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**Patronal Politics and Rotation of the Governor's Corps in Contemporary  
Russia: Factors of Dismissals and Reappointments (2005–2021)**

SUMMARY OF THE DISSERTATION'S THESIS  
for the purpose of obtaining academic degree Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science

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## Statement of a scientific problem

The abolition of gubernatorial elections in 2004 changed the accountability of Russian regional heads - now their stability began to depend more on the federal authorities, rather than on electoral support. Moreover, the mechanism of forming the gubernatorial corps has changed radically. If previously regional heads were replaced through electoral procedures, now the reappointment and resignation of governors have become the complete prerogative of the federal center. Accordingly, the assessment of the governor's effectiveness began to depend not on the preferences and opinions of voters, but on central government's criteria. The first list of such criteria was approved by presidential decree in 2007 and included exclusively socio-economic parameters. Subsequently, performance criteria changed in 2010 and 2012 but were always based on socio-economic characteristics.

However, studies of personnel rotations during the period of appointment of governors (2005-2012) show the high importance of the loyalty factor: the most stable were those heads of regions who were able to ensure good results for the "party in power" in federal elections<sup>1</sup>, while social-economic efficiency was not a significant factor in gubernatorial rotations<sup>2</sup>. This fits into the logic of the theory of "machine politics" (*machine politics*), where the stability of the political regime depends on the reproduction of electoral support for the "United Russia"<sup>3</sup>.

However, after the return of direct elections of regional heads in 2012, several studies indicate a lack of empirical evidence that electoral logic remains significant as a factor in gubernatorial rotations between 2013 and 2015<sup>4</sup>. Moreover, during the

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<sup>1</sup> Reuter O. J. The politics of dominant party formation: United Russia and Russia's governors // *Europe-Asia Studies*. – 2010. – Vol. 62. – №. 2. – P. 293-327; Reuter O. J., Robertson G. B. Subnational appointments in authoritarian regimes: Evidence from Russian gubernatorial appointments // *The Journal of Politics*. – 2012. – Vol. 74. – N. 4. – P. 1023-1037.

<sup>2</sup> Reuter O. J., Robertson G. B. Subnational appointments in authoritarian regimes: Evidence from Russian gubernatorial appointments // *The Journal of Politics*. – 2012. – Vol. 74. – N. 4. – P. 1023-1037; Rochlitz M. et al. Performance incentives and economic growth: regional officials in Russia and China // *Eurasian Geography and Economics*. – 2015. – Vol. 56. – N. 4. – P. 421-445.

<sup>3</sup> Гельман В. Я. Динамика субнационального авторитаризма (Россия в сравнительной перспективе) // *Общественные науки и современность*. – 2009. – №. 3. – С. 50-63.

<sup>4</sup> Golosov G. V., Tkacheva T. Let my people run: Pre-election resignations of Russia's governors, 2013–2015 // *Problems of Post-Communism*. – 2018. – Vol. 65. – N. 4. – P. 243-252; Мухаметов Р. С. Кремль и переизбрание губернаторов: факторы поддержки // *Журнал политической философии и социологии политики «Полития. Анализ. Хроника. Прогноз»*. – 2020. – №. 4 (99). – С. 137-152.

presidency of Dmitry Medvedev, many regional heads resigned, who were symbols of the most well-functioning “political machines” that ensured consistently high results of “United Russia” in their regions: M. Shaimiev in Tatarstan, M. Rakhimov in Bashkiria, K. Ilyumzhinov in Kalmykia, etc. Accordingly, electoral efficiency alone could not be considered as a sufficient factor to explain the entire list of rotations of regional heads.

Moreover, when studying the return period of gubernatorial elections, researchers come to different conclusions. For example, in a study by R. Mukhametov, the insignificance of electoral variables was revealed in contrast to the indicator of real income, the growth of which has a positive effect on the likelihood of retaining the regionals’ head post<sup>5</sup>. The work of R. Turovsky and E. Luizidis also revealed the absence of a stable influence of electoral variables on gubernatorial rotations. At the same time, economic indicators retain their influence on the resignation of regional heads cyclically - during periods of crises, the poverty indicator is important for reappointment, and during periods of growth – the amount of investment<sup>6</sup>.

A study of a wider sample of gubernatorial resignations (from 2005 to 2020) reveals that the electoral predictors of rotation retain the highest significance<sup>7</sup>. At the same time, in the indicated works of R.F. Turovsky, the importance of informal connections between governors and the federal political elite is noted, which increased significantly after 2016, when the representation of non-local governors began to rapidly expand - by 2020, for the first time in the history of modern Russia, their number exceeded number of local governors. Also during this period, the term “technocratic governors” and then “new wave governors” came into use in political journalism to emphasize the meritocratic nature of the regional heads’ rotation. However, so far, the hypothesis about the influence of patronage on the resignations of governors has not been systematically studied and tested, which is largely due to

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<sup>5</sup> Мухаметов Р. С. Указ. соч.

<sup>6</sup> Туровский Р. Ф., Луизидис Е.М. Факторы губернаторских отставок в России // Polis: Journal of Political Studies. – 2022. – №. 4. – С. 161-178.

<sup>7</sup> Reuter O. J., Turovsky R. Vote mobilization, economic performance and gubernatorial appointments in Russia // Russian Politics. – 2021. – Vol. 7. – №. 2. – P. 183-209.

the difficulty of operationalizing the informal elite connections of regional heads. Moreover, in a larger sample of cases (since 2005), the electoral mobilization, socioeconomic efficiency, and patronage hypotheses were not tested simultaneously in regression models.

Thus, the **research problem** is determined by the lack of theoretical understanding and empirical testing of the nature of the influence of patronage in conjunction with electoral and socio-economic factors on the stability of the heads of Russian regions

**Research question:** what is the relationship between patronage factors, socio-economic and electoral efficiency in the process of rotation of regional heads?

**Purpose of the study:** to determine the significance of patronage as a reflection of the biographical connections of federal and regional political actors in the process of rotation of heads of Russian regions in the period from 2005 to 2021. To achieve the goal, the following **tasks are expected to be completed:**

1. To substantiate the heuristic potential of studying Russian politics and federal relations from the point of view of the neopatrimonialism theory and the concept of patronal politics;
2. Explore patterns of regional heads' rotation during the period of appointments (2005-2011) and after the return of direct elections of governors (since 2012);
3. Prepare a network analysis database that will include connections between governors and federal actors for each sample year of observation (2005-2021);
4. To operationalize the category of "patronage" taking into account the specifics of Russian federalism and the practice of gubernatorial rotations;
5. Based on regression analysis, determine the level of influence of patronage on the stability of governors, electoral, as well as socio-economic factors of resignations and reappointments of regional heads of the Russian Federation.

### **Literature review**

The study of rotation's factors of the gubernatorial corps can be divided into two key areas of research. The first direction of research is devoted to describing the

patterns of rotation of regional heads and various channels of their recruitment, with a special emphasis on the biographical analysis of the professional background of the regional leaders. It allows to take into account the significance of informal connections between the federal elite and regional authorities.

In such works, in the first years after the abolition of direct gubernatorial elections, researchers did not record significant rotation but emphasized the change in the accountability of regional heads in favour of the federal center<sup>8</sup>, the growing dependence of regional leaders on the “United Russia”<sup>9</sup> and the shift in the functionality of the governor towards the “manager”<sup>10</sup>. The abolition of direct elections at first did not lead to a sharp rotation of governors due to the lack of the necessary “cadre bench” in the Kremlin to recruit new regional heads<sup>11</sup>. Often local elites succeeded in leaving their successor as head of the region<sup>12</sup>.

The first significant wave of regional heads’ rotation took place during the presidency of Dmitry Medvedev, when a significant part of the “heavyweight” governors resigned<sup>13</sup>. As the rotation of governors increased, an increase in their dependence on federal elite groups<sup>14</sup> and an expansion in the representation of non-local governors was recorded<sup>15</sup>. This increased the importance of clientelism and support for federal elites during the rotation of regional heads<sup>16</sup>.

The return of gubernatorial elections did not become a factor in at least a partial restoration of the autonomy of gubernatorial power. The introduction of a

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<sup>8</sup> Лапина Н. «Центр-регионы» в постсоветской России: история, механизмы взаимодействия, сценарии будущего // Политическая экспертиза: ПОЛИТЭКС. – 2006. – Т. 2. – №. 2. – С. 85-98.

<sup>9</sup> Соколова Т. В. Феномен губернаторской власти в современных российских политических процессах: федеральный и региональный уровни // Вестник Пермского университета. Серия: История. – 2007. – №. 3 (8). – С. 168-173.

<sup>10</sup> Старкова М. А. Механизмы и источники рекрутирования глав российских регионов // Вестник Пермского университета. Серия: История и Политология. – 2009. – №. 1. – С. 15-23.

<sup>11</sup> Туровский Р. Ф. Практики назначения губернаторов: инерция и радикализм в политике центра // Журнал политической философии и социологии политики «Полития. Анализ. Хроника. Прогноз». – 2009. – №. 2. – С. 72-89.

<sup>12</sup> Гуляева А. Г. Институт преемника в современной России: Региональный аспект // Вестник Пермского университета. Серия: Политология. – 2011. – №. 4. – С. 43-59.

<sup>13</sup> Реутов Е. В. «Назначение» губернаторов в России: итоги эксперимента // *Via in tempore*. История. Политология. – 2012. – Т. 23. – №. 13 (132). – С. 174-180.

<sup>14</sup> Ортунг Р. Отношения между Центром и периферией // *Pro et contra*. – 2010. – Т. 14. – №. 4-5. – С. 80-95.

<sup>15</sup> Подвинцев О.Б. Губернаторы-«варяги» и региональные политические элиты в современной России: условия и тенденции взаимодействия // Политическая экспертиза: ПОЛИТЭКС. – 2009. – Т. 5. – №. 2. – С. 56-71.

<sup>16</sup> Туровский Р. Ф. Перспективы трансформации управленческих элит в субъектах РФ // Вестник Московского университета. Серия 12. Политические науки. – 2010. – №. 5. – С. 37-44.

“municipal filter” in the elections of regional heads limits real electoral competition<sup>17</sup>. The appointment of non-locals to gubernatorial positions has become the dominant trend in the Kremlin’s personnel policy<sup>18</sup>. As a result, by 2021 there are only 10 subjects of the Russian Federation left where non-locals have never headed the region - and they are appointed least often in the national republics<sup>19</sup>. Biographical analysis indicates some rejuvenation of regional heads and an expansion in the number of governors with management and economic education<sup>20</sup>, as well as experience in federal structures<sup>21</sup>.

However, to obtain more stable results indicating the factors of gubernatorial rotations, researchers resort to some variations of regression analysis models. As a rule, their authors focus on studying the influence of two key factors of rotation – electoral and socio-economic. This correlates with a body of scientific literature on the role of the institution of elections in the stability of political regimes, where the ability to ensure high results of the dominant party is one of the key criteria for political survival. At the same time, the set of socio-economic predictors varies significantly depending on which indicators of economic development are considered by the authors to be most related to the quality of regional governance. Some studies use expert assessments to measure the level of informal support for governors from federal elites. However, often authors only postulate the need to test the influence of governors’ patronage on their political stability, without including the corresponding predictors in regression models due to the difficulties of operationalizing informal influence.

An empirical study of the Russian governors’ rotation factors during the absence of direct elections (2005-2011) indicated the secondary importance of

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<sup>17</sup> Политическое развитие России. 2014-2016. М., 2016.

Note: N.V. Petrov is included in the list of media outlets performing the functions of a foreign agent.

<sup>18</sup> Кынев А. В. Феномен губернаторов-«варягов» как индикатор рецентрализации (опыт 1991-2018 гг.) // Журнал политической философии и социологии политики «Полития. Анализ. Хроника. Прогноз». – 2019. – №. 2 (93). – С. 125-150.

<sup>19</sup> Панов П. В. «Свои и чужие»: губернаторы-«варяги» в кроссрегиональном измерении // Вестник Пермского федерального исследовательского центра. – 2022. – № 2. – С. 86–98.

<sup>20</sup> Быстрова А. С. Отставки и выборы 2018 г.: обновление губернаторского корпуса, бассейн рекрутирования и карьеры новых персонажей // Власть и элиты. – 2018. – Т. 5. – С. 331-359.

<sup>21</sup> Флягин А. М. Как изменился портрет российского губернатора: анализ биографий глав регионов. 1991-2019 гг // Вестник Пермского университета. Серия: Политология. – 2020. – Т. 14. – №. 1. – С. 29-39.

economic efficiency as a predictor of reappointment. Indicators of economic development turned out to be insignificant in terms of influence on the reappointment of governors, while the stability of governors directly depended on the ability to ensure good results for «United Russia» in federal elections<sup>22</sup>. The results obtained rather refer to the body of literature on the importance of the electoral institution for the stability of non-democratic regimes, which are well studied in the works of J. Gandhi<sup>23</sup>, B. Magaloni<sup>24</sup>, B. Geddes<sup>25</sup>, E. Last-Okar<sup>26</sup>, as well as to the concept of “machine politics”, which emphasizes the special importance of reproducing subnational electoral stability<sup>27</sup>. This conclusion was confirmed in a comparative study by Michael Rochlitz, who found that economic growth is the main factor of Chinese governor’s rotation, while in Russia the key political stability factor is electoral mobilization<sup>28</sup>. In many ways, this echoes the study of the search for *trade-off* by authoritarian leaders between loyalty and competence when making personnel decisions. This problem was studied in detail in the work of G. Egorov and K. Sonin<sup>29</sup>. A more multi-factor model is proposed by W. Reisinger and B. Morawski, who, in addition to the importance of the electoral results of «United Russia», note such factors of governors’ stability as the share of the titular ethnic group within the region, economic predictors (life expectancy and economic growth), as well as the length of stay with authorities<sup>30</sup>.

However, after the return of gubernatorial elections, a new stage of intensive rotation of regional heads begins. In this regard, the previously discovered

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<sup>22</sup> Reuter O. J., Robertson G. B. Op. cit.

<sup>23</sup> Gandhi J. Political institutions under dictatorship. – 2008. – 221 p.

<sup>24</sup> Magaloni B. Credible power-sharing and the longevity of authoritarian rule // Comparative Political Studies. – 2008. – Vol. 41. – N. 4-5. – P. 715-741.

<sup>25</sup> Geddes B. Why parties and elections in authoritarian regimes? // annual meeting of the American Political Science Association. – 2005. – P. 456-471.

<sup>26</sup> Last-Okar E. Structuring conflict in the Arab world: Incumbents, opponents, and institutions. – Cambridge University Press, 2005. – 269 p.

<sup>27</sup> Гельман В. Я. Динамика субнационального авторитаризма (Россия в сравнительной перспективе) ... С. 50-63.

<sup>28</sup> Rochlitz M. et al. Op. cit.

<sup>29</sup> Note: K.I. Sonin is recognized as an individual performing the functions of a foreign agent. Egorov G., Sonin K. Dictators And Their Viziers: Endogenizing The Loyalty–Competence Trade-Off // Journal of the European Economic Association. – 2011. – Vol. 9. – N. 5. – P. 903-930.

<sup>30</sup> Reisinger W. M., Moraski B. J. Skill or Loyalty? The Fate of Russia's Governors under Presidential Control // Benjamin F. Shambaugh Conference. – 2011. – P. 1-31.

relationship between the stability of regional heads and the results of «United Russia» requires additional empirical testing on a new sample of cases: from 2014 to 2022, new governors were appointed in 70 Russian regions. Thus, an analysis of the factors of gubernatorial rotations from 2013 to 2015 no longer found unambiguous confirmation of the “reward for elections” hypothesis<sup>31</sup>. The significant consolidation of the political regime during the period of “appointed” governors raises the question of the “discernibility” of the loyalty, which can hardly be accurately stated only by calculating the election results of the “party in power”<sup>32</sup>. In R. Mukhametov’s study, electoral variables also did not show an impact on the resignation of governors, in contrast to indicators of real incomes of citizens<sup>33</sup>. At the same time, in a wider sample of cases (2005-2020), the results of «United Russia» in the regions and the incumbent president in the presidential elections are still the most significant predictor of gubernatorial rotations<sup>34</sup>.

The lack of clarity on the mechanisms for the rotation of regional heads after 2012 led to the complication of explanatory models. The search began for other predictors of rotation that could explain the personnel policy of the federal center in relation to Russian governors. One of these predictors was the factor of the strength of patron-client ties among the heads of Russian regions. Nikolai Petrov<sup>35</sup> developed the idea, proposing the concept of the federal center as a “set of corporations” that control the regions and exercise their political patronage, right up to the governors<sup>36</sup>. Baturu and Elkind based on an analysis of the rating’s dynamics of the most influential politicians in Russia (top 100) according to «Vox Populi» together with «*Nezavisimaya Gazeta*» from 1999 to 2014 found that patron-client networks focused on Putin reached more than 50% after 2004, which coincides with the abolition of gubernatorial elections<sup>37</sup>. For this reason, Putin's circle began to be

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<sup>31</sup> Golosov G. V., Tkacheva T. Op. cit.

<sup>32</sup> Sharafutdinova G., Turovsky R. The politics of federal transfers in Putin’s Russia: regional competition, lobbying, and federal priorities // *Post-Soviet Affairs*. – 2017. – Vol. 33. – N. 2. – P. 170-171.

<sup>33</sup> Мухаметов Р. С. Указ. соч.

<sup>34</sup> Reuter O. J., Turovsky R. Op. cit.

<sup>35</sup> Note: N.V. Petrov is included in the list of media outlets performing the functions of a foreign agent.

<sup>36</sup> Петров Н. От федерации корпораций к федерации регионов // *Pro et contra*. – 2012. – №. 4-5. – С. 101-118.

<sup>37</sup> Baturu A., Elkind J. A. Dynamics of regime personalization and patron–client networks in Russia, 1999–2014 // *Post-Soviet Affairs*. – 2016. – Vol. 32. – №. 1. – P. 75-98.



viewed as a separate segment of the national political elite<sup>38</sup>. This result refers to the concept of a «*single-pyramid system*» by researcher Henry Hale, which is characterized by the coordination of the most influential patron networks around one patron<sup>39</sup>. Researchers increasingly began to take into account the factor of inclusion of political actors into the clientele of federal personalities as a predictor of political survival. Moreover, after 2016, a new stage of mass rotations of governors began, which led to a significant expansion of the representation of non-local governors as a separate phenomenon of the gubernatorial corps<sup>40</sup>. A situation of double accountability has arisen when the governor has two principals in the form of the federal center and citizens, who since 2012 have received the right to directly elect governors in the vast majority of Russian regions<sup>41</sup>. The expansion of the non-local governors representation among regional heads inevitably influenced the transformation of many regional regimes, the parameters of which began to be taken into account when analyzing the factors of governor's rotation<sup>42</sup>.

The presence of stable patron-client ties is important for governors for electoral mobilization of the “United Russia”<sup>43</sup>, as well as for the implementation of large infrastructure projects<sup>44</sup>. An empirical correlation is discovered (sample of cases: 2005-2017) between the presence of support for governors from the security elites (territorial leadership of the FSB) and the economic growth of Russian regions, which also indicates the importance of patronage<sup>45</sup>. However, for a long time, the patronage of the governor was not considered an independent and decisive predictor of the governor's rotation. In this regard, researchers have proposed using expert assessments of the governors' influence in the federal elite to measure the stability

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<sup>38</sup> Ратленд П. Постсоветские элиты России // Polis: Journal of Political Studies. – 2016. – №. 3. – С. 55-72.

<sup>39</sup> Hale H. E. Russian patronal politics beyond Putin // Daedalus. – 2017. – Vol. 146. – №. 2. – P. 30-40.

<sup>40</sup> Кынев А. В. Указ. соч.

<sup>41</sup> Klimovich S. Mind the Gap between the Governor and the People: The Common Agency Problem in Russian Authoritarian Federalism // Publius: The Journal of Federalism. – 2023. – Vol. 53. – No. 2. – P. 301-324.

<sup>42</sup> Torikai M. Subnational Cadre Rotations for Centralization: Different Appointment Patterns of Outsider and Local Governors in Russia // Available at SSRN 4037903. – 2022.

<sup>43</sup> Slider D. How united is United Russia? Regional sources of intra-party conflict // Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics. – 2010. – Vol. 26. – No. 2. – P. 257-275.

<sup>44</sup> Wolfe S. D., Müller M. Crisis neopatrimonialism: Russia's new political economy and the 2018 World Cup // Problems of post-communism. – 2018. – Vol. 65. – №. 2. – P. 101-114.

<sup>45</sup> Yakovlev A., Aisin A. Friends or Foes? The Effect of Governor-Siloviki Interaction on Economic Growth in Russian Regions // Russian Politics. – 2019. – Vol. 4. – No. 4. – P. 520-545.

of regional heads<sup>46</sup>. Thus, the work of R. Turovsky and E. Luizidis revealed the significance of the variable influence of governors in the federal elite - the higher the experts assessed the influence of the governor among the federal elite, the lower the probability of resignation became<sup>47</sup>.

However, until now, the patronage of regional heads, operationalized using network analysis metrics, has not been used in regression models along with electoral and socio-economic predictors on a wide sample of rotation cases (2005-2021). The relevance of such a study is great since among academic works a consensus has not yet been formed regarding the key factors of governors' rotation: some studies reveal the insignificance of electoral variables after 2012, in contrast to socio-economic factors, while many works capture the continued significance of election results, emphasizing the need to test "patronal hypotheses" that could establish a link between governors' patronage and their degree of stability in office. Moreover, there is a theoretical concept of "patronage politics" by Henry Hale, which can strengthen the theoretical and methodological apparatus that explains the significance and influence of patronage on political processes<sup>48</sup>.

### **Theoretical and methodological framework**

The dissertation research is based on the concept of patronal politics as interpreted by Henry Hale<sup>49</sup>, who characterizes post-Soviet political regimes as "patronalistic hybrid regimes". In such regimes, formal obligations are significantly inferior in importance to the set of informal rules that determine the strategic basis for the functioning of the political regime. This concept has become an evolution of the theory of neopatrimonialism, which assumes the prevalence of informal political practices over formalized institutions. Neopatrimonialism as a Weberian concept<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Ivanov Y., Petrov N. Transition to a New Model of Russian Governors' Appointments as a Reflection of Regime Transformation // *Russian Politics*. – 2021. – Vol. 6. – No. 2. – P. 153-184. Note: N.V. Petrov is included in the list of media outlets performing the functions of a foreign agent.

<sup>47</sup> Туровский Р. Ф., Луизидис Е.М. Указ. соч.

<sup>48</sup> Hale H. E. *Patronal politics: Eurasian regime dynamics in comparative perspective*. – Cambridge University Press, 2015. – 538 p.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Weber M. *Max Weber: selections in translation*. – Cambridge University Press, 1978.

was developed in Western social sciences as a result of studying the problems of modernization and democratization in regions of decolonization<sup>51</sup>, and then became in demand for the study of regime transformations in the post-Soviet space<sup>52</sup>. This theory examines the political regime not from the standpoint of analyzing formal institutions, but from the point of view of the influence of network informal relationships on public administration. Neopatrimonialism in Russia is defined as a special institutional structure, where impersonal bureaucratic institutions compete with patronal networks<sup>53</sup>.

In patronal systems, it is not impersonal, but deeply personalized communications and forms of resource exchange that are primary. Speaking about the Russian case, Henry Hale states that the main political actors are not formal institutions, but patronal networks. Hale identifies three main types of Russian patronage networks: 1) “oligarchs” - representatives of corporate patronage networks; 2) regional political machines (headed by governors); 3) “state networks” - representatives of the bureaucratic authorities.

Thus, patronal politics implies the dominance of the following power practices: 1) the prevalence of informal practices over formal institutions; 2) the main subjects of politics are patronage networks; 3) competition for political influence is expressed in the struggle for power between various patronage networks - accordingly, the degree of patronage of actors in such a system becomes a key criteria for political success; 4) the network is the organizing principle of political interaction within the framework of patron-client relations - the terms “patronage”, “patronage policy” and “patron-clientelism” are used interchangeably in this work.

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<sup>51</sup>Roth G. Personal rulership, patrimonialism, and empire-building in the new states // *World politics*. – 1968. – Vol. 20. – №. 2. – P. 194-206; Eisenstadt S. N. Traditional patrimonialism and modern neopatrimonialism // *Beverly Hills/London: Sage*. – 1973; Medard J. F. The underdeveloped state in tropical Africa: political clientelism or neopatrimonialism // *Private patronage and public power: Political clientelism in the modern state*. – 1982. – Vol. 162. – P. 162-192.

<sup>52</sup> Фисун А. А. Постсоветские неопатримониальные режимы: генезис, особенности, типология // *Отечественные записки*. – 2007. – Т. 39. – №. 6. – С. 8-28; Гельман В. Я. «Порочный круг» постсоветского неопатримониализма // *Общественные науки и современность*. – 2015. – №. 6. – С. 34-44; Skigin P. Putin's Russia as a Neopatrimonial regime // *Ideology and Politics. Journal*. – 2017. – Vol. 8. – №. 2. – P. 9-33.

<sup>53</sup> Robinson N. Russian neo-patrimonialism and Putin's “cultural turn” // *Europe-Asia Studies*. – 2017. – Vol. 69. – No. 2. – P. 348-366.

The terms “patronage”, “patronal politics” and “patron-clientelism” are used in this work as complementary to each other. The theory of patron-client relations emphasizes the asymmetry of power and status<sup>54</sup>, the mutual exchange of resources and their monopolization by the patron<sup>55</sup>. At the same time, the use of the term patronage is intended to focus attention on one of the key functions of patron-clientelism - the prevalence of hierarchical interaction<sup>56</sup>, which actualizes the use of network analysis to identify actors with the highest level of centrality in the patronage network. In turn, the patronage network implies a center-periphery structure, where the federal patrons have a significant number of horizontal connections between themselves and vertical relationships with the heads of regions, who are dependent on the exclusive connections of their patrons for potential transactions with other representatives of the political elite.

### **Research methods**

Patron-client relationships are often defined through expert assessments, while the operationalization and quantification of such informal communications are necessary for empirical testing within quantitative methods. One of the ways to operationalize patron-client networks is **social network analysis** (SNA), which has firmly entered the list of mainstream areas of research on political elites, making it possible to explain the success of certain political strategies or coalitions<sup>57</sup>.

The operationalization of patron-client relations in the context of the problem under study involves the formation of a database on the affiliations of federal elites and governors from 2005 to 2021. Ties between the federal elite and governors are recorded based on biographical intersections and expert assessments based on the classification of various types of patronal connections according to H. Hale<sup>58</sup>. The

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<sup>54</sup> Kaufman R. R. The patron-client concept and macro-politics: prospects and problems // *Comparative studies in society and history*. – 1974. – Vol. 16. – №. 3. – P. 284-308.

<sup>55</sup> Eisenstadt S. N., Roniger L. Patron—client relations as a model of structuring social exchange // *Comparative studies in society and history*. – 1980. – Vol. 22. – №. 1. – P. 42-77.

<sup>56</sup> Hosking G. Patronage and the Russian state // *The Slavonic and East European Review*. – 2000. – P. 301-320.

<sup>57</sup> Keller F. B. Analyses of elite networks // *The Palgrave handbook of political elites*. – Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2018. – P. 135-152.

<sup>58</sup> Hale H. E. Russian patronal politics beyond Putin ... P. 31.

sample is continuous, including all connections of Russian governors in each year of observation and representatives of the federal elite associated with them.

To determine the degree of governors' patronage, key metrics of the centrality of regional heads in the network will be calculated:

1. Binary variable *of patronage* - represents the very fact of the inclusion of the governor in the federal-regional patronage network (coded in this case as "1", in all other cases – "0").

2. Degree of closeness (*closeness centrality*) is a metric that calculates the average length of all shortest distances from the vertex under study to all other vertices in the network. In other words, this metric indicates the actor's ability to establish communication with all network participants. Politically, and in the context of this study, this centrality metric measures a governor's ability to build coalitions. The higher this indicator, the greater the number of federal actors that can provide potential political support to the head of the region;

3. Degree of influence (*eigenvector centrality*) - unlike other network analysis metrics, it increases the centrality coefficient of those nodes that have connections with other influential nodes by measuring transitive influence. Accordingly, this indicator takes into account not only the number of connections themselves but also the degree of centrality of the "patron" itself in the network with which the governor is connected.

To identify rotation factors in the gubernatorial corps, **logistic regression on panel data is used**, which analyzes the probability of the event's occurrence coded by a dummy variable ( reassignment/promotion vs. resignation).

**The empirical basis** of the study is:

a) *socio-economic indicators of Russian regions* (Rosstat);

b) *electoral indicators of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation* - data from the Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation on the share of votes of "United Russia" according to party lists in the regional context in regional and federal elections, as well as the results of the presidential elections;

c) *biographical data of the heads of regions*, including the encyclopedia of biographies “TASS Person”, interviews with governors, analytical reports “State Council 2.0” and “Politburo 2.0”, as well as V. Ivanov’s monograph “Head of a Subject of the Russian Federation. History of governors. T.1 Book. 2”, which contains a description of various patron-client connections of regional elites from 2000 to 2011;

G) *expert assessments of the patronage of governors* - annual APEC ratings (Rating of the governor’s influence of Russian regions), data from the survival rating of the governors of Russian regions “State Council 2.0”.

### **Research hypotheses**

The first hypothesis is consistent with the concept of patronal policy of H. Hale.

*Hypothesis No. 1.1:* The inclusion of the governor in the patronage network reduces the likelihood of his resignation.

*Hypothesis No. 1.2:* The closer the position of the governor to the main (central) actors patronal network, the lower the probability of resignation.

In this case, one can see that hypothesis 1.2 is clarifying: increasing the stability of regional heads is influenced not only by the very fact of patronage but also by the presence of support from federal actors who have a high level of affiliation with the center of the patronage network (i.e., in the post-Soviet context, the president). This hypothesis is tested by including in the regression analysis the two above-mentioned network analysis centrality metrics - *closeness centrality* and *eigenvector centrality*.

The following hypotheses are derived from an analysis of the literature on the problem under study.

*Hypothesis No. 2:* Electoral effectiveness, along with the patronage factor, can reduce the likelihood of resignation of the head of the region: the higher the results of the United Russia party in the region or the current president in the presidential elections, the lower the likelihood of resignation.

*Hypothesis No. 3:* Socio-economic indicators do not have a statistically significant impact on the process of resignations and reappointments of regional heads, in contrast to the patronage factor.

### **Statements to be defended**

1. Patronage has a significant impact on the process of gubernatorial corps' formation in modern Russia. The stability of governors is influenced both by the very fact of inclusion in the patronage network and by their position in the federal-regional actor network. The likelihood of a regional head being reappointed or promoted to the federal level is influenced by the governor's potential ability to build coalitions with representatives of the federal elite, as well as the position of the regional leader's patrons themselves in relation to other representatives of the patronage network.
2. In the evolution of the federal-regional patronage network, three stages can be distinguished, in accordance with the approach of H. Hale: from a system of competing pyramids<sup>59</sup> (until 2008), through a two-tipped pyramid (2008-2011) to a single one (since 2012). These processes are consistent with the processes of structuring the federal elites, however, from the point of view of the gubernatorial corps' formation, there is a significant time lag. The formation of a unipolar patronage pyramid has increased the importance of connections between governors and representatives of the federal elite and the presidential network of influence, in particular, for reassignment or promotion.
3. The current stage in the evolution of the personnel policy of the federal center is characterized by the formation of a gubernatorial corps with a more differentiated professional profile, as the representation of the regional bureaucracy decreases and the number of people from federal and business structures associated with patronage networks expands. At the same time, the

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<sup>59</sup>Although the term "pyramid" rather refers to hierarchical networks, in this study the "pyramidal" nature of the network is manifested in a higher level of centrality of federal actors compared to the heads of regions.

federal center's understanding of the costs of a complete reformatting of regional elites leads to the use of hybrid personnel policy practices.

4. Electoral predictors retain their influence on the rotation of governors. However, the importance of electoral clientelism, in which the leaders of regional political machines received special internal autonomy in exchange for ensuring high results for «United Russia», is decreasing - this has become less relevant in the context of consolidating support for the “party in power” in the region. Instead, elections can serve as a legitimation of gubernatorial rule in the context of strengthening the relationship between the leaders of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation and the federal elite. In this regard, among the electoral predictors, the probability of resignation of regional heads is most strongly influenced by the low results of «United Russia» in regional legislative assemblies, since this may signal the presence of an intraregional conflict between the governor (often oriented towards the interests of the central government and his “patron”) and local pressure groups.
5. The influence of economic predictors on the rotation of regional heads is the most unstable since in different periods different socio-economic indicators influence the resignations of governors. However, we cannot say that the quality of economic management is completely insignificant to the political stability of governors. Avoiding the most critical problems in the economy, such as rising unemployment and poverty, reduces the likelihood of the resignation of the governor to a sufficiently high degree. However, various manifestations of governors' loyalty related to patronage or electoral effectiveness remain prevalent in relation to competence-based (economic) performance metrics.



### **Scientific novelty**

- Methodological synthesis of the concept of patronage policy by H. Hale and network analysis, in relation to the personnel policy of the federal center in relation to the heads of Russian regions.
- For the first time, the inclusion of regional heads in the federal patronage network is operationalized through network analysis metrics and tested in a regression model as a key predictor of the rotation of regional heads.
- A study was conducted of the influence of the institutional context (the mechanism of formation of the gubernatorial corps) on the factors of stability of Russian governors with simultaneous testing of socio-economic, electoral and “patronage” predictors.
- The connection between the evolution of the federal patronage network and the structure of the patronage of regional heads is described, followed by visualization of the connections of political actors using network analysis: it was revealed that the formation of a unipolar pyramid of power (according to H. Hale) contributed to the expansion of the involvement of persons close to the president in the patronage of regional heads.
- The personal composition of the key subjects of patronage was determined with a study of the dynamics of their involvement in the recruitment of the gubernatorial corps of modern Russia by identifying biographical relationships between the heads of regions and specific representatives of the federal elite.
- For the first time, using network analysis (by calculating the dynamics of metrics of the number of nodes, connections and graph diameter from 2005 to 2021), a change in the structure of the federal-regional patronage network was demonstrated: a gradual expansion of the number of nodes and connections between them while reducing the diameter of graphs indicates an increase in the relationship between federal and regional elites, when several regional heads can be patronized by one federal influence group.

## **Research Approbation**

1. XXII April International Scientific Conference of the National Research University Higher School of Economics on problems of economic and social development (Moscow, April 13-30, 2021). Report “Factors of rotation of the gubernatorial corps in modern Russia (2012-2020)”.
2. Scientific seminar of the Graduate School of Political Science “Factors of rotation of Russian governors - the influence of patronage on political stability: experience of network analysis” (Moscow, April 26, 2023).

*The main results of the dissertation research were published in leading peer-reviewed scientific publications recommended by the Higher School of Economics:*

1. Balandin Yu. A. Patronage as a key predictor of governor’s rotation: factors of stability of the heads of Russian regions after the return of the governor's elections in 2012 // Bulletin of Perm University. Series: Political science. 2022. T. 16. No. 4. P. 73-84. (in Russian).
2. Gaivoronsky Yu. O., Balandin Yu. A. Recruitment of the governor’s corps in contemporary Russia: evolution of patronal networks (2017—2021) // Journal of political philosophy and sociology of politics “Politeia”. 2022. No. 4 (107). pp. 146-167. (in Russian).
3. Balandin Yu. A., Gaivoronsky Yu. O. Patronal politics and turnovers of regional governors in Russia. Evidence from social network analysis // Journal of political philosophy and sociology of politics “Politeia ”. 2023. No. 3 (110). pp. 67-90. (in Russian).

## *Summary*

**The first chapter** of the dissertation research is devoted to the theoretical and methodological foundations of the study. **In paragraph 1.1.** The current state of the scientific debate on the theoretical and empirical aspects of the governors' rotation from 2005 to 2021 is presented. A study of personnel rotations from 2005 to 2011 records the key importance of electoral factors in the reappointments and resignations of Russian governors, in contrast to socio-economic efficiency. The study of the rotation factors of regional heads on a sample of cases since 2012 (after the return of gubernatorial elections) no longer always recorded the influence of electoral management on the governor's resignations of constituent entities of the Russian Federation. Some studies have established the influence of individual socio-economic factors, be it the level of real income of citizens or the level of poverty. Moreover, in the study of rotation factors, the factor of patronage and informal connections of governors with the Kremlin began to be taken into account due to the expansion of the number of non-locals among regional heads. However, the authors either only postulated the importance of searching for an operationalization of patronage when studying gubernatorial rotations, or used expert assessments of the influence of governors in the federal elite. At the end of the paragraph, it is postulated that the Kremlin's new personnel strategies require a new look at the research problem, the search for a new (additional) explanatory framework for the analysis of gubernatorial rotations in the form of the theory of neopatrimonialism and patronage politics.

**Paragraph 1.2** is devoted to a conceptual understanding of the significance of informal practices in the post-Soviet space, namely, to consideration of the theory of neopatrimonialism as a theoretical framework for the study of informal relations in modern Russia. The heuristic potential of the theory is noted, which allows us to move away from dichotomous models of studying the dynamics of political regimes - be it the "autocracy-democracy" continuum, or "extractive and inclusive"

institutions<sup>60</sup>. It is stated that more attention was paid to the reasons for Russia's deviation from any poles of these continuums than to explaining the characteristics of the Russian political regime itself. In this regard, the Russian case has increasingly begun to be described through the theory of neopatrimonialism<sup>61</sup>. It allows us to go beyond dichotomous logic and pay attention to repeated informal practices, which in themselves form an independent type of power, with a claim to one of the variations of political regimes. The key feature of this theory is the understanding of the mechanisms of political governance and the distribution of benefits as a synthesis of formal and informal institutions and practices. The paragraph outlines the development of the neopatrimonialism theory, which dates back to Weberian concepts of power and then became popular to explain institutional transformations in Africa, Asia and Latin America in the context of processes of decolonization and modernization, which often took place in a non-linear manner and with heterogeneous influence on political changes. Next, the prospects for studying post-Soviet politics are considered in the logic of the theory of neopatrimonialism, which focuses on the dominance of informal practices, patron-client relations and the tendency towards centralization and hierarchization of political governance.

**Paragraph 1.3** is devoted to consideration of the concept of patronage policy as the embodiment of neopatrimonialism. At the beginning of the paragraph, various practices of neopatrimonialism are discussed, such as clans, clientelism and patronage. Networks are seen as a way of interaction within patronage and in this case it is possible to use the concept of patron-client relationships, which focuses on different types of affiliations between political actors. The most comprehensive theoretical framework of patron-client relations in Russian politics was outlined by Henry Hale in his monograph «Patronal Politics». He characterizes post-Soviet political regimes as “patronalistic hybrid regimes”. In them, formal obligations are significantly inferior in importance to a set of informal rules that determine the

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<sup>60</sup> Аджемоглу Д., Робинсон Д. А. Почему одни страны богатые, а другие бедные. Происхождение власти, процветания и нищеты // М.: АСТ. – 2015. – Т. 720.

<sup>61</sup> See.: Hale H. E. Russian patronal politics beyond Putin ... P. 30-40; Skigin P. Op. cit.; Гельман В. Я. «Порочный круг» постсоветского неопатримониализма ... С. 34-44.

strategic basis for the functioning of the political regime<sup>62</sup>. In patronal systems, it is not impersonal, but deeply personalized communications and forms of resource exchange that are primary. Speaking about the Russian case, Henry Hale states that the main political actors are not formal institutions, but patronal networks. Hale identifies three main types of Russian patronage networks: 1) “oligarchs” - representatives of corporate patronage networks; 2) regional political machines (headed by governors); 3) “state networks” - representatives of the bureaucratic authorities. Henry Hale emphasizes that in the Russian system, patronage is a necessary condition for achieving political success<sup>63</sup>.

The final part of the paragraph examines a number of studies documenting various relationships between patronage and various aspects of regional governance. For example, the degree of governors’ patronage affects the level of transfers received, and this relationship is recorded in a comparative perspective - using the example of China and Latin America<sup>64</sup>. Also, economic growth is positively influenced by the presence of connections between the head of a region and law enforcement agencies (using the example of Russia<sup>65</sup>).

**The second chapter** of the dissertation research examines various aspects of the institutional dynamics of political relationships between the federal center and regional authorities in Russia. **Section 2.1** examines the features of recentralization policy, which began to determine the relationship between the center and the regions since 2000. Recentralization was a response to the expansion of regional autonomy in the 90s when the subjects of the federation could form their budget, influence the electoral process and establish their legislation, which often contradicted the federal one.

After the election of Vladimir Putin as president, a process of gradual reduction of regional independence and strengthening of political control over the

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<sup>62</sup> Hale H. E. *Patronal politics: Eurasian regime dynamics in comparative perspective*. – Cambridge University Press, 2015. – 538 p.

<sup>63</sup> Hale H. E. *Russian patronal politics beyond Putin ...* P. 30-40.

<sup>64</sup> Jiang J., Zhang M. Friends with benefits: Patronage networks and distributive politics in China // *Journal of Public Economics*. – 2020. – Vol. 184. – P. 1-2; Lodola G. J. *The politics of subnational coalition building. Gubernatorial Redistributive Strategies in Argentina and Brazil* – University of Pittsburgh, 2011.

<sup>65</sup> Yakovlev A., Aisin A. *Op. cit.*

regions by the federal center began. The first step was the creation of federal districts in 2000, then a reform of the procedure for forming the Federation Council was carried out - if from 1996 to 2001 the upper house of parliament consisted of governors and speakers of legislative assemblies *ex officio*, then a model was introduced for the delegation of senators from the regional executive and legislative branches of government. Thus, governors lost their status as federal parliamentarians, and their ability to lobby for regional interests was significantly reduced. Attention is also paid to the creation of a federal “party of power”, which made it possible to strengthen control over regional “political machines” and establish the dominance of “United Russia” in Russian regions.

The key measure of recentralization policy is the abolition of direct elections of regional heads, which changed the logic of the accountability of governors - now they began to depend on the will of the federal center, and not the sentiments of regional voters. The return of direct gubernatorial elections in 2012 did not affect the return of regional autonomy - on the contrary, governors became even more dependent on the federal center. The number of informal connections between regional heads and federal pressure groups has increased due to the consistent expansion of the non-local governors.

**Paragraph 2.2.** is devoted to studying the peculiarities of the Kremlin’s personnel policy about the governor’s corps from 2005 to 2011, during the absence of direct elections of regional heads. This paragraph (*as well as paragraph 2.3*) presents the author’s calculations of the number of resignations and reassignments during the period under review; the ratio of locals and non-local in the governor’s corps; the average length of term of office of regional heads; governor recruitment channels; experience of governor’s participation in majoritarian elections, as well as experience working in Soviet authorities («*nomenklatura*»).

The paragraph postulates a gradual process of rotation after the abolition of direct elections - during Putin’s second presidential term, the Kremlin was in no hurry to significantly rotate the gubernatorial corps due to the short “personnel bench”. However, rotation patterns underwent significant changes after Dmitry

Medvedev was elected president. “Heavyweight” governors who were associated with a high level of regional autonomy resigned. For the first time, a significant increase in the number of non-local governors has been recorded (from 11 to 30 regional heads from 2005 to 2011). This led to a change in the recruitment channels for regional heads. During Putin's second presidential term, three key segments of the political elite represented in the gubernatorial corps will stand out: the regional elite; private business and law enforcement agencies. Under Medvedev, the regional nomenclatura and security forces became less in demand for recruiting heads of constituent entities of the Russian Federation, while the representation of private business, state corporations and the federal bureaucracy increased.

**Paragraph 2.3** is devoted to studying the features of personnel rotation of governors after the return of direct gubernatorial elections. The influence of the protest events of 2011-2012 on the Kremlin's decision to carry out partial liberalization of electoral legislation is emphasized. However, the introduction of a “municipal filter” in gubernatorial elections made it possible to minimize real electoral competition, which retained full control over personnel appointments of regional heads.

A significant increase in the number of non-local governors has been recorded, especially after 2016, when the Kremlin's internal political bloc was headed by Sergei Kiriyenko. His appointment marked a significant change in the patterns of personnel rotation of governors - since 2020, for the first time in the history of modern Russia, there were more non-locals than local heads of regions. This was a consequence of changes in recruiting channels - the experience of the governor's corps has become more differentiated and equally, includes both people with regional management experience and people from federal authorities and business structures. At the same time, the Kremlin is aware of the limits of a complete reformatting of regional elites, using several hybrid personnel policy practices. For example, most national republics are still headed by representatives of local elite groups, and non-local governors often have some kind of biographical connection with the region of destination.

**The third chapter** of the dissertation research is devoted to the manifestations of patronage politics during the rotation of the gubernatorial corps, based on the results of network analysis. **Paragraph 3.1** presents the design of the network analysis: operationalizing patronage as a predictor of turnover and identifying control variables. Sources of information about informal connections between governors and the federal elite are identified: biographical data of regional heads, expert assessments of consulting companies and political analysts, as well as media materials, and interviews with governors. The structure of the network analysis database is outlined, which consists of the characteristics of actors (nodes) and connections between them (edges), which form a patronal network (graphs). A separate list of nodes and connections was generated for each year of observation – from 2005 to 2021 inclusive. The list of actors includes both heads of regions and representatives of the federal political elite (“patrons”).

The following is a list of subjects of patronage, which is based both on expert assessments and on formal institutional criteria. The criteria for establishing affiliation between governors and the federal elite are based on an integrated approach that combines instrumental and expert assessments. When compiling a database of connections, a classification of various types of patronage was used within the framework of the theory of patronage policy according to Henry Hale: 1) general place of work; 2) territorial criteria - the place of birth or career; 3) study at one university for one year; 4) family ties; 5) friendship<sup>66</sup>.

The design of the regression analysis is then described. Since the dependent variable has a binary form (resignation – “1”, maintaining a position, or promotion – “0”), the choice was made in favour of logistic regression with the spatiotemporal type of data collected (region-year). The hypotheses are tested over a time interval of 16 years: from 2005 to 2021.

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<sup>66</sup> The specified affiliation criteria were also used in the study of patronage in the article: Гайворонский Ю. О., Баландин Ю. А. Рекрутирование губернаторского корпуса в современной России: эволюция патрональных сетей (2017-2021) // Журнал политической философии и социологии политики «Полития. Анализ. Хроника. Прогноз». – 2022. – №. 4 (107). – С. 146-167.



The final part of the paragraph presents a list of key predictors and control variables. Key predictors include four ways of operationalizing gubernatorial patronage: 1) a binary patronage variable – an assessment of the very fact of the presence of federal patronage; 2) «closeness centrality» - a metric that calculates the average length of all shortest distances from the studied vertex to all other vertices of the network; 3) “eigenvector centrality» - unlike other network analysis metrics, it increases the centrality coefficient of those nodes that have connections with other influential nodes by measuring transitive influence; 4) index of centrality and influence - a combined index reflecting a combination of positional and reputational approaches to determining the power resource of a political actor. Control variables include: a) socio-economic indicators of Russian regions (Rosstat); b) electoral indicators of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation; c) biographical information of regional heads; d) expert assessments of the governors’ patronage<sup>67</sup>.

**Paragraph 3.2** discusses the features of recruiting the governor's corps in the context of the evolution of patronage networks. This section is devoted to a detailed examination of patron-client relations of federal elites and regional heads over time, from 2005 to 2021. A detailed examination of the structure of patron-client networks is dictated by the particular significance of various operationalizations of governors' patronage, which are used as key variables in the regression analysis of rotation predictors.

The section discusses descriptive statistics of both the graphs themselves and the nodes (only governors<sup>68</sup>). Descriptive characteristics of patron networks from 2005 to 2021 include the following parameters: number of nodes; number of connections; graph diameter<sup>69</sup>; average path length<sup>70</sup>; number of clicks on the

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<sup>67</sup> The specified regression analysis design and set of predictors were tested in the study: Баландин Ю. А., Гайворонский Ю. О. Патрональная политика и ротация губернаторского корпуса в России // Журнал политической философии и социологии политики «Полития. Анализ. Хроника. Прогноз». – 2023. – №. 3 (110). – С. 67-90.

<sup>68</sup> Because different metrics of governor centrality in the network are used in regression models.

<sup>69</sup> The diameter of a graph is the maximum distance between any two of its vertices. Accordingly, the smaller the diameter, the higher the network density.

<sup>70</sup> The average path length of a graph is the average of the shortest path lengths between all nodes.

network (Girvan-Newman algorithm<sup>71</sup>). Descriptive characteristics of network nodes (governors): average value of closeness metrics centrality; eigenvector centrality; betweenness centrality of regional heads, as well as the number of governors with a zero centrality value (outside federal patronage) and the average value of eigenvector centrality of governors, excluding zero values (max =1). This allows us to trace the dynamics of governors' involvement in federal-regional patronage networks.

In addition to basic metrics describing the key characteristics of graphs and nodes, the paragraph presents an analysis of the patronage's dynamics ties between governors and segments of the Russian political elite<sup>72</sup>, as well as leaders of regional patronage among federal actors. Additionally, there is a table of governors who were in the top 10 at least three times in terms of closeness centrality from 2005 to 2021.

From 2005 to 2011, there was a gradual increase in the centrality of regional heads with a reduction in the diameter and average path of the graph, which indicates an increase in the interconnectedness of governors with the federal elite. An analysis of the channels for recruiting governors in the context of patron-client relations shows that during Putin's second presidential term, one could talk about parity competition between private business, the Yeltsin elite, the Luzhkov's group and the president's entourage for the patronage of governors. A review of the subnational graph's leaders of connections between federal and regional elites from 2005 to 2008 reflects the rivalry of the ex-leader of the Fatherland-All Russia party and mayor of Moscow (1992-2010) Yuri Luzhkov (in conjunction with Yevgeny Primakov) with the presidential network. In this regard, until 2008 we can talk about *competing-pyramid politics*, following the theory of patronal politics by H. Hale.

The situation changed after the election of Dmitry Medvedev as President of Russia, who by 2010 dismissed most of the regional leaders associated with Yuri Luzhkov (as well as the mayor of Moscow himself), and formed his own "clientele"

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<sup>71</sup> A method for identifying clusters in a network by sequentially removing connections from the original graph. The connected components of the remaining network are the desired communities (cliques). The method was developed by Michelle Girvan Girvan ) and Mark Newman .

<sup>72</sup> For each year of observation, the number of connections between federal actors and regional heads was calculated. It must be taken into account that a federal actor may be associated with several governors.

of governors together with the handler of the Kremlin's political bloc, Vladislav Surkov. Henry Hale defines this period (2008-2012) as a two-tipped pyramid power pyramid<sup>73</sup>.

Since 2012, an increase in the overall connectivity of the elite network has been recorded - as the number of governors included in various federal patron-client networks expands, the closeness centrality indicator consistently increases among regional heads. Thus, on average, the gubernatorial corps becomes more connected to the federal elite and the presidential network in particular. This refers to the gradual expansion of the representation of non-local governors and the formation of a single-pyramid system, which was reflected in the gradual expansion of the number of governors associated both personally with the president and with the federal-level managerial elite loyal to him. This was also facilitated by a significant increase in the trust rating of the Russian President after 2014, which strengthened the unipolar patronage network<sup>74</sup>.

The final part of the paragraph describes the expansion's dynamics of the most significant leaders of patronage networks, which are associated with the largest number of governors. In addition to Vladimir Putin, these are networks of such political elite actors as: Dmitry Medvedev, Gennady Timchenko, Sergei Chemezov, Sergei Shoigu, and Sergei Sobyenin. The following describes the dynamics of the closeness centrality of the most influential regional heads after 2012 in terms of position in the patronage network.

**Paragraph 3.3** of the dissertation examines the results of a regression analysis of rotation's predictors of Russian regions' heads from 2005 to 2021. Hypotheses 1.1 and 1.2 of the study were confirmed. The stability of governors is influenced both by the very fact of inclusion in the patronage network and by the specific characteristics of patronage. The decrease in the probability of resignation is influenced by both the degree of regional heads' *closeness centrality* to the head of

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<sup>73</sup> Hale H. E. Patronal politics: Eurasian regime dynamics in comparative perspective. – Cambridge University Press, 2015. – P. 276-282.

<sup>74</sup> Hale H. E. Patronal politics: Eurasian regime dynamics in comparative perspective. – Cambridge University Press, 2015. – P. 288.

state, and the presence of patronage of influential federal actors with connections to the most significant participants in the political elite network - *eigenvector centrality*.

The second hypothesis, about the continued influence of electoral management on the stability of governors, is only partially confirmed. Only the results of United Russia in regional elections to the legislative assemblies of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation show stable statistical significance. The unreliability of the “electoral” hypothesis is due to the lack of stable indicators of the results’ significance of presidential campaigns and federal parliamentary elections for the rotation of governors.

The third hypothesis about the absence of socio-economic influence of socio-economic indicators on gubernatorial rotations is also partially confirmed. On the one hand, the influence of economic predictors on the rotation of governors is the most unstable, since in different periods the resignations of governors are influenced by different socio-economic indicators. On the other hand, one cannot say that the quality of economic management is completely insignificant to the political stability of governors. Crisis phenomena in the economy, such as rising unemployment and poverty, increase the likelihood of the resignation of regional governors.

In this regard, the results of regression analysis show the priority importance of patronage policy during the rotation of governors. Accordingly, various manifestations of governors’ loyalty (patronage and elections) remain prevalent in relation to competency-based performance metrics.

At **the conclusion**, it is stated that the results of the dissertation research confirm the assumption about the key role of patronage in the rotation of regional heads of modern Russia. Economic indicators have an ambiguous relationship with rotation, since different metrics of socio-economic development have different statistical relationships with the resignations of governors in different periods of personnel changes. Approximately the same can be said about elections, since only the results of elections to the legislative assemblies of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation show a stable connection with gubernatorial resignations. At the

same time, the results of the study also update the study of informal practices of elite rotation in principle, with an emphasis on the study of mutual affiliation of key actors of the political elite. Network analysis has demonstrated significant heuristic potential both for studying the evolution of elite politics in general and for measuring the power potential of specific actors of the political elite in particular. It has been recorded that visualization of graphs of patronage networks (2005-2021), with an emphasis on studying the dynamics of affiliation of governors and the federal elite, shows that the key role of patronage in recruiting regional heads is not an innate property of the Russian political system, but the result of a strategic choice of the ruling elite and the result political competition and struggle between various influence groups. It is postulated that, on the one hand, the influence of the institution of presidency on regional personnel policy is increasing due to the fact that, despite the formal return of direct gubernatorial elections in 2012, acting heads of regions began to be appointed directly by presidential decrees. This is clearly evident in the study of gubernatorial rotations after 2012, when an increasing number of new governors are either directly connected with the president or are patronized by the close circle of the head of state. On the other hand, a unipolar system leads to the strengthening of personalistic factors when making political decisions, when the president is not only an institution, but a specific person with a set of exclusive connections with various people. This provokes the formation of a different method of political governance, where patronal loyalty begins to replace institutional loyalty (for example, expressed in the high results of the “party in power” in elections). Moreover, this pattern of elite rotation may be true not only for modern Russia, but also for other political regimes with a high degree of consolidation of the political elite and personification of power.