

Factors of Regional Electoral Loyalty: Specifics of Republics within the Russian Federation.

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Abstract

For a long period of federative relations' formation in Russia, republics (ethnic subunits with special status and power) presented an example of units eager to be independent and showing the lowest level of support to federal authorities. But today they demonstrate a record-breaking high support to federal authorities in the elections. In this paper this phenomenon is analyzed and possible explanation of the Russian ethnic subunits' electoral loyalty is planned to be found. The first hypothesis of the research is concerned with the determinant nature of so called "regional political machines" in the process of ethnic units' electoral loyalty formation. The second hypothesis of the research is that high electoral support of federal authorities in republics within the Russian Federation can be rather connected with financial factors (such as federal transfers).

Keywords: elections, elites, Russia, quantitative methods, regional political machines, intergovernmental transfers

Introduction

During the federal elections republics within the Russian Federation (with some exceptions) show a record high level of support to federal authorities. Moreover, this trend is increasing over time. However, if we look at the history of federal relations in Russia, such demonstration of electoral loyalty on the part of republics may seem, at least, intriguing.

For a long time the formation of administrative division system in modern Russia was quite contradictory: on the one hand, it was largely determined by the desire to create a symmetrical federation with equal subunits, on the other – an attempt to consolidate the exceptional position of the national-territorial subunits. The latter was the result of regional policy in the late Soviet period, as well as a kind of echo of the Soviet ethnic federalism (see more in Treisman, 1999: 28 – 46).

Some changes in the asymmetry of Russian federal structure were made with the adoption of the 1993 Constitution of the Russian Federation, although the document kept contradictions inherent in whole regional policy undertaken previously. For example, despite the fact that the republics were recognized as “nation states” within the Russian Federation (The Constitution: Chap. 1, art. 5 (2)), their scope of authority was equal to thereof at the administrative-territorial units and autonomous entities.

Unwillingness of ethnic subunits to have equal status with the administrative-territorial entities has led to the signing of bilateral agreements between the republics and the federal center. Moreover, “they often made redistribution of competence of the Russian Federation and of the items of joint jurisdiction enshrined in the Basic Law. Therefore, these treaties, in fact, contradicted the Federal Constitution” (Nozhenko, Belokurova, 2010: 39). Even the signing of such agreements with the administrative- territorial entities that, seemingly, neutralized asymmetric federative structure of the Russian Federation, however, in fact, did not have such an effect, as “the hallmark of these documents was the lack of apparent conflicts with the federal Constitution. These acts did not revise, but specified and complemented the provisions of the Article 72 of the Basic Law” (Ibid.: 40), which enshrined the items of joint jurisdiction of the Federation and its entities. Thus, by early 1999 the territorial-legal space of Russia retained its fragmentation.

Things began to change when Vladimir Putin came to power. Drastic transformations made in the field of regional policy over the period of 1999 – 2004 through a series of reforms had led to the unification of the legal space that put an end to the mismatch between regional and federal legislation (Ibid.: 56). Equal conditions of interaction with the federal government for all regions were created, regardless of their way of formation. Bilateral relations between the federal center and the regions had been substantially weakened, and the “power vertical” alignment has brought to naught the opportunity for various subnational political regimes formation and “had offset the relevance of regional identity policy” (Ibidem).

Thus, despite the long history of a special relationship between the federal center and the republics, to date, national-territorial entities are formally equal to the position of the rest of subunits.

But if we consider the results of the electoral processes in Russia in the context of the history of federal relations, it would be logical to assume the following scenario of national-territorial entities electoral behavior after the unification process: 1) the republics support the party and the candidate of power less, still seeking to show their exceptional status; 2) national-territorial

entities behave as well as administrative units do, due to the unification of the legal space. However, as it was noted earlier, ethnic regions, in comparison with other subunits, demonstrate greater loyalty to the party and the candidate of the government in federal electoral processes.

Thus, the purpose of the study is to explain the above mentioned phenomenon by examining the republics' political and socio-economic characteristics. In the first section, I describe the state of research in the field and formulate a set of working hypothesis regarding electoral loyalty of Russian ethnic subunits. The second section describes the data, clarifies the methodology, presents and shortly analyses the findings.

The state of research and working hypothesis

Generally, the electoral results in Russian ethnic subunits are explained through the analysis of regional elites and their structure. The key focus here is on the study of so-called regional “political machines”. Basic definition of these structures is the following: “political organizations that mobilize electoral support by providing a certain kind of specific privileges for voters in exchange for their votes” (Stokes, 2005: 315). Usually, such incentives are various material benefits: increasing income, jobs, and a variety of social profits (including - for example, better health service). Thus, such a kind of treating of voters is a key feature for the classic definition of regional political machines.

Originally, this concept was used “to describe the mechanisms of political domination in U.S. cities since the end of the Civil War and till the “New Deal” of Franklin Roosevelt” (Gel'man, 2010: 9). Later, in 1969, J. Scott (Scott, 1969) opened a new research perspective in political science, being the first who had extrapolated conclusions about early local political machines in the cities of the U.S. to the political systems of the “third world”. Later, this approach was used for the analysis of political regimes in many other countries, and now local political machines are considered as a special case of such a phenomenon as subnational authoritarianism (see, eg, Scott, 1972, Gervasoni, 2010).

As for the national-territorial entities, namely the identification of the population by ethnicity becomes the basis for the analysis of local regimes through the concept of political machines. It is stated that “social networks based on ethnicity are quite dense, and in those circumstances, when ethnicity becomes politicized, these social networks are the basis for the formation of political machines” (Golosov, 2014: 5). Thus, the results of Stalin's “nativization” policy, the construction and strengthening of national identities in the administrative-territorial units later on were consolidated by the political structure of the Brezhnev period, when top party positions in

the autonomous republics were held by the representatives of the “titular” nation. Such a privileged position of titular ethnic groups has not stopped over time. “The ethnic minority social networks institutionalized by the Soviet regime not only survived the USSR’s demise, but actually gained strength as the republics (typically led by titular group members) declared sovereignty and sought to reinforce the status of their “native” groups through the implementation of language laws, education policies, and preferential hiring practices in state administration” (Gorenburg, 1999, op. by: Hale, 2003: 244). All of this gave the leaders of ethnic minority regions (especially republics) special opportunities and incentives to mobilize strong political machines (Hale, 2003: 244).

However, a special place in the literature on various aspects of the political process in the regional context, is occupied by the studies examining federal financial aid to subunits as one of the tools in the relationship between regions and the center (see, eg.: Kim, 2013; Veiga, Veiga, 2013; Ardanaz, 2014;). A wide range of researches is dedicated to the Russian case of financial aid system and its role in national political processes. In particular, Bulanin and Shcherbak (2005) wrote about the role of transfers as a kind of “sedative” for the regions intent to secession.

The key feature of most papers devoted to the analysis of transfer policy in Russia is the study of the relationship between the financial aid provided to regions and the results of the electoral processes (Treisman, 1996, 1998; Popov, 2004 Starodubtsev, 2010). Despite some differences in the results of these researches, what they have in common is the conclusion about the use of non-repayable financial assistance to the regions as a tool for stimulating the provision of certain electoral results.

And although these papers do not focus on the republics and their greater propensity to extract “fiscal rent” (the term - Gervasoni, 2009), a brief glance at the history of intergovernmental fiscal relations in the Russian Federation (especially at the first steps in this process) suggests probable strengthening of the effect of transfers in case of ethnic subunits. The fact is that republics were the first regions that have entered bargaining process with the federal government over inter-budgetary reciprocity regulation and did it quite successfully. And considering that this contractual nature of the relationship between the federal and republican authorities continued for a fairly long period before the establishment of formal “rules of the game”, we can assume the possible impact of the preceding practices on the formal institutions set later and, consequently, the possible enhancement of the transfers’ effect on the electoral results in the case of republics.

Therefore, the two working hypotheses are advanced in the research. The *first one* suggests that record-breaking electoral support to the federal authorities in ethnic subunits of the Russian Federation is determined by the strength of their regional “political machines”. The *second hypothesis* states that electoral loyalty of Russian republics is affected by federal fiscal aid due to the specifics of interactions between republics and the federal center during the process of inter-budget relations’ formation.

Data and methodology

To verify the previously mentioned hypotheses and to answer the research question, a statistical analysis of the data was used in the study. The **dependent variable** in the present paper is the level of electoral support for the party of power in the regions, expressed as the logit-transformed version of the votes share for this party in the parliamentary elections. The **independent variables** are: 1) the degree of consolidation of regional elites (operationalized through the index measure); 2) the degree of subnational transfers’ dependence (presented as a proportion of transfers in the regions’ income). For the operationalization of the first predictor the quantitative index theoretically showing the degree of regional elites’ consolidation was constructed. In the construction of this indicator the following data were included: 1) the votes share for the winner in the first or the only round at the last gubernatorial elections prior to the elections analyzed; 2) the effective number of candidates in the same gubernatorial electoral processes (index is calculated by the method of G. Golosov¹); 3) the number of replacements at the governor’s position²; 4) the total term of office of the acting regional head and his predecessor, if any.

In constructing the formula for calculating the degree of regional elites’ consolidation there was considered the theoretical assumption about the positive impact of the votes share for the winner and the term of office and the negative influence of the effective number of candidates and the number of heads’ replacement. In other words, in theory, the less competitive is political environment in the subunits, the more stable the regional elites are. Thus, the formula took the following form:

$$I_c = \frac{v_1 + t}{N_G + n},$$

¹ This indicator is a variation of the effective number of parties index presented in Golosov Grigorii V. (2010). The Effective Number of Parties: A New Approach. *Party Politics*, 2 (16): 171 – 192

² Herewith the reelection of the current governor or an appointment of the person temporally in charge was not considered as a replacement.

where v_1 is the votes share for the winner in the first or the only round at the last gubernatorial elections prior to the elections analyzed, t - the total term of office of the acting regional head and his predecessor, if any, N_G - the effective number of candidates in the last gubernatorial electoral processes prior to the elections analyzed, n - the number of replacements at the governor's position since the last federal elections. This indicator is a conditional operationalization of regional political systems' force that is, intuitively, *ceteris paribus*, must be kept in a long-term perspective. In this regard, the calculated index was used for the analysis of electoral processes in 2011 as well.

In addition to the key variables the analysis also included control variables characterizing different socio-economic and political characteristics of regions which may have an effect on the electoral loyalty: the percentage of urban population in the region, the proportion of the population over the working age, the share of people with higher education, the rate of the average monthly income. Also, a binary variable characterizing regional heads' membership in the block "Fatherland - All Russia" (FAR) was added. The code "1" is assigned to the entity if its governor was in the list of persons signing the original documents of the organization or in its governing bodies. This indicator was put into the analysis due to the direct structural connection of FAR and the "United Russia" party created on the basis of FAR's confluence with the "Unity": the "United Russia" has included most of the subnational heads. Considering that in the elections-1999 a governor's belonging to the FAR had largely influenced the part lists voting for the organization (Hesli, Reisinger, 2003, op. By: Golosov, 2013: 474), the relative success of the "United Russia" in the elections in 2003 and later can be explained due to the efforts of governors.

It should be mentioned that some observations were excluded from the analysis due to certain reasons. In particular, the analysis did not include the Republic of Dagestan as the governor's elections have never been held there³ and, consequently, the variables associated with the popular elections of the subunit's head cannot be used in this case.

Also, the study of the 1999 parliamentary elections did not include the Udmurt and the Chechen Republics. In the first case the reason is the holding of the first governor's elections only in 2000. In the second one it is the absence of the federal elections' results in 1999⁴. In addition, the

³ According to the Constitution of the Republic of Dagestan, the head of the entity is elected by the supreme representative body. But since 2006 the head of the region becomes an appointee of the President of the Russian Federation.

⁴ The Resolution of the Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation dated September 30, 1999 canceled the parliamentary elections in Chechnya because of the "absence of the necessary conditions for the free

Chechen Republic is not involved in the calculation with control variables until the elections of 2011 as the information on one of the control indicators in the region (income) is provided only since 2010.

For the empirical part's realization it was decided to calculate the multiple regressions with the inclusion of the interaction effects between the independent variables and the indicator of the status of subunits. For the operationalization of the latter the dummy was introduced. The code "1" was assigned to the region with the status of the republic, "0" – to all other entities. Further, this dummy variable was divided by the share of the Russian population in the region in order to reflect the ethnic component in the final indicator.

Analysis

Considering the history of the federal relations' development and, in particular, the beginning of the unification of legal space in 1999, it was decided to begin the study from the analysis of the parliamentary elections in the year mentioned. Here the dependent variable is the votes share for the actor, which is regarded as the "party of power" of that period - the movement "Unity" (more precisely, the logit-alternative of the variable).

Data on the amount of financial aid are the information for 1998, and the chronological framework of the selection of numerical indicators for calculating the effective number of candidates in gubernatorial elections are for the period from 1995 to 1999 (taking into account that regional electoral processes were held prior to or simultaneously with the federal ones).

To construct the variable "Status", in particular, to account for its ethnic component in this period the results of the population census of 2002 were used.

The results of the multiple regression before and after including control variables are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Voting for the "Unity" in 1999.

Not including control variables			
	Estimate	Std. Error	Pr (> t)
(Intercept)	-1.1370	0.1137	9.51e-16
Index	-0.1836	0.2539	0.47171
Transfers	0.5307	0.1652	0.00189

citizens' will expression in the region". At that time there already had emerged a difficult situation which became the basis for the commencement of hostilities now known as the Second Chechen War.

Status	-0.4014	0.1364	0.00426
Index*Status	0.2901	0.1711	0.09375
Transfers*Status	0.3016	0.1266	0.01958

Number of observations: 86
Multiple R²: 0.5483, adjusted R²: 0.5201
p-value: 1.301e-12

Including control variables

	Estimate	Std. Error	Pr (> t)
(Intercept)	-0.97511	1.32672	0.46481
Index	-0.10092	0.22944	0.66140
Transfers	0.36121	0.21488	0.09723
Status	-0.76163	0.87808	0.38869
OVR	-0.02170	0.11277	0.84797
Urban population	0.15580	0.38145	0.68419
Age	-0.69664	1.25017	0.57914
Education	-5.99207	1.89568	0.00232
Income	0.16513	0.28834	0.56869
Index* Status	0.14099	0.17191	0.41493
Transfers*Status	0.44336	0.24351	0.07292
OVR*Status	-0.07560	0.08898	0.39844
Urban pop.*Status	0.76674	0.54180	0.16145
Age*Status	-1.14157	1.28433	0.37713
Education*Status	-1.94062	2.09228	0.35685
Income*Status	0.10005	0.21896	0.64914

Number of observations: 86
Multiple R²: 0.7187, adjusted R²: 0.6584
p-value: 7.425e-14

Source: author's calculations

The interpretation of the results is as follows. The table shows that during the initial analysis the only variable “working” in relation to the status of the region is the variable “Transfers”, reflecting the share of transfers in budget revenues. The coefficient of the interactive effect between the two measures is positive and significant at $p \leq 0.05$. That is, with increasing of the financial aid amounts, the effect of the entities’ status on the voting for the “Unity” is strengthening. And if the relationship between status and voting is negative (i.e., the republics with the lowest proportion of the Russians vote worse, as evidenced by the coefficient of the variable “Status”) in case the share of transfers in regional revenues is 0, then, after looking at

the marginal effect's graph (Figure 1 in Appendix) it becomes more obvious that the increase in the share of transfers change this trend in the opposite direction. In other words, with increasing of financial aid amounts, republics with the lowest proportion of the Russians better vote for the party of power.

However, it is quite a facile decision to make such conclusions at the initial stage since it is necessary to see whether the situation identified changes with adding the control variables. From the same Table 1 it becomes clear that, indeed, under the control of the results on the socio-economic characteristics of republics, the effect identified earlier disappears. The only significant indicator is the percentage of the population with higher education in the region. But its negative effect on the votes for the party of power is independent from the status of a subunit that does not provide anything substantial in terms of the objectives of the study. Thus, the results of the elections-1999 did not identify the determining factors of the electoral loyalty in republics.

As for the 2003 parliamentary elections, among the distinctive methodological features of data selection for the analysis of these electoral processes the shift of time frame for the effective number of candidates should be mentioned. Thus, for the given period the effective number of candidates during the gubernatorial elections is limited to the indicators of 2000 – 2003 years. The results are presented below.

Table 2. Voting for the “United Russia” in 2003.

Not including control variables			
	Estimate	Std. Error	Pr (> t)
(Intercept)	-0.823112	0.111721	1.23e-10
Index	0.342798	0.144075	0.0197
Transfers	0.304339	0.169689	0.0766
Status	-0.064506	0.094581	0.4972
Index*Status	0.411919	0.069231	6.35e-08
Transfers*Status	0.004304	0.099227	0.9655
Number of observations: 88 Multiple R ² : 0.5461, adjusted R ² : 0.5184 p-value: 7.407e-13			
Including control variables			
	Estimate	Std. Error	Pr (> t)
(Intercept)	-2.47313	1.65676	0.140267
Index	0.28588	0.14250	0.048932

Transfers	0.23966	0.22935	0.299842
Status	1.22137	0.92396	0.190772
OVR	0.10323	0.09626	0.287450
Urban population	-0.04215	0.46083	0.927396
Age	-0.27773	1.33291	0.835587
Education	-2.05268	1.74079	0.242566
Income	0.38366	0.29673	0.200534
Index* Status	0.51094	0.13862	0.000462
Transfers*Status	-0.10428	0.19738	0.599037
OVR*Status	-0.12240	0.07264	0.096718
Urban pop.*Status	-0.47068	0.52196	0.370466
Age*Status	1.14258	0.92621	0.221723
Education*Status	-0.11392	1.47350	0.938611
Income*Status	-0.21321	0.19291	0.273075

Number of observations: 87
Multiple R²: 0.6051, adjusted R²: 0.5154
p-value: 1.662e-08

Source: author's calculations

Before the inclusion of control variables, as can be seen from the table above, the only significant interactive effect is the one between the status and the index of regional elites' consolidation ($p \leq 0.001$). Its coefficient is positive, that suggests an increase in the influence of the status on the voting with an increase of the index measure. The marginal effect graph (Figure 2) allows us to know the nature of this relation: the more stable the "political machine" in the republics, the better they vote in 2003 for the party of power. Moreover, the identified tendency survives with the addition of the control variables to the analysis, though weakens a little (the significance level is slightly decreased) (Figure 3).

It is noteworthy that the calculations with control variables (which hypothetically complement the index of regional elites' consolidation as the characteristics of "political machines") in 2003 did not reveal significant results of their interaction with status. Probably, this may indicate that in this period the "political machine" actually took place, but was based more on the strength of the regional heads, on their popularity (for example, the effect of the latter on federal elections results was found by O. Reuter (Reuter, 2013)).

Thus, the study of the elections 2003 confirmed the hypothesis about the influence of the features of the internal political systems in the republics on their electoral loyalty. And

considering that the end of the power vertical formation was around 2004 (with the abolition of gubernatorial elections), it can be assumed that in the course of further electoral processes the identified trend will only strengthen.

Unlike the study of the previous parliamentary electoral processes, in the analysis of the 2007 elections the measure of the effective number of candidates was taken during the period from 2000 to 2005, and the information about the ethnic composition of the region represents the results of the population census of 2010. It was decided to take the 2010 census data since this period is chronologically closer to the analyzed electoral processes. There were the exceptions of the Aginsk Buryat and the Ust-Ordyn Buryat Autonomous Districts, which still managed to vote in 2007 as separate entities, but are not presented as such in the census of 2010. For these cases, the analysis of the 2007 elections included the results of the census of 2002.

Also, there were some regions excluded from the analysis (besides the main exceptions): the Taimyr (Dolgan-Nenets), the Evenk, the Koryak, and the Komi-Permyatski Autonomous Districts. The reason for this was the lack of data for these regions in connection with the regions' unification process that began in 2005. The calculation results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Voting for the "United Russia" in 2007.

Not including control variables			
	Estimate	Std. Error	Pr (> t)
(Intercept)	-0.1025	0.1497	0.495457
Index	0.5975	0.2042	0.004490
Transfers	1.1172	0.2638	6.18e-05
Status	0.5814	0.1306	2.79e-05
Index*Status	-0.3526	0.0772	1.82e-05
Transfers*Status	-0.5072	0.1310	0.000224
Number of observations: 84			
Multiple R ² : 0.6914, adjusted R ² : 0.6716			
p-value: < 2.2e-16			
Including control variables			
	Estimate	Std. Error	Pr (> t)
(Intercept)	-0.325656	2.120407	0.878401
Index	0.418801	0.161497	0.011665
Transfers	0.041158	0.305865	0.893360
Status	-6.428183	1.801417	0.000669
OVR	0.004236	0.109643	0.969295

Urban population	-0.224688	0.464101	0.629869
Age	-1.008908	1.626618	0.537198
Education	-2.480593	1.479489	0.098270
Income	0.261262	0.348474	0.456042
Index* Status	1.514767	0.272179	4.97e-07
Transfers*Status	1.675427	0.390844	5.94e-05
OVR*Status	-0.069428	0.070495	0.328232
Urban pop.*Status	-1.808891	0.551207	0.001641
Age*Status	5.766392	1.307692	3.84e-05
Education*Status	-2.027270	1.365799	0.142416
Income*Status	1.032488	0.312424	0.001529

Number of observations: 83
Multiple R²: 0.8005, adjusted R²: 0.7559
p-value: < 2.2e-16

Source: author's calculations

As in the analysis of the previous parliamentary elections, the initial results of calculations in 2007 showed a change in the voting for the party of power depending on the status of the subunits and their political systems. However, if in 2003 this interactive effect had a positive direction, in 2007 the trend reversed. If at zero degree of regional elites' consolidation republics with the lowest proportion of the Russians vote better than other regions, then with the increase of the political systems' index the influence of the status on voting becomes negative and strengthens with the consolidation of regional regimes (Figure 4). The same pattern is observed when considering the interactive effect between status and transfers (Figure 5): with the increase of financial aid amount the influence of status on the votes for the party of power becomes negative. That is, the republics receiving big sums from the federal center in 2007 voted worse for the "United Russia", than with the absence of large cash infusions.

But it is interesting that the results vary somewhat with the addition of the control variables. So, for example, the effect of status on voting for the party of power is changing its direction depending both on the degree of regional elites' consolidation and on the amount of financial aid. With the increase of these two indicators, the support for the "United Russia" in republics is growing, though it does not reach a positive mark in the case of the most powerful political systems or the maximally subsidized regions (see Figures 6, 7).

Perhaps this effect can be explained by the influence of other factors in the republics. For example, the interactions between status and the age composition, income and level of

urbanization in the region became significant. The greater proportion of the population over the working age in the republics, the better these regions vote for the party of power, though, according to the marginal effect graph (Figure 8) this finding indicates only a reduction of oppositional sentiment (the effect of status does not become positive, even with the maximum possible proportion of the older population). Increasing revenues and decreasing the level of urbanization in regions also have a positive impact on the status effect. In this case, unlike the situation with age, these indicators do not just weaken the opposition, but also change the negative impact of status (republics vote worse than other regions) to the positive one (republics vote better) (see Figures 9, 10).

Thus, the results of the 2007 parliamentary elections in republics depend on the stability of regional political systems and a range of socio-economic characteristics.

In the study of the 2011 elections the chronological framework for the index of regional elites' consolidation remained unchanged from the previous analysis of the electoral processes. Data on the ethnic composition of regions, as well as in the case of the last electoral cycle, are the results of the 2010 census. But there was an additional exclusion of observations due to the continuation of regions' unification process. So, the Aginsk Buryat and the Ust-Ordyn Buryat Autonomous Districts were not included into the analysis. The first mentioned region, joining the Chita Region, became a part of the new entity – the Zabaikalye Territory, and the second one merged in the Irkutsk Region. The results are in Table 4.

Table 4. Voting for the “United Russia” in 2011.

Not including control variables			
	Estimate	Std. Error	Pr (> t)
(Intercept)	-0.67045	0.17131	0.000197
Index	0.42082	0.26330	0.114134
Transfers	0.81963	0.34515	0.020086
Status	0.23973	0.11705	0.043994
Index*Status	0.44915	0.05845	4.41e-11
Transfers*Status	-0.30176	0.13585	0.029308
Number of observations: 82			
Multiple R ² : 0.6878, adjusted R ² : 0.6673			
p-value: < 2.2e-16			
Including control variables			
	Estimate	Std. Error	Pr (> t)
(Intercept)	-2.91566	3.42543	0.3977

Index	0.51165	0.29616	0.0887
Transfers	0.59830	0.52132	0.2552
Status	0.31910	2.21825	0.8861
OVR	0.15354	0.16432	0.3535
Urban population	-1.36456	0.83937	0.1088
Age	-1.85668	2.04264	0.3667
Education	0.62199	2.07848	0.7657
Income	0.57770	0.51992	0.2705
Index* Status	0.22001	0.22391	0.3294
Transfers*Status	0.04506	0.45106	0.9207
OVR*Status	-0.06563	0.09267	0.4813
Urban pop.*Status	-0.05425	0.63166	0.9318
Age*Status	1.29089	1.65882	0.4392
Education*Status	0.33253	1.49745	0.8249
Income*Status	-0.07810	0.33887	0.8184

Number of observations: 82
Multiple R²: 0.7426, adjusted R²: 0.6841
p-value: 4.356e-14

Source: author's calculations

Presented results show the effect of the transfers' amount and the stability of the subnational political regime on voting, depending on the status of the entity, if we do not consider the socio-economic characteristics of the regions. However, in the case of financial aid the interactive effect is negative (Figure 12), whereas the degree of regional elites' consolidation has positive effect on voting in republics (Figure 11). Thus, we can say that, if not to take into account socio-economic indicators of the regions, republics with the most consolidated elites (stable rule of the subunit's head) will provide better results to the party of power. At the same time, the receiving of large transfer amounts leads to weakening of the effect of the status on voting; although it does not change the situation radically (republics still vote better than other regions).

Nevertheless, the inclusion of control variables in the analysis completely neutralized the results obtained at the initial stage and did not identify any other effects (whether the correlation of voting in republics with the age or with the agricultural orientation).

Conclusion

Analysis of the Russian ethnic subunits' voting during federal elections for the party of power has revealed the following tendencies. First, for all the analyzed electoral processes, with some

exceptions, the dominant factor influencing the outcome of elections in the republics is the strength of their political systems. The more consolidated and stable is the regional regime in the republics, the better is voting for the party of power there. Herewith, the addition of control variables reflecting socio-economic characteristics of the regions, usually, did not eliminate this effect and sometimes even increases it.

Second, along with the effect of regional elites' consolidation, the relationship of socio-economic indicators of regions with the status is also significant. With the increase in the share of population over the working age, of the rural population, and with the income growth electoral performance of the Kremlin forces in the republics is improving. These results allow us to connect the interpretation with the inclusion of the "political machines" mechanisms: citizens' belonging to a particular social group can be used as a resource for various manipulations (whether through the incentives or through the direct pressure). And coupled with the influence of political systems, the effect of socio-economic characteristics intuitively supports the conclusions of several studies on massive fraud in the federal electoral processes in Putin's Russia (Shpilkin, 2009; Kalinin, Mebane 2010).

However, the analysis of the 2011 elections, which are also known by fabricated character of their results (Kobak, Shpilkin, Pshenichnikov, 2012), did not reveal the trend observed in other electoral processes. Moreover, according to the calculations none of the factors had a significant effect on the voting in the republics.

The elections of 1999 also dropped out. Here, similarly, none of the interaction effects of variables with the status of the region is significant. Such a deviation of these two electoral cycles, presumably, can be associated with different institutional context in which they occurred. In the case of electoral processes in 1999 we can talk about the early days of the Putin regime and about the beginning of the power vertical alignment, about the relatively democratic institutions. All of this, perhaps, reflected in the spread of electoral preferences in the republics and the lack of relationship with any political or social-economic characteristics.

The 2011 elections took place in the context of social activity intensification, enhancement of civic participation (the famous blogger Alexey Navalny's campaign against the "party of crooks and thieves", the development and distribution of the various voting strategies against the party of power, the emergence of the independent observers movement, etc.), that could also mitigate the effect of regional "political machines".

Nevertheless, we can talk about the confirmation of the hypothesis about the impact of political regimes in the republics on the increasing of their electoral loyalty. At the same time, the hypothesis about the relationship between the financial aid received by the national-territorial units and their results for the party of power cannot be confirmed, as the impact of an interactive effect between the status and transfers is episodic.

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Appendix

Figure 1. Marginal effect of status on voting for the party of power in 1999 depending on transfers' amount (without control variables).

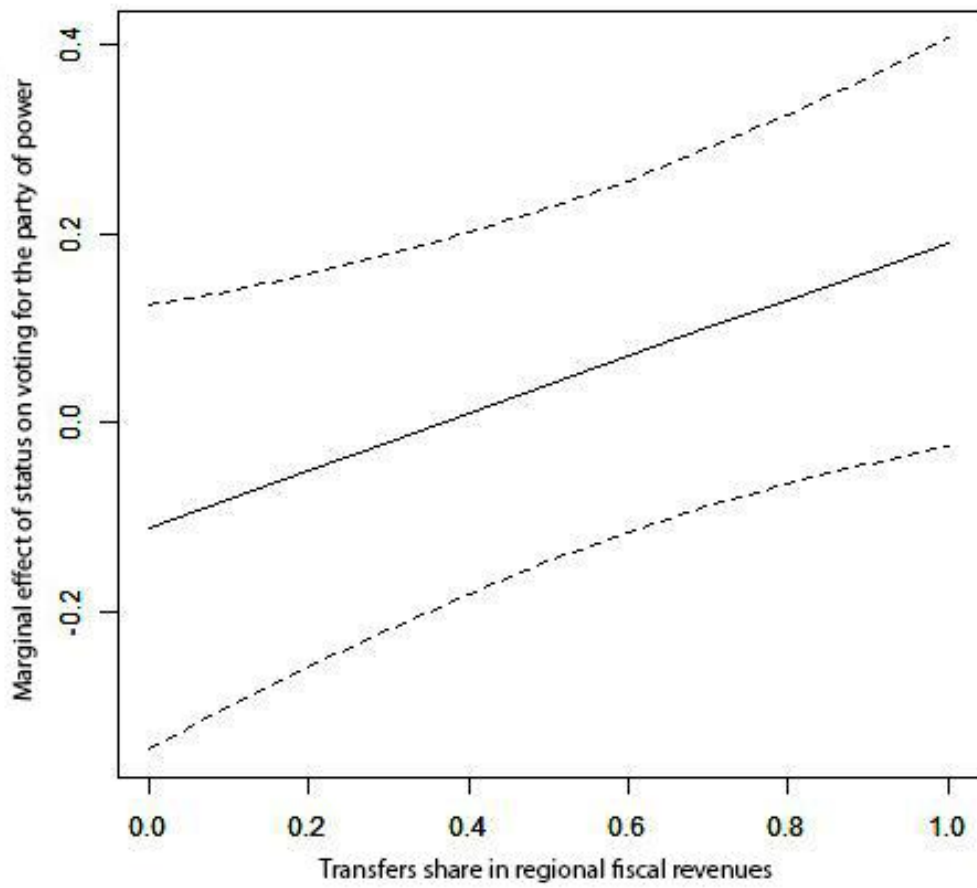


Figure 2. Marginal effect of status on voting for the party of power in 2003 depending on the degree of regional elites' consolidation (without control variables).

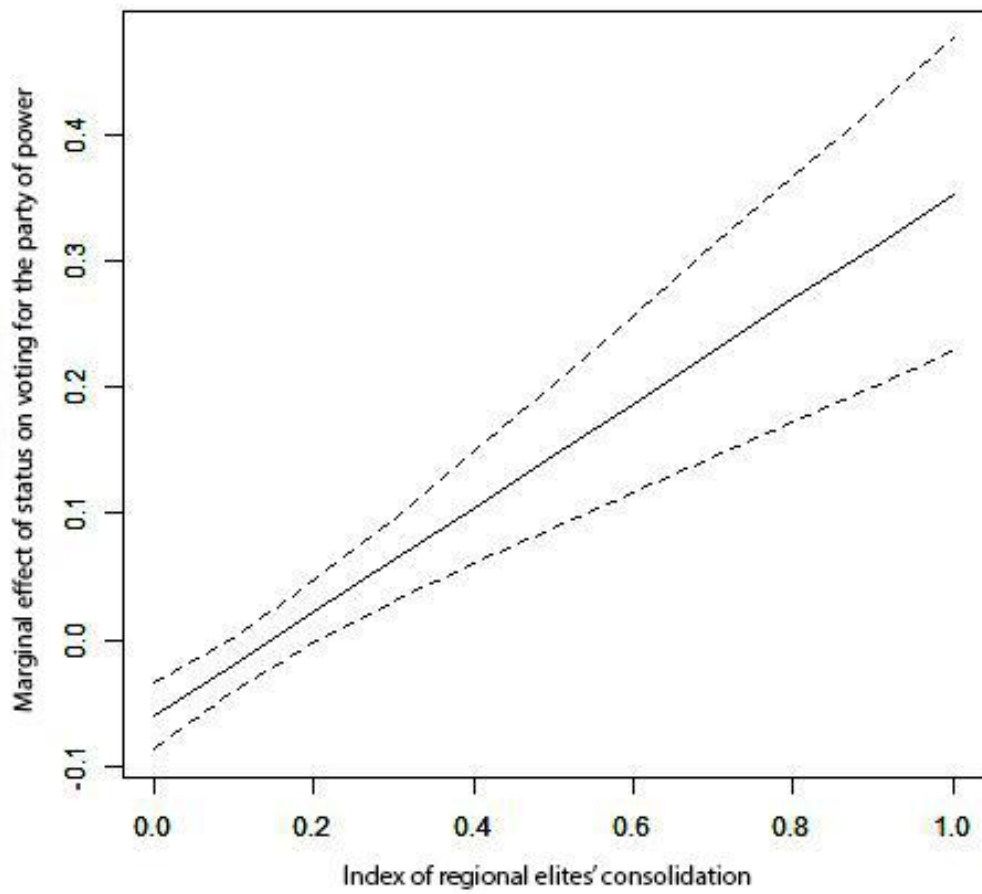


Figure 3. Marginal effect of status on voting for the party of power in 2003 depending on the degree of regional elites' consolidation (including control variables).

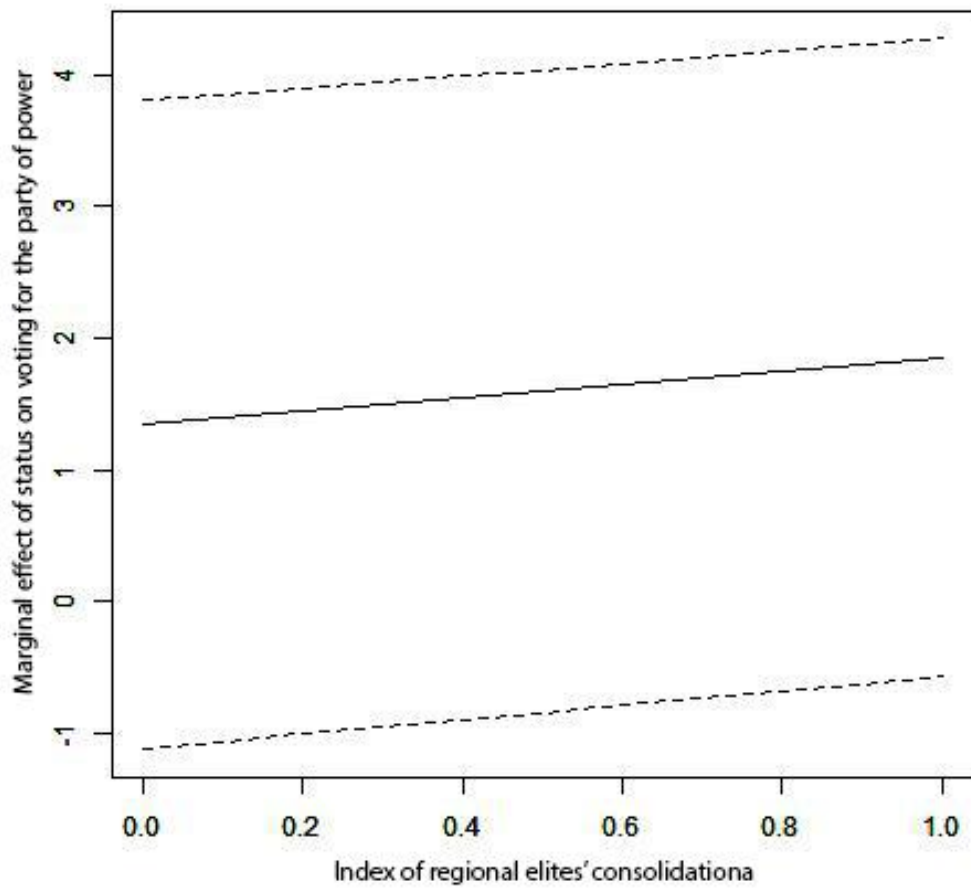


Figure 4. Marginal effect of status on voting for the party of power in 2007 depending on the degree of regional elites' consolidation (without control variables).

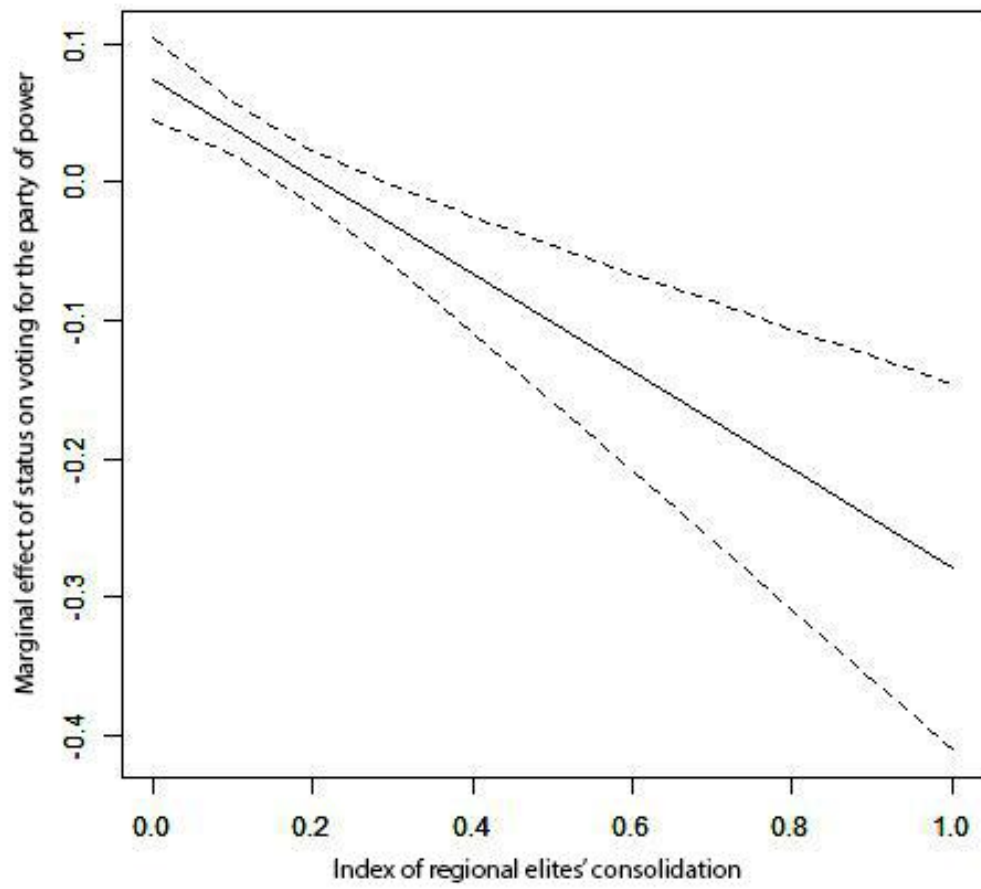


Figure 5. Marginal effect of status on voting for the party of power in 2007 depending on transfers' amount (without control variables).

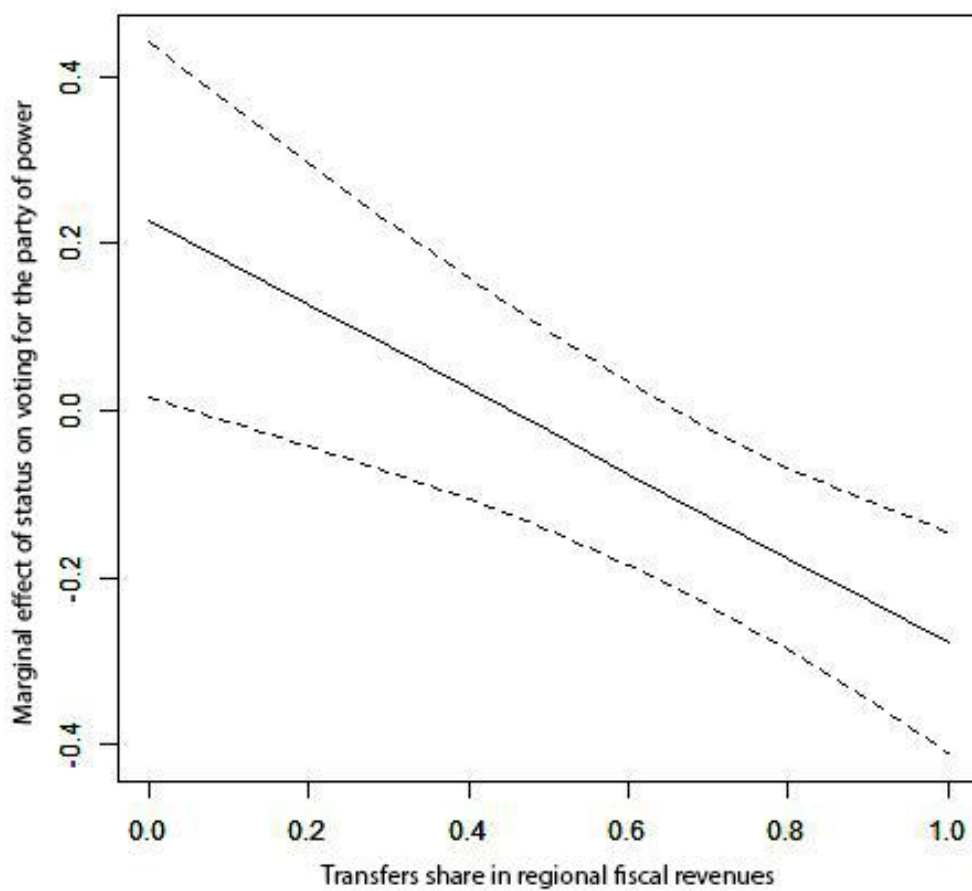


Figure 6. Marginal effect of status on voting for the party of power in 2007 depending on the degree of regional elites' consolidation (including control variables).

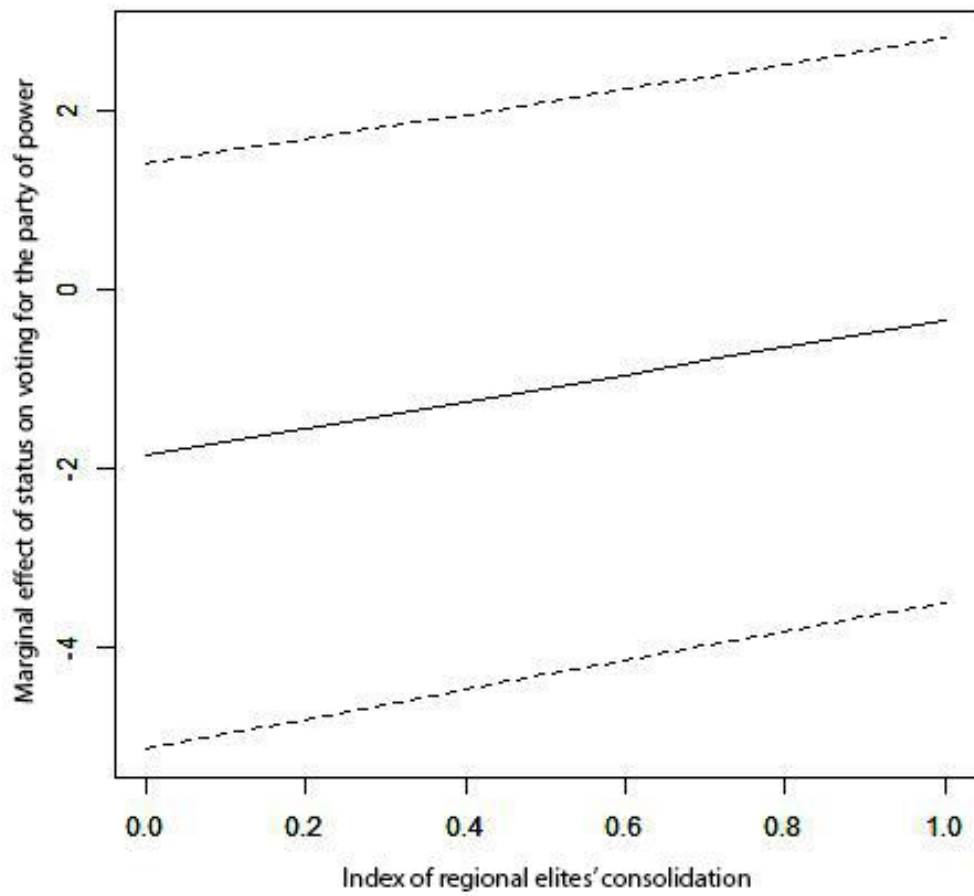


Figure 7. Marginal effect of status on voting for the party of power in 2007 depending on transfers' amount (including control variables).

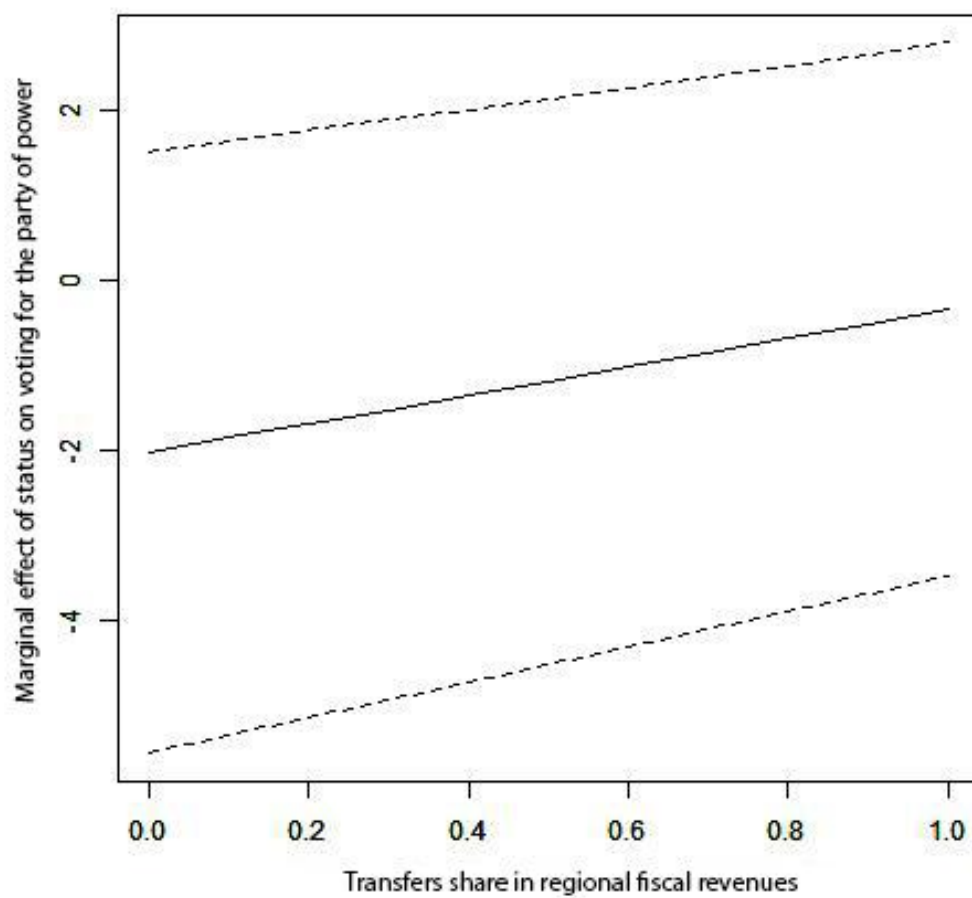


Figure 8. Marginal effect of status on voting for the party of power in 2007 depending on the age of population.

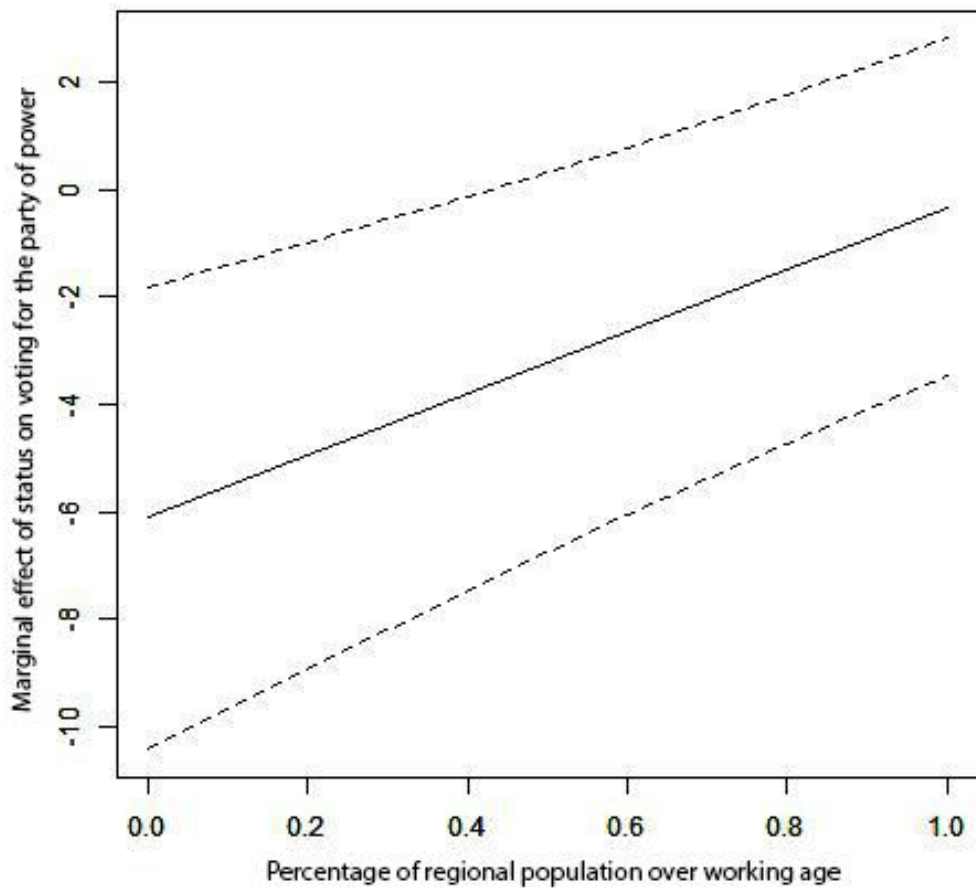


Figure 9. Marginal effect of status on voting for the party of power in 2007 depending on the level of urbanization.

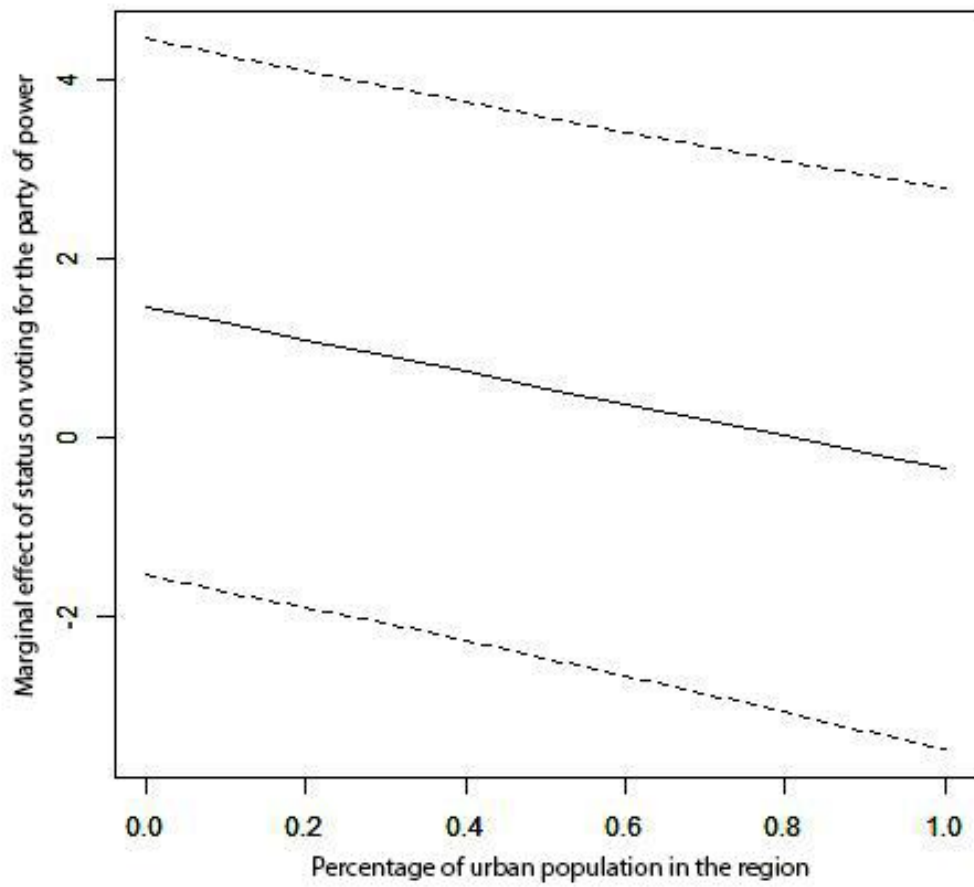


Figure 10. Marginal effect of status on voting for the party of power in 2007 depending on the average monthly personal income.

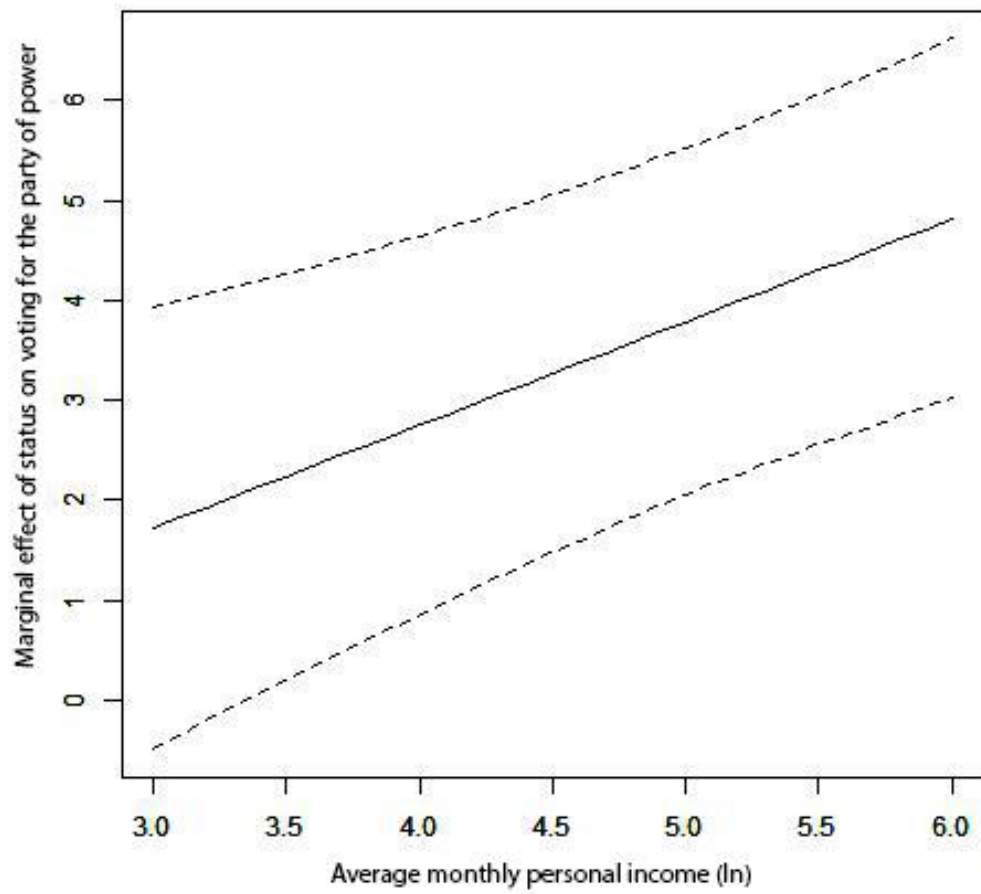


Figure 11. Marginal effect of status on voting for the party of power in 2011 depending on the degree of regional elites' consolidation (without control variables).

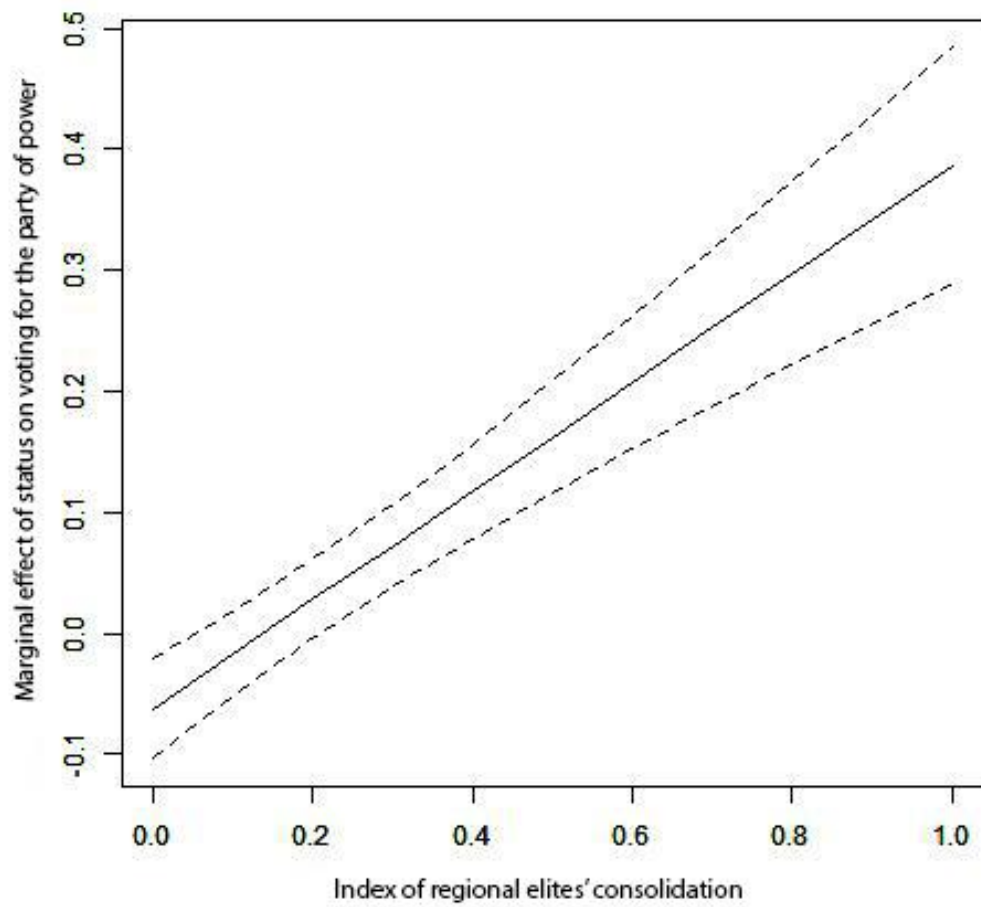


Figure 12. Marginal effect of status on voting for the party of power in 2011 depending on transfers' amount (without control variables).

