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Conference abstract

### **Patron-client relationships as the factor of the gubernatorial corps formation in Russia**

In 2017, an active rotation of the heads of regions began in Russia. 49 governors or 57% of all regional heads took over their powers. Under the supervision of the first deputy head of the Presidential Administration, Sergei Kiriyenko, a bet was placed on young technocratic governors. However, the staff was not so uniform. Among the governors of the new wave were both the security forces - Vladimir Vasiliev (Dagestan), Makhmud Kalimatov (Ingushetia) and Igor Babushkin (Astrakhan region), as well as representatives of the "old" regional elites - Alexander Uss (Krasnoyarsk Territory), Oleg Kozhemyako (Primorsky Territory) and populists - Sergey Furgal (Khabarovsk Territory) and Valentin Konovalov (Khakassia), as well as former sportsman Batu Khasikov (Kalmykia).

The reasons for the resignation of the heads of regions are more evident for observers. In the mid-2000s, there were two key criteria enough to avoid resignation. The first is to ensure electoral returns for V.V. Putin and D.A. Medvedev in the presidential election and for the ruling party - "United Russia" in elections of all levels. The second criterion is the absence of conflicts and serious failures in management (usually associated with the inability to manage consequences of natural disasters or man-made catastrophes).

Less commonly, there was a conflict factor between regional elites and federal elites and large corporations. Then the so-called "May decrees" issued by V.V. Putin played a prominent role. Since the overall level of execution of presidential instructions was lower than the target indicators in most regions, this criterion was used in conjunction with others. After S.V. Kiriyenko was appointed in the Presidential Administration the KPI indicators were institutionalized. At the same time, the order of governors resignation remained vague. One way or another, the resignation of governors has more obvious reasons than the factors of appointment.

Since 2005, when popular elections of regional leaders were cancelled, active involvement of federal players in the process of promoting loyal candidates for governor positions has been observed. Moreover, this process did not stop even after returning to the popular vote in 2012.

Patron-client relations are built on an interpersonal exchange of resources, both material and status. American political scientist Henry Hale broadens the interpretation of patron-client relations, adding that not only rewards and benefits, but also punishments can be distributed. Thus, the patron has the right to punish his or her client. Consequently, in the context of rotations in the governor's corps in Russia, it can be said that appointment to the region can be not only a step in the career ladder or admission to the resource base but also kind of punishment in the form of exile, removal from the federal centre, which reproduces the practices of the Soviet and even the imperial period.

Moreover, it is difficult to identify a unified approach in the personnel policy of the presidential administration. An analysis of the relations of the new wave governors with other representatives of the political elite at the federal level among the political establishment and big business shows that the presence of a patron at a higher level plays a great role in choosing a candidate. When compared with other factors, it turns out that patron-client relations are crucial in the appointment of interim in the region. Having worked in the region from a few months to a year, the interim who enjoyed the support of the patron has all the necessary resources to consolidate their positions through the voting procedure. The system failed only in 2018, when incumbents could not win the elections in the wake of protest moods in Primorye, Khakassia, the Khabarovsk Territory, and the Smolensk Region.

An analysis of biographical and career intersections, coupled with an analysis of cartridge-client decisions, show that patron-client relations have become one of the decisive factors in the selection of candidates for appointment as a second and further work in the gubernatorial position. A large role in these processes is played by representatives of the federal political elite represented by Vyacheslav Volodin, Sergey Kiriyenko and Sergey Sobyenin, heads of large companies with state participation and state corporations - Sergey Chemezov, Alexey Miller, representatives of large business - the Rotenberg family, the Kovalchuk family, Gennady Timchenko, and also power structures. At the same time, the role of independent political actors and regional elites is decreasing.

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