

# **The electoral prize of Russian ethnic federalism: Do republics make sense for the Kremlin?**

Shcherbak Andrey, Sokolov Boris  
(LSCR HSE)

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# Introduction

- Russian ethnic federalism
  - The part of the Soviet legacy that was never revised
- The ‘pendulum swing’ – from Yeltsin to Putin
- Putin’s regime: Russian federalism is dead
  - Russia is de facto unitary state
- Why not to abandon republics?
  - Republics – into ‘regular regions’?
  - Pre-Soviet political geography

# Introduction

- Russian ethnic federalism has certain political/ electoral value for the Kremlin
- Republics can bring more votes to (any) incumbent in the Kremlin
- A latent feature of the republican status, not due to social and economic differences
- The republican status grants some privileges to the titular ethnic group, the 'organized' ethnicity facilitates political mobilization along the ethnic lines

# Theoretical framework

- Political ethnicity in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia
  - the role of administrative hierarchy among ethnic and non-ethnic regions, privileges and benefits of the republican status, titular minorities in the USSR, ethnic mobilization in the late Soviet period, ethnic conflicts across the post-Soviet space, the asymmetry of Russian federalism under Yeltsin, the rise of ethnic Russian nationalism, and Putin's recentralization policy (e.g., Martin 2001, Gorenburg 2001, 2003, Derlugian 2005, Stepan 2000, Treisman 1997; Ross, 2005).
- Comparison of the patterns of political behavior of Russians and the titular ethnic minority groups, more specifically – electoral mobilization in Russian ethnic republics

# Theoretical framework

- Russians – up to 81% of population (the 2010 census), all ethnic minorities are small
- 21 ethnic republics, titular minorities
- Some scholars argued that the impact of ethnic minorities on Russian politics is insignificant
- Recent research - ethnic minorities seem to have much higher rates of electoral mobilization than Russians

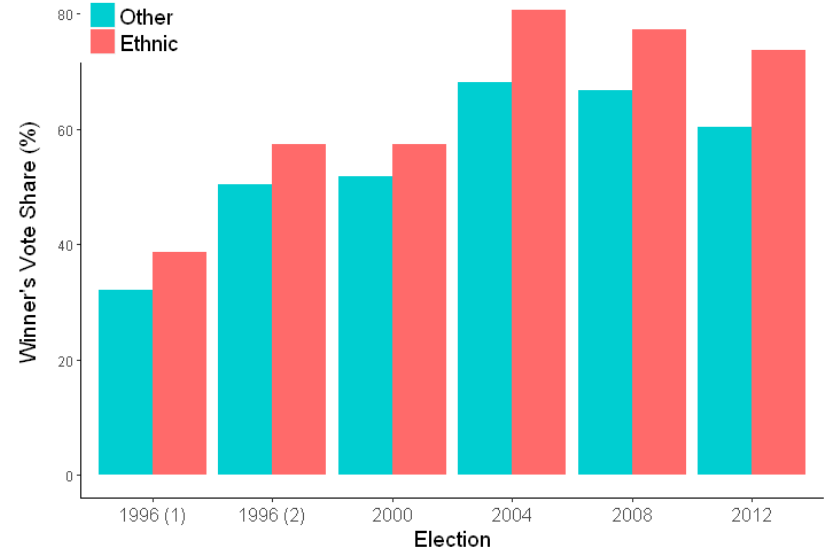
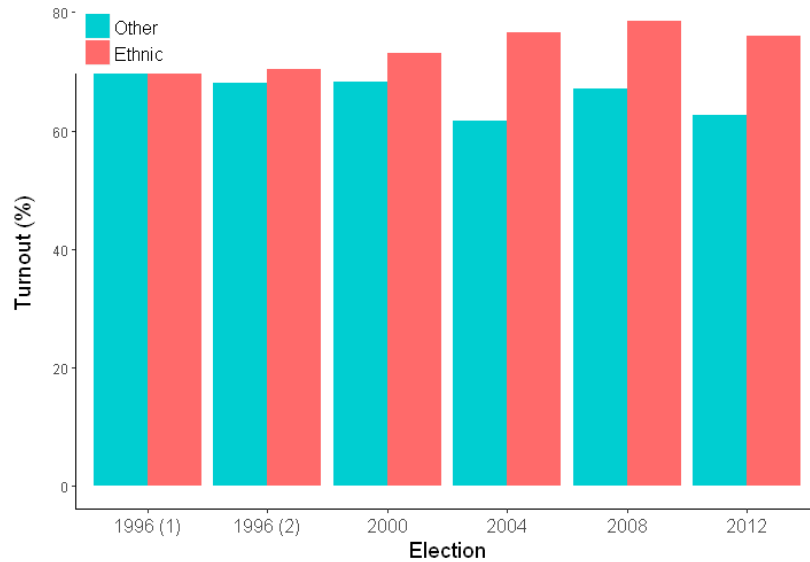
# Theoretical framework

- Previous studies applied to such theoretical frameworks as ethnic minority representation, patronage politics, dominant party regimes and ethnic federalism (Goodnow et al. 2014; Goodnow and Moser, 2012; Hale 2003; White, Saikkonen 2016; Saikkonen 2015; White, 2015).
  - Ethnicity and failed democratization,
  - Ethnicity and electoral manipulations,
  - Ethnicity and dominant party regime,
  - Elections and ethnic electoral machines.
- Robust and positive association between ethnicity and electoral support for the party of power/ incumbent on national elections in Russia.

# Theoretical framework

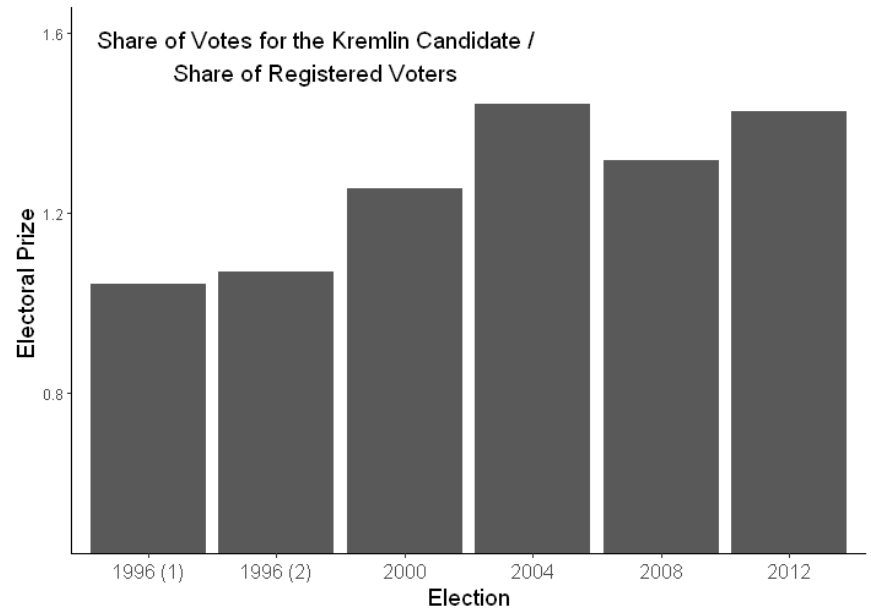
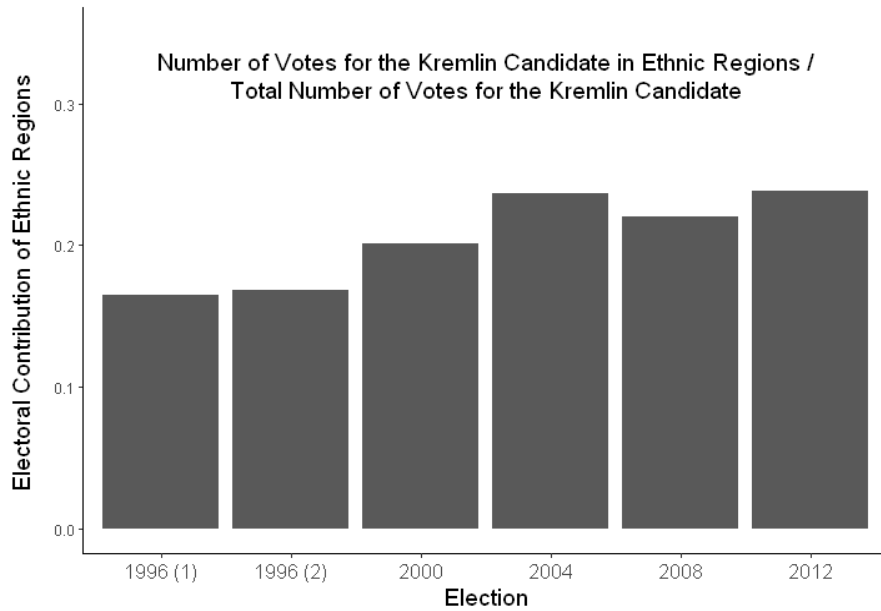
- If the Kremlin had derived all republics of their status, automatically it would have lost too many votes. Vice versa, if all regions were given the republican status, the Kremlin would have harvest a lot of additional votes.
- RQ - *what is the electoral value of Russian federalism for the Kremlin?*
- We aim to estimate the value of the 'electoral prize' of ethnic federal structure for the Kremlin.

# Winner's Vote Share and Turnout in the Russian Regions, 1996-2012. Ethnic Regions vs. All Other Regions.

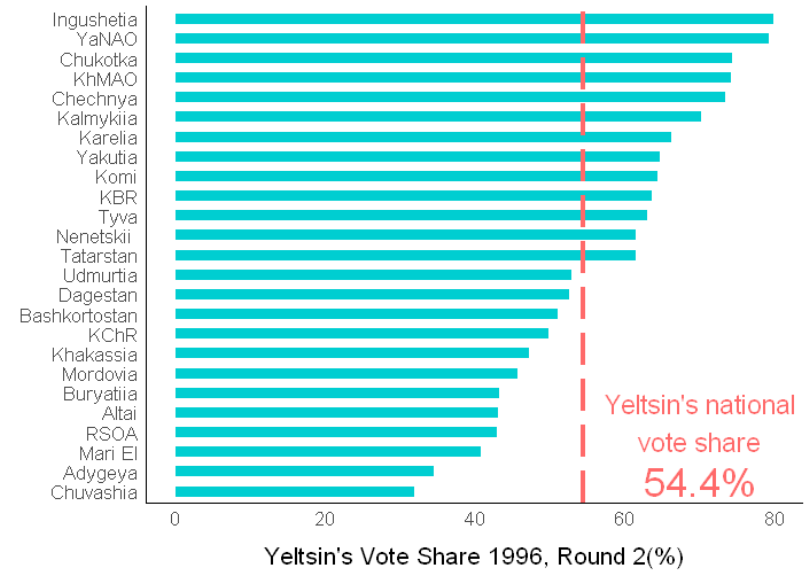
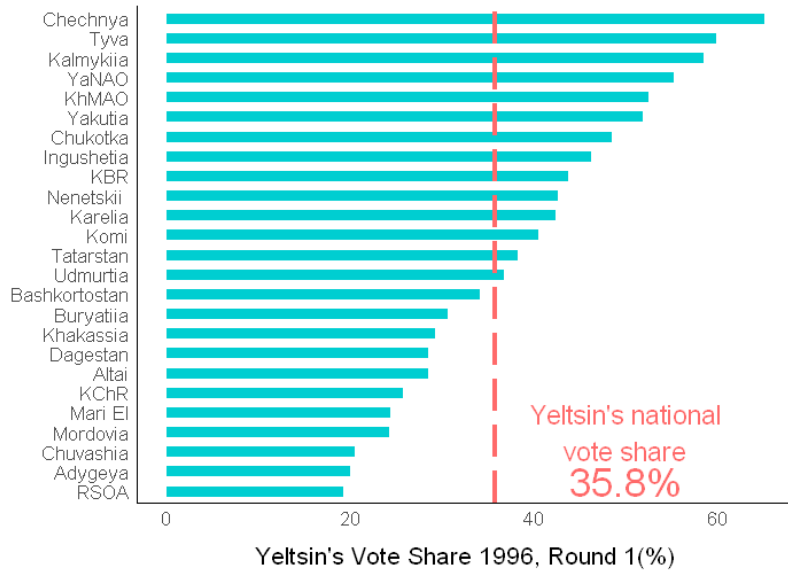




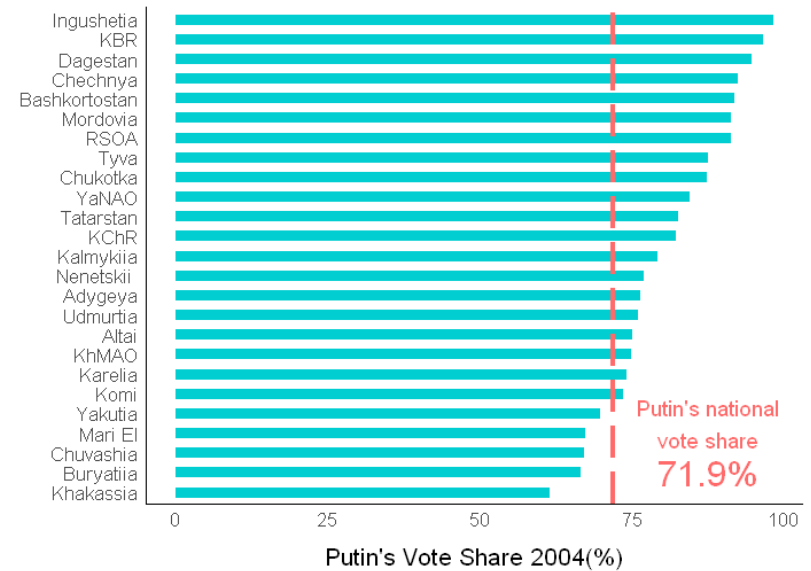
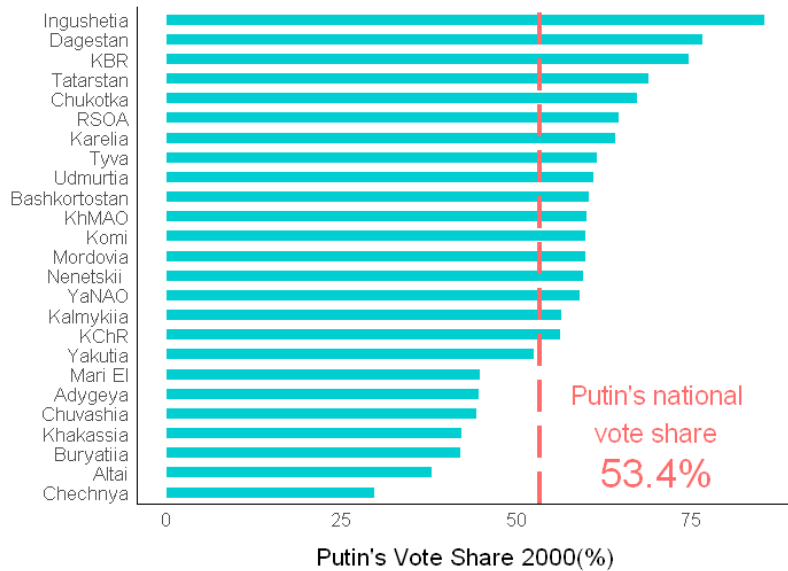
# Electoral Contribution of Ethnic Regions, 1996-2012



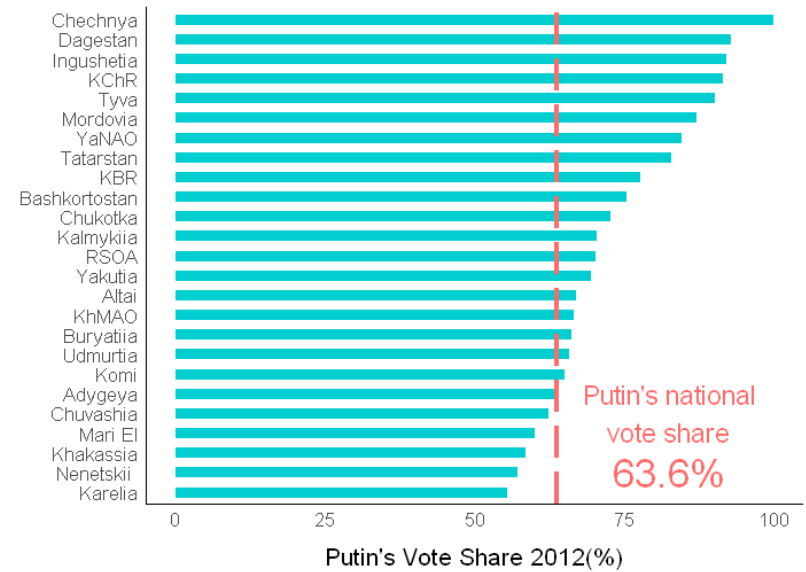
# Winner's Vote Share in Different Ethnic Regions of Russia



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# Predicting Putin's Vote Share and Turnout. 2012 Presidential Election

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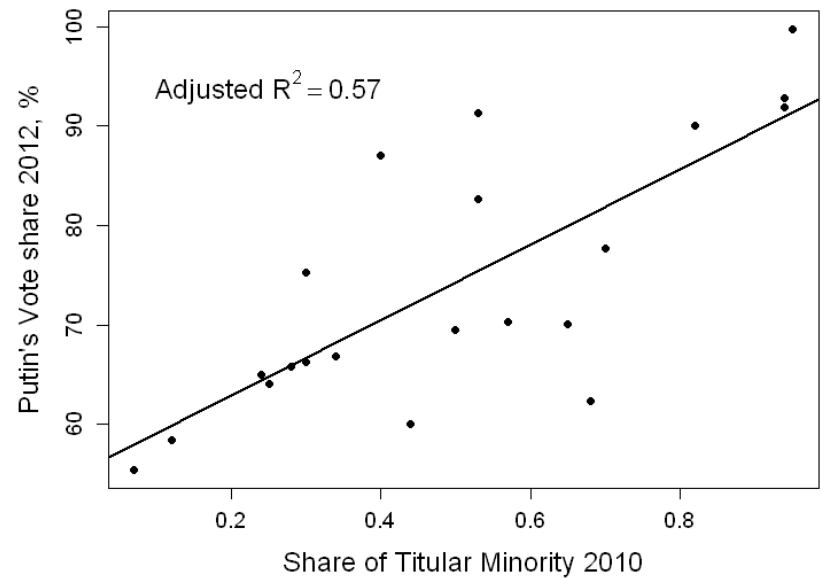
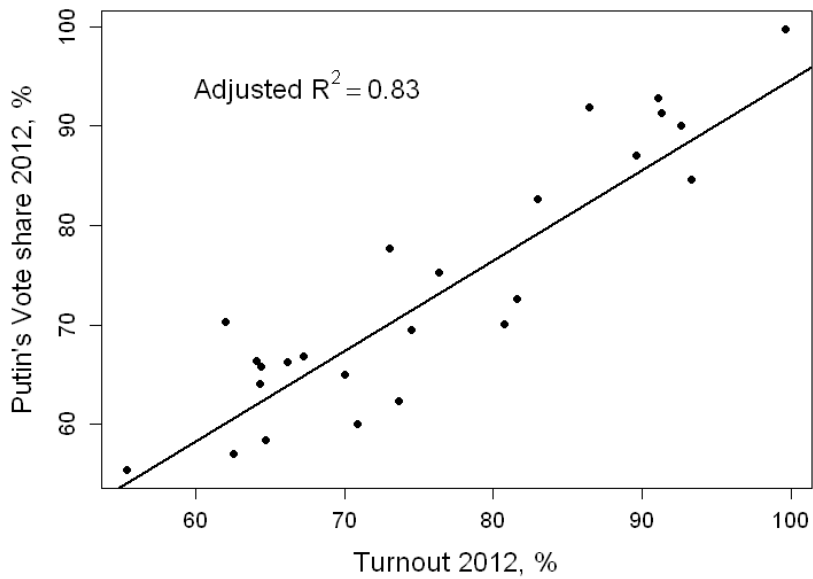
	Putin's Vote Share 2012 (log)		Turnout 2012 (log)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Consumption Prices	-0.006 (0.021)	-0.006 (0.019)	-0.011 (0.017)	-0.012 (0.017)
Share of Rural Population	0.004* (0.002)	0.002* (0.001)	0.004* (0.002)	0.002* (0.001)
GRP 2011 (log)	0.021 (0.016)	0.015 (0.013)	0.022 (0.015)	0.016 (0.012)
Income Per Capita 2011 (log)	-0.016 (0.078)	-0.011 (0.067)	0.015 (0.073)	0.025 (0.062)
Ethnic Region	0.144*** (0.039)		0.146*** (0.038)	
Share of Russians		-0.380*** (0.062)		-0.352*** (0.052)
Constant	4.539 (2.546)	4.939* (2.257)	4.770* (1.953)	5.226*** (1.758)
N	83	83	83	83

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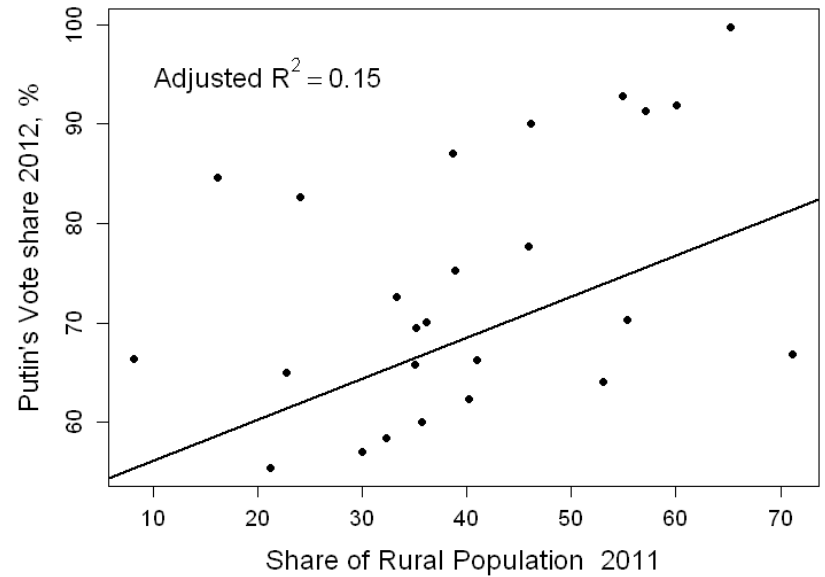
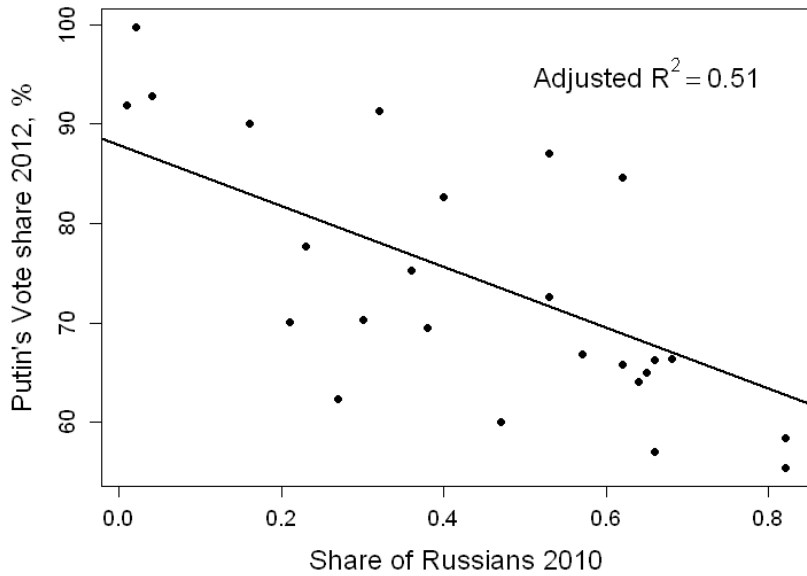
\*p < .05; \*\*p < .01; \*\*\*p < .005

Entries are OLS estimates with Huber-White robust standard errors in parentheses

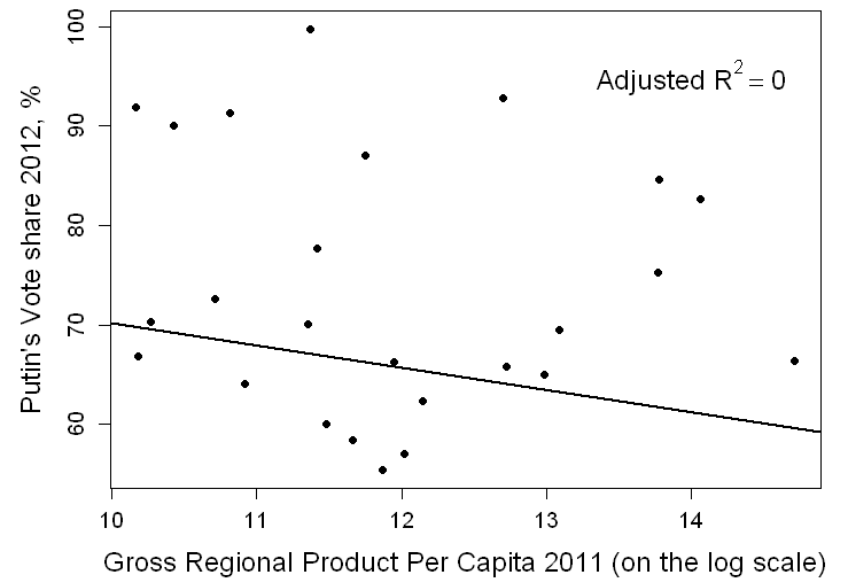
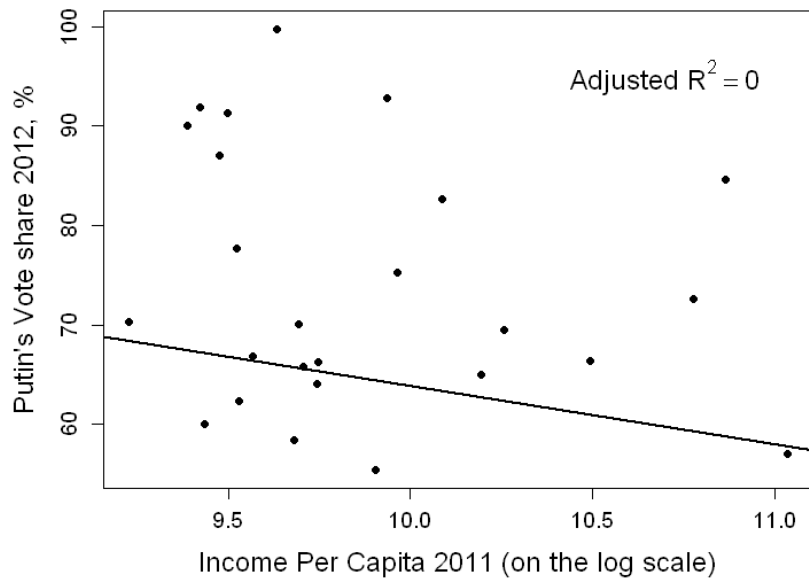
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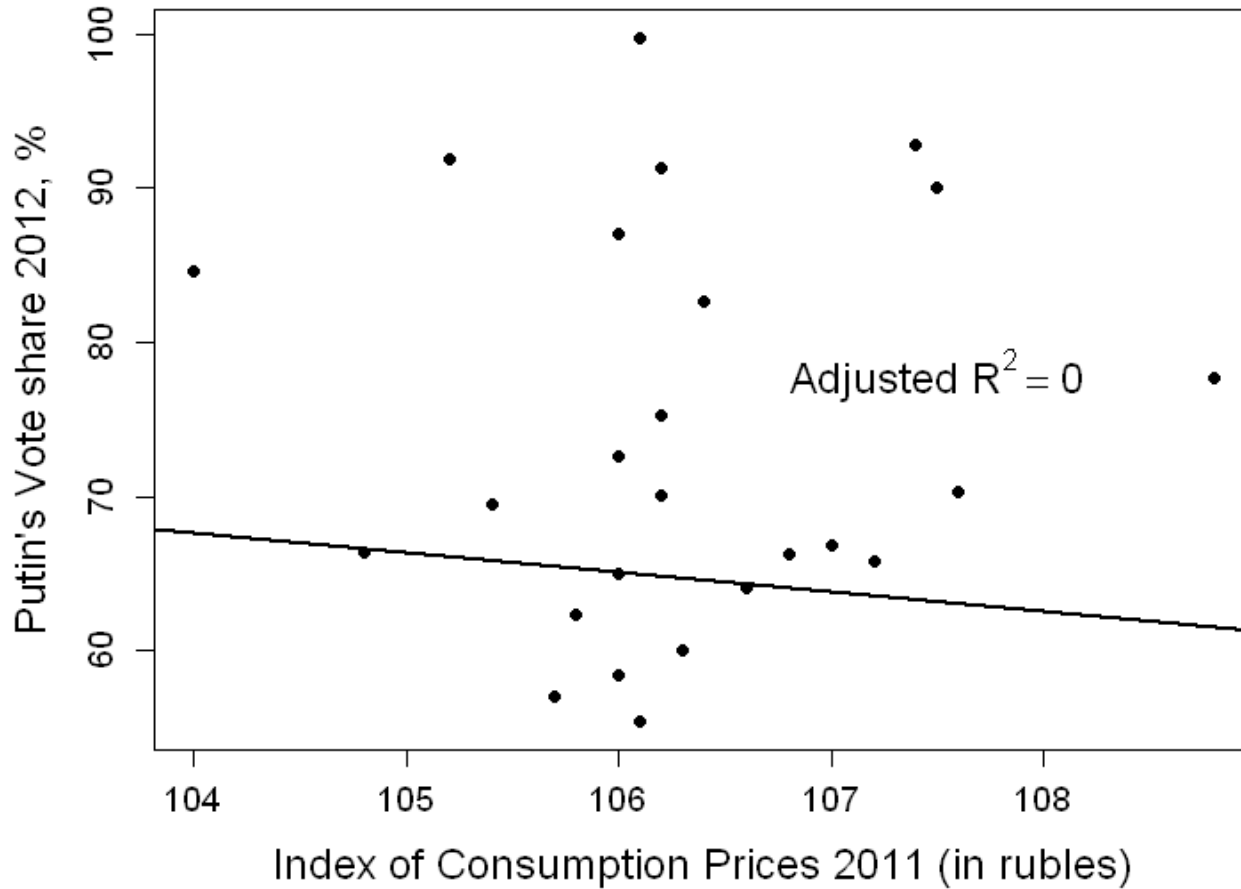


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# Key Findings

- Ethnic regions show consistently higher electoral support for the Kremlin candidates than other regions of the RF throughout the whole history in post-Soviet Russia.
- However, the ranking of ethnic regions according to their relative “pro-Kremlinness” was changed significantly in the early years of the Putin administration but since that time it remains more or less constant. Currently the electoral fortress of the regime consists of Islamic region of North Caucasus and Volga-Ural region + Mordovia, Tyva, Yamal, and Chukotka.
- Socio-economic differences do not explain the variation in the level of support for the Kremlin presidential candidates among ethnic regions of Russia.
- But ethnic composition does!: (a) The higher share of titular nationality and (b) the lower share of the Russian population in a region then (c) the higher support for the Kremlin candidate.
- This resonates well with the finding by Goodnow et al. (2014) and Goodnow and Moser (2012) that in more homogenous ethnic regions where a large national majority presents the level of electoral manipulation is higher: the Kremlin uses ethnic regions to get additional votes in a clearly unfair way.
- Do other potential mechanisms of electoral exploitation of ethnic regions by the Kremlin exist? What are the benefits for local elites?

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!**