The dual logic of Russia’s party system nationalization

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Abstract

The article attempts to identify major factors of the nationalization of the vote in contemporary Russia using the two level approach: the between- and within-region. The former compares regions as units of analysis while the latter additionally takes into account voting in municipalities to obtain levels of voting homogeneity within the regions. The study uses data from the last 2012–2016 national-regional electoral cycle investigating both federal and regional election results. Following Ishiyama (2002) for the between-region level of analysis the Regional Party Vote Inequality index has been utilized. The Party Nationalization Score proposed by Jones and Mainwaring (2003) has been applied to the measurement of voting territorial diversity at the within-region level. The results show that regional political factors may be still considered as major drivers of the nationalization of the vote as it did in the 1990s. The difference is that in politically recentralized Russia non-competitive regions headed by politically strong governors provides between-region inequality rather than contributing to nationalization. At the same time, the similarity continues in the ability of governors’ “political machines” to contribute homogeneity of the vote, but only within their regions.

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1. Introduction

In its broadest sense, the concept of nationalization refers to national integration and political parties play one of the most important role in this process providing the national focus into subnational politics (Jackman, 1972; Scott, 1966). This study employs quite narrow, but conventional definition of the party system nationalization. Following Grigori Golosov nationalization is defined as “the extent to which national parties receive similar vote shares in different territorial units of the state” (Golosov, 2015, p. 397).

Nationalization of the party system may be considered as a more broader process of evolution of territorial and functional cleavages (Caramani, 2004) or treated as a result of the party system development when parties at the regional level tend to mirror the federal patterns of party politics (Ishiyama, 2002, p 156), what may lead to the synchronization of vote swings at the national and subnational levels (Jackman, 1972). But any way, during nationalization territorial voting patterns get similar (Claggett et al., 1984), and the exploring of territorial diversity of the vote seems to be the basic level of analysis necessary for the broader and deep investigations.

Russia provides a rich field to study the practice of party system nationalization. Even the first post-communist parliamentary elections to the State Duma in 1993 showed the above-average level of territorial homogenization of the vote, which...
remains one of the highest among post-communist countries (Golosov and Grigoriev, 2015). This fact seems even more striking in the sense that we describe the process of territorial homogenization of electoral behavior in the most ethnically diverse country with the clearly uneven socio-economic development of regions.

The tabula rasa conception emerged as a first theory to explain and predict institution-building and the electoral choice in post-communist countries. They were less socio-economically diversified than those of Western Europe (Evans and Whitefield, 2000). Consequently, the early stage of democratic transition should have witnessed higher voting diversity. Conversely, Herbert Kitschelt distinguishes different types of communism, namely bureaucratic-authoritarian, national-accommodative, and neo-patrimonial regimes, and he states that their emergence varied over time (Kitschelt, 1999).

As Golosov and Grigoriev put it, a high level of the nationalization of the vote witnessed at the very first elections in Russia represents a logical consequence of the parties’ failure to take root regionally and a lack of developed organizational networks on the ground, with the Communist Party of Russian Federation (CPRF) being the exception (Golosov and Grigoriev, 2005, p. 146). In this light the case for poor nationalization of the 1995 and 1999 elections due to the formation of gubernatorial “political machines” seems convincing. For example, during the 1999 elections there was the elite rivalry between Unity and Fatherland-All Russia led to comparatively high levels of voting regionalization. While the former party counted on media promotion and attracting particular importance to federal problems, the latter relied on gubernatorial “machine politics”.

However, the credible explanation for the extent of Russia’s party system nationalization at the subsequent elections has yet to be given. As Ishiyama notes, in the 1990s politically strong governors facilitated the nationalization of the vote across the regions: the less competition faced the regional executive the more similar regional vote shares were to the national ones. (Ishiyama, 2002, p. 164). A bit later the politics of the new centralism in Russia has clearly revealed “the incorporation of sub-national regimes into a new political order nationwide in order to serve as a link between national and regional elites” (Golosov and Grigoriev, 2005, p. 152). Moreover, under Vladimir Putin governors have been vote delivery brokers looking for the guarantees to secure the post (Reuter and Robertson, 2012). But even if gubernatorial “machines” contribute to the country’s nationalized electoral system, one can honestly admit that they are not equally effective and should have set a great variety both at the between- and within-region levels.

Russia’s highly nationalized party system arises out of electoral authoritarianism (Turovsky, 2012). It means that high levels of the nationalization of the vote have resulted from the restrictive legislation concerning party politics during the first decade of the 2000s. For example, the qualifications had been so high that there were only 7 officially registered parties in Russia in 2011. It appears to be an unstable product of institutional engineering which is often used to underpin the United Russia-led party system (Kynev, 2011). Since 2012 the most part of these restrictions have cancelled (though parties on the regional, ethnic or religious basis still cannot be registered) and the number of parties has grown in the country. In such circumstances the role of regional political factors in party system nationalization also should be remarkable.

It should be noted that there is a necessity to study within-region (that is, across municipalities) variations due to so-called “methodological nationalism bias” in investigating the nationalization and regionalization of the vote (Jeffery and Wincott, 2010; Schakel, 2013). Paradoxically, regional and municipal voting tends to be overlooked in the literature. However, it is quite obvious that if we, for instance, conventionally define the party system nationalization as territorial voting homogeneity, we should take into account different territorial levels of elections to see regularities via different analytical “lens”. This allows us to study how the established gubernatorial “political machines” simultaneously influence on the between-region nationalization of the vote across regions and within-region homogenization of electoral choice.

2. Theories of voting nationalization

This part of the paper deals with the major factors of voting nationalization worldwide, namely socio-economic and ethnic diversity, federalism and decentralization, presidentialism, and the effect of regional elites. Although this list of macro-factors of territorial homogenization of electoral behavior is far from being complete, some of them seem irrelevant to Russia’s sub-national comparative studies. For instance, it is difficult to evaluate the effect if the regional institutional design in Russia because it has been relatively unified during the policy of re-centralization in the 2000s.

2.1. Socio-economic and ethnic diversity

Any account of regional diversification and its impact on party systems should start with the classic political theory of social cleavages (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967). However, its limitation connected with a strikingly different nature of democratization processes is revealed through the analysis of post-communist countries and Russia in particular. Actually, post-communist countries failed to undergo phased democratic transitions characterized by gradually increasing political inclusiveness and expanding political rights. Rather, democratization happened instantaneously, from the perspective of institutional transformations. As regards Russia, it is noteworthy that the strict application of S.-M. Lipset’s and S. Rokkan’s ideas implies that party platforms must reflect the existing fault lines or cleavages. This thesis fits into the context of the CPRF (workers vs. owners) and is partly relevant to the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia — LDPR (the centre-periphery cleavage). At the same time, with the rise of the dominant party, elections has got features of referendum rather the selection of ideologies or policies (Gill, 2012; Golosov, 2011). In addition, greater volatility amid poor party institutionalization remains an obstacle to considering democracies of the third wave through the approach of social cleavages (Mair, 1998; Powell and Tucker, 2009).
Given the above-mentioned arguments concerning Russia’s case, it is more precise methodologically to discuss the impact of socio-economic, geographical, and ethnic diversity on territorial homogeneity of electoral support. There is a relative consensus over the negative impact of ethnic or ethnolinguistic fragmentation on nationalization (Clem and Craumer, 1999; Morgenstern et al., 2009; Tiemann, 2012; Schakel, 2013; Golosov, 2016). While examining Russia’s regions, John Ishiyama sheds light on the nuance implying that the ethnic factor exerts influence only on voting for the major parties rather than support for all the parties. The variable called “percent of regional Russian population” turned out to be positively linked with nationalization (Ishiyama, 2002, p. 165).

Socio-economic independent variables largely allows us to recognize the relation between national and regional economic agendas, which impact upon electoral choice (Merrill and Grofman, 1999). At the same time, economic development tends to be analyzed through the lens of economic autonomy or urbanization. On the one hand, one should agree that rural residents bound together by traditional leanings are not inclined to support parties as a modern institution of political competition. Therefore, changes in the urban population may greatly affect nationalization (Caramani, 2004; Ishiyama, 1996). On the other hand, both federal and regional elections in Russia have revealed that the urban population tends to vote for the opposition (Turovsky, 2015).

2.2. Federalism and decentralization

Alongside the theory of social cleavages, the relationship between federalism and territorial homogeneity of electoral politics is subject to one of the most elaborated theories. Decentralization results in autonomous regional processes. Separating the regional agenda from the federal one is underway, with the former acquiring its significance. Despite the aforementioned link, there are different points of view in the literature on the relation between decentralization and nationalization of voting. Some scholars acknowledge the negative impact of federalism on party system nationalization (Chibber and Collman, 2004; Jones and Mainwaring, 2003; Thorlakson, 2007; Brancati, 2008; Harbers, 2010), whereas others argue that there is no influence (Caramani, 2004; Deschouwer, 2009; Lago-Peñas and Lago-Peñas, 2010). An alternative way is to state that “regional authorities may influence regional processes or separate regional elections rather than party and party system nationalization” (Schakel, 2013, p. 212). Starting with the premise of W. Ricker’s theory (1964), Golosov (2016) has revealed the correlation between nationalization and the endurance of federalism. As usual scholars investigate decentralization through fiscal autonomy or devolution.

2.3. Presidentialism

Presidents largely seek to reach out to national ideas, while relying on national forces and resources (Shugart and Carey, 1992). Yet D. Brancati points out that presidential vote influences regional elections in case of their concurrence (Brancati, 2008).

The President of Russia has several powerful levers to control the regional establishment, ranging from gubernatorial appointments (from 2005 to 2012) and granting regional leaders status of acting governors (since 2012) to participating in decision-making in regional factions of United Russia and so on. Nevertheless, quantifying or measuring such presidential influence seems quite challenging in a sub-national comparative study.

2.4. The influence of sub-national elites

While exploring the party system nationalization of the 1990s, one primarily focused on regional elites. The birth of the national electorate and parties was mainly analyzed through the centre-periphery struggle or the confrontation between federal and regional authorities (Gelman and Golosov, 1998; Solnick, 1998; Ordeshoo, 1996). Strong elites tended to confront party penetration into the regions, as it could disrupt the status quo of the early democratization and market economy in the country (Stoner-Weiss, 1997; Mendras, 1999). At the same time Ishiyama (2002) has found that politically strong governors could provide greater voting nationalization in Russia.

The theory of “political machines” or “machine politics”, which enables us to understand the reasons for the formation of Russia’s dominant-party system, has come to be quite a popular explanatory tool (Hale, 2003; Berezkin et al., 2003). Under Vladimir Putin’s presidency, these “political machines” started to play into the Kremlin’s hands, rather than oppose it, especially amid a series of institutional transformations, including a ban on establishing regional political parties (based on religious, ethnic basis or regional identity), restrictions for party registration, the abolition of gubernatorial elections etc.

Appointed governors may well have been punished or dismissed for the failure to fulfill their obligations to the central authorities (Reuter and Robertson, 2012). This problem confronted “non-local/Varangian” governors most as they did not have the background/genetic affiliation with their region (Podvintsev, 2009). The 2011 federal elections saw United Russia’s weaker positions as a consequence of the poor mobilization of votes in the entities led by such non-locals.

3. Research design

The literature on the nationalization of the vote allow us to develop a range of hypotheses to be tested using sub-national data. The first (and major) assumption is concerned with the influence of sub-national processes and strategies of regional
elites on nationalization. From this perspective, the more consolidated the regional elite is and the higher its capacity to manage electoral politics is, the stronger the nationalization of the party system is. The second assumption deals with federal relations and decentralization. In this respect, we also suppose that greater autonomy has a negative impact on voting nationalization. The third assumption is related to ethnic, economic, and settlement diversification. In other words, the more diversified regions are, the greater voting regionalization (or localization) will be.

As a statistical method of analysis, linear regression (cross-section) is employed. It involves statistics in the period since 2012 when Vladimir Putin reestablished elections of governors. Therefore, we are able to use these data to test the major hypothesis. Unfortunately, the amendments allow regions to choose if there is a need to introduce gubernatorial elections. Almost all North Caucasian republics (the Chechen republic excluded) decided to secure appointed governors as well as oil-rich autonomous districts (Nenets Autonomous District, Khanty-Mansi Autonomous District, Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous District) and the Republic of Crimea. We analyze both regional (2012–2016) and national (2016) elections to obtain cross-section and between-level comparisons.

There are two dependent variables employed for the between- and within-region levels of analysis. To measure the nationalization of the vote (the between-region level) we use Ishiyama, 2002 the regional party vote inequality index (RPVI), which was elaborated by the author on the basis of Rose and Urvin’s cumulative regional inequality index. The RPVI can be calculated via the following formula:

$$RPVI = \frac{\sum_{j} v_j/v_{n_j} \cdot p_i/p_{i_{n_j}}}{2}$$

where $v_j$ and $v_n$ are number of votes cast accordingly in the region $j$ and nationally, $p_i$ and $p_{i_{n_j}}$ are votes cast for the party $i$ in the region $j$ and nationally. To get the score, you need to sum values by region. The closer the score to 100 the more regionalized the vote in the region in relation to the national election results.

As for the within-region level, we can employ the Party Nationalization Score (PNS = 1 − G, with G standing for the Gini coefficient) by Jones and Mainwaring (2003). It is similar to the RPVI but not so much dependent on the population. If the PNS index could give scores to regions, it would be also used for the between-region level of analysis.

In order to create the party system nationalization score (PSNS) Jones and Mainwaring multiplied the PNS for every party by its share of the national valid vote, and then summed the resulting figure for all the parties. Like the PNS, the PSNS ranges from 0 to 1.

For various reasons, we do not analyze the following regions with regard to the within-region level: a) cities of federal importance (Moscow, Saint-Petersburg and Sevastopol) due to their low degree of territorial diversity; moreover, Moscow holds regional parliamentary elections exclusively under the majoritarian system; and b) the Nenets Autonomous District consisted of only two administrative units (one municipal district and one urban district), it does not allow us to measure a within-region voting homogenization score.

The between- and within-region levels of the nationalization of the vote can be tested with the following groups of variables. The first group concerns politics at the regional level. The first variable here is the affiliation of the governor with the region (“non-local/Varangian” - 1; “local” - 0). The variable rests on the official biographies of the heads of Russian regions provided by the official websites. The head of the region who used to work in a different region before taking office — he/she may also have been the interim governor — is referred to as “non-local/Varangian”. The second variable is the turnout in regional elections as the proxy of mobilization capacity of the ruling group in the region. The United Russia regional party list tends to be headed by the governor, who later withdraws and relinquishes the mandate. The governor also spearheads the party’s electoral campaign. The third variable is legislative election competition/dominance calculated as the effective number of parties (for the between-level) or the margin of victory, that is, the difference between the winning party’s result and the votes gained by the party which came second (for the within level). The wider the “margin”, the less competitive elections and politics in the region are. Governor’s the margin of victory is also employed for the between-region level. The applicability of the variable is quite limited because many Russian regions have secured appointed governors. Several federal units have not held elections since the reform. Thus, the results of gubernatorial elections are used as an additional rather than regular variable (and for the between-region level only). It can be also seen that different proxies of electoral competition serve for robustness check.

To estimate the impact of federalism (the second group of variables), the degree of the region’s economic autonomy, the share of federal budget transfers to the region (%), is calculated. The Federal Treasury supplies the necessary data. It is difficult to estimate political autonomy given the close correlation between the formal constitution-based administrative division (republics, krays, oblasts and autonomous districts) and the share of the ethnic Russians living there. It poses a problem of multicollinearity and leads to a shift in the resulting estimates.

The third group of variables deals with social and economic diversity and includes such indicators as: a) log GRP per capita (taking the value of goods and services in 2011); the proportion of the urban population (%); Fearon’s ethnic fractionalization index (2003). The data is provided by The Russian Federal State Statistics Service (Rosstat).

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1 The following formula is used: $F = 1 - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{p_1} p_i^2}$, with $p_i$ standing for the size of the ethnic group and its percentage in the region’s total population.
The log population is applied as a control variable for the between-region models because the RPVI should be dependent on it.

4. The results

The between-region level of analysis shows that Russian constituent units are still vary significantly but not so much as in the 1990s. The finding is consistent with the literature on the nationalization of the vote in Russia. The results of the 2016 State Duma elections demonstrate that the most nationalized (according to the RPVI scores) vote can be found in the Nents Autonomous District (0.001) and in the regions of the Russian Far East - Chukotka Autonomous District (0.001), Magadan Oblast (0.002), Jewish Autonomous Oblast (0.002), Kamchatka Krai (0.003), Sakhalin Oblast (0.004). The most regionalized vote is shown by Moscow (0.331), Saint-Petersburg (0.190), the Republic of Tatarstan (0.189), Kemerovo Oblast (0.139), the Republic of Dagestan (0.135). We can see that, on the one hand, the variation depends on the population where the most populous regions tend to reflect the most regionalized vote, and vice versa. On the other hand, among the regions associated with the regionalization of the vote stand out both politically competitive (Moscow and Saint-Petersburg) and the most non-competitive regions like Tatarstan, Dagestan and Kemerovo.

The level of the regionalization of the vote have dropped drastically since the late 1990s. As Ishiyama reports, in 1999 the RPVI scores for the least nationalized regions were follows: Moscow - 5.45, Moskov Oblast — 2.15, Tatarstan — 1.99, St. Petersburg — 1.98, Bashkortostan — 1.66. The growing overall level of the nationalization of the vote has been one of the major consequences of Putin’s policy of recentralization.

Table 1 represents the regression analysis of results of the State Duma elections, 2016 (the between-region level). As is reported, political factors can influence the level of the nationalization of the vote. The legislative election competition is negatively associated with the dependent variable (Model 1). In terms of the RPVI it means the more competitive a region, the more its vote is nationalized. The similar logic meets the results of the Model 2, which indicates the significant influence of governors’ “political machines” on the inequality of election results across the federal units. So, the greater the margin of victory on gubernatorial elections, the less the vote is nationalized.

The regression analysis also shows that the variable of non-local governors has been significantly negative. The result may have been a reliable justification of the Russian political scientists’ assumption about the inter-elite consolidation problems that the heads of regions come across in case they are appointed acting governors in the regions where they are strangers. As a result, public conflicts and political and administrative inefficiency arise. In this light non-local governors cannot control regional election as effectively as local governors and tend to meet more nationalized election results.

At last, the turnout in Russian regions may be also considered as a significant factor of the nationalization of the vote (Model 3). As well as in the case of governors’ margin of victory, the turnout contributes to the between-region inequality of the vote.

It can be seen that the results contradict the findings of Ishiyama, who has revealed that politically strong governors could facilitate the party system nationalization in the late 1990s. After the policy of recentralization, we are witnessing an inverse logic: the inequality of the vote is mostly produced by non-competitive regional political regimes in with the regional authorities have resources for managing the vote.

At the within-region level the nationalization of the vote, in terms of its homogeneity across municipalities of the regions concerned, the average PSNS has been 0.84 in the 2012–2016 regional election cycle, which exceeds the overall PSNS scores for the 2011 (PSNS = 0.78) and 2016 (PSNS = 0.80) State Duma elections. This pattern is quite remarkable as, hypothetically speaking, regional elections should be characterized by a lower impact of nationalization than federal ones. It should be the case given the common agenda for all the regions and the uniting factors like the involvement of the President in the

Table 1
Factors of the nationalization of the vote, the 2016 State Duma elections (the between-region level).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legislative election competition</td>
<td>-.258** (.066)</td>
<td>.006* (.003)</td>
<td>-.175 (.101)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governor’s margin of victory</td>
<td>-.306* (.123)</td>
<td>-.301* (.139)</td>
<td>-.266** (.003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-local governor</td>
<td>-.306* (.123)</td>
<td>-.301* (.139)</td>
<td>-.266** (.003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnout</td>
<td>-.175 (.101)</td>
<td>.026** (.003)</td>
<td>.026** (.003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic fragmentation</td>
<td>.603* (.301)</td>
<td>.618*. (.386)</td>
<td>.335* (.261)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban population</td>
<td>.008* (.006)</td>
<td>.002* (.006)</td>
<td>.006* (.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic autonomy</td>
<td>.007*. (.004)</td>
<td>.005* (.004)</td>
<td>.005* (.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log GRP per capita</td>
<td>-.092* (.091)</td>
<td>.946** (.051)</td>
<td>.946** (.051)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log Population</td>
<td>1.01** (.063)</td>
<td>1.02** (.071)</td>
<td>.946** (.051)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-4.13** (.599)</td>
<td>-4.95** (.667)</td>
<td>-5.39** (.487)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-squared</td>
<td>.805</td>
<td>.818</td>
<td>.870</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: dependent variable: RPVI (log). Standard errors in parentheses.
* - p ≤ .05; ** - p ≤ .01.
campaign and other factors. On the other hand, one should not regard the 0.04—0.07 difference as significant and critical either.

The most nationalized vote (according to the PSNS) can be seen in the most non-competitive regions such as: Chechnya (0.96), Kabardino-Balkaria (0.94), Karachaevo-Cherkessia (0.93), Mordovia (0.92), Ingushetia (0.92), Kemerovo oblast (0.90), and Tatarstan (0.89). However, this group is followed by moderately competitive regions with the diversified elite, such as Volgoda oblast (0.89), Leningrad oblast (0.89), Pskov oblast (0.88).

The analysis of the individual components of the index across the regions with the highest scores of the PSNS allows us to identify even the negative impact of such hyper-nationalization on the development of the party system. For instance, some parties of the federal parliamentary opposition may not be represented in regional legislative assemblies, with the nationalization of the vote implying voting mostly for United Russia. In other words, the party composition of several regional parliaments may be different from the federal "standard" despite the highest scores of the PSNS.

Thus, the CPRF and the LDPR failed to get mandates in the Chechen Republic in 2013. They performed better in 2016, and the situation was remedied. Back then, the Communist Party had not fully adapted to the new conditions, including the new regional office and the involvement of Magameda Ahmadov, First Secretary of the Vladimir Regional Committee of the Communist Union of Youth. The relations of the Liberal Democrats with the regional leaders deteriorated following Vladimir Zhirinovsky's speech at a federal TV-channel and later Ramzan Kadyrov even called on voters to refrain from supporting the party. The CPRF and the LDPR have enjoyed little and territorially uneven support in Chechnya.

In 2011, Sergey Mironov boycotted the submission of his party — A Just Russia - list to Mordovia's electoral committee because Nikolai Merkushkin, the head of the republic, wielded influence over the regional office. A Just Russia ran in the regional elections for the first time in 2016 and failed to cross the threshold.

The Republic of Tyva witnessed a similar case. Apart from United Russia, only A Just Russia led by Vasily Oyun, the former Speaker of the State Great Khural, won seats in the legislative body. In essence, it was due only to the fact that the party came second (4.92%), and one-party parliament is prohibited by law. The Communist Party is still weak there, and the Liberal Democratic Party relies heavily on ethnic Russian candidates, appealing to ethnic minorities in the region (Russians constitute only about 16% of the total population of Tyva).

Yaroslavl Oblast (0.75), Dagestan (0.75), North Ossetia (0.77), Rostov Oblast (0.77), Kalmykia (0.78), the Republic of Altai (0.78) show the least nationalized vote. In this regard, the conclusion can be drawn that the federal status of the subject does not affect the territorial unevenness of the vote in parliamentary elections across municipalities. The figures from the regions with the most nationalized party systems also testify to it.

The regression analysis of regional election data (Table 2) shows that political factors may be considered significant factor of the territorial homogenization of the vote. It is noticeable that electoral competition (measured as margin of victory) and mobilization (measured as turnout) may influence in different ways on the PNS of United Russia and the other parliamentary parties. The more non-competitive regional elections are, the higher PNS scores can be obtained for United Russia and simultaneously the lower for the CPRF, the LDPR and A Just Russia. The variable of electoral mobilization indicates the same logic.

It is also noteworthy that the effect of electoral competition on the nationalization of the vote for the opposition parties is comparatively higher than for United Russia. An increase in the margin of victory index of 1%, ceteris paribus, increases United Russia’s PNS by .001. By comparison, the Communist Party will get a .002 decline in the PNS index in a similar case, while A Just Russia and the Liberal Democratic Party will witness a .003 drop.

Ethnic fragmentation has been significant only for the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (Models 5 and 6). It may be considered an effect of party’s leadership nationalistic rhetoric used to in the 1990s and early 2000s. Ethnic non-Russians tend not to vote for the LDPR. Thus, in the case of territorial localization of ethnicities, the party’s PNS may drop significantly.

Elections for the State Duma at the within-region level of analysis almost fully confirm the findings from regional elections (Table 3). The only one discrepancy is that the variable of electoral mobilization is significant for A Just Russia’s PNS (Model 8).

Table 2
Factors of the nationalization of the vote at the within-region level, regional parliamentary elections (2012–2016).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
<th>Model 6</th>
<th>Model 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Margin of victory</td>
<td>.001** (.000)</td>
<td>.001** (.000)</td>
<td>-.003** (.000)</td>
<td>-.003** (.001)</td>
<td>-.004** (.001)</td>
<td>-.002** (.000)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnout</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-local governor</td>
<td>-.011 (.007)</td>
<td>-.011 (.006)</td>
<td>.004 (.013)</td>
<td>.003 (.016)</td>
<td>-.011 (.022)</td>
<td>-.013 (.023)</td>
<td>-.031 (.025)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic fragmentation</td>
<td>-.034 (.015)</td>
<td>-.035 (.016)</td>
<td>-.055 (.033)</td>
<td>-.059 (.043)</td>
<td>-.197** (.055)</td>
<td>-.191** (.062)</td>
<td>-.097 (.059)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Population</td>
<td>-.000 (.000)</td>
<td>-.000 (.000)</td>
<td>-.001 (.001)</td>
<td>-.001 (.001)</td>
<td>-.001 (.001)</td>
<td>-.001 (.001)</td>
<td>-.001 (.001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic autonomy</td>
<td>.000 (.000)</td>
<td>.000 (.000)</td>
<td>.000 (.000)</td>
<td>.000 (.000)</td>
<td>.000 (.000)</td>
<td>.000 (.000)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log GRP per capita</td>
<td>.915** (.030)</td>
<td>.924** (.032)</td>
<td>1.01** (.065)</td>
<td>.999** (.081)</td>
<td>.944** (.109)</td>
<td>.892** (.115)</td>
<td>.904** (.119)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.274</td>
<td>.220</td>
<td>.490</td>
<td>.247</td>
<td>.470</td>
<td>.227</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: dependent variables: Model 1 — PNS (United Russia), Model 2 — PNS (United Russia), Model 3 — PNS (CPRF), Model 4 — PNS (CPRF), Model 5 — PNS (LDPR), Model 6 — PNS (LDPR), Model 7 — PNS (A Just Russia). Standard errors in parentheses.

* p ≤ .05; ** p ≤ .01.

As for regional elections, there is no such effect. That is why Table 2 contains seven models instead of eight: the 8th model has failed the F-test and has not been included into Table 2.

The regression analysis also indicates that social and economic diversity as well as economic autonomy (as a proxy for decentralization) are for the most part insignificant. This result may refer to the major effect of the policy of recentralization formatted as a unification and homogenization of the regions. In such circumstances political abilities of regional authorities has been the major factor of (managed) electoral behavior.

5. Conclusion

The main conclusion that can be drawn from given analysis is that since recentralization of Russia the influence of political factors of the nationalization of the vote have remained. At the same time, they changed the direction of operation. While in the late 1990s governors’ “political machines” could be used as a tool of increase in the nationalization of the vote, today regional authorities tend to provide the ruling elite of the country with as many votes as possible. It leads to the dual logic of the party system nationalization in terms of territorial homogeneity of the vote. At the between-region level the most non-competitive regions provide United Russia the highest support contributing inequality of electorates distribution across the federal units. But simultaneously at the within-region level the election results tend to be extremely homogenous across municipalities.

Democracies saw the formation of the electorate along social cleavages, whereby the nationalization of the vote was predetermined by ethnic, linguistic, settlement or economic diversity. The differences between the unitary and federal state also has a role to play. These “classic” factors find little evidence in post-communist Russia. The analysis has revealed the paramount importance of the so-called procedural component in the formation of territorial patterns of the vote. Nationalization appears to be “imposed” to the extent regional elites are able to exert influence on election results. In this respect, the nationalization of the vote seems not so much “imposed” rather “engineered”. Apart from the analysis, this can be illustrated with the discrepancy between the composition of the federal and some regional parliaments, even though voting is over-nationalized, to put it narrowly. It definitely maps out the lines of further research into the nationalization of party systems extending beyond the approach of this study.

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References


