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# SPECIFICITY OF INTER-ELITE COMPETITION AT REGIONAL LEVEL IN MODERN RUSSIA

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## ABSTRACT

*The article deals with the approaches to understanding the concept of 'competition'. There are three approaches to understanding the concept: as a competition in the market, as a behavioral element of the market mechanism and as a market mechanism criterion to resist monopolization. Conditions for the existence of competition are also considered. The first condition for the competition to emerge is a presence of a great number of items of any particular product or resource in the market. The second condition for the emergence of competition is freedom of choice of producers' economic activities. The third condition for the competition to emerge is correspondence between what determines the demand and what determines the supply. The fourth condition for the emergence of competition is the presence of the market of means of production. The essence of the competition in the political field is analyzed as well. Specific conditions for the political competition in modern Russia are distinguished and common features of the political competition in subjects of the Russian Federation are also determined. An example of the conditions and essence of the political competition in Yaroslavl is considered in detail. Changes of the area of political competition for the last four years of the Russian Federation are also considered.*

## KEYWORDS

- elite
- competition
- political process
- transformation
- subject of the Russian Federation

## INTRODUCTION

Competition is an important feature of different activities where a conflict of interest (politics, economics, science, sport, etc.) is observed. The competition got widely spread after the inheritance, class privileges and medieval regulations were eliminated and the principles of democracy and market economy were approved.

The relevance of the research topic is determined by fundamental changes in modern Russia. There is a practical need to study theoretical and methodological bases of the political process as a necessary condition for further democratic transformation of the society. In the context of pluralism, one of the most important democratic institutions is party competition.

The political life of modern Russian society largely reflects the specificity of public attitude towards political problems and government - attitude developed during the reform period. Moreover, the order and way of implementing political processes and procedures in Russia bear the imprint of long-term political and cultural features that characterize the post-Soviet space. In particular, this concerns the specificity of implementing inter-elite competition in Russian society.

Political indifference and passivity of the majority of the population, inherited from the Soviet past, serve as a breeding ground for developing different violations in the implementation of competitive processes.

Hence there is a need for deep social reflection on the issues of inter-elite competition and political choices of the modern Russians.

### **Research Methodology**

The research methodology was based on general scientific methods: historical (that helped identify the emergence and formation of inter-elite competition under specified historical conditions), case study (to study the essence, basic characteristics and features of specific examples of inter-elite competition, to identify their subjects and tendencies), comparative (to identify features of specified inter-elite interactions under different conditions).

An important element of the research methodology was interviewing experts. The interviews were conducted on topic guide composed of 7 topic dimensions that characterized the inter-elite competition components. In the topic dimensions the following information dimensions were considered:

- Actors;
- Problem situation (causes of inter-elite competition);
- Stages and periods of inter-elite competition;
- Resources, opportunities, restrictions of the actors;
- Methods and forms of interaction of the competing parties;
- Character of interaction between the competing actors;
- Examples of inter-elite competition.

10 deep interviews were conducted with the experts ranging from deputies, experts from political parties and public organizations leaders, territorial administrative authorities, specialized academic institutions staff.

The empirical research base was constituted by the materials of All-Russian and regional researches, as well as the data of Levada-center, All-Russian Public Opinion Research Center, articles in the Mass Media. Federal laws, decrees, normative legal acts of subjects of the Russian Federation were also used in the research.

Modern inter-elite competition at the regional level in Russia is characterized in the example of the Yaroslavl Region. The choice of the region is determined by the fact that the Yaroslavl Region is a kind of ‘indicator’ for modern Russia. In the Yaroslavl Region the federal election results are similar to the final federal results. The region has average socio-economic indicators in the country. These and some other parameters suggest that general features of the inter-elite competition in the Yaroslavl Region will be typical for other regions of the country.

### Theoretical aspects

Researchers as V.Y. Gelman, O.V. Gaman-Golutvina, G.V. Golosov, G.G. Diligensky, A.A. Kara-Murza, A. V. Obolonsky, E.B. Shestopal<sup>1</sup> studied political competition among Russian political elite. Among foreign researchers studying Russian elite, A. Steen<sup>2</sup>, D. Lane and C. Ross<sup>3</sup> should be mentioned.

David Lane examines a few of the theoretical approaches that help explain the trajectory of change from socialism to capitalism. His theory demonstrates the role of elites regarding the transformation from socialism to capitalism as a type of system transfer in which elites craft democratic and market institutions into the space left by state socialism. Lane contrasts this interpretation with class-based theories, which consider transformation in terms of revolution, and explain why such theories have not been considered the best way of framing the transition in the post-socialist states. Lane contends that elite theories alone are inadequate to explain a system change that brings free markets.

<sup>1</sup> VY Gelman, ‘Политические партии в России: от конкуренции к иерархии’ [Political Parties in Russia: from Competition – to Hierarchy], *Polis* (5), 2008; OV Gaman-Golutvina, *Политические элиты России: вехи исторической эволюции* [Political Elites I Russia: Milestones of Historical Evolution], Moscow, 2006; GV Golosov, *Российская партийная система и региональная политика* [Russian Party System and Regional Policy], St. Petersburg, 2006; GG Diligensky, ‘Интерпретации: эмпирика и теория электоральных исследований’ [Interpretation: Theory and Empirics of Electoral Research] *Polis* (2), 2002; AA Kara-Murza, *Оппозиция: выбор есть* [Opposition: the Choice is] Algorithm, Moscow, 2006; AV Obolonsky *Человек и власть: перекрестки российской истории* [A Man and Power: Crossroads of Russian History], Moscow, 2002; EB Shestopal, *Образы российской власти: от Ельцина до Путина* [Images of the Russian Government: from Yeltsin to Putin], Moscow, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> A Steen & V Gelman, *Elites and Democratic Development in Russia*, Routledge, London & New York, 2003; A Steen, *Political Elites and the New Russia: the Power Basis of Yeltsin’s and Putin’s Regimes*, Routledge Curzon, London & New York, 2003.

<sup>3</sup> D Lane, *Elites and Classes in the Transformation of State Socialism*, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick (U.S.A.) & London, 2011; D Lane (ed.), *Elites and Political Power in the USSR*, Aldershot, Hants, England, Elgar, Brookfield, Vt., USA, Distributed in the U.S. by Gower Pub. Co., 1988; D Lane & C Ross *The Transition from Communism to Capitalism: Ruling Elites from Gorbachev to Yeltsin*, St. Martin’s Press, New York, 1999.

A.Steen and C.Rose explain transformation from Communist rule towards democratic development in Russia by consideration of elites` role. They show how elites support and challenge democracy and why they are crucial to Russian democracy in particular. A.Steen and C.Rose try to explain how the elites` degree of integration at national and regional levels may constitute the main condition for the consolidation of the emerging political regime and interpret the complex post-communist elite patterns of behavior and attitudes into a theoretical framework of elitist democracy.

Study of the party competition has traditionally been the responsibility of Political Science and Political Sociology. In the Western Political Science, the political competition of party systems was studied by R Dahl and E Downs<sup>4</sup>. Thus, Downs focused on the rational nature of voters` participation/ non participation in the elections and selfish motivation of the politicians who seek only to get and retain power. Among foreign researches studying Russian specificity of party competition there is J. Ishiyama<sup>5</sup>. He tells that all forms of government require popular support, in order to survive, whether voluntary or involuntary. The researcher shows that Russia`s elite is not alone in being able to mobilize popular support for an undemocratic regime, Russia provides an outstanding caution that popular support can grow when governors reject democracy and create an undemocratic regime. J. Ishiyama shows the role of individuals in processes of political transformations and individual influences on regime support.

Separate parties and party systems are more or less well-studied in the works of Z. M. Zotova, L. V. Smorgunov, M. N. Afanasyev, G. V. Golosov and others<sup>6</sup>. In domestic science, special attention is paid to institutional conditions of the party system formation. The works of S A. Avakyan, V. V. Lapteva, E. Y. Meleshkina and others<sup>7</sup> highlight the problems of institutionalization of parties, rules and procedures of their participation in the elections. Political competition in the aspect of power relationships was studied by V. S. Komarovskiy, A. N. Chumikov, V. V. Petuhov, E. B. Shestopal.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> R Dahl, *Democracy and its Critics*, Translation from English, Moscow ROSSPEN, 2003; E Downs, *Economic Theory of Democracy*; J Roemer, 'Political Competition: Theory and Applications', *Economic Journal*, no. 2, 1982.

<sup>5</sup> A Bozóki & J T Ishiyama (eds.), *The Communist Successor Parties of Central and Eastern Europe*, Armonk, M.E. Sharpe, New York, 2002.

<sup>6</sup> ZM Zotova, *Политические партии и организации в системе политического управления* [Political Parties and Organizations in the System of Political Management], Moscow, 2006; LV Smorgunov, 'Сравнительный анализ политико-административных реформ: от нового государственного менеджмента к концепции "governance"' [Comparative Analysis of Political and Administrative Reform: the New Public Management and the Concept of "Governance"], *Polis* (4), 2003; MN Afanasyev, 'Политические партии в российских регионах' [Political Parties in Russian Regions], *ProetContra*, 2000; GV Golosov & AV Lichtenstein, 'Партии власти и российский институциональный дизайн: теоретический анализ' [The Party in Power and Russia's Institutional Design: Theoretical Analysis], *Polis* (5), 2002.

<sup>7</sup> SA Avakyan, *Политический плюрализм и общественные объединения в Российской Федерации: конституционно-правовые основы* [Political Pluralism and Public Associations in the Russian Federation: Constitutional and Legal Framework], Moscow, 2007; VV Lapteva, *Право и многопартийность в современной России* [Right and a Multiparty System in Russia], Moscow, 1999; EY Meleshkina, 'Воронка причинности» в электоральных исследованиях' [The Funnel of Causality "in Electoral Studies], *Polis* (5), 2002.

<sup>8</sup> AN Chumikov & MP Bocharov, *Связи с общественностью: теория и практика* [Public Relations: Theory and

The electoral process has a considerable impact on the formation of inter-elite competition. Among foreign researchers who study elections in Russia, Stephen White, Richard Rose, William Mishler and Neil Munro<sup>9</sup> should be mentioned. The authors named above also study general characteristics of transformation of the political regime and process in Russia<sup>10</sup>:

The concept of ‘competition’ first came into Economics, and later into Political Science from Biology where it was determined as ‘a struggle for existence’. Competition - as prominent English sociologist A Giddens explains - ‘is a concept used in Ecology to denote different kinds’ fighting for the best position in the area<sup>11</sup>. The competition starts with the struggle for existence in a chaotic competition of individuals when some die and others adopt struggling for limited resources of the environment – food, light, water, shelter. In a sense, it is the very ‘war of all against all’ or a ‘natural state’ described by T Hobbes in his famous *The Leviathan*.

Systemic views of the competition as a market and business relationships characteristic started to be formed first in the works of English, French and German mercantilists in XV—XVII centuries. Thus, in the works of one of the leaders of the East India Company, T Man, the competition was determined as one of the mechanisms for achieving a balance. Famous German mercantilist J. J. Becher noted that the market monopolization causes higher prices, while the competition helps reduce price levels as it covers many producers of similar goods<sup>12</sup>.

This thesis about the political competition means that, when there is monopoly in the political market, si.e. the power is completely seized by one party or a group of people, the society has nothing to do but follow the ideals, values and political course proclaimed by the active power.

Another situation is when a presence of a great number of parties, elite groups competing for the trust of voters of political subjects leads to a higher level of public participation in the political process, increased requirements to the active power, and this, in turn, increases the competition and the level of democracy development on the whole.

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Practice], Moscow, 2008; VV Petukhov, *Общая психология* [General Psychology], Moscow, 2005; EB Shestopal, *Образы российской власти: от Ельцина до Путина* [Images of the Russian Government: from Yeltsin to Putin], Moscow, 2008.

<sup>9</sup> S White, R Rose & I McAllister, *How Russia votes*, Chatham House Publishers, NJ, c1997; R Rose & N Munro, *Elections without order: Russia's challenge to Vladimir Putin*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, New York, 2002.

<sup>10</sup> R Rose, W Mishler & N Munro, *Time matters: adapting to the consequences of transformation*, Centre for the Study of Public Policy, University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen, 2006; R Rose, W Mishler & N Munro, *Russia transformed: developing popular support for a new regime*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, New York: 2006; R Rose, *Understanding post-communist transformation: a bottom up approach*, Routledge, London & New York, 2009; R Rose, W Mishler & N Munro, *Popular support for an undemocratic regime: the changing views of Russians*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge & New York, 2011.

<sup>11</sup> A Giddens, *Социология* [Sociology], Editorial URSS, Moscow, 1999, pp. 42-68.

<sup>12</sup> IS Plotnikov (ed.), *Меркантилизм* [Mercantilism], OGIZ, Leningrad, 1935, p. 215.

The competition of people as subjects of economic relationships became one of the key benchmarks for many medieval scholars adhered to anti-bourgeois conceptions of the universe, first of all, the supporters of canonical Christian Doctrine, and later the great utopian scholars. In *The City of the Sun* and on *Utopia* there was neither a hint at the existence of competitive relationships, nor of the business itself. On the opposite, the world created by the great utopian scholars' imagination was actually conflict-free, and, consequently, non-competitive<sup>13</sup>.

However, as the researches note, we live in the world of an imperfect competition, including the sphere of politics, where the market turns to be divided between two or three big actors<sup>14</sup>.

When the competition becomes systematic, the interaction of class and competition creates not only an economic system, but a social system as well: what is going on in the economy tends to spread and dominate in all the aspects of our life<sup>15</sup> and that helped transfer a whole range of the commodity market characteristics into the political market.

In the scientific works on the problem, there are three approaches to the concept of 'competition'<sup>16</sup>:

1) Competition as competitiveness in the market. With this approach the competition is understood as subjects' competitiveness in achieving the best results. In other words, this is a kind of a fair struggle won by the most skillful, enterprising, capable competitor under the conditions of equal chances for both of the competitive parties.

2) Competition as a behavioral element of the market mechanism, that is the very 'invisible hand' of the market (Adam Smith) which coordinates its participants' activity and provides demand and supply balance. This approach is typical for the 'classical' theory of Economics, as well as the theory of democracy.

3) Competition as a market mechanism criterion to resist monopolization, that means the end of any competition. As the most preferred market model of oligopoly is suggested, that is the market characterized by presence of a limited number of big firms (political parties, groups, movements or decision making centers in the political market), which, on the one hand, set the system of control

<sup>13</sup> VA Kulichenko, *Тенденции развития политического плюрализма в России* [Tendencies of the Development of Political Pluralism in Russia], Moscow, 2001, p. 42

<sup>14</sup> AI Mikhailushkin & PD Shimko, *Основы экономики* [Fundamentals of Economics], Tutorial, 2nd edition, St. Petersburg, 2002, p. 143.

<sup>15</sup> GV Golosov, *Российская партийная система и региональная политика* [Russian Party System and Regional Politics], St. Petersburg, 2006, p. 82.

<sup>16</sup> YB Rubin, *Конкуренция: упорядоченное взаимодействие в профессиональном бизнесе* [Competition: Ordered Interaction in the Professional Business], 2nd edition, Moscow, 2006, p.35.



and interdependence through ‘auction’, and on the other hand, enter into the competition with each other.

In this case, the competition is understood not as a rivalry, but as a degree of general market conditions dependence on the particular market participants’ behaviour. Due to this fact, it is necessary to distinguish between the terms ‘competition’ and ‘rivalry’: ‘Competition’ refers to the model that determines the market structure, while ‘rivalry’ characterizes the actual behavior of subjects in the market<sup>17</sup>.

The actors’ behaviour may have the nature of a rivalry only in the market with oligopolistic structure, when their interdependence is positive and high enough. If there is a monopoly of one of the subjects in the market, it cannot be characterized as a rivalry because the actors’ interdependence is minute<sup>18</sup>.

The same situation arises for the opposite model of the market with perfect competition. Oligopoly is an interim step that does not mean monopoly, but sets a pretty high barrier for new participants to enter the market, that is to be far from an ideal type of competition.

The current situation in the political market in Russia is characterized by the very oligopolistic type due to, firstly, the existence of a strong ‘ruling party’ representing the interests of the active government, and secondly, to the introduction of new amendments to the Legislation, that is the rising of the barrier up to 7 %, designation of mandatory quantitative and territorial framework for establishing parties.

It should be noted, that under oligopoly both fair and unfair competitions are possible. In the latter case these may be some actions on discrediting rivals, including distribution of false inaccurate information about the rival, on misleading consumers about character, methods, place of the production of goods and their quality, unlawful using of the rival’s trademark (logo, slogan), distorting information on real information about the rival under the advertising campaigns, unauthorized using and disclosing of confidential information; as well as some competitive struggle methods relating to the violation of norms and rules of competition adopted in the political market<sup>19</sup>.

The main objective and function of competition is to conquer the market, priority public status in the struggle for consumers and electors with the competitors.

The competition emerges when a number of conditions are complied. The first condition is a presence of a great number of items of any particular product or resource in the market. If production is owned by one owner, like under the

<sup>17</sup> AN Chumikov & MP Bocharov, *Связи с общественностью: теория и практика* [Public Relations: Theory and Practice], Moscow, 2008, p. 214

<sup>18</sup> R Park, ‘Конкуренция. Конфликт. Аккомодация. Ассимиляция’ [Competition. Conflict. Accommodation. Assimilation], *Theoretical Sociology*, Vol.1, Moscow, 2002, p. 325.

<sup>19</sup> M Porter, *Конкуренция* [Competition], St.Petersburg, 2002, p. 85.

conditions of an administrative-command system when the production of many products was commanded only by the state, the state monopoly prevails denying any competition<sup>20</sup>.

The second condition for the emergence of competition is freedom of choice of producers' economic activities. Each of them do not only choose what to produce, but has the right to make any changes into the production, set the quantity, etc.

The third condition for the emergence of competition is the correspondence between what determines the demand and what determines the supply. If, for example, demand exceeds supply, a consumer does not have the freedom for choosing goods. All the products are easily manufactured because of the deficit. If there is a deficit there is no free competition.

The fourth condition for the emergence of competition is the presence of the market of means of production.

In the competitive struggle it is very important to set a high standard of profit which is a benchmark for choosing an economic activity. But the choice of activity shows only the possibility of production. To make the possibility come true, it is necessary, when having monetary capital, to turn it into the means of production<sup>21</sup>.

Thus, the competition should be referred to as a rivalry, competition of people, groups and organizations in achieving personal targets, best results in a particular sphere, with a great number of subjects participating in the struggle. On the one hand, the competitive environment, as a means to support competitive interaction of the market agents, must provide the terms of equality, on the other hand, it seems to be a process of realizing the subjects' advantages. This conflict undoubtedly threatens the existence of the competition itself. It should not be forgotten, that the same conflict acts as an inside engine for the competition development. That is why the only right method to resolve the conflict is to support the competitive conditions from the outside that is why the necessity to order the competitive environment is an objective factor for its existence.

Political actors competition was and still is one of the formal characteristics of their activity, and, like any form, it has a structure value in the system of modern business relationships. It is a centrifugal form of business relationships, inside and by means of which any agent acts and interacts with his environment. The form invariably arises as a consequence and sign of business sovereignty of the political agents. It manifests itself through comparing their advantages and disadvantages realizing the right for a comparatively successful achievement of goals, as well as through their ability to acquire and preserve relatively better conditions of their life.

<sup>20</sup> J Remer, 'Политическая конкуренция: теория и применения' [Political Competition: Theory and Usage], *Economical Journal*, No. 2, 1982, p. 114.

<sup>21</sup> VG Ledyayev, *Власть: концептуальный анализ* [Power: Conceptual Analysis], Moscow, ROSSPEN, 2001, p. 37.



Competitive advantages and disadvantages that constitute the real competitive potential of any political agent manifest themselves through the activity, the success of which is always relative.

On the one hand, we observe divergence, and sometimes a conflict of interests. On the other hand, a relatively successful implementation of political subjects' interests takes place under the conditions of relatively unsuccessful and restricted implementation of the interests of others.

Strengthening competitors' positions and achieving certain benefits can be stated only in the background of relative weakening of their rivals. This happens because the competitors affect each other and, thus, because of the opposition of parties. The conflict of interests, when determining the concept of competition, generates a conflictual nature of competitive activity, competitive rivalry<sup>22</sup>.

### All-Russian Conditions for Inter-Elite Competition

Since 2000 the legal framework for federal relationships has been stabilized. Seven federal districts have been formed. The Legislation of the Federation has been gradually brought into conformity with the Constitution of the Russian Federation and federal laws. A position of plenipotentiaries of the President in federal districts has been established by Decree of the President from May 13th, 2000. Due to the Decree, a three-level government system- Center- District-Subject of the Federation- has been formed. However, the fact that the governors, elected through direct elections, were not accountable to the plenipotentiaries, prevented the latter to carry on their supervisory and management functions<sup>23</sup>.

That was why in 2004, the president started implementing the next stage of restoring the vertical of power. He amended the laws *'On General Principles of Organization of Legislative and Executive Organs of State Authority in the Subjects of the RF'* and *'On Basic Guarantees of Electoral Rights of Russian Citizens to Participate in the Referendum'* - in the State Duma. In such a way, the radical method to cancel the direct elections of governors was implemented<sup>24</sup>. The procedure of direct elections was placed by the procedure of 'giving authorities'. In such a way 'the vertical of power' was created. The president got the right to appoint and dismiss governors.

Nowadays the governor implements the policy of the center and manages the area. Regional society has almost lost the opportunity to influence the governor as it has been deprived of the right to terminate the powers of the governor of the area. At the same time, the governor still has the right to dissolve the elected legislature. The procedure of early termination of powers of the legislative bodies

<sup>22</sup> АА Kara-Murza, *Оппозиция: выбор есть* [Opposition: the Choice is], Moscow, Algorithm, 2006, p. 213.

<sup>23</sup> VK Medvedeva, *Федеральные округа и новая региональная политика* [Federal Districts and New Regional Policy] available at <<http://www.humanities.edu.ru/db/msg/64469>>.

<sup>24</sup> <<http://izbiratel.ru/vyboryros/2006/10/05/otmena.html>>.

of subjects of the Russian Federation has been simplified. If earlier they could be dissolved only by the Federal Law on the basis of the Court decision, nowadays a decree of the president of the Russian Federation is enough.

A relevant independence of public-wide elected mayors from the governors prevented the final completion of the system formation. And in March, 2009, in the first reading the Duma passed the law '*On Amendments to the Federal Law "On General Principles of Local Self-Government in Russia"*'. The Law introduces the institution of 'dismissing the head of municipal formation' that allows the governor to dismiss a mayor.

Changes of the laws '*On Elections of Deputies of the State Duma*', '*On Guarantees of Electoral Rights of Russian Citizens to Participate in the Referendum*', '*On Elections of the President of RF*' increased the entrance barrier to the Duma up to 7% (since 2007), introduced a proportional system of the elections into legislature of all levels of governance. Giving parties the federal status actually meant the elimination of regional parties acting as a tool for the regional political elites, and weakened, to a great extent, their impact on the political process. To participate in the elections and have representatives in the parliaments of different levels, they have to enter federal parties. As a result, the legislature has been creating the party's monopoly on the formation of legislature at federal and regional levels<sup>25</sup>.

The Duma adopted amendments to federal legislation allowing the party that won the elections to the parliament of the Russian Federation, to propose its candidate for governor. As the regional elections results show, only the party United Russia can count on this right. After that, the process of governors entering the party became widespread.

In 2005, 15 current leaders of subjects of the Federation entered the party. Other 8 members of 'United Russia' were appointed to the positions of governors. By the end of the year 65 heads of subjects of the Federation were members of the party, or 73,8 %. Currently 91,2 % of senior managers of subjects are the members of 'the party of power'<sup>26</sup>.

The proportional component in Russian variant of electoral campaign allows building controlled party configurations both of federal and regional scale. That is it that helps use manipulative mechanisms and correct election results without violating the law.

The political party space in modern Russia is thoroughly developed and purposefully constructed. The elite needs political parties as tools of formation and control of financial flows and as the means of fighting between 'clans', for example, between St. Petersburg and Moscow groups.

<sup>25</sup> EYu Meleshkina, 'Доминирование по-русски или мировой феномен' [Dominance in Russian or Global Phenomenon] in *Political Science: Political Parties and Party Systems in Modern World*, Moscow, 2006, p. 156.

<sup>26</sup> <<http://www.sorokinfond.ru/index.php?id=525>>

### Inter-elite Competition in Russian regions (Case of Yaroslavl Oblast)

In many regions a complicated political situation is conditioned by the evolution of the Governor institution caused by the policy of the Centre to appoint '*varangians*', that is the figures external for the region, that causes the emergence of inter-elite splits on the line of 'local-strange'<sup>27</sup>.

Due to this, for the last years in Yaroslavl Oblast serious changes both in the formal component of the regional political system and in the informal practices have occurred.

The determining factors for the changes were the changes pre-defined not only by the federal context, but also by transformations.

Another important aspect for changing the terms of regional inter-elite competition was a radical change of the regional elite and its priorities. The predetermining factor was a change of the head of the region - after United Russia got practically the minimum rating in the country at the December 2007 elections, Governor Anatoliy Lisitsyn got a conventionally called promotion - he became a deputy of the State Duma of Russia.

He was replaced by a person of another formation S A Vakhrukov. In 1990s he held various senior level positions in Yaroslavl Oblast: Secretary of State, Deputy Governor, Chairman of the State Duma of Yaroslavl Oblast. But after he lost the governor elections in 1999, he moved to the position of Deputy Plenipotentiary Representative of President of Russia in the Ural Federal District. Such a transition was associated with the pre-election conflict between Governor Lisitsyn and Vakhrukov.

This pre-determined great changes both in the executive power of the region and the legislature, as well as at the local level.

It should be noted that the new governor did not conduct rapid and radical changes in the regional elite. Representatives of the former administration are still leaving it. This is conditioned also by the fact that the new head of the region simply does not have personnel resources.

But this is the very slow change of former leaders that greatly effects the conditions and content of the competition - few people want to leave the elite that is why they correspond their actions with the general line implemented by the head of the region.

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<sup>27</sup> RF Turovsky, 'Тезисы участников открытой дискуссии «Перспективы политической конкуренции в российских регионах» на V Всероссийском конгрессе политологов' [Abstracts of the open discussion of participants' perspectives of political competition in the Russian regions at All-Russian Congress of Political Scientists on "Prospects of Political Competition in Russia's Regions"], 20-22 November 2009, <[http://rapn.ru/partner/files/diskussiya\\_kongress.doc](http://rapn.ru/partner/files/diskussiya_kongress.doc)>

It should be noted, that the public competition is probably becoming rather unsafe for the existence of politicians. This is just due to the change of regional politicians' mentality caused by the change of the head of the region. The former governor was trying to compare the ambitions of regional political subjects, resolve conflicts in the region by means of auctions and bargaining agreements. Thanks to this, vice-governors of his Government were leaders of Union of Right Forces (URF), Republican Party, and the regional Parliament appealed to the Constitutional Court to consider the constitutionality of the procedure of the so called 'appointment of governors'. Withdrawal of the appeal was possible because of a new action and new bargaining agreements.

In the modern conditions there dominates the desire to ensure personnel dominance in the political space by means of, first of all, administrative and power methods.

A kind of example may become the elections of the deputies of the Regional Duma, when to provide United Russia with better results, Fair Russia was not admitted to the elections. The same was demonstrated at the elections to the municipality of the city of Yaroslavl in 2008.

As a result, 'playing' an active and great part in the regional space was possible only on the side of the ruling party and the regional government.

It should be noted that the party and regional executive are not a single entity. The power seems to be dominant, but at the same time, it does not control the party totally and considers different ways to control it. The main limiting factors are lack of large-scale financial and personnel resources not just to control the party, but to ensure its operation and achievement of the indicators set by the federal government.

The major benchmark for regional politicians and managers was also changed. The former main factor was the support of the electors, where public discussion and quarrels were necessary.

As a result, there was an active confrontation, competition between political subjects.

Currently the major benchmark is the sovereignty. And this substantially changes the nature of competition, first of all, the benchmarks for the regional political subjects' activity.

A kind of example may be the conflict of power, even a more informal one, between Governor Vakhrukov and the Mayor of Yaroslavl in the early 2008, just after the new governor's appointment. The conflict was not public, and federal agencies became its arbiter. The winner was the head of the region, when he received a complete control over the region from the Federal Centre.

Previously there had been conflicts between the Mayor and the Governor, but they had the aspect of publicity at least by means of active information wars.

Another tendency following those mentioned above is the withdrawal of independent and bright politicians. As a result, the competition is sharply decreasing. It was demonstrated at the elections to grassroots local government in October 2009. We cannot say, of course, that there were no bright and successful candidates and politicians from other parties but United Russia, but their number was much less than during the former campaigns. There is a good quantitative example - if United Russia nominated candidates for all the 830 vacancies, all other parties participating in the elections all together nominated for less than one third of seats vacant. This shows an active death of multiparty and competitions of parties.

Another limiting factor for the regional competition was the Financial Crisis. Many entrepreneurs, who just started to play an active role in the political process and election campaigns as a social group, lost their resources. As a result, their opportunity to promote themselves in the political process and to resist administrative resource was sharply reduced. The situation is caused not only by the fact that some surplus funds for conducting political and electoral campaigns disappeared because of the Crisis. It was caused also by the increased dependence of entrepreneurs and businesses on the state bodies in the sphere of economics and, therefore, their less desire to enter the confrontations with the government because of political ambitions.

### **The entrepreneurs are primarily oriented to preserve their businesses.**

Any new independent active leader faces the dilemma whether to enter the system on the stated conditions or stay outside the structure of the regional political system. An example of this is the head of Tutayev Municipal District, who, after the conflict broke out, was removed from office when several criminal proceedings were initiated against him. At the same time the head of the town of Tutayev resigned independently, and was appointed to a senior position at the secondary level in the regional Government.

However, we cannot say that the inter-elite competition has disappeared completely. The competition has transferred into the inside of the power system, party United Russia, like in the USSR into the framework of the Communist Party.

A bright example are the elections to the municipality of the city of Yaroslavl in October 2008, when under the lists of the candidates of United Russia there were recent active members of Fair Russia, Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, Motherland and other political forces. The criteria to get under the lists were loyalty (at least demonstrated), ability to negotiate and high rating in a certain part of the city. As a result, the fraction of United Russia in the municipality of the city of Yaroslavl got amorphous and conflict inside.

No less striking examples are the pre-election conflicts, when a party nominates a candidate, but the head of the municipal district or the head of the region himself support another one.

It is becoming more actual to study and use in practice the methods of competitive struggling inside a party, inside the power system (or an inner corporate competition where the corporation is a structured regional and local elite).

### **Conclusions**

The analysis of modern political processes in Russia suggests decreasing of real inter-elite competition. The reasons are obvious- the formed vertical of power, dominance of 'United Russia' members in legislature both at federal and regional levels. At the same time, the competition within 'United Russia' leadership is intensifying.

Mono centric model formed in Russia is characterized not only by 'absorbing' or 'ousting' the competition participants, but also by monopolization of political game space, where the frames, order and, on the whole, the result of inter-elite competition are determined by the dominating actor. The competition is possible until there is no challenge to the dominating actor.

Undoubtedly, it is important that a sufficiently high concentration of the resources is in hands of the 'party of power' that is currently the major agent of the state policy. That is why 'United Russia', political elite of the party has more opportunities and resources to influence the Mass Media, to lobby for their interests, high level of its representation at different levels of power: federal, regional and local.

From election to election there is a tendency of single party dominating and artificial multiparty system existing due to the minimal support of other parties participating in the elections and represented in the legislature.

Modern political situation suggests decreasing the level of the political competition in the regions of Russia. Actually, it is easy to verify that because of the abolition of governor elections, abolition of Duma elections in single member constituencies, absence of public elections of the heads of local government in many regions, and, because of the consolidation of the major part of power elite in the United Russia party, the public and, particularly, electoral competition is decreasing.

Periodic intensification of public forms of the political competition is still being observed in many regions when governors are appointed, the most important electoral campaigns are conducted, such as the elections for regional legislative assemblies with their interparty competition, and the elections of mayors in large and economically important cities. It would not be right to say that the political



competition in the regions of Russia radically decreased. It was rather transferred from public into nonpublic form.

Nevertheless, among the most important tendencies promoting the competition there should be singled the deconcentration of power in the regions with the simultaneous decreasing of the governor's influence. This tendency is conditioned by the increased impact of the Centre over the regions, activation of security forces outside the governor's control, relationships with the Centre built by the regional political actors themselves and not mediated by the governor.

On the whole, we can say that as a result of these transformations, the prospects for the competition in a traditional sense are rather vague and are kept mostly at the local level. This is due to the fact, that at this level people get acquainted with each other and they are difficult to be misled by the means of a massive campaign. This does not exclude, of course, the decrease of competitive activity by different manipulation and use of administrative resource.

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### **Weblinks**

<<http://izbiratel.ru/vyboryros/2006/10/05/otmena.html>>.

<<http://www.sorokinfond.ru/index.php?id=525>>.

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