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Why Are There so Many or so Few Parties?

Factors of Party System Fragmentation in the Russian Regions

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Prior to the 2002 electoral reform, political parties in Russia's regional legislative elections showed poor performance. Since December 2003, however, all regions have been obliged to elect no less than half of the members of their assemblies by proportional representation. As a result, party competition at the sub-national level became unavoidable. This study tests three kinds of hypotheses dealing with the institutional, sociological, and political factors in the fragmentation of party systems within Russia's regions. The analysis demonstrates that political factors, especially the activity of the Kremlin and the heads of regional executives, have played the primary role in shaping regional party systems.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the first post-Soviet decade, political parties in the Russian Federation suffered from negligibly low levels of success in terms of the overall share of seats won by party-nominated candidates and the rates of their participation in regional legislative elections (Ross 2002; Hutcheson 2003; Golosov 2003, 2006b; Hale 2006). There are, however, some explanations as to why the electoral significance of political parties was so tiny at the sub-national level at that time. First, there was the existence of party substitutes in the Russian regions.¹ Political machines controlled by the heads of regional executives (or “governors,” as they are often referred to in the scholarly literature) and politicized financial-industrial groups were the most important of these substitutes. Both provided politicians with organizational and financial resources, and they participated more efficiently during contests than the parties did (Hale 2006). Another important factor that impeded the parties' development was the broad use of a single-member plurality system at regional parliamentary elections (Golosov 2003, 2006b).

In the first half of the 2000s, the status quo in party politics at the sub-national level changed dramatically. When Vladimir Putin came to power, he launched a policy

of recentralization aimed at “placing control over the main levers of power in the hands of the federal authorities” (Gel'man 2009, 1). To complete this task, it was highly important to create a new ruling mechanism over regional political processes through their “vertical integration” (Gel'man 2009, 12), among other means. One of the key instruments involved in accomplishing this consisted of embedding federal political parties, and specifically United Russia, in regional electoral arenas. The 2002 electoral reform played a key role in this process (Golosov 2006a; Gel'man 2009).

In 2002, the law “On the Basic Guarantees of Citizens' Electoral Rights and the Right to Vote in Referenda” was successfully adopted. Under this law, since July 2003 all Russian regions have been obliged to elect no less than half of the members of their assemblies according to the proportional representation electoral system.² Thus, the role of political parties in the regions grew—in contrast to the 1990s and early 2000s—and the participation of party lists in regional legislative elections became inevitable (Golosov 2011a).

As a residual effect, this electoral reform has provoked the emergence of regional party systems, which were extremely rare until its implementation and therefore were considered by scholars to be “deviant cases” (Gel'man and Golosov 1998). The newly established sub-national party systems, at the same time, varied greatly in terms of their degree of fragmentation depending on the region, even if parliamentary elections were held simultaneously. For

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example, Amur Oblast and Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug conducted legislative elections concurrently on March 27, 2005, but the former had an effective number of electoral parties equal to 7.67 whereas the latter had only 1.75.³

Why did some regions experience flourishing multipartism while others did not? To what extent did the number of parties in the regions result from institutional and sociological factors, keeping in mind the system of electoral authoritarianism that took shape in Russia in the mid-2000s? The purpose of this article is to identify the causes of party system fragmentation in the Russian regions over the 2003–2013 period, when each region experienced no less than two legislative elections under the new rules of the game introduced through the 2002 electoral reform. The effective number of electoral parties can serve as an empirical indicator for the concept of “party system fragmentation.”

The first section starts with a review of the main approaches to party system fragmentation, together with a description of the causes of United Russia’s electoral domination at regional elections in Russia since 2003. In the second section, hypotheses regarding the factors involved in party system fragmentation in the Russian regions will be put forward. The following section will provide an operationalization of the dependent variable and independent variables. In the empirical part of the article, the results of multiple regression analysis will be reported and discussed. The final section concludes the discussion. The descriptive statistics of variables and data sources are listed in two appendices.

FRAGMENTATION AND DOMINATION: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In political science there have been three broad approaches proposed to answer the question of what factors can influence party system fragmentation. The institutionalist approach emphasizes the role of electoral laws in explaining the formation of party systems. Its foundations were laid down by Duverger (1959).⁴ It was further developed by such scholars as Sartori (1968), Rae (1971), Taagepera and Shugart (1989, 1993) and Lijphart (1990, 1994). According to this approach, the dimension of an electoral system that has the greatest impact on the structure of party competition is that of district magnitude: the greater the magnitude of the district, the higher the expected level of multipartism.

The second approach to explaining the causes of party system fragmentation is the sociological one. It stresses that certain differences in the structure of a given society matter in relation to one or another type of party system. The roots of this way of thinking are often traced to the work of Lipset and Rokkan (1967). In short, the sociological approach implies that “social segmentation results in multipartism” (Lane and Ersson 1987, 154).

The third approach asserts that institutional and sociological factors influence the number of parties not separately, but together. Ordeshook and Shvetsova (1994) and Amorim Neto and Cox (1997) were among the first who found that electoral laws influence the number of parties in a given political system to the extent that the social structure allows. This “mixed” approach was further developed by other researchers who analyzed data sets from non-European countries (Mozaffar, Scarritt, and Galaich 2003) and sub-national units (Geys 2006).

The approaches reviewed were designed on the basis of democratic states. At the same time, the political process in Russia is considered by scholars to be electoral authoritarianism (Golosov 2011b; White 2012; Gel’man 2015; Wilson 2016). Therefore, party competition in Russia, in addition to institutional and sociological factors, can be mediated by political ones, that is, by the direct intervention of federal or regional executive authorities (Ross 2011).

In the scholarly literature there is a lack of understanding of why the party systems of the Russian regions have different levels of fragmentation. At the same time, there have been several works dealing with the factors involved in United Russia’s electoral dominance at the regional level (Golosov 2011a; Panov and Ross 2013a, 2013b; Reuter 2013). These studies should be taken into account because the party system fragmentation of the Russian regions and United Russia’s domination of regional elections can be seen as two sides of the same coin.

For example, Golosov (2011a) revealed some factors that influenced the electoral success of United Russia at regional legislative elections between 2003 and 2007. United Russia received higher electoral results in those regions where governors had political power rooted in an electoral mandate, enabling them to exploit their rating in favor of the “party of power,” as United Russia is often called for its close ties with the Kremlin (Reuter and Remington 2009), to a significant extent. Another important factor in United Russia’s electoral victory concerned ethnicity. The party obtained a higher proportion of votes in regions where the share of ethnic Russians was relatively small. Finally, it is worth noting that United Russia’s results were in many ways dependent on the electoral politics of the Kremlin manipulating the election rules.

Based on data from regional parliamentary elections held between 2003 and 2011, Reuter (2013) drew the conclusion that United Russia’s electoral performance was better in those regions where governors had control over strong political machines. These inherently clientelist political vehicles (Scott 1969) belonged to those governors who had been elected by popular vote, rather than appointed to office after the abolition of the gubernatorial elections at the end of 2004 without having to participate in any contest.

Panov and Ross (2013b) examined the electoral results of United Russia’s candidates in single-member constituencies in 43 regional elections between 2008 and 2011. The

authors found that these candidates' results were directly dependent on the configuration and strategies of the regional elites as well as the regional political regime: in authoritarian regions United Russia completely dominated the political landscape (Panov and Ross 2013b, 750–52). They also reached similar conclusions when studying regional legislative elections in Russia during the 2007–2012 period (Panov and Ross 2013a).

While the above-cited works put forward some hypotheses fruitful for this study, it is important to mention that the causes of United Russia's dominance across the regions and the causes of party system fragmentation are different phenomena which, accordingly, need to be studied separately. If the causes of the fragmentation of regional parliaments have become more evident recently (Golosov 2015), then the factors of party fragmentation among the electorate still remain without any serious empirical analysis. This study is aimed at filling this gap.

RESEARCH STRATEGY AND HYPOTHESES

The analysis conducted in this study is based on electoral cycles. The term “electoral cycle” is defined here to mean nothing more than the chronological sequence of regional legislative elections. The period between December 7, 2003, and October 12, 2008, is designated as the first cycle of regional elections under the new rules of the game. During this period the first regional elections were held under rules whereby no less than one-half of a regional parliament had to be elected using the proportional representation electoral system. The period from October 8, 2006, to September 8, 2013, is established, accordingly, as the second cycle. The unit of analysis here is a region. This approach allows one to highlight the tendencies of party system fragmentation in cross-regional and chronological perspectives (Golosov 2006b, 251).

The use of the results of regional elections as units of observation also offers some methodological advantages. First, a large number of cases and significant cross-regional variations in a dependent variable result in an easy-to-use statistical research strategy (Lijphart 1971). Second, the regional data required for the operationalization of variables are easily accessible. Third, the advantage of the study of the Russian regions is their place within a single national context as well as the consistency of the institutional environment within which the units of observation are embedded. For instance, the vast majority of regions have adopted a mixed-member majoritarian electoral system with an equal balance between the proportional representation (PR) and single-member plurality (SMP) components since the first cycle of parliamentary elections under the new rules of the game (Kynev 2009).

Based on the main assumptions of the above-mentioned scientific literature, one can propose some hypotheses related to the factors of party system fragmentation in the Russian regions.

In line with the institutionalist approach, it is possible to assume that regions differ from each other in their level of party system fragmentation because they have different district magnitudes to which the seats for the party lists must be allocated. However, in Russia, party competition is constrained by legal electoral thresholds rather than district magnitudes, which usually have low thresholds of representation and exclusion (Golosov 2006a, 28). Thus, the “institutional” hypothesis of this paper asserts that the level of party fragmentation was high in regions with relatively low legal electoral thresholds.

From the perspective of the sociological approach, ethnic heterogeneity is often considered “an especially important component of social structure” (Ordeshook and Shvetsova 1994, 101). It is assumed that ethnicity—being the most politicized feature of societies—is one of the most important causes of a multiparty system. This article will consider the relevance of this hypothesis to the multiethnic regions of Russia.

The scholarly tradition also concurs that the complexity of social structure and the number of issues on the political agenda increase along with the rise in the number of citizens with the right to vote (Anckar 2000). Because political parties are the key mediators between the demands of voters and the political system, their number should rise as the number of politically relevant citizens rises. This is the second hypothesis within the “sociological” group.

The number of political parties participating in regional elections may also depend on the proportion of ethnic Russians. In some works (Hale 2003, 2006; Golosov 2011a; Reuter 2013) the fact is stressed that in regions marked by a relatively small proportion of Russians, there will probably be found a closed political regime and, therefore, the absence of political competition.

Regional party politics have been heavily dependent on the Kremlin's actions since the end of the first half of the 2000s, actions that have been described in scholarly literature as “counter-reforms” (Kynev and Liubarev 2011; Sheinis 2014). The Kremlin influenced regional party systems, artificially reducing the overall number of political parties at the national level and substantively hampering their opportunities for participating in electoral campaigns.

Factors determined by the peculiarities of regional political life were also capable of affecting party system fragmentation. In particular, one might suppose that the level of party system fragmentation was lower in regions governed by powerful heads of regional executives. It seems, however, that this factor had a varying restrictive power relative to the time of elections. The reason for this is that since the mid-2000s, the overall number of party branches in Russia has gradually declined under the influence of the Kremlin.

As a result, regional elections after that period have typically been characterized by lower levels of fragmentation irrespective of the degree of a governor's influence in a given region.

Three other "political" hypotheses are also linked with regional politics. First, a relatively small number of parties is likely to be found in regions whose political regimes have distinct authoritarian features. Second, a lower number of parties should be seen in regions whose governors were among the first to make the decision to commit to United Russia. Third, few parties are expected to exist in regions whose political elite is not divided.

Finally, this research will consider the hypothesis that institutional and sociological factors, namely, legal electoral thresholds and the degree of ethnic heterogeneity, have a joint influence on the levels of regional party system fragmentation. We will thereby examine whether the high level of ethnic heterogeneity facilitated the proliferation of parties at regional elections under low electoral thresholds.

VARIABLES AND METHOD

As was already mentioned in the previous section, this analysis is based on data from two regional electoral cycles, but these data sets have not been merged into one panel dataset for statistical analysis. This is because the first regional parliamentary elections were held in more permissive political circumstances than the second ones (Panov and Ross 2013a). The descriptive statistics and the sources of the data for each variable used to reveal the causes of party system fragmentation within the first cycle of regional parliamentary elections are presented in Appendix 1; the same information for the second cycle is listed in Appendix 2. The method of this study is ordinary least squares regression (OLS). Because of potential heteroscedasticity issues in the data, robust standard errors (White 1980) are computed for all estimations.

The dependent variable of analysis is the effective number of electoral parties, "ENPV" (Ordeshook and Shvetsova 1994; Amorim Neto and Cox 1997; Mozaffar, Scarritt, and Galaich 2003; Clark and Golder 2006). There are several possible ways to calculate this. The index proposed by Laakso and Taagepera (1979) is the one most commonly used in comparative research on political parties and party systems. This tool, however, has one serious shortcoming when applied to a system with one dominant party. When a party receives more than 50 percent of votes, the Laakso-Taagepera index continues to produce high values painting a two-party system rather than a dominant single-party one (Molinar 1991, 1384; Golosov 2010, 176). An alternative formula for counting the effective number of parties was invented by Molinar (1991). However, it also has a shortcoming when applied to a dominant-party system. In an environment where a party gains more than 50 percent of votes, the Molinar index "registers very low

levels of party system fragmentation" (Golosov 2010, 177). Because United Russia received more than 50 percent of votes in more than one third of the Russian regions in the first cycle of regional legislative elections, and a similar result in more than half of the regions in the second cycle, the index used here will be the one proposed by Golosov (2010), which gives plausible values for counting the effective number of parties with respect to a dominant-party system.

An independent variable dealing with the institutional factor of regional party system fragmentation is operationalized using the values of the legal threshold as "Threshold."

The independent variable "Ethnic Heterogeneity" is measured in regard to the Russian regions according to an approach proposed by Ordeshook and Shvetsova (1994, 108). They calculated the level of ethnic heterogeneity by calculating the effective number of ethnic groups. For the first cycle of elections, ethnic heterogeneity was counted for each region on the basis of data from the 2002 Russian national census, and the 2010 census for the second cycle.

The variable "Number of Voters" is defined as the number of registered voters in a given region (in millions). For the first cycle of regional elections, the values for this variable are from 2003, and for the second from 2010. Next, the independent variable "Percent Russian" is operationalized by the percentage share of ethnic Russians in a given region on the basis of the 2002 census data for the first cycle of elections, and the 2010 census data for the second cycle.

The level of intervention of the federal authority into the character of regional political processes has risen over time since the mid-2000s. Later regional elections were held in less favorable circumstances for the operation of political parties. Thus, the independent variable dealing with the influence of the Kremlin on regional party systems is operationalized by "Time of Election." For example, with regard to the elections that were held in October 2006, the value of the independent variable is equal to 6.83, where the integer part of the number shows the year of given elections and the decimal part, which is added to the integer part, is the ratio between the ordinal number of a month and the overall number of months, that is, 12.

The variable "Governor's Strength," which reflects the degree of the governor's influence in a region, is measured by taking into account the percentage share of votes received by the heads of regional executives in the most recent gubernatorial election in which they have participated. For compatibility, the results of single or first rounds of voting were used. If by the time of regional legislative elections, a region was headed by a person who had never participated in popular elections⁵ either as a candidate for a governor's post or as a candidate for a vice-governor's position, then this variable was coded as 0. A similar way of measuring the governor's degree of influence has already been applied in some studies (Golosov 2011a, 405; Reuter 2013, 110). However, as was mentioned earlier, the degree

of a governor's influence had a restrictive power over party system fragmentation until the mid-2000s. Hence, for a regression model, the interactive variable "Governor's Strength \times Time of Election," reflecting the governor's degree of influence while factoring in the time of the regional legislative elections, was also constructed.

To define the degree of democracy of the regional political regimes, "Democracy," the Carnegie Moscow Center's rating of regional democratic development created by Russian scholars Petrov and Titkov (2013), was used. The values of their index for nearly all regions for the entire period from 2003 to 2007 were taken for the assessment of democratic development in a given region in the first cycle of elections. Likewise, the values for the whole period from 2006 to 2010 were taken for the same assessment in the second cycle. The value of the variable for the parliamentary elections in the first cycle in Chechnya was taken for the period from 2004 to 2008 because of a lack of more recent data. The values of the Petrov–Titkov democracy index for the Agin-Buryat, Koryak, Taimyr, and Ust-Ordynsky Buryat Autonomous Okrugs were taken for the period from 2000 to 2004. The source of the data for these values was an index of regional democracy prepared by the same authors according to the same principles in the project "A Social Atlas of Russian Regions."⁶

The affiliation of governors with the United Russia party (the respective variable in the analysis is labeled "Head of List") was defined through ascertaining the fact of their running at the top of the United Russia lists in regional legislative elections (or in federal ones if conducted at the same time). However, the participation of governors in United Russia's electoral campaigns had political consequences only until the prohibition of electoral blocs, which occurred in March 2006. Until that time, governors had the freedom not to commit themselves to the party of power. But since March 2006 governors under the influence of the Kremlin had to head United Russia's list (Golosov 2011a, 406; Reuter 2013, 111). This is why Golosov chose to construct the variable "Head of List" as part of his approach (Golosov 2011a, 406). He proposed constructing the variable through a twofold process. At the first stage it is determined whether or not governors ran as poster candidates of United Russia's list. If a governor was at the top of United Russia's list the value is 1; otherwise it is 0. At the second stage it is noted when governors headed the list. If it was before March 2006, then the value obtained at the first stage is multiplied by 1. If a governor led United Russia's list in March 2006 or later, then the first stage's value is multiplied by 0. Thus, the variable "Head of List" is relevant only to the first cycle of regional elections.

Reuter and Remington (2009, 521) rightly note that "since mid-2003, both the Kremlin and regional elites have increased their commitment to the party of power, turning it into a true dominant party." Thus, it may be possible to speak of the existence of elite conflict in a

given region if powerful regional actors made a decision to head the list of an opposition party during electoral campaigns. If this was the case, then the variable "Elite Conflict" assumed the value of 1; otherwise 0. This approach for building this variable has already been used by Golosov (2011a, 406) and Reuter (2013, 112–13). But the researchers differed in the question of who should be considered a member of a regional political elite. This paper follows the approach used by Reuter (2013, 112–13), who gave a list of these powerful actors: "a vice-governor, Federation Council senator, chair of the regional legislature, or mayor of a city in the region with more than 100,000 residents."

FINDINGS

Table 1 shows the results of five regression models devoted to the factors of party system fragmentation in the first cycle of regional parliamentary elections. The first three models deal with the institutional, sociological, and political factors of party system fragmentation in the Russian regions respectively. The fourth model tests the hypothesis that legal thresholds and ethnic heterogeneity had a joint influence on the levels of fragmentation. Finally, the fifth model combines all the previous ones.

According to the obtained results, the main causes of party system fragmentation in the first cycle of regional legislative elections were associated with political factors. All coefficients of variables within the "political" group (Model 3) are significant. The effective number of electoral parties was lower in regions that tended to be the least democratic, where there were close ties between governors and the United Russia party and where there was a lack of intra-elite struggle.

The level of party system fragmentation was also lower in those regions which were headed by influential governors who possessed control over strong political machines. In addition, it was revealed that the degree of governor's influence constrained the level of party competition only until the mid-2000s. Figure 1 plots the marginal effect of a governor's strength on the effective number of electoral parties, depending on the year of regional elections. It can be observed that powerful governors resisted party system fragmentation in their regions only until early 2007. After that time the marginal effect of a governor's strength on the effective number of electoral parties ceased to be significant.⁷ A possible explanation is that by then the "menu" of viable parties under the influence of the Kremlin sharply decreased and became close to equal in all regions irrespective of the strength of a particular governor.

The threshold values established by regional electoral laws did not have any impact on party system fragmentation (Model 1). Moreover, nor was there found any relationship between

TABLE 1
Factors of Party System Fragmentation, the First Cycle

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Threshold	-0.17 (0.17)	-	-	-1.17*** (0.31)	-0.55* (0.28)
Ethnic heterogeneity	-	-0.16 (0.26)	-	-4.14*** (1.07)	-1.88* (1.02)
Number of voters	-	-0.35*** (0.12)	-	-	-0.16 (0.15)
Percent Russian	-	2.42*** (0.74)	-	-	1.91*** (0.63)
Time of election	-	-	-1.10*** (0.29)	-	-1.02*** (0.26)
Governor's strength	-	-	-6.24* (3.40)	-	-5.45* (2.97)
Democracy	-	-	0.08*** (0.02)	-	0.05*** (0.02)
Head of list	-	-	-0.85** (0.37)	-	-0.83** (0.34)
Elite conflict	-	-	0.90*** (0.32)	-	0.64** (0.28)
Time of election × Governor's strength	-	-	0.85* (0.46)	-	0.73* (0.41)
Threshold × Ethnic heterogeneity	-	-	-	0.55*** (0.16)	0.30* (0.15)
Constant	4.34*** (1.09)	2.21** (0.88)	8.00*** (2.47)	11.67*** (2.09)	10.76*** (2.66)
N	87	87	87	87	87
R-squared	0.03	0.21	0.60	0.23	0.69

Source: See Appendix 1.

Note: Here and in a Table 2, cell entries are unstandardized OLS coefficients and robust standard errors (in parentheses). ***Significant at 0.01; **Significant at 0.05; *Significant at 0.1.

the number of parties in a given region and “Ethnic Heterogeneity.” The coefficient of this variable appeared negative and insignificant (Model 2). Two other “sociological” factors, namely, “Number of Voters” and “Percent Russian” have more explanatory power (also see Model 2). While the positive coefficient of “Percent Russian” indicates that the degree of party system fragmentation was higher in regions with a predominantly ethnically Russian population, as predicted, the negative coefficient of “Number of Voters” is interesting and was not initially presupposed.

However, the negative associations between the number of parties and the number of voters can be explained if one takes into account that the more populous regions are more significant from an electoral point of view. The Kremlin might especially encourage the heads of such regions to facilitate United Russia’s electoral success, so as to maintain its control over the regions which, in turn, reduce the overall level of party system fragmentation.

Speaking further about institutional and sociological factors, one should note that as they were introduced into the regression analysis separately, they explain a smaller proportion of the dependent variable’s variation

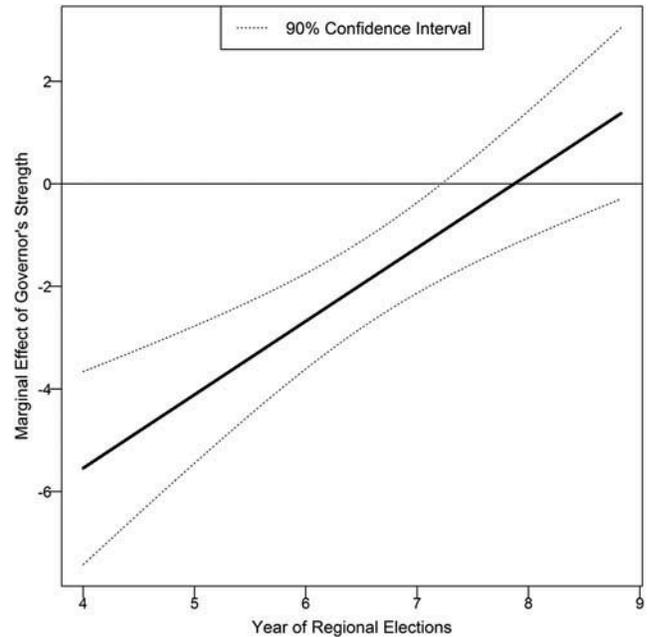


FIGURE 1 The marginal effect of governor’s strength on the effective number of electoral parties, the first cycle (author’s calculations).

than when they are combined (Model 4). The joint effect of institutional and sociological factors, namely legal electoral thresholds and the degree of ethnic heterogeneity, is the following. In contrast to research that relied on data from Western democracies (Clark and Golder 2006, 700–701), it was found that there was no proliferation of parties in ethnically heterogeneous regions. Moreover, the restricting influence of ethnic heterogeneity on the number of parties can be shown under small legal thresholds (see Figure 2).⁸ This fact can be explained if one takes into account that a high level of ethnic heterogeneity was inherent to such types of Russian regions as Autonomous Okrugs. Meanwhile, these types of regions had lower levels of party fragmentation not due to their heterogeneity, but rather as a result of certain specific features: a small number of residents, a large area, a long distance between towns and so on. At the same time, legal thresholds in six of the eight Autonomous Okrugs were less than 7 percent.

Model 5 includes as regressors all variables constructed for the analysis of the factors of party system fragmentation in the first cycle of regional parliamentary elections. It is easy to see that nearly all variables included in this model are significant, and the model itself explains about 70 percent of the variation of the dependent variable.

Table 2 shows the results of five regression models designed to explain why party system fragmentation levels in the regions were different during the second cycle of elections. The way in which they were constructed is the same as for the first cycle.

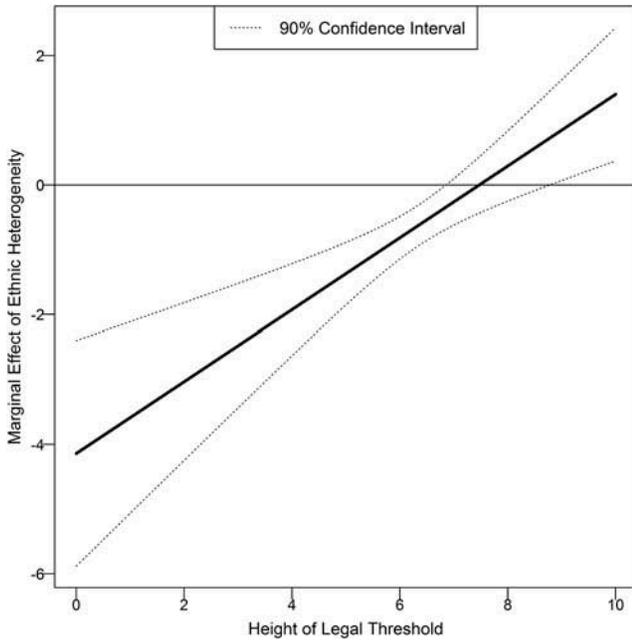


FIGURE 2 The marginal effect of ethnic heterogeneity on the effective number of electoral parties, the first cycle (author’s calculations).

As in the first cycle of parliamentary elections, the political factors (Model 3 of Table 2) play the leading role in explaining regional party system fragmentation in the second cycle, but their explanatory power is lower. The coefficient of “Democracy” is positive and as significant as for the first cycle of regional elections. The coefficient of “Elite Conflict,” on the contrary, has lost its significance, which can be explained by the fact that conflicts among key regional politicians during the second cycle usually did not leave the boundaries of the United Russia party when electoral campaigns were held.

The interaction between “Time of Election” and “Governor’s Strength” remained significant. Figure 3 plots the marginal effect of a governor’s strength on the effective number of electoral parties depending on the year of regional elections. As shown, the powerful governors have influenced the number of parties since 2011. One can propose the following explanation for this fact. Due to the wave of political mobilization of citizens dissatisfied with the established political order (Gel’man 2013; Semenov, Lobanova, and Zavadskaya 2016), United Russia’s approval rating among the electorate began to shrink after 2011.⁹ As a consequence, the levels of party system fragmentation rose at regional parliamentary elections. Thus, the power resources of state-influenced governors were in demand again and their intervention into regional party politics was similar to that which had taken place until 2007.

TABLE 2
Factors of Party System Fragmentation, the Second Cycle

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Threshold	0.01 (0.09)	–	–	–0.08 (0.36)	0.05 (0.19)
Ethnic heterogeneity	–	–0.01 (0.09)	–	–0.67 (1.70)	–0.02 (0.91)
Number of voters	–	–0.02 (0.09)	–	–	–0.09 (0.09)
Percent Russian	–	1.03*** (0.35)	–	–	–0.01 (0.33)
Time of election	–	–	0.17*** (0.05)	–	0.20*** (0.04)
Governor’s strength	–	–	2.20 (1.34)	–	2.74** (1.34)
Democracy	–	–	0.07*** (0.01)	–	0.07*** (0.01)
Elite conflict	–	–	0.17 (0.23)	–	0.09 (0.23)
Time of election × Governor’s strength	–	–	–0.22* (0.13)	–	–0.26** (0.13)
Threshold × Ethnic heterogeneity	–	–	–	0.06 (0.25)	–0.02 (0.13)
Constant	2.24*** (0.58)	1.57*** (0.37)	–1.57*** (0.48)	3.20 (2.48)	–1.83 (1.41)
N	83	83	83	83	83
R-squared	0.00	0.15	0.47	0.07	0.52

Source: See Appendix 2.

Note: ***Significant at 0.01; **Significant at 0.05; *Significant at 0.1.

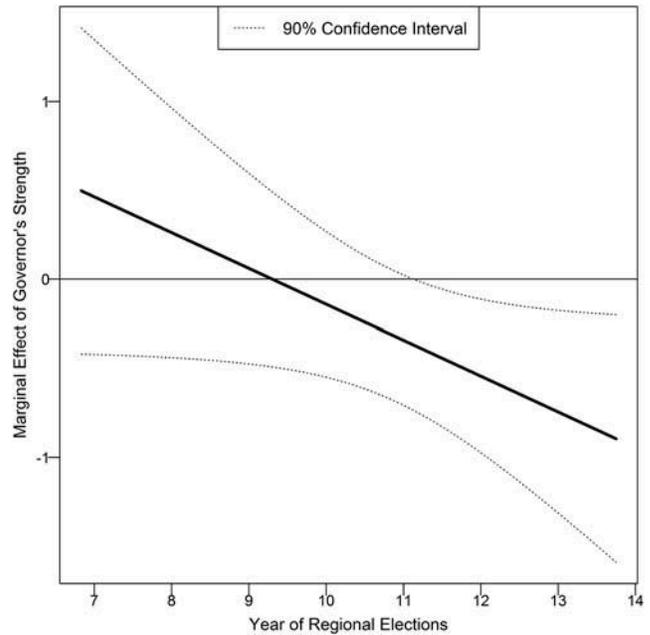


FIGURE 3 The marginal effect of governor’s strength on the effective number of electoral parties, the second cycle (author’s calculations).

Model 4 of Table 2, which tests the joint influence of legal electoral thresholds and ethnic heterogeneity on the number of parties, has no explanatory power. The same can be said of the pure institutional model (Model 1 of Table 2). The reason is that the majority of Russian regions, including Autonomous Okrugs and Republics, applied the threshold of 7 percent in the second cycle. Model 2 of Table 2 has greater explanatory power by comparison to the first and fourth models, but solely due to the variable “Percent Russian”, which, as with the first cycle of regional parliamentary elections, is positive and significant, in accordance with the prediction (Model 5 of Table 2).

CONCLUSION

In previous studies devoted to the factors of party system fragmentation, the main focus was on institutional and sociological factors. It was supposed that the number of parties depended on certain dimensions of electoral systems, cleavages in the social structure, or the combined influence of these two variables. These explanations, however, are not enough to understand the causes of party system fragmentation in the regions of the Russian Federation.

The analysis conducted shows that the main factors of party system fragmentation in the Russian regions during the period under observation were linked with the activity of the Kremlin and the heads of regional executives. The former reduced the “menu” of political parties at regional elections by creating unfavorable operating conditions for both existing parties and emerging new ones. The regional governors, in turn, used the resources of their political machines in aid of United Russia, which, accordingly, undermined the electoral results of other parties and promoted a reduction in the overall level of party system fragmentation. At the same time, the analysis found that the state-influenced heads of regional executives controlling such political machines played an active role in reducing the level of party system fragmentation until 2007, when the political struggle in regions became more or less competitive, and again since 2011.

Two other factors that permanently influenced the level of party system fragmentation in Russian territorial entities were tied to the peculiarities of their political regimes and ethnic composition. Those regions which have more democratic political regimes and higher shares of ethnic Russians have higher levels of party system fragmentation.

The obtained results demonstrate that despite the development of conditions for the emergence of regional party systems in the first half of the 2000s, the executive authority played the main role in their formation by obstructing those political parties which were capable of challenging United Russia. If, however, strong political parties did appear at the regional level, this was not due to any processes taking place in regional societies, but rather as a result of intra-

elite struggle in the regional establishment. The research, therefore, demonstrates the potential large role of political factors in shaping party systems in regimes of electoral authoritarianism.

NOTES

1. This article labels as “regions” the sub-national units comprising the Russian Federation.
2. Only nine regions had previously used a proportional component for legislative elections (Goloso 2003, Table 1).
3. Values were obtained based on the approach for counting the effective number of parties proposed by Goloso (2010).
4. Clark and Golder (2006), however, warn against assuming that Duverger was a pure institutionalist, as many scholars do (Amorim Neto and Cox 1997, 151). They point out that along with electoral laws, Duverger clearly believes that social forces also influence the multiplication of political parties (Clark and Golder 2006, 681).
5. In December 2004 the Kremlin abolished popular gubernatorial elections. When they were restored in May 2012, they were circumscribed by a number of limitations on the participation of challengers.
6. NISP 2016. Nezavisimyi institut sotsial’noi politiki, at http://atlas.socpol.ru/indexes/index_democr.shtml, accessed June 18, 2016.
7. The two-tailed 90 percent confidence intervals around the bold line indicate the conditions under which the degree of a governor’s strength influences the effective number of electoral parties. These intervals have a statistically significant effect until their upper and lower bounds are both above and below the zero line (Brambor, Clark, and Golder 2006, 75–76).
8. The curious case of ethnic heterogeneity that begins under the electoral threshold of 10 percent to facilitate party system fragmentation refers to the Republic of Kalmykia, which has an effective number of ethnic groups equal to 2.47, a legal electoral threshold equaling 10 percent, and, at the same time, a relatively high number of the effective number of electoral parties, namely 3.19.
9. The Mann–Whitney test’s comparison of the values of effective number of electoral parties over the course of regional elections within the second cycle before and after 2011 indicates that these values were lower in the period up until 2011 than afterward ($p < 0.01$).

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APPENDIX 1
Descriptive Statistics of Variables in Table 1 and Data Sources

Variable	N	Mean	Range	SD	Source
ENPV	87	3.30	1.17–7.67	1.54	TsIK. 2016. Tsentral'naia izbiratel'naia komissiiia Rossiiskoi Federatsii: informatsiia o vyborakh i referendumakh, at www.izbirkom.ru/region/izbirkom , accessed June 18, 2016.
Threshold	87	6.05	0.00–10.00	1.53	Garant-Servis. 2016. Regional'naia informatsiia, at http://ivo.garant.ru/#/startpage:0 , accessed January 3, 2016.
Ethnic heterogeneity	87	1.66	1.07–6.18	0.77	Census. 2016. Vserossiiskaia perepis' naseleniia 2002 goda: natsional'nyi sostav i vladenie iazykami, grazhdanstvo, at www.perepis2002.ru/ct/doc/TOM_04_03.xls , accessed June 18, 2016.
Number of voters	87	1.25	0.02–7.12	1.19	TsIK. 2016. Tsentral'naia izbiratel'naia komissiiia Rossiiskoi Federatsii: k voprosu o chislennosti izbiratelei, uchastnikov referendum v Rossiiskoi Federatsii, at www.cikrf.ru/news/relevant/2010/07/13/chislennost.html , accessed June 18, 2016.
Percent Russian	87	0.74	0.01–0.97	0.25	Census. 2016. Vserossiiskaia perepis' naseleniia 2002 goda: svodnye itogi, at www.perepis2002.ru/ct/doc/TOM_14_25.xls , accessed June 18, 2016.
Time of election	87	6.11	4.00–8.83	1.31	TsIK. 2016. Tsentral'naia izbiratel'naia komissiiia Rossiiskoi Federatsii: informatsiia o vyborakh i referendumakh, at www.izbirkom.ru/region/izbirkom , accessed June 18, 2016.
Governor's strength	87	0.52	0.00–0.98	0.26	Geliks 2014. Basa dannyykh "Rossiiskaia electoral'naia ststistika", at http://db.geliks.org/ , accessed January 5, 2014.
Democracy	87	29.63	17.00–45.00	6.47	Petrov and Titkov (2013).
Elite conflict	87	0.26	0.00–1.00	0.44	TsIK. 2016. Tsentral'naia izbiratel'naia komissiiia Rossiiskoi Federatsii: informatsiia o vyborakh i referendumakh, at www.izbirkom.ru/region/izbirkom , accessed June 18, 2016, Kynev (2009).
Head of list	87	0.15	0.00–1.00	0.36	TsIK. 2016. Tsentral'naia izbiratel'naia komissiiia Rossiiskoi Federatsii: informatsiia o vyborakh i referendumakh, at www.izbirkom.ru/region/izbirkom , accessed June 18, 2016, Kynev (2009).

APPENDIX 2
Descriptive Statistics of Variables in Table 2 and Data Sources

Variable	N	Mean	Range	SD	Source
ENPV	83	2.28	1.10–3.84	0.66	TsIK. 2016. Tsentral'naia izbiratel'naia komissiiia Rossiiskoi Federatsii: informatsiia o vyborakh i referendumakh, at www.izbirkom.ru/region/izbirkom , accessed June 18, 2016.
Threshold	83	6.72	4.00–7.00	0.70	Garant-Servis. 2016. Regional'naia informatsiia, at http://ivo.garant.ru/#/startpage:0 , accessed January 3, 2016.
Ethnic heterogeneity	83	1.67	1.11–6.14	0.76	Census. 2016. Vserossiiskaia perepis' naseleniia 2010 goda: natsional'nyi sostav i vladenie iazykami, grazhdanstvo, at www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/perepis2010/croc/Documents/Vol4/pub-04-04.xlsx , accessed June 18, 2016.
Number of voters	83	1.31	0.03–7.12	1.19	TsIK. 2016. Tsentral'naia izbiratel'naia komissiiia Rossiiskoi Federatsii: k voprosu o chislennosti izbiratelei, uchastnikov referendum v Rossiiskoi Federatsii, at www.cikrf.ru/news/relevant/2010/07/13/chislennost.html , accessed June 18, 2016.
Percent Russian	83	0.73	0.01–0.95	0.25	Census. 2016. Vserossiiskaia perepis' naseleniia 2010 goda: natsional'nyi sostav i vladenie iazykami, grazhdanstvo, at www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/perepis2010/croc/Documents/Vol4/pub-04-04.xlsx , accessed June 18, 2016.
Time of election	83	10.82	6.83–13.75	1.67	TsIK. 2016. Tsentral'naia izbiratel'naia komissiiia Rossiiskoi Federatsii: informatsiia o vyborakh i referendumakh, at www.izbirkom.ru/region/izbirkom , accessed June 18, 2016.
Governor's strength	83	0.25	0.00–0.94	0.31	Geliks 2014. Basa dannyykh "Rossiiskaia electoral'naia ststistika", at http://db.geliks.org/ , accessed January 5, 2014.
Democracy	83	30.17	16.00–42.00	5.75	Petrov and Titkov (2013).
Elite conflict	83	0.07	0.00–1.00	0.26	TsIK. 2016. Tsentral'naia izbiratel'naia komissiiia Rossiiskoi Federatsii: informatsiia o vyborakh i referendumakh, at www.izbirkom.ru/region/izbirkom , accessed June 18, 2016, Kynev (2009).