

# Businessperson Deputies and Party Cohesion: Evidence from the Russian State Duma

Party Politics

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## Abstract

Previous explorations of Russia's mixed electoral system uncovered conflicting results on party discipline in legislative voting. The effect in recent convocations is modest, with single-member district deputies expressing slightly less factional loyalty than those elected under proportional representation. However, factors other than electoral mandate may also affect party cohesion. In particular, a definitive connection exists between holding public office in Russia and the opportunity to maximize personal profit-seeking. Using individual-level reading voting data on budgetary bills from the 7th State Duma, I examine how the profit-seeking behavior of deputies who previously held business positions at the executive level influences party cohesion. I find significant evidence that deputies with previous executive business positions defect from their party more frequently than those without. The effect is marginally greater for deputies elected from single-member districts rather than the party-list. These findings have greater implications for party cohesion and the involvement of businesspeople in national legislatures.

## Keywords

businesspeople, legislative institutions, party cohesion, Russia

## Introduction

Among the 10 deputies in the 7th State Duma who most frequently dissented from their party on budgetary bills are counted a man considered among the wealthiest residents of his federal subject; the owner of a billion-dollar dairy company; one among the five wealthiest members of the entire State Duma; a multi-millionaire with important positions in banking, investments, and gymnastics; the owner of, at any one point in time, various fuel, oil, and construction companies; and a man who not only co-owned a pharmacy chain, but also directed a stock exchange and owns a real-estate business. Together over the past 4 years, these six men<sup>1</sup> have on average voted in discord with their party on budgetary bills 35.2% of the time, while the mean across all other deputies was only 8.9%.

The considerable attention paid to party cohesion in influencing legislative politics has attracted a wealth of literature regarding what causes deviation from such strict voting behavior (Haspel et al., 1998; Kunicova, 2008). Though there is a strong consensus among scholars that institutional and electoral systems influence voting behavior at an individual level, non-institutional explanations

for this divergence are less understood. In fact, there has been almost no exploration of the extent to which personal business interests place deputies at odds with the interests of their party, despite, particularly in the Russian case, findings of corruption in gubernatorial elections (Sidorkin and Vorobyev, 2018) and the supposed “purchasability” of State Duma deputies, committee chairmanships, and even the introduction of legislation (Cheloukhine and King, 2007). Reuter and Szakonyi (2017) further discover that elite defections under autocracy are higher when individuals maintain wealth and rent collection methods independent of the regime, leading to inter-party switching during elections.

Considering these previous findings, there should be a significant effect of holding executive business positions

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on party cohesion, as businessperson deputies with those qualifications are more focused on ensuring economic prosperity in the short-term than on maintaining party connections. This should hold true specifically for individuals who held executive positions in companies before their successful elections, as such persons have more to gain from strengthening their business industries, ensuring relevant economic infrastructure, and increasing the likelihood of receiving state funding (Szakonyi, 2020) for projects.

In this study, roll-call voting data from the Russian State Duma will be combined with public business records in order to explore the roll of private business connections in promoting non-cohesive voting behavior. Although previous academic literature has explored the relationship between business and politics in Russia (Ortung, 2004; Pyle, 2011) with an emphasis on cronyism (Lamberova and Sonin, 2018), no prior research has established correlation between executive business positions and deviation from party voting. In order to build upon previous longitudinal studies of electoral mandates in Russia, I will specifically focus on all readings of budgetary legislation in the 7th State Duma. Budgetary bills are of particular interest to businessmen deputies who wish to redirect funding in a way beneficial to their firms (Szakonyi, 2020) and are therefore the type of bill where business and party interests are most likely to conflict.

Although my empirical focus is Russia, the implications of my findings are not specific to any particular country. The interests of businessmen deputies and career politicians are not necessarily aligned. Businessmen deputies often have different goals, including personal enrichment, and are less concerned with their long-term electoral prospects. Whenever this is true, their presence will undermine party cohesion. Additionally, the evidence that I provide here on the influence of electoral mandate on dominant party cohesion strengthens previous findings on the importance of institutions under authoritarian rule (Gandhi and Przeworski, 2007).

The remainder of the paper will proceed as such: first, I review the existing literature on businesspeople in legislatures and party cohesion, both in application to Russia and legislative institutions in general. I then provide a background on the historical and current political climate of both the State Duma and Russian party politics. After that, I present my empirical research design and methodological reasoning. Finally, I report my results and form a conclusion.

## Businesspeople in the legislature

Previous research has found numerous benefits to holding political connections for economic elites. These include increased operating profit margins in the Chinese National People's Congress (Truex, 2014) and general rent-seeking behavior for resource extraction in Central Asia (Markowitz, 2011). Several other reasons beyond immediate

personal gain have also been identified as encouraging businesspeople to enter the political area, such as an inability to rely on legal systems to secure property rights or enforce legal contracts (Li et al., 2006), as well as in order to reduce the instability that results from illegitimate elections (Chaves et al., 2015). Under Mubarak, businessmen competed in elections primarily for the purpose of obtaining immunity from prosecution, offering the regime a stabilizing form of redistribution (Blaydes, 2010). In the British House of Commons, obtaining an electoral seat offers a doubled return on life-time wealth (Eggers and Hainmueller, 2009). Cross-nationally, politically connected firms are estimated to receive a return of 1.3% from the parliamentary election of a close business associate (Faccio, 2006), with a greater effect for regimes with weaker electoral institutions.

Recent literature has attempted to explore similar questions with specific application to post-transition Russia. Lamberova and Sonin (2018) establish a significant and direct relationship between the inner circle of President Putin and the wealth of businessmen, while connections to presidential adversaries are found to have a significant negative relationship. Corruption has been extensively discovered at all political levels, with the primary intended outcomes being rent extraction. For example, Sidorkin and Vorobyev (2018) discover that corruption levels are higher closer to the end of appointed regional governors' political terms, as those officials calculate their continued ability to accumulate wealth from their office. Overall, estimates have placed the amount spent on bribing public officials at more than half a billion USD each month (Levin and Satarov, 2000), with corruption being long imbedded in both Russian society as well as the political and economic systems themselves (Cheloukhine and King, 2007).

This financial gain from holding office is not simply through bribery or the assumption of power, but also the implementation of pro-business policies, public funding for economic infrastructure, and the decrease of corporate taxes, as has been proven at the regional legislature level (Szakonyi, 2020). Businesspeople in the State Duma with specific sectoral ties have also been found to introduce legislation directly relevant to their industry of interest at a significantly higher rate than their peers (Chaisty, 2013). Additionally, "moonlighting politicians" across Europe, New Zealand, and South Africa have been known to pursue high-level private sector positions after election, presumably using their political status for financial gain (Geys and Mause, 2013). So, with all of the signs pointing toward highly pervasive corruption within and outside legislatures, shouldn't there be a definitive connection between those who pursued office for profit-seeking and the actual act of such?

Clearly, there is a demonstrable option for corruption when desired; the ability to focus on economic prosperity enables deputies to direct their legislative activity toward

short-term profit-seeking. The significant findings of corruption should imply that those undertaking such activities are doing so frequently, to the point of rising above any other usual commitments in the legislative process. Furthermore, the evidence of higher levels of rent-extraction when one perceives their remaining time in office to be short-lived also implies that individuals focused on economic self-benefit and corruptive activities are less focused on long-term party loyalty. As such, politicians with strong business connections and a desire to maximize the financial gain derived from their position should generally pursue whatever behavior ensures such benefits, regardless of possible concerns for the long-term.

### Electoral mandates and party cohesion

For institutionalized authoritarian regimes, previous scholarship has demonstrated that elite cohesion and co-optation have significant implications on durability. (Brownlee, 2007; Gandhi and Przeworski, 2007; Kailitz and Stockemer, 2017; Schedler, 2015; Smith, 2005). Ruling parties are a primary mechanism through which elite cohesion is enhanced, as they allow for unique access to patronage (Levitsky and Way, 2012)—not simply for elites themselves, but for their connections as well. Membership in these parties also ensures elite loyalty through career advancement for those committed to the long-term (Reuter and Turovsky, 2014). As mentioned previously, politicians with a desire to prioritize these short-term spoils of office should be less concerned with demonstrating this party commitment and more focused on their own personal enrichment.

Perhaps one of the more usual displays of long-term dedication to a career in politics is the expression of party cohesion in voting, as such processes are usually highly uniform and consistent discord from the party would be telling. For politicians whose election is based on placement on the party-list, voting in alignment with party leadership is a primary way in which loyalty, and thus assurance of re-election, can be expressed (Haspel et al., 1998). In the specific context of the Russian State Duma and the question of when dissonance arises, causal linkage has previously been found between economic elitism and defection from parties during legislative elections (Reuter and Szakonyi, 2017). Such a situation arises from elites prioritizing the acquisition of personal wealth over maintaining allegiance to their parties, which would otherwise assist with re-election. As follows, those with the most autonomous political resources are more likely to defect, as co-optation from long-term party commitment is perhaps less of an incentive than direct monetary gain.

In order to best explore party cohesion in Russia, one must look at the party that continuously holds a significant majority of local and national legislative seats. United Russia, the party in question, is perhaps the most well-known

case of strong party cohesion in the country today as a consequence of strict voting discipline imposed immediately upon its creation (Reuter, 2010). Comprising a strong majority of seats and with widely encompassing political and economic connections at all levels, United Russia has continued to consolidate its position as the dominant party in the country. In the case of United Russia specifically, this status of importance when combined with strong voting discipline enables the distribution of wealth to members; the party today is considered the primary method of patronage distribution in the State Duma (Reuter, 2010). Outside of United Russia, previous literature has emphasized that the capacity of Russian parliamentary parties to hold on to their members and to deliver relatively high levels of voting discipline has been a recognizable feature of Russian legislative politics (Chaisty, 2005).

The question then arises of whether there is in fact variation in loyalty within each party. If deputies receive financial gain from “playing by the rules,” why should businesspeople want to defect? Aside from holding wealth outside of politics as described above, some have argued that Russia’s mixed electoral system, with both single member districts (SMD) and proportional representation (PR) systems, creates a distinction between deputies beholden to local and party interests (Thames, 2001). Logically, this should arise from the fact that the greater the concern of re-election, the more voting behavior is defined by electoral strategies and less by either personal opinions or party leadership (Haspel et al., 1998). Conversely, individuals whose election is based on party-list inclusion should, as previously described, express loyalty through following voting discipline.

With that being said, previous studies on party cohesion have found differing evidence for the hypothesis that mandate type affects cohesion. Kunicova and Remington (2008) discovered only a modest difference between the cohesion of SMD and PR deputies, while the earlier research of Thames (2001) seemed to indicate a slightly more significant impact. In any case, the absence of definitive findings leads me to believe that mandate type alone cannot explain consistent dissenting votes. Alternatively, the aforementioned desire of businessperson office holders to maximize their own economic gain as opposed to forming long-term commitments seems to operate parallel with voting individually rather than with a party.

As follows, there should be a noticeable impact on party cohesion when controlling for individuals who previously held executive business positions. Additionally, as the dominant party in the 7th State Duma, membership in United Russia should produce significant variation in cohesion dependent on businessperson status. The impact of holding a business position should be more noticeable for deputies with an SMD mandate, as they are less beholden to party interests than their PR counterparts. However, based on previous literature, the effect of mandate type should not be

statistically significant, and the primary focus should be on business positions. Finally, this effect should be most noticeable for budgetary bills, as they typically preclude cohesion more than other topics and specifically allow for economic elites to strengthen financial gain for their businesses. Additionally, budgetary bills are uniform in their content in such a way as to consistently affect voting cohesion and produce debate along party lines (Kunicova and Remington, 2008). These expectations produce the following hypotheses:

**H1:** Deputies who previously held executive-level business positions vote against their party more frequently than other deputies.

**H2:** The effect of previously holding executive-level business positions is greater for SMD deputies than PR deputies.

## Research design

Several different regressions are conducted in order to measure the hypotheses. First, I measure for the effect of holding executive company positions on individual voting dissent when controlling for party membership and electoral mandate type. Then, several controls are added: membership in the budgetary committee, whether the position in question was held at a top-500 or top-25 domestic company by total revenue, electoral vote-share received, and the holding of various important parliamentary positions. Finally, I measure for the interaction term between mandate type and executive positions, then graph predicted dissent by party. My dataset contains several types of data collected from different sources, the foundation of which is voting data on all budgetary bills from the 7th State Duma (2016–2020).

As mentioned previously, my focus on budgetary bills is for several reasons: they are consistently important, thus producing higher division in voting among party lines and a stronger desire by parties to maintain cohesion, and the content debated in different budgetary bills maintains relative consistency. I focus on all three readings and amendments on the basis that these bill-related floor votes reflect the process of debate and amendment ratification and are more robust than simply observing the final reading alone. Finally, I exclude deputies with membership in a party with only one seat, though some minority party candidates run under the purview of one of the four primary ones. Overall, this produced 134,605 individual roll-call votes across 301 different bills.

To measure whether there is a distinction in behavior between SMD and PR deputies, I create the dependent variable *discord*. This variable is dichotomous and is coded 1 if a deputy's vote differs from the majority vote of their party on a budgetary bill, and 0 otherwise. After determining the individual discord vote for each deputy on each bill, I summarize the value of this variable and divide by the total number of bills to create a numeric *dissent* variable, equal to the percentage of times that each deputy voted differently

from the majority vote of their party. Because of behavioral voting patterns in the State Duma, as well as the fact that actual attendance during voting is not recorded, I make the same decision as Kunicova and Remington (2008) in defining non-votes (“не голосовало,” or “did not vote”) as equivalent to voting against a bill. Thus, each party-bill combination is coded as either for, against, or abstain.

Next, I determine business connections according to profile listings on RUPEP.org, a database containing the business positions and connections of Russian and Belarusian public officials. The data is manually coded and sourced to official state registers, government websites, and other documents, and company registration numbers are provided for confirmation of individual entities. After scraping the business positions of each of the 7th State Duma deputies, I filter for those of significant importance in the same fashion as Szakonyi (2020): executives (president, CEO, and chairman), directors, deputy-directors, and board members. These individuals are considered more involved with the daily proceedings of their respective companies (Szakonyi, 2020), and thus are more capable of forming judgements on the effects of ratifying a budgetary bill. I then produce an overall executive dummy that is coded 1 for holding at least one of these four types of positions in any number of companies. This allows for specification to individuals who may actually benefit from the increased profits of a business.

Additionally, any connections to government entities, NGOs, cooperatives, universities, or investments funds are removed in order to strengthen the measurement of rent-extraction. Because many deputies with prior executive business positions held multiple at any point in time, the non-dichotomous value is mostly meaningless. Overall, this resulted in 1,565 executive business connections for 287 deputies, a little more than half (64%) of the total size of the State Duma. The party breakdown is presented in Table 1. These preliminary findings are unsurprising; it is well-known that regional political and economic elites have significant investments in United Russia (Reuter and Remington, 2009), while A Just Russia, and the Liberal Democratic Party less-so, is considered a “parastatal party” intended to provide limited competition to the dominant party regime (March, 2009). Of the four dominant parties, only the Communist Party, the primary electoral enemy of the regime (Gel'Man, 2008), has fewer business executives than non-business executives.

From there, mandate type was determined by pulling from the official State Duma website, which contains party and election information for each of the current deputies. Party list deputies are presumed to be those listed with a regional party number (“номер в региональном списке,” or “number in the regional list”), while SMD deputies are those without. Table 2 summarizes the party factions and their electoral mandate types. There is a small difference (17 individuals) between the total number of deputies counted

**Table 1.** Company positions by party membership in the 7th State Duma.

	Executives	Board Members	Directors	Deputy-Directors	Total Executives	Non-Executives
United Russia	103	33	87	37	260	73
Communist Party	5	1	7	2	15	26
Liberal Democrats	7	3	8	4	22	16
A Just Russia	6	5	6	2	19	2
Overall	121	42	108	45	316	117

**Table 2.** Electoral mandate by party membership in the 7th State Duma.

	SMD	Party-List	Total
United Russia	194	139	333
Communist Party	10	31	41
Liberal Democrats	6	32	38
A Just Russia	6	15	21
Overall	216	217	433

and the official size of the State Duma as a consequence of deaths, the removal of independent and small-party candidates, and seats currently without deputies.

With the data collected, I first analyze the effect of previously holding executive business positions on dissent by estimating a simple regression model that controls for party membership:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{dissent}_i = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{communist\_party} \\ & + \beta_2 \text{liberal\_democratic\_party} \\ & + \beta_3 \text{a\_just\_russia} + \beta_4 \text{executive\_dummy}_i + \epsilon_i \end{aligned}$$

This allows for the most straightforward measure of whether previously being a business executive had a significantly negative impact on party cohesion. By omitting United Russia from the measure, I expect that all of the parties included will have significant and positive coefficients for PR mandate deputies, thus showing that loyalty in United Russia precedes business connections.

After that, I estimate several more detailed models that account for various controls, the most notable of which is as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{dissent}_i = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{communist\_party} \\ & + \beta_2 \text{liberal\_democratic\_party} \\ & + \beta_3 \text{a\_just\_russia} + \beta_4 \text{executive\_dummy}_i \\ & + \beta_5 \text{budget\_committee\_membership}_i \\ & + \beta_6 \text{deputy\_chairmen} + \beta_7 \text{committee\_chairmen} \\ & + \beta_8 \text{party\_leader} + \epsilon_i \end{aligned}$$

Presumably, membership in the budgetary committee should reduce dissent on the budgetary bill vote, as deputies in the committee have already gained intimacy with the bill from intra-committee negotiations and thus are less likely to be influenced by debate on the floor. I further

expect dissent to be reduced by connection to an important business, which is estimated through an additional model and measured by top-25 or top-500 total revenue in 2017. This arises from the fact that the companies with the highest revenue could be considered the most important to the national economy and most likely formed from significant sectoral consolidation post-transition. As such, I would not expect such connected deputies to experience significant variation in wealth extraction ability that would be dependent on individual budgetary bills. Finally, I expect that party parliamentary leaders practice the most cohesion, while deputy chairmen are much more beholden to personal and external, rather than party, interests. A higher electoral vote-share for deputies from single-member district should correspond with a stronger perceived popular mandate and thus more party cohesion.

Finally, I chose to explore the 7th Duma for several reasons. First, there has been a significant dearth of literature on the functioning of the contemporary State Duma, especially in the context of a strong and seemingly uniform United Russia. Second, much of the previous research on the intersection of political and economic elites has focused specifically on the transition period and the immediate effect of privatization but has not followed through with the consolidation of parties and industries and the rising number of businesspeople directly involved in the Russian government. With these considerations in mind, I now present the results of my statistical analyses.

## Empirical results

To begin, I reaffirm the previous findings of Noble (2020), who contributes to the literature on the State Duma by challenging preconceived notions of the parliament as “rubber-stamp,” finding that there is much more discourse than expected within the house and that said discourse is primarily connected to intra-executive disputes. Because of the role played by United Russia in settling these disagreements, the existence of dissent unassociated with this intra-executive contention should both complement that finding of healthy discourse as well as contribute to the hypotheses presented here. Figure 1 portrays dissent among each of the primary parties, separated by businessperson standing.

These results contribute toward both expectations—executives typically express greater dissent than non-

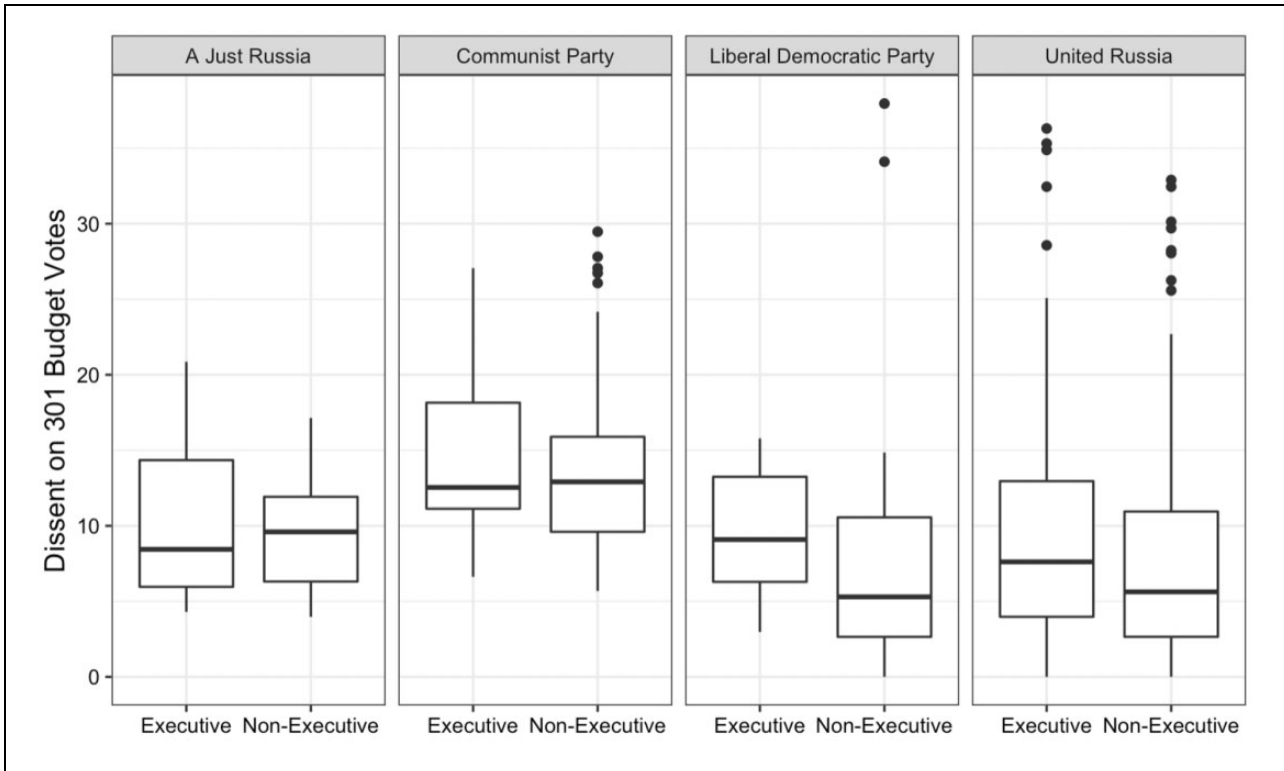


Figure 1. Variation in dissent among parties and businessperson status.

Table 3. Effect of executive positions and party membership on dissent, by mandate type. United Russia is omitted.

	SMD Deputies	Party-List Deputies
Intercept	7.77*** (0.74)	7.79*** (0.74)
A Just Russia	2.22 (3.15)	2.23 (1.90)
Communist Party	5.44** (2.44)	6.87*** (1.42)
Liberal Democrats	-1.24 (3.11)	0.78 (1.38)
Company Executive	2.84*** (1.04)	0.35 (1.01)
N	216	217
R <sup>2</sup>	0.05	0.10

\*p < 0.1; \*\*p < 0.05; \*\*\*p < 0.01; \*\*\*\*p < 0.001.

executives and there is a noticeable amount of variation by party. Next, Table 3 contains the results of the regressions for dissent on dummies for businessperson deputies and party-list membership. The omitted category for party is United Russia in both regressions. Coefficients represent the mean percent discord on 301 total budget bills. According to my primary hypothesis, business executive deputies should express less party cohesion, while the effect of electoral mandate should be present but modest. I further expect that membership in United Russia produces significantly less dissent from the party vote.

The regression on SMD deputies yields a very statistically significant and positive coefficient on the businessperson dummy, as well as insignificant coefficients for all of the party

memberships. Conversely, the Communist Party and United Russia membership dummies are statistically significant for the PR deputies, while the businessperson dummy is not. The exception of A Just Russia in this case arises from only two of their deputies not being executives. Overall, these results support my hypothesis that, controlling for party membership, holding executive business positions has a significantly positive impact on party dissent. The variation by electoral mandate type as observed above is dependent upon the limited number of observations by party, and thus warrants exploration in modified models below.

With that consideration aside, the coefficients of each of the party dummies for the PR regression model support the existing hypotheses that United Russia and the satellite parties have significantly more party cohesion than the primary opposition party. This is true even when controlling for businessperson deputies. With that being said, other factors might have an impact on these economic and party-mandate effects. In order to measure this possibility, I run several additional regressions, controlling for electoral vote-share (for SMD deputies), budget committee membership, deputy chairmanship, committee chairmanship, party leadership, and connection to the largest 25 and 500 firms by revenue (Table 4). In accordance with the results of the previous regressions, United Russia remains the omitted party.

The first model only controls for party membership, electoral mandate, and executive business positions. Even

**Table 4.** Regressions controlling for alternative explanations of dissent. United Russia is omitted.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
(Intercept)	7.41**** (0.66)	7.47**** (0.67)	7.65**** (0.64)	8.71**** (2.13)	7.28**** (0.68)
A Just Russia	1.88 (1.65)	1.86 (1.65)	1.82 (1.65)	2.28 (3.17)	1.90 (1.65)
Communist Party	6.66**** (1.24)	6.66**** (1.24)	6.47**** (1.24)	4.41 (2.80)	6.75**** (1.24)
Liberal Democrats	0.47 (1.28)	0.43 (1.28)	0.35 (1.29)	−0.20 (3.84)	0.55 (1.28)
SMD Mandate	0.83 (0.73)	0.83 (0.73)	0.83 (0.74)		1.03 (0.73)
Company Executive	1.62** (0.72)	1.62** (0.72)		3.43*** (1.08)	1.56** (0.72)
Budget Committee		−0.96 (1.44)		−0.61 (2.15)	−0.93 (1.41)
Top 25 Firm			0.61 (2.18)		
Top 500 Firm			1.31* (0.75)		
Electoral Vote-Share				−2.59 (4.06)	
Deputy Chairmen					5.99** (2.45)
Committee Chairmen					0.02 (1.38)
Party Parliamentary Leader					−3.53 (3.67)
N	433	433	433	198	434
R <sup>2</sup>	0.07	0.07	0.06	0.07	0.09

\* $p < 0.1$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

**Table 5.** Exploring the interaction term between executive positions and electoral mandate. A Just Russia is omitted.

	Model 6	Model 7
Intercept	9.29**** (1.62)	10.12**** (1.68)
United Russia	−1.88 (1.65)	−2.17 (1.65)
Liberal Democrats	−1.41 (1.97)	−1.81 (1.98)
Communist Party	4.78** (1.95)	4.26** (1.97)
SMD Mandate	0.83 (0.73)	−0.28 (0.95)
Company Executive	1.62** (0.72)	0.27 (1.03)
Executive * SMD Mandate		2.59* (1.43)
N	433	433
R <sup>2</sup>	0.07	0.08

\* $p < 0.1$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

though the coefficient for SMD deputies is statistically insignificant, it nevertheless maintains a positive direction. The second model controls for budget committee membership, which would be expected to reduce discord as a consequence of previous negotiations. This appears true as the sign is negative, but the coefficient is also statistically insignificant. None of the other controls are significantly impacted by the inclusion of the variable, and the company executive coefficient retains strong statistical significance.

The third model controls for executives in the top 25 and 500 firms in Russia by total revenue in 2017. The coefficient for the former is almost nonexistent as expected, and which might be attributed to the consolidation of the most important businesses and the inability of a single bill to produce much of an effect on wealth extraction (in these companies specifically). Furthermore, almost all of these deputies are members of United Russia, so the statistical effect is largely included

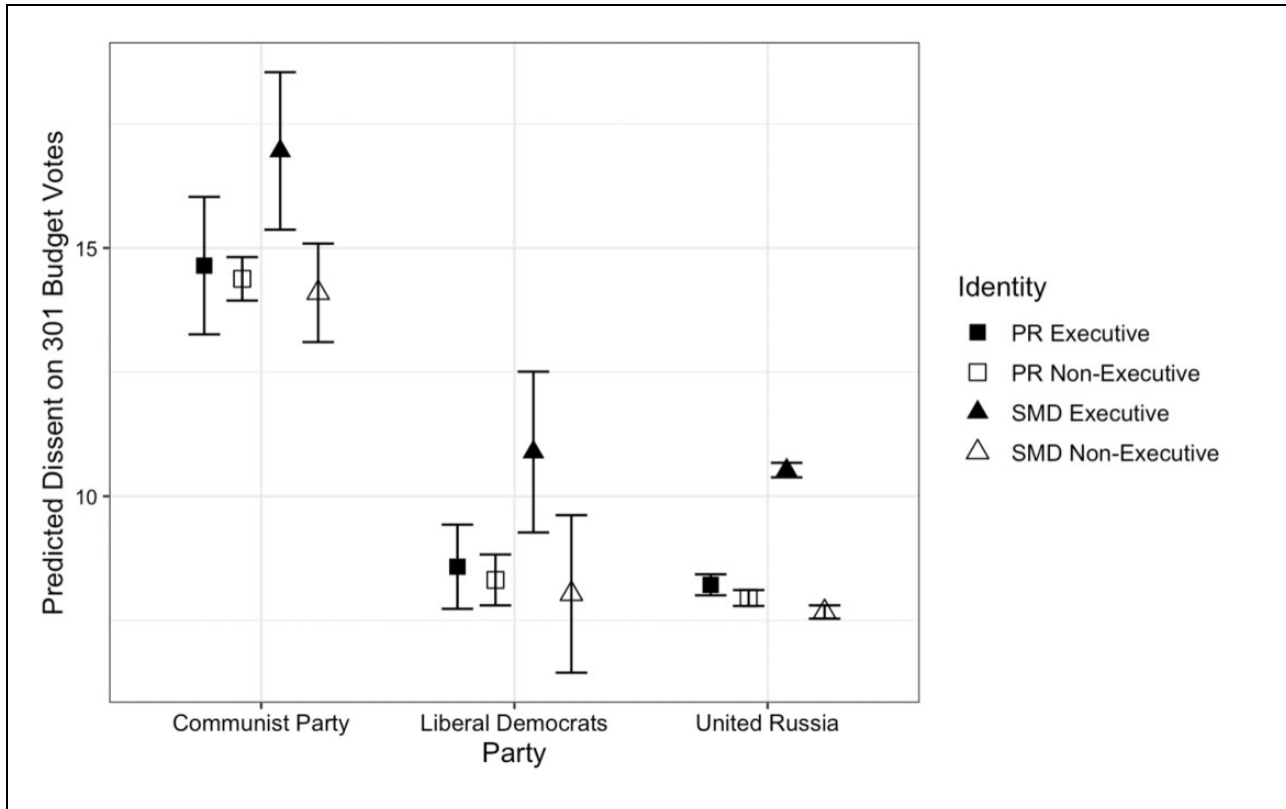
within the intercept. Conversely, the coefficient for elite positions at the top 500 companies is very significant and positive, reaffirming the hypothesis that such connections play an important role in affecting party coherence. Next, the fourth model controls for electoral vote-share, and thus is restricted exclusively to SMD-mandate deputies. As expected, receiving a higher electoral vote-share corresponds with greater cohesion and less dissent, as such individuals receive a greater popular mandate from their district. The executive coefficient retains positive significance.

Finally, in the fifth model, controlling for deputy chairmen, committee chairmen, and party parliamentary leaders, the executive coefficient remains both positive and statistically significant. The significant lack of cohesion among Communist Party deputies can be explained by previous literature, which describes the intra-party struggle for ideological domination and the heterogenous “catch-all” nature of the organization<sup>2</sup> for regime opposition (Hashim, 1999). Empirical analysis of cohesion in the State Duma conducted during the Yeltsin presidency found that the faction had the highest cohesion at the time (Haspel et al., 1998), though there has been a significant consolidation in regime-opposite parties since then.

Lastly, in order to demonstrate that electoral system alone cannot explain voting discord, I regress on party membership and SMD mandate as such:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{dissent}_i = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{communist\_party} \\ & + \beta_2 \text{liberal\_democratic\_party} + \beta_3 \text{united\_russia} \\ & + \beta_4 \text{executive\_dummy} + \beta_5 \text{SMD} + \epsilon_i \end{aligned}$$

and compare this first model to a regression that controls for the interaction term between business executives and SMD mandate:



**Figure 2.** Predicted values for OLS regression in Model 7 with 95% confidence intervals. A Just Russia is omitted.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{dissent}_i = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{communist\_party} \\ & + \beta_2 \text{liberal\_democratic\_party} + \beta_3 \text{united\_russia} \\ & + \beta_4 \text{executive\_dummy}_i + \beta_5 \text{SMD} \\ & + \beta_6 (\text{SMD} \times \text{executive\_dummy}) + \epsilon_i \end{aligned}$$

This should reinforce that electoral mandate has little impact on voting discord while business executive interests do. Because there are no deputies in A Just Russia that meet the qualifications of the interaction term, that party is omitted.

From the resulting coefficients, it's evident that there is little difference in dissent by mandate type without the consideration of executive company positions (Table 5). The seventh model suggests that the effect of having a business background is positive and robust for SMD deputies, although more broadly electoral type does not have much of an impact on party cohesion.

Graphing the predicted values of the second linear model from Model 7 makes clear that there is a noticeable difference in discord between business executives and non-business executives for SMD mandate deputies, and that this effect persists for United Russia PR deputies (Figure 2). The latter finding implies again that mandate matters little without the presence of personal business interests, though the effect is greater for single-member districts. This closely aligns with the research of Kunicova and

Remington (2008), who find only a modest support for the hypothesis that PR deputies should exhibit more cohesion than SMD deputies.

As stated previously, mandate type is not enough to explain dissenting votes. Even though SMD deputies may have a greater implied freedom than their counterparts to vote against the majority of the party, the evidence does not seem to support such a claim, especially not without considering further controls. However, as clearly shown here, both SMD and PR deputy businesspeople have personal interests to pursue, and as a consequence exhibit both the capacity and desire to vote independently of their party.

Overall, the results suggest that personal business connections play a significant role in party cohesion, while the effect of electoral mandate is present but modest. Overall, deputies within their mandate type that previously held executive positions have significantly greater discord from the party than those that didn't. This is somewhat variable at the party-level, with United Russia maintaining a much greater degree of party cohesion for their party-list deputies. My results on party cohesion between mandates is consistent with prior research (Kunicova and Remington, 2008), while my findings of executive business interests which persist across electoral systems has significant implications on the interaction between these systems and the parties within.



## Conclusion

My research here on the role of business executives in defying party cohesion confirms that economic interests matter in legislatures. Deputies are more likely to vote in discord with the party apparatus when they previously held important positions in companies. The effect of mandate type is largely insignificant but nevertheless modest in the expected direction. The significant findings on United Russia, as well as the incredibly strict voting discipline expressed for party-list deputies within that party, reaffirms that dominant parties are able to maintain party cohesion more so than minor coalitions. At a time in Russian history during which corruption persists at every level of government, the implicit bias provided by a personal history of involvement with business further blurs the line between political and economic elites.

To summarize, my primary finding is that previously held executive business positions influence voting cohesion for deputies to a significant extent that overrules the effect of electoral mandate. This effect persists even when controlling for membership in the budgetary committee, various important legislative positions, and electoral vote share, among others. There is almost no statistical difference in cohesion by mandate type, though party-list deputies exhibit relatively more cohesion than those elected from single-member districts. This confirms previous literature exploring more recent State Duma convocations.

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## Author's note

The reported assets from the introduction can be found as follows:

Andrey Viktorovich Baryshev:

[https://web.archive.org/web/20200411055659if\\_/https://74.ru/text/business/50957311/](https://web.archive.org/web/20200411055659if_/https://74.ru/text/business/50957311/) (accessed 11 December 2020).

Arkady Nikolaevich Ponomarev:

<https://www.forbes.ru/profile/240799-ponomarev> (accessed 11 December 2020).

Dmitry Vadimovich Sablin:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20180719175017/https://www.rferl.org/a/investigative-report-on-the-trail-of-the-12-indicted-russian-intelligence-officers/29376821.html> (accessed 11 December 2020).

Alexander Yurievich Bryksin:

<https://tass.ru/encyclopedia/person/bryksin-aleksandr-yurevich> (accessed 11 December 2020).

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## Notes

1. See author's note for sources. These being, in order, Andrey Viktorovich Baryshev; Arkady Nikolaevich Ponomarev; Dmitry Vadimovich Sablin; Alexander Yurievich Bryksin; Alexey Nikolaevich Krasnoshtanov; and Oleg Alekseevich Kolesnikov.
2. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Communist-Party-of-the-Russian-Federation>.

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### Author biography

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