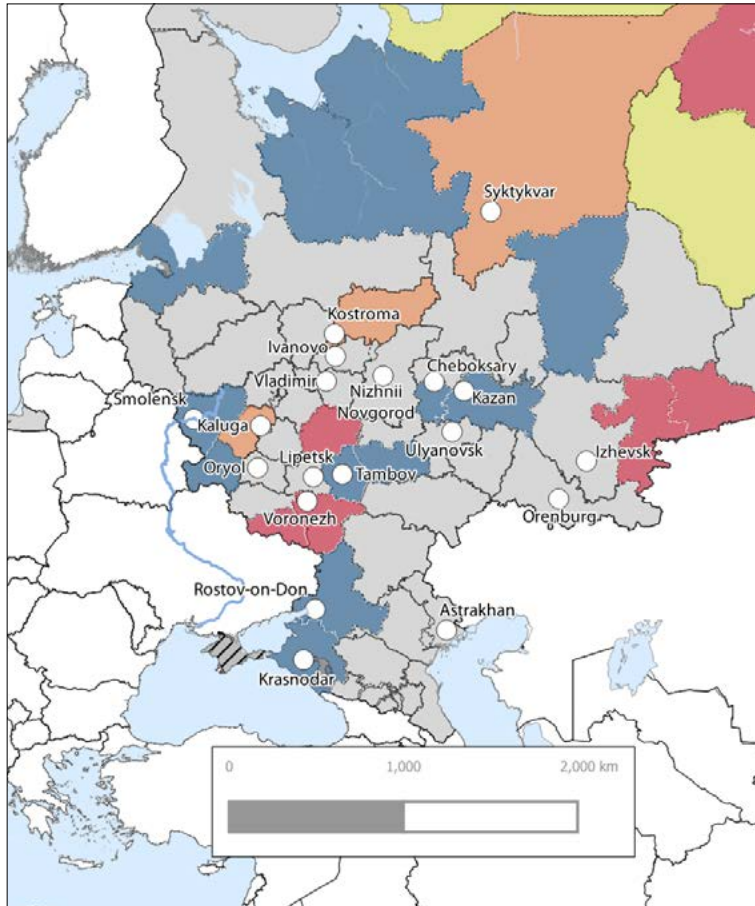


■ Regions where gubernatorial elections were held ■ Regions where legislative elections were held ■ Regions where gubernatorial and legislative elections were held ■ Regions where the governor was elected by the legislative assembly of the region ■ Ukrainian areas annexed by the Russian Federation on 21 March 2014\*  
 1. Jewish Autonomous Oblast; 2. Tambov; 3. Belgorod; 4. Penza; 5. Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug; 6. Tatarstan; 7. City of Sevastopol\*; 8. Kaluga; 9. Voronezh; 10. Krasnodar; 11. Kamchatka; 12. Perm; 13. Chuvashia; 14. Ryazan; 15. Bryansk; 16. Magadan; 17. Rostov; 18. Leningrad Oblast; 19. Komi; 20. Arkhangelsk; 21. Kurgan; 22. Smolensk; 23. Chelyabinsk; 24. Kostroma; 25. Irkutsk; 26. Novosibirsk; 27. Nenets Autonomous Okrug; 28. Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug (Yugra)

\* The Ukrainian City of Sevastopol (along with the Autonomous Republic of Crimea) was annexed by the Russian Federation on 21 March 2014. The annexation is not recognized by the international community. Map created in QGIS by the Research Centre for East European Studies at the University of Bremen with geodata from Openstreetmap.org

MAP

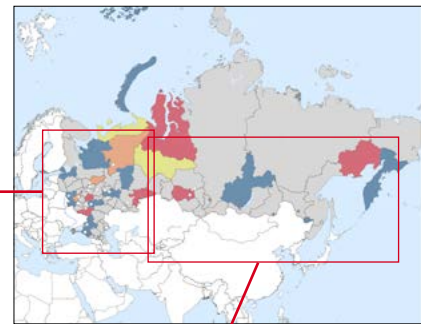
**Map 2a: Cities of the Russian Federation (Western Part) Where Elections Were Held on Unified Election Day 2020 (11–13 September 2020)**



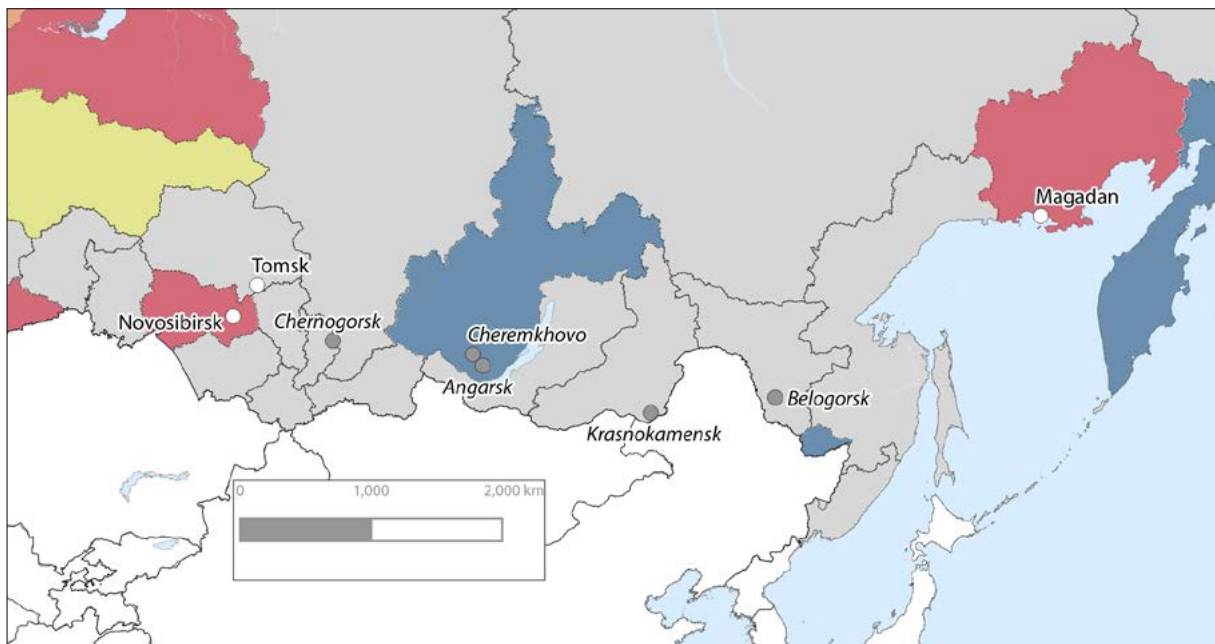
- Syktykvar *Cities where legislative elections were held*
- Angarsk *Cities where mayoral elections were held*
- ▨ *Ukrainian areas annexed by the Russian Federation on 21 March 2014 (The Ukrainian City of Sevastopol (along with the Autonomous Republic of Crimea) was annexed by the Russian Federation on 21 March 2014. The annexation is not recognized by the international community).*

See Map 1 on p. 23 for the regions where elections were held

Map created in QGIS by the Research Centre for East European Studies at the University of Bremen with geodata from Openstreetmap.org



**Map 2b: Cities of the Russian Federation (Eastern Part) Where Elections Were Held on Unified Election Day 2020 (11–13 September 2020)**





## ABOUT THE RUSSIAN ANALYTICAL DIGEST

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The Russian Analytical Digest is a bi-weekly internet publication jointly produced by the Research Centre for East European Studies [Forschungsstelle Osteuropa] at the University of Bremen ([www.forschungsstelle.uni-bremen.de](http://www.forschungsstelle.uni-bremen.de)), the Center for Security Studies (CSS) at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (ETH Zurich), the Center for Eastern European Studies at the University of Zurich (<http://www.cees.uzh.ch>), the Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies at The George Washington University (<https://ieres.elliott.gwu.edu>), and the German Association for East European Studies (DGO). The Digest draws on contributions to the German-language *Russland-Analysen* ([www.laender-analysen.de/russland](http://www.laender-analysen.de/russland)), and the CSS analytical network on Russia and Eurasia ([www.css.ethz.ch/en/publications/rad.html](http://www.css.ethz.ch/en/publications/rad.html)). The Russian Analytical Digest covers political, economic, and social developments in Russia and its regions, and looks at Russia's role in international relations.

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Layout: Cengiz Kibaroglu, Matthias Neumann, Michael Clemens

ISSN 1863-0421 © 2020 by Forschungsstelle Osteuropa an der Universität Bremen, Bremen and Center for Security Studies, Zürich

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