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The Tail Wagging the Dog? Top-down and Bottom-up Explanations for Bureaucratic Appointments in Authoritarian Regimes

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Abstract

The paper investigates the link between the sub-national variation of political regimes in a (at the federal level) non-democratic country and the appointments of federal officials in the sub-national provinces. In particular, we look at the appointment of the chief federal inspectors to the regions in Putin's Russia in 2000–2012. Our main research question is whether appointment patterns can be explained by top-down concerns of the central government willing to keep control over the most unruly regions or by bottom-up self-selection of bureaucrats belonging to influential groups into more attractive positions more suitable for rent-seeking. The advantage of our case is that data we have at hand allow us to distinguish these two logics. Our results indicate that for the Russian chief federal inspectors in 2000–2012 bottom-up self-selection appears to be the more plausible explanation of the link between sub-national political regimes and appointment patterns.

Keywords

authoritarianism – appointments – sub-national political regimes – Russian regions – bureaucracy
[page 239]

1 Introduction

Appointments of bureaucrats play a crucial role in ensuring the stability of authoritarian regimes. In recent years, a growing body of literature addressed the variation in the appointment strategies pursued by various autocracies.¹ This paper contributes to this literature by adding a further important

¹ See Hongbin Li and Li-An Zhou, "Political turnover and economic performance: The incentive role of personnel control in China", *Journal of Public Economics* 89, no. 9–10 (2005): 1743–1762; Ora John Reuter and Graeme Robertson, "Subnational appointments in authoritarian regimes: Evidence from Russian gubernatorial appointments", *Journal of Politics* 74, no. 4 (2012): 1023–1037; Pierre Landry, Xiaobo Lü and Haiyan Duan, "Does performance matter? Evaluating political selection along the Chinese administrative ladder", *Comparative*

dimension to the analysis: whether appointments are driven by the strategic considerations of the political elites (what we refer to as *top-down logic of appointment*) or rather the interests of the bureaucrats themselves, self-selecting into attractive positions given their political weight and their connections (the *bottom-up logic of appointment*).²

The majority of existing studies concentrates on the goals of the central government it intends to achieve with its appointment decisions. However, even in consolidated autocracies, appointments rarely follow a clear and consistent political logic unambiguously determined by the national leadership. Candidates themselves invest substantial effort into receiving more attractive appointments and avoiding less attractive ones. The interests of the bureaucracy in certain cases could contradict the interests of the political leadership. This contradiction rarely leads to an open and explicit confrontation, but the bureaucratic inertia and lobbying by individual officials could *de facto* distort the outcomes desired by the political leaders. The existing research confirms that political connections matter for bureaucratic appointments in autocracies;³ [page 240] our goal is, however, to go beyond this research and to provide evidence for cases where the logic of appointment the regime itself would pursue explicitly contradicts the allocation of positions resulting from bureaucratic selfselection and to thus compare the relative importance of these two logics empirically.

For this purpose, we investigate the appointments of the *chief federal inspectors (glavnyi federal'nyi inspector, CFI)* in the sub-national regions of the Russian Federation in 2000–2012, i.e., the first two terms of Vladimir Putin as president and the presidency of Dmitrii Medvedev. The position of the CFI was created in 2000 as a new category of staff within the presidential administration with the main task to monitor the implementation of federal laws and decrees of the president in the regions.⁴ Thus, the CFIs are an example of what one could refer to as *presidential control hierarchy* created to keep regional executives in check. The incentives of the control bureaucrats have been shown to be crucial for the policy performance of authoritarian regimes.⁵

Our analysis looks, in particular, at how the CFI appointments match the within-country variation of political regimes in Russia. Within large countries, individual regions occasionally have strikingly different political regimes, including both 'isles of authoritarianism' and sub-national democracies.⁶ Russia since the 1990s was used in the research as an example of large states containing both

Political Studies, doi: 10.1177/0010414017730078; Josef Woldense, "The ruler's game of musical chairs: Shuffling during the reign of Ethiopia's last emperor", *Social Networks* 52 (2018):154–166.

² The authors appreciate the helpful comments of Irina Busygina, Vladimir Gel'man, Henry Hale, Graeme Robertson, Michael Rochlitz, Adam Scharpf, Gulnaz Sharafutdinova, Brian Taylor, Dmitriy Vorobyev and Lucan Way, as well as other participants of the Aleksanteri Institute conference on "Critical Issues in the Research of Contemporary Russian Politics" (Helsinki, 2017) and the Political Economy of Democracy and Dictatorship (pedd) Conference (Münster, 2018). The study has been funded within the framework of the Basic Research Program at the National Research University Higher School of Economics (hse) and by the Russian Academic Excellence Project "5–100". All mistakes remain our own.

³ Victor Shih, Christopher Adolph and Mingxing Liu, "Getting ahead in the Communist Party: Explaining the advancement of Central Committee members in China", *American Political Science Review* 106, no. 1 (2012): 166–187.

⁴ J. Paul Goode, *The Decline of Regionalism in Putin's Russia: Boundary Issues* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011); Brian Taylor, *State Building in Putin's Russia: Policing and Coercion after Communism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2011).

⁵ Andrei Yakovlev, *Stimuly v Sisteme Gosudarstvennogo Upravleniya i Ekonomicheskii Rost: Opyt SSSR, Kitaya i Rossii*, HSE Working Paper WP 8/2014/07, 2014.

⁶ Agustina Giraudy, *Democrats and Autocrats: Pathways of Subnational Undemocratic Regime Continuity within Democratic Countries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

democratic and authoritarian political regimes in different provinces;⁷ in the 2000s, in spite of the centralization effort by Putin, the variation of regimes persisted.⁸ For a consolidated authoritarian regime, the existence of this subnational political variation may pose a problem of control: the regime has to **[page 241]** decide how to deal with more or less pluralist regions and which ones pose a greater threat for regime stability. This logic of control is likely to determine the appointments of CFIs. At the same time, the extent of political competition in the region has an effect on the rent-seeking opportunities federal appointees have, which makes some regions more attractive than others. In terms of the logic of self-selection, bureaucrats will try to obtain positions in regions where rent-seeking opportunities are more promising.⁹

The main premise underlying our analysis is the following: Since the early 2000s, the federal government in Russia frequently appointed CFIs with a background in the military and security services to the regions. This goes in line with an argument often made in the literature that Putin's regime frequently relies on former military and security personnel (the so-called *siloviki*) for staffing the bureaucracy and the political elite.¹⁰ At the same time, there is a strong variation among the CFIs in terms of their background: while in some regions the center sends *siloviki* CFIs, in others a non-*siloviki* background seems to be preferable. This variation exists not only over space, but also over time.

Why do, however, *siloviki* become CFIs in some regions, but not in others? On the one hand, it appears to be plausible that the Kremlin should be more willing to appoint *siloviki* to regions where it believes larger extent of control is needed. On the other hand, *siloviki* are a powerful category of bureaucrats, potentially able to use its clout for the purpose of rent-seeking, and thus could be better able to self-select into regions with larger rent-seeking opportunities than other groups of the Russian bureaucracy. We show that sub-national political variation indeed affected whether a *silovik* was appointed as a CFI to a region of Russia. The empirical results of our analysis, however, seem to be **[page 242]** more consistent with self-selection of the *siloviki* than with the central government sending *siloviki* to the regions where the issues of control are more salient. Thus, the main contribution of our study to the body of research on authoritarian regimes is that it provides evidence for the importance of interests of officials themselves rather than for an elaborate regime strategy and survival logic in the appointment of bureaucrats.

⁷ Kathryn Stoner-Weiss, *Local Heroes: The Political Economy of Russian Regional Governance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Vladimir Gel'man, "Regime transition, uncertainty and prospects for democratisation: The politics of Russia's regions in a comparative perspective", *Europe-Asia Studies* 51, no. 6 (1999): 939–956; Henry Hale, "Explaining machine politics in Russia's regions: Economy, ethnicity and legacy", *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 19, no. 3 (2003): 228–263.

⁸ Anastassia Obydenkova and Alexander Libman, "National autocratization and the survival of sub-national democracy: Evidence from Russia's parliamentary elections of 2011", *Acta Politica* 48, np. 4 (2013): 459–489.

⁹ While we frame the main contradiction of our study as that between "control" and "rent-seeking", we acknowledge that the central government wants to control the regions, among other things, to ensure access to rents (see Yumin Sheng, "Global market integration and central political control: Foreign trade and intergovernmental relations in China", *Comparative Political Studies* 40, no. 4 (2007): 405–434). However, we compare whether the appointment policy follows the rent-seeking (and control) logic of the central government vs. the rent-seeking interests of individual bureaucrats.

¹⁰ For an extensive debate on the role of *siloviki* see Bettina Renz, "Russia's 'force structures' and the study of civil-military relations", *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 18, no. 4 (2005): 559–585; Bettina Renz, "Putin's militocracy? An alternative interpretation of *siloviki* in contemporary Russian politics", *Europe-Asia Studies* 58, no. 6 (2006): 903–924; Brian Taylor, "The Russian *siloviki* and political change", *Daedalus* 146, no. 1 (2017): 53–63; David Rivera and Sharon Rivera, "The militarization of the Russian elite under Putin: What we know, what we think we know (but don't), and what we need to know", *Problems of Post-Communism*, DOI: 10.1080/10758216.2017.1295812.

2 Presidential Envoys and Chief Federal Inspectors in the Russian Regions

The idea that the Russian federal president requires representatives in individual regions able to monitor the local situation emerged in the early 1990s (though the tradition of the establishment of control hierarchies in Russia is of course much older and can be traced back to the *fiskal* office introduced by Peter the Great or to the use of party organs to monitor the local bureaucracies in the USSR).¹¹ Since August 1991, Boris Yeltsin started appointing *presidential envoys* (*polnomochnye predstaviteli*, in short *polpredy*) to various sub-national regions. In 1992, a decree on the status of the envoys was passed, endowing them with the tasks to represent the president in relations to the regional government, to coordinate the activities of the federal agencies in the region, as well as to monitor the implementation of federal law and presidential decrees. The establishment of the position of the envoys was linked to the very high degree of *de facto* autonomy Russian regions were able to obtain in the 1990s; under these circumstances, the Kremlin needed a special official who would represent the president in relations to individual governors and to protect federal interests. The most powerful regions, however, resisted the appointment of the envoys. In most ethnic republics, envoys were appointed only several years after the position of the envoy was established; in Tatarstan, Bashkortostan and Sakha no envoy was ever appointed. But even in weaker regions, envoys had little power to actually influence the decisions by the governors or even became dependent on the latter.¹²

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After Putin became president in 2000, he invested substantial effort into restoring control over the regional governors.¹³ As early as in spring 2000, he divided the Russian Federation into (originally) seven *federal districts* comprising several regions each and appointed a single envoy to each of these districts (we will refer to them as district-level envoys in what follows). The office of the region-level envoy was officially discontinued, but almost immediately revived under the label “chief federal inspectors”:¹⁴ now the CFIs were subordinated to the district-level envoys, who needed their own representatives in the individual regions of their district. There is some indication that originally the office of the CFIs was an initiative of the district-level envoys themselves.¹⁵ This initiative, however, was quickly taken over by the Kremlin. The functions of the CFIs are focused on the monitoring of the implementation of the federal legislation in the regions, of the decrees of the president, as well as of the annual Presidential Address.¹⁶ Both CFIs and district-level envoys are part of the presidential administration.

Putin’s federal reform resulted in a major decrease of the power of the governors and, in particular, in the emancipation of the federal agencies’ branches in the region from any impact of the governors. As a result, the CFI became a key actor coordinating the work of the federal agencies in the region, in

¹¹ Jerry Hough, *The Soviet Prefects: The Local Party Organs in Industrial Decision-Making* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969): 5.

¹² Irina Busygina, “The president’s representatives: Problems of establishing and prospects for developing an institution”, *Russian Politics and Law* 35, no. 1 (1997): 15–29; William Clark, “Presidential prefects in the Russian provinces: Yeltsin’s regional cadres policy”, in: Graeme Gill, ed. *Elites and Leadership in Russian Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 1998): 24–51; Eugene Huskey, *Presidential Power in Russia* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016): 183–211.

¹³ Cameron Ross, “Putin’s federal reforms and the consolidation of federalism in Russia: One step forward, two steps back!”, *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 36, no. 1 (2003): 29–47.

¹⁴ Nikolay Petrov, “Seven faces of Putin’s Russia: Federal districts as the new level of state territorial composition”, *Security Dialogue* 33, no. 1 (2002): 73–91.

¹⁵ <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/150949> (accessed 27 March 2018).

¹⁶ A. Gadzhiev and K. Cherkasov, “Nekotorye aspekty administrativno-pravovogo statusa glavnykh federal’nykh inspektorov apparatov polnomochnykh predstaviteley prezidenta Rossiyskoi Federacii v federal’nykh okrugakh”, *Sovremennoe Pravo*, no. 1 (2013): 11–14.

particular in the sphere of security and law enforcement. Moreover, CFIs engaged in the collection of information on political developments and regional elites, and prepared suggestions for appointments made by the president. The existing qualitative research documents that the appointments of the CFIs were driven by multiple factors: the federal government carefully balanced inspectors with *siloviki* and non-*siloviki* background, as well as inspectors with local origin and coming from Moscow.¹⁷ [page 244]

CFIs are appointed to all regions of Russia (though in some cases the same person is a CFI responsible for several regions).¹⁸ The appointment decision on the CFI is made by the district-level envoys, but since the latter belong to the presidential administration, their decisions are also not independent and subordinated to the administration's policies. Since mid-first decade of the 2000s, CFIs have been subject to regular rotation from region to region to avoid the formation of close ties between the CFIs and the regional administrations.¹⁹

In 2004, Putin abolished the direct elections of the regional governors by the regional population and replaced them by a *de facto* appointment from Moscow. As a result, regional governors ceased to be independent actors representing regional elites and gradually turned into part of the federal hierarchy, representing federal interests in the regions. The process of transformation did not happen overnight: in the first years after the introduction of the gubernatorial appointments, the federal center mostly reappointed incumbent regional leaders; elected governors could have served until the end of their term anyway. However, by the end of the first decade of the 2000s, the Kremlin became more assertive in its appointment policies, removing the most influential governors of the previous cohort from office.²⁰ As a result of this transformation, the importance of the CFIs in the eyes of the center diminished, as the governors themselves were now directly subordinated to the federal center.²¹

In 2005, the Framework Regulation (*Tipovoe Polozhenie*) of the office of the CFI was passed at the federal level, which was then implemented in all federal districts (before that, no standardized federal-level regulation of the CFIs existed). The Regulation clearly states that the CFIs' main function is that of control over decision-making of the regional government and over the implementation [page 245] of federal law; in this capacity, the CFI has to report to the district-level envoy (as before), but also to the Monitoring Department (*Kontrol'noe Upravlenie*) of the presidential administration in Moscow. This was part of an effort to create a so-called unified system of presidential control that would integrate and better coordinate the monitoring department of the presidential administration and the district envoys and CFIs. By the mid-first decade of the 2000s, the number of agencies engaged in various forms of monitoring and control activities in Russia increased substantially.²² By integrating both the CFI into the presidential monitoring hierarchy and the governors into the presidential power

¹⁷ Elena Chebankova, "The limitations of central authority in the regions and the implications for the evolution of Russia's federal system", *Europe-Asia Studies* 57, no. 7 (2005): 933–949; Nikolay Petrov, "Siloviki in Russian regions: new dogs, old tricks", *Journal of Power Institutions in Post-Socialist Societies*, no. 2 (2005), <https://pipss.revues.org/331>.

¹⁸ In Krasnodar krai, in addition to the CFI for the entire region, a CFI was also appointed for Sochi, an important resort frequented by the Russian president. In the neighboring Stavropol krai, part of the territory (resort city Kavminvody) was under supervision of the CFI for Kabardino-Balkariya.

¹⁹ Nikolay Petrov, "Who is running Russia's regions?", in Vadim Kononenko and Arkady Moshes, eds. *Russia as a Network State* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011): 105.

²⁰ Helge Blakkisrud, "Medvedev's new governors", *Europe-Asia Studies* 63, no. 3 (2011): 367–395; Gulnaz Sharafutdinova, "Subnational governance in Russia: How Putin changed the contract with his agents and the problems it created for Medvedev", *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 40, no. 4 (2009): 672–696.

²¹ Nikolay Petrov, "The excessive role of a weak Russian State", in Maria Lipman and Nikolay Petrov, eds., *Russia in 2020: Scenarios for the Future* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2011): 303–328.

²² On the topic of controlling agencies in Russia see A. Tarasov, *Gosudarstvennyi kontrol' v Rossii* (Moscow: Kontinent, 2008).

vertical more generally, the Kremlin attempted also to increase its clout over other monitoring hierarchies. Thus, the CFIs themselves became subject to more control from the federal level, potentially limiting their ability to engage in rent-seeking.

One can see that the CFIs possess two characteristics advantageous for our study. The first is their very specific task: while other segments of the Russian control bureaucracy also have to monitor the governors, they are endowed with other responsibilities (typically linked to law enforcement in general), which could affect the decision-making of the center. Thus, it is easier to formulate what the goals of the center with respect to the appointment of the CFIs should be. Second, due to the fact that not all CFIs are of *siloviki* background, we obtain the necessary variation for our identification strategy. This allows us to clearly identify the sub-group of CFIs, who should be more important for the center in terms of control, but who potentially have stronger leverage in terms of rent access.

3 Theoretical Considerations

3.1 Sub-national Regimes in Russia

The goal of our paper is, as mentioned, to investigate under which conditions the federal government decided to appoint a *silovik* to a particular region as a CFI, and how the characteristics of the sub-national political regime influenced these decisions. Before we proceed to developing our hypotheses, we need to briefly discuss the nature of the variation of regimes across Russian regions. It would certainly be naive to expect some Russian regions to have consolidated democratic regimes with well-established checks and balances and full-scale rule of law like those we find in Western democracies. Furthermore, between [page 246] 2005 and 2012, the head of the regional administration was not elected by the regional population. It has therefore been common for the literature to, on the one hand, recognize the existence of the differences of political regimes, but, on the other, to avoid calling even the most open of them “democracies”.²³

Probably, the most accurate way to describe the differences between subnational regimes in Russia under Putin would be to do so in terms of political competition and pluralism. In some regions, governors have full control over regional politics. The political elites are consolidated and loyal to the governors; economic actors are under control of the incumbent; media operate within narrow boundaries set by the regional administration. In other regions, however, political elites are fragmented and compete for control over the region. Elite factions have certain control over economic assets and enjoy support from different actors of the federal elite. Elections are more competitive, representing the struggles between factions, and there is more space for civil activism and media freedom. As a result, political decision-making in these regions has to take the interests of various factions into account, which also have support in the regional bureaucracy and can sabotage decisions particularly threatening to them. This difference could influence the decisions of the federal government concerning the appointment of the CFIs, which will be the focus of our study.

3.2 Strategic Considerations of the Center: The Logic of Control

Under which conditions does the federal government believe its control over a region is jeopardized? On the one hand, the center could be interested in closely monitoring more *competitive* regions. In this case, *first*, an important concern of the center is that competition of factions could destabilize the political situation in the region, which could spill over to other territories of Russia. *Second*, the

²³ Petr Panov and Cameron Ross, “Patterns of electoral contestation in Russian regional assemblies: Between competitive and hegemonic authoritarianism”, *Demokratizatsiya* 21, no. 3 (2013): 369–400; Inga Saikkonen, “Variation in subnational electoral authoritarianism: Evidence from the Russian Federation”, *Democratization* 23, no. 3 (2016): 437–458.

existence of a higher level of political competition at the sub-national level could lead the local population to questioning the consolidated authoritarian rule at the federal level. It is not always the case that the center wants to undermine the isles of democracy at the sub-national level: there are even cases of autocracies which consciously promote subnational democratization (like China).²⁴ However, while allowing some level of political [page 247] pluralism, the central government remains interested in safeguarding full control over the region in case of an emergency. *Third*, competitive sub-national politics could limit the ability of the governors to implement the directives of the federal center, since the governors have to seek support of various factions for pursuing a particular policy. This is of course an undesirable outcome for the center.

At the same time, regions with a *low* level of political competition could also pose a problem for the federal center. While the sub-national authoritarianisms of the 1990s contributed to the development of the national authoritarianism of the 2000s in Russia²⁵ and many sub-national autocracies were well integrated into the federal “power vertical,”²⁶ the survival of old powerful governors with particularly strong control over the region should have at least remained a reason of concern for the federal center, especially given that in the 1990s many of these governors were among the most pronounced opponents of the Kremlin fighting for larger autonomy of their territories.²⁷ It is plausible to claim that, in the eyes of the federal government, these governors were capable of again reviving the old autonomist sentiment or at least were less inclined to execute any federal directive without further ado. In fact, even in the first decade of the 2000s, the old “regional barons” occasionally allowed themselves to criticize the federal administration, though in an unsystematic fashion.²⁸ Hence, more extensive monitoring of these governors was also necessary.

If both most and least competitive regions are a problem for the center, we should expect a lower extent of monitoring in regions with an *intermediate* degree of competitiveness. On the one hand, strong media and civil society the federal government could be concerned about are absent. On the other hand, their governors also do not have access to the powerful political machines potentially threatening federal control.

As already mentioned, it is plausible to argue that the federal government would be interested in appointing *siloviki* to the regions where it is particularly uneasy about a potential loss of control. *First*, this would fit the apparent perception of the Putin regime that bureaucrats with a background in the security [page 248] services, military or similar agencies exhibit superior abilities for governing potentially problematic territories due to their impartiality and lack of links to the local elite groups.²⁹ *Second*, *siloviki* are likely to be perceived as more loyal and willing to follow orders regardless of the

²⁴ Kevin O’Brien and Lianjiang Li, “Accommodating ‘democracy’ in a one-party state: Introducing village elections in China”, *China Quarterly* 162 (2000): 465–489.

²⁵ Grigorii Golosov, “The regional roots of electoral authoritarianism in Russia”, *Europe-Asia Studies* 63, no. 4 (2011): 623–639.

²⁶ Valentin Mikhailov, “Authoritarian regimes of Russia and Tatarstan: Coexistence and subjection”, *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 26, no. 4 (2010): 471–493.

²⁷ On the contradictions between the old regional and the new federal autocracy see Anastassia Obydenkova, “A triangle of Russian federalism: Democratization, (de-)centralization and local politics”, *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 41, no. 4 (2011): 734–741.

²⁸ E.g. <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/251379>;

http://businesspress.ru/newspaper/article_mld_40_ald_451118.html (accessed 27 March 2018).

²⁹ The most recent example seems to be the appointment of Vladimir Vasil’ev as the head of Dagestan in late 2017. Vasil’ev has a substantial background in the Ministry of the Interior, where he served thirty years of his life (followed by fifteen years in the State Duma): his appointment was followed by a massive anti-corruption campaign in Dagestan in early 2018.

local situation, given their past professional background.³⁰ The personal past of Putin in the KGB could potentially be yet another factor increasing his trust in the ability and loyalty of the *siloviki*.³¹

3.3 Self-selection of Bureaucrats: The Logic of Rent-seeking

How should the outcome look like if it is driven by the self-selection of bureaucrats? In the 2000s, *siloviki* corporations developed into powerful interest groups in Russia, occasionally having a major impact on political decisionmaking,³² including appointments. From this perspective, probably, an important aspect we have to take into account is the potential of the position for rent-seeking. It appears plausible that, *ceteris paribus*, *siloviki* will attempt to move to regions, which have higher rent-seeking opportunities.

The case of Petr Kapishnikov is a good example of how the CFI position is used for rent-seeking by a *silovik*. Kapishnikov was born in 1953 in the Orenburg *oblast*. Between 1972 and 1993 he served in the Soviet and later Russian military, among others in the Afghanistan war. In the 1990s, he worked in the regional administration of Orenburg and was appointed CFI in Orenburg in 2000. [page 249] In 2007–2014, he was CFI in Bashkortostan, appointed to this position by federal district envoy Grigorii Rapota, himself a former Foreign Intelligence official. Despite having been a government official for decades, Kapishnikov managed to build a substantial family business in Orenburg specializing in real estate, fuel, metal, engineering and air transport operations. During his time in Bashkortostan, evidence has appeared that the Yukon group registered on the name of Kapishnikov's son Dmitrii made inroads into the oil and oil refining business of the region. In the course of the Panama leaks in 2016, it emerged that Dmitrii Kapishnikov owned several offshores on the British Virgin Islands.³³

The specific mechanism through which the *siloviki* obtain access to attractive regions could differ from case to case. We certainly do not expect the federal bureaucrats to have a free choice regarding their career options out of several regions with different rent-seeking potential: it would be naïve to expect that the central government is content with officials accepting one appointment and refusing the other. There are two instruments bureaucrats could use to get the more attractive position. *First*, they could rely on the power of the informal groups of elites they belong to.³⁴ The more powerful members of these groups are likely to be interested to move their allies to regions with larger rent-seeking potential – as a reward for loyalty and as a way to establish control over the rents, which could benefit the entire group. Since the Soviet era, careers of bureaucrats in Russia have been strongly influenced by clientelistic ties to a strong patron. More powerful members of the elite would then monitor the

³⁰ Andrei Pertsev “Zhizn’ po ustavu. Zachem Kreml’ stavit gubernatorami silovikov”, <https://carnegie.ru/commentary/64210>, 2016 (accessed 27 March 2018).

³¹ We do not claim that this trust is rooted in real facts: it is possible that the impartiality and loyalty of *siloviki* is over-estimated and that the members of this group have a set of other disadvantages (e.g., lack of experience in the civil hierarchy). These disadvantages have repeatedly revealed themselves in the case of *siloviki* governors, but the federal center still continues to appoint *siloviki* to this position, driven by its perceptions rather than by actual experience. See Natalia Zubarevich, “The burden of the regions: What has changed in ten years?”, *Russian Politics and Law* 55, no. 2 (2017): 61–76.

³² See Andrei Soldatov and Michael Rochlitz, “The *siloviki* in Russian politics”, in: Daniel Treisman, ed., *The New Autocracy: Information, Politics, and Policy in Putin’s Russia* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2017): 83–108. For a detailed discussion of the nature of the group of *siloviki*, which can be characterized as cohort, clan or corporation see: Taylor, *State Building in Putin’s Russia*. For us, it suffices to conclude that *siloviki* have an influence on the governmental decisions, which is beyond question.

³³ <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2600184>; <https://revinform.livejournal.com/549355.html>; <http://echo-oren.ru/2016/05/12/6846> (accessed 31 March 2018).

³⁴ On the role of patronage in the Russian bureaucracy see: Vladimir Gimpelson, Vladimir Magun and Robert Brym, “Hiring and promoting young civil servants: Weberian ideals versus Russian reality”, in Don Rowney and Eugene Huskey, eds. *Russian Bureaucracy and the State* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009): 231–252.

openings (or even orchestrate those by removing CFIs who do not belong to their group) and then use their lobbying potential to ensure that their candidates are appointed to the position – possibly, in exchange for favors to other groups. Given the importance of the *siloviki* in the Russian political system, it is plausible to argue that they would be particularly successful in terms of this competition for positions.

Second, bureaucrats could secure attractive appointments by accumulating expertise about particular regions, which would make them more attractive candidates in the eyes of the center if an opening becomes available. One can argue that potential CFIs have sufficient information about the rent-seeking potential of the region, including the main variable of our study (political **[page 250]** competitiveness). The Russian regions we study are relatively large (about 60% of the regions have a population of more than one million people, and only the distant Chukotka *okrug* has less than 100,000 people). But more importantly, bureaucrats could use their informal networks to obtain information about individual regions; this would help them to both assess their rent-seeking potential (i.e., whether an appointment there is “worth the effort”) and to collect information necessary to signal to the government their competence and thus to secure the appointment. Potential CFI candidates can then trace possible openings and then invest in acquiring region-specific knowledge at least to the level sufficient to convince the federal government to appoint them to these regions. Being part of the *siloviki* community could provide informational advantages in acquiring knowledge about potential openings and collecting region-specific information. The development of the cadre reserve system as a recruitment pool for higher-ranking positions in Russia since the 2000s is also likely to favor *siloviki*, who, due to their better-structured career paths have higher chances to succeed in entering the cadre reserve system.³⁵

Rent-seeking is influenced by numerous factors, which we need to control for in the empirical analysis. But, most importantly, the sub-national political regime should also matter as a factor influencing rent-seeking potential. On the one hand, regions with highly consolidated autocratic rule offer relatively little space for rent-seeking to the CFIs. The rents in these regions are captured by the governor, who already established a mechanism of their allocation and redistribution and is unwilling to cease a large portion of these rents to the CFI. Attacking the governor in order to expropriate rents in this region is also more difficult, given the extent of consolidation of the regional elite.³⁶ On the other hand, however, very competitive regions also offer limited possibilities for rent-seeking. This is partly because of much higher openness of the media and a relatively strong civil society. Furthermore, in a competitive environment, fierce infighting for rents should lead to larger rent dissipation.³⁷ Hence, in terms of rent-seeking the regions with an intermediate level of political competition actually show more promise. There is no unambiguous control of the **[page 251]** incumbent over rents, but also no need to engage in costly rent-seeking contests and to deal with active media and civil society.

Note that the argument holds if one assumes that the CFIs have a sufficient degree of (*de facto*) autonomy in their action – not only from the point of view of their relations to the regional governments, but also from the point of view of how closely they themselves are monitored by the federal government itself. Paradoxically, although CFIs were created to monitor the regional governments, it does not automatically guarantee that the CFIs themselves are perfectly monitored by the center: principal-agent problems in the multilayered hierarchy of the Russian governance system

³⁵ Eugene Huskey, “Elite recruitment and state-society relations in technocratic authoritarian regimes: The Russian case”, *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 43, no. 4 (2010): 363–372.

³⁶ Alexander Libman, Andre Schultz and Thomas Graeber, “Tax return as a political statement”, *Review of Law and Economics* 12, no. 2 (2016): 377–445.

³⁷ Johann Graf Lambsdorff, “Corruption and rent-seeking”, *Public Choice* 113, no. 1–2 (2002): 97–125.

could give them some degree of autonomy (which can be used for extracting rents). If the central monitoring over the CFIs themselves is highly intensive, the rent-seeking opportunities also diminish.

We conclude that the prediction of the allocation of the *siloviki* to individual regions from the point of view of their self-selection into the most attractive rent-seeking locations is *the opposite* to the prediction we made while considering the federal logic of control. The top-down considerations should place *siloviki* in the most and the least competitive regions. The bottom-up considerations of self-selection should move them in the regions with an *intermediate* level of competitiveness. By observing the empirical pattern of appointments, we will be able to see whether self-selection or strategic considerations dominate the actual choices made by the federal center. We do not claim that the appointments are driven *either* by one logic or the other. Our argument is that one of the logics seems to be *relatively* more important so that the *statistical association* in our data fits this pattern: but there will be of course individual cases fitting the other logic as well.

4 Empirical Strategy

In order to test the theoretical conjectures of the paper, we have scrutinized the biographies of the CFIs with regard to their background in the security services and the military. The biographies were compiled and coded on the basis of the Labyrinth.ru and Integrum World Wide data bases as well as openly accessible internet sources for those rare cases when no information on presidential representatives and chief federal inspectors was available in the data bases. We coded officials as *siloviki* with a background in the following agencies: for the *Soviet Union*: KGB, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Defense, Office of the Prosecutor; for the *Russian Federation*: Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry [page 252] of Justice, Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Civil Protection and Emergency Situations, Office of the Prosecutor, Federal Security Service (FSB), Border Service of the Federal Security Service, Federal Tax Police, Federal Drug Control Service. Other authorities such as the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) or the Federal Guards Service (FSO) did not appear in the sample, thus they are not further listed here.³⁸

Our dataset covers the period of 2000–2012 (but we also collected data on presidential envoys of the 1990s). Supplementary Material (SM) A1³⁹ demonstrates that the share of *siloviki* among the presidential envoys before 2000 and among the CFIs after that showed some tendency towards an increase already in the late 1990s; after 2000, it jumped and continued to grow almost until 2008, with a certain decrease after that. Thus, Putin’s administration indeed relied on the *siloviki* to a substantial extent; however, the role of *siloviki* went down somewhat after the last powerful governors of the 1990s had to leave their offices by the end of the first decade of the 2000s. At the same time, even in 2008, more than 40% of the CFIs did not have a *siloviki* background. It is compelling to suggest that this variation is due to the variation in the regional characteristics. The maps in the SM A3 show that the spatial allocation of *silovik* CFIs across the territory of Russia is also highly diverse.

The main explanatory variable of the paper is the index of democratization of sub-national political regimes developed by Nikolay Petrov and Alexey Titkov. The index is, as of now, the standard tool in

³⁸ Note that there is no consensus about which organizations should be counted as *siloviki*. However, those included in our coding scheme are usually also considered as *siloviki* in the relevant literature. The only exception is the Ministry of Justice which we include as a whole as we follow Volkov’s conceptualization of *siloviki* as “organizations that held the coercive resources of the state and were responsible for the maintenance of the public monopoly of violence”. See Vadim Volkov, “The Russian mafia: Rise and extinction”, in: Letizia Paoli ed. *Oxford Handbook of Organized Crime* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014): 170. Bettina Renz (2005) includes it because the subordinate *fsin* is responsible for the penitentiary system. By using the broader definition of Volkov it appears to be justified to include the Ministry of Justice as a whole.

³⁹ URL: <https://figshare.com/s/3843d05b7ee2985f2311>

the research on sub-national politics in Russia. It is an expert-opinion score computed as an average of ten sub-indicators, each evaluated using a five-point scale. These indicators include both traditional aspects of democracy (extent of competitiveness of the regional politics, freedom of elections, autonomy of the media, pluralism of the elites, openness of regional politics etc.) and components more typical [page 253] for the research on sub-national politics (autonomy of municipalities in individual regions).⁴⁰

Our conjectures suggest a non-linear relation between the political regimes and the appointment of *siloviki*. Hence, in our empirical analysis, we regress the likelihood of appointment of the *silovik* CFI on the Petrov/Titkov score and the square of this term. The strategic considerations and the logic of control of the central government implies that we should observe a non-linear U-shaped relation between the score of Petrov/Titkov and the likelihood of a *silovik* being appointed CFI. If the CFI appointments are to a larger extent driven by self-selection, we should observe an inverse U-shaped relation.

We use two approaches to construct the data and the regressions. In the first approach, we fully utilize the fact that we have information on the CFI for each particular year and estimate a panel data specification with two-way fixed effects, where the dependent variable is a dummy for regions, which had a *silovik* CFI in a particular year t . In this case, as the explanatory variable, we use average Petrov/Titkov score for the year t and four years preceding it ($t-1$, ..., $t-4$). This is due to both data availability and also our willingness to avoid possible reverse causality problems: we look at how lagged regional political regime values affected the likelihood of a *silovik* becoming a CFI in this region. The regressions are run for the period of 2003–2010, for which the Petrov/ Titkov scores are available. We estimate a linear probability model, since it makes it easier to interpret the non-linear term among the covariates and to incorporate fixed effects; however, because our dependent variable is a dummy, we also run conditional fixed-effects logit estimator (with year dummies). In the last case we had to drop all regions, where no variation was present as to whether a *silovik* or not was the CFI; otherwise the conditional fixed-effects logit cannot be estimated.

Using panel data has a substantial advantage in terms of solving the problem of unobserved heterogeneity, i.e., possible other factors influencing appointments to particular regions. But it also constrains us in our ability to include in the regressions time-invariant covariates, which can reveal further details on the logic of appointment of the CFIs. In addition, the Petrov/Titkov index is relatively persistent over time, which could cause problems for the fixed effects estimators (driven by small changes in the index, i.e., essentially, by the noise in the measurement). Hence, we also use a second approach: we compute the share of years a region was run by *siloviki* CFIs in 2000–2012 and construct a cross-section of regions, regressing this score on the Petrov/Titkov [page 254] score for the first decade of the 2000s, as well as its squared term and a large set of controls. We estimate these regressions (which we refer to as *averaged cross-sections* in what follows) using OLS. We also look at cross-sectional regressions for each individual year included in our dataset; the results are discussed in the SM A6; this analysis is helpful to show us how the autonomy of the CFIs themselves matters for the extent to which self-selection of *siloviki* into lucrative positions happens.

The regressions cover all Russian regions with a number of standard exceptions: Chechnya, as well as the autonomous *okrugs*. Thus, we analyze 79 regions. We use a large array of control variables to isolate the effect of subnational political regime and at the same time to investigate possible other correlates of appointment of *siloviki* in Russian regions (see SM A4).

⁴⁰ Nikolay Petrov and Alexey Titkov, Indeks demokraticnosti Tsentra Karnegi: Desyat' let v stroyu (Moscow: Moscow Carnegie Center, 2013).

5 Results

Table 1 reports the results for the panel data specifications. In the regression (1), we control for income per capita, population and urbanization; in the regression (2), we replace income per capita by the regional GDP (both variables are highly correlated, we cannot use them in a single regression); in the regression (3), in addition, we drop population, to use only GDP as a proxy of the regional size. Regressions (4) – (6) replicate the linear probability models with two-way fixed effects using conditional fixed-effects logit. We find that the squared term of the Petrov/Titkov score has a negative and significant coefficient; for the linear term the coefficient is positive and significant. For the linear probability model, where the coefficients represent the marginal effects of the variables, we have computed the level of Petrov/Titkov score, for which the likelihood of having a *silovik* as CFI is the highest. It is roughly equal to 26, which is well within the set of actually observed values of the score and roughly falls in the second quartile of the distribution (see SM A2). Thus, we find an inverse U-shaped relation between the Petrov/Titkov score and the likelihood that a *silovik* is appointed as CFI. This fits our hypothesis that *siloviki* self-select in the most attractive regions.

Table 1. [separately on page 256] Effects of sub-national political regimes on the origin of CFIs, panel data, 2003-2010

	(1) Linear probability model	(2) Linear probability model	(3) Linear probability model	(4) Conditional logit	(5) Conditional logit	(6) Conditional logit
Income per capita	0.000 (0.000)			0.000 (0.000)		
Population	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)		-0.003 (0.005)	-0.003 (0.005)	
Urbanization	0.041 (0.025)	0.041 (0.025)	0.041 (0.025)	0.336** (0.160)	0.334** (0.160)	0.333** (0.161)
GDP		0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)		0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
Petrov / Titkov	0.107* (0.054)	0.105* (0.054)	0.105* (0.054)	1.633** (0.766)	1.639** (0.766)	1.587** (0.751)
Petrov / Titkov squared	-0.002** (0.001)	-0.002** (0.001)	-0.002** (0.001)	-0.032** (0.013)	-0.032** (0.013)	-0.031** (0.013)
Constant	-3.226 (2.048)	-3.390* (1.968)	-3.451* (1.871)			
Observations	632	632	632	288	288	288
Number of groups	79	79	79	36	36	36
R-squared	0.040	0.040	0.039			

Note: ** significant at 1% level, * 5%, * 10%. For the linear probability model, robust standard errors applied. Within R-squared reported. All regressions estimated using two-way FE.

Table 2 reports the results for the averaged cross-sections. Again, we estimate several specifications with different combinations of controls to avoid multicollinearity. We also find a significant non-linear effect of the Petrov/ Titkov score on the share of years a *silovik* was the presidential CFI in the region. The maximum share is achieved for regions with a score of 26–34 depending on the specification, which again falls within range of actually observed data (in the second or the third quartiles). In addition, a number of other covariates seem [page 255] to be correlated with the presence of a *silovik* CFI in the region. The most robust effect is for the distance from Moscow: the closer the region is to Moscow, the more likely it is to be run by a *silovik*. This fits our prediction that the *siloviki* attempt to

avoid “exile” to distant regions. Furthermore, in ethnic regions *siloviki* are less frequent: this may be because, as mentioned, the federal government was careful in selecting CFIs with the necessary ethnic background for these regions.⁴¹ Regions with a higher share of acts contradicting the federal law in the 1990s, as expected, have a higher share of *siloviki* as well. For both panel data and averaged cross-sectional regressions, our results survive numerous robustness checks reported in the SM A5; we also discuss two alternative explanations of our findings, which, however, appear to be less likely given the specifics of the Russian case and our quantitative results.

Table 2. [separately on page 257] Effects of sub-national political regimes on the origin of CFIs, average cross-sectional data, OLS, 2000-2012

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Petrov / Titkov	0.126** (0.057)	0.135** (0.057)	0.130** (0.057)	0.130** (0.056)	0.106** (0.052)
Petrov / Titkov squared	-0.002** (0.001)	-0.002** (0.001)	-0.002** (0.001)	-0.002** (0.001)	-0.002** (0.001)
Average income per capita	0.000 (0.000)			0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
Average population	0.000 (0.000)	0.000** (0.000)		0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
Average urbanization	0.003 (0.005)	0.005 (0.004)	0.005 (0.005)	0.003 (0.005)	0.002 (0.004)
Share of ethnic Russians, 2010	-0.360* (0.205)	-0.383* (0.204)	-0.345 (0.216)	-0.418** (0.203)	
Education, 2010	-2.383 (1.525)	-1.702 (1.414)	-1.319 (1.486)	-2.637* (1.524)	-2.154 (1.518)
Distance from Moscow	-0.035** (0.015)	-0.031** (0.014)	-0.038*** (0.013)	-0.027* (0.014)	-0.045** (0.015)
Average GDP		-0.000* (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)		
Area				-0.165*** (0.047)	
Contradictions to federal law of the regional legislation in the 1990s					1.461* (0.753)
Constant	-0.709 (0.865)	-1.091 (0.905)	-1.026 (0.906)	-0.728 (0.852)	-0.744 (0.842)
Observations	79	79	79	79	79
R-squared	0.161	0.186	0.149	0.191	0.164

Note: robust standard errors in parentheses. *** significant at 1%, ** 5%, * 10%. Petrov / Titkov score for 2001–2011 used.

How large is the effect we look at in quantitative terms? To provide an intuition, we look at the average share of *siloviki* as CFIs in 2000–2012; we split the regions into five quantiles according to the average democracy level and look at how the average share of *siloviki* changes across these quantiles. For the

⁴¹ The result survives even if we exclude the Central Federal District, which is very close to Moscow and, for the lion’s share of the period we study, had Georgii Poltavchenko as the envoy, one of the most prominent examples of the *siloviki* in Russian politics.

first quantile (lowest level of democracy), the average share of *siloviki* as CFIs across all regions is 50%; in the second quantile, it is 49.5% and in the third it is 45.5%. In the fourth quantile, however, the average share jumps to 66.1%, while in the fifth quantile it again returns to 47%. This suggests a substantial increase of the share of *siloviki* in the “intermediate” regions from the point of view of the pluralism of sub-national regimes included in our data.

6 Conclusion

It remains to summarize our findings. Our goal was to understand whether the link between the appointment of bureaucrats of the presidential control hierarchy and the sub-national political regimes is primarily driven by the strategic considerations of the central government or by the self-selection of bureaucrats belonging to influential groups into the most lucrative positions. We find that the sub-national political regime indeed affects whether the CFI sent to a Russian region is a *silovik* or not. *Siloviki* are particularly likely to be found in regions with an intermediate score of democratization of sub-national politics: both regions with high and with low Petrov/Titkov score are characterized by a lower likelihood of a *silovik* appointment. This outcome seems to fit [page 258] the self-selection hypothesis rather than the strategic control considerations of the center.

While interpreting the results of the study, of course, we need to take into account, that in Russia the CFIs are not the only element of political control over regions. As mentioned, looking at the CFIs was advantageous in terms of the identification strategy (variation of the background of the CFIs) and clear-cut functions they have. However, the Russian government also controls regional bureaucrats through other agencies, which matter for keeping governors in check, too. Thus, possibly, the success of *siloviki* in lobbying for an attractive position could have been driven by the presence of other control agencies, which have been used to target more “troublesome” regions.

Even with this caveat, we believe that our results enrich the literature on appointments in non-democracies by drawing attention to the rent-seeking interests of the bureaucrats themselves who are able to manipulate the political agenda in their favor. We suggest that in order to understand non-democratic regimes, instead of focusing only on the rational policy choices of the incumbent (attempting to maximize his survival chances and power), one also needs to cover interests of numerous other bureaucrats, only imperfectly controlled by the incumbent and pursuing their own interests (which may or may not contribute to regime survival). These interests could turn out to be what determines political decisions and, ultimately, explains the performance of authoritarian regimes. [page 259]