Deliberation in the Russian State Duma

From a Seat of Discussion to a Tool of Autocracy, 1996-2021



Nicholas James

St. Antony's College

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Abstract

Why do legislators continue to engage in parliamentary floor activities under authoritarian regimes when policy decisions and voting outcomes are often predetermined before reaching the debate stage? This dissertation investigates the evolution of the Russian State Duma from a semi-democratic institution to a hegemonic electoral authoritarian regime by examining how legislative debates have transformed from relatively open discussions into orchestrated tools of regime control, illustrating the government's strategic manipulation of parliamentary structures to reinforce authoritarian consolidation. Utilising a novel dataset from the Duma's public records and detailed legislator-level data, this research provides both macro and micro perspectives on the transformation of legislative speech under such conditions and reveals systematic manipulations of parliamentary structures and strategic distributions of debate opportunities, underscoring their role in legitimising the regime. The core theoretical contribution lies in developing a framework for analysing legislative speech in electoral authoritarian regimes, with a particular focus on Russia. This framework highlights the impact of institutional configurations, such as electoral system manipulations, agenda-setting controls, and procedural changes in the Duma, which collectively shape legislative behaviour, eventually curtailing legislators' substantive impact while allowing regulated avenues for political expression and pro-regime messaging. Moreover, the dissertation uncovers a delicate balancing act where legislators must align with the dominant party's prerogatives while maintaining space for their own party's narratives. The research further explores the broader role of the party system in these regimes, showing how the dominant party's control over legislative processes, including speech opportunities, reflects broader political dynamics in which opposition parties, though restricted, play a role in simulating political engagement and, therefore, contribute to institutional legitimacy.

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Abbreviations

AIC	Akaike Information Criterion
API	Application Programming Interface
CAM	Class Affinity Model
CI	Confidence Intervals
FE	Fixed-Effects
FZ	Federal Law
	Federal'nyi Zakon
ICC	Intraclass Correlation Coefficient
KPRF	Communist Party of the Russian Federation
	Kommunisticheskaia Partiia Rossiiskoi Federatsii
MMM	Mixed-member Majoritarian
MP	Member of Parliament
OLS	Ordinary Least Squares
PR	Proportional Representation
sLDA	Supervised Latent Dirichlet Allocation
SMD	Single Mandate District
SR	A Just Russia
	Spravedlivaia Rossiia
SVM	Support Vector Machine
UR	United Russia
	Edinaia Rossiia
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Transliteration

Cyrillic	**Latin**
а	a
б	b
в	v
г	g
д	d
е	e
ё	yo
ж	zh
з	z
и	i
й	i
к	k
л	l
м	m
н	n
о	o
п	p
р	r
с	s
т	t
у	u
ф	f
х	kh
ц	ts
ч	ch
ш	sh
щ	shch
ъ	”
ы	y
ь	‘
ю	iu
я	ia

1. Introduction

'[Parliament is not a place for discussion]'.

– Boris Gryzlov, Chairman of the State Duma Fourth Convocation[1]

'If you need to shout obscenities, then you need to shout. But [do so] in the Duma, not in the squares, and find solutions'.

– Ivan Rybkin, Chairman of the State Duma First Convocation[2]

The divergent perspectives of Boris Gryzlov and Ivan Rybkin, representing different convocations of the State Duma – the lower house of the Russian parliament – offer an illustration of the evolution of parliamentary discourse in Russia and shifting democratic expectations over time.

Boris Gryzlov's tenure as the Chairman of the Fourth convocation of the State Duma is often epitomised by his statement, '[Parliament is not a place for discussion]'. Often misinterpreted as a repudiation of debate based on its inaccurate paraphrase, a more direct reading of Gryzlov's words reveals a normative view on the role of political discourse within the Duma during the rise of United Russia. It suggests a move away from using the Duma as an ideological and partisan battleground.

[1] This is not the original phrasing of Gryzlov. This is, in fact, a paraphrase made famous by journalistic paraphrasing, of which it is nearly impossible to find the first definitive usage (see *Novaya Gazeta* 2007 for an early example). Gryzlov originally said, 'I believe that this format of the Duma Council will involve constructive legislative activity. *It seems to me that the State Duma is not a platform where political battles should be held*, or some political slogans and ideologies should be defended; this is a platform where constructive, effective legislative activity should be carried out' (see http://api.duma.gov.ru/api/transcriptFull/2003-12-29) (emphasis added).

[2] (*Lenta.ru* and Rybkin 2018).

In contrast, Ivan Rybkin, commenting on his time as Chairman during the First convocation, expressed a fundamentally different democratic ethos: 'if you need to shout obscenities, then you need to shout. But [do so] in the Duma, not in the squares, and find solutions' (Lenta.ru and Rybkin 2018). This declaration encapsulates an era in which the Duma was a platform for more forthright and direct political expression, albeit with an emphasis on retaining these discussions within the parliamentary domain. Rybkin's tenure was marked by a dynamic and somewhat turbulent democratic process, wherein the Duma acted as a crucible for varied political discourse and active contestation. Rybkin, in his retrospective reflections (Lenta.ru and Rybkin 2018), contrasts this period with the subsequent convocations, noting a perceptible shift towards a Duma that increasingly speaks dismissively of the public's needs and concerns. This observation points to a transition from the Duma's original role as a representative and deliberative assembly to a body more synonymous with top-down governance and diminished responsiveness to the electorate.

Even though the Duma's has increasingly been governed from the top-down, significant efforts have been made to improve its public image and operational efficacy. When Vyacheslav Volodin became Speaker in 2016, he introduced a series of reforms aimed at enhancing public perceptions of the Duma. These included disciplinary actions against absentee deputies, streamlining the legislative process, and improving the Duma's relationship with the government (Noble 2017b). These efforts to reform and project a more disciplined and responsive parliamentary body mark the Seventh convocation as distinct. They reflect a strategic shift by the regime to balance control with an appearance of increased legitimacy and efficiency. Yet, Kynev highlights a contradiction in this strategy: while deputies are encouraged to develop political independence due to the increasing significance of their individual characteristics in elections, their actual impact on Duma decisions is significantly diminished (2017b). Why, then, do these legislators continue to engage in policy debates on the floor?

This dissertation seeks to uncover how, under United Russia's influence, the Duma experienced not a cessation of dialogue but a transformation in the substance and purpose of its legislative discussions. It is within this context of change and evolution in parliamentary discourse within a backsliding and eventual electoral authoritarian regime that the present study situates itself, aiming to dissect and understand the developments in legislative speech within the Russian State Duma. Hence, the dissertation proposes that Gryzlov's remark symbolizes not an inherent trait of the Duma's legislative process, but rather a strategic transformation under United Russia's influence. It signifies a shift in the substance and purpose of legislative discussions, marking a transition towards more managed and party-aligned parliamentary discourse, diverging from an open forum for debate.

The question of why legislators in authoritarian legislatures bother to engage in parliamentary work is underexplored within the current literature. Public debates on the parliamentary floor are among the most visible aspects of politics in both democratic and multiparty authoritarian regimes. Yet, comparative analysis of these debates across different regime types remains limited. This dissertation seeks to fill this gap by investigating the nature and function of parliamentary debates in the context of regime transitions, with a specific focus on the Russian State Duma. Legislative discourse under authoritarian conditions provides a unique lens to examine the broader implications of parliamentary dialogue for understanding the both the dynamics of authoritarian governance and democratic backsliding, and individuals' motivations for engaging with these regimes. By analysing the transformation of legislative speech, this study sheds light on the mechanisms through which authoritarian regimes manipulate parliamentary discourse to reinforce their dominance, control public perception, and manage political opposition.

This dissertation focuses on the Russian State Duma from its inception as a semi-democratic institution to its evolution into a more authoritarian body to answer the puzzle of why legislators under authoritarian conditions should continue or even increase their debate participation. It uses the

concepts of competitive authoritarianism, where democratic institutions exist but incumbents routinely violate democratic rules to maintain power (Levitsky and Way 2010), and electoral authoritarianism, where regimes hold elections but severely constrain opposition and political competition (Schedler 2013; 2006), to uncover how legislative debates have shifted in response to the changing political landscape and the strategic objectives of the regime. By examining floor speeches, the dissertation explores the ways in which the Duma has been used as a tool for governance, legitimation, and control, providing insights into the adaptive strategies of authoritarian regimes.

In the initial years following the Soviet Union's dissolution, the State Duma stood as a symbol of the stark choices facing the nascent Russian democracy. This period's Duma, with its wide array of political parties and heightened elite political dynamics, reflected the era's political unrest and early experiments with democratic functioning. A case in point during the First State Duma (1994-1995) is the conduct among deputies new to the formalities and practices of democratic politics. For instance, Vyacheslav Marychev's of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia was often characterised by his provocative, often ironic actions like brandishing a firearm in parliament while wearing a Megadeth t-shirt or adorning outlandish outfits, mirroring the era's reactionary and oft ironic political mood. Parallel to these elements of dramatism, the Duma engaged in serious political discourse, particularly in its sustained criticism of the executive branch following the 1993 Constitutional Crisis.

For example, during the opening session of the Duma in 1994, Viktor Ilyukhin and Gennady Zyuganov from the Communist Party (KPRF) prominently opposed President Yeltsin, revealing deep ideological divisions and authentic contestation within the Duma (Kommersant October 6th, 1994). By the end of the First Convocation, the Duma saw a solidification of these behaviours, with deputies increasingly concentrating on partisan interests and electoral pursuits, some of which were aimed directly at the government. Throughout these political conflicts, debates were instrumental in shaping how deputies interacted with each other and their constituents, though they often appeared ineffective

to political commentators and constituents alike (Chaisty and Schleiter 2002a, 714-15). Despite this perceived ineffectiveness, Duma members engaged earnestly in these debates. This perceived inefficacy may be attributed to the Duma's relatively lenient approach to parliamentary procedures during these initial periods, which, while facilitating diverse speechmaking and vigorous debates, also led to faction-based stratification of practices and a prioritisation of political expediency (Biryukov, Gleisner, and Sergeyev 1995). This pattern at least suggests an underlying emphasis on using speeches for political ends – be it career advancement, sectoral politics, party-based point-taking, or the broader contestation between the Duma and the executive during this period.

The 2000s marked a discernible shift in the State Duma, characterised by increased deference to authority. For instance, Noble (2017) finds evidence that the scrutiny of budget bills decreased by half from 2002-2006 to 2010. However, this beginning of this trend of deference is not directly related to the heightened formalism and procedural adherence that emerged post-2012 – a year marked by genuine oppositional challenges to the regime leading to the eventual retrenchment of authoritarian practices in response. This later period saw increased and direct governmental oversight on the floor, which is reflected in strategic alterations of procedural rules which manage deputies' speechmaking conduct (see *Appendix A, Table 1*).

A significant instance of this later shift occurred between April and September 2012, as the rules of procedure underwent major modifications in reaction to opposition against new legislation curtailing protest rights. This oppositional moment reached a climax on June 5th, 2012, when opposition parties coalesced to forestall the controversial vote with filibustering tactics. Known in Russia as 'Italian Strike,' the filibustering attempt significantly shaped parliamentary dynamics in the subsequent convocations. The opposition parties, collectively known as the 'systemic' opposition by this time, prolonged the day's session well into the night, with the ultimate decision coming after roughly 11-14 hours of intense debate, filibuster attempts, and nearly 400 amendments proposed.

Despite these efforts, the opposition was thwarted, primarily due to the Duma chair's introduction of a time and threshold limitation for discussing individual amendments and speeches (e.g., the bundling of individual amendments together) .

As Noble and Schulmann note (2018), this united opposition resulted in severe individual consequences for leading opposition figures. For example, two leading fierce critics of the Kremlin and leading opposition figures from *A Just Russia* – Gennady Gudkov and Ilya Ponomarev – faced retributions such as the stripping of Gudkov's mandate, the dismissal of his son (a fellow *A Just Russia* deputy) from the party, and the censure of Ponomarev (Noble and Schulmann 2018). More importantly, this oppositional moment led to the reactive alteration of the Duma regulations (in September, see *Appendix A, Table 1*) to further protect against future instances of filibustering.

Concurrently, Noble's data on the budget process shows that by the end of the Sixth Convocation,[3] the time spent on deliberation decreased by nearly *fourfold* on average from the levels found at the beginning of the millennium. This change is pivotal for understanding how authoritarian regimes strategically curtail legislative discourse to reinforce their control and potentially limit oppositional engagement, highlighting the dynamics between legislative behaviour and authoritarian governance. This observation prompts two essential questions for this thesis: Do these debate participation patterns reflect a comprehensive shift in the Duma's legislative behaviour, and what explains the roles and functions of these emergent behaviours? What explains speechmaking under the constraints of authoritarianism?

These illustrative examples illustrate a significant evolution in the character and utility of parliamentary debates, closely related to the government's increasing influence over them, and underscore the notion that the roles, functions, and forms of such debates are fundamentally different

[3] The Sixth Convocation covers the 2012-2016 budgets.

in authoritarian and democratic contexts. Conventional wisdom holds that, at least in democratic contexts, debates on the parliamentary floor formalise the government and opposition's public platforms, primarily serving partisan or electoral ends rather than as genuine forums for policy formation or persuasion (Slapin and Proksch 2012; Maltzman and Sigelman 1996; Austen-Smith 1990; Mayhew 1974). Conversely, in hybrid and authoritarian systems, where genuine partisanship and electoral dynamics are often subdued, the roles and effectiveness of legislative debates are less transparent and often understudied as a result.[4]

Addressing this divergence, this study presents a series of research questions focused on the distinctive nature of legislative debates under backsliding and authoritarian contexts, where executive dominance overshadows the legislative process in general.

1. *Functions and characteristics:* How do the functions and characteristics of parliamentary debates differ between democratic and authoritarian regimes?
2. *Strategies of floor engagement:* What are the conditions that create participation patterns in policy debates in authoritarian contexts?
3. *Structural and institutional influence:* How do the structures and rules within legislative institutions, such as control over agenda-setting and floor debates, shape the nature of legislative speech in authoritarian regimes? To what extent do electoral systems in backsliding regimes influence legislative debates, and how are these influences reflected in legislators' speech behaviour?
4. *Party configurations:* To what extent do shifts in party configurations within regimes experiencing democratic backsliding impact legislative debates, and how do these shifts manifest in the speech behaviour of legislators under authoritarian conditions?

[4] Schuler provides notable exceptions in the literature, by explicating the importance of parliamentary speeches under authoritarianism, albeit in a single-party legislature (Schuler 2020; 2021).

By undertaking an in-depth analysis of legislative speech within the Russian State Duma across different time periods, this study seeks to shed light on how regime type and institutional factors shape parliamentary discourse. The insights gained from this research will not only augment the existing body of knowledge on parliamentary politics but also provide novel insights into the changing roles and functions of legislatures in varying political systems, highlighting the dynamic nature of legislative speech in between regime types.

Central to this inquiry are concepts developed in relation to authoritarian parliaments – co-optation, monitoring, and signalling – key theories which carry expectations regarding how and why authoritarian regimes may manage and manipulate legislative discourse to reinforce stability, control, and legitimacy. Co-optation theory suggests that the regime incorporates opposition and potential rivals into its fold, offering them certain privileges and positions of power to dilute their oppositional stance and align their interests with those of the ruling elite (Geddes 2006). This integration is expected to manifest in legislative speeches as a subdued or supportive stance towards regime policies, particularly from those holding leadership positions or significant committee assignments.

Monitoring, on the other hand, implies a systematic oversight by the regime over legislative activities, where speeches and debates are scrutinised by the ruling party, thus limiting genuine deliberation and dissent but allowing for interactions with the legislative process (Blaydes 2011; Gehlbach and Keefer 2012; Svolik 2012). This control is anticipated to result in a noticeable shift towards more centralised debate structures and a reduction in oppositional engagement, reflecting an intensification of government oversight.

Finally, signalling theory posits that legislative speeches serve as a medium for the regime to project its strength, consolidate its narrative, and dissuade opposition by demonstrating the futility of resistance (Simpser 2013; Weeden 2015). This is expected to lead to a strategic alignment of legislative discourse with pro-government narratives, emphasising regime successes and downplaying or ignoring

critical viewpoints. Through the lens of these theoretical frameworks, this dissertation aims to dissect the dynamics of legislative speech in the Russian Duma, testing the applicability of co-optation, monitoring, and signalling theories in explaining the evolution of legislative debates from a platform of potential policy deliberation to one of regime support and elite management.

Therefore, this dissertation is not only an exploration of legislative speeches in the Russian context but also a test and extension of the existing literature's theoretical expectations of legislative speech behaviour within this setting. Central to the dissertation are several such expectations: firstly, a strategic realignment of legislative discourse towards pro-government rhetoric, evidencing the regime's endeavours to bolster its legitimacy and enforce control. Secondly, an anticipated reduction in oppositional discourse within regime-stabilising policy debates highlights the strategic constraints imposed on dissenting voices, aligning with the consolidation of authoritarian power. Thirdly, the dissertation aims to unravel how institutional dynamics and party affiliations shape the legislative narrative. Moreover, it scrutinises the adaptive strategies employed by the regime to manage legislative discourse, marking an evolution in both the nature and extent of legislative speeches across convocations. Through this lens, the dissertation not only probes into the intricacies of legislative speech behaviour in an authoritarian setting but also rigorously tests the theoretical frameworks posited by existing literature, laying bare the mechanisms through which authoritarian regimes maintain their grip on legislative processes.

If legislatures are multi-task institutions, efficacy testing between plausible theories and introducing a framework which explains speechmaking is necessary to construct a clearer picture of the politics of parliamentary debate. The structure of the remaining introduction is as follows. *Section 1.1* establishes the main arguments and theoretical argument. *Section 1.2* examines why Russia presents a pertinent case study for this investigation. Finally, Sections *1.3* and *1.4* outline the data and methods used in this study and the overall structure of the dissertation.

1.1 Main Arguments and Theory

This section outlines the key arguments and theoretical framework of the dissertation, which aims to enhance the existing research on authoritarian and backsliding legislatures by applying theories of legislative debate, traditionally focused on democratic systems, to the context of these regimes. This approach is particularly pertinent considering the Duma's historical development within a backsliding democratic framework. The dissertation investigates whether the characteristics of legislative speech shift under authoritarian rule and, if so, examines how these changes align with or challenge the prevailing theories about the functions and objectives of authoritarian parliaments.

The dissertation's theoretical framework synthesizes recent advances within the politics of legislative speech literature (e.g., Proksch and Slapin 2012; Bäck, Debus, and Fernandes 2021) with the scholarship on authoritarian legislatures (Gandhi, Noble, and Svolik 2020). In the first instance, recent studies on legislative speech provide substantial evidence that the nature of electoral systems shapes the motivations for and structure of legislative speech in democratic settings. In democracies, party leaders strive to manage floor time effectively to garner votes and do so by balancing a cohesive party message and individual MP's exposure (Proksch and Slapin 2012, 2015, 2021). This body of literature explores the strategic aspects of parliamentary speeches, highlighting the dynamic between party leaders and rank-and-file members across different electoral contexts. This framework suggests that legislative debates are primarily arenas for strategic positioning geared primarily towards electoral ends: electoral incentives create the necessity for strategic positioning both within and between parties and towards voters. However, the dissertation posits that in authoritarian systems, where electoral results are of less central value in retaining tenures, speeches are aimed towards projecting legitimacy.

Proksch and Slapin (2012) theorise three findings related to electoral systems which are applicable for testing in the Duma. First, in plurality systems, party leadership focuses on maximising MPs' visibility, resulting in moderate party unity and control by leadership. This environment encourages

backbenchers to assert their ideological and policy-based differences, catering to local electoral demands. Second, proportional systems prioritise party cohesion, with leadership maintaining stringent control and rewarding loyalty. Here, MPs' roles shift towards conforming with the party's stance, limiting individual ideological expression. Finally, in mixed-member proportional systems, such as those characterising most of the Duma's convocations, the incentives diverge between single-member district and proportional representation deputies. Backbenchers in these systems balance personal ideologies and party lines, varying their approach based on whether they represent single-member districts or are part of party lists (Proksch and Slapin 2015).

The relationship between backbenchers and leadership is envisaged as a strategic delegation game. Party leaders aim to allocate floor time in a way that supports party objectives, while backbenchers pursue their career or ideological goals. This strategic interplay fundamentally shapes legislative debates, transforming them into tools for both intra-party coordination and public messaging, which are highly contingent on the electoral framework (Proksch and Slapin 2015). Therefore, their model also suggests that procedural rules in legislatures are endogenously influenced by these electoral incentives, thereby influencing party leaders to orchestrate debates to maximise their strategic benefits. Hence, in plurality systems where individual reputation is key, procedural rules often encourage a variety of perspectives. In contrast, proportional systems, where the party's image is paramount, tend to have stricter rules to maintain party unity.

This general model can be extended to consider various institutional dynamics such as government-opposition relations, coalitional dynamics, policy extremity, and personal characteristics like gender or age cohort (Proksch and Slapin 2015, 2021). These extensions are vital for understanding legislative speech within authoritarian contexts, where the initial electoral dynamics undergo transformations marked by subdued incentives for genuine elections by the ruling party (Simpser 2013). In democracies, debates often exhibit a balance between government proposals and

opposition critiques (Proksch and Slapin 2021). However, under authoritarian conditions, this equilibrium is notably disrupted since the government's agenda-setting role becomes more pronounced and dictates the parameters and focus of legislative discussions. These conditions are defined by a hardening political system in which power is concentrated in the hands of the executive, where political pluralism is minimised, and genuine opposition is either systematically excluded or rendered ineffective. Democracy, by contrast, is characterised by free and competitive elections, protection of civil liberties, political pluralism, and institutionalised checks on executive power.

The dissertation conceptualises democratic backsliding as a gradual erosion of democratic norms, institutions, and processes, within the formally democratic system, which slowly transforms into an authoritarian regime. This process involves weakening judicial independence, media freedom, and electoral integrity, often under the guise of legal reform or national security (Bermeo 2016). Authoritarian consolidation, on the other hand, describes the process by which a competitive or electoral authoritarian regime – post-democratic backsliding – strengthens its hold on power by eliminating political opposition, further centralising control, and using legislative and institutional mechanisms to solidify the ruling elite's dominance (Levitsky and Way 2010). This transition from democratic backsliding to authoritarian consolidation marks the point at which the democratic facade is increasingly abandoned, and the regime's core goal becomes the maintenance of political control and stability through coercion and manipulation rather than genuine popular support. It is in this setting that the dissertation argues that debates evolve into instruments for either reinforcing or allowing limited challenges to the government's agenda, highlighting a significant change in the nature and function of legislative speech in authoritarian systems compared to their democratic and backsliding counterparts.

To lay the foundation for the hypotheses that will be explored in this dissertation, this section will elucidate the importance of four pivotal concepts within the context of electoral authoritarianism and

authoritarian legislatures: governmental oversight, the impact of electoral and party systems, diverging policy attention and legislative focus, and stratifying government-opposition dynamics. These concepts serve as the analytical lenses through which the study investigates legislative speech. Each concept not only reflects the developing mechanisms of control and manipulation within such regimes but also sheds light on the strategic adaptations that these systems undergo to maintain power and legitimacy in the face of domestic and international scrutiny.

In electoral authoritarian regimes, increasing governmental oversight is central to understanding how these systems operate. This concept highlights the progressive intensification of control over legislative bodies, aiming to centralise decision-making within the ruling party's hands. The significance of this lies in its direct impact on the legislature's autonomy and the opposition's ability to function, revealing the methods through which authoritarian regimes seek to consolidate power and mute dissent. Therefore, regimes monitor legislative speech to ensure alignment with the regime's goals. This involves formal procedural changes that restrict oppositional discourse and enhance executive oversight and informal practical changes on how floor time is allocated to back benchers.

The declining impact of electoral systems and the increasing significance of party systems in electoral authoritarianism underscore the strategic manipulation of political structures to entrench the ruling party's dominance. This shift demonstrates how electoral authoritarian regimes diverge from democratic norms, where electoral systems play a central role in shaping legislative behaviour. Instead, these regimes leverage party systems and institutional arrangements to ensure legislative outcomes align with their interests, marking a departure from the expected democratic processes.

While oversight increases and genuine electoral politics become muted, policy discussions may be refocussed, highlighting the regime's priorities in maintaining stability and public support (and using the ruling party to achieve those outcomes). This concept is essential for understanding the selective attention given to certain policy areas over others, illustrating how legislative debates are used as tools

for narrative control. By focusing on policies that ostensibly benefit public welfare or enhance regime stability, authoritarian leaders manipulate legislative discourse to legitimise their rule and marginalise oppositional voices. The provision (or promise) of policies affecting everyday citizens serves as a tangible demonstration of the regime's commitment to public well-being, thereby enhancing its perceived legitimacy and justifying its hold on power.

Finally, the evolution of government-opposition dynamics in legislative debates within electoral authoritarian regimes is a key area of investigation. This concept sheds light on the increasing dominance of pro-government narratives and the corresponding decrease in oppositional discourse, especially in critical policy areas. The importance of this dynamic lies in its reflection of the regime's strategies to manage and manipulate legislative debates, reinforcing its narrative while diminishing the opposition's visibility and effectiveness.

The following summary of the theory chapter presents four related concepts: governmental oversight, impact of electoral and party systems, policy attention and legislative focus, and government-opposition dynamics.

1. *Increasing Governmental oversight and influence* posits a progressive intensification of government oversight within authoritarian legislatures, characterised by alterations in lawmaker participation, and the centralisation of debates within the ruling party as the regime coalesces. The hypothesis is that as authoritarian regimes consolidate, they exert greater control over parliamentary proceedings via regulatory and party-based controls, reducing the diversity and autonomy of legislative debates. This leads to diminished oppositional engagement, indicative of the regime's strategic manipulation of legislative processes.
2. *Declining impact of electoral systems and increasing impact of party systems* suggests that legislative behaviours in authoritarian parliaments are influenced more by party and institutional variables than by the electoral system type. It hypothesises that in authoritarian contexts, changes in

electoral systems do not significantly alter incentives for legislative speechmaking as they would in democracies. Instead, the electoral system becomes a tool for the regime to manipulate the legislature's overall composition and their influence on debate is therefore constrained to party-based controls, overshadowing the democratic presuppositions that associate electoral systems with legislative behaviour.

3. *Diverging policy attention and legislative focus* examines the shift in policy attention within authoritarian legislatures, proposing that as regimes undergo democratic backsliding, there is a strategic refocusing of policy discussions. The hypothesis is that authoritarian regimes will increasingly focus on policies that stabilise the regime and directly impact the public welfare of its main support base, while attention to other areas diminishes. This shift reflects the regime's efforts to use legislative debates as a strategic tool for narrative control and regime consolidation.
4. *Stratifying government-opposition dynamics* explores how policy attention diverges between pro-government and pro-oppositional speech, positing that as regimes consolidate, there is a noticeable shift towards pro-governmental narratives in legislative debates, accompanied by a decrease in oppositional focus in key policy areas. This reflects the regime's strategy to manage legislative debates and reinforce its narrative, diminishing the effectiveness and visibility of oppositional rhetoric.

The dissertation then moves on to consider debates as a strategic arena for the government to present policies and the opposition to engage in tactical manoeuvres beyond the voting stage of bills. While opposition parties may exist in electoral authoritarian regimes – defined by an unequal election landscape heavily favouring the ruling party (Schedler 2006) – their ability to effectively challenge the government is often significantly limited. Hence, opposition strategies must navigate tighter controls

and restricted parliamentary freedoms. Therefore, emergent speech patterns are generated from adherence to the government's prerogatives.

In such environments, opposition legislators face a delicate balance: they cannot be too harsh in their critiques of the government, yet they must maintain a degree of effectiveness to preserve legitimacy and garner genuine forms of electoral support. Consequently, debates may align more with regime consolidation objectives, narrowing the diversity and quality of legislative discourse. Ultimately, this leads to a legislative environment where speeches and debates are less about genuine policy deliberation and more about reinforcing the ruling party's authority and agenda, often to the detriment of democratic representation and pluralism. The question here is whether these changes support stabilising functions of authoritarian legislatures.

Therefore, a secondary concern of this dissertation is to address the literature on authoritarian parliaments and test theoretical expectations on legislative speech generated from its theories. Namely, co-optation, monitoring, and signalling theories.

First, the concept of co-optation in authoritarian regimes involves the strategic incorporation of opposition elements into the government, transforming them into subdued partners. This process reduces the effectiveness of opposition movements and aligns with Gerschewski's (2013) view of co-optation as a 'de-fanging' mechanism. In the Russian context, this is evident through the strategic allocation of leadership posts and committee appointments to opposition members, effectively aligning them with the regime's objectives (Hutcheson 2013; Turovsky 2015). Co-optation is not merely symbolic but carries substantial implications for the legislative process, as it influences policy direction and aligns legislator interests with those of the ruling party (Gandhi 2008; Gandhi and Przeworski 2007). The literature might expect that in these cases, legislators will seek increased floor access for career advancement, and as they gain more opportunities to participate, they become increasingly compelled to support the government. Leadership roles or significant committee

appointments will then display a tendency to support regime policies in their speeches and increase their floor time relative to backbenchers, indicating effective co-optation. Furthermore, the distribution of committee chairs and vice-chairs allocated to opposition members will correlate with diminishing oppositional rhetoric within the parliament, as these positions serve both as a reward and a mechanism to integrate opposition members into the regime's objectives.

Second, monitoring mechanisms – which help explain executive-legislative interactions for upper-level elites, and governmental oversight over the lower-level elites – are examined. These mechanisms provide two main pathways: one for upper-level elites to interact regularly with the executive on budgetary and policy matters, ensuring transparency and mitigating fears of power usurpation (S Gehlbach and Keefer 2012; Svolik 2012); the other allows the executive to oversee lower-level elites active within the legislature (Blaydes 2011). Such monitoring not only manages the relationship between the regime and its elites but also enables the government to remove ineffective, corrupt, or genuine opposition officials from their positions.

In Russia, while the regime appears to tighten its grip over legislative processes, it simultaneously maintains a level of strategic engagement with the opposition. This suggests a dual objective: asserting the dominant party's narrative while subtly gauging and potentially repressing oppositional rhetoric. In this controlled environment, opposition leaders, though restricted, should be allocated more speaking opportunities than might be expected. Such instances are strategic, allowing the regime to monitor dissent and adjust its tactics accordingly. This leads to two expectations: increased executive control over the legislative process will correlate with less floor time given to opposition politicians and less oppositional speeches overall, which reflects enhanced oversight. However, opposition leadership will take more floor time. Hence, the government can limit effective opposition challenges on the floor, while still promoting avenues for informational exchange where necessary. It follows that the extent of oppositional language in speeches may be inversely proportional to the regime's

control over legislative procedures during backsliding moments. Or in other words, an increase in oppositional language may occur concurrently with a decrease in floor time, indicating the coalescing government's monitoring practices. However, after an authoritarian shift, this oppositional language should diminish in kind.

Third, signalling notes that authoritarian regimes may conduct regular elections but systematically breach democratic norms, employing tactics like electoral fraud, media control, and intimidation (Schedler 2006; Schedler 2002, 2013). The elections are not straightforward democratic processes but are contests of uncertainty management, where the regime endeavours to contain unpredictability while the opposition seeks to amplify it (Schedler 2013). In this context, legislative speech and activities often transcend their nominal purpose of informing government decisions, serving instead as tools for regime propaganda (Schuler 2020, 2021; Simpser 2013; Weeden 2015). The government manipulates these debates to display an appearance of pluralism while ensuring that the opposition's efforts at influencing policy remain largely symbolic and ineffective. This strategy not only showcases the opposition's feebleness to the public and potential defectors but also allows the ruling party to claim credit for positive political developments, thereby reinforcing its image of efficacy and control (Krol 2017; Truex 2016).

Therefore, government and opposition rhetoric will vary significantly in response to the electoral environment of a given convocation, with pro-governmental speech becoming more cohesive over time. Conversely, opposition speech will become more fragmented and less critical of the government during more authoritarian periods. Pro-government legislators will focus more on important issues such as the economy, allowing them to claim credit for positive developments in these areas. In contrast, opposition legislators may be more inclined to discuss national policies where the Duma has less influence such as foreign policy, but with limited influence on actual outcomes. However, in cases of important policies, legislators may support the government to secure floor time.

This dissertation provides a unique vantage point for examining legislative speech in authoritarian regimes, a context markedly different from advanced democracies where theories of debate are typically applied. The strategic and rational choice framework posits that legislators' behaviours, including speechmaking, are driven by their goals of career advancement, party loyalty, and policy influence. However, in authoritarian settings, these motivations interact with a different set of institutional constraints, rules, and incentives – the ruling regime's power dynamics, the limited scope for genuine political opposition, and the risks associated with dissent create an environment where the strategic choices of legislators are profoundly altered. By applying this framework to extant theories of authoritarian parliaments – where scant attention has been applied to this data in general – the dissertation offers insights into how speech incentives change over time, and how legislators navigate these challenges, adapting their strategies in response to the authoritarian context.

1.2 Case Selection: Why Russia?

The selection of Russia as the primary case study in this dissertation is rooted in its trajectory from democratic elements to authoritarian practices, presenting a clear-cut example of democratic backsliding in practice. This evolution provides an ideal setting to explore the transformation of legislative dynamics within an increasingly electoral – verging on hegemonic – authoritarian regime. Considering the successive rule, leadership, and practical variations in the Duma, Russia's case may help shed light on how governments undergoing backsliding can strategically manipulate democratic institutions like parliaments to entrench authoritarian rule while maintaining a facade of democratic processes. The gradual yet significant transformation of the Duma offers profound insights into the mechanisms through which authoritarian regimes can co-opt and restructure democratic institutions to their advantage.

Scholarship on the Duma initially analysed the democratic elements of the parliament (e.g., Chaisty and Schleiter 2002; Smith and Remington 2001b). Most of this earlier work has assessed the extent to which the Duma's development has been impacted by institution building efforts, the effect of electoral systems on legislative behaviour, and the extent of substantive representation. Moving forward, the literature clearly shifts focus from the impact of democratic institutions to the apparent hybridity developing in the parliament. Hence, subsequent work has continued to rely on the democratic elements of the Duma as a backbone to understand the role of sectoral and regional interests, (Chaisty 2013b), the development of the party system as an *impediment* to democratization (Riggs and Schraeder 2005), and the introduction of majoritarianism inside the Duma alongside increasing executive influence (Chaisty 2005a; Shevchenko and Golosov 2011). However, after Russia's authoritarian turn came to broader international attention in the 2010s, the literature has pivoted towards interpretating these non-democratic elements present in parliament. It follows that the institutions of parliament have been extensively studied to assess how this authoritarian turn has affected legislative politics (e.g., Buckley and Reuter 2019; Krol 2017; Noble 2020; Shirikov 2021).

However, there is little scholarship synthesising *how* the regime has moved from democracy to authoritarianism in the context of parliament other than through the party and electoral system (e.g., Hutcheson 2018). Nor has scholarship taken seriously the role of legislative debates as a source for understanding these changing contexts.[5] Therefore, the selection of Russia as a case study in this dissertation is an informed inquiry to advance for the broader field of democratic backsliding and Russian legislative studies, as it provides an insightful narrative of backsliding.

The Duma is characterised by varying levels of speech activity and unexplored potential for automatic content analysis techniques. Russia's post-1993 political journey is particularly intriguing.

[5] Korgunyuk et al. provide some of the only work with the parliamentary corpora, using it to define cleavages within the Duma (2022).

Emerging from the dissolution of the Soviet Union and multiple constitutional crises, it embarked on a path of semi-democracy, marked by an underdeveloped democratic tradition but characterised by economic lobbying and parliamentary diversity (Troxel 2002). Over time, however, this trajectory shifted, leading to an increasing consolidation of authoritarian governance (Hale 2014; Petrov, Lipman, and Hale 2014). This transition provides a unique opportunity to study the transformation of legislative functions and behaviours in a backsliding regime which the current literature has under looked.

This dissertation rests upon Hutcheson's (2018b) framework for understanding the evolution of Russia's party and legislative systems, which delineates three distinct legislative periods: fragmentation (1993-2002), consolidation (2002-2009), and cartelisation (2009-present). These stages represent more than just temporal divisions; they encapsulate significant shifts in the nature of the executive-legislative relationship and are indicative of the changing patterns of legislative interaction. The periods of consolidation and cartelisation mark the authoritarian break where Russia began entrenching non-democratic elements into its democratic systems. This breakdown aligns not only with different Duma convocations but also with changes in electoral and procedural rules, albeit with some overlap. The study leverages these periods to explore variations in the executive-legislative relationship, regime type, and electoral mechanisms, providing a comprehensive understanding of the evolution of legislative speech and behaviour in the context of Russia's political transformation.

The development of the Duma's structure and form over time reveals significant shifts in the party and electoral landscape. This change is illustrated in *Table 1*, which outlines the fluctuating number of parties, the dominant party, and the ruling party's seat share across various convocations. A notable trend is the diminishing diversity of parties concurrent with the growing dominance of United Russia, evidenced by its increasing number of legislators and seat share.

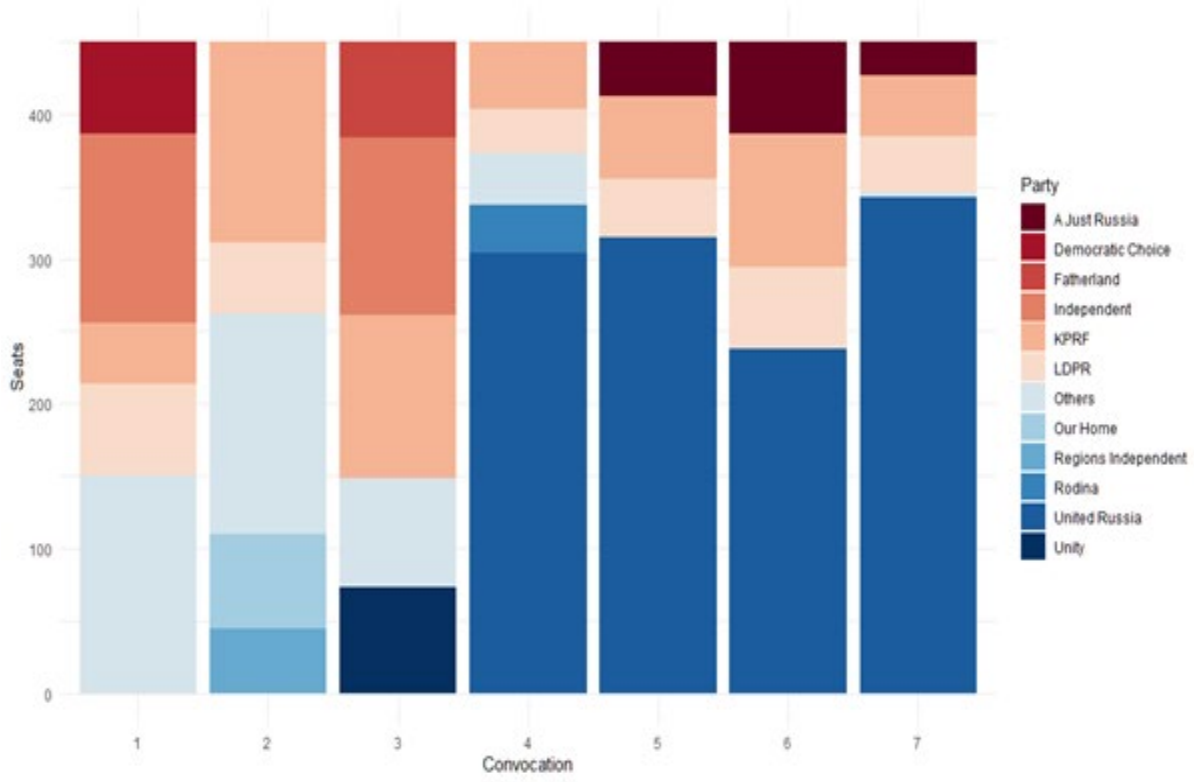
Table 1.1. Structure of the Party System in the Duma[6]

Convocation	*Number of Parties*	*Largest Party*	*Ruling Party Seat Share*
First (1993–1995)	8	LDPR/Choice of Russia	14% (each)
Second (1995–1999)	7	KPRF	31%
Third (1999–2003)	6	KPRF	25%
Fourth (2003–2007)	5	United Russia	49%
Fifth (2007–2011)	4	United Russia	70%
Sixth (2011–2016)	4	United Russia	53%
Seventh (2016–2021)	6	United Russia	76%

Figure 1.1 further elucidates these shifts, graphically representing the party structure evolution by tracking the parliamentary seats held by the top four parties. It highlights the onset of the Duma's cartelisation beginning in the Fourth Convocation, marked by a reduction in the number of independents and 'others', who gradually become integrated into the formal party system. However, note the loss of a supermajority during the Sixth convocation moving from 70% to 53% of the Duma. This decline indicates a slight weakening of the party's relative power and corresponds with a period of widespread discontent from late 2011 to 2012.

[6] The Sixth and Seventh Convocations began in October as opposed to December like the rest. I do not count independents as belonging to a party. Moreover, I include 6 parties in the Seventh to account for the seats held by Rodina and Civic Platform. Parties and seat share are counted at the start of a convocation.

Figure 1.1. Seats in the Duma by Top Four Parties per Convocation[7]



The development of United Russia in this context, as detailed by Ora John Reuter, is deeply tied to the balance of power between Russia's political leaders and elites (Reuter 2017). Reuter's analysis emphasises that dominant parties emerge as a solution to a two-sided commitment problem, where leaders need to co-opt elites, but elites must not hold so much power that they resist committing to a dominant party project. In Russia, this balance was critical to United Russia's formation under Putin, particularly after the failed attempts to establish pro-presidential parties during the Yeltsin era. The creation of United Russia marked the start of a strategic consolidation of power, as Putin's

[7] Data are acquired from the Central Election Commission. This graph shows the legislative structure of the Duma for each convocation. Seats are counted by their allotment after the election (i.e., accounting for deputies incorporating into factions). I include a category, 'others', as a metric which includes worse performing parties and vacant seats. Independents have two categories since Regions of Russia Independents constituted a group.

administration sought to centralise control and co-opt regional elites, who had previously held significant autonomous resources (Reuter 2017). The party's influence over policy-making and legislative processes, while often underestimated, plays a crucial role in maintaining the regime's stability by providing the executive with mechanisms to control the political arena and supress opposition through intra-executive discipline and policy alignment (Noble 2020). Hence, United Russia is not merely a passive tool of the Kremlin but an active player with its own scope for policy entrepreneurship *within the confines of Kremlin oversight* (Reuter 2017).

Electoral rules add another layer of complexity and variation. The Russian electoral system has oscillated between mixed membership and proportional representation, a transition detailed in *Table 2*. Initially, elections employed a dual approach of 50/50 party-list proportional representation and single-member district system, before shifting to exclusive proportional representation in the Fifth and Sixth Convocations. The Seventh Convocation marks a return to the original mixed system. This back-and-forth in electoral strategies underscores the regime's active manipulation of electoral processes aimed at consolidating the party system (Golosov 2017).

Table 1.2 Electoral Regulations for Seat Assignment by Convocation*[8]

Convocation	*Seat Assignment*	*PR Signatures*	*PR Threshold*
First (1993–1995)	PR/SMD	100,000	5.0%
Second (1996–1999)	PR/SMD	200,000	5.0%**
Third (1999–2003)	PR/SMD	200,000	5.0%***
Fourth (2003–2007)	PR/SMD	200,000	5.0%
Fifth (2007–2011)	PR	200,000	7.0%
Sixth (2011–2016)	PR	150,000	7.0%****
Seventh (2016–2021)	PR/SMD	200,000	5.0%

In the context of the 2016 Duma election, Wilson correctly predicted that despite a decrease in the number of contesting parties compared to the 43 in the 1995 election, a substantial increase in wasted votes occurred, thereby demonstrating the usefulness of electoral engineering to sway results (Wilson 2016). In a mixed electoral system, the potential for a plurality win with a meagre share of the vote in SMD constituencies increases, especially if numerous candidates are struggling in a constituency. Such a scenario tends to favour the dominant party, in this case United Russia, by enabling it to win a disproportionate number of seats even amid declining popularity. Even if United Russia's support waned, it was able to maintain legislative dominance without resorting to overt

[8] Data are collected from the Central Election Commission. *From 1999, party list and SMD candidates may pay an electoral deposit to secure their spot on the list, returnable if they win 3.0% or 5.0% of the vote. **Invalid votes are counted towards the threshold. ***If parties reach 5% of the vote but less than 50% of the vote, parties with 3.0% or above would win seats as well. However, if the parties winning seats still result in less than 50% of the vote, a repeat election is held. ****However, parties with 5.0-6.0% will get 1 seat and those with 6.0-7.0% will get 2 seats.

electoral falsification, which had previously contributed to the protest movements in 2011-2012 during United Russia's initial loss of a super majority (Wilson 2016; Kynev 2017).

Hence, reforming the electoral system allowed United Russia to secure plurality wins with minimally predicted voter support. Therefore, the switch back to MMM served to rectify their previous loss of a supermajority by effectively reducing competition through the increased number of wasted votes. This manipulation diminished the impact of the systemic opposition, showcasing how the electoral system is crafted to favour the ruling party. By designing electoral rules to exploit the fragmentation of opposition votes, the regime reinforces a dominant-party system, ensuring political stability and suppressing potential challenges from opposition parties. This strategic use of electoral mechanisms exemplifies how the Russian party system is structured to maintain the regime's power and limit political pluralism, securing United Russia's legislative dominance even amid declining popularity.

Wilson sheds light on the regime's strategic use of legal and administrative tools to manage electoral competition and safeguard its position. The reintroduction of more stringent signature requirements (see *Table 1.2*) and the establishment of a 'criminal filter' are key examples. While the signature requirements historically have not been excessively stringent, the Central Election Commission (CEC) retains the discretion to invalidate signatures, providing a mechanism to bar undesirable parties or candidates. Hence, none of the parties needing to collect signatures to become registered on the ballot were registered (RIA Novosti 2016). The criminal filter, imposing a near-lifetime ban on electoral participation for individuals convicted of serious crimes, raised concerns about its potential misuse to exclude regime opponents through fabricated cases or arbitrary application of laws.

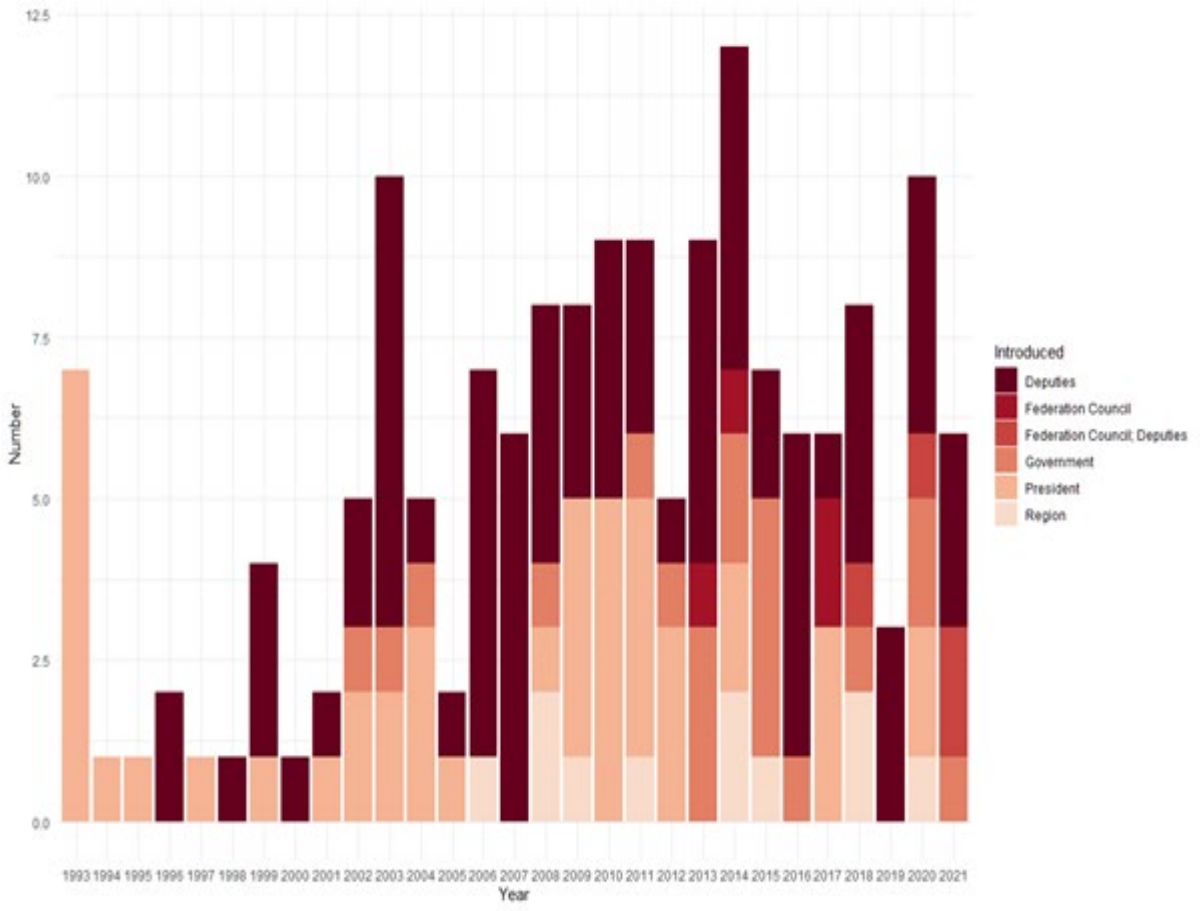
Figure 1.2 provides a detailed illustration of the dynamics surrounding the introduction and success of legislation, amendments, and presidential decrees specifically targeting the electoral system in

Russia. This data serves to underscore how the regime's strategic engagement with electoral laws and procedures has evolved in line with its consolidation of power. Notably, the period dubbed the Tandem era (2008-2012), characterised by Dmitry Medvedev holding the presidency with Vladimir Putin as Prime Minister, witnessed a significant number of electoral reforms initiated through presidential decrees. This trend highlights the presidency's dominant role in shaping electoral legislation during this phase.

However, a further development becomes evident in the post-Tandem period. The data shows a decrease in the political prominence of presidentially initiated electoral reforms. Instead, the Federal Assembly, which combines both the lower house (State Duma) and the upper house (Federation Council), alongside the government, took on more prominent roles as the main initiators of electoral policies. This transition reflects a broader strategic realignment within the Russian political system regarding attention to electoral policies and procedures. By diversifying the sources of electoral legislation beyond the presidency to include other state bodies, the regime could potentially lessen political sensitivity and public scrutiny associated with electoral law changes directed towards the office of the president.

The decrease in the direct association of electoral reforms with the presidency, particularly after Medvedev's tenure, suggests a deliberate move to make such reforms appear less politically driven and more a matter of routine legislative process. This strategy might aim to normalise the continuous adjustments to the electoral system, framing them as technical or administrative rather than overtly political manoeuvres designed to maintain the regime's grip on power, and aligns with the regime's broader efforts to consolidate power and control over electoral mechanisms through more institutionalised channels.

Figure 1.2. Total Amendments to Electoral Legislation Year and Initiator[9]



A cursory qualitative analysis of legislative initiatives in the Duma reveals distinct patterns in the types of legislation introduced by different branches of government, particularly concerning electoral law and party development. This analysis provides insights into the shifting focus of legislative activity and the strategic manipulations employed by various state actors.

During Medvedev's presidency, the president's legislative initiatives were substantial and often directed at pivotal aspects of party development and comprehensive legal reforms. A notable example includes Medvedev's legislative intervention to modify party registration requirements, as seen in the

[9] The data are compiled from Golos's Chronology of Electoral Legislation (2021). Eight datapoints through the period did not include the initiator of legislation, so they are omitted. This graph shows the patterns in attention given to the electoral system by year and by bill, law, and constitutional law amender.

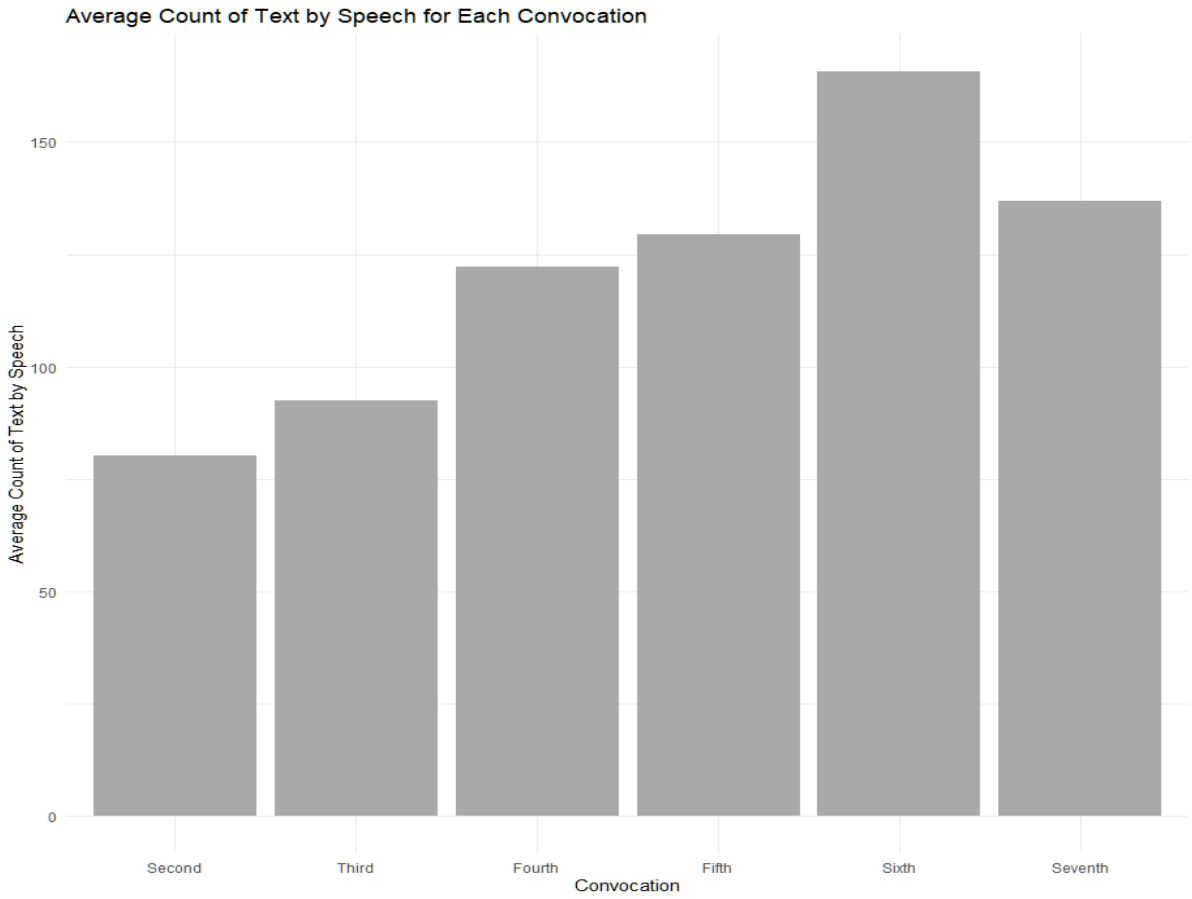
2009 amendments to the Collected Legislation of the Russian Federation (2009). These changes notably eased the signature registration requisites for the top four Duma parties and lowered the threshold for other parties, indicating a strategic approach to shaping the party landscape. In contrast, the government predominantly focused on addressing procedural and technical aspects of electoral laws, aiming to clarify and refine existing legal frameworks. These initiatives often targeted the minutiae of election processes, enhancing the government's control over electoral mechanisms.

The Duma's legislative focus regarding reform during this period was more grounded in practical electoral concerns, dealing with issues such as media debt regulations, Central Election Commission rules, and the involvement of non-governmental organizations in elections. Over time, there is a discernible shift in the locus of legislative initiative towards the Federal Assembly and the government. This shift indicates a growing regime interest in fine-tuning electoral procedures and functions, as evidenced in *Figure 1.2*.

The variations in legislative focus, extending beyond broad institutional rules like proportional representation or single-member districts to more nuanced legal adjustments, suggest a secondary outcome of reforming the electoral system: increased influence over the incentive structures governing speechmaking in the Duma. These formal changes in election-related legislation reflect an evolving approach to managing the political landscape and may have significant implications for the behaviour and speech patterns of legislators within the Duma.

Initial data on speech lengths in the Duma reveals intriguing patterns across different convocations and time periods, particularly when juxtaposing the more semi-democratic era with the authoritarian turn. *Figure 1.3* distinctly illustrates that the average word count in the chamber raises over time. In other words, the floor has become livelier in the latter convocations.

Figure 1.3. Average Speech Length (per speech) by Convocation



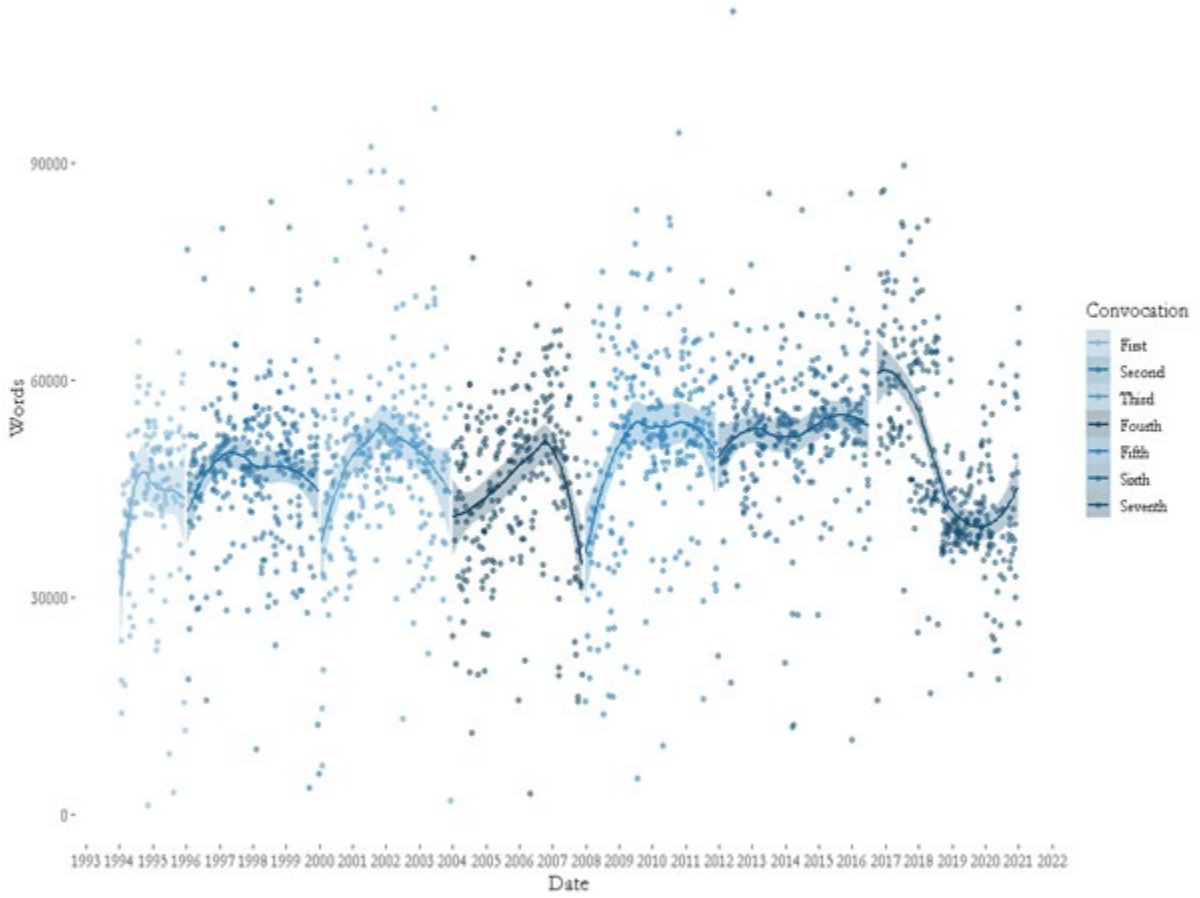
Contrary to expectations, the authoritarian period sees an increase in the mean amount of speech time (per individual speech) within the chamber. This counter-intuitive trend might be attributed to changes in time constraint rules as delineated in the Duma's procedural regulations (*Reglament*), documented in depth in *Appendix A*. These amendments to the rules of procedure, particularly evident from the mid-2000s and more pronounced around 2012 after the 'Italian Strike', generally cap and decrease the time allocations for individual speeches. The rules, such as limiting the overall time for discussing amendments (Article 50 Section 5) and setting stringent time limits for various types of speeches (Article 56 Sections 1 and 2), significantly reduced the scope for extensive debate and oppositional manoeuvring. This shift not only limited the duration of floor speeches but also granted the chairperson greater discretion in managing floor time (Article 56 Section 5 and Article 59 Section

2), effectively diminishing the opposition's ability to use parliamentary procedures as a tool for resistance (see *Appendix A*). Yet, despite these restrictions, the cumulative time spent on the floor has increased, suggesting broader participation.

Despite the procedural changes aimed at reducing the time allocations for individual speeches, the cumulative time spent on the floor had increased over time. However, as *Figure 1.4* shows, the data for the Seventh convocation shows a unique pattern: there is a noticeable drop in the word counts per day, which goes against our expectations given the reforms introduced by the Speaker, Vyacheslav Volodin, including disciplinary actions against absenteeism (Noble 2017b).

One possible explanation for the drop in daily word counts is that the Seventh convocation has become more efficient in legislative debates. The disciplinary actions against absenteeism and reforms to streamline the legislative process may have led to more focused and concise speeches. Legislators may be using their allotted time more effectively, reducing the need for longer speeches. This efficiency would align with Volodin's reforms aimed at improving public perception of the Duma. Shorter, more focused debates can create an image of a more professional and disciplined legislative body. It may also reflect the centralisation of the legislative process. With the Speaker having greater discretion in managing floor time, there might be stricter enforcement of speech limits and more control over the content and duration of speeches. This would indicate a higher level of control over the legislative process, ensuring that debates do not deviate from the agenda set by the ruling party. It would also suggest that opposition voices are further marginalised, reducing the overall length of debates.

Figure 1.4 Total Words Spoken per Day by Convocation with LOESS Mean Line[10]



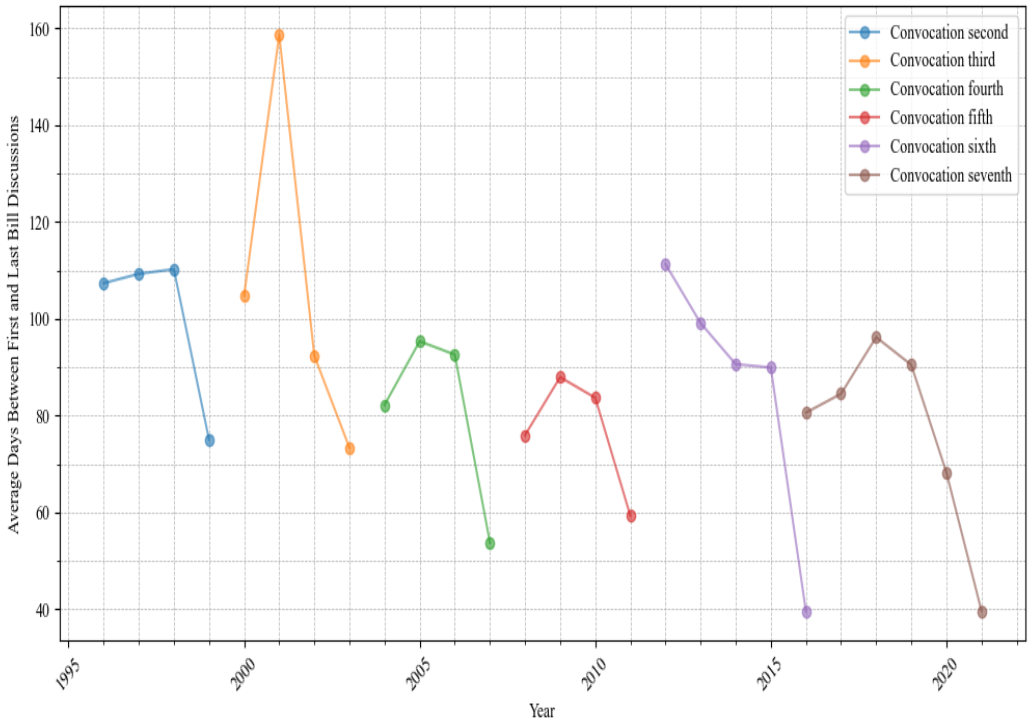
However, equally plausible is that legislators might also be strategically using their time to align with the regime's priorities, focusing on delivering key messages efficiently rather than engaging in lengthy debates. The drop in word counts might reflect a tactical adaptation to the new rules and expectations set by Volodin's leadership. Hence, they reflect the regime's efforts to maintain control

[10] The graph is coloured by the mean number of words spoken during a given convocation where opaqueness equals a higher mean. A LOESS line is provided by convocation to underscore the variation of local trends in word counts by convocation. This visualisation may partly overstate the variance of the mean number of words spoken over time. However, even given the sharp drop in 2018, the mean number of words per session increased 10% from the first convocation to the seventh. In any case, the local trend lines provide an advantage in looking at within-convocation patterns which is more advantageous for gauging change over time (since convocations align with variations in rules). The total word counts are normalised by the number of individual speeches given in a day.

while appearing responsive and effective. Legislators adapt by delivering their messages within the constraints, maintaining visibility and relevance without breaching new norms. In any case, the changes indicate a further narrowing of the space for oppositional manoeuvring, with potential tighter control over speech content and duration. This has implications for how opposition parties strategize and participate in legislative debates. Furthermore, the shift in speech patterns is reflective of broader trends in authoritarian governance, where the balance between control and responsiveness is continually adjusted to sustain regime stability and legitimacy.

There is still a question of whether the length of time spent in the chamber correlates with bill velocity. Over time, we might expect that the Duma should demonstrate increasing efficiency in its legislative outputs, which could correspond with the length of time deputies spend in the chamber. However, as *Figure 1.5* shows, the average days between the first and last discussions of bills (not considering bills only read in the first reading), a rough measure of bill velocity, exhibit varying patterns across different convocations. The data indicates that the Fourth to Seventh convocations generally follow similar trends in terms of bill velocity, with some fluctuations.

Figure 1.5 Average Days Between First and Last Bill Discussions by Convocation[11]



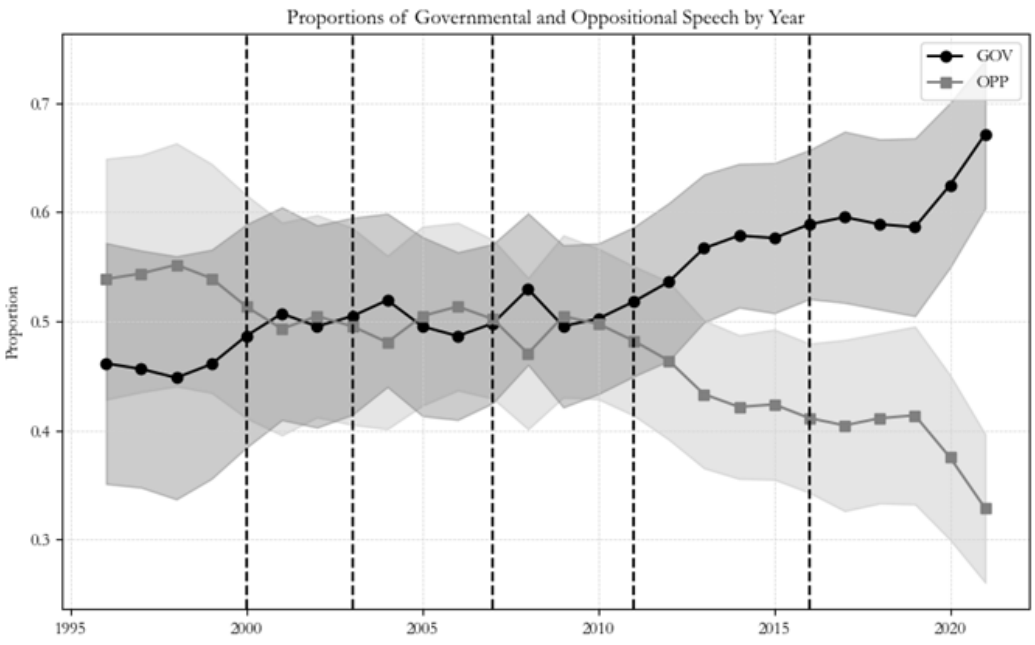
However, the Sixth and Seventh convocations do show a reduction in the average days between the first and last discussions of bills during the end of their sessions, suggesting an increase in legislative efficiency. This trend also aligns with the procedural changes and reforms aimed at streamlining the legislative process. If this increase in 'efficiency' was solely due to the leadership of Vyacheslav Volodin, we would only see such day-level reductions in the Seventh convocation. The reduction in deliberation time during these convocations may indicate a more controlled and centralised legislative process due to institutional and party-based factors rather than leadership style. Hence, debates may become more focused and concise (potentially contributing to faster bill passage past the second

[11] Note: this figure does not include bills accepted (or rejected) during their first readings so as to not count one-day of discussion as being substantive.

readings) due to the broader institutional changes within the Duma introduced during 2012 rather than in the Seventh convocation.

We might further expect that government-opposition dynamics are significantly influenced by the hardening of the systemic opposition, regulatory amendments in 2012, and the efficiency reforms implemented by Vyacheslav Volodin. *Chapter 6* reveals that 2012 marked a watershed moment for pro-governmental speech within the Duma, coinciding with the procedural amendments. Moreover, the period marked by Volodin's tenure further entrenched these speechmaking patterns. The following figure from *Chapter 6* demonstrates these tendencies.

Figure 1.6 Governmental and Opposition Orientation by Year with 95% Confidence Intervals (Aggregate CAM Mean Values)[12]



The figure demonstrates the aggregate class affinity mean values – a scaling method developed to scale between party-positions – providing empirical evidence of these shifts, showing how pro-

[12] Note: For all CAM figures, dashed lines indicate convocational changes starting with the Second and moving to the Seventh convocations

government speeches dominated the legislative landscape post-2012, with confidence intervals reflecting the diminishing presence and overlap, and thus overall influence of pro-oppositional speech over the floor. Specifically, the data show that the reform programs under Volodin not only streamlined legislative processes (particularly towards the end of sessions as demonstrated in Figure 1.5) but also reinforced the dominance of pro-government rhetoric, further marginalising pro-opposition voices. This is pivotal for understanding the interaction between formal regulatory changes and informal power mechanisms, revealing how the regime has been able to solidify its grip on the Duma by controlling the legislative discourse.

The importance of this figure extends beyond descriptive statistics; it empirically underpins the argument that the regime's control over the Duma has intensified, transforming the legislature from a semi-democratic forum into a tool of competitive authoritarianism. This dynamic mirrors the broader strategies of electoral authoritarian regimes worldwide, where democratic institutions are preserved in form but hollowed out in function. The figure thus stands as a visual representation of how formal and informal mechanisms intertwine to enhance the regime's legitimacy while suppressing true political pluralism, underscoring the theoretical claims of the dissertation regarding the adaptive strategies of authoritarian rule in legislative institutions.

In examining the Duma's sessions, similarities with Western parliamentary behaviours are possible, where politicians often speak at or past each other without genuine persuasion and speechmaking incentives are generated within the electoral system (Proksch and Slapin 2012). However, as the Duma develops these democratic expectations may start to wane. Hence, the generalisability of these observations remains a challenge, as highlighted in single-country studies (e.g., Blaydes 2011; Brancati 2014; Magaloni 2008; Malesky and Schuler 2010). Brancati notes that much of the research on democratic institutions within authoritarian states is rooted in single-case studies, limiting their applicability to broader contexts, and they advocate for more expansive conceptual

frameworks that balance cross-national generalisability with the specificity required for in-depth analysis (2014).

However, such an approach must be able to navigate the complexities of varied measurements and potential confounders across different cases and outcomes. In contrast, Pepinsky (2013, 650) stresses the importance of prioritising internal validity, particularly when external validity is challenged by measurement and where data generation processes are uncertain. In the case of this dissertation, the data generation process of legislative speech is of conceptual importance, and its purpose is to distinguish between the generation processes in democratic and authoritarian regimes. Therefore, Russia is apt to handle this because it offers variation over regime type, electoral systems, procedural regulations, party system configuration, and the Duma's relationship to the executive, all of which in turn, vary according to its stage of development.

In these scenarios, scholars should focus on how institutional changes over time influence specific outcomes, emphasising the contextual nuances in the explanatory variables that distinguish legislatures in their political consequences. A study encompassing both non-authoritarian and authoritarian periods within a single country, such as Russia, offers valuable insights into these dynamics. Therefore, this dissertation makes steps to create the conditions necessary for cross-country research by elucidating the specifics of a single case, without which cross-country generalisations are impossible to verify.

1.3 Data and Methods

This study leverages the extensive public records of the Russian State Duma, accessible up to at least 2022, through its API[13] and its dedicated webpage. These records include comprehensive speech

[13] As of the submission of this dissertation, access to the Duma API has been intermittently restricted in some Western countries (in fact, there has been problems with access since 2021).

transcripts and legislator-level data from 1996-2021. Data is unavailable for the First convocation (1994-1996). To complement this speech data, additional speaker-level metadata not available in the Duma's API library were compiled, encompassing committee and leadership positions, age, gender, and electoral system type, sourced from legislator webpages, the Central Election Commission, biographies, and scholarly publications (see *Appendix B*).

The dataset encompasses all publicly available speeches and legislator data spanning from 1996 to 2021, covering the Second to Seventh convocations of the Duma.[14] This period is particularly significant as it encapsulates the phases and regime transitions of Russia which this dissertation is predicated upon. Constructing this dataset involved significant challenges, including meticulous manual coding of speakers' metadata per convocation (and year where appropriate), and compiling transcripts into speech act-level 'short transcripts' for more granular data availability. The final speech dataset includes variables such as speech date, speaker identity, full text, reading of bill, and question-issue addressed. The legislator dataset includes but is not limited to key variables: time in convocation, party variables, committee variables, total time in office, year, age, ruling party status, leadership roles, SMD status, and gender.

Post the initial compilation phase of this dissertation, an alternative source from *Dekoder* and *Novaya Gazeta* has released the same speech dataset (with an identical structure), which can be accessed for comparative or supplementary analysis.[15] Consequently, researchers seeking to engage with this dataset are advised to refer to the *Dekoder* source for the most up-to-date and easily accessible speech data.

[14] For the purposes of comparative analysis, focusing on the Second to Seventh convocations allows for a more consistent examination of the trends in legislative behaviour under more stabilised conditions. The First Duma was marked by significant tensions between the branches of government, lacked an identifiable party-system, and was in the process of establishing legislative procedures, reflecting a struggle to define the balance of powers within the new Russian state. Moreover, easily accessible data is not present for the First Duma.

[15] https://duma.dekoder.org/en/

The primary focus of the dissertation focuses on the dynamics of debates at the convocation level, with particular attention to the participation patterns of deputies and their relationship to speech content. Following the methodological guidelines provided by Slapin and Proksch (2021), the analysis filters speeches shorter than 50 words, considering them as insubstantial contributions to the debate. These speeches are assigned a value of 0 words and are not entirely removed, acknowledging that even minimal participation can yield insights into deputies' engagement patterns. While the analysis excludes most procedural speeches made by the chairperson presiding over the meetings (as these are typically administrative rather than substantive contributions to the debates), these contributions are counted if they exceed 50 words.

The table below presents summary statistics of key variables of interest across the chapters. The dataset encompasses 2,547 observations of deputies spanning across the convocations. On average, each convocation witnesses a median of 46 speeches per deputy, amounting to a total of 4,897 words spoken. Notably, a small fraction of deputies (2.28%, or 58 individuals) either did not speak or spoke fewer than 50 words at any given meeting, indicating varying levels of participation.[16]

[16] See *Appendix B Table 1* for a detailed breakdown of all variables in the data set compiled at the daily level.

Table 1.3. Descriptive Statistics of Legislator and Speech Data (1996-2021)

	mean	median	sd	min	max	*n*
N speeches	239.0495	46	685.4848	0	11897	2547
N words/speeches	117.2919	89.7826	110.1986	0	1275.107	2547
N words	14941.69	4897	31925.41	0	533,763	2547
Exposure (time in chamber)	1242.481	1381	404.8917	1	1733	2547
Party share	0.368344	0.25111	0.277307	0.0044	0.746667	2547
Seats	164.8402	113	124.1374	2	336	2547
Committee share	0.054964	0.0381786	0.044549	0.00232	0.22527	2547
Seniority	6.095135	3.9917921	4.55725	0.046512	25.4829	2547
Age	53.70084	53.931507	10.47242	25.27671	89.45479	2547

	0	1	Total	*n*
Spoke	2.2772	97.7228	100	2547
Ruling party	46.83942	53.16058	100	2547
Party leader	98.19395	1.806046	100	2547
Duma leadership	97.95838	2.041618	100	2547
Committee chair	92.26541	7.73459	100	2547
Committee deputy chair	64.74283	35.25717	100	2547
SMD	67.13781	32.86219	100	2547
Gender (female)	87.71103	12.28897	100	2547

To ascertain the ruling party status, a binary variable is used, derived from United Russia and its pro-governmental predecessor parties. This variable helps in distinguishing the speeches and actions of the ruling party members from those of the opposition, although complete party-level information is retained in the dataset for use in *Chapter 6*. The analysis incorporates binary variables for committee

allocations, differentiating between the roles of committee chair and deputy chairs. The chairperson is often responsible for presenting bills submitted through their committee, while deputy chairs engage in diverse functions such as updating on amendments, proposing resolutions, and interacting with government bodies (Collected Legislation of the Russian Federation 2020). Additional binary variables are included to account for deputies holding positions in the Duma leadership. These variables help in identifying the influence of leadership roles on deputies' participation and speech patterns. Finally, a dummy variable for party leaders is also included to assess the impact of party leadership on legislative behaviour and speech dynamics.

The dissertation's empirical section unfolds in four parts, each foundational to the subsequent analysis. It starts with a regression-based study of floor participation dynamics, using negative binomial models for speech counts and linear mixed-effects models for total speaking time per convocation. The dissertation then moves on to measure the impact of electoral rules on floor participation. It builds on the regression-based model and extends this to measure differences among PR/SMD legislators in the Fourth and Fifth convocations, and Sixth and Seventh convocations. Again, mixed effects models conditioned with random effects on deputies are used for this section.

The third empirical chapter employs a machine learning approach based on elastic net regularisation to categorise speeches belonging to six policy domains: civil/political, economic, social, defence, foreign policy, and procedural policies. With these categorisations in hand, the analysis moves on to employ a similar mixed-effects regression strategy on policy attention by convocation. Finally, the fourth empirical chapter uses the results from the preceding chapter to elucidate whether policy domains are more pro-government or pro-oppositional by legislators in given convocations. It uses a Class Affinity Model (Perry and Benoit 2022) trained on party leadership speeches per policy domain. The purpose of employing CAM is that its foundational premise – that a speaker's orientation throughout a speech oscillates between a *'Government* mode' and an *'Opposition* mode' – is applicable to

authoritarian contexts where the government and opposition should be clearly delineable if that opposition is active. Hence, the CAM can sidestep pitfalls associated with similar classification methodologies which are not explicit in how we should interpret predicted class probabilities (e.g., Benoit and Herzog 2017; Joachims 1998; Sebastiani 2002). Legislators' associated CAM scores are again regressed in a similar strategy to assess change over time and by legislator characteristics.

1.4 Structure

The dissertation comprises seven chapters, each serving a distinct purpose in the scholarly inquiry. *Chapter 2* delves deeply into the extant literature and theoretical constructs, engaging in a critical examination and expansion of these to further refine the theoretical framework introduced in this initial chapter. This chapter is instrumental in placing the analysis within the literature on legislative speech and authoritarian legislatures. The dissertation then transitions into the empirical chapters. Owing to the complexity inherent in the four methodological approaches and the associated data, detailed discussions of these are reserved for their respective chapters. *Chapter 3* is particularly important as it examines the evolution of speechmaking within the Duma, establishing an essential baseline for comprehending the transition from democratic to authoritarian systems in legislative practices. This chapter finds a correlation between United Russia's escalating control over parliamentary proceedings and the patterns of decreasing floor access and speaking time allocated to the opposition.

In *Chapter 4*, the focus shifts to the influence exerted by electoral systems on the patterns of speechmaking. It discerns that the recent electoral changes in Russia distinguish the latter convocations from their democratic counterparts, albeit their effects are relatively subdued when juxtaposed with party and institutional variables. This divergence, as observed in the Duma under varying electoral systems, exemplifies how co-optative frameworks significantly mould legislative

conduct, reinforcing the hypothesis that speechmaking behaviours in authoritarian regimes are profoundly different than in democracies even if elections are held.

Chapters *5* and *6* proceed to analyse policy attention and pro-governmental rhetoric. *Chapter 5* analyses the policy focus in the Duma across different convocations, accentuating the shift in policy attention that mirrors the regime's strategic priorities. The findings of this chapter resonate with the premise that policy discourse in authoritarian legislatures is increasingly orchestrated to align with regime consolidation and high levels governmental agenda-setting. The penultimate chapter, *Chapter 6*, provides an examination of the dynamics of pro-governmental and oppositional rhetoric within these policy domains, offering evidence that legislative debates are employed as tools for narrative control and regime support. The findings here underscore the strategic manipulation of legislative debates in reinforcing regime narratives, thus emphasising the significance of legislative speech as an instrumental facet of the regime.

The dissertation culminates in *Chapter 7*, which synthesizes the findings, reconnecting them with the theoretical framework and deliberating on their implications for our comprehension of authoritarian legislatures. It concludes by contemplating the broader importance of the study for the discipline of political science, especially in elucidating the evolution of legislative behaviour in political systems undergoing a transition.

The dissertation's structure is designed to methodically probe the theoretical questions posited in this introduction and subsequent theory chapter. Each chapter is constructed to build upon its predecessor. For example, data produced in *Chapter 5* is used for the basis of analysis in *Chapter 6*, and findings from *Chapter 3* are tested against their expectations for *Chapter 4*. This progressive exploration ensures that the empirical findings are firmly rooted in addressing the theory and include methodological precision.

2. The Role of Legislative Debates: Literature and Theory

Chapter 2 of this dissertation is dedicated to constructing a comprehensive theoretical framework that explicates the dynamics of legislative debates in authoritarian regimes, particularly in the context of democratic backsliding. This chapter aims to extend and refine the burgeoning body of research on parliamentary speeches in democratic settings, contributing novel insights into how institutions shape legislative discourse in authoritarian systems. This endeavour is vital for understanding the role of legislative debates in reinforcing regime stability within the broader theoretical landscape of authoritarian legislatures.

The chapter begins by engaging with the four primary theoretical approaches on comparative analysis in legislative debates in advanced democracies (Bäck, Debus, and Fernandes 2021). A recent *Oxford University Press* edited volume serves as a foundational reference, offering a detailed exploration of the dynamics and functions of legislative debates in democratic contexts. This section will critically examine and distil these theoretical approaches, evaluating their relevance and applicability to the authoritarian context.

Following this, the focus shifts to theories specifically pertaining to authoritarian legislatures. This section delves into the unique characteristics, mechanisms, and strategic objectives that define legislative processes in authoritarian regimes. It will examine how these legislatures differ from their democratic counterparts in terms of structure, function, and the role they play in the broader political system. This discussion will include an analysis of how authoritarian regimes utilise these legislative institutions as tools for political control, public legitimacy, and policy implementation.

The final section of the chapter presents a novel theory of authoritarian legislative debate based on a synthesis of the authoritarian literature and its expectations towards legislative speech. This theory

is developed by juxtaposing the nature of debates in democratic systems with those in authoritarian regimes. It explores how the underlying principles, motivations, and objectives of legislative debates shift as political systems move from democratic to authoritarian governance. This theory aims to provide a robust framework for understanding the transformation in the substance and style of legislative debates during democratic backsliding.

2.1 Theories of Legislative Speech Under Democratic Systems

This section will engage with four prominent theoretical approaches towards comparative legislative debates in advanced democracies. Bäck, Debus, and Fernandes' (2021) recent studies offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the current state of the art concerning legislative debates.

Bäck et al. point out at least four viewpoints on the purpose of legislative debates spread across the literature: deliberative, discourse, strategic and rational choice, and individualistic representation approaches (Bächtiger 2014; Back, Debus, and Fernandes 2021). First, the deliberative approach focuses on how speeches inform and generate 'positive' decision-making practices (Bächtiger 2014). Second, discourse approaches concentrate on the argumentative structure of debates and the rules and rituals undergirding speech-making (S. Martin et al. 2014; Steiner et al. 2004). Third, strategic and rational-choice approaches study how and why parties and institutions allocate floor time (Proksch and Slapin 2015, 2021) Finally, there is a growing literature on representation and how parliamentarians' individual characteristics (e.g., gender or ethnicity) affect their speech behaviours (Bäck and Debus 2020; Bäck, Debus, and Fernandes 2021; Baumann, Debus, and Müller 2015; Blumenau 2019). Discussing these foundational theories is essential for understanding how debates have developed in the Duma, since they provide the basis for juxtaposing the characteristics and expectations of debates in democracies with those observed in authoritarian regimes. Special attention

is given to the strategic and rational choice approach developed by Proksch and Slapin given the importance of formal institutions in the Russian context.

2.1.1 Deliberation

The deliberative approach to legislative debates, deeply rooted in normative theories, envisions parliaments as forums for optimal decision-making based on the strength of arguments, consensus-building, and consensuality. This perspective, influenced by theorists like Habermas (1996), Gutmann and Thompson (1996), as well as elaborated by Bächtiger (2014), posits that political actors create and confer legitimacy over policymaking through justifying and refining their policies during debates. Debates are seen as a key element in ensuring the quality of deliberation, focusing on the positive normative implications they hold in the policy-making process.

However, this viewpoint faces critique for its divergence from standard legislative studies, where debates often serve purposes beyond creating genuinely deliberative policy outcomes. Critics like Fishkin and Luskin (2005)[17] and Landwehr and Holzinger (2010) argue that plenary speeches, often prepared well in advance, may not facilitate the information-sharing necessary for persuasion in final votes and tend to follow a rigid character – a finding also observed by Bächtiger (2014). This suggests a potential disconnection between the idealistic aspirations of deliberative theory and the practical realities of legislative processes.

Despite these criticisms, the deliberative approach offers valuable insights into the legislative process with potential implications for authoritarian regimes. It recognizes that while strategic considerations may dominate high-stakes policy decisions, lower-stakes situations may allow for different types of behaviours, underscoring the importance of context in legislative debates. Debates can highlight essential normative functions beyond policy outputs, such as public consensus-building.

[17] Regarding deliberation in persuasive environments in general.

For instance, in government-opposition settings, parties are more inclined to engage in strategic behaviour due to electoral competition, potentially undermining the deliberative capacity of legislatures (Bächtiger 2014). This strategic posture, however, does not preclude the presence of coordination and respect in debates, indicative of a deliberative ethos, though it may sometimes be more performative than substantive (Landwehr and Holzinger 2010).

Hence, the appearance of deliberative practices and the public perception of argumentation and persuasion in legislatures can bolster the legitimacy of the law-making process, even if these debates do not always engage in real coordinative activity. This perspective challenges us to look beyond the surface of legislative debates to understand the multiple roles they play in the policy-making process, ranging from strategic positioning to the creation of a façade of deliberation that serves to legitimise policy decisions.

2.1.2 Discourse

The discourse approach to legislative speech focuses on the linguistic rules and conventions that underpin parliamentary debates (Bäck, Debus, and Fernandes 2021; Ilie 2003). Grounded in the understanding that parliamentarians are acutely aware of their audience – both their colleagues and the general public – this approach acknowledges that debates, particularly those concerning substantial legislation, often adopt a confrontational and rhetorical stance (e.g., Bächtiger 2014; Ilie 2003, 2004, 2010). This perspective highlights that legislators use debates not just as a means of direct communication with their peers, but also as a platform to engage with and influence a broader public audience. In this context, debates become less about genuine deliberation and more about showcasing and reinforcing the values and norms of the speakers, using rhetorical skills to bolster their arguments.

A key contribution of the discursive tradition is its focus on the linguistic features of debate, which can offer insights into other theoretical approaches. Sometimes these approaches overlap with the normative accounts from the deliberative approach. For example, tools such as the Discourse Quality

Index have been used to gauge the deliberative quality of debates, evaluating key indicators like respect and the extent to which speeches draw from the notion of the 'common good' in their rhetoric (Bächtiger 2014; Ilie 2015). Additionally, the distinction between the language of parliamentary debate and everyday speech is a primary area of inquiry within this tradition. Scholars explore questions about the differences between these forms of speech and what these differences reveal about the informal and formal rules governing parliamentary discourse.

However, a critique of the discursive approach is that it tends to be more descriptive than explanatory. While it provides valuable insights into the linguistic aspects of parliamentary debates, it often falls short in explaining the political motivations and behaviours that shape the parliamentary space. The emphasis on language and rhetorical style, although informative, does not fully account for the strategic and political underpinnings that drive legislative debates. This limitation suggests that while the discursive approach offers important insights regarding the puzzle of understanding parliamentary speech, it needs to be understood alongside other theoretical frameworks that address the broader political and strategic dimensions of legislative discourse.

2.1.3 Strategic and Rational Choice

Scholars developed and refined the classic strategic and rational-choice accounts of legislative speech-making in the American context (Bäck, Debus, and Fernandes 2021). For instance, earlier scholarship in the field underscored the uses of debate for electoral politics in Congress: debates incentivise legislators to take credit, advertise, and take positions because of their potential media coverage (Mayhew 1974; Fenno 1973). Austen-Smith (1990b) contributed to this field by examining the role of debates in information revelation, suggesting that the impact of debates on legislation is limited and only effective under specific conditions. This view reinforces the notion of debates as 'cheap talk' in policymaking, emphasising their contingent utility within strategic environments rather than as avenues for persuasion or consensus-building. The policy-centred approach, however, argues

that minority party members and ideological extremists can use speeches to influence policy outcomes more effectively. In contrast, members vulnerable electorally tend to spend less time in the chamber (Maltzman and Sigelman 1996b).

Proksch and Slapin provide the most important and comprehensive account of parliamentary debate thus far in the literature. The basic premise of their model assumes that parliamentarians use speech as an opportunity to relate their positions to voters and their parties. Since floor time is limited, party leaders control who may come to the floor to send a unified message. In turn, political institutions – mainly elections – determine the degree to which party leaders enact control over the floor (Proksch and Slapin 2015, 17-18; 2012). Therefore, the selection process creates a strategic environment for speech-making for both individual lawmakers who seek career advancement and party leaders who seek unity. Their model carries far from their illustrative cases since it is designed with these relatively unobtrusive assumptions.

Their original game-theoretic model follows a strategic delegation game. The game specifies that the strategic environment consists of a tension between party leaders (principals) who intend to send unified party signals and backbenchers (agents) who require speaking time to advance career interests. The game follows a basic logic: a MP is first recognised as a potential speaker; the party leader then decides whether to allow them floor-time or take it themselves; if floor-time is allocated to the MP, they must decide whether to stick to the party line or not in their speech. The leadership decision to give floor-time and the backbencher decision to stay with the party line depends on ideology, institutions, and electoral concerns (Slapin and Proksch 2012, 15).

Depending on electoral institutions, backbencher speeches may be directed at the party or voters, and leaders will limit ideologically distant voices (Slapin and Proksch 2012). However, backbenchers' overall selection chances are beholden to the absolute electoral gains that party-leaders may receive

from delegating floor-time to them. The observable implication of this model for speech-making is that electoral and party systems create the incentive structure for backbench speeches.

Slapin and Proksch provide robust evidence that electoral systems affect parliamentary speech and reflect implications for party unity and leadership control. Their theory outlines the effects of three electoral systems under parliamentary regimes: plurality, proportional and mixed-member PR (2015). Party leaders value MP exposure and unity in plurality systems, while MPs value ideology and party position. Leaders value exposure and unity since MPs' names will feature prominently on ballots, and backbenchers value ideology and party position since they require the backing of their party. This suggests moderate party unity on the floor, moderate leadership control, and low leadership participation (Proksch and Slapin 2021; 2015). In proportional electoral systems, party leaders value party unity above all and reward loyalists to preserve the party brand; backbenchers value the party's position. This creates incentives for a high degree of party unity, leadership control, and leadership participation (Slapin and Proksch 2021; 2015). Mixed-member PR follows a similar logic. However, backbenchers value ideology and party position due to the electoral differences across SMD and party lists. In addition, SMD deputies may deviate from the party line to gather constituency level votes and personal image. This also implies that party leadership exerts more control over their PR deputies. Therefore, debates should have high party unity, extremely high leadership control, and high leadership participation (Slapin and Proksch 2021; 2015).

The model also implies that the parliamentary rules of procedure are endogenous to electoral incentives meaning party leaders governing floor-time regulations will structure them to fit their highest payoffs. This is a main mechanism of control over speaking allocation. In plurality systems where legislators' brands are more critical to electoral success than party unity, rules for floor-time will be looser and, therefore, offer the opportunity for more voices and broader dissent (Proksch and Slapin 2021). In proportional systems where the party image is more important than the individual's,

floor-time the rules of procedure will let parliamentary leaders limit debate on the floor and block participation (Proksch and Slapin 2021).

For example, Proksch and Slapin find that in party-centred institutions (e.g., proportional representation), where a unified party image is more important than candidate-centred institutions, party leaders exert more stringent controls over floor time and value party unity. As a result, leaders will eschew dissenting backbenchers in these systems, favouring colleagues in line with the status quo. In addition, backbenchers in these systems will value the party's position (Proksch and Slapin 2010). Party leaders have less control over dissenting speeches in individual-centred institutions (e.g., plurality). Leaders, instead, value candidates' exposure to the electorate. Likewise, backbenchers do not value the party position per se, but ideology since they are somewhat removed from the party and face local party challengers when up for election. This helps differentiate them to the electorate (Proksch and Slapin 2021, 38-41).

While Proksch and Slapin's contributions to the field have focused on the electoral incentives that moderate the relationship between party leaders, backbenchers, and floor-time, they note that there are several other institutional dynamics to account for regarding speech-making: government versus opposition, coalitional dynamics, challenger parties, policy extremity, committees, and gender (2021). These additional variables are essential to model because they offer additional variation and nuance across time and regime configurations.

The government-opposition dynamic plays a pivotal role in parliamentary debates, as it is fundamentally structured by the government's agenda-setting and the inherent divide between government and opposition parties (Proksch and Slapin 2021, 43). This dynamic is essential for understanding legislative behaviour, as it captures both intra-party and inter-party variations in dissent and agreement. Debates centred around government policy typically mirror this divide, focusing more on the dichotomy of government versus opposition rather than on specific policy positions (Herzog

and Benoit 2013; Lauderdale and Herzog 2016). This observation underscores how legislative debates often serve as a reflection of political alignment rather than purely policy-driven discussions.

Furthermore, the government-opposition divide is not limited to opposition parties alone; it can also manifest within pro-government ranks. An illustrative example is found in the budgetary debates in Ireland, where pro-government backbenchers have been demonstrated to voice criticisms against the government's agenda (Herzog and Benoit 2013). Such instances show that the degree of homogeneity or heterogeneity regarding pro-governmental speech within a parliamentary chamber is closely linked to the existing party configurations and the institutional incentives shaping floor-time allocations.

In systems that prioritise party unity, legislators tend to adopt more homogeneous positions, aligning closely with party directives. Contrastingly, in systems that emphasize individualism among legislators, the party structure allows for greater levels of dissent, leading to a more heterogeneous range of viewpoints. Hence, in proportional representation systems, where party unity is often paramount, there is a tendency to limit the speech opportunities of dissenting members. This dynamic can lead to an underrepresentation of dissenting voices in the data generation process, as party leaders strategically allocate floor time to maintain a cohesive party image. Consequently, the actual extent of dissent and debate within these systems might be underappreciated, highlighting the need for a systematic approach to analysing legislative speech in such contexts. This understanding of the government-opposition dynamic and the institutional factors influencing legislative speech is instrumental in examining the nuances of parliamentary discourse, particularly in the context of strategic and rational choice theories of legislative behaviour.

Martin and Vanberg's study (2008) highlights an intriguing aspect of parliamentary speeches, emphasising their role in monitoring interactions between coalition partners. They propose that parliamentary debate and the process of questioning allow backbench legislators to oversee and keep

tabs on their coalition colleagues. This perspective views legislative speeches as a tool for intra-coalitional scrutiny, providing a platform for backbenchers to hold their own government accountable and to ensure adherence to coalition agreements.

However, Proksch and Slapin (2021, 44) offer an explanation of this dynamic, particularly in the context of proportional representation systems where party leaders exert significant control over the parliamentary floor. In such systems, party leaders are not just influential figures; they often have the authority to determine who speaks and what is spoken. This control extends to managing the speakers' lists and the contents of the speeches delivered. Given this level of control, the monitoring function of speeches as proposed by Martin and Vanberg may manifest differently.

For example, in settings where party leaders have a strong hold over floor activities, one would expect them to allocate speaking opportunities to party loyalists rather than to those who might challenge or deviate from the party line. The rationale behind this is straightforward: in systems where party unity and discipline are paramount, such as in proportional representation systems, party leaders are likely to prioritize maintaining a cohesive party image over facilitating open intra- or inter-party scrutiny. Therefore, speeches in these contexts may be more aligned with reinforcing overall party positions and showcasing unity rather than serving as a tool for internal monitoring or airing dissenting views within the coalition.

In turn their work suggests that the function of parliamentary speeches as a mechanism for monitoring within coalitions is contingent on the institutional context, particularly the extent of control party leaders have over parliamentary proceedings. In systems with strong party leadership, the monitoring role of speeches might be less pronounced or manifest in a more controlled manner, with party leaders steering the discourse to maintain a unified front. This understanding is helpful for assessing debates' utility as tools for internal oversight versus instruments for reinforcing party unity and discipline.

Related to the government-opposition dynamic is a recent line of literature that studies challenger (i.e.., non-mainstream) parties' interactions with governing parties (Hobolt and De Vries 2020). This interaction, which has been extensively studied in campaign contexts (Hobolt and De Vries 2020; Proksch and Slapin 2021), undergoes a notable transformation post-election, as the government-opposition dynamic becomes a guiding force for interactions within the parliamentary setting.

In the aftermath of elections, when challenger parties have secured seats in the parliament, the nature of their engagement with the established governing parties shifts. This shift is characterised by a learning curve for both the incumbent governmental parties and the insurgent challengers. For the governing parties, the challenge lies in learning how to effectively address and counteract the often radical and disruptive speeches made by members of these challenger parties. This aspect of parliamentary debate requires the governing parties to develop strategies that can effectively neutralise, engage with, or incorporate the perspectives brought forth by these non-mainstream parties. The ability to do so is critical, as it determines the governing parties' capacity to maintain control of parliamentary discourse and to effectively push their legislative agendas.

Conversely, the insurgent challenger parties, typically characterised by their non-mainstream status and often radical viewpoints, must learn how to navigate the established norms of parliamentary debate, and engage with the government's agenda-setting processes. This learning element involves understanding the intricacies of parliamentary procedures, the strategic use of speeches to influence policy, and the art of negotiating and finding common ground within the often-rigid structures of mainstream political discourse. For these challenger parties, the parliamentary environment presents an opportunity to transition from campaign rhetoric to substantive policy dialogue, which requires a recalibration of their approach to legislative speech and engagement. Therefore, Proksch and Slapin (2021, 45) point out that this dynamic, while rooted in the fundamental government-opposition divide,

is distinct in its practical implications. The interaction between governmental and challenger parties within the parliament is not merely oppositional; it is also an arena for mutual adaptation and learning.

Proksch and Slapin also address policy extremity as a potential extension to their original delegation theory. While the original theory tangentially refers to ideology regarding its relationship to intraparty cohesion, they concede that ideological distances from the party line may drive some speech behaviours. For instance, party members with more 'extreme' ideologies than their peers may request more floor time if they are in a system that preferences personal votes. Or, in the case of radical parties, policy extremity may influence legislators to take more floor time since they have less policy influence (Proksch and Slapin 2021, 45).

Deputies' individual characteristics also impact speechmaking. The original theory suggests that when delegating the opportunity to participate in debates, leaders tend to prioritize those legislators who possess extensive knowledge about the policy in question. Legislators who are members or leaders of relevant committees are often preferred for debate participation, especially when the legislation being discussed pertains to their committee's area of expertise. Their involvement in the drafting process of the bill positions them as knowledgeable participants who can provide detailed insights and informed arguments drawn from the committee stage of their work (Proksch and Slapin 2021).

Additionally, the theory underscores the importance of seniority in the context of legislative speech. It operates on the assumption that legislators accumulate skills and knowledge over their tenure in the chamber. Therefore, those with greater seniority are likely to participate more actively in debates, leveraging their experience and expertise. This increased involvement of senior legislators in debates is not merely a function of their longevity in the chamber but also a reflection of the depth of understanding and legislative acumen they have developed over time.

Their final point on gender in debate moves beyond the institutional background and political factors that affect debate and includes personal characteristics such as age or gender. In this case, they choose gender as a readily available and salient characteristic that influences speech-making (Proksch and Slapin 2021; c.f., Blumenau 2019). However, their original theory does not offer a reading of why and how personal characteristics should affect speech practices. Instead, they note this shortcoming and state that the theory only considers that these characteristics affect the pool that leaders can draw from to allocate floor-time (2021. 46). Yet, the pool of parliamentarians is important for substantive representation. Analysing the effects of personal-level characteristics is a key concern in understanding how representation affects law-making.

2.1.4 Representation

The recent literature in legislative studies has increasingly focused on the micro-foundations of speechmaking, particularly examining the impact of individual-level characteristics on legislative activities. Such characteristics, including leadership roles, committee membership, gender, religion, and ethnicity, have been found to significantly influence legislative behaviour (Bäck and Debus 2019, 2020; Blumenau 2019; Schuler 2020). While the influence of leadership roles and committee membership is apparent, individual-level effects remain significant even when controlling for these institutional positions (Bäck and Debus 2019; Baumann, Debus, and Müller 2015).

In studying debates as a form of substantive representation, scholars have observed that individual characteristics can be more strongly associated with outcomes, such as word usage and debate participation, than party and electoral explanations. For example, MPs of immigrant background in Germany are found to discuss civil rights legislation more frequently than economic policy (Bäck and Debus 2020). Examining such individual-level factors can illuminate the broader legitimacy-making functions of parliaments. While representativeness might have inconclusive effects on policy outputs (e.g., Chaisty 2013a), it can significantly shape the course of debate and what parties choose to

publicise. The concept of representativeness in debates is also intertwined with the electoral system, as posited in Proksch and Slapin's model. The strategic delegation game could incorporate concerns about substantive representation, where party leaders might favour certain backbenchers for topics aligned with their personal characteristics.

2.1.5 Presidential Systems and Debate

Taylor highlights the distinctive nature of legislative elections in presidential systems, where despite the significant influence of presidents, legislators may maintain a certain degree of independence from the executive branch (Taylor 2021, 51). This autonomy is particularly notable in scenarios where the executive leader does not belong to the majority party in parliament. The inherent separation of powers in such systems creates a distinct divide between party leaders and the government. This separation poses challenges in maintaining party discipline, especially when it comes to aligning dissenting members with the party line. Furthermore, Taylor (2021, 51) notes that in plurality systems, legislators are often incentivised to concentrate on local rather than national issues. This focus on local issues underscores the contrast in debate freedoms within presidential systems, where legislators navigate between their autonomous role and various political pressures – including pressures include lobbying, influences from the presidency and executive organs, party cohesion, and constituency concerns, all of which significantly shape political decision-making.

In the context of the United States, legislators are observed to frequently prioritise career-advancing activities over participation in floor debates. However, legislative speeches still play a vital role, particularly in non-substantive bill debates. In these contexts, speeches can be instrumental in garnering individual votes, especially for members during electoral cycles. Proksch and Slapin's model suggests here that the relative freedom associated with non-substantial bill debates provides an opportunity for airing intra- and internal party grievances and targeting potential rivals during floor time. However, not all presidential systems follow the same electoral patterns nor follow similar rules

of procedures in parliament. If we take rules of procedure to be endogenous to legislative initiative itself, we must take seriously these differences and what they tell us about regime structure.

In presidential systems, the dynamics of legislative debate are influenced by a variety of factors beyond just the electoral system. The government versus opposition divide, for instance, manifests differently across countries, largely depending on the degree of control political systems exert over the agenda. In systems where governing parties have substantial control over the agenda, they tend to dominate the debate (Magar 2021; Vidal and Vera 2021). Conversely, in systems like the US Senate, where this control is limited or marginal, debates are more unrestricted and open (Taylor 2021).

The role of the executive in questioning also shapes the nature of parliamentary debates. In systems where the executive is formally engaged in questioning, there tends to be more activity from the opposition, as this provides them with an opportunity to challenge the government (Alemán, Micozzi, and Ramírez 2018; Alemán, Ramírez, and Slapin 2017). In contrast, systems without such a formal questioning process see more active participation from party leaders and committee chairs (Taylor 2021).

An interesting variation noted in the context of presidential systems in Latin America involves the role of backbenchers (Taylor 2021). In these systems, backbenchers are often more vocal and participate frequently in debates, with the notable exception of Mexico (Magar 2021). The influence of coalitional dynamics on speech also varies between different systems. For instance, in multiparty systems like Brazil, coalitional effects on speech might differ from those in a two-party system like the United States (c.f., Simison 2020). However, the literature has yet to fully explore whether parties use speech as a strategic resource for achieving electoral or policy goals (Taylor 2021).

2.1.6 Theoretical Gaps

This dissertation ventures into relatively uncharted territory by focusing on legislative speech within a backsliding and authoritarian context, an environment distinct from the advanced

democracies where the brunt of existing theories of legislative speechmaking are predominantly grounded. In authoritarian settings, the conventional strategic and rational choice framework, which typically views legislators' behaviours—including speechmaking—as driven by desires for career advancement, party loyalty, and policy influence, encounters a markedly different landscape. In authoritarian systems, the motivations of legislators are intricately entwined with unique institutional constraints, rules, and incentives, including the prevailing power dynamics of the ruling regime, a constrained environment for genuine political opposition, and the heightened risks associated with expressing dissent. This context, therefore, significantly alters the strategic decision-making processes of legislators.

By applying the strategic and rational choice framework to the context of authoritarian parliaments, this dissertation aims to shed light on the evolving nature of speech incentives within these regimes. It seeks to unravel how legislators adapt their strategies in response to the authoritarian setting, adjusting their approaches to speechmaking in the face of distinct challenges. Such an exploration is critical for explaining legislative behaviour in authoritarian contexts, offering a new perspective on how legislators navigate and respond to the unique pressures and constraints they face. This approach not only fills a gap in the current literature on legislative speech and enhances our comprehension of the dynamics of legislative speech in regimes markedly different from those where existing theories have been traditionally applied. However, it is important to note how a theory of legislative speech may contribute to our broader understanding of parliaments under authoritarianism. Therefore, the next section will detail the predominant theories in this field.

2.2 Theories of Authoritarian Legislatures

The scholarly investigation of authoritarian parliaments has intensified in recent decades, pivoting towards understanding their role in reinforcing regime stability and their incorporation of seemingly

democratic institutions (Gandhi and Przeworski 2007; B Geddes 2006; Barbara Geddes, Wright, and Frantz 2012). This shift in focus moves away from merely affirming their stabilising function (Loewenberg 1973, 143) towards examining the specific mechanisms through which these institutions contribute to regime durability and the contexts influencing their evolution.

A recent special issue of *Comparative Political Studies* – dedicated to authoritarian parliaments – categorises the existing literature into three main analytical approaches (Gandhi, Noble, and Svolik 2020). The first perceives authoritarian parliaments as largely ceremonial, serving predominantly to ratify pre-decided policies, with substantive political decision-making occurring outside these legislative halls (Brancati 2014; Geddes, Wright, and Frantz 2018). The second approach acknowledges similarities between authoritarian and democratic parliaments, suggesting that even under authoritarian constraints, these institutions perform comparable functions to their democratic counterparts, albeit in altered forms (Gandhi, Noble, and Svolik 2020, 1360; Levitsky and Way 2010). The third perspective views authoritarian legislatures as active political arenas designed to fulfil specific authoritarian goals, diverging from the functions typically ascribed to democratic institutions (Gandhi, Noble, and Svolik 2020, 1361).

Building on earlier comparative political studies, proponents of the third perspective argue that authoritarian parliaments, while lacking autonomous legislative power (Blondel 1973, 60-74), serve vital roles beyond mere symbolic representation. These roles include facilitating political elite recruitment and rent distribution (Lust-Okar 2009; Mezey 1979; Nelson 1980), enhancing internal legitimacy and political integration (Grossholtz 1970; Malesky and Schuler 2010; Schuler and Malesky 2014), establishing communication channels between the populace and the regime (Truex 2016; Vanneman 1977), and mediating and representing interests (Gandhi 2008; Loewenberg and Patterson 1979; Nelson 1980). This perspective identifies at least six overarching mechanisms through which

authoritarian legislatures operate, each implying distinct expectations for legislative behaviour and speeches.

2.2.1 Co-optation, Patronage, and Rent Distribution

Co-optation in authoritarian parliaments is a process where opposition or potential oppositional elites are integrated into the state apparatus, serving two primary purposes. First, it weakens potential opponents by diluting their influence. Second, it redirects power away from these potential adversaries and towards the security apparatus (Geddes 2006). Co-opted legislatures offer a restricted platform where opposition voices can express dissent, negotiate policy concessions, and represent significant social groups (Gandhi 2008; Gandhi and Przeworski 2006, 2007). Furthermore, these institutions dissuade opposition elites from organising protests by providing access to specific rents and benefits (Blaydes 2011; Reuter and Robertson 2015, 236) Co-optation also plays a role in facilitating private investment and economic growth by ensuring property rights (Malesky and Schuler 2010, 482; Wright 2008), underscoring the importance of legislatures in the success of authoritarian regimes.

However, a notable gap in the literature is the lack of in-depth exploration into the behavioural implications of co-optation, particularly at the micro-level (Schuler 2021; Williamson and Magaloni 2020). Despite the availability of significant micro-level data and plausible applicability of existing theoretical frameworks, the specific details of how co-optation shapes individual behaviours within these legislatures remain underexplored. For example, the role of individuals in monitoring executive power and the importance of policy compromises in the process of co-optation are acknowledged (Gandhi and Przeworski 2007; Wright 2008), but not extensively examined or questioned. Hence, there are still open questions regarding the extent to which legislators actively contribute to policy concessions and how institutional practices influence their behaviours. This gap indicates a need for further research to understand the ways in which co-optation impacts legislative behaviour and decision-making in authoritarian contexts.

Brancati highlights a key issue in these regards: in the absence of free and fair elections, or when decision-making is reduced to mere 'rubber-stamping', politicians lack either the incentive or the capacity to meaningfully lobby for compromises with the regime (2014). This observation suggests that in systems where electoral processes are constrained or legislative decision-making is purely ceremonial, the potential for legislators to influence or meaningfully engage with policy is significantly diminished. Noble's research further elucidates this phenomenon, finding that legislative activity in the Duma is often driven by intra-executive factionalism rather than by party members within the parliament (2020). This perspective shifts the focus from the role of individual legislators to the actions of those within the executive branch, indicating that the mechanisms of policy-making and legislative influence may differ substantially from those in more democratic settings. Previous studies have, instead, mainly focused on methods used by regimes to co-opt the opposition, such as through rent distribution, without fully exploring the subsequent impact on downstream legislative behaviour (c.f., Blaydes 2011; Lust-Okar 2009; Reuter and Robertson 2015; Szakonyi 2018, 2020).

Additionally, the mechanisms of patronage and rent distribution within authoritarian legislatures are essential for understanding the distribution of material benefits and lobbying power among legislators, party structures, and constituents. Geddes (2006), Blaydes (2011), and Lust-Okar (2009) describe legislators in these regimes as being primarily driven by the maximisation of personal benefits or rents. These practices are integral to co-optation strategies, where legislators support regime policies in return for access to policymaking advantages (Krol 2017). However, the degree to which these material benefits result in significant legislative influence remains unclear (as in Noble 2020), especially considering the disparate access to resources between pro-government and opposition parties, which raises questions about the effectiveness of co-opting opposition within these legislative systems.

Therefore, in the co-optation account, legislative speeches can often be perceived as mere façades or 'window-dressing', serving to mask the deeper quid pro quo dynamics between the executive and

influential legislators. In this scenario, speeches are plausibly used for the post-facto legitimisation of legislative decisions or to communicate supposed legislative accomplishments to constituents, particularly during election periods.[18] However, these proclaimed achievements may be more reflective of the legislators' abilities to engage in rent-seeking rather than genuine policy influence. This perspective raises critical questions about the actual role and function of legislative speeches in such systems, suggesting that in environments where legislative agency is limited and executive decisions regarding rents are largely unilateral, the primary role of legislative speeches might be reduced to a cynical formality.

This cynical view of legislative speeches is further reinforced by recent findings for the Russian case. For example, an investigation by *iStories*[19] (2021) revealed that at least 22 deputies from United Russia did not participate actively in legislative speeches or introduce any legislation throughout their tenures. Despite this lack of involvement, these deputies continued to enjoy the privileges associated with parliamentary positions, including immunity, various entitlements, and substantial salaries. This situation highlights a stark discrepancy between legislative engagement and the acquisition of benefits, casting doubts on the meaningfulness and substantive impact of legislative speeches within such regimes. This revelation points to a broader systemic issue where the formal aspects of legislative work, such as speeches, may not accurately reflect the actual political dynamics and power structures at play in these settings.

In the Russian political system, particularly during its consolidation period in the 2000s and onwards, most of the parliamentary opposition was brought under the influence of the government (Hutcheson 2013; Turovsky 2015). This incorporation was achieved through the strategic allocation

[18] In fact, this is more related to *signalling* functions of authoritarian legislatures.

[19] *Important Stories (Vazhnyye Istorii).*

of leadership roles and committee appointments, which served dual purposes. They acted as tools of patronage and as means to steer legislative agendas in line with the government (Rasch and Tsebelis 2011; Shevchenko and Golosov 2011). These appointments, while providing visibility and certain advantages to opposition members, effectively brought them closer to the regime's objectives, indicating co-optation in practice. As noted at the regional level by Reuter and Robertson (2015), holding a leadership position or chairing a committee in this context is not merely symbolic. It often entails the ability to influence policy direction and access to resources and patronage, thereby aligning the legislator's interests with those of the ruling party. Conversely, backbenchers and members of lower-tier committees may find themselves less engaged with the government and might face restrictions in their speaking rights.

The importance of this approach lies in its potential to explain the consolidation of power and the strategic alignment between the government and legislative members. Regarding legislative speech, it may reveal how legislative discourse serves as a venue for managing dissent within a controlled environment. Therefore, co-optation theory will be pivotal in undergirding this dissertation.

2.2.2 Monitoring

Monitoring mechanisms within authoritarian legislatures are posited to play a role in reducing information asymmetries and managing internal regime dynamics, offering pathways for interaction and oversight. One key pathway facilitates regular interactions between upper-level elites and the executive branch, particularly on budgetary and policy matters (S Gehlbach and Keefer 2012; Svolik 2012). This interaction ensures a degree of transparency within the regime's inner workings and helps alleviate concerns about potential power usurpation. By keeping upper-level elites engaged and informed, the regime can maintain a balance of power and prevent the emergence of rival power centres. The second pathway allows the executive to maintain oversight over lower-level elites active within the legislature (Blaydes 2011). This monitoring serves not only to manage the relationship

between the regime and its legislative members but also to identify and remove officials who may be ineffective, corrupt, or potentially disloyal. Such a mechanism ensures that the legislative body remains aligned with the regime's objectives and policies.

In the Russian context, recent studies highlight the significance of these monitoring mechanisms in shaping parliamentary careers. Research by Anton Shirikov (2021) demonstrates that legislative activities, including floor speeches, are correlated with higher chances of retaining parliamentary seats and gaining visibility within the government. However, this increased visibility does not necessarily translate into executive appointments. This finding implies that legislative speeches in authoritarian contexts like Russia serve functions beyond mere career advancement.

Legislative speeches, in this framework, can be seen as efforts by legislators to build or maintain their *parliamentary* careers and demonstrate their value to the regime. This could be in the form of showcasing their skills as technocrats, aligning with the regime's policy goals, or signalling their willingness to be co-opted into the regime's inner circle (Buckley and Reuter 2019; Krol 2020; Szakonyi 2018, 2020). Such activities can be particularly important in systems where the regime seeks to maintain a facade of technocratic efficiency and policy expertise, while also ensuring loyalty and alignment among its legislative members.

The development of monitoring mechanisms in the Russian State Duma, particularly during the periods of consolidation and cartelisation, showcases a strategic move towards enhanced executive control over the legislative agenda. This is exemplified by the shifts in the rules of procedure during critical times, reflecting the regime's response to oppositional activities.

Shevchenko and Golosov (2011) highlight the notable shifts in the Duma's rules of procedure, which signify a strategic move towards greater executive dominance in legislative processes. This shift, demonstrated in *Chapter 1* and *Appendix A*, is characterised by both overt and subtle changes in legislative procedures, significantly influencing the nature of legislative debates and the role of the

opposition within the Duma. A key instance illustrating the reactive nature of these procedural changes was the response to the 'Italian strike' filibuster in June 2012 (Noble and Schulmann 2018). In the wake of this heightened oppositional activity, the Duma introduced new standing orders designed to restrict the influence of the opposition. These changes not only reduced the time allocated for presenting amendments but also grouped bill amendments by topic, effectively limiting the opposition's ability to use floor time effectively when necessary for the ruling party.

In this context, the Duma's potential monitoring functions become apparent. While the regime seemingly tightens its control over legislative processes, it also maintains a degree of strategic engagement with the opposition. This approach suggests a dual objective: on one hand, affirming the dominant party's narrative, and on the other, subtly monitoring oppositional rhetoric and public sentiment. In this controlled environment, opposition leaders, despite facing restrictions, are occasionally granted more speaking opportunities than might be initially expected. These opportunities are likely strategic, allowing the regime to keep tabs on dissent and adapt its strategies as needed.

Monitoring may explain the strategic dynamics of legislative control and oversight during periods of consolidation. It highlights how procedural reform and the strategic allocation of floor time are employed to manage legislative discourse, reflecting a sophisticated blend of restrictions and allowances. This theory becomes increasingly relevant in understanding the balance between demonstrating regime support and managing oppositional discourse, particularly during periods of heightened executive control.

2.2.3 Signalling

Signalling based theories present a distinct perspective from informational theories, positing that elections function primarily as instruments of dominance and propaganda rather than as genuine channels for information gathering (Schedler 2013; Schuler 2020, 2021; Simpser 2013; Weeden 2015).

This theory asserts that elections, and even electoral fraud, serve to project the regime's strength, discourage opposition, and emphasise the futility of defecting to a weaker or losing party (Gehlbach and Simpser 2015; Magaloni 2006)

In this context, elections and legislatures are seen not as mediums for democratic representation but as propagandistic tools. They are utilised to garner support, display dominance over the opposition, change citizens' beliefs, showcase the regime's repressive capacity, and enforce a complicit relationship between the populace and the regime (Weeden 2015; Schuler 2021; Simpser 2013; Gehlbach and Simpser 2015).

While signalling theory often emphasises the role of elections, Schuler notes that the theory's mechanisms also significantly impact legislative speech behaviour, particularly in the post-electoral context. If elections are viewed as tools to sway citizen beliefs in favour of the regime, it logically follows that post-electoral legislative speeches would refrain from directly criticising the regime (Schuler 2021, 25). However, this research was contained to a single-party legislature.

In multiparty authoritarian contexts, signalling theory suggests that legislative behaviours and speeches are likely to differ between pro-government and opposition groups. The extent and nature of these behaviours would then depend on whether these groups are in genuine opposition to the regime or are co-opted. Legislatures in these settings might exhibit a stratified pattern of speech, where pro-government factions align closely with the regime's narrative, while opposition groups, if genuinely adversarial, may demonstrate varying degrees of criticism or conformity (c.f., Simison 2020). This stratification is dependent on the regime's success in using elections and legislative processes as tools of signalling and propaganda, influencing not only public perception but also the behaviour of legislators within the parliamentary framework.

In this framework, legislative speech extends beyond its nominal function of contributing to government decisions. Instead, they often serve as tools for regime propaganda (Schuler 2021; Simpser

2013; Weeden 2015). Legislative debates are manipulated to create an illusion of pluralism, ensuring that the opposition's efforts to influence policy are largely symbolic and ineffective. This approach serves multiple purposes for the regime: By controlling the legislative process, the regime can display the opposition's ineffectiveness to the public and potential defectors. This demonstration of impotence undermines the credibility and influence of opposition groups. Moreover, the ruling party can use controlled legislative debates to claim credit for positive developments at the local level. This manipulation of the legislative process enables the regime to reinforce its image of efficacy and control, building a narrative of success and stability under its rule (Krol 2017; Truex 2016).

Therefore, signalling may provide an avenue for understanding how political narratives are crafted within these regime types. In these contexts, the opposition's role in national policy debates is carefully managed. While they are allowed to participate, their ability to effectuate actual policy changes is strategically curtailed. This ensures that their criticisms remain largely symbolic, without posing a real threat to the regime's policies. Conversely, pro-government legislators often engage in discussions on critical issues and are credited with successes, thereby bolstering their perceived legitimacy and effectiveness. This differential approach in legislative discourse between opposition and ruling party members serves to signal the regime's strength and cohesion, while simultaneously working to fragment and weaken the opposition (Beazer and Reuter 2019; Andreas Schedler and Hoffman 2016; Schuler 2021).

According to Schuler (2021), criticisms expressed in the legislature are often orchestrated by the regime itself and do not genuinely reflect citizen preferences or effectively constrain the executive. This perspective is supported by Noble's (2020) findings regarding executive spill-over effects in the Duma. However, the existing literature on signalling often overlooks the behaviour of opposition parties in legislative contexts. Opposition parties in such regimes may strategically increase their critical rhetoric, especially if their access to the floor is limited. This increase in critical discourse serves as a

mechanism for opposition parties to maintain their relevance and challenge the regime's control over the legislative narrative.

The significance of signalling in this study lies in its capacity to explain the manipulation of legislative debates to serve the regime's objectives. It sheds light on how legislative discourse is crafted to display government efficacy, undermine opposition credibility, and maintain a facade of pluralism. Signalling becomes particularly pertinent in later periods, where the regime's narrative control and the strategic management of opposition discourse underscore the evolving nature of authoritarian legislative dynamics.

2.2.4 Information Acquisition and Power-Sharing

Information acquisition is posited as a mechanism for regime survival wherein parliaments play a key role in enabling the state to gather intelligence about its constituencies and elites (Gandhi 2008; Gandhi and Przeworski 2007). This mechanism involves assessing levels of discontent (Malesky and Schuler 2010), gauging support (Magaloni 2008), and rewarding or punishing legislative performance (B Geddes 2006; Myagkov, Ordeshook, and Shakin 2009). Within this framework, elections are not merely a democratic facade but serve as a critical tool for understanding public sentiment and enabling legislators to act as intermediaries between the populace and the regime (Geddes 2006; Pop-Eleches and Robertson 2015; Truex 2016).

In such systems, multiparty elections function as a means of performance assessment, pinpointing regions of weak regime support (Brownlee 2007; Magaloni 2008). Here, the regime strategically uses electoral feedback to modify its policies and allocate public spending, particularly in areas vulnerable to opposition influence (Magaloni 2008). Post-election, legislative behaviour becomes significant as legislators relay local and elite concerns to the executive, thereby shaping the regime's decision-making (Malesky and Schuler 2010). This practice resonates with Truex's concept of 'representation within

bounds' in single-party regimes, where legislators balance responsiveness to their constituents on certain issues while maintaining overall loyalty to the regime (Truex 2016).

However, this model presupposes that legislative behaviour is influenced by the electoral process, suggesting that the type of electoral system plays a role in shaping this behaviour. Therefore, an analysis of legislative behaviour should seriously consider these claims. Russia, with its history of changes in electoral rules, provides a compelling case for studying the impact of electoral systems on legislative behaviour. If elections indeed influence legislator behaviour, then changes in the electoral rules should correspond to observable shifts in legislative conduct. This approach underscores the importance of examining how different electoral systems within the backsliding contexts can lead to variations in legislative behaviour and interactions with the regime.

The informational dynamic in authoritarian regimes reflects aspects of representation and delegate responsiveness akin to democratic systems, where legislators typically align their actions with public opinion for electoral gain (e.g., Dassonneville et al. 2020; Powell 2000). Empirical research in countries such as China and Vietnam corroborates this, demonstrating that legislators address issues relevant to their constituents during post-election periods and occasionally express mild criticism of the regime (Malesky and Schuler 2010; Manion 2016; Truex 2016). However, the exact nature and scope of post-electoral information acquisition in multiparty authoritarian regimes are less clear.

Additionally, the role of bureaucratic bargaining comes into play, emphasising the value of legislation quality and the process of its development (Paler 2005). In such regimes, the technical expertise of legislators is often prioritised over their ability to resonate with voter preferences (Schuler 2021). This emphasis on technical skill raises questions about the regime's goals in balancing technical expertise with political manoeuvring, and whether a stronger bureaucracy could more efficiently meet these technical needs. In such a scenario, legislative speech may become less central to policymaking. Consequently, speeches under authoritarian rule could lean towards being more 'political' in nature,

devoid of substantive content, and serve more as a platform for political posturing rather than genuine policy discussion.

Similarly, power-sharing arrangements address elite collective action problems and reduce information asymmetries (Boix 2003; Gehlbach and Keefer 2012; Noble 2020). These arrangements transform legislatures into arenas where intra-regime elites can negotiate and protect their political and economic interests without threatening the overall stability of the regime. In contrast to the information acquisition mechanism, which focuses on the regime's relationship with the broader public, power-sharing emphasizes how information is disseminated among the elite, expanding the range of veto players.

According to theories of power-sharing, authoritarian legislatures are expected to be dynamic environments where legislators are actively involved in amending and proposing legislation that addresses the needs of various intra-regime groups. This perspective views legislatures more as sites of elite conflict than as direct agents of political action (Bonvecchi and Simison 2017; Lü, Liu, and Li 2020; Noble 2020). In this context, the regime may acknowledge the utility of these legislative activities in managing conflicts and may thus endorse legislators' initiatives, offering them incentives to carefully select issues for engagement (Krol 2017, 2020; contrast with Noble 2020). This suggests that legislatures under authoritarian regimes might engage with the agenda-setting process by formalising governmental actions on the floor.

Under this framework, the legislative process is seen less as a means of direct policy implementation or public representation and more as a tool for managing elite dynamics within the regime. The legislative arena becomes a space for elites to navigate their interests, negotiate compromises, and maintain their hold on power, all while operating under the overarching structure of the government. Similar to information acquisition, this power-sharing perspective shifts the focus

from the legislative body as a representative institution to a strategic platform for elite negotiation and conflict resolution within the authoritarian system.

In the context of power-sharing within the Russian Duma, the theory suggests complex dynamics that might not be fully captured through legislative speeches. Power-sharing theories, as elucidated by Boix (2003), Svolik (2012), and Noble (2020), posit that the government grants legislators' certain powers, such as veto rights, making them intermediaries in the policy-making process. This approach may be complemented by the regime's monitoring function, where lower-level elites gather information about regime intent (Gehlbach and Keefer 2012). However, this interaction of power-sharing and monitoring does not necessarily translate into the domain of legislative speeches.

The analysis of power-sharing through speeches faces several challenges. Firstly, legislative speeches often do not reflect the deliberative or persuasive aspects of policymaking and are more likely to serve as formal platforms for endorsing pre-determined policies (Proksch and Slapin 2012). This observation aligns with Noble's (2020) findings that in the more authoritarian eras of Russia, significant policy decisions are often made outside the public legislative arena, particularly by executive actors, diminishing the role of speeches in reflecting true power-sharing dynamics.

Secondly, the nature of policy debates in the Duma further complicates this analysis. With the executive exerting considerable control over committee meetings and the legislative agenda, much of the substantial policy dialogue occurs behind closed doors (I Shevchenko and Golosov 2011). This scenario implies that even when legislators engage in debates over important policies, these discussions are often orchestrated or constrained by the executive, suggesting a limited scope for power-sharing through public speeches. Additionally, the dominant party's control over the legislative process further limits the opposition's capacity to influence policy through floor debates.

In terms of information acquisition, the theory suggests that opposition legislators might have more freedom to articulate diverse views, including constituency preferences on national issues, than

their counterparts from the dominant party (Simison 2020; Truex 2016). However, the practical application of this theory in the Duma is challenged by the performative and processual nature of legislative speeches. As Slapin and Proksch (2012) argue, legislative debates, even in democracies, often lack substantive information exchange and are instead utilised for political posturing or platform codification. This tendency is likely exacerbated in the constrained parliament.

Therefore, while power-sharing and information acquisition theories provide valuable frameworks for understanding legislative behaviour, their application to the analysis of legislative speeches in the Russian Duma is limited. The speeches are more likely to reflect the regime's strategic objectives and narrative control rather than serve as genuine platforms for power-sharing or substantive information exchange.

The subsequent section synthesises the approaches of co-optation, monitoring, and signalling, outlining how these mechanisms operate within a multitask framework. This theoretical section aims to elucidate the interactions and strategic adaptations that define legislative discourse as regimes navigate the spectrum from democratic governance to more authoritarian practices.

2.3 A Theory of Backsliding Debate: Multitask Institutional Dynamics in Authoritarian Legislatures

In conceptualising a theory of debate for authoritarian legislatures, this dissertation builds on the premise that institutions like the Russian Duma serve multiple purposes within the political framework of the state. This idea aligns with Schuler's (2021) characterisation of authoritarian parliaments as multitask institutions. The objective here is to construct a comprehensive analytical framework that captures the dynamic evolution of authoritarian legislatures, particularly focusing on how legislative debates morph as regimes transition from democratic to more authoritarian forms.

This section builds upon the theories of co-optation, monitoring, and signalling within authoritarian legislatures to generate expectations regarding their relationships to legislative speech. It

emphasises the importance of developing hypotheses that are not only theoretically grounded but also amenable to empirical testing. King et al. advocate for a research design that facilitates the drawing of clear, falsifiable predictions from theoretical propositions, ensuring that hypotheses can be robustly tested against empirical data (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994). Similarly, George and Bennet reinforce the value of integrating these hypotheses within empirical case studies – especially within-case studies. They argue for the necessity of grounding hypotheses within a solid theoretical framework while also ensuring they are sufficiently concrete and specific enough to be scrutinised through empirical observation to ensure internal validity (George and Bennett 2005). This dual focus on theoretical depth and empirical applicability is particularly pertinent for examining complex political phenomena like authoritarian legislatures, where nuances in legislative behaviour under different regime conditions can provide critical insights.

Authoritarian legislatures demonstrate adaptability in their roles and functions, responding to the evolving needs of the regime. Initially, they may mimic democratic legislatures, offering a semblance of pluralism. However, as the regime's needs change, they evolve into structures that prioritise regime legitimisation and elite coordination, marking a transition from open forums to controlled environments aimed at ensuring regime stability.

The trajectory of authoritarianism in Russia relevant for this thesis can be delineated into three distinct phases as identified by Hutcheson (2018): fragmentation (1993-2002), consolidation (2002-2009), and cartelisation (2009-2021). The initial phase, fragmentation, characterises the early Dumas as a tumultuous party system and the absence of a unified pro-presidential party, leading to significant discord between government branches (Robinson 1998). The era of consolidation (2002-2009) under Putin's leadership saw the strategic strengthening of United Russia, effectively skewing the electoral landscape. This phase laid the groundwork for electoral authoritarianism, where electoral processes could be formally maintained while ensuring outcomes favourable to the regime. It demonstrates a

pivotal shift towards greater control over the electoral process, aligning with Schedler's (2006; 2013) theory of electoral authoritarianism. The final phase of cartelisation (2009-2021) represents an advanced stage of hegemonic electoral authoritarianism. During this period, the political arena became even more tightly controlled, with systemic opposition parties playing a role within the limits set by the regime.

Hence, these periods, reflect an adaptive approach to maintaining control over the legislative floor. The strategic use of legislative bodies has been central to this evolution, allowing the regime to balance the appearance of political pluralism with the realities of authoritarian consolidation. This understanding of Russian political development underscores the importance of legislative bodies in authoritarian regimes, not merely as rubber-stamp entities, but as multifaceted tools for governance, legitimation, and control. The regime's ability to maintain a facade of pluralism, while simultaneously ensuring electoral outcomes are predetermined, underscores the essence of electoral authoritarianism.

The Russian regime's approach to managing electoral processes from the consolidation phase and onwards – through the strategic bolstering of United Russia, manipulation of electoral systems, and control over the electoral landscape – demonstrates key characteristics of electoral authoritarianism: the use of elections as instruments of legitimacy rather than genuine contests of power (Schedler 2006). However, electoral authoritarianism must be able to grapple with voter preferences and citizens' needs or face a destabilising illegitimacy risk (Bunce and Wolchik 2006). Chaisty and Whitefield argue that building a popular winning coalition diminishes those risks (Chaisty and Whitefield 2023).

They find that, in the electoral context of the 2020 constitutional referendum, building a broad winning coalition required the regime to not only secure the loyalty of its traditional base but also to extend its appeal to non-traditional supporters. This necessitated crafting ideological and material incentives designed to resonate with a wider electorate, a strategy that underscores the inherent adaptability of electoral authoritarian regimes when confronted with the need to maintain power

amidst potential popular dissent (Chaisty and Whitefield 2023). Hence, the regime calibrated the constitutional amendments to appeal to diverse segments of society, effectively broadening its support base beyond Putin loyalists, addressing various societal needs and concerns while simultaneously mitigating risks associated with electoral fraud and opposition mobilisation.

This manoeuvring not only illustrates the regime's adeptness at navigating the complex terrain of voter preferences in electoral contexts but also highlights the critical importance of constructing a multi-faceted electoral strategy that goes beyond simple coercion or manipulation (Chaisty and Whitefield 2023) – a finding which carries implications for a theory of legislative debate under authoritarianism. The construction of a multi-faceted electoral strategy, which incorporates a combination of coercion, manipulation, and strategic engagement with voter preferences, extends its influence into the legislative domain. Regimes do not merely rely on overt control mechanisms but also engage in complex coalition-building efforts. This entails tailoring legislative actions and debates to align with broader support bases, thereby ensuring that the legislature serves not just as a rubber stamp for autocratic decisions but as a platform for legitimising the regime's authority and responding to societal needs and preferences within a controlled framework.

Legislative debates in such contexts are not solely about co-opting opposition, signalling regime strength, or quelling dissent but are also a critical element of the regime's broader strategy to maintain power by appearing to address and incorporate preferences. Thus, legislative debates become a venue for the regime to articulate and reinforce its public-facing coalition-building efforts, showcasing a responsiveness to public concerns while carefully managing the narrative to prevent genuine challenges to its authority. This approach to managing legislative debates reflects an understanding that voter preferences and societal needs cannot be entirely ignored even in a controlled electoral and legislative environment. It necessitates a theory of legislative debate that accounts for the dual goals

of authoritarian regimes: to maintain control over the political narrative and to manage public perceptions of regime legitimacy and responsiveness.

The following theoretical framework seeks to incorporate those insights from the Russian case and build upon existing theories of authoritarian legislatures in three keyways. It revisits co-optation theory, highlighting a dynamic legislative role in integrating opposition into the power structure. Monitoring, traditionally seen as static oversight, is reimagined as an evolving and ongoing tool for managing opposition and curtailing dissent depending on the state's capacity and needs. Signalling theory, typically focused on showcasing regime strength, expands to encompass inter-convocational functions that change over time.

Co-optation emerges as a key strategy, where the regime integrates notable opposition figures into its fold, ensuring their loyalty through the allocation of leadership roles and committee positions. This integration is not merely about securing compliance; it creates a legislative environment where support for regime policies is both a consequence and a requirement of holding significant office. Therefore, legislators seeking career advancement may vie for floor time to demonstrate their loyalty and alignment with regime goals, thereby positioning themselves as competent partners. Those who secure floor access and actively participate in legislative debates are more likely to be promoted to leadership positions or receive committee appointments. This dynamic creates an expectation that significant leadership roles or committee appointments are associated with a discernible pattern of supporting regime policies, illustrating the effectiveness of co-optation in aligning legislative interests with those of the ruling party.

This strategy may become evident in increased floor time and supportive rhetoric from legislators in significant roles and those vying for promotion, demonstrating how co-optation effectively aligns legislative behaviour with regime objectives. However, the effectiveness of co-optation is not absolute. While it aims to integrate opposition members by offering them a stake in governance, it also faces

challenges when legislators use their positions to subtly critique or navigate around the regime's policies, revealing the limits of co-optation in ensuring absolute regime support. Here, the government requires to *signal* its strength. The theory posits that as regimes become more authoritarian, the legislative narrative becomes more controlled, with speeches increasingly reflecting pro-government positions even among backbenchers. Signalling, as a dynamic element, underscores the regime's efforts to shape the legislative narrative, ensuring that debates serve to reinforce the government's legitimacy. This mechanism predicts a strategic realignment of legislative debates towards pro-government rhetoric, a shift that not only underscores the regime's narrative control but also its ability to diminish the effectiveness of oppositional rhetoric. The expectation here is that legislative debates will increasingly mirror the ruling party's agenda, particularly on key policy issues, highlighting the regime's capacity to project a cohesive and authoritative stance.

Finally, monitoring functions extend beyond simple oversight to act as a dynamic mechanism for curbing dissent and guiding legislative discussions. The implementation of stricter regulations and procedural controls reflects an authoritarian regime's effort to limit oppositional discourse while still allowing for a degree of controlled expression. Monitoring legislative speeches and behaviours enables the regime to manage the delicate balance between appearing to maintain a semblance of legislative debate and ensuring that such debates do not undermine regime stability. By implementing stricter formal regulations and procedural controls, the regime effectively narrows the space for oppositional discourse while maintaining the illusion of a functioning legislative debate. This dual approach suggests that increased executive control over the legislative process would correlate with a reduction in oppositional content, reflecting the regime's capacity to manage legislative discourse actively.

The theory posits that the evolution of legislative debates moving from democracy and backsliding into authoritarianism are characterised by *legitimisation through progressive restriction*. Initially, legislatures like the Russian Duma may present democratic characteristics during consolidation, providing

platforms for diverse opinions and debates. This phase typically aligns with the regime's efforts to gain or retain internal and international legitimacy. However, as regimes consolidate, there is a strategic shift towards more controlled and regime-centric operations, all of which are testable by analysing democratic versus authoritarian expectations. This adaptability of legislative roles is a crucial aspect of this theory. The government's manipulation of parliamentary processes occurs through gradual changes in legislative behaviours.

During the consolidation phase, co-optative practices become prominent. The government permits opposition influence initially. However, as it strengthens, or if the opposition becomes overly influential, their power is systematically reduced. This aligns with the legislature's signalling role, projecting regime strength, especially during and after politically uncertain times. Furthermore, if initial signalling efforts are weak, the regime enhances its monitoring of debates, indicating a reactive strategy in response to significant opposition activities.

Therefore, the theory expects a significant transformation in legislative debates as the Duma's authoritarian turn deepens. An initially open environment becomes increasingly restricted, with debates shifting from forms of genuine discourse to supporting authoritarian legitimacy. The opposition's role changes from active dissent to strategic participation within government-set boundaries. This evolution underscores the inherent adaptability of authoritarian legislatures, adjusting functions and operations in response to state dynamics. These observations lead to the development of key hypotheses, including the intensification of government oversight in debates, the impact of electoral system changes on legislative behaviour, shifts in policy attention, and the dynamics of government-opposition rhetoric in legislative debates.

In this context, it becomes imperative to understand the internal dynamics of these institutions and how they adapt to the regime's changing needs. In turn, this understanding underscores the internal validity of the case (Pepinsky 2013). Their insights provide a methodological foundation for

this study, ensuring that the theoretical framework developed here is not only rooted in empirical realities but also offers a comprehensive account of the internal mechanisms of control in authoritarian legislatures.

An initially open environment becomes increasingly restricted, with debates shifting from forms of genuine discourse to supporting authoritarian legitimacy. The opposition's role changes from active dissent to strategic participation within government-set boundaries. This evolution underscores the inherent adaptability of authoritarian legislatures, adjusting functions and operations in response to state dynamics. These observations lead to the development of three main hypotheses, including the intensification of government oversight in debates, the impact of electoral system changes on legislative behaviour, shifts in policy attention, and the dynamics of government-opposition rhetoric in legislative debates.

Authoritarian conditions create an intensification of government oversight and influence over legislative debates, leading to more centralised debate structures and diminished oppositional engagement. In democratic settings, Slapin and Proksch's work emphasises the strategic use of legislative speech for party positioning and individual career advancement (2012). In authoritarian regimes, especially during periods of backsliding, a similar strategic positioning occurs, but with a focus on reinforcing regime power, thereby adding another mediating variable: the government. The government's intensification of oversight over parliamentary debates parallels the control party leaders exert in democracies, as per Slapin and Proksch (2015), but with higher stakes pertaining to regime stability and control.

As authoritarian regimes consolidate, they often mirror the centralised control of debates seen in democratic legislatures under strong party leadership. However, in authoritarian contexts, this centralisation serves not only to maintain party unity but also to suppress opposition voices, reflecting a transition from democratic debate dynamics to controlled and regime-centric operations. The

reduction in oppositional engagement echoes the limitations that minority voices might face in democratic parliaments, albeit in a more extreme form. The rational-choice aspect of legislative behaviour can be adapted to understand the calculations made by legislators in authoritarian regimes. Here, the choices and speeches of lawmakers are influenced not just by career advancement and party loyalty, but also by the need to navigate the constraints imposed by the regime. The cost-benefit analysis for opposition legislators particularly becomes more complex, weighing the risks of regime retaliation against the need to represent their constituents and ideals.

The concept of *reactive monitoring* suggests a dynamic response by the regime to opposition activities, akin to the adaptive strategies used by party leaders in democracies to manage dissent within their ranks. However, in authoritarian regimes, this takes on a more repressive form, limiting legislative autonomy and shaping the nature of debates to align with regime interests. The shift from strategic party-led debate dynamics to regime-controlled legislative environments highlights the adaptation of democratic legislative strategies to serve authoritarian ends, leading to the following hypotheses regarding participation patterns and the content of legislative speeches.

2.3.1 Government Oversight and Influence in Legislative Debates

1. During the transition from a democratic to an authoritarian regime, there will be a notable shift in the allocation of floor time and participation opportunities in legislative debates, influenced by committee memberships, party leadership positions, and ruling party status. Specifically:
    i. In a democratic setting, committee leadership might correlate with expertise and interest alignment in legislative matters. However, as the regime transitions to authoritarianism, committee leadership becomes more indicative of loyalty

to the regime, with these members receiving disproportionately more floor access and participation opportunities.

ii. Consequently, promotion into leadership positions may be contingent upon participation in debates prior to the promotion period, even if such debate access is limited in comparison.

iii. In a democratic context, party leadership roles may reflect diverse ideological positions within the legislature. However, in an authoritarian transition, these roles increasingly signify a practice of *reactive monitoring* wherein co-opted party leaders will increase their floor time and active participation compared to backbenchers.

iv. As the regime becomes more authoritarian, the ruling party's legislators are expected to dominate legislative debates increasingly. This dominance is seen in both the quantity of floor time and the frequency of participation, reflecting the regime's consolidation of power and control over legislative discourse.

This aligns with the concepts of co-optation and monitoring, reflecting a shift towards regime-centric control over legislative debates. Pro-opposition voices will likely diminish as the ruling party consolidates power, mirroring the regime's move towards authoritarianism. The shift in debate structures can be empirically verified through changes in floor participation patterns among leadership, speech lengths, and the dominance of ruling party narratives. The emphasis on government oversight as a dynamic and evolving mechanism reflects an understanding of authoritarian resilience wherein legislative institutions are actively used to adapt to and mitigate potential challenges to regime stability (Magaloni 2006).

Co-optation's focus on the incorporation of elites and parties into the governmental fold imply the expectation that since leadership positions often come with benefits that can align the interests of

the legislators with those of the ruling party, these positions then allow for greater influence and access to resources, providing an incentive to support the regime's agenda. By actively participating in legislative debates and supporting regime policies, these legislators demonstrate their integration into the government's fold and may access career advancement opportunities. Hence, debates may be an avenue where loyalty can be demonstrated in public. Moreover, the expectations posit that changes in legislative procedures, such as time constraints or grouping of amendments, are strategically employed to limit effective opposition challenges on the floor and therefore reflect a monitoring mechanism. These procedural adjustments, however, still allow for certain avenues of informational exchange to remain open. The strategic use of procedural changes is anticipated to serve dual purposes: curtailing the opposition's capacity to effectively present their challenges while simultaneously enabling the government to monitor legislative discourse and gauge oppositional sentiment.

In this section of the theory, the transition from democratic to authoritarian governance in the State Duma is analysed through the lens of government oversight and influence in legislative debates, operationalising a set of variables that highlight the evolving nature of legislative control and participation. The framework sets out to examine the dynamics of individual legislator covariates, committee memberships, party leadership positions, and ruling party membership within the legislature as independent variables. These elements are visible cues as to how the consolidation of power within the ruling party and the strategic allocation of leadership roles contribute to the authoritarian transition, reflecting shifts in the legislative landscape that correspond with changes in the regime's approach to governance.

The hypotheses suggest that in the transition from a democratic to an authoritarian regime, the role of government listening evolves from engaging with a plurality of voices to a more strategic focus on controlling legislative discourse. In an authoritarian setting, the government listens to legislative debates primarily to monitor and manage discourse, ensuring that the legislative environment aligns

with the regime's objectives. Hence, the government itself becomes the main audience for such debates since they allow the regime to assess loyalty, identify potential threats, and maintain control over the legislative agenda by gauging sentiment and adjusting policies as needed. By controlling who speaks and for how long, the government can prioritise loyal legislators, ensuring that the dominant narratives reflect regime priorities. Additionally, placing loyalists in key committee positions ensures that debates and discussions align with government interests, with these leaders acting as monitors who guide discourse and report on opposition sentiments. Therefore, speeches may serve as both a 'reward' or an opportunity to demonstrate loyalty and a mechanism for disseminating the regime's messages.

The amount of floor time allotted to legislators and their rate of participation in debates are identified as dependent variables, offering a quantifiable measure of the impact of authoritarian practices on legislative discourse. These variables allow for the empirical examination of the regime's strategies to control and direct legislative debates, illustrating how floor time and participation opportunities are affected by convocational patterns. Hence, the convocation of the State Duma serves as a mediating variable, providing a temporal framework that helps contextualise the changes in legislative behaviour over time, across different periods of Russia's political evolution noted in the introductory chapter – aligning with the periods of fragmentation (Second to Third Dumas), consolidation (Fourth to Fifth Dumas), and cartelisation (Sixth to Seventh).

Through this approach, the study seeks to empirically validate the theoretical expectations of government oversight and influence within authoritarian legislatures. By correlating shifts in committee leadership, party roles, and ruling party dominance with changes in legislative speech and participation, the model aims to highlight the authoritarian regime's strategies to maintain control and adapt to potential challenges, underscoring the dynamic and evolving nature of authoritarian resilience

as observed in the State Duma's transition from democratic beginnings to an increasingly authoritarian posture.

2.3.2 Influence of Electoral System on Legislative Speech in Authoritarian Contexts

2. In authoritarian contexts, legislative speech will *not* be heavily influenced by the electoral system of a given legislature. Rather, the party system itself becomes more impactful over time.

In other words, legislative behaviours in authoritarian regimes may be influenced more by party and institutional variables than by the type of electoral system since ostensibly the type of system should not matter as an incentive generator. The hypothesis presents a counter-intuitive claim correlating with the signalling function of parliaments: while elections may matter for parliamentary affairs and seat allocation, they do not generate incentives for speechmaking in similar ways to democracies. In turn, this reflects the regime's efforts to manipulate legislative debates outside of the democratic presuppositions that these speeches matter for voter behaviour. This manipulation of the legislative process reinforces the regime's narrative, overshadowing the impact of electoral system changes.

Under authoritarian conditions, the political environment is controlled to ensure that the regime maintains its dominance and suppresses opposition (Schedler 2013). Institutional rules are crafted to reinforce the regime's power, dictating the structure and functioning of legislative processes. This controlled environment shifts the focus away from elections as a driver of legislative behaviour and towards compliance with institutional norms. Legislators operate within a framework where their primary concern is adhering to the expectations set by the regime, rather than engaging in public discourse to appeal to voters. The hypothesis suggests that in such an environment, legislative speech

is less about electoral engagement and more about aligning with the institutional framework designed to uphold the regime's stability.

Therefore, this hypothesis posits that the type of electoral system will become less influential in determining legislative behaviour as the regime becomes more authoritarian. Instead, institutional and party factors, particularly those related to the regime's stability and control, will play a more significant role in shaping legislative speech and participation. The shift away from democratic norms in speechmaking will be observable across different electoral system configurations.

The analysis for this hypothesis presents data on legislators who held tenure through electoral system changes. A muted effect of electoral change compared to controls would indicate that a shift from democratic expectations has occurred. The analysis seeks to address the potential relationship between electoral systems and legislative behaviour in authoritarian contexts. While democratic theories posit a direct influence of electoral systems on legislative practices (Carey and Shugart 1995), the theory suggests that in authoritarian regimes, the impact of electoral systems on legislative speech diminishes over time, overshadowed by party and institutional factors. This perspective resonates with the work of Gandhi and Lust-Okar (2009), who argue that authoritarian regimes manipulate electoral institutions to their advantage, often to maintain the appearance of legitimacy rather than to facilitate genuine political competition. Hence, electoral system changes lead to an absorption and neutralisation of opposition within a broader strategy of speech controls.

2.3.3 Policy Attention and Legislative Focus

The importance of policy domain in legislative debates under authoritarian conditions lies in its strategic significance for both the regime and the legislators. Policy domains that are critical to the regime's stability, such as economic stability and welfare policies, are often prioritised in legislative discussions because they directly affect key constituencies and help legitimise the regime's actions. Legislators from the ruling party are more likely to engage in these substantive policy discussions to

align themselves with the regime's priorities, reflecting a process known as 'representation within bounds' (Truex 2016, 178). This ensures that these policies remain under the regime's control while providing a semblance of responsiveness to public needs.

On the other hand, Simison finds that in the multiparty Brazilian case, less critical policy domains (e.g., foreign or defence policy) are typically left open for debate by backbenchers and opposition members. This is due to the legislature's relative lack of control over such policy domains. Hence, this selective openness allows the regime to maintain an appearance of pluralism and democratic debate while monitoring and controlling the opposition's activities (Simison, 2020 7). By understanding which policy domains are emphasised or deprioritised, we gain insights into the regime's strategic use of the legislature for maintaining stability, managing dissent, and signalling responsiveness to public welfare. Therefore, we might expect the following hypothesis:

3. As legislatures undergo democratic backsliding, there is a notable shift in the content and focus of legislative debates. This shift reflects the regime's strategic use of the legislature for both monitoring dissent and signalling that the government is acting in the public interest.
    i. The hypothesis anticipates an increased emphasis on policy areas critical to the regime's stability and public welfare. These include discussions on economic stability and policies that directly benefit key constituencies of the regime.
    ii. Conversely, the hypothesis expects a decrease in legislative attention to policies that are less central to the regime's immediate objectives or outside the scope of direct legislative action. These are left open for discussion by backbenchers and opposition members due to their non-efficaciousness.

Primarily, key legislators, such as party leaders and members of the ruling party, are expected to be actively involved in the substantive policy discussions. Their speeches and interventions are likely

to align closely with the regime's priorities, reflecting the processes of signalling, aligning with the theoretical understanding of authoritarian legislatures where elites play a significant role in reinforcing regime narratives and policies. The potential focus on stability and welfare policies serves dual purposes: legitimising the regime's actions and curtailing dissent by showcasing the government's attention to public needs. These less central policy discussions are expected to be more open to backbenchers and opposition members, who may use these topics to maintain a presence in legislative debates without directly challenging the regime (c.f., Simison 2020; Truex 2016). This is reflective of the strategic use of legislative debates by authoritarian regimes. By allowing discussions on less critical issues, the regime permits a controlled form of pluralism, maintaining an appearance of open debate while ensuring that key policy areas remain aligned with regime interests. The involvement of backbenchers and opposition in these peripheral discussions also aligns with the monitoring aspect of authoritarian legislatures, as it allows the regime to observe opposition activities without risking significant policy deviations.

This shift in policy attention and legislative focus is operationalised through the examination of independent variables such as committee memberships, party leadership positions, and ruling party membership over time. These variables offer insights into the evolving nature of legislative debates and the strategic direction of policy discussions as the regime transitions from democratic to authoritarian practices. The amount of participation related to specific policy areas, serving as the dependent variables, is tracked throughout this transition, providing empirical evidence of the changing priorities within legislative debates.

The convocation of the State Duma acts as a mediating variable, contextualizing these shifts within specific legislative periods and highlighting the regime's adaptability in managing legislative discourse to suit its evolving needs. This strategic shift in policy attention within authoritarian legislative debates speaks to the literature on authoritarian policy-making processes (e.g., Noble 2020; Schuler 2020). It

suggests that authoritarian regimes strategically direct legislative attention towards issues that reinforce regime stability and public welfare, while deprioritising or sidelining policies that pose a threat to regime security. Meanwhile, it directs pro-government legislators to engage with those reinforcing policies, which may underscore their 'responsiveness' to the public. This mechanism is reminiscent of the selective policy responsiveness seen in authoritarian regimes, where governments respond to certain public demands to enhance legitimacy and prevent dissent. By detailing how policy focus shifts in legislative debates, the theory elaborates on the ways which authoritarian regimes engage in policy signalling to maintain control.

2.3.4 Government-Opposition Dynamics in Legislative Debates

The next set of hypotheses builds on the prior propositions by asking how the consolidation of an authoritarian regime influences the content and focus of legislative debates. Specifically, these hypotheses explore the expectation that legislative debates will increasingly reflect and support the narrative of the ruling party, while the focus of the opposition, particularly on critical policy areas, will decrease. This shift in legislative debates serves as a strategic mechanism for the regime to signal its dominance, co-opt opposition voices, and manage dissent within the legislative arena. Hence, the dissertation expects the following:

4. As the authoritarian regime consolidates, a strategic realignment in legislative debates toward pro-government rhetoric occurs, accompanied by a diminishing focus on oppositional discourse in key policy areas.
    i. The expectation is that legislative debates will increasingly reflect and support the narrative of the ruling party or government. This shift in rhetoric serves to reinforce the legitimacy and policies of the regime. Analysing legislative debates should reveal a noticeable increase in speeches that align with or endorse government positions, particularly on key policy issues.

ii. It is anticipated that as the regime consolidates, the opposition's focus, particularly in debates on critical policy areas, will decrease. This reduction in oppositional engagement suggests a strategic limitation placed on their ability to challenge or influence the regime effectively. The expectation is that oppositional voices in legislative debates will either become less critical of the government, especially on policies central to the regime's stability.

This hypothesis suggests a realignment of legislative debates in favour of the pro-governmental narratives and is closely linked to both signalling and co-optation theories. The shift towards pro-governmental rhetoric and the decrease in oppositional focus in key policy areas reflect the regime's efforts to signal its dominance and co-opt opposition voices into its fold. It showcases how the regime strategically manages legislative debates to reinforce its narrative and diminish the effectiveness of oppositional rhetoric. The dissertation analyses the distribution and evolution of policy stances in legislative debates, particularly examining the extent and nature of pro-oppositional discourse across different convocations.

The dependent variables for this hypothesis are the amount of pro-governmental speech related to the previously identified policy areas (such as political, social, economic, procedural, defence, and foreign policy) and the nature and extent of oppositional discourse in legislative debates. Tracking these variables across the regime transition allows for an empirical assessment of how legislative debates are realigned to favour the government's narrative. The change in the content and focus of speeches, particularly the increase in pro-governmental rhetoric and the reduction in critical oppositional engagement, serves as a direct measure of the hypothesis, evidencing the strategic management of legislative debates by the authoritarian regime.

Hence, the independent variables consist of committee memberships, party leadership posts, and the status of the ruling party within the legislature. These variables are observed over time to capture the power dynamics within the Duma. They guide the model into examining how the regime's consolidation impacts the legislative environment, facilitating a shift towards pro-government rhetoric. These variables effectively operationalise the structural mechanisms through which the authoritarian regime exerts its influence over the legislative process, directing the focus of debates and the distribution of floor time towards those who align with regime objectives.

By operationalizing these variables, the hypothesis seeks to empirically demonstrate how an authoritarian regime's consolidation leads to a strategic realignment in legislative debates. The analysis focuses on the evolution of policy stances and the extent of pro-oppositional discourse across different convocations, revealing how the regime's efforts to signal its dominance and co-opt opposition voices manifest in the legislative arena. This approach allows for an examination of the changing dynamics of legislative debates, highlighting the decrease in oppositional focus on critical policy areas and the increasing emphasis on pro-government rhetoric. Through this analysis, the hypothesis elucidates the mechanisms through which authoritarian regimes strategically manage legislative debates to reinforce their narrative, legitimise their policies, and diminish the effectiveness of oppositional rhetoric, thereby consolidating their control over the legislative process.

2.3.5 Discussion

The propositions presented in this section see legislative speeches as instruments of regime support. In the transition process, legislative speeches evolve from being tools of policy advocacy to instruments of regime support and elite management. This shift reflects the broader trend of democratic erosion throughout the state. In this evolving context, co-optation, monitoring, and signalling emerge as dynamic and interrelated processes. Initially, co-optation involves integrating opposition elements with limited power, which progressively diminishes as the regime consolidates.

This practice is not static; rather, it is a process where opposition members may initially seem empowered but gradually find their influence curtailed, aligning more with regime objectives. Monitoring extends beyond simple oversight, evolving into a strategic and reactive response to oppositional challenges, which are inherent risks under co-optation. Even in environments of democratic backsliding or hybrid conditions, the regime employs monitoring to gauge and respond to oppositional rhetoric, adjusting its strategies accordingly. Legislative debates, thus, are not just platforms for policy discussion but are strategically used to observe and counter oppositional narratives as they are displayed publicly.

It therefore follows that the legislature's role as a signalling tool becomes prominent, particularly in times of potential instability or challenges to regime authority. Legislative debates serve to project regime strength and unity, reinforcing the government's narrative and therefore assist in managing public perception. Hence, this signalling function is expected to be particularly pronounced following instances of heightened opposition activity, where the regime might recalibrate its approach to demonstrate control and suppress dissent. The evolution of legislative debates in authoritarian regimes, therefore, offers critical insights into the mechanisms of regime stability and adaptability. It underscores how authoritarian states strategically utilise legislatures to maintain control, manage dissent, and project an image of legitimacy. This perspective is essential for understanding the nature of authoritarian governance and the ongoing challenges posed by democratic backsliding, revealing the ways in which regimes manipulate legislative processes to sustain their authority.

Overall, the theory contributes to the literature by providing a detailed examination of how authoritarian regimes utilise legislative debates as tools for governance. It bridges the gap between authoritarian practices and democratic ideals, showing how regimes co-opt democratic institutions for authoritarian purposes. By highlighting the strategic use of legislative debates for government oversight, electoral manipulation, policy focus, and managing government-opposition dynamics, the

theory stresses that adaptability and resilience are of key concern to authoritarian parliaments. This approach encourages a reassessment of legislative debates in authoritarian contexts, not as mere formalities, but as critical components of authoritarian governance strategies.

When juxtaposing the proposed theory with the dynamics of legislative speech in democracies, several contrasts and similarities emerge. Democratic theories of legislative speech often emphasise deliberation, transparency, and electoral accountability, viewing parliamentary debates as mechanisms for policy scrutiny, public engagement, and the representation of diverse interests. The theory presented in this chapter suggests that while authoritarian regimes may adopt the façade of these democratic practices, the underlying motivations and outcomes are markedly different, prioritising regime stability and governmental control over deliberation.

However, the theory also reveals that even in authoritarian contexts, legislative debates can embody elements of strategic communication and policy discourse similar to those in democracies, albeit generated from different pathways. Research on single-party legislatures has shown that these quasi-democratic elements of legislative speech are present under more overt forms of authoritarianism. For instance, Schuler finds that legislators in Vietnam are given space for oppositional representation on non-crucial forms of legislation (2021) – a finding that this theory also posits to occur in the Russian context. This similarity between democracy and authoritarianism underscores the adaptability of legislative institutions and the ways in which authoritarian regimes co-opt democratic practices for authoritarian ends. It highlights that, in order to discern the genuine democratic functions of legislative speech from their manipulative use in authoritarian settings, a study must incorporate information on how speechmaking incentives are generated.

Therefore, this chapter provides a framework for further analysis which contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of political communication, representation, and governance across regime types, and does so through drawing connections to and distinctions from democratic contexts.

This theoretical integration not only enhances our understanding of the roles of speech in authoritarian parliaments but also informs practical approaches to governance, democracy promotion, and authoritarian resilience, offering valuable insights into the complexity of legislative institutions worldwide.

3. The Dynamics of Debate Participation

The scholarly debate on the role of legislative speeches within democratic presidential systems often relegates these discourses to the realm of the symbolic, arguing they bear minimal impact on the political landscape and primarily serve as after-the-fact rationalisations for decisions made elsewhere (Taylor 2021). This perspective has inadvertently led to a paucity of research focusing on the dynamics of legislative speechmaking in contexts of authoritarianism and democratic backsliding, leaving a significant gap in our understanding of how these practices evolve as regimes transition from democratic to authoritarian governance. This gap is particularly glaring given the theoretical expectations laid out in the preceding sections, which suggest that such transitions are marked by substantial shifts in the allocation of legislative floor time and participation opportunities, driven by changes in committee memberships, party leadership positions, and the status of ruling parties.

This first empirical chapter seeks to bridge this gap by providing a detailed examination of speechmaking practices within the Russian Duma, a legislative body that has experienced the very transition from democratic to authoritarian governance described in the theoretical framework proposed in *Chapter 2*. Through this analysis, the chapter empirically tests the hypotheses that predict a systematic reconfiguration of legislative debates, wherein floor time and participation opportunities become increasingly skewed towards individuals and groups demonstrating loyalty to the regime, as part of a process of *reactive monitoring*.

By examining the independent variables of committee, party, and Duma-wide leadership posts, and ruling party status, alongside the dependent variables of floor time allocation and participation rates, this chapter will illuminate the mechanisms through which authoritarian regimes co-opt and monitor legislative activities to consolidate power. Furthermore, by considering the mediating role of

the convocation of the State Duma, the chapter explores the ways in which legislative institutions under authoritarianism adapt to sustain regime stability, echoing the dynamics of co-optation and monitoring highlighted by Magaloni (2006). In this context, evidence of governmental oversight over the floor emerges as a fundamental element of how the state manages its co-opted deputies, reflecting the regime's adaptive strategies to ensure stability and mitigate challenges. The forthcoming empirical investigation will shed light on how changes in speechmaking patterns result from both formal (read: regulatory and institutional innovations) and informal (read: party-based delegation strategies) changes in government monitoring mechanisms, consequently reshaping the legislative environment.

The development of speechmaking practices in the Russian case reveals a complex and somewhat paradoxical trend: despite an overall increase in the time legislators spend on the floor, this expansion occurs against a backdrop of heightened governmental scrutiny over access to legislative debates. Noble (2020, 1440) notes that while floor time in democratic periods correlates with enhanced legislative scrutiny, such a relationship appears to dissipate in authoritarian contexts, suggesting a divergent function of speechmaking contingent upon the regime type. This divergence implies that the constraints and motivations guiding speechmaking undergo a transformation across different convocations, a nuance not fully explored in Noble's analysis. Despite this, the existing literature has yet to systematically delineate the evolution of speechmaking practices in response to changing legislative access conditions over time.

The body of research concerning the Duma has thoroughly examined its institutional evolution over the last three decades, emphasising aspects such as roll-call voting, distributive politics, party cohesion, and interactions between the Duma and the executive (e.g., (Chaisty 2005c, 2013a; Kunicova and Remington 2008; Remington 2006). However, this scholarship has largely neglected the role and significance of debate institutions, possibly attributing to a prevailing view that the importance of debates has waned since the establishment of United Russia's dominant party system in 2003 (Goode

2010). Such assessments often gauge the 'relevance' of debates solely through the lens of their immediate policy outcomes, overlooking their potential instrumental value to the regime. This oversight underscores the necessity for a thorough investigation into legislative speech, particularly focusing on how the nature and function of speechmaking have shifted over time in response to evolving political dynamics.

The thesis argues that the Duma's evolving approach to legislative debates is marked by an increasing interest in controlling parliamentary discourse through its co-optative features. This trend is characterised by an intensification of scrutiny regarding access to the floor. Such oversight aims to curtail the participation of opposition backbenchers while simultaneously amplifying the voices of key figures within both the systemic opposition and the ruling party. This strategy serves to mitigate potential dissent at its inception and fortify party cohesion. The Duma employs a dual strategy to achieve these objectives: informal party-based delegation arrangements and the ad-hoc modification of formal procedural rules, thereby centralising debate among these key deputies. This argument highlights the importance of understanding the dynamic nature of legislative debates under different regime types and the ways in which it is ultimately controlled in non-democratic settings.

Empirical evidence draws attention to a period of *individual* oppositional speechmaking in the Duma's early years, characterised by extended floor times predominantly allocated to opposition figures, party and Duma leadership, and committee chairs. A notable instance during the Second Convocation – the extraordinary session on May 13, 1999, involving the Communist Party's leadership (KPRF) – illustrates this trend, where the three longest speeches in Duma history were delivered in an attempt to impeach President Yeltsin, aggregating 12,593 words in a single meeting spread across three ranking deputies. This incident starkly contrasts with subsequent periods, where high word count speeches were typically dispersed across separate sessions, addressing diverse topics such as budgetary concerns, regulations, and security.

After this early tumultuous era, there was a noticeable reduction in speech length, coinciding with a pivotal rule modification in 2000 (see Appendix A) that constrained the floor time allotted to individual deputies. The ensuing decade, marked by political backsliding, witnessed additional adjustments to the procedural rules concerning speech duration. Notably, from 2010 to 2012, the Duma enacted eight amendments related to speech length and participation, reflective of an era consolidating authoritarianism and concern over oppositional influence over the floor. These amendments signify a growing governmental interest in the strategic use of parliamentary debates, particularly in later stages where the state's influence over the legislature became increasingly pronounced. This evolving legislative landscape highlights the government's concerted efforts to shape the discourse within the Duma, illustrating the interaction between speechmaking practices and the broader objectives of regime control and stability.

As noted in the introductory chapter, the period between April and September 2012 marks a pivotal moment in the evolution of the Russian Duma's procedural rules with respect to the formal mechanisms governing legislative debates. The culmination of this transformative phase occurred on June 5th, 2012, during a highly contested session aimed at passing legislation to impose stringent fines on protestors. This session witnessed an unprecedented unity among the opposition parties who endeavoured to stall the legislative process (Noble and Schulmann 2018). Their efforts included filibustering attempts and the introduction of around 400 amendments which forced the day's session into a marathon event. Despite these concerted efforts, the opposition's resistance was ultimately overcome by procedural adjustments made by the chair, notably the reduction of time allocated for discussing individual amendments and speeches. As noted previously, this episode did not occur without repercussions; notwithstanding the punitive measures against the Gudkovs and Ponomarev, the Duma permanently amended its rules to forestall similar instances of filibustering in the future.

Contrary to expectations that such stringent amendments – designed to augment governmental control over speech duration – would curtail the overall length of sessions, empirical data presents a counterintuitive trend. Notably, despite the implementation of stricter amendments aimed at increasing governmental oversight over speech duration in 2012, the data do not exhibit the expected decrease in overall session lengths. Instead, *Figure 1.3* depicts a trend where legislative floor time remains relatively stable, with some periods witnessing an increase in the subsequent years. This trend persists until 2018-2019 when there is a discernible decline in the time spent in the chamber that precedes the COVID epidemic.

The decrease in 2018 presents an anomaly when juxtaposed against the assurances from Volodin, the Chairperson during the Seventh convocation, who avowed to ensure that deputies remained actively engaged throughout legislative sessions. This discrepancy suggests that while the government's approach to legislative speechmaking involves optimisation for strategic outcomes, there may have been additional factors at play that led to the reduction in floor time, which are not immediately apparent from the data alone. In turn, this prompts a reassessment of the simplistic view that increased governmental control would lead to reduced debate times. Instead, the complexity of factors influencing floor time becomes evident, requiring a consideration of how variations across different convocations and regime methods of debate control contribute to the observed legislative behaviour.

The objective of this chapter is to set a basis for understanding debate institutions within hybrid and authoritarian frameworks, where a distinction is made between the formal and informal institutional 'rules' that exhibit dynamism across time. Magar (2021) highlights the potential for friction between these institutional forms, a phenomenon that is particularly pronounced in presidential systems. Formal institutions are identified as those that diffuse debate authority by endowing deputies with extensive participation rights, as evidenced through established procedural rules. In juxtaposition, informal institutions concentrate debate authority by virtue of the party

system's role in allocating parliamentary concessions and privileges, such as committee appointments, thereby establishing a distinct system of access determined by party hierarchy and strategic interests. Consequently, debate participation emerges as a variable subject to the whims of party preferences, thus delineating an informal structure of participation.

This chapter asserts the imperative of examining both the progression of procedural rules and the evolution of the party system over time and throughout the various Duma convocations to gain a full understanding of the debate landscape. Evidence is put forward to illustrate a stark contrast in the speechmaking practices between the initial five convocations and the two most recent ones, reflective of the tensions between formal and informal institutions. To address identified gaps within existing literature, an exposition of the debate institutions in Russia since 1994 is provided, paired with an analysis of floor access and the duration of floor presence – key indicators of plenary debate governance. The former variable tracks the frequency of deputies' contributions to debates, while the latter gauges the extent of their engagement on the floor. The analysis commences with an exposition of the party system and the institutional milieu framing legislative debate in Russia. The primary analysis is informed by a novel dataset encompassing 388,201 speeches across 35,883 debate questions. Additional legislator metadata was compiled through a rigorous process involving the scraping of data from Duma and party websites, supplemented by manual data collection to address gaps. The dataset, after a cleaning process that excluded speeches with incomplete data, and speeches below 50 words, comprises 103,452 contributions from 1,610 legislators, presenting a comprehensive corpus for analysis.

3.1 Institutional Setting of Russian Legislative Debates

Central to the operational framework of the Duma is the Council of the State Duma, which shoulders a multifaceted array of responsibilities essential to the legislative process. It is charged with

the formulation of draft programs for forthcoming legislative work, the inclusion of bills during sessions, the construction of draft calendars for issue consideration, the orchestration of additional meetings, the establishment of procedural guidelines for Duma activities, the convening of extraordinary sessions, the allocation of draft laws to relevant committees, and the transmission of draft laws to the government for deliberation (Collected Legislation of the Russian Federation 2020, Chapter 1; Chapter 2)

The composition of the Council is reflective of the Duma's elected leadership, comprising the Chairperson, the First Deputy Chairs, Deputy Chairs, and the leaders of the various parties. Party nominations play a decisive role in determining the elected positions, and the existing voting regulations tend to favour the ruling party, especially in terms of securing chairmanships.

The Chairperson assumes a role akin to that of a parliamentary speaker, presiding over meetings, steering the daily affairs of the chamber, and leading the Council of the Duma. This role is instrumental in directing the flow of legislative operations, encompassing the management of issues and the progression of bills through the legislative pipeline. Additionally, the deputy chairs serve as alternates to the Chairperson and, within their own remit, convene expert councils that pertain to committee jurisdictions and the evaluation of draft laws (Ibid., Chapter 1). This latter function wields significant influence over the policy-making process by granting these deputies the power to impede or shape the trajectory of legislative proposals. Consequently, these positions are sought after by career politicians in the legislature and protected within the political arena.

The State Duma's legislative work is predominantly conducted within the framework of its committee system, which serves as the main engine for bill introduction and amendment. This system has undergone significant transformation since the Duma's inception, evolving from a non-majoritarian setup during its First and Second Convocations to a structure where majoritarian principles prevail, particularly after United Russia's ascent to prominence in the early 2000s (Chaisty

2005b). Initially, committee chair positions, which are of considerable strategic importance, were allocated among the various parties in a manner that reflected the multiparty composition of the Duma. This distribution of influence saw a radical shift as Unity, and subsequently United Russia, began to assert control over these positions (Remington 2007). By the time of the Seventh Convocation, a semblance of proportionality in committee appointments had been restored, albeit within a political landscape significantly different from the Duma's early days (Sakwa 2020). The significance of committee posts, especially the chairpersonships, cannot be overstated; they afford incumbents a direct conduit to legislative activity, bestowing upon them the potential to exert considerable influence over the introduction and amendment phases of the legislative process.

The procedural rules of the Duma clearly stipulate that no deputy may engage in debate without explicit permission from the presiding chair. The chair wields the authority to intervene in the discourse of deputies, curtailing or halting their contributions if they stray from the established regulations concerning speech. For example, if a deputy exceeds their allocated time for speaking, the chairperson is entitled to interject. The chairperson may also issue a caution and, if necessary, interrupt the deputy should they digress from the subject matter at hand. Furthermore, the chairperson holds the prerogative to set the duration of debate on particular issues, which includes the power to extend the speaking time when deemed appropriate (Collected Legislation of the Russian Federation 2020, Chapter 5). This procedural control vested in the chairperson and the committee structure's centrality to the legislative process underscores the importance of institutional roles within the Duma. The ability of chairpersons to manage debate time and focus directly impacts the legislative process's efficiency and the nature of political discourse within the Duma.

The Council of the State Duma also bears the responsibility for planning the draft procedures that govern the Duma's plenary sessions. It scrutinises the recommendations submitted by committees regarding the issues to be deliberated on the floor, aligning its decision-making with the proposed

monthly agenda of legislative activities. The sequencing of bill readings is structured with precedence given to later readings over initial readings in the order of presentation. Furthermore, deputies retain the right to propose modifications to the procedures for conducting meetings (Ibid., Chapter 2).

A standard parliamentary session, barring hearings, encompasses six principal types of debates, each regulated by distinct provisions within the Duma's procedural guidelines (as detailed in *Table 3.1*). To participate in most debates, deputies are required to register their intent to speak in advance and be slated on the speaker list for specific issues. These issues are predefined by the Council and put to a vote at the commencement of each session by the present deputies. Should a deputy on the speaker list not be accorded the chance to speak within the established time limit—proposed by the chairperson—they may opt to submit a written version of their speech for inclusion in the parliamentary records. Typically, the sequence of debates adheres to the predetermined speaker list, except for party representatives, whose speaking order is determined by their respective party leaderships.

Table. 3.1. Debate Types in the Duma[20] [21]

Debate type	Goal	Duration	Selector
1. Draft procedure	Discuss and vote on the order of a plenary session	3 Minutes (25 total)	List order
2. Legislative questions: a. First reading b. Second reading c. Third reading	Prepare law or draft law/ position-taking	7 Minutes	List order
3. Procedural Issues	Change working order, right of reply, messaging, etc.	3 Minutes	List order
4. Committee reports: a. Reports b. Co-reports c. Concluding remarks	Move for floor consideration	 15 Minutes 5 Minutes 5 Minutes	List order
5. Draft resolutions a. Faction representatives b. Other deputies	Institutions, government, and constitution	 7 Minutes 3 Minutes	 Faction/List order List order
6. Current events and other issues a. Faction representatives b. Other deputies	Position taking	 10 Minutes total	 Faction/ List order Chairperson

[20] This up-to-date typology of debate types is adapted from the formal regulations of the Duma (available here: https://www.consultant.ru/law/review/lawmaking/reglduma/

[21] The Duma uses the word 'faction' (*fraktsiia*) in lieu of party due to their legal definitions. A faction is a group of deputies who come together based on party affiliation (or by electoral agreement as was common in earlier Dumas) while in the legislature; as such it includes electoral blocs.

	10 minutes (every two months)

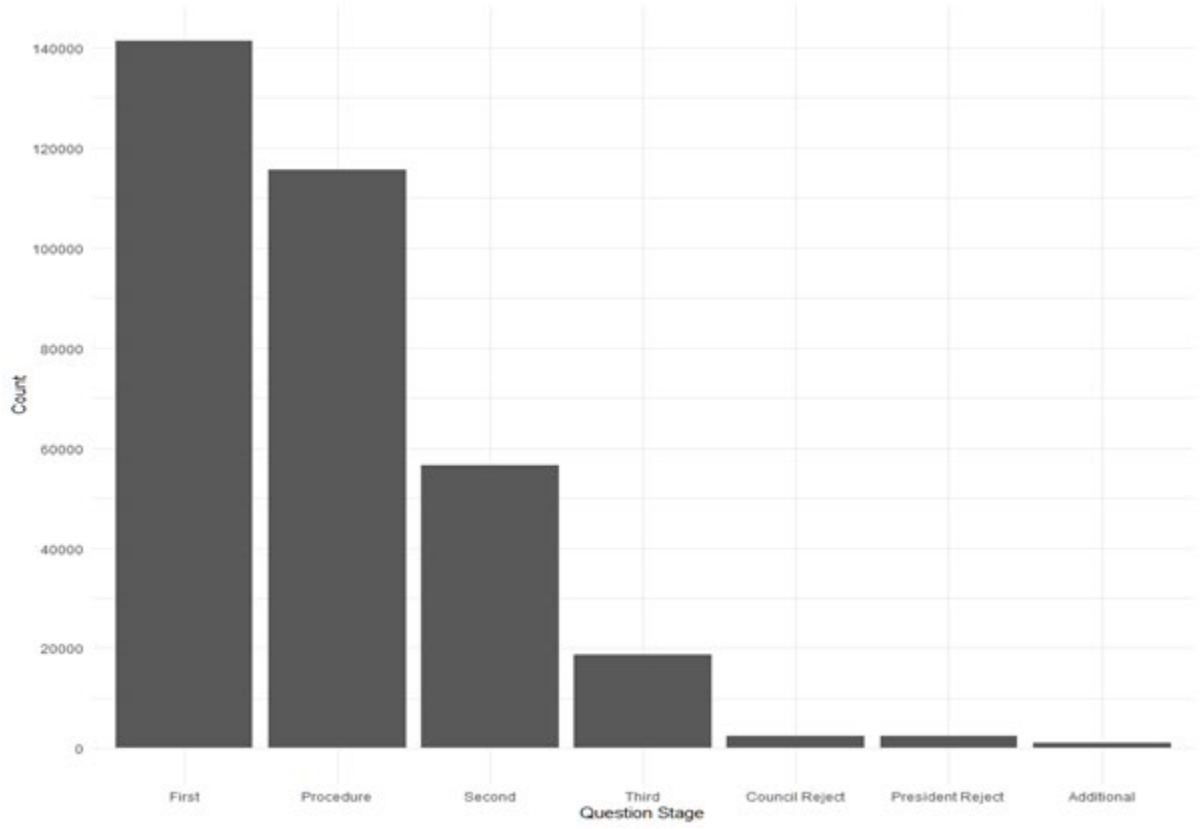
In debates regarding draft procedures – the daily schedule -- each speaker is allotted a three-minute slot within a collective 25-minute timeframe. These discussions centre on deliberating and deciding upon the agenda as outlined by the Council, with the option to extend the time cap via a majority vote. Legislative inquiries, pivotal in refining draft laws over three readings, allocate seven minutes per deputy, with committee members involved in the draft law responding to and justifying procedural motions. Procedural speeches, encapsulated in *Chapter Five of the Regulations* (2020), span a spectrum of topics, including presenting proposals and elucidating the rationale behind the acceptance or rejection of amendments, with each speech confined to three minutes. Committee reports, which introduce draft laws for review or highlight amendments from subsequent readings, are granted 15 minutes, while co-reports and final comments are limited to five minutes.

Draft resolutions, particularly those pertaining to constitutional matters or Duma regulations, distinguish themselves by prioritising factional input. Each faction may nominate a spokesperson to address the assembly for up to seven minutes, while non-faction deputies are allocated three minutes. There is also a 35-minute total cap for these debates. The proposer of the resolution is afforded a concluding response. Additionally, faction representatives may speak for 10 minutes on current issues on Tuesdays and Thursdays, whereas non-affiliated deputies have a 10-minute opportunity monthly based on their requests (Ibid., Chapter 5). It is notable that this last instance is the sole occasion where the chairperson directly influences the order of speeches.

Subsequently, the transcripts of the Duma include six primary categories of issue-questions. These include debates pertaining to a bill in the first, second, third, as well as those that occur during exceptional additional readings. Additionally, the Duma may consider laws rejected by the Federation

Council and the President. The remaining portion of proceedings are dedicated to discussions of current events, draft resolutions, and procedural matters. As depicted in *Figure 3.1*, it is apparent that most speeches occur during the first reading. The second highest number of speeches are directed towards procedural issues, current events, or draft resolutions. This is followed by a declining number of speeches during the second and third readings, and finally, a minority of speeches pertain to bills rejected by the President or Federation Council or those that are considered after the third reading.

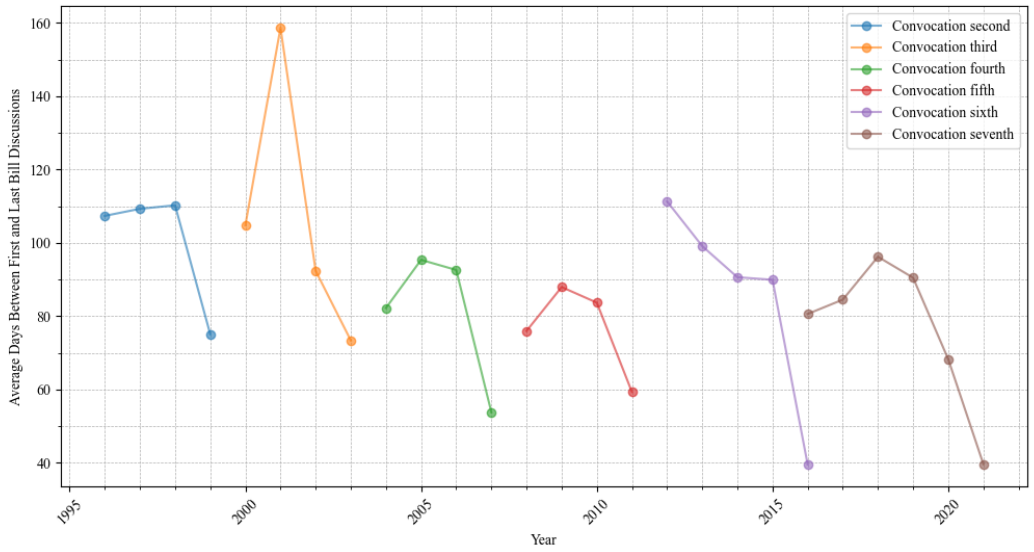
Figure 3.1. Count of Debate Types in the Duma



The prominence of speeches during the first reading is significant because this stage represents the primary opportunity for legislators to influence the legislative process and engage in substantive debate. The first reading allows for broad discussion and introduction of amendments, making it the focal point for expressing policy positions and negotiating legislative details. This stage sets the tone

of the legislative discourse and determines the framework of the bill before it advances further in the process if it is not voted through or rejected on the day. In contrast, the decline in speeches during subsequent readings indicates a narrowing of debate as bills progress, a trend that increases in the latter two convocations. The following figure, adapted from the introductory chapter demonstrates the trend in declining bill-debate velocities. In the Sixth and Seventh convocations, the average days spent on debates past the second reading decline from 50-60 days to 40 days.

Figure 3.2 Average Days Between First and Last Bill Discussions by Convocation[22]



According to *Table A.1*, *Chapter Five* of the Duma's Regulations has been amended on multiple occasions, with a notable concentration of these amendments occurring during the tenure of United Russia as the dominant party. This pattern signals the government's vested interest in managing floor access, underscoring the strategic importance of debate in the legislative process. The 2012 amendments coincide with a discernible shift in speechmaking practices and a tightening of executive

[22] Note: this figure does not include bills accepted (or rejected) during their first readings so as to not count one-day of discussion as being substantive.

influence over floor access. Considering these observations, one can expect to witness variability across different Duma convocations as the government seeks to solidify the party system. The evolution of this system is inextricably linked to the enforcement of formal rules that govern the Duma. These rules increasingly aim to centralize party control, often at the expense of individual legislators' autonomy in the legislative process.

Comparatively, Taylor finds that in democratic presidential systems, in contrast to parliamentary models, the rules of procedure tend to provide greater leeway and freedom of action in debates, as legislators in these systems are often more focussed on local concerns (e.g., campaigning), possess greater autonomy, and parties exhibit less coherence (Taylor 2021). In other words, the electoral and party systems determine the rules of procedure which govern legislative debate and the executive does not have the power to intervene on the formal rules (Proksch and Slapin 2015). However, in the authoritarian case, the rules of procedure are not optimised according to electoral considerations otherwise, they would vary according to the electoral changes between the mixed and proportional systems. Moreover, as the executive wields stronger informal power such through party-based controls, the potential capacity for autonomous debate participation weakens.

3.2 Party Politics in the Duma

The configuration of parliamentary institutions in Russia cannot be fully appreciated without a thorough understanding of the role political parties play in setting the government's agenda. The Duma serves not only as a legislative body but also as a platform for reconciling conflicts within the executive branch and between the executive and legislature (Noble 2018). Consequently, the evolution of the party system is a critical factor in the executive's functionality and has seen significant transformations, shifting from a loosely consolidated system to a more robust party of power model over time (Golosov 2002, 2017). These changes offer a lens through which to examine the relationship

between democratic and authoritarian elements within the political system, shedding light on the ways in which democratic institutions may be co-opted and how their functions can be both subverted and preserved.

In the context of legislative debates, the party system's development is particularly revealing. The rules for allocating seats, for instance, not only demonstrate the regime's manipulation of the electoral process to secure favourable outcomes but also serve as an important indicator for examining shifts in speechmaking practices. The manner in which electoral seats are distributed under various regimes provides valuable insights into the political motivations behind speechmaking and the constraints placed upon it. Hence, the development of speechmaking practices rely on those formal rules for allocation, but informal party-based delegation towards party-based seats (e.g., committee chairs) as well.

Despite the relevance of these parliamentary dynamics, the research exploring their impact on floor speech remains limited. However, as noted in the prior chapter, existing theories can offer predictions about expected legislative behaviour. Proksch and Slapin (2015) argue that in mixed-member majoritarian (MMM) systems, legislators elected from single-member districts (SMD) and those from proportional representation (PR) lists are likely to exhibit distinct behaviours due to their different incentive structures. SMD legislators, whose election relies more heavily on personal votes, are expected to be more vocal than their PR counterparts, who are elected based on party affiliation. Nevertheless, party leaders are anticipated to enforce party unity, which would be especially pronounced during the purely proportional periods (2007-2016), potentially leading to stricter control over floor time allocations to backbenchers.

The electoral history of the Duma reveals a strategic manipulation of its electoral system (see *Table 1.2*), reflective of the broader political objectives at different historical junctures and a combination of formal legal mechanisms for securing dominance and informal extra-legal methods for maintaining

that dominance. The initial convocations were characterised by a mixed member system, evenly splitting representation between proportional representation and single-mandate districts. This arrangement underwent a transition in the Fifth and Sixth Dumas, which adopted a purely proportional representation model, before reverting to the mixed system in the Seventh Duma. These shifts in the electoral mechanism had profound implications for the structure and behaviour of political parties within the Duma.

The propensity for deputies from SMD constituencies to deviate their votes from party lines during the first four convocations underscores the fragmented nature of party cohesion in the earlier Dumas (Kunicova and Remington 2008). The amendments to the electoral rules in the Fourth and Fifth convocations can be interpreted as a deliberate move to reinforce party discipline and strengthen the party system, aligning with the objectives articulated by Noble and Schulmann (2018, 52). The subsequent cartelisation of the party system, which favoured systemic opposition rather than authentic contenders to the regime's power, suggests an engineered political landscape designed to mitigate genuine challenges to the ruling party (Hutcheson 2018).

The nascent years of the Russian Duma in the 1990s, epitomised by the Second Duma, was marked by a lack of consolidation. The landscape was dotted with a multitude of political groups, with the legislature divided along pro-government and anti-government lines. The Second Duma was notable for its overt opposition from Communist and leftist blocs. The parliamentary regulations of the time were utilised as bulwarks *against* executive encroachment, with parties leveraging legislative amendments to assert their mandate (Shevchenko and Golosov 2001). This period also saw the prominence of nonpartisan, independent actors who drew support from regional and sectoral bases rather than the centralised party system (Gel'man 2008; Hale 2006).

However, as Russia entered the 2000s, a marked consolidation within the party system occurred, with independents increasingly being subsumed under the banner of dominant parties, especially

United Russia (see *Figure 1.1*). The government's orchestration of these developments, fostering a robust party system while simultaneously diluting the opposition within the Duma, has been instrumental in enhancing regime stability. It illustrates a calculated strategy to cultivate a legislative environment conducive to the ruling party's interests, effectively marginalising dissenting voices and reinforcing the executive's political dominance.

The amendments to the procedural regulations of the State Duma reflect an adaptation to the evolving dynamics of the party of power system and an augmentation of executive oversight within the legislative process. Shevchenko and Golosov's analysis highlight a strategic limitation imposed on deputies, where the legislative draft schedule is tailored for immediate sittings only, constraining deputies' capacity for strategic planning and diminishing their control over the policy-making process (Shevchenko and Golosov 2011, 206). This, coupled with the observation that the allotted time for deputy reports and speeches has been halved from 30 to 15 minutes since 2000, underscores a deliberate effort to streamline legislative debates and possibly curtail extensive deliberation (2011, 206). Furthermore, the procedural authority vested in the government to influence the sequencing of bills, especially the provision allowing a bill to be dismissed after the first reading by the relevant committee with the Council's consent, accentuates the ruling party's dominion over legislative priorities.

The consolidation of a pro-governmental party system, underscored by the dominance of United Russia, significantly impacts the dynamics of speechmaking within the Duma, aligning closely with the hypothesis outlined regarding increasing governmental oversight. This alignment suggests that the evolution of the party system and the tightening of procedural rules engender a more controlled legislative environment, where informal constraints on speechmaking become increasingly pronounced. This scenario, wherein the informal components of party rank and status – manifested through roles such as committee chairs, deputy positions, Duma leadership, and membership in the

ruling party –determines speech opportunities, resonates with the anticipated shifts due to the regime's transition.

The expected outcomes in terms of floor time allocation and participation can be discerned across three dimensions:

H1. There would be a notable increase in floor time and participation opportunities for committee leaders – particularly, but not limited to those aligned with United Russia – reflecting their loyalty to the regime. This is anticipated to manifest as these individuals are granted more opportunities to contribute to legislative debates, steering discussions in a manner that aligns with the ruling party's objectives. the analysis is expected to reveal a skewed distribution of speech opportunities toward committee leaders, indicating power consolidation within a select few.

H2. Promotion into leadership positions may be contingent upon participation in debates prior to the promotion period, even if such debate access is limited in comparison.

H3. Party and Duma leadership roles will increasingly serve as procedural gatekeepers and influencers of legislative discourse. This results in an informal delegatory process of speechmaking access, where these roles signify a practice of reactive monitoring. Consequently, there will be increased floor time for party and Duma leaders, at the expense of opposition and backbencher voices. The expected pattern is a dominant presence of leadership roles, reflecting top-party membership, in legislative debates.

H4. As the proportion of United Russia deputies within the Duma increases, a marginalisation of minority party voices is expected, alongside an intensification of intraparty competition for floor access within United Russia. This competition is anticipated to favour party leaders and notable figures, relegating backbenchers to less frequent participation in debates. This dominance is reflected in both the quantity of floor time and the frequency of participation among United Russia members. An expected outcome would be a pattern of reduced floor access for opposition parties

and a nuanced intraparty dynamic within United Russia, where floor time favours those in leadership positions. This could manifest as a decrease in speechmaking opportunities for backbenchers from the opposition, highlighting a strategic containment of potential dissent within the ruling party's ranks.

3.3 Description of Variables and Method

In this chapter, the exploration of floor access and participation within the Duma is conducted through an analysis of debate participation at the convocation level. The study employs two dependent variables specifically designed to capture the different facets of participation (i.e., floor time and floor access), adhering to the methodological guidelines proposed by Slapin and Proksch (2021). This involves the exclusion of all speeches that fall below 50 words, classifying them as 0, under the premise that such contributions do not constitute substantial debate input. This coding decision implies that a value of 0 still offers insightful data regarding the participation spectrum (see *Appendix B*).

To enhance analytical robustness, the study incorporates an aggregate modelling approach detailed in *Appendix C*, which features two distinct model specifications alongside controls for convocation variability. The first dependent variable (*DV1*) is operationalised by aggregating the daily speech count of deputies and then compiling these figures into a convocation-level summary. The second dependent variable (*DV2*) is defined by the ratio of the total word count to the number of speeches across a convocation, effectively normalising floor time relative to the opportunities for participation. *DV1* serves as a quantitative measure of speech frequency, whereas *DV2* captures the duration of floor engagement, adjusting for the volume of speeches.

The ensuing analysis presents summary statistics for the variables of interest across a sample encompassing 2,547 deputy observations over various convocations. Preliminary findings indicate a median of 46 speeches per convocation, accompanied by an aggregate word count of 4,897. Notably,

DV1 demonstrates a pronounced right skew, indicative of the substantial variance in speech frequency – a phenomenon attributed to overdispersion where the variance outstrips the mean. A marginal fraction of the sample (2.28%, equating to 58 deputies) either did not engage in speechmaking or contributed minimally (below 50 words), underscoring the diversity of participatory levels within the legislative body.

Given the overdispersion observed in *DV1*, the analysis adopts a negative binomial regression approach (Hilbe 2007). This method is particularly suited to addressing the variance-mean discrepancy inherent in the speech count data. For *DV2*, which articulates a more continuous-analogous measure of floor time per convocation, the study employs an ordinary least squares regression, offering a more straightforward interpretation of the results. Standard errors are clustered by deputy to account for within-individual correlation, ensuring that the statistical inferences drawn are both robust and reliable. This dual-faceted approach allows for a comprehensive assessment of speechmaking practices within the Duma, shedding light on both the frequency and substantive depth of legislative debates.

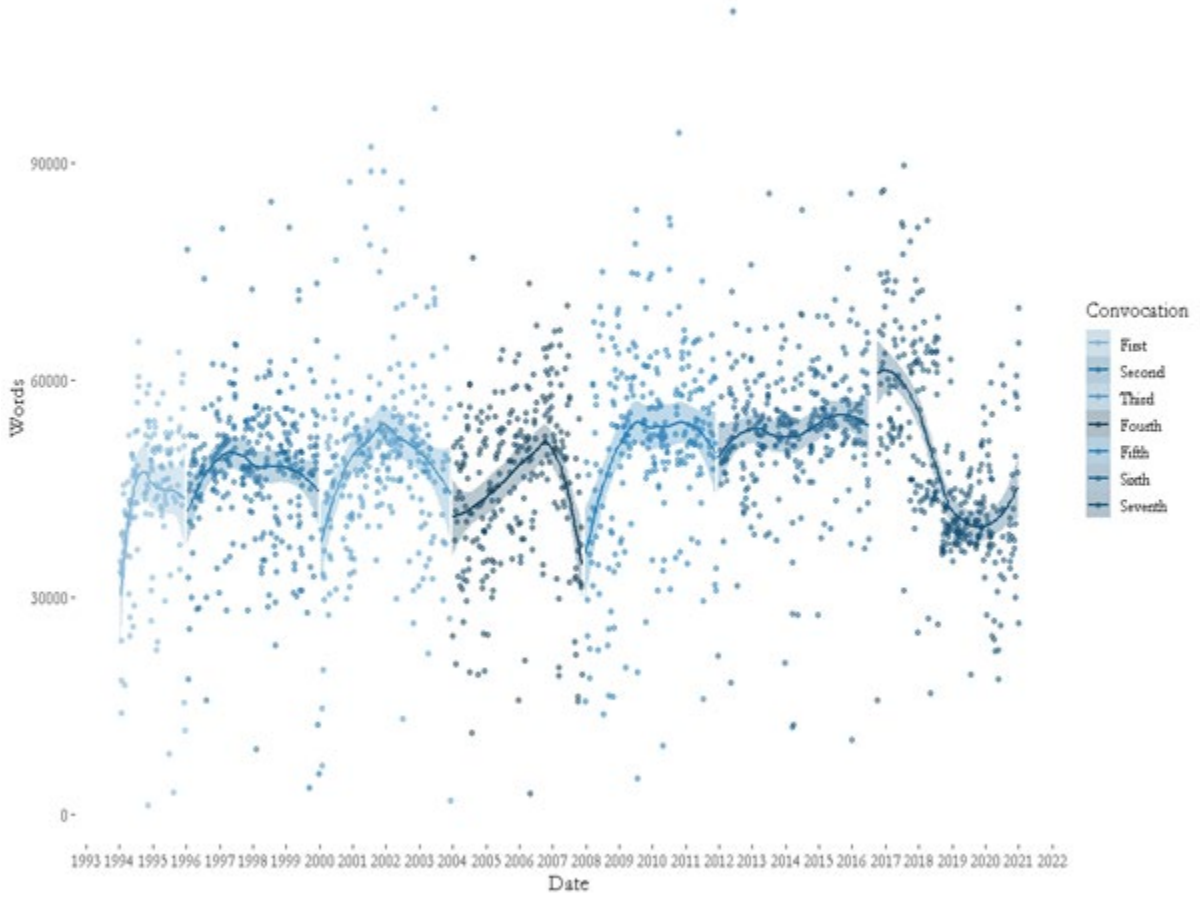
In this dataset on aggregate, the mean number of speeches per convocation (*DV1*) stands at 239.05, peaking at 11,897, while the average words per speech per convocation (*DV2*) is 89.78, with the highest value reaching 1275.107. The spread of words spoken per convocation varies widely, from 0 to 533,763, and averaging at 14,941.69.[23] This variability indicates a marked disparity in floor time usage among deputies, with notable individuals like Vladimir Zhirinovsky from the LDPR utilising significantly more floor time than his peers, exceeding the next most verbose speakers by over double the word count.

Despite the noted decline in speech lengths in 2018-2019, the data reveals a 10% increase in the average number of words spoken per session from the First to the Seventh convocation. Preliminary

[23] Refer to the introductory chapter *1.3* on data and methods for the corresponding data table (*Table 1.3*).

points across convocations pointed to evolving trends that resonate with anticipated changes within the Duma's operational framework (see *Figure 3.3*).

Figure 3.3 Total Words Spoken per Day by Convocation with LOESS Mean Line[24]



Notably, a substantial reduction in floor time is observed towards the Fourth Duma's conclusion, correlating with the electoral reform that phased out single-member districts – a change likely impacting SMD members' contributions on the floor. The distinct patterns observed in the Sixth and Seventh convocations further underscore the need for in-depth examination, suggesting these periods may diverge significantly from previous convocations in terms of legislative speechmaking practices.

[24] Reproduced from *Chapter 1*.

The regression analysis for understanding floor access and participation in the Duma employs a comprehensive set of explanatory and control variables to dissect the intricacies of legislative behaviour. These variables are bifurcated into two main categories: Status and Deputy characteristics, offering a dual lens through which to examine the dynamics at play. Status variables include governmental status, operationalised through a dummy indicating whether a deputy belongs to the governmental party or coalition within the parliament. Recognising the fluidity of party dynamics across different convocations, this study carefully selects relevant indicators for majority status, particularly noting the distinction before and after the rise of United Russia (pre-United Russia this is coded as the pro-governmental parties). The inclusion of this variable is premised on the hypothesis that ruling party members, given their pivotal role in legislative outcomes, are likely to secure more floor time. Party share then quantifies the proportional representation of a party within the legislative body, positing that a higher share might inversely affect individual members' ability to access the floor, due to the increased internal competition for speaking opportunities. Distinctions are made between committee chairs and deputy chairs, reflecting the varied responsibilities and the likely increased floor access for these positions. The chairpersons, responsible for presenting bills, and deputy chairs, tasked with a range of committee-related activities, are hypothesised to have greater participation in debates.

Deputy characteristics include individual-level variables such as vote type which controls for the method through which deputies are elected, considering the potential influence of electoral systems on legislative behaviour. Seniority measures the tenure of deputies in the Duma and is included as a proxy for experience and potentially increased influence or access to the floor. Exposure then controls for the duration a deputy has served within a specific convocation, adjusted to a day-level metric, which controls for impact of intra-convocational changes within the convocation on participation rates. In alignment with Slapin and Proksch (2021), age and gender demographic controls are incorporated to account for individual-level differences that might affect floor participation. Finally,

binary variables for Duma leadership roles (chair and deputy chairs) and a separate indicator for party leaders are included to assess the impact of these high-profile positions on debate participation.

To examine overall floor participation and to investigate the main inquiry into participatory practices over time within the Duma, the study adopts a comprehensive analytical strategy encompassing three distinct model specifications across six models. Two of these specifications, included in *Appendix C*, serve as a robustness check, presenting pooled results with controls for convocation to ensure the findings' stability. The primary analysis, however, seeks to unveil changes in participation across different convocations, predicated on the hypothesis that the dynamics of legislative behaviour have evolved in tandem with the Duma's institutional development.

Given the anticipated influence of a progressively solidifying party system, which could potentially limit deputies' floor access due to heightened intraparty competition, the analysis hypothesises variable effects of model predictors across convocations. Specifically, it posits that the while ruling party status will be associated with higher levels of participation, the party share variable might exhibit a more pronounced negative impact in later convocations compared to earlier ones, suggesting that the nature and intensity of intraparty competition have shifted over time, potentially affecting deputies' opportunities for participation.

To capture the potential variability in floor participation (*DV2*) across different legislative periods, the main enquiry of this chapter employs a linear mixed-effects model, integrating an interaction term between the convocation factor variable and the variables of interest. This methodological approach allows for an examination of how floor time practices might vary across convocations, reflecting changes in the broader regime context. By choosing the Second Convocation as a reference category, the analysis sets a baseline against which changes in later convocations can be assessed, providing a clear comparative framework.

The inclusion of random effects conditioned on individual deputies addresses the heterogeneity inherent in legislative engagement and speaking styles, ensuring that the model accounts for personal differences that could influence floor participation. However, to avoid the methodological complication of rank deficiency, the analysis does not interact the convocation variable with the electoral system (SMD) within this model. This decision stems from the recognition that intertwining convocation with electoral system changes could obscure the interpretation of results (or indeed lead to rank deficiency due to the change in electoral system for two convocations). Instead, the study reserves the exploration of electoral system impacts for the next chapter, maintaining a focus on convocation as the primary factor of interest in the primary model and keeping the electoral system constant to isolate the effects of legislative development on participatory practices.

Therefore, the analytical strategy, by integrating interaction terms between convocation and the variables of interest, optimises statistical power in comparison to a stratification methodology, which would analyse each convocation in isolation. The latter approach, while intuitively straightforward, inherently assumes that convocation impacts all variables, including demographic characteristics like age and gender, potentially leading to theoretical and interpretative complications. Moreover, stratification might highlight the relevance of specific predictors within individual convocations but falls short of elucidating the dynamics of change or consistency in predictor significance across different legislative periods.

Instead, the model used in this study, facilitated through the introduction of convocational interaction terms, a dynamic view of how the relationship between predictors and legislative participation evolves over time. Each interaction term contributes to the analysis by indicating potential shifts or continuities in the significance of variables like party leadership, Duma leadership, and committee roles across convocations, thereby illuminating broader patterns of change within the legislative framework of the Duma.

3.4 Results

Appendix C details the full outcomes of the primary model, showcasing both the interactions and main effects. For *DV2*, the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) for this specification is reported at 30,264.98, with the marginal R^2 at 0.15 and the conditional R^2 at 0.47. These metrics underscore the substantive improvement in model fit attributed to the incorporation of random effects, with the conditional R^2 particularly highlighting the significant contribution of these effects to explaining the variance in legislative participation.

The reduction in AIC from 30,661.56 to 30,264.98 upon integrating the convocation interactions suggests a refined model efficacy, affirming the hypothesis that accounting for the influence of convocation on predictor variables enhances the overall analytical framework (see *Appendix C*) Significantly, interactions involving party leadership, Duma leadership, party share, and the presence of the largest party emerge as noteworthy, signifying their varied impact across different legislative periods.

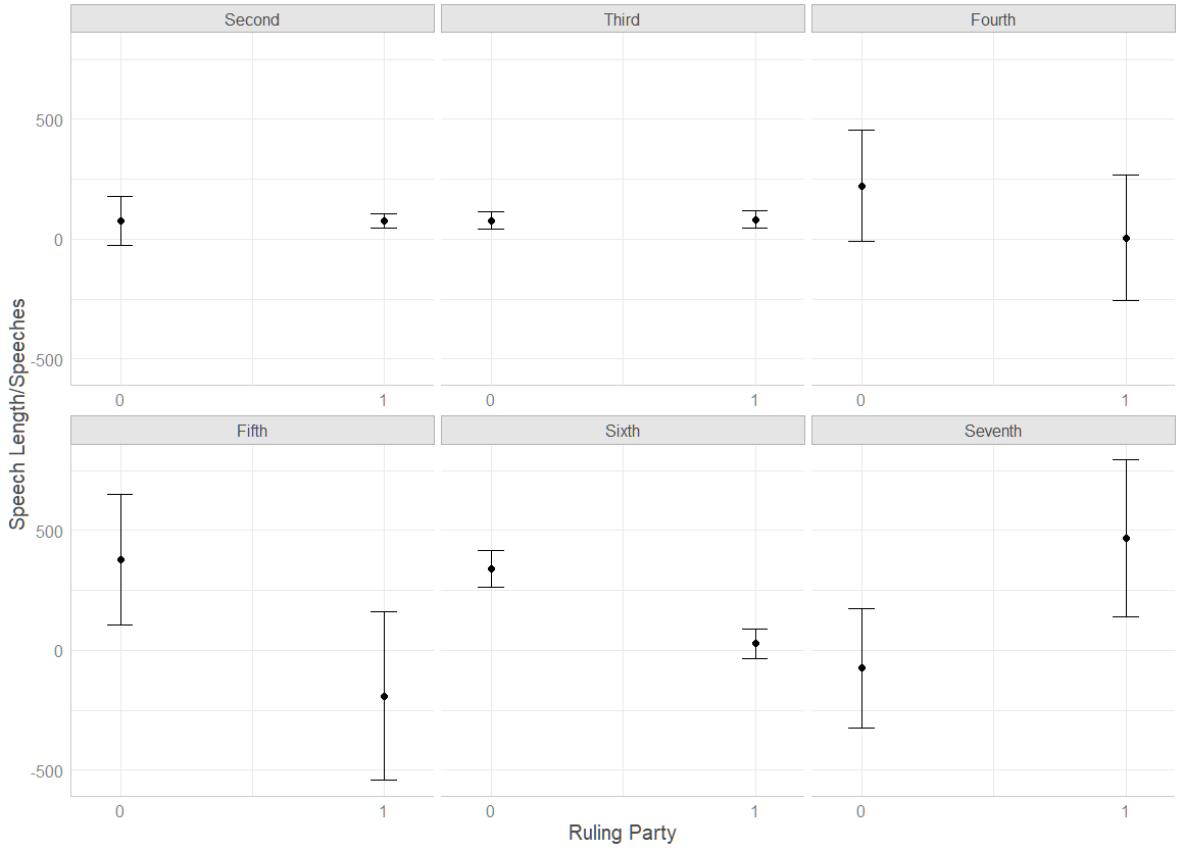
Furthermore, the pooled models, which include fixed effects for convocation (*Table C. 2*), corroborate the significance of variables such as Duma leadership, party leadership, and committee percent across the board. This consistency in floor access and participation across convocations, as revealed in the pooled analysis, reinforces the importance of these variables in shaping legislative participation, thereby offering a comprehensive view of the factors that influence floor access and participation within the Duma's evolving political and institutional landscape.

The results of this underscore how the ruling party's influence on legislative floor time has evolved across different convocations of the Duma. Particularly, it reveals a discernible differentiation in the impact of the ruling party on floor time beginning from the Fifth through the Seventh convocations, whereas the Third and Fourth convocations do not exhibit significant deviations from the patterns observed in the Second Convocation. This pattern suggests that the earlier legislative periods—

specifically, the Third to Fourth convocations—do not significantly alter the ruling party's effect on floor time allocation.

The coefficients obtained from the analysis underscore pronounced disparities, especially highlighting the Seventh Convocation (β = 540.69) as markedly distinct, exhibiting a positive slope compared to the negative slopes observed in all prior convocations. This stark contrast is graphically represented in *Figure 3.4*, which delineates the effects of the ruling party's influence on floor time across convocations. Notably, the impact of convocation on word count demonstrates a significant escalation in the Seventh Convocation compared to the Sixth, underscoring a pivotal shift in parliamentary practices.

Figure 3.4. Average Marginal Effects of Words/Speeches (*DV2*) in Convocation (Ruling Party) with 95% Confidence Intervals



The prominence of United Russia on the legislative floor, particularly highlighted in the Seventh Convocation despite its establishment as the dominant party, marks a critical juncture in the evolution of parliamentary practices within the context of authoritarian periods. This shift indicates a strategic adaptation in the use of legislative floor time, where the dominant party begins to assert unprecedented dominance in legislative debates.

Furthermore, the Fifth Duma's distinct negative slope reveals a period of relative aversion towards United Russia monopolising floor time, contrasting sharply with the patterns observed in later convocations. This aversion indicates a phase of legislative behaviour where, despite the presence of a dominant party, the allocation of floor time was more distributed or contested among different political factions within the Duma.

These findings collectively suggest a transformation in the dynamics of floor time allocation and participation within the Duma, particularly under authoritarian conditions. The late onset of differentiated floor time allocation for the ruling party, specifically in the Seventh Convocation, points to a deliberate change in parliamentary practices, aligning floor time more closely with the interests and strategies of the dominant party. This evolution reflects a broader trend of consolidating power and influence within the legislative process, marking a significant shift in the operational dynamics of the Duma across different convocations.

The exploration of party share by convocation sheds light on the mechanisms through which parties manage and distribute floor time among their deputies within the Duma dependant on their share of parliament. As an indirect measure of intraparty competition, party share illuminates the level of demand for floor time among members of the same party. A higher party share suggests a larger number of deputies vying for limited opportunities to speak on the legislative floor, potentially intensifying competition within the party. This competition can influence the party's strategy in managing its members' participation in debates, affecting whether floor time is distributed broadly

among many deputies or concentrated among a few key speakers. If the analysis reveals a positive or horizontal slope in relation to party share, it implies a scenario of open delegation, where a higher percentage of party members are granted the opportunity to participate in floor debates. This suggests less competition within the party for speaking opportunities, possibly indicating a cohesive party program that aims to ensure a broad representation of its members on the floor.

Conversely, as a direct measure of party-based delegation, party share provides insights into the party's strategic approach to allocating speaking opportunities among its members. This encompasses the party's decisions on whether to distribute floor time across a wider array of deputies or to concentrate speechmaking responsibilities among specific individuals. A negative slope associated with party share would indicate restrictive delegation practices, where fewer deputies are responsible for a larger share of the party's floor time. This pattern reflects a strategic preference for relying on key speechmakers who are more experienced, articulate, or aligned with the party leadership's agenda, thereby limiting the diversity of voices from the party presented on the legislative floor. This analysis is important for understanding the dynamics of intraparty competition and the strategic delegation of speaking opportunities. Hence, the party percentage serves as an indicator that offers insights into both the level of intraparty competition for floor time and the extent of party-based delegation of speaking roles.

The analysis reveals that significant differences in these dynamics emerge primarily in the Sixth and Seventh convocations, with earlier periods not demonstrating a notable impact of convocation and party share on floor time allocation. This distinction underscores the evolving nature of party strategies in managing floor participation over time. The coefficients present a compelling narrative of intraparty dynamics, with the Seventh Convocation (β = -852.63) showcasing a higher degree of competition and restrictive delegation compared to both the Sixth (β = 811.35) and the Fifth (β = 1,183.65) convocations. These figures suggest a tightening of control over who gets to speak on the

floor, with the Seventh Convocation marking a significant shift towards more centralised and selective delegation practices within the ruling party.

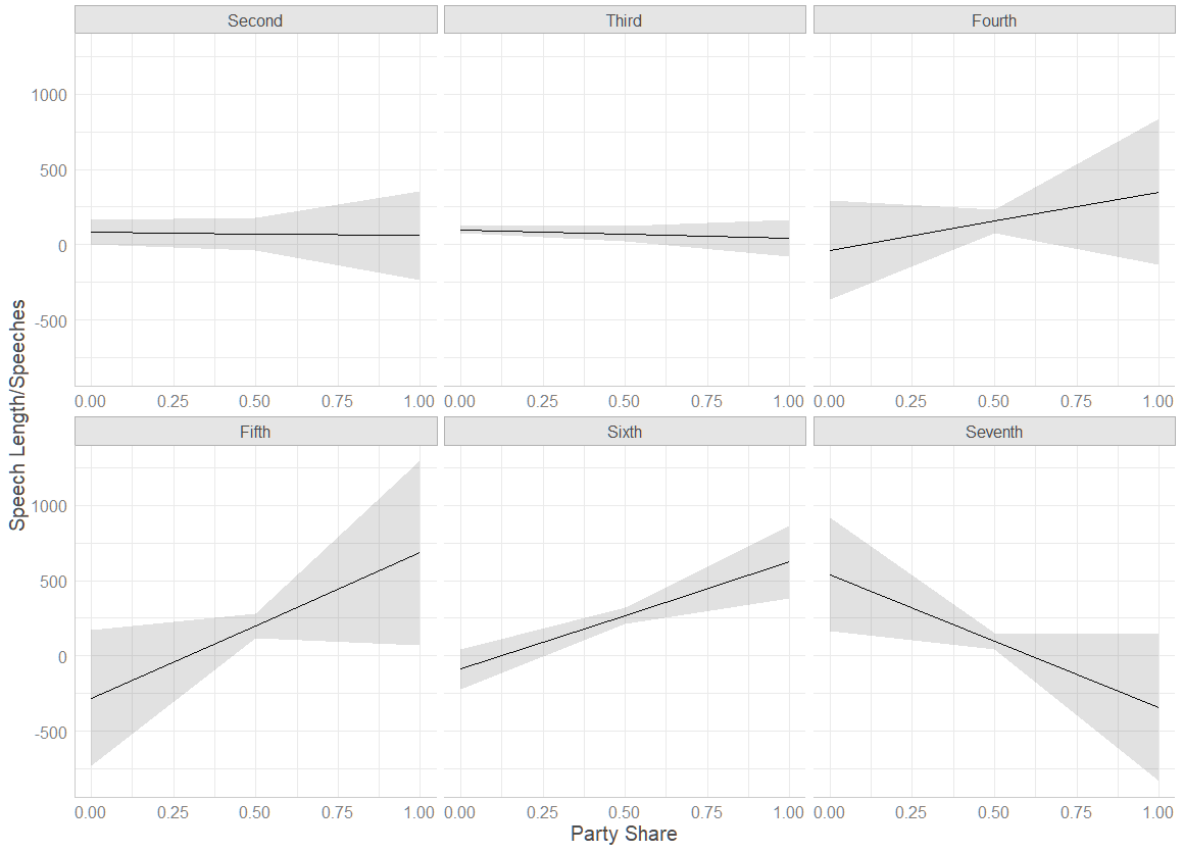
These significant changes in party dynamics and floor time allocation during the Sixth and Seventh convocations of the Russian State Duma can be attributed to several key political developments. A central figure in these changes is Vyacheslav Volodin, who became Chairman of the State Duma in 2016. Volodin, led a concerted effort to tighten control over legislative processes, ensuring that the Duma functioned effectively as a tool of the ruling party. This approach initially emphasised centralisation and a hierarchical management of floor time, reflecting Volodin's influence on streamlining debates and prioritising United Russia's agenda (Noble 2017b). By concentrating floor time among a select group of loyal party members, United Russia aimed to strengthen party discipline, present a unified front, and ensure that legislative debates aligned with regime priorities.

Additionally, with Volodin's appointment, there was a renewed focus on minimising the influence of opposition parties within the Duma (Kynev 2017b). By restricting who could speak on the floor, United Russia sought to limit opportunities for opposition members to challenge the regime or undermine its policies. This approach reflects a broader effort to control legislative discourse and prevent dissenting voices from gaining traction in the political landscape. The Seventh Convocation's restrictive delegation practices also aimed at prioritizing key legislative issues that aligned with United Russia's strategic goals. By concentrating floor time among trusted members, the party ensured that debates were focused on advancing policies crucial to its agenda, reinforcing United Russia's dominance and maintaining stability within the Duma.

Figure 3.5, illustrating the marginal effects of party share by convocation, visually captures these distinctions, providing a clear representation of how intraparty competition and delegation practices have shifted. It details the restrictive trends in the Seventh Convocation. This convocation-specific analysis not only confirms the significant variances in party-based delegation strategies across different

legislative periods but also indicates a strategic shift in the later convocations towards more tightly controlled and competitive allocation of floor time.

Figure 3.5. Marginal Effects of Words/Speeches (*DV2*) in Convocation (Party Share) with 95% Confidence Intervals



The distinctions observed in the Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh convocations, in contrast to the initial four, in terms of the impact of ruling party presence and party percentage on legislative floor time, underscore a significant evolution in parliamentary dynamics within the Duma. The Seventh Convocation, in particular, is marked by a pronounced negative effect of party share on floor time. This trend suggests a concentration of speaking opportunities among a select group of key party members, rather than a broad distribution across parties' parliamentary representation. This pattern is indicative of a strategic shift towards a more hierarchical approach within the party's operational

dynamics, emphasising the role of leadership and imposing more stringent controls over who is delegated the opportunity to speak on the floor per Volodin's reform program.

Moreover, the augmented influence of the ruling party on floor time allocation during this period further validates the interpretation of a strategic realignment within the party's approach to legislative debates. The presence of a dramatic negative effect associated with party share, as opposed to a levelling off or positive trend, signifies a deliberate move away from open delegation practices towards a model where floor time is more selectively allocated. This development points towards the implementation of a party program that prioritises speeches from leadership figures or those explicitly endorsed by the party hierarchy, effectively narrowing the scope for broader participation.

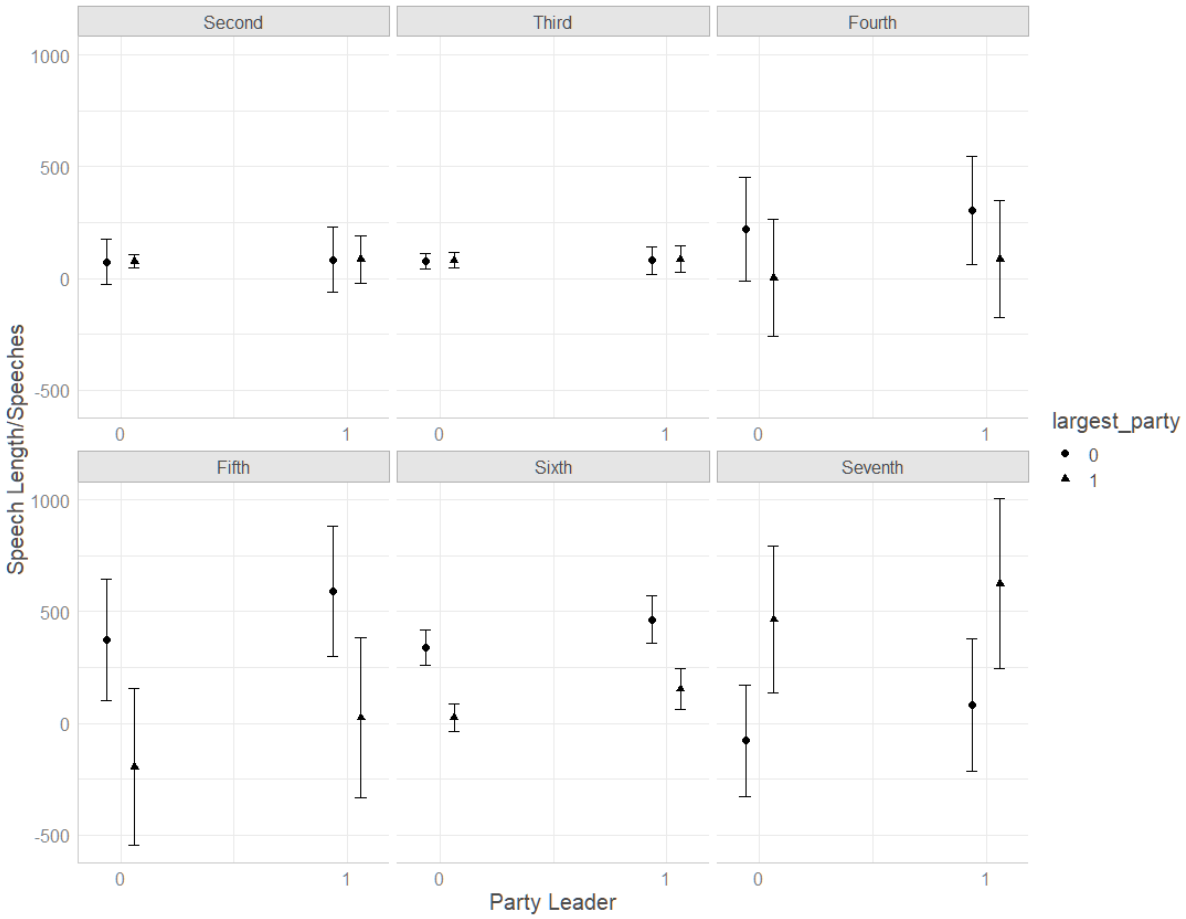
Such findings suggest that the later convocations of the Duma are characterised by an increasingly centralised control over legislative discourse, with the ruling party—and potentially its leadership—exerting greater influence over the proceedings. This shift towards a more hierarchical party program, emphasising leadership and enacting stronger restrictions on speech delegation, marks a significant departure from earlier practices. It reflects a strategic adaptation to the evolving political landscape, potentially aimed at reinforcing party cohesion, streamlining legislative agendas, and consolidating speechmaking within the hands of a few key individuals.

With respect to key players involved in leadership roles within the Duma leadership, party, or committees, a nuanced picture emerges. Contrary to initial hypotheses, committee leadership roles do not universally translate to increased floor time across convocations, suggesting that the mere position of committee leadership does not guarantee more extensive participation in legislative debates. However, the impact of Duma-wide and party leadership roles on floor time complicates this finding.

The significance of party leadership roles in influencing floor time is particularly pronounced in the Fifth and Sixth convocations, with a notable distinction in the pattern of participation between these two periods ($\beta = 113.50$ for the Fifth and $\beta = 196.73$ for the Sixth). *Figure 3.6* illustrates these

differences, categorising the interactions by ruling party status (ruling party = triangle), and revealing the landscape of legislative engagement based on governmental or oppositional leadership.

Figure 3.6. Average Marginal Effects of Words/Speeches (*DV2*) in Convocation by Party (Party Leadership) with 95% Confidence Intervals



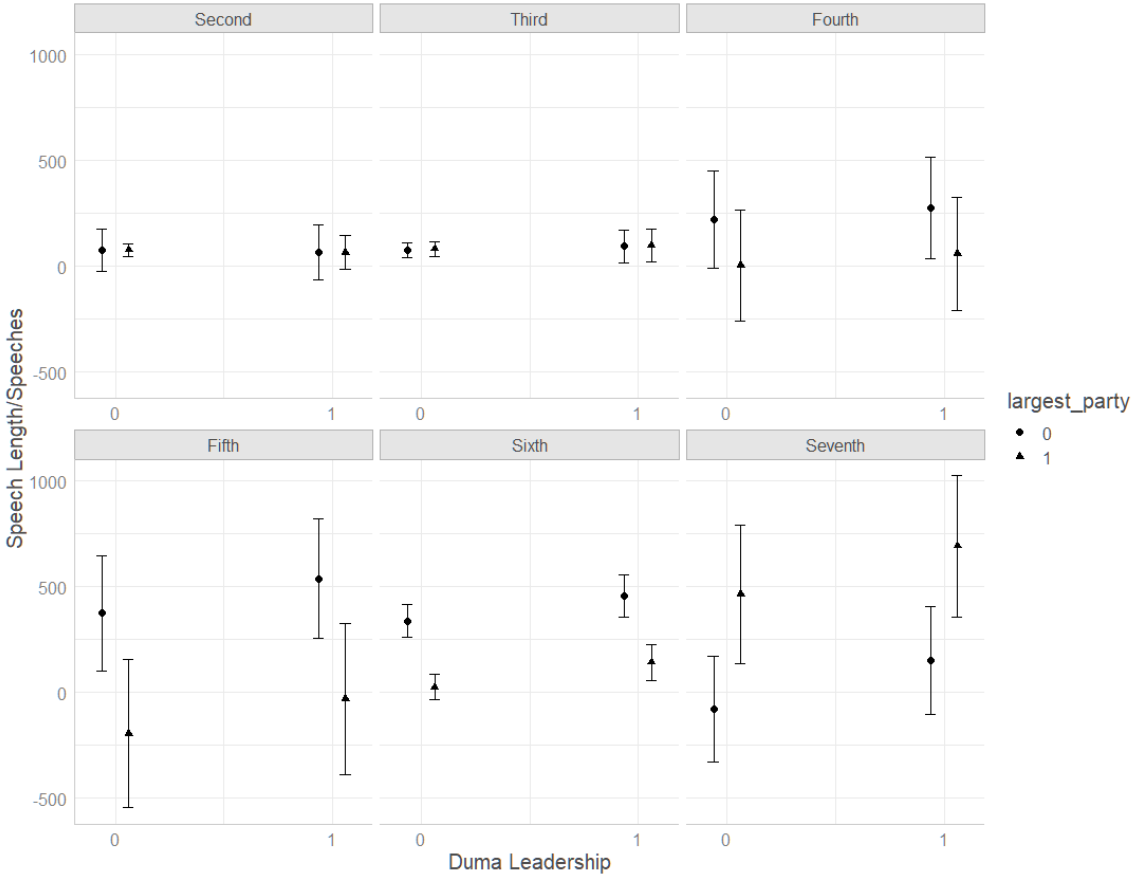
This differentiation highlights a dynamic where, in the Fifth Convocation, opposition leaders tend to spend less time on the floor compared to their counterparts in the Sixth. Conversely, leaders of the ruling party are observed to occupy more floor time during the Sixth Convocation. This trend correlates with the rise in United Russia's membership within the Duma, emphasising the party's dominant presence and its consequential impact on legislative discourse, particularly in contrast to the opposition's behaviour in earlier convocations.

The observation that backbenchers in the opposition experienced a reduction in floor time between the Fifth and Sixth convocations reinforces the notion that floor access is increasingly concentrated among 'key players', typically those in positions of party leadership. This concentration of floor time among party leaders, coupled with the observed negative trend in party share, suggests a strategic narrowing of debate participation to those in leadership roles, particularly within smaller parties.

However, the fact that these significant distinctions emerge primarily in the Sixth Convocation raises questions about the underlying factors influencing intraparty competition for floor space. The expectation might be that shifts in party dynamics and formal regulations curtailing dissent would manifest earlier, particularly with the establishment of the party-of-power system by the Fourth Convocation or would continue into the Seventh Convocation with new parliamentary rules. Yet, the analysis indicates that changes in party-based delegation and the nature of floor time allocation underwent adjustments slightly later than anticipated and did not evolve in direct correlation with formal regulatory changes.

The analysis of Duma-wide leadership positions reveals significant shifts in their influence on floor time allocation from the Fifth through the Seventh convocations, with a notable differentiation emerging between opposition and government leaders. *Figure 3.7* elucidates these shifts, illustrating a gradual transition in the slope from favouring opposition leaders in earlier convocations to privileging government leaders in later periods. The effects are not only significant across convocations but also varies by party status ($\beta = 162.76$ for the Fifth, $\beta = 116.30$ for the Sixth, and $\beta = 223.66$ for the Seventh Convocation), underscoring the relationship between leadership roles and floor time allocation.

Figure 3.7 Average Marginal Effects of Words/Speeches (*DV2*) in Convocation by Party (Duma Leadership) with 95% Confidence Intervals



This effect of Duma-wide leadership positions amplifies over time and differs based on party affiliation, mirroring the dynamics observed with party leadership. The alignment between the effects of Duma-wide and party leadership roles is likely attributable to the strong collinearity between these variables, given that party leadership often predicates Duma leadership appointments.[25] This relationship suggests an increasing use of Duma leadership positions by United Russia to orchestrate floor time distribution, highlighting a strategic consolidation of control over legislative debates.

Hence, the data indicate that Duma leadership roles have increasingly impacted who participates in legislative debates, reflecting the strategic considerations of Volodin's reform packages. Specifically,

[25] Running the regression excluding one of these indicators does not substantively change its robustness metrics or the size or direction of the coefficients.

the Seventh convocation is characterised by a significant divergence in floor time allocation strategies between the Duma leadership and all other members. This shift highlights the increasing importance of these leadership roles in controlling and directing legislative discourse. By concentrating floor time among these leaders, United Russia could maintain a cohesive narrative, reinforce its dominance within the Duma, and control the floor.

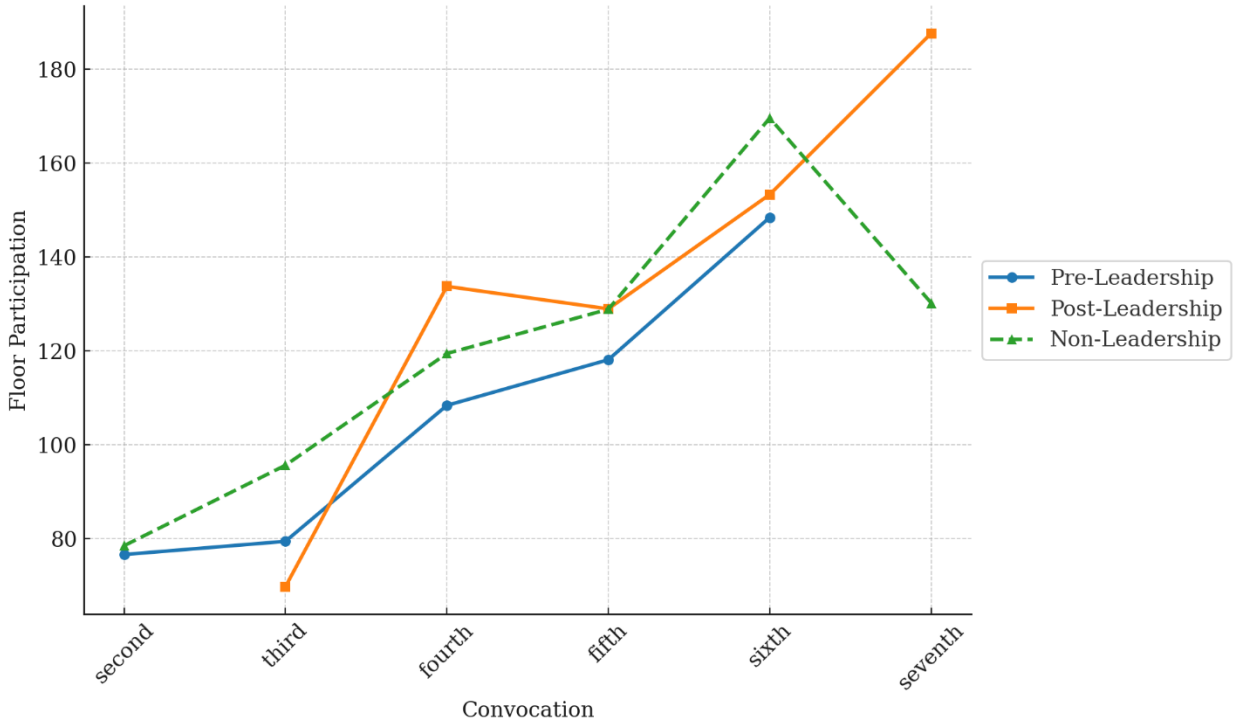
In contrast, the Sixth Convocation saw different dynamics in floor participation, shaped by the regime's need to address electoral challenges and public dissatisfaction following the 2011-2012 protests. During this period, United Russia faced the challenge of introducing regulatory reform packages under adversarial conditions (i.e., the sustained and collective opposition movement), resulting in less centralised control over floor participation compared to the Seventh Convocation. The evolution of floor participation practices in these convocations reflects broader strategic shifts within the Duma, emphasising the importance of leadership roles in shaping legislative discourse and reinforcing the ruling party's influence in Russia's political system.

The pronounced gap observed in the Seventh Convocation, as depicted in the graph, accentuates the significant divergence in floor time allocation strategies between government and opposition, marking a pivotal shift in parliamentary practices. This divergence indicates not only an increase in the strategic importance of leadership positions during later convocations but also suggests an evolution in the role these positions play in shaping the legislative discourse, with a more pronounced emphasis on controlling and directing floor debates.

A supplementary analysis on leadership promotion reveals that in terms of committee appointments (chairs and deputy chairs), there is an increase in floor participation for legislators once they assume leadership roles rather than before. This is evident in the solid blue (pre-leadership) and orange (post-leadership) lines in *Figure 3.8*. Committee leaders have more opportunities to speak, aligning with the hypothesis that leadership roles provide greater access to debate participation yet

refuting the hypothesis that committee appointments are contingent upon floor participation. In fact, compared to backbenchers who are never promoted, future leaders speak less on average. The distribution of participation suggests a consolidation of debate delegation within committee leaders especially by the time of the Seventh convocation where promoted leaders' speeches significantly eclipse non-leadership speeches.

Figure 3.8 Floor Participation (*DV2*) versus Leadership Promotion[26]



The findings underscore a significant transformation in the institutional dynamics governing parliamentary debate, particularly evident in the Seventh convocation's distinct departure from previous patterns. These changes necessitate a nuanced interpretation of the aggregate results

[26] Legislators are categorized into pre-leadership, post-leadership, and non-leadership groups, and the average participation for each group is calculated and plotted across convocations. Solid lines represent leadership-related trends, while a dashed line indicates non-leadership trends. Post-leadership trends start in the Third convocation since this graph is about promotion rather than committee status. Likewise, pre-leadership trends end in the Sixth convocation.

presented in the appendix, especially considering the substantial influence of the Seventh Convocation on the observed effects, such as the large negative impact of party share in pooled regressions.

In concluding this analysis, it is imperative to consider the broader implications of these findings. The marked shift towards a more centralised control of floor time, particularly through leadership roles within United Russia, signals a strategic adaptation within the legislative framework to reinforce the ruling party's agenda. This adaptation reflects a broader trend towards consolidating power within the Duma, potentially impacting the plurality and vibrancy of parliamentary debates.

3.5 Discussion

The examination of participatory patterns in the Duma's evolution reveals a profound influence of party-based informal norms on the configuration of debate structures in the legislature's later stages. The use of formal regulations and informal practices distinctly manifests in the allocation of floor time to Duma chairpersons and their deputies, underscoring a system where regulatory allowances and factional control over leadership assignments converge to prioritise voices from within the leadership ranks. Notably, this dynamic intensifies due to informal party strategies, particularly after a pivotal 2006 rule change that bound faction members to their initial factions, thereby solidifying party allegiances.

However, the crystallisation of these practices, especially the centralisation of speechmaking under the aegis of party leadership, distinctly marks the period post-2016, suggesting a temporal shift that transcends mere rule modifications to reflect a broader transformation in participatory norms. The period following 2011-2016, as opposed to the immediate aftermath of the 2006 rule change, emerges as a critical juncture where speechmaking practices undergo significant centralisation, highlighting a strategic tightening of informal constraints over debate participation that may interact with the 2012 rule changes. While the legal framework of the Duma purports to offer equal floor access to all

deputies, the practical application of informal constraints increasingly restricts this access, channelling speaking opportunities through a filter of party leadership preferences. The enactment of speech length modifications post-2012, prominently from the Sixth Convocation onward, further incentivises party leaders to dominate the legislative discourse, leveraging limited floor time to shape the party's public portrayal.

But rather than the Sixth Convocation, it is the Seventh Convocation which stands out in this evolutionary narrative, showcasing a dramatic amplification in the shift towards restricted speech-making practices. This phase signifies not merely a continuation of the trends set in motion during the Sixth Convocation but marks a pivotal moment of consolidation, where informal party-driven constraints and selective procedural adjustments meld into a distinct program of party-leadership driven legislative debate. Therefore, the Seventh Convocation underscores the evolution of party norms and their connection to ad hoc procedural changes, delineating a period where the orchestration of floor debates is finely tuned to serve the strategic interests of the ruling party, thus encapsulating a unique era in the Duma's legislative discourse.

Regarding the theoretical chapter and hypotheses set out in this chapter, the analysis shows several alignments with expectations concerning floor time allocation. The expectation that committee leadership correlates with increased floor time in democratic settings, shifting towards a loyalty-based allocation in authoritarian contexts, is shown to gain partial support by the data. The anticipated increase in floor time for committee leaders, indicative of their loyalty to the regime, does not uniformly manifest across convocations. However, the analysis confirms that party leadership roles evolve to gain a central stage, signifying regime loyalty and monitoring practices against backbenchers. This transition is particularly evident in the later convocations, where party and Duma-wide leadership positions become instrumental for the ruling party to exert control over legislative discourse. The significant differences observed between the Fifth and Seventh convocations underscore a strategic

shift towards a more centralised and hierarchical approach to speechmaking, aligning with the hypotheses regarding the increasing dominance of the ruling party in legislative debates.

Moreover, the findings highlight a marked shift in the effects of ruling party status and party share on floor time allocation in the later convocations. This shift indicates a strategic consolidation of power within the hands of key party members, reinforcing the hypothesis of an increasing domination by the ruling party in legislative debates. The large negative effect of party percentage in the Seventh Convocation, juxtaposed against the significant influence of party leadership, points towards a more restricted and hierarchical delegation of speech opportunities, emphasising the central role of leadership in controlling the legislative agenda.

If the Duma is conceptualised as a venue for symbolising the executive's legitimacy, it follows that its debates might mirror those in democratic settings, albeit without significant impact on legislative outcomes. However, this adherence to a semblance of democratic debate potentially detracts from the quality of parliamentary discourse. Taylor (2021) posits that an effective parliamentary debate encompasses broad participation and equitable contribution distribution among members. Contrary to this ideal, the Russian scenario, particularly in later convocations, sees a marginalisation of regular members in favour of a concentrated speaking platform for party leaders and affiliated members.

Comparatively, the Duma's operational patterns in these later stages align with observations from presidential democracies, like Chile or Mexico, where the influence of party leadership and party size similarly dictate debate dynamics (Magar 2021; Alemán, Ramírez, and Slapin 2017). This parallel suggests a commonality in how parliamentary debates function across different systems, emphasising the strategic role of party leadership and size in shaping legislative discourse in executive dominant systems. Taylor's analysis of legislative debate within presidential systems, which underscores the use of debates for position expression and as a normative underpinning for law passage, offers a lens to assess the Duma's practices. However, this framework seems less applicable to the Duma's earlier

convocations, where the nature of debates significantly diverges from the patterns observed in a 'typical' presidential system. This divergence is noteworthy, especially considering the Duma's transition towards a more pronounced super-presidential system leading into its authoritarian period. It implies that the evolution of debate structures and access in the Duma is more profoundly influenced by the interplay of state consolidation and party system dynamics rather than merely by the overarching regime type.

This chapter has illuminated the evolving determinants of legislative debate in the Duma, particularly highlighting the distinct parliamentary practices that characterise the later authoritarian period. While the causal impacts of electoral regime changes on parliamentary speech remain unexplored in this chapter, the subsequent analysis aims to delve into the effects of electoral system dynamics on floor access. The forthcoming investigation seeks to provide a granular understanding of how formal electoral-regulatory changes – electoral rule modification – influence legislative participation across different time periods.

The findings from this chapter not only affirm the attention given towards debate in the Duma during authoritarian periods but also stress the importance of examining the incentives and constraints that shape participation within this legislative framework. Such an inquiry is instrumental in comprehensively understanding the effects of single-member district (SMD) and proportional representation (PR) electoral systems and their implications for legislative debate practices, which hitherto went unexplored. This analytical perspective dissects the hypotheses related to electoral types and their impact on the parliamentary discourse in Russia, offering insights into the mechanisms that govern legislative engagement in authoritarian contexts.

4. Legislative Debate Participation: The Role of Electoral Systems

This chapter examines the impact of electoral rule changes on legislative behaviour within the Russian Duma, particularly during the transitions between the Fourth and Fifth, as well as the Sixth and Seventh convocations. It aims to unravel the extent to which shifts from mixed-member majoritarianism (MMM) to proportional representation (PR), and the subsequent reversal, have impacted floor participation and potentially moderated oppositional voices within the legislative framework, and whether these shifts in electoral system impact speechmaking in ways that are consistent with or aberrate from democratic expectations.

Building upon the foundational analysis of legislator-level covariates on floor participation explored in Chapter *Three*, this segment further distinguishes the behavioural patterns that emerged alongside electoral system transformations and the ascendancy of United Russia as the predominant political force.

The change of the electoral system from MMM to PR in the Fifth convocation was ostensibly aimed at consolidating the party system and removing sources of unpredictability left over from the Yeltsin era. During the earliest convocations, regional and industrial elites used single-member districts to insert their own members into pro-presidential parties thereby linking their interests to that of the executive (Reuter 2017). In turn, the electoral reform raised concerns among deputies about the loss of their connections to specific localities and diminished relative independence from parties (White and Kryshtanovskaya 2011, 558). However, by the end of the Fifth convocation in late 2011 and – just one term into the new electoral policy – United Russia's standing had significantly diminished alongside widespread public discontent precipitating the 2012 protest period. The policy intervention's

success in quieting regional elites created newfound unpredictability and a loss of status for United Russia in the party system (Hale, Washington, and Colton 2017).

As a result, for the 2016 elections to the Seventh convocation, the regime reintroduced the original MMM system for the 2016 elections and included additional innovations aimed at election engineering in SMD localities (Kynev 2017a). The policy change was accompanied by the returned success of United Russia in SMD districts, indicating that the return to MMM was associated with a strategy of seat-maximization. Gandhi et al. find this to be a key trade off between MMM and PR, since proportionality reduces the potential seats a large party may hold (Gandhi, Heller, and Reuter 2022).

Despite the reversal of the electoral system in the Seventh convocation, data presented in the previous chapter indicates that floor behaviour sharply deviates compared to other MMM convocations. This deviation suggests that the reversal does not correlate with the same behavioural dynamics present before 2007. While the previous chapter provided cursory information on SMD deputies by holding their effects constant, it purposely left unexplored the question of the variance in the effect of electoral system changes.

Against this backdrop, the theory section posits that in authoritarian regimes, the influence of the electoral system on legislative speech and participation is overshadowed by the prevailing party system and broader institutional-regulatory factors. This suggests a departure from democratic norms, where electoral systems play a pivotal role in shaping legislative incentives. Instead, the authoritarian context of the Duma sees the manipulation of legislative debates and participation as tools for reinforcing regime narratives, diminishing the direct impact of electoral system changes on legislative behaviour.

This hypothesis challenges conventional understanding by suggesting that the dynamics of legislative speech and participation are less about the mechanics of seat allocation and democratic approval, and more about the broader strategic objectives of the regime. As the Duma transitions

through different electoral configurations, the analysis seeks to isolate the causal effects of these system changes, juxtaposing them against the influence of party affiliation and institutional variables.

Therefore, this chapter is dedicated to a systematic exploration of how shifts in the electoral system influence floor participation within the Russian Duma, with a particular focus on the transitional dynamics from MMM to PR and PR to MMM. The core of this investigation hinges on assessing the speechmaking behaviours of SMD deputies as they transition into PR roles from the Fourth to the Fifth convocation and PR deputies transitioning into SMD roles in the Seventh convocation. This approach allows for a critical examination of the behavioural impacts engendered by electoral system modifications.

The analysis is structured around the hypothesis that if electoral system changes do not significantly affect legislative speechmaking behaviours during these intervention periods, it could be inferred that factors beyond the electoral framework predominantly influence legislative conduct on the floor. This premise sets the stage for a empirical test aimed at validating or refuting the null hypothesis concerning the effect of electoral systems on floor participation.

Should the investigation reveal no relatively substantial effects attributable to the electoral system changes, it would underscore the predominance of alternative drivers behind legislative behaviours in the Duma. In other words, a muted or negligible impact of electoral system changes, when compared to the significant effects of party and institutional factors, would underscore a shift towards authoritarian control mechanisms, emphasising the regime's capacity to direct legislative outcomes irrespective of electoral configurations.

A finding of reciprocal effects across intervention periods would indicate a consistent impact of the electoral system on legislative behaviour, suggesting that the framework within which deputies are elected plays a pivotal role in shaping their participation in legislative debates. Divergent effect coefficients across different intervention periods would hint at a more complex relationship between

electoral systems and legislative behaviour, potentially varying with the context of each electoral intervention. This variability points back towards the analysis in *Chapter 3* that finds the party system and leadership allocations to be primary drivers of behaviour.

This investigative trajectory promises to shed light on the relationship between electoral systems and legislative behaviours in the Duma, offering a clearer understanding of the mechanisms through which electoral interventions influence – or fail to influence – legislative speechmaking. By analysing the effects across distinct electoral transitions, this chapter aims to contribute to a broader comprehension of the factors that mould legislative conduct, providing insights that transcend the Russian case to inform the study of legislative behaviours in varying electoral contexts.

4.1 Electoral Systems, Legislative Behaviour, and Speechmaking Incentives

The study of electoral systems' influence on legislative behaviour and speechmaking incentives within parliamentary settings has garnered significant attention, particularly in democratic environments (Bäck, Debus, and Fernandes 2021). Despite this focus, the examination of these dynamics within hybrid and authoritarian regimes has not been as thoroughly pursued, even though there exists literature on the function of electoral systems in such contexts. Within the framework of parliamentary democracies, it is well-documented that electoral systems engender distinct incentives for legislative speech, shaped by the relationship between party leaders and backbenchers (Proksch and Slapin 2015). Specifically, the control exerted by party leaders over floor time is more pronounced in electoral arrangements that emphasise the collective image of the party rather than individual deputies' vote-seeking efforts. This control dynamics shift in electoral contexts that favour personal vote mechanisms, reducing party leaders' ability to dictate floor participation.

In the context of MMM systems, the legislative incentives are particularly complex due to the dual nature of seat allocation, which combines single-member districts with proportional representation

through party lists. This bifurcation results in varied behavioural incentives for deputies, depending on their electoral route to the parliament. Deputies elected from SMDs enjoy a degree of autonomy from party mandates, reflecting behaviour patterns more common in purely SMD systems (Proksch and Slapin 2015, Chapter 2). These deputies often prioritise local interests over party directives and demonstrate a propensity to diverge from the party line. In contrast, those elected through closed party lists find their behaviour more constrained, as their candidacy and position on the ballot are heavily influenced by party leadership preferences.[27]

This dichotomy underscores the relationship between electoral systems and legislative behaviour under democratic conditions, suggesting that the structure of electoral institutions plays a critical role in shaping the incentives for floor participation and speechmaking within legislatures. The distinction between deputies elected through SMDs and those from party lists illuminates the broader dynamics of power and influence within parliamentary bodies, emphasising how electoral frameworks can influence the balance between individual initiative and party discipline.

While the research on parliamentary democracies provides insight into the relationship between electoral systems and legislative behaviour, extending these insights to authoritarian regimes necessitates an understanding of the unique political dynamics that characterise such settings. Similarly, when these insights are applied to presidential democracies, the effects of electoral systems are obscured by greater legislative autonomy, which creates challenges in maintaining party discipline in relation to the executive branch's goals and positions (Taylor 2021). In contrast, authoritarian regimes are marked by constrained political competition, diminished opposition roles, and the strategic manipulation of electoral outcomes to maintain regime stability and legitimacy (Gandhi and Lust-Okar 2009). Given these characteristics, the straightforward application of democratic electoral system

[27] Note that the majority of MMM systems in authoritarian regimes use closed lists (Gandhi, Heller, and Reuter 2022).

incentives to authoritarian contexts may not capture the complexity of legislative behaviour within these regimes.

The preceding chapter's findings, indicating that electoral systems, when considered in isolation, do not significantly impact legislative behaviour, highlight the importance of context-specific analysis. This suggests that any observable effects of electoral systems on legislative conduct in authoritarian regimes might be contingent upon other institutional and party-based norms, reflected in distinct convocations. Such effects, if present, are likely intertwined with broader regime dynamics rather than solely attributable to the electoral system's structural features.

In transitioning to the Russian context, where the Duma has experienced shifts between MMM and PR, alongside the regime's evolving authoritarian nature, it is critical to explore how these electoral system changes influence legislative floor conduct against the backdrop of authoritarian constraints. Given the regime's evolution and the strategic employment of electoral engineering, it is anticipated that the impact of electoral system changes on speechmaking and floor participation would manifest differently across the convocational interventions. This variation might reflect the regime's shifting priorities, the consolidation of power, and the strategic adaptation to maintain control over the legislative process.

The Russian case may illustrate how authoritarian regimes adapt electoral systems to serve regime stability rather than facilitate genuine political competition. In such a context, the effects of electoral system changes on legislative behaviour could be mediated by factors such as party loyalty, regime-induced constraints on opposition, and the strategic interests of the ruling party. Therefore, the broader regime type and its evolution might play a more significant role in shaping legislative incentives than the electoral system per se. In the Duma, changes in electoral rules may serve as mechanisms for the regime to engineer desired legislative outcomes, with the actual impact on floor participation being secondary to regime strategies and broader party dynamics.

Slapin and Proksch (2015) contend that deputies elected under PR experience reduced floor access and use less floor time relative to their SMD peers. This is attributed to party leaders exercising tighter control over PR members, prioritising the party's image over individual vote-seeking (2015). This phenomenon is largely due to the increased control exerted by party leaders over PR-elected members, with a strategic focus on maintaining the party's collective image rather than encouraging individual deputies' vote-seeking endeavours. Such control mechanisms are particularly pronounced in democratic settings, where inclusion on party lists – and consequently, electoral prospects – are closely tied to deputies' alignment with party leadership and adherence to party lines.

Applying this framework to the Russian context offers insightful parallels, especially considering the electoral system shifts the Duma has experienced. The mechanisms of deputy selection, heavily influenced by loyalty considerations, underscore the strategic calculations underpinning the inclusion of incumbents and newcomers on party lists (Reuter 2017; Krol 2017). In this environment, PR deputies are expected to act as custodians of the party brand, prioritising the collective interests and image of the party over individual political ambitions. Empirical findings from Kunicova and Remington (2008) reinforce this perspective, demonstrating that PR deputies are more likely to align with their faction's stance during critical votes, such as budgetary decisions. This alignment suggests a strong adherence to factional discipline among PR-elected deputies, further indicating the significant influence of party leadership in shaping legislative behaviour within PR systems. Moreover, the role of party leadership extends beyond electoral cycles, with disciplinary measures such as expulsion from the party being utilised to enforce compliance among deputies who deviate from the party line or pose challenges to government interests (Wilson 2009). This indicates a continuous mechanism of control and discipline within parties, highlighting the importance of loyalty and party cohesion over individual legislative agendas.

Within democratic environments PR systems afford party leaders significant sway in shaping the composition of party lists, thereby exerting control over the legislative process. This control mechanism is predicated on the allocation of rewards for loyalty and the imposition of sanctions for dissent, thereby influencing deputies to align with party directives over individual or constituency interests (Cox, Fiva, and Smith 2019). Such a dynamic naturally engenders a legislative environment where deputies under PR systems exhibit a constrained capacity to challenge or diverge from the party or government's agenda. This phenomenon becomes even more pronounced within authoritarian contexts, where the confluence of electoral system mechanics and authoritarian control strategies further limits deputies' autonomy.

The adaptation of PR systems in Russia, particularly during the Fifth convocation, exemplifies the augmentation of party leadership control through electoral system modifications. The introduction of state-based party registration processes, limitations on post-election party mobility, and the transition to an exclusively PR system were strategic moves aimed at consolidating party discipline and ensuring deputies' alignment with party interests (Smyth, Lowry, and Wilkening 2007). These regulatory changes not only reinforced the mechanisms of control available to party leadership but also created a structured incentive environment for incumbent deputies to adhere closely to party mandates, thereby securing their political tenure.

The relationship between deputies and the party under PR rules is critically important in authoritarian regimes, where the distinction between party and state often blurs. In the context of United Russia, the centralised control exerted by party leadership over deputies – through list placement, list exclusion, and party expulsion – serves as a potent tool for ensuring legislative compliance (Wilson 2009). The cost of disloyalty in such settings can be severe, effectively using the electoral system as a lever to maintain party coherence and government stability.

Moreover, the strategic employment of PR systems in electoral autocracies is not merely a tool for list management but a comprehensive strategy to enforce loyalty and discipline within pro-governmental parties (Gandhi, Heller, and Reuter 2022). The transition to or maintenance of PR systems in such regimes is indicative of a broader effort to control legislative behaviour, limit the potential for dissent, and streamline the legislative process in favour of the ruling party or coalition.

Under electoral authoritarianism, opposition parties encounter analogous incentive structures due to the co-opted nature of their parliamentary inclusion (Schedler 2002). These parties must strike a delicate balance between critiquing or engaging with the government while evading retaliation or outright repression. If the government perceives that parties or their deputies risk overstepping their boundaries and jeopardising regime stability, they may increase participatory barriers within the parliament (e.g., through the regulations) or introduce barriers to the parliament itself (e.g., by adjusting electoral thresholds). Therefore, parties have a vested interest in regulating their members' behaviour on the floor and will resort to disciplinary measures – list exclusion being one of them – against members who transgress.

The balancing act is illustrated with the example in the introduction chapter from *A Just Russia*. Regarding deputies who exhibit excessive contestation against the regime, Dmitry Gudkov was expelled from the party following the 2011-2012 protest period. Concurrently, during this same period, other members were expelled, suspended, or left the party for their overly pro-government stance (e.g., Igor Zotov) (RIA Novosti 2012). Deputies also have a disciplinary connection to the executive through the prospect of censure and expulsion from the Duma, which the government has used as part of its repertoire against oppositional activity that cross the line. For example, Gennady Gudkov (Dmitry Gudkov's father and deputy from *A Just Russia*) was made an example of and completely divested of his mandate due to such conducted. Consequently, parties possess additional incentives to restrict floor access among deputies who deviate from the official party line and may do so using

mechanisms inherent to PR. It is important to note that while expulsion is not necessarily tied to the electoral system, it axiomatically precludes deputies from future party lists. This implies that deputies like Dmitry Gudkov must change parties in subsequent elections if they wish to run, or, as in Igor Zotov's case, they may exit the parliament.

This scenario underscores the broader implications of proportional representation within electoral authoritarian regimes. By facilitating tighter control over deputy nomination and list placement, PR systems empower party leadership to enforce discipline and loyalty, effectively using the electoral mechanism as a tool for managing oppositional behaviour. The disciplinary connection between deputies and the executive, manifesting through the threat of censure and expulsion, further entrenches the regime's capacity to curtail dissent and shape legislative discourse and participation according to its preferences.

The recalibration of Russia's electoral system, as articulated by Moraski (2007), underscores a strategic manoeuvre by the regime to consolidate control over SMD deputies, who, due to their capacity to cultivate personal votes through local allegiances and personal charisma, posed a challenge to centralised party discipline. Gandhi et al. (2022) further elucidate this dynamic, suggesting that the shift towards Proportional Representation (PR) served to enhance party discipline, particularly over those deputies who had previously relied on personal votes for their electoral success. This transition reflects a calculated effort to mitigate the independence of deputies by embedding them within a party-centric framework that emphasises loyalty and alignment with party objectives over individual electoral strategies.

This electoral system evolution reflects a tension inherent in SMD representation, where the local nature of constituency ties competes with party allegiance – even in authoritarian contexts. The incentive to foster personal votes within SMD localities emerges as a double-edged sword, potentially empowering deputies at the expense of the regime's potential cohesive control (André, Depauw, and

Martin 2016; Gandhi, Heller, and Reuter 2022). Conversely, PR systems offer a mechanism for the regime to exert a more granular level of control over deputies, particularly through the nomination process and party list placements, thereby aligning deputies more closely with party and regime priorities.

The distinction between SMD and PR deputies extends to the mechanisms of discipline and control. For SMD deputies with strong local support, expulsion from a party may not severely impede their re-election prospects, underscoring a degree of autonomy not afforded to their PR counterparts. However, federal election laws and regulations, such as signature thresholds, introduce constraints that favour party-affiliated candidacies, suggesting that even SMD deputies must navigate party considerations to some extent (Kynev 2017a). Moreover, the selective application of rules against both non-systemic politicians and systemic opposition further illustrates the regime's direct influence over legislative participation, reinforcing the connection between government oversight and deputy behaviour.

The following analysis reveals the impact of electoral incentive structures within electoral regimes, distinguishing them from electoral democracies. In democratic contexts, deputies' floor behaviour is predominantly shaped by electoral system incentives and party constraints. In contrast, authoritarian regimes layer government-imposed constraints atop electoral system dynamics, potentially diluting the direct influence of the electoral system on legislative behaviour. This additional layer of control introduces a relationship between party loyalty, personal electoral strategies, and government oversight, ultimately shaping the legislative landscape in a manner that privileges regime stability and control over the floor. Consequently, the impact of electoral system changes on floor behaviour in authoritarian contexts is modulated by these broader regime dynamics, suggesting a diminished role for electoral system design in determining legislative participation patterns during periods of authoritarian governance.

4.2 Empirical Strategy

To measure the association of electoral system modifications on legislative floor participation within the Russian Duma, this chapter adopts a subgroup analysis strategy focussing on deputies who were either in the Fourth and Fifth or Sixth and Seventh convocations. This approach is particularly suited for evaluating policy impacts over time by comparing the changes in outcomes between the group affected by the policy change (in this case, deputies subjected to electoral rule changes) and a control group that remains unaffected by the intervention. This design facilitates an evaluation of the electoral system's effects from other concurrent changes or trends that could influence legislative behaviour (Angrist and Pischke 2009) as previously demonstrated in *Chapter 3*.

The empirical strategy is operationalised through panel datasets constructed for two distinct periods: the Fourth and Fifth convocations (*Panel A*), and the Sixth and Seventh convocations (*Panel B*). This segmentation allows for a focused analysis on periods immediately before and after significant electoral system transitions, capturing the immediate effects of these changes on deputies' floor participation. The panels remain independent from each other since the populations in question change due to attrition and replacement. Deputies who transition between electoral systems across these convocations are identified as the treatment group. Conversely, deputies who remain within the same electoral framework across convocations serve as the control group, providing a baseline against which to measure changes in the treatment group.

The prevalence of deputies from United Russia in the group switching to SMD roles during the Seventh Convocation introduces a layer of complexity to the analysis. The dominant position of United Russia within the political landscape could skew the results, reflecting party-specific dynamics rather than broader electoral system effects. Hence, the models account for fixed party effects. Despite these considerations, the analysis strives for balance between the treatment and control groups

regarding observable characteristics, aiming to mitigate potential biases and ensure that the observed effects can be attributed to the electoral system changes.

The decision to separate the convocations into two panels rests on several key factors. First, unobserved time-variant effects on word count are likely to differ between time periods, such as during economic crises and war. Second, legislative attrition leads to a small sample size for deputies present in all convocations. Third, qualitative differences between legislators who remain in parliament for longer periods and those who attrit may confound the effects of systemic regulatory changes. Fourth, the effect of switching from SMD to PR may differ from the reverse formulation, further complicating an appropriate modelling approach that covers all convocations. To address these challenges, the analysis compares the change in yearly normalised floor time (i.e., floor participation, *DV1*) and the change in yearly number of speeches (i.e., floor access, *DV2*) for deputies who experienced an electoral system change (treatment group) with those who did not experience the change (control group) before and after the policy interventions.

The theory presented in *Chapter 2* posits that in authoritarian regimes, legislative speech and participation are more profoundly shaped by the party system and institutional factors rather than the electoral system itself. Therefore, this chapter presents the following hypothesis and sub-hypotheses:

H1. In authoritarian periods, legislative speech will not be heavily influenced by the electoral system of a given legislature.

H1a. Speechmaking is more significantly influenced by institutional rules and party directives than by the type of electoral system. As United Russia tightens control, institutional factors such as party leadership roles and committee positions will have a stronger correlation with speechmaking activity than electoral rules.

H1b. The presence and strength of the ruling party will more positively directly influence legislative speech than changes in the electoral system. Deputies from the ruling party are expected to adjust their speech behaviour to align with party strategies.

This chapter investigates whether democratic theories that ascribe significant influence to electoral systems in shaping legislative behaviour apply in the later Dumas. It suggests that as regimes become more authoritarian, the type of electoral system exerts a diminishing influence on legislative activities. Instead, mechanisms of regime control, such as party alignment and institutional dominance, become primary drivers of legislative speech and participation patterns. These factors underlay the authoritarian regime's capacity to manipulate legislative debates, reinforcing its narrative and control irrespective of electoral system configurations.

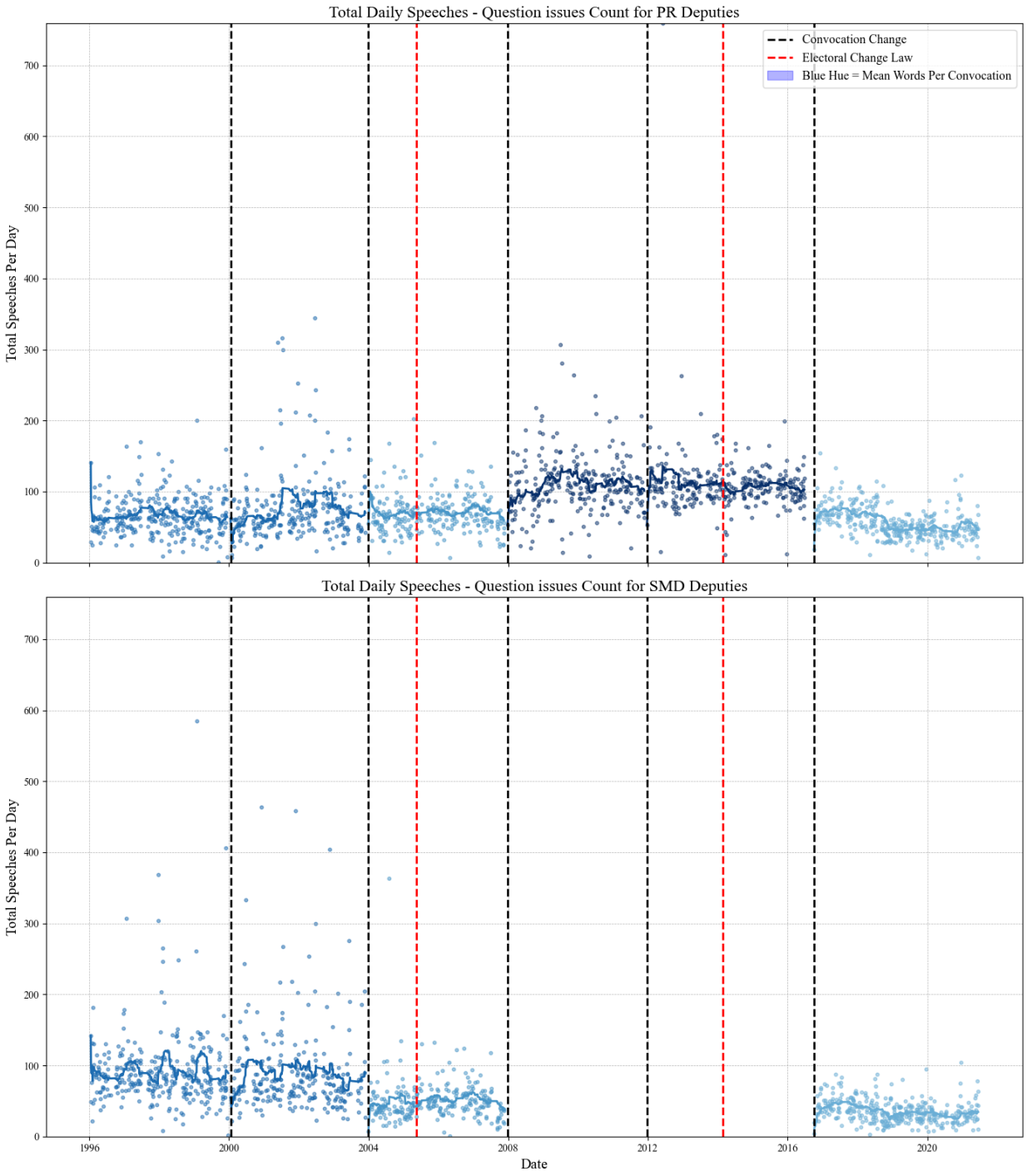
Hence, the empirical investigation will assess the effect of electoral system changes on the legislative behaviours demonstrated in *Chapter 3* to vary alongside regime type, juxtaposing these effects against the backdrop of party and institutional controls. Building on the theoretical proposition that, in authoritarian contexts, the influence of the electoral system on legislative speech is minimal compared to the evolving impact of the party system, it is anticipated that floor time will either decrease or remain constant across the convocations. This trend is expected to be relatively subdued when compared to the effects of party and institutional dynamics.

Figure 4.1 demonstrates the total speech counts by convocation for SMD and PR deputies, illustrating the overarching theme of the diminishing role of the electoral system, a subject warranting further examination. It shows that earlier convocations may have stronger incentives for increased levels of SMD speechmaking in line with democratic expectations. The Fourth convocation sees a significant drop off in speechmaking for these deputies, *without anticipation to the looming electoral changes*. This drop off can be compared against the dashed red line indicating the formal announcement (i.e.,

signing of the electoral law)[28] where SMD speechmaking does not seem to correlate with the announcement and remains stable. Furthermore, it is not surprising that after the rule change into PR, the total speeches given by PR deputies rises and includes a greater spread than in earlier convocations. However, the spread of speech counts lowers in the Sixth convocation, and by the reintroduction of MMM in the Seventh convocation, a notable discrepancy between the democratic expectations of SMD engagement arises: there is a reduced visibility of these members on the floor compared to earlier convocations. In fact, the narrow participation levels in the Seventh convocation directly contrasts with the wider spread of engagement patterns in prior convocations.

[28] These dates can be found in the Federal Law 'On Elections of Deputies of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation' dated February 2nd, 2014 N 20-FZ, and May 18th, 2005(N 51-FZ accessible at https://www.consultant.ru/).

Figure 4.1. Total Daily Speeches by SMD and PR Deputies with Convocational and Electoral Markers and LOESS Mean Lines per Convocation

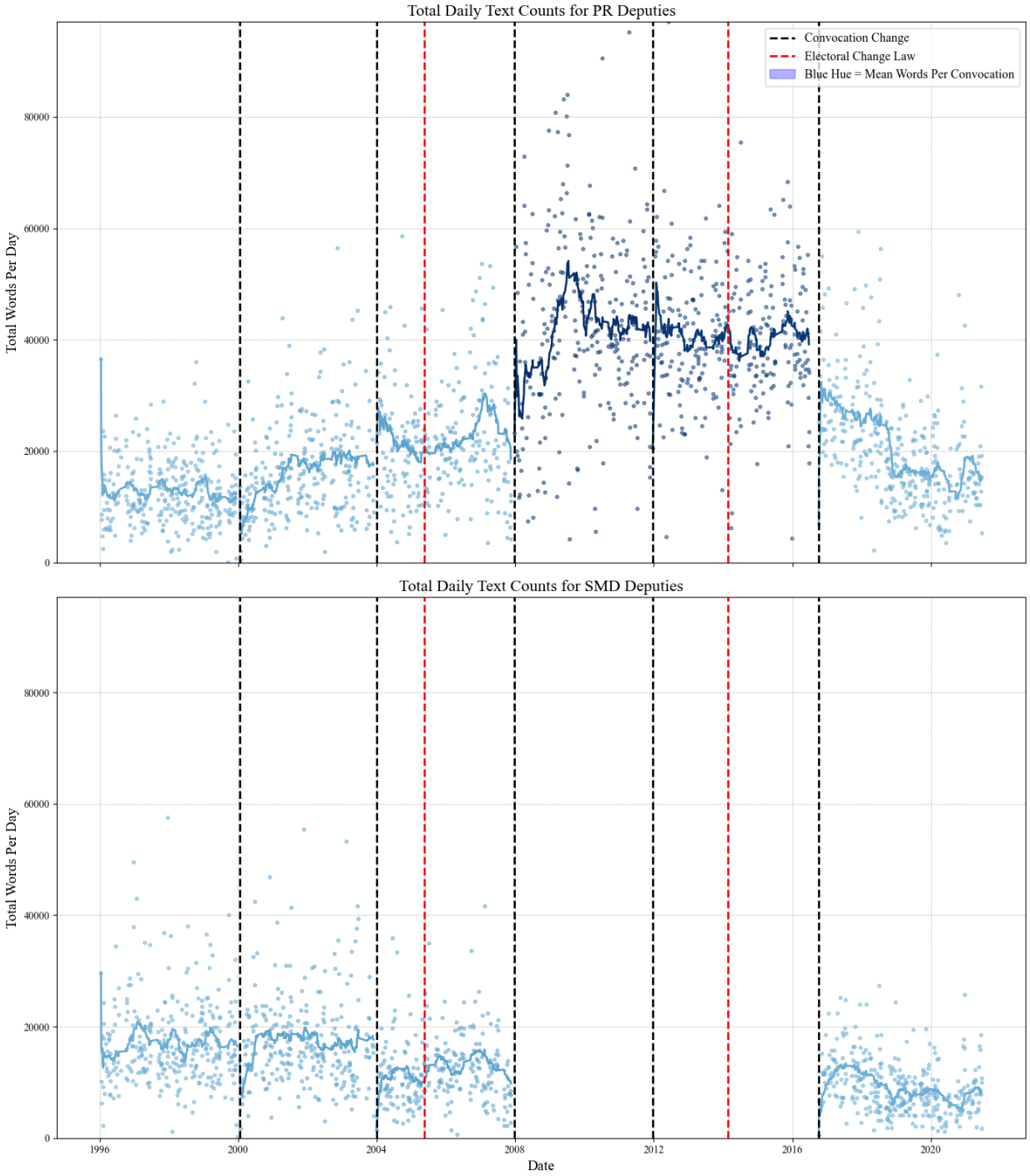


The analysis uses normalised floor time and the number of speeches as dependent variables (*DV1* and *DV2*, respectively) in a strategic way. Normalised floor time, by considering the length of each

speech relative to the total number of speeches per year, offers a measure of how extensively deputies engage in legislative debates. *Figure 4.2* demonstrates the total number words per day by PR and SMD deputies respectively. Notably, the amount of time spent on the floor decreases for SMD deputies in the Fourth convocation, and the time spent for PR deputies decreases year over year in the Seventh convocation (with a stark discontinuity in 2018).

Surprisingly, there are seemingly no anticipatory effects of the planned electoral changes on speech lengths among either PR or SMD deputies. Instead, most differences in speech lengths occur after the start of a new convocation. This suggests that broader institutional factors, rather than electoral interventions, are linked to changes in participation rates. Notably, the variations in speech lengths across convocations highlight the importance of convocation-specific factors in shaping speechmaking incentives. If electoral systems of the Duma were the primary incentive generation mechanism, we would expect speech lengths to remain relatively stable across these reforms. However, the data shows that the return to MMM in the Seventh convocation does not result in the same patterns among PR deputies as observed in previous MMM convocations, whereas the newly appointed SMD deputies experience a somewhat familiar return to their previous practices. Therefore, this analysis must test which factors are important for constructing speechmaking incentive under the new regime types in the latter convocations.

Figure 4.2. Total Daily Word Counts by SMD and PR Deputies with Convocational and Electoral Markers and LOESS Mean Lines per Convocation



To estimate the effect of electoral rule changes on legislative floor participation, the analysis proposes the following estimator for Floor Participation:

$$Y_{it} = \beta_0 + g + p + \delta Electoral\ Change + K_p + X + t + \epsilon_i$$

In this model *Y* signifies the ratio of word count to speeches delivered by deputy *i* in year *t* for *DV1*. The indicator g marks the deputies subjected to the electoral rule change, while *p* represents the specific intervention period. The δ term, Electoral Change, embodies the treatment variable, operationalised through the interaction $g \times p$., assigning a value of one to deputies post-treatment in the intervention period and zero otherwise. The coefficient of primary interest, δ, captures the Average Treatment Effect on the Treated (ATT), quantifying the electoral change's effect on deputies' floor participation.

To account for potential convocation-specific variations and time-varying effects, the model incorporates the intervention period variable *p*, alongside a vector *K* of covariates identified in the preceding chapter as varying between convocations. These covariates are interacted with *p* to precisely model their differential effects across convocations. Additionally, *X* represents a set of covariates constant across convocations, such as age, seniority, and gender, ensuring a comprehensive control framework. The model also adjusts for temporal effects with the inclusion of the year variable *t*, a necessary adjustment given the asynchronous start times of different convocations. The error term ϵ contains the error, and the random effect for each deputy is modelled as $\epsilon_i = \epsilon + \beta_i$, allowing for individual variance among deputies' floor participation behaviours.

For *DV2*, measuring floor access, the modelling strategy simply removes the random effects component and models the number of speeches per year with negative binomial regressions containing the same covariate structure. To account for minor balance deviations, these models include inverse probability weights in both model specifications.

This inquiry is operationalised through analysing yearly-level debate participation, using two dependent variables designed to capture the essence of legislative engagement. *DV1* offers a normalised metric, calculating the average word count per speech by dividing the total length of

speeches by the total number of speeches delivered annually. Conversely, *DV2* quantifies the annual frequency of speeches, thereby providing a direct measure of floor access. Building upon the methodological groundwork laid in the preceding chapter, this analysis continues to exclude speeches that fall below the 50-word threshold, assigning a value of 0 to such instances while preserving their data. This procedural consistency ensures a focused examination of substantive speech participation.

The panels correspond to the legislative periods which include electoral system reforms:

Panel A encompasses deputies active during the Fourth and Fifth convocations, aligning with the first policy intervention (MMM to PR).

Panel B is tailored to the Sixth and Seventh convocations, focusing on the subsequent policy intervention (PR to MMM).

This bifurcation not only enables a targeted analysis of each intervention's potential impact but also achieves a relative balance across covariates within the datasets (see *Appendix D*). To further refine this balance and address any residual disparities, inverse probability weights are applied within the models, enhancing the robustness of the estimations (Wei, Epland, and Liu 2023). The methodology's precision is underscored by detailed balance tables provided in the appendix, which illustrate the efficacy of these adjustments.

Deputies transitioning to a new electoral system – whether moving from SMD to PR or vice versa – are designated as the 'treated' group, spotlighting the influence of electoral system transitions on legislative speechmaking. The subsequent table offers summary statistics for *Panel A*.

Table 4.1. Descriptive Statistics (Panel A, 4th and 5th Duma)

	mean	median	sd	min	max	*n*
N words	5945.68	2326	12,479.98	0	181,937	1199
N words/speeches (*DV1*)	118.557	98.066	103.1196	0	1252	1199
N speeches (*DV2*)	99.0092	20	255.2393	0	3041	1199
Party share	0.51584	0.6909	0.273519	0.0044	0.700	1199
Seats	229.1803	304	122.2241	2	315	1199
Committee share	0.05425	0.0403	0.038742	0.0022	0.1446	1199
Seniority	7.24018	6.9165	3.92084	0.0492	15.923	1199
Age	53.5813	55	9.2634	28	80	1199

	0	1	total	*n*
Spoke	0.337	99.663	100	1199
Ruling party	30.16	69.84	100	1199
Party leader	97.05	2.95	100	1199
Duma leadership	96.04	3.96	100	1199
Committee chair	84.07	15.93	100	1199
Committee deputy chair	57.45	42.55	100	1199
Gender (female)	86.52	13.48	100	1199
Treated (SMD to PR)	48.97	51.03	100	1199
Policy intervention	50.63	49.37	100	1199

In *Panel A*, the mean number of words spoken on the floor per year is 5,945.68, with a median of 2,326, a minimum of 0, and a maximum of 181,937. The number of speeches show a mean of 118.557, with a median of 98.066, a minimum of 0 and a maximum of 1252. The large outliers indicate a right skewed distribution. The mean number of words spoken per speech (DV1) is 118.557 with a median of 98.066, a minimum of 0, and a maximum of 1,252. DV1 is directly comparable to the data from Chapter 3 and closely matches the broader dataset where the mean number of words spoken per speech is 117.292, with a median of 89.783, a minimum of 0, and a maximum of 1275.107. Note that the treated and intervention variables compose roughly half of the dataset each as well.

The following table presents summary statistics for *Panel B*.

Table 4.2. Descriptive Statistics (*Panel B*, 6th and 7th Duma)

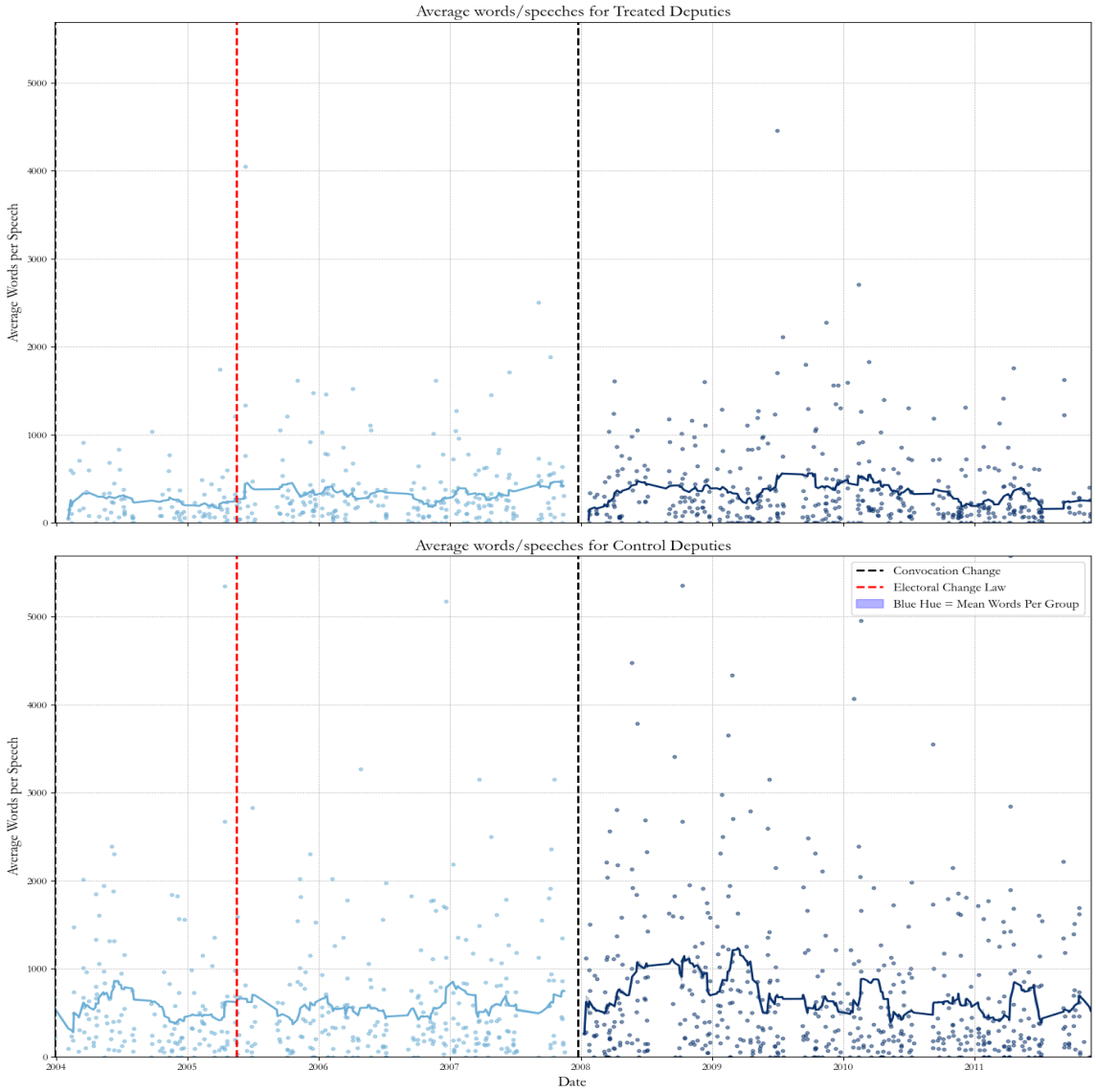
	mean	median	sd	min	max	*n*
N words	6066.291	2259	11371.31	0	110256	1585
N words/speeches (*DV1*)	117.3975	97.625	101.5021	0	1252	1585
N speeches (*DV2*)	73.34132	16	192.562	0	2458	1585
Party share	0.429231	0.5288	0.276616	0.00444	0.74666	1585
Seats	193.1539	238	124.4771	2	336	1585
Committee share	0.055089	0.030095	0.053067	0.00159	0.22527	1585
Seniority	9.57307	8.032831	6.161384	0.27633	25.4829	1585
Age	55.47334	55.00821	11.49214	26.7534	88.939	1585
	0	1	total			
Spoke	0.315	99.685	100			
Ruling party	41.262	58.738	100			
Party leader	98.864	1.1356	100			
Duma leadership	96.215	3.785	100			
Committee chair	86.183	13.817	100			
Committee deputy chair	50.095	49.905	100			
Gender (female)	83.722	16.278	100			
Treated (PR to SMD)	62.461	37.539	100			
Policy intervention	44.164	55.836	100			

Panel B is similar to *Panel A* except for a somewhat imbalanced treated group and intervention group due to attrition. In *Panel B*, the mean number of words spoken on the floor per year is 6,066.291, with a median of 2,259, a minimum of 0, and a maximum of 110,256. The number of speeches per year (DV2) have a mean of 73.341, a median of 16, a minimum of 0 and a maximum of 2458. The large outliers indicate a right skewed distribution as well. The mean number of words spoken per

speech (DV1) is 117.3975 with a median of 97.625, a minimum of 0, and a maximum of 1,252. As in *Panel A*, the dependent variable is similar to the previous chapter. However, treated deputies are fewer than the control group indicating that only 37.5% of deputies changed electoral tier. Moreover, both panels have similar distributions per variable to the broader dataset in Chapter 3.

The following graph demonstrates the average word counts divided by speeches per year by treated and control groups for *Panel A*. The scatter plot for treated deputies shows a relatively dense concentration of points, indicating consistent speech activity across the pre-treatment period and a slight increase of dispersal thereafter. PR-only deputies display a wider spread with fewer dense clusters, indicating more sporadic speech activity. Notably there are no obvious anticipation effects in either group, and the post-intervention period seems to positively impact both the control and treated groups.

Figure 4.3. Average Words/Speeches per Year by Treatment Status (*Panel A, DV1*)



To further evaluate *Panel A*, the analysis employs a regression-based test that involves adding interaction terms that combine the treatment status with time indicators leading up to the policy enactment (less one year) while including the covariates of the study. By excluding the year immediately before the intervention, the test attempts to mitigate the influence of any actions taken in anticipation of the change. This ensures that the pre-treatment period more accurately reflects unaffected behaviour. These interaction terms, created by pairing the treatment group flag with dummy variables for pre-policy years help identify any significant differences in *DV1's* trajectory

between the groups before the intervention (for a similar integrated framework involving 'leads' see Autor 2003). The core objective here is to investigate if the trend in the outcome variable – specifically, *DV1*, which measures floor participation – before the intervention was introduced, was consistent across both the treatment and control groups. Therefore, the model structure is defined as follows:

$$Y_{it} = \beta_0 + p + g_{pre} + g_{post} + (g_{pre} \times t_1) + (g_{post} \times t_2) + K_p + X + t + \epsilon_i$$

The coefficient of primary interest for identifying systematic pre-treatment trends is the interaction term $(g_{pre} \times t_1)$, which captures differences in the outcome variable in the pre-intervention period between treated and control groups. These terms reflect changes leading up to the policy intervention. Again, to account for convocation-specific and time-varying effects, the model incorporates the intervention period variable *p*, alongside a vector *K* of covariates identified in the preceding chapter as varying between convocations. These covariates are interacted with *p* to precisely model their differential effects. *X* represents constant covariates. The error term ϵ contains the error, and the random effect for each deputy is modelled as $\epsilon_i = \epsilon + \beta_i$.

Table 4.3. Pre-Treatment Trends OLS Regression (*Panel A, DV1*)

	Coef.	95% CI	*P*
Treated * Pre-Intervention	-1.92	[-27.24, 23.40]	0.882
Treated * Post-Intervention	3.73	[-21.30 – 28.76]	0.770
Random Effects			
σ^2	1481.38		
τ_{00} Deputy ID	6360.89		
ICC	0.81		
N Deputy ID	177		
Observations	1,158		
Log Likelihood	-6,351.88		
Akaike Inf. Crit.	12,749.77		
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	12,866.74		
Marginal/Conditional R^2	0.133/0.836		

The results reveal that none of the interaction terms yield statistically significant differences (with p-values considerably exceeding the 0.05 threshold), implying the absence of discernible pre-treatment trend disparities between the treated and control groups. This outcome suggests that both groups were following comparable trajectories prior to the 2007 intervention.

Figure 4.4 depicts the data for *Panel B*, which shows the impact of the policy intervention on speech participation for the Sixth and Seventh convocations. The spread is somewhat narrower and more consistent across intervention periods in deputies moving to SMD than in PR-only, suggesting a systematic difference between these deputies and the PR counterparts regardless of the intervention. Likewise, the spread for control deputies is more dispersed, with points spread throughout the timeline, indicating less consistent speech activity. The wider spread indicates a more reactive and less centralised speechmaking pattern, where PR-only deputies respond to external political stimuli rather than following a centralised strategy.

Figure 4.4. Average Words/Speeches per Year by Treatment Status (*Panel B, DV1*)



Addressing the electoral system transition necessitates a similar approach as *Panel A*. For *Panel B*, the treated group comprises PR deputies from the Sixth convocation transitioning to SMD roles, contrasted with control group deputies persisting in PR roles across both convocations. The following regression table tests employs the regression-based test for assessing pre-treatment trends.

Table 4.4. Pre-Treatment Trends OLS Regression (*Panel B, DVI*)

	Coef.	95% CI	*P*
Treated * Pre-Intervention	-7.28	[-37.77, 23.22]	0.640
Treated * Post-Intervention	-29.35	[-59.82, 1.11]	0.059
Random Effects			
σ^2	1668.76		
τ_{00} Deputy ID	9518.27		
ICC	0.85		
N Deputy ID	192		
Observations	1,552		
Log Likelihood	-8,718.40		
Akaike Inf. Crit.	17,482.81		
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	17,606.21		
Marginal/Conditional R^2	0.120/0.869		

The interaction terms between the treatment indicator and the pre-treatment years are not statistically significant and pre-treatment p-values are well above the conventional significance level of 0.05, while the post-treatment p-value is close to significance at 0.059 indicating a potential effect. This suggests there is no evidence of differential trends between the treatment and control groups in the years leading up to the intervention. Again, the R^2 values indicate that the model satisfactorily explains the variance in the outcome variable. These results suggest it is reasonable to proceed with the full analysis for *Panel B*. The year-over-year variability in both panels emphasises the need for including year-specific controls within the model to mitigate the effects of external political events. The balance tables for *Panel A* and *Panel B* (see *Appendix D*) show that, after adjusting for various covariates, the treatment and control groups are similar.

To further investigate the data, an additional model will be specified that includes a three-way interaction for intervention, treated group, and the ruling party. This is particularly relevant to test

given the balance tables (see Appendix D) indicating differences between deputies in the ruling party (e.g., United Russia) and those in the opposition; these differences could influence the treatment effect.

4.3 Results

The initial application of the regressions to evaluate the impact of electoral system changes on legislative floor participation *DV1* strategically incorporates the electoral change parameter (δ) without an interaction term for ruling party status. This methodological choice allows for a straightforward assessment of the policy intervention's overall effect while controlling for, but not dissecting, the influence of ruling party affiliation on this effect.

Table 4.5. Linear Mixed-Effects *DV1* (*Panel A* and *Panel B*)

	Text Count/Speeches per Year (*DV1*)	
	Panel A	*Panel B*
	(1)	(2)
Treatment	59.92	**200.45*****
	(68.00)	(67.88)
Treated	-8.21	1.41
	(12.39)	(16.19)
Age^2	0.33	-0.20
	(0.68)	(0.66)
Seniority	-1.12	-0.47
	(2.02)	(1.45)
Party share	52.94	**1,425.74*****
	(545.84)	(347.19)
Committee percent	**-490.02*****	**-229.32****
	(177.10)	(93.08)
Ruling party	-5.63	**-563.75*****
	(331.29)	(129.58)
Duma leadership	**127.02*****	**75.07****
	(32.38)	(35.73)
Party leader	**160.90*****	-8.21

	(36.44)	(42.49)
Committee chair	**-52.93*** **	-14.15
	(16.14)	(21.03)
Committee leadership	-9.56	10.88
	(11.28)	(12.56)
Gender (Female)	0.91	18.97
	(16.80)	(17.32)
Treatment*Treated	7.50	**-36.46*** **
	(10.71)	(12.56)
Treatment*Party share	-670.17	**-1,810.33*** **
	(624.88)	(520.53)
Treatment*Committee percent	245.52	-17.97
	(164.96)	(146.11)
Treatment*Ruling party	355.52	**791.31** **
	(370.83)	(316.40)
Treatment*Duma leadership	-71.28	**-122.46*** **
	(44.63)	(40.88)
Treatment*Party leader	**122.49***	-30.98
	(72.65)	(81.94)
Treatment*Committee chair	**46.20** **	-38.32
	(17.95)	(24.37)
Treatment*Committee leadership	4.66	-7.81
	(13.33)	(15.73)
Constant	123.40**	-61.97
	(54.60)	(75.52)
Time FE:	Yes	Yes
Random Effects		
σ^2	7619.32	9631.36
τ_{00} Deputy ID	3654.95	7185.98
ICC	0.32	0.43
N Deputy ID	177	192
Observations	1,158	1,552
Log Likelihood	-6,898.19	-9,702.70
Akaike Inf. Crit.	13,856.38	19,471.39
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	14,008.01	19,647.85
Marginal/Conditional R^2	0.175/0.442	0.098/0.483

Note: $^{*}p<0.1$; $^{**}p<0.05$; $^{***}p<0.01$

The conditional R^2 values highlight the efficacy of incorporating random effects conditioned on deputies into the model. By accounting for the unobserved heterogeneity among deputies, the random effects approach enhances the model's explanatory power, suggesting that the variation in *DV1* is meaningfully captured by the model's specified random components.

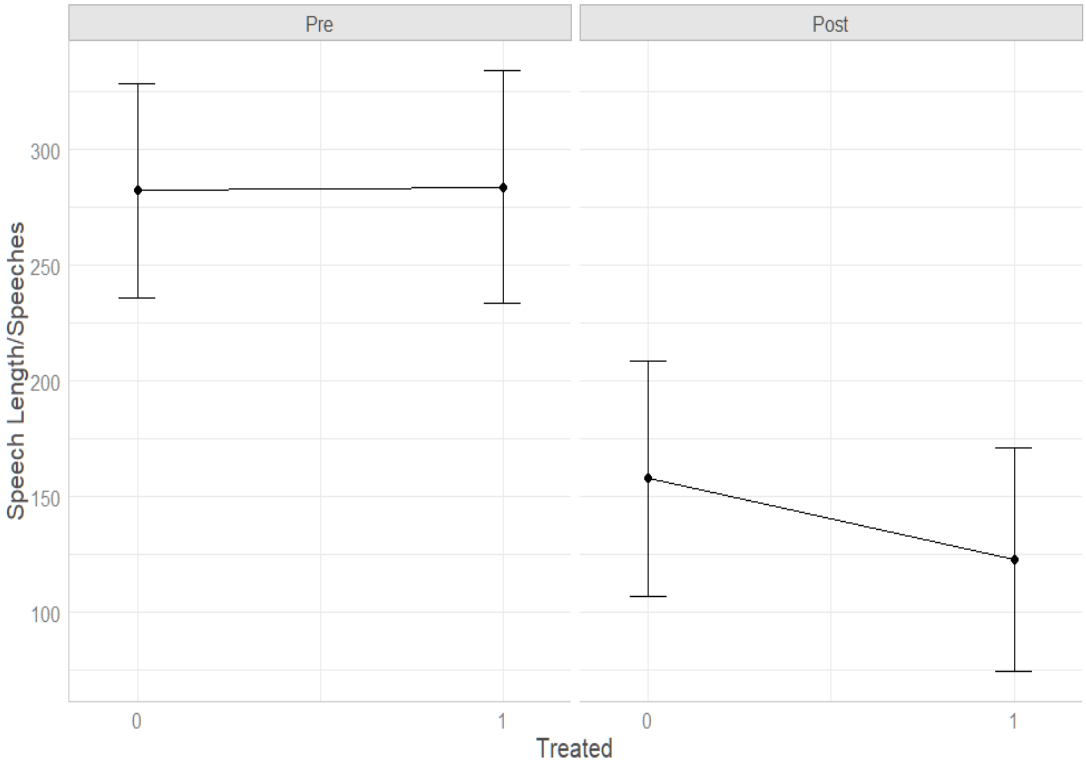
The findings reveal mixed support for the policy intervention's effects. *Panel A* does not indicate a statistically significant impact of transitioning to a proportional representation system on the floor participation of deputies. This suggests that the shift to PR in the Fifth convocation did not markedly alter legislative behaviour in terms of speech length. Conversely, *Panel B* reveals a significant effect ($p<0.01$) of reverting to a MMM on legislative behaviour. Specifically, deputies transitioning from PR to SMD spoke on average 36.46 fewer words per speech compared to their counterparts remaining in PR, indicating a decrease in speech length for SMD deputies under MMM conditions, and can be visually affirmed in *Figure 4.4*. Such deputies switch into SMD constituencies due to their strong local ties, administrative support, or personal financial and organisational resources that make them competitive in SMDs (Kynev 2017a). However, the high informal costs (e.g., personal and business resources), extent of gerrymandering, and new voting allocation rules all but ensured United Russia's deputies spots in these districts (Kynev 2017a). The observation regarding their speechmaking behaviour is intriguing as it contrasts with the expectation from democratic systems literature, which posits that SMD deputies tend to use more floor time for direct constituency or sectoral engagement (Proksch and Slapin 2015, 51). Yet, the relatively modest effect size, when juxtaposed with model controls, hints at the complexity of factors influencing floor time beyond the electoral system alone.

Instead, several interactions with the treatment period support the findings from *Chapter 3* on the importance of leadership roles, United Russia membership, and intraparty competition. Deputies associated with Duma leadership positions are more affected by the convocation period. The positive

coefficient for United Russia status (β = 791.31, p<0.05) demonstrates that being part of the ruling party is more impactful on speechmaking than the electoral system, potentially reflecting the ruling party's strategic adaptation to maintain its dominance or coherence in legislative proceedings. Moreover, the significant negative coefficient (β = -1,810.33, p<0.01) for the party share interaction reveals a pronounced decrease in speech length as the proportion of the faction increases, suggesting that the convocation's impact is inversely related to party representation. This implies that larger parties within the legislature experience a more substantial shift in legislative behaviour post-transition, possibly due to internal dynamics and intraparty competition for floor space among KRPF and LDPR deputies.

Figure 4.5 illustrates the effects of policy intervention by treatment status for *Panel B*.

Figure 4.5. Average Marginal Effects of Speech Length/Speeches in Pre- and Post-intervention by Treated Status with 95% Confidence Intervals, *Panel B*



These alternative indicators collectively suggest that the effects of electoral system changes are significantly conditioned by deputies' roles within the Duma leadership, their affiliation with the ruling

party, and the strength of their party. The substantial magnitudes and significance levels of these interaction terms underscore that electoral system changes intersect with internal legislative and party dynamics to shape speechmaking patterns. This interaction highlights the critical importance of institutional and political contexts in understanding the adaptive behaviours of legislators in response to electoral system reforms, reinforcing the notion that legislative behaviours in authoritarian contexts are influenced by a confluence of systemic, party, and individual factors. Therefore, these trends, particularly pronounced within the Seventh convocation, underscore a differential impact of electoral system changes.

Upon examining the impact of electoral changes on floor access (*DV2*), the initial models did not register significant effects, prompting further investigation into the ruling party's potential moderating role. Incorporating three-way interaction terms – ruling party status, treatment, and treated status – into the analysis aimed to explore the moderation effect of United Russia in more detail.

The following table explores *DV2* through negative binomial models and finds a significant interaction term, indicating that the relationship between ruling party status and electoral system notably influences floor access. The near-reciprocal nature of the coefficients further implies a certain consistency in the electoral system's effect on floor access, contingent upon the ruling party's status.

Table 4.6. Negative Binomial Regression *DV2* (*Panel A* and *Panel B*)

	Speeches per Year (*DV2*)	
	Panel A	Panel B
	(1)	(2)
Treatment	**2.24****	-0.59
	(0.97)	(0.74)
Treated	0.41	**-0.97*****
	(0.26)	(0.24)
Ruling party	**-12.06*****	**-3.03****
	(3.68)	(1.29)
Seniority	0.01	**0.03*****

	(0.01)	(0.01)
Age^2	**0.01****	-0.003
	(0.01)	(0.003)
Party share	**18.76*****	3.64
	(6.13)	(3.54)
Committee percent	**21.26*****	**11.62*****
	(1.85)	(0.87)
Leadership	**-0.77****	0.54
	(0.36)	(0.33)
Party leader	**0.83***	0.46
	(0.43)	(0.42)
Committee chair	**1.27*****	**1.24*****
	(0.18)	(0.19)
Committee leadership	0.01	**0.50*****
	(0.12)	(0.12)
Gender (female)	**-0.55*****	**-0.58*****
	(0.12)	(0.09)
Treatment*Treated	-0.34	**0.53***
	(0.36)	(0.32)
Treatment*Ruling party	**9.70***	-0.57
	(5.37)	(3.10)
Treated*Ruling party	**-0.95*****	**1.31*****
	(0.29)	(0.28)
Treatment*Party share	**-18.08****	0.35
	(9.03)	(5.53)
Treatment*Committee percent	**-4.00***	-0.57
	(2.18)	(1.45)
Treatment*Leadership	**1.19***	0.25
	(0.63)	(0.45)
Treatment*Party leader	-1.07	1.24
	(1.02)	(0.83)
Treatment*Committee chair	0.36	**0.59****
	(0.25)	(0.26)
Treatment*Committee leadership	**0.57*****	**0.39****
	(0.17)	(0.16)
Treatment*Treated*Ruling party	**0.84****	**-0.89****

	(0.40)	(0.37)
Constant	**1.07***	**3.22*****
	(0.61)	(0.62)
Time FE:	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,199	1,585
Log Likelihood	-5,799.94	-5,295.52
theta	0.57*** (0.02)	0.67*** (0.03)
Akaike Inf. Crit.	11,645.88	10,637.05
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

The three-way interaction is highly significant across both panels, with a positive coefficient in *Panel A* (0.84, p<0.01) and a positive one in *Panel B* (-0.89, p<0.05). These effects suggest that ruling party deputies' responses to electoral system changes are contingent upon the specific nature of the transition. This result illustrates the complexity of electoral system influences, demonstrating that the change itself, coupled with the experience of being treated (i.e., undergoing the transition), affects deputies' legislative engagement. The coefficients suggest that deputies' floor access is closely tied to their party affiliation. In *Panel A*, the positive effect indicates that the transition to PR incentivises ruling party deputies to increase their legislative engagement, possibly to consolidate the party's message or adapt to the party-centric nature of PR as demonstrated in the following two empirical chapters.

Conversely, in *Panel B*, the negative effect suggests that returning to MMM (i.e., moving to SMD) reduces the necessity or strategic benefit for such deputies to engage extensively in floor speeches. In other words, the empirical findings indicate that the ruling party delegates less floor access in comparison to the opposition when transitioning into SMD. In other words, the ruling party deputies transitioning to SMD incur less gains from speaking on the floor, while the opposition is allowed more access to help maintain a veneer of democratic processes. This follows the fact that most opposition deputies in SMD spots are in so-called 'yielded' seats where United Russia did not run candidates

(Kynev 2017a). Therefore, this strategy reflects a calculated response to maintain political dominance by not only limiting SMD seats in the opposition, but limiting the potential for independent speechmaking – even among regime-aligned legislators – that could challenge the party-based messaging of the regime.

Furthermore, this recalibration aligns with broader patterns of authoritarian control, where the ruling party manipulates institutional norms and practices to consolidate power, such as through candidate filtering and selective promotion of loyal deputies into SMD roles. The opposition, on the other hand, is left to operate under more traditional democratic expectations because their floor speeches pose less of a direct threat to the regime's grip on power. This differentiated strategy underscores the regime's focus on controlling legislative discourse, supporting the argument with evidence and theoretical grounding rather than simply postulating an ad hoc explanation. These opposition deputies take time on the floor to help create their personal brand, while for United Russia deputies such manoeuvring is not warranted given their unfree and unfair access to key SMD spots (Golosov 2017; Kynev 2017a).

The results from the analysis provide compelling support for the hypothesis that the influence of electoral systems on legislative speechmaking in the Russian Duma is significantly mediated by party dynamics, particularly under authoritarian conditions. The regression results indicate that, while electoral system changes do affect speech length and frequency, these effects are notably moderated by party affiliation and institutional roles. In the context of *H1a*, the data shows that institutional roles such as Duma leadership and committee positions have a more pronounced effect on speechmaking behaviours than the electoral system itself. In other words, the effect size of electoral transition is modest compared to other factors such as party share and leadership roles. The positive coefficients for Duma leadership and ruling party affiliation in both panels illustrate that deputies with leadership roles or party alignment are more actively engaged in speechmaking, reflecting the influence of

institutional prerogatives and party directives as demonstrated in *Chapter 3*. This aligns with the hypothesis that, as United Russia tightens its grip, deputies adjust their behaviour more in response to party strategies than to electoral rules, underscoring the significance of institutional influences over electoral ones.

Furthermore, *H1b* is supported by the findings that the presence and strength of the ruling party more directly influence legislative speech than electoral changes and moderates the effect of the electoral system. The substantial positive coefficient for United Russia affiliation suggests that these deputies are more likely to align their speech behaviour with the party, especially during periods of electoral transition. This highlights the ruling party's strategic adaptation to maintain dominance in legislative proceedings even when threatened by losing relative dominance as in the Sixth Convocation. Overall, they reinforce the central hypothesis that under authoritarian conditions, legislative behaviour is primarily influenced by party affiliation and institutional factors rather than electoral system changes alone.

4.4 Discussion

This chapter established the impacts of electoral system changes on legislative debate participation within the Duma, particularly focusing on the transitions between the Fourth and Fifth convocations and the Sixth and Seventh convocations. The theory proposed in *Chapter* 2 suggests that in authoritarian regimes, speechmaking and participation in debates are influenced more significantly by party system dynamics and institutional variables than by the type of electoral system. This theory aligns with the contention that authoritarian regimes manipulate access to legislative debates in favour of their ruling parties, thereby diminishing the direct impact of electoral system changes on legislative behaviour especially within the opposition.

While the latter convocations may be associated with higher levels of participation (see *Chapter 3*), these higher levels of participation – specifically within United Russia – contributed to the establishment of a systemic opposition by the Seventh convocation. Hence, electoral reform periods have been used to consolidate the regime's power by sustaining the party of power system and by undermining the organised opposition's ability to challenge the ruling party both in elections (c.f., Colton and McFaul 2003; Smyth 2006; Kynev 2017a) and on the floor. The analysis shows that these reforms did not lead to significant unmoderated changes in legislative speechmaking behaviour. This suggests that the composition of the Duma and individual deputy characteristics and career paths have a greater influence on speechmaking behaviours than electoral reforms. This contrasts with democratic assumptions that electoral systems create incentives for parliamentarians to build strong personal brands through their speeches in SMD localities (especially under presidential systems) (Taylor 2021).

Consistent with the hypothesis (see *Chapter 2.3.2; Chapter 4.2*), the analysis revealed that significant electoral system changes within the Duma did not uniformly affect floor participation or the moderation of oppositional voices in the manner one might expect if electoral systems were the primary drivers of legislative behaviour. Notably, the transition from mixed-member majoritarianism to proportional representation and its reversal did not lead to significant changes in floor participation that could be directly and solely attributed to these electoral changes. Instead, the variation in legislative speechmaking and participation was more closely associated with deputies' affiliations with the ruling party and the broader institutional context.

This manipulation of legislative behaviour becomes more apparent when examining the transition of deputies from PR to SMDs in the Seventh convocation. As Kynev (2017a) demonstrated, the selection of SMD candidates is associated with a set of institutional manipulations (e.g., gerrymandering and high-thresholds aimed at high-visibility incumbents) and aims to consolidate

United Russia's power over the floor. These deputies are selected due to their reliance on administrative support, large financial resources, or local influence, and through a party-based process of candidate filtering, which ensures that only regime-aligned candidates can succeed in these districts. This process carries affinities to Szakonyi's research on mayoral elections (2022), which reveals a similar pattern of institutional tooling and filtering that prevents credible challengers from entering the political arena. In mayoral elections, candidates with significant financial resources or independent political support are often blocked through administrative manipulations, such as disqualification on technical grounds or the selective enforcement of registration requirements. This process echoes what Kynev describes for SMDs in the Duma, where institutional manipulation serves to secure the regime's control over political outcomes.

Connecting Szakonyi's findings to the Duma, the logic is clear: just as mayors are selected and filtered based on their alignment with regime interests, so too are SMD deputies chosen not only for their electoral viability but also for their loyalty to the ruling party. This filtering process diminishes the likelihood that SMD deputies will challenge the regime or act independently in the legislature as the democratic scholarship suggests. By selecting candidates who rely on the regime's administrative support and resources, the system ensures that even those deputies who should theoretically have greater autonomy (due to their local ties and constituency focus) remain firmly within the bounds of regime control. This institutional manipulation limits their legislative engagement, particularly in areas that might challenge regime authority, while simultaneously insulating them from the pressures that might otherwise encourage greater parliamentary participation or dissent. In turn, this helps explain the reduced speechmaking of SMD deputies, whose political survival is less dependent on legislative visibility and more on their ability to navigate and maintain their positions through regime support and local patronage systems, echoing the findings in mayoral elections where access to administrative resources, rather than public debates, secure political success (Szakonyi 2022).

As a result of these dynamics, SMD deputies have less incentive to engage in lengthy floor debates. Their political success depends less on national visibility, as is often the case with PR deputies, and more on their ability to secure local resources and maintain strong ties to their constituencies. United Russia's dominance in SMDs enables the ruling party to control these deputies more directly, reducing their need to rely on legislative speeches as a tool for political advancement. Instead, their influence is exerted through informal networks and behind-the-scenes negotiations (read: closed-door committee meetings) where speeches become secondary to their role in securing regime stability at the local level.

The muted impact of electoral system reform on legislative behaviour compared to the more pronounced influence of party affiliation further underscores the capacity of authoritarian regimes to manipulate legislative practices, regardless of the formal electoral framework. In Russia, the shift from PR to MMM during the cartelisation period has not produced the incentives for greater speechmaking typically expected in more democratic systems, contrasting sharply with democratic expectations, where SMD deputies might be expected to use speeches to build personal brands and appeal to their constituencies.

As Kynev (2017a) points out, the redistricting for the 2016 elections in Russia involved splitting urban areas across multiple districts, effectively diluting the power of opposition-leaning voters in cities and ensuring that regime-affiliated candidates had a structural advantage. By controlling the electoral process through these manipulations, the regime ensures that SMD deputies are less reliant on traditional forms of legislative activism, such as speeches, and more focused on securing local patronage and resources to maintain their positions. Hence, the data in this chapter suggest that the type of electoral system has become a weak determinant of legislative behaviour in the Duma as the regime adopts increasingly authoritarian characteristics. The regime's control over the electoral process, particularly in SMD districts, allows United Russia deputies to focus on non-legislative

avenues for political survival, thereby diminishing the perceived necessity for floor engagement as a strategy for electoral success.

In light of these findings, the subsequent chapters of this dissertation will explore the ramifications of these dynamics. Specifically, the following chapter will analyse how shifts in the party and institutional system have impacted the legislative agenda and the spectrum of topics broached in debates. Building on the results concerning the electoral system, party dynamics, and institutional controls on legislative behaviour, this forthcoming investigation aims to unveil the tangible impacts of these shifts on legislative discourse and policy prioritisation within the Duma.

Therefore, the following chapter addresses the dynamics of policy attention among Russian legislators. Amidst discussions of democratic backsliding within authoritarian regimes, this analysis seeks to empirically unpack systematic changes in legislative attention across policy domains, highlighting how the content and focus of debates have evolved across different policy. By examining these temporal trends and patterns, the chapter aims to illuminate the Duma's use of legislative debates as a tool for monitoring dissent and signalling commitment to the public.

Central to this analysis is an examination of the informal power mechanisms that pervade the legislative process, particularly emphasising the role of informal party-based controls. These mechanisms significantly influence the allocation of policy attention and shape the legislative agenda, reflecting the regime's adaptive strategies to sustain power and manage dissent. By analysing the shifting content and focus of legislative debates against the backdrop of democratic backsliding, this chapter underscores the paramount importance of recognising the relationship between formal legislative frameworks and the prevailing informal authority structures.

In the forthcoming chapter, the dissertation discusses how these informal power structures, exemplified by the roles of committee chairs and party leaders, exert a profound influence on the legislative agenda and policy prioritisation. This analysis not only reveals the strategic adaptability of

authoritarian regimes in managing legislative discourse but also demonstrates their reliance on both the formal mechanisms of electoral and regulatory systems and the informal grip of party control mechanisms. Such adaptability is indicative of the regime's efforts to navigate and modulate legislative discourse, reinforcing its control while maintaining a façade of procedural normalcy.

5. Policy Attention of Russian Legislators

This chapters turns its focus towards the strategic shifts in legislative discourse within the Russian State Duma from 1996 to 2021, encompassing the Second through Seventh convocations. Drawing upon the hypothesis that legislative assemblies in authoritarian contexts exhibit significant shifts in debate content and focus as a consequence of democratic backsliding, this chapter endeavours to empirically investigate the evolution of policy attention across six domains – economic, political, social, defence, foreign policy, and Duma regulations. The primary goal is to clarify temporal trends and patterns in policy attention, shedding light on the potential of the regime to use legislative debates to monitor dissent and convey its commitment to the public.

The chapter seeks to explain how informal power mechanisms, particularly the role of party-based controls, significantly influence the allocation of policy attention and the broader legislative agenda, reflecting the regime's adaptive strategies to maintain power and manage dissent. By analysing the evolving content and focus of legislative debates within the context of democratic backsliding, this investigation highlights the critical importance of understanding the symbiotic relationship between formal legislative frameworks and informal authority that often dictate the real dynamics of policy discourse.

Through this lens, the chapter positions the strategic adaptability of authoritarian regimes – manifested in their capacity to shift policy focus and legislative discourse – as a reflection of the regime's reliance on both the visible hand of formal electoral and legislative systems and the invisible grip of informal power structures. This dual reliance underscores the significance of committee chairs and party leaders not just as procedural figureheads but as pivotal players in steering legislative behaviour and policy prioritisation, thus offering a deeper comprehension of how authoritarian

control mechanisms extend beyond mere electoral manipulation to encompass the entire legislative process.

The chapter posits that the strategic manipulation of policy discourse and legislative focus serves as a vital tool for authoritarian regimes to signal responsiveness to the public, manage political dissent, and reinforce their grip on power, all while operating within the formal bounds of legislative and electoral systems. This exploration into the relationship between formal and informal power within the Russian Duma not only contributes to the academic discourse on legislative dynamics in authoritarian contexts but also sets the stage for subsequent discussions on the implications of these dynamics for policy prioritization and legislative agenda-setting within such regimes.

The Russian scenario offers a vantage point for analysing shifts in authoritarian policy-making landscapes. Despite the general scarcity of comprehensive studies on policy domain attention, specific policy areas have been examined. For example, studies by Thames (2010), Kunicova and Remington (2008), Chaisty (2006), and Noble (2017) have explored how electoral mandates, party affiliations, and policy preferences influence legislative support and decision-making within the Duma. However, a gap remains in understanding how legislative debates distribute attention across different policy domains. This gap is addressed by situating the Duma's policy attention within the broader context of autocratic regimes. Research suggests that legislative actors in such systems navigate a complex landscape of policy decisions, mediated by interactions with the executive and elite coalitions, and characterised by a variety of policy preferences and debate engagements (Williamson and Magaloni, 2020; Noble, 2020; Schuler, 2020, 2021). This chapter seeks to expand the literature's understanding of how policy attention functions within authoritarian parliaments, particularly through the lens of the Duma's legislative discourse.

The analysis draws on the dataset of legislative debates to perform a quantitative dissection of policy attention within the Duma across question issues, considering factors such as electoral

mandates, party affiliations, and institutional frameworks. This approach aims to illuminate the dynamics of policy attention and its implications for legislative decision-making. By bridging the macro-level institutional analysis with micro-level legislative debates, this research offers deeper insights into Russian legislative politics.

Initial observations from the data show that earlier convocations exhibited a broad spectrum of policy issues, indicative of a more autonomous legislative environment. However, a contraction in policy attention becomes apparent from the Fourth convocation onwards, especially in social, defence, and foreign policy domains. The Russian case underscores the fluid nature of policy attention in the Duma, and this chapter details how these trends are shaped by leadership preferences, economic imperatives, and institutional changes. While early Dumas focused on economic reform and regional pressures, subsequent convocations have seen shifts in policy attention driven by the regime's broader control strategies. The analysis will explore these shifts, considering the erosion of legislative autonomy and the regime's influence on issue attention. Expectations are set for a continuation of politics and economics as dominant themes, with procedural-regulatory (i.e., Duma management) debates diminishing post-2012 due to the regulatory changes aimed at curtailing opposition. Defence and foreign policy are expected to remain low-profile, while social policy may see fluctuations tied to crisis events and the regime's broader authoritarian consolidation.

Although broader works addressing policy domain attention are scarce, several pivotal studies have delved into specific policy areas. For instance, Chaisty examines how economic interests are manifested within the Duma by scrutinising the avenues through which economic actors sway legislative decision-making, including lobbying, committee assignments, and the generation of factions within the Duma (2006). These results demonstrate that up until the Fourth convocation, policy domain attention on the legislative side of policy making was far from barren. This is further corroborated by Chaisty and Schleiter's earlier work, *Productive but Not Valued* (2002), demonstrating

that early Dumas passed significant legislation, and that the relevance of legislation fluctuates temporally. They also provide an early example of policy domain attention in the literature; albeit categorised by the volume of legislation rather than floor debates. Their findings indicate that the Kirienko period (April-August 1998) and the Primakov period (September 1998 – May 1999) were the most productive phases for economic legislation to date at the time of writing (2002). Notably, they introduce data illustrating the varied importance of legal-political legislation, and the diminished significance of social and defence-security domains.

These initial observations suggest that the regime strategically uses the legislature not only to monitor and suppress opposition but also as a means to demonstrate its responsiveness to the public. The theory chapter posits a heightened emphasis on policy areas critical for the regime's stability and the welfare of its key constituencies, such as economic policies that enhance stability and directly benefit the regime's supporters. In contrast, it predicts a decline in legislative focus on policies that diverge from the government's immediate objectives or fall outside the legislature's direct purview, relegating such topics to the discussions of backbenchers and opposition members due to their diminished relevance for regime maintenance.

A comprehensive analysis must consider several factors that could explain the allocation of policy attention in legislative debates. One significant factor is diminishing legislative autonomy – a transformation that has fundamentally altered the legislative capacity to select issues for discussion and the manner of their address (Noble and Schulmann, 2018). The institutional changes highlighted in previous empirical chapters have also been shown to affect both the allocation of floor time and access, likely influencing the focus on specific issues. Determining which deputies who frequently engage in different policy discourses will further refine those chapters' results.

Chaisty and Schleiter's research offers a starting point, indicating that economic policy discussions were predominant in the early Dumas (2002). However, if the debate results diverge from their analysis

of voting results, it implies a preponderance of non-consequential policy discussions on the floor. The analysis should then further explore who participates in the more impactful debates.

A critical aspect to monitor is whether debates concerning Duma regulations decrease over time. Given the significant regulatory changes in 2012 and their implications for speech practices, it is expected that procedural debates have decreased since then, reflecting the regime's efforts to curtail opposition attempts to either amend regulations or engage with the day-to-day planning of the Duma.

Defence and foreign policy are expected to remain less emphasised due to their executive-driven nature. Social policy, however, presents a more nuanced picture: spikes in attention during crises, such as in 2012, and increased activity as the regime strengthens its authoritarian grip are anticipated. This aligns with authoritarian strategies to broaden provision beyond their support base to quell protests, rebellions, and threats (Gallagher and Hanson 2009; Gandhi and Przeworski 2006). Additionally, in times of protest or crises, a surge in political-legal debates aimed at curtailing citizen rights is expected, as evidenced by the legislative agenda during the 2012 protests.

The chapter aims to elucidate how informal power structures, particularly party-based controls, shape the distribution of policy focus and influence the broader legislative agenda, showcasing the regime's adaptive methods for retaining power and suppressing dissent. Through an analysis of the changing nature of legislative debates amid democratic backsliding, the study underscores the essential role of informal authority in guiding the actual workings of policy discourse, often beyond the formal legislative frameworks. These changes in legislative priorities reveal how the regime strategically employs the legislature to enhance stability, curb opposition, and preserve legitimacy. Thus, the transformation of the Duma can be interpreted not merely as institutional erosion but as a deliberate reorientation of legislative focus aimed at ensuring the regime's survival.

5.1 The Duma's Policy Attention in Context

The period from 1996 to 1999 was a key time period of political and economic transformation for Russia, marking the early post-Soviet years and the onset of the Yeltsin era. Policy development during this time primarily revolved around the monumental task of transitioning from a socialist to a market-based capitalist economy (McFaul 2001). This era's hallmark was the transition from a centrally planned economy to a market-oriented system (McFaul 2001). Yeltsin's administration introduced a series of reforms aimed at market liberalisation, including extensive privatisation of state assets, deregulation of prices, and a strong push for foreign investment (Aslund 1995).

Yeltsin's reform programs, while transformative, sparked considerable controversy due to their swift and sweeping nature. The abrupt shift towards a market economy resulted in significant economic hardship, widening social inequality, and deepening unrest across Russia. Amidst this upheaval, the newly formed Duma became a key arena for intense policy debates, reflecting Russia's fragmented political landscape and the difficulties of navigating such a profound transition. The absence of a dominant party allowed for a wide range of political perspectives, contributing to a vibrant yet contentious legislative environment (Remington 2001).

Simultaneously, Russia was also grappling with the task of constructing democratic institutions. The Duma played a key role in these efforts, engaging in vigorous debates on legal reforms, the rule of law, and the establishment of a multiparty system (Remington 2001). These discussions were essential components of the larger policy discourse at the time. Towards the end of Yeltsin's tenure, in response to a financial crisis in 1998, there was a shift in policy preference towards a more state-managed economy (Shleifer and Treisman 2000; Treisman 2011). As the era of liberalisation began to wane, it paved the way for the state-directed economic strategies that would come to characterise Putin's presidencies in the years to follow.

By the time Putin came into power in 2000, the political landscape began to change. His regime sought to consolidate power and centralise decision-making. The preferences of United Russia provide insight into the policy shifts observed over time, since they largely reflect the policy preferences of the broader government. As such, the focus on strengthening state control over the economy and key sectors is reflected in the party's policy priorities (Reuter 2017).

As a party that emerged from the consolidation of several pro-Kremlin parties, United Russia's platform has often prioritised stability and economic development. However, this development is framed within the paradigm of state-controlled capitalism, echoing the government's approach to curtailing the free-market reforms of the Yeltsin era (Hale 2006). Moreover, United Russia has been an advocate for socially conservative values (Henderson 2011). This stance is in line with the regime's preference for maintaining social order and traditional values, even as it navigates the complexities of modernisation and globalisation.

United Russia's dominance in the Duma has also been characterised by a robust foreign policy stance, echoing Putin's focus on reasserting Russia on the global stage. The party often vocally backed legislation aiming to protect and promote Russian interests abroad, reinforcing the shift from the more conciliatory foreign policy of the Yeltsin era (Mankoff 2011). However, critics have argued that United Russia's policy preferences are often driven less by ideological commitment and more by the imperatives of political survival and the need to maintain control over the state's resources. This dynamic is said to often shape the party's positions, particularly in the economic sphere (Gel'man 2008).

5.2 Theoretical Considerations

The dynamics of policy attention within the Duma suggest certain patterns aligning with the interests of authoritarian leadership, which exercises considerable influence over legislative discourse.

This influence manifests in selectively promoting discussions on issues deemed strategically significant for regime stability while suppressing others. Within the Russian context, as the regime transitions from a hybrid democracy towards increased authoritarianism, there should be observable shifts in policy focus. The hypothesis presented in the theory chapter notes that the Duma should move towards less contentious issues, thereby reflecting power consolidation efforts aimed at enhancing governance capacity, particularly in addressing social issues and regime challenges (c.f., Göbel 2011). As control over the Duma strengthens, it is expected that policy attention will pivot towards areas of lower conflict potential yet high relevance for regime stability, such as fiscal policy and social welfare issues. This realignment may result in diminished oppositional engagement in these legislative debates.

As *Chapter 3* demonstrated, the steepest decline of opposition-linked floor time and access within the Duma traces to the Seventh convocation, wherein the debates are dominated by United Russia. This proved counterintuitive considering their dominance in politics since 2004. However, it leads to a key expectation: policy areas which are potentially more contentious (e.g., political-legal rights or foreign policy) will receive relatively lesser attention in the later Duma debates, while quotidian day-to-day issues may gain prominence. This expectation stems from the regime's strategy to limit the risk of potential backlash from the opposition or broader society, and to provide avenues for genuine legitimacy.

Several theoretical priors undergird this primary expectation. First, there is an institutional constraint expectation, wherein the consolidation of United Russia's dominance is anticipated to correspond with a shrinking space for oppositional voices, particularly on politically sensitive issues such as political-legal rights – dominant parties, once entrenched, seek to minimise contentious debates to maintain control and avoid disruption (Simison 2020). Second, from a regime stability perspective, it is likely that the government strategically redirects legislative focus away from polarising subjects to less controversial, day-to-day matters to maintain broad voter coalitions which is part-and-

parcel of United Russia's electoral strategy (Chaisty and Whitefield 2023). This helps limit public backlash or mobilisation of opposition forces while simultaneously reinforcing the regime's appearance of competent governance. Third, the behaviour of opposition parties themselves must be considered: knowing their influence is curtailed, these parties may gravitate towards engaging in more technical or procedural matters where they can still exert some leverage, rather than expending resources on high stakes debates they are unlikely to win. For instance, the 2012 'Italian Strike' demonstrated and reinforced the opposition's inability to affect polarising legislation. Finally, there is a trade-off between contention and compliance, where the legislative agenda increasingly reflects compliance with executive priorities as authoritarian tendencies deepen. This would result in a decline of debate on contentious issues and a corresponding increase in the focus on routine policy discussions, reinforcing the image of an efficient, functioning government.

The importance of policy domain in legislative debates under authoritarian conditions lies in its strategic significance for both the regime and legislators. Key policy domains critical to regime stability, such as economic development and welfare, are prioritized because they directly impact important constituencies and serve as critical legitimacy tools for the regime (Geddes, Wright, and Frantz 2018; Hale 2014). Legislators from the ruling party actively engage in these substantive debates to align themselves with the regime's priorities, a process referred to as 'representation within bounds' (Truex 2016). This alignment ensures that key policy areas remain under regime control while still appearing responsive to public needs, reinforcing the regime's stability and maintaining its legitimacy.

Conversely, domains which are outside the purview of parliamentary action, such as foreign policy and defence are deprioritised. These areas, being closely tied to executive prerogatives, are often left open for debate by backbenchers and opposition members. The regime's strategy of allowing more open discussion in these domains serves to give the illusion of pluralism and democratic debate, while keeping opposition activities confined to areas that pose little risk of substantive debate (Simison

2020). By controlling the focus of legislative debates, the regime effectively monitors dissent and channels political energy away from discussion that could undermine its legislative agenda.

Given this context, we can formalise the following hypothesis: as legislatures undergo democratic backsliding, there will be a notable shift in the content and focus of legislative debates. This shift reflects the regime's dual strategy of monitoring dissent and signalling that it is acting in the public interest. Specifically, ***H1*** anticipates an increased emphasis on policy areas critical to regime stability and public welfare – such as economic development, social welfare, and political-civil rights – where regime legitimacy is bolstered through the provision of material benefits to key constituencies (Gandhi 2008; Svolik 2012). Conversely, ***H2*** expects a decline in attention to policies such as defence and foreign policy which, being tied to executive prerogatives, are more vulnerable to revealing state weaknesses. Allowing less efficacious policy domains to be discussed by backbenchers and opposition members is consistent with the regime's effort to limit effective challenges, while presenting an image of openness and pluralism in less critical debates (Malesky and Schuler 2010). Similarly, as the Duma regulations become standardised during the Sixth convocation due to the fallout from the 2012 'Italian Strike', less attention will be given to such matters.

In this environment, ruling party leaders and key legislators are expected to be prominently involved in discussions on substantive policy issues that align with regime priorities. Their speeches serve the dual function of reinforcing regime narratives while signalling responsiveness to public needs. These less central policy discussions are then delegated to backbenchers and opposition members, who can engage in legislative debates without posing a direct threat to regime stability (Simison 2020; Truex 2016). This strategy highlights how authoritarian regimes allow controlled pluralism by permitting debates on peripheral issues, thereby monitoring opposition activities over executive-led initiatives without risking substantial policy shifts that could weaken the executive's control.

This shift in policy attention is operationalised through examining independent variables such as committee memberships, party leadership roles, and ruling party membership over time. These variables illuminate how legislative debates evolve, showing how the regime directs focus towards stability and welfare policies, while marginalising potentially destabilising areas. Participation in specific policy discussions, as the dependent variable, will be tracked over time, offering empirical support for the regime's shifting legislative priorities.

The convocations of the Duma act as a mediating variable, contextualising the shifts within particular legislative periods. This provides further insight into how the regime adapts legislative discourse to meet its changing needs as democratic practices decline. Ultimately, these shifts in legislative focus offer a window into the regime's strategic use of the legislature as a tool for reinforcing stability, preventing dissent, and maintaining legitimacy – mirroring selective policy responsiveness seen across authoritarian systems (Magaloni 2008).

5.3 Data and Methods

This section outlines the dataset and methodological approach used to analyse variations and trends in policy attention. The dataset builds upon the information presented in earlier chapters, incorporating legislator-level data, and spanning daily activities across the specified convocations. To dissect the legislative debates into distinct policy domains, this analysis employs a multinomial elastic net regression approach for categorising the '*question issues*' variable (see *Table B.1*).

The elastic net algorithm categorises question issues from legislative debates into six policy domains based on the Duma's official legislative classification scheme: economic, political, social, defence and security, foreign policy, and procedural-regulatory. In general, the application of machine learning models such as SVMs in text categorisation has been well-established in the literature (Joachims 1998; Sebastiani 2002). These are particularly well-suited for high-dimensional data, which

makes them highly effective for categorising structured text data like parliamentary question issue titles (e.g., 'On the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation'). However, their binary classification nature limits their applicability for this analysis, which requires a multi-class approach to accommodate the six policy domains. One common approach to extend SVM to handle multi-class problems is to decompose the multi-class task into multiple binary problems. But, in this context, the SVM approach falls short.

Elastic net regularization presents a superior alternative for text classification in this context for several reasons. Firstly, the L1 regularisation component (the Lasso penalty) introduces sparsity in the model by reducing the coefficients of less important features to zero. This automatic feature selection is invaluable in text classification, where the feature space can be overwhelmingly large, thereby enhancing model interpretability and computational efficiency (Hastie, Tibshirani, and Friedman 2009, Chapter 3.4). Secondly, the L2 regularisation component (the Ridge penalty) addresses multicollinearity by diminishing the influence of correlated features, leading to more robust and reliable coefficient estimates.

The integration of L1 and L2 penalties in the elastic net method achieves a balance between feature selection and regularisation, important for preventing overfitting in high-dimensional datasets where features may vastly outnumber observations (Zou and Hastie 2005). This balance ensures that the model remains sensitive to the most relevant features for classifying legislative debates into the designated policy domains, while maintaining generalizability.

To systematically categorise legislative debates into policy domains, this study adopts a coding scheme based on Chaisty's framework from *Legislative Politics and Economic Power in Russia* (2006), with modifications to include foreign policy and procedural work (see *Table 5.1*). This scheme involves six indicators that code whether a specific issue pertains to one of the predefined policy orientations.

Table 5.1. Criteria for Identifying Policy Domains in Question Issues[29]

Economic (issue scored: 1)	- Investment, fuel and energy, markets, consumer rights, trade, industrial and intellectual property, land, agriculture, foodstuffs and rural development, construction and town planning, mortgages, scientific research, bankruptcy, state property and privatization, planning and state controls, anti-monopoly, budget and taxes, banking, duties, credit, transport and communication, advertising and licensing
Political-Civil (issue scored: 2)	- Federal state institutions and agencies, state symbols and monuments, elections, referenda and elected officials, constitutional rights, activities of political, social, and religious groups, regional and local government, judiciary, criminal, civil, and administrative law
Social (issue scored: 3)	- Veterans, family, elderly, young, disabled, working conditions, poverty, social security, pensions, health, housing, education, minorities, compensation
Defence and Security (issue scored: 4)	- Armed forces, sale of arms, law and order agencies, crime-fighting, border security, foreign intelligence
Foreign Policy (issue scored: 5)	- Interstate issues, international agreements and treaties, international collaboration
Procedural-Regulatory (issue scored: 6)	- Procedural work of the Duma, daily activities, regulatory measures of the Duma

[29] *Note:* The original classification scheme can be found in the appendix of Chaisty (2006) and is based on the official Duma categorisation scheme of legislation.

To analyse the policy domains within legislative debates from 1996 to 2021, encompassing 637,075 question-issue speech pairs, an iterative supervised machine learning approach was adopted, leveraging the granularity and depth of the dataset. The process began with preprocessing the texts of the question issues variable using the 'bag of words' technique while excluding common Russian stop words to ensure the focus remained on relevant linguistic features. Subsequently, a random sample of 2000 sentences were extracted from the dataset for initial analysis.

The methodology involved hand coding 2000 sentences from this sample to serve as a training set for the machine learning model. This step established a reliable basis upon which the model could learn to categorise speeches into their respective policy domains accurately. Following this, an elastic net regularization method was applied to fit a logistic regression model to these hand-coded scores, capitalising on the method's ability to handle high-dimensional data and mitigate overfitting through its dual regularisation approach.

The application of the model to the 2000-sentence subset yielded a model summary that provided initial insights into the algorithm's performance. To further refine the model, a data frame was created, capturing the actual and predicted attributions alongside the accuracy of these predictions. This iterative process involved comparing the model's predictions with actual labels by manually reviewing 2000 clearly attributed examples, thereby enhancing the model's training with real-world data.

Subsequent iterations incorporated newly validated data, employing 4-word n-grams to capture more nuanced linguistic patterns and improve the model's ability to discern between policy domains. The logistic regression model, augmented by elastic net regularization, was trained using a 5-fold cross-validation strategy. The regularisation parameter, (l1 ratios), was set to [0.1, 0.5, 0.7, 0.9, 0.95, 0.99].[30]

[30] This range allowed the model to explore varying degrees of sparsity and coefficient shrinkage to improve predictive performance.

The performance of the final model on the question issue corpus was commendable, achieving an 85% accuracy rate in identifying policy domains, a significant improvement from the initial model's 73% accuracy. Moreover, the model's Area Under the Curve (AUC) metrics indicated excellent capability in distinguishing true positives from false positives across all classes, underscoring its effectiveness in classifying legislative debates into the specified policy domains (see *Appendix E*). All classes perform well within acceptable bounds, affirming the model's reliability and efficacy in parsing legislative debates into their respective policy domains.

The analysis progresses to a more granular level with the categorised corpus at hand by transitioning to the application of linear mixed-effects models. This approach is consistent with the methodologies outlined in previous chapters and is tailored to accommodate the complexity and depth of the dataset. The linear mixed-effects models are conditioned on individual deputies, which account for heterogeneity in individual engagement on the floor. Two model structures are proposed to dissect the dynamics of policy domain attention within the Duma:

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + K + X + t + \epsilon_i$$

$$Y_{it} = \beta_0 + K_t + X + t + \epsilon_i$$

Where Y represents the count of speeches within a specific policy domain by deputy i in convocation t. Where t controls for time-varying cross-convocational effects, capturing the period variable to account for the legislative environment across different convocations. K is vector of covariates that include variables such as party affiliation or committee membership, which may have varying effects between convocations. In the second model, t is interacted with these covariates (K_t) to explore the interaction effects and how they may differ across time. X is a vector of the covariates established as unrelated to convocation such as age, seniority, and gender. The error term ϵ contains the error, and the random effect for each deputy is modelled as $\epsilon_i = \epsilon + \beta_i$, where β_i captures the individual-specific random effects.

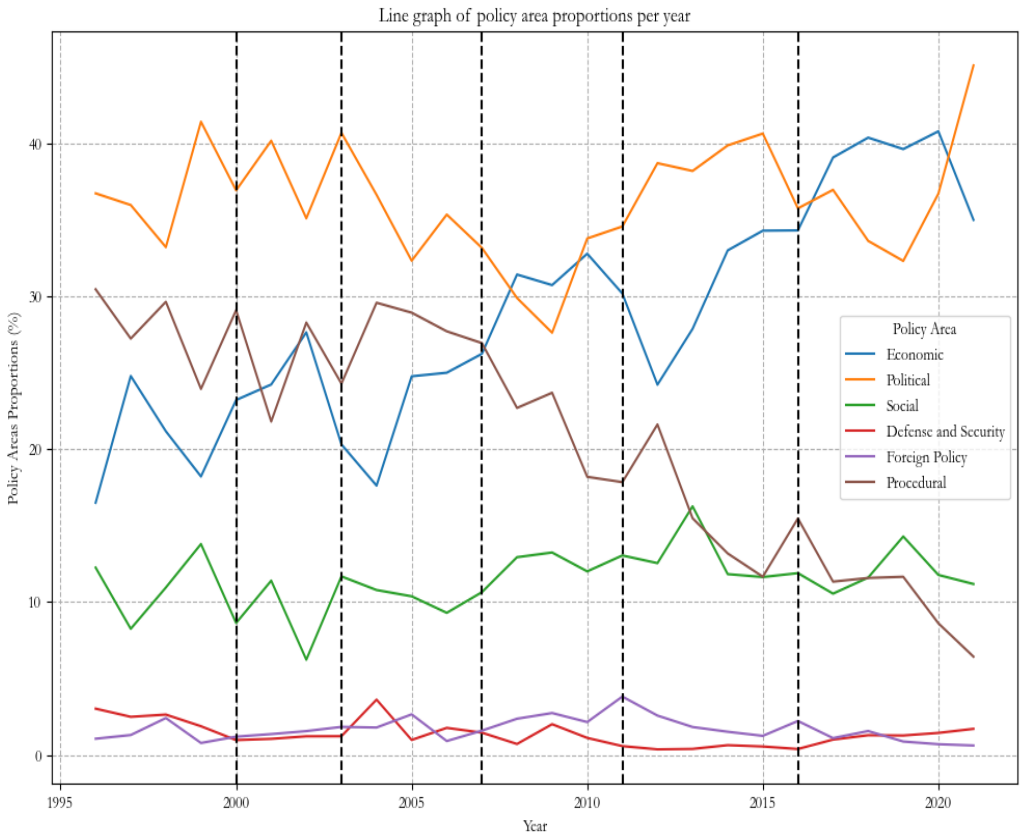
The two specifications aim to capture different facets of legislative behaviour. The first model pools the results while controlling for convocation through the time variable *t*, offering a broad overview of policy domain attention while accounting for the overall time effect. The second model, instead, accounts for variation between convocations by interacting time with relevant covariates. This model structure is particularly insightful for examining how the influence of specific variables may evolve across different legislative periods.

These model structures are designed to illuminate the nuances of policy attention within the Duma, revealing how legislative focus shifts across policy domains over time and across individual deputies. By employing linear mixed-effects models, this analysis accommodates the inherent complexity of the legislative process detailed in the preceding chapters, accounting for both fixed effects related to observable characteristics and random effects that capture unobserved individual heterogeneity.

5.4 Results

Following the accurate categorisation of speeches into respective policy domains, the counts of policy attention were aggregated back into the dataset. This process involved the cumulative compilation of each policy domain's data back into the original rows of the dataset. The objective was to generate annual and convocational tallies of policy attention, thereby facilitating a comprehensive analysis of legislative focus over time. With daily counts of policy attention at hand, an evaluation of the overall proportions of policy domain attention on a daily basis was conducted for the period spanning from 1996 to 2021. *Figure 5.1* highlights the changing proportions of policy attention annually, with intermittent dashed lines marking the transitions between convocations. This figure provides a clear overview of how legislative focus has shifted over time, reflecting the dynamism in policy discourse within the Duma.

Figure 5.1. Policy Area Attention Over Time (Proportion of Policy Attention per Year)[31]



This figure underscores how distinct policy domains have evolved throughout successive convocations. Consistent with theoretical expectations, defence and foreign policy issues have invariably received minimal attention across all convocations. This observation corroborates the hypothesis that such policy areas are not delegated to the parliament. Instead, the Russian political system – as in most presidential systems (Taylor 2021) – is designed to concentrate decision-making power over external affairs in the executive. This dominance limits the legislature's role in these domains, which serves to shield sensitive discussions from substantive public debate and potential

[31] Vertical dashed lines indicate convocation.

scrutiny. Thus, the consistent low focus on these areas may not only reflect authoritarian control but also institutional arrangements that predate the regime's authoritarian consolidation.

A notable finding is the significant and consistent decline in procedural attention, which concerns the Duma's internal operations. This is emblematic of the impact of regulatory changes concerning the discussion of draft procedures in the Duma (2005 and 2010), and the broader 2012 changes that have fundamentally altered legislative speech practices. This downward trend aligns with the premise that as the regime consolidates control and minimizes the scope for opposition on the Duma floor, discussions regarding Duma regulations would be expected to diminish. The pronounced decrease in procedural debates serves as a stark indicator of the regime's success in stifling opposition efforts to modify regulations, especially following the oppositional surge in 2012. This trend not only reflects the regime's consolidation of control but also signifies a strategic curtailment of legislative discourse, which contributes to the minimisation of challenges to its authority.

The resilience of social policy attention within the Duma maintains a steady presence around 10% of overall discussions despite a more tightly controlled legislative environment. This consistent engagement with social policy topics suggests the strategic balance maintained by the regime as hypothesised in the theory chapter: it restricts debates on contentious issues while permitting discussions in less controversial and regime-stabilising areas. This pattern reflects the regime's efforts to broaden its support base by prioritising socio-economic concerns, aligning with survival tactics commonly observed in authoritarian regimes (Magaloni 2008; Williamson and Magaloni 2020) and observed within the regime's electoral strategies outside of the Duma(Chaisty and Whitefield 2023).

A notable power dynamic emerged between political and economic discussions, revealing an alternating pattern of dominance on the legislative floor. Although political-civil discourse has been more visible on the floor over time, a noticeable shift occurs with economic discussions gaining prominence by the Seventh convocation. This trend, marked by a consistent rise in economic debates

despite occasional declines in the Fourth and Sixth convocations, signals a strategic reorientation of legislative focus towards economic issues. The predominance of economic over political discussions during most of the Seventh convocation, especially against the backdrop of declining procedural debates, highlights a significant transformation in legislative discourse, suggesting a strategic legislative emphasis on policies conducive to economic welfare.

The dip in economic focus in 2012 coincides with an increased emphasis on political and legal rights, likely aimed at curbing political dissent (Dollbaum 2017). However, from 2014 onward, specifically post-Crimea annexation, the spotlight on political-civil issues declines significantly, overtaken by economic discussions. This shift is possibly related to the defensive measures employed against Western sanctions, which focussed on capital flight (Oxenstierna and Olsson 2015, 51), ensuring the continuation of essential social services (World Bank 2015), and adopting import substitution strategies to counter the impacts of the depreciating rouble (Kommersant 2015). These developments necessitated a flurry of legislative activities in the Duma, focusing on adjustments to fiscal policies (e.g., pension and healthcare budget management) and broader economic policies (e.g., limiting foreign direct investment and bolstering domestic industries), marking a strategic pivot in legislative attention towards economic resilience and self-sufficiency.

The pooled regression analysis focuses on identifying legislators who frequently engage in discussions across various policy domains. The appendix outlines these models, which offer a comprehensive overview, while the main focus of this chapter explores between-convocation variations with interaction-based models. The results from the pooled regressions and interaction models across the six policy areas are detailed in *Appendix E*. This section of the chapter, therefore, demonstrates the subtleties of how these engagement patterns may vary across different convocations. This exploration is particularly pertinent given the observed institutional changes and their potential impact on legislative discourse, as outlined in previous chapters.

In alignment with the hypotheses presented in *Chapter 2.3.3*, the following analysis demonstrates a discernible shift in legislative policy attention within the Duma, particularly as it navigates through stages of democratic backsliding towards increased authoritarianism. This shift is notably reflected in policy areas deemed critical for the regime's stability and public welfare, alongside a corresponding decrease in attention to matters less central to the regime's immediate objectives. The following will describe how these changes have occurred within each policy domain and explain how key actors – committee chairs, party leaders, and ruling party members – have guided policy attention.

Central to this exploration are the key actors described in the preceding two chapters – committee chairs and party leaders – whose roles are pivotal in shaping the legislative agenda and discourse. These individuals, wielding significant informal (read: delegation) and formal (read: ability to omit or decline speaking privileges) powers, serve as the linchpins of the legislative process, guiding the distribution of policy attention. Committee chairs hold significant influence over the legislative agenda, particularly in determining which policy issues are brought forward for discussion. Party leaders and members of the ruling party are instrumental in steering legislative debates as evidenced in *Chapter 3*. This chapter seeks to address whether control over the floor translates into steering the agenda towards issues that underscore the regime's legitimacy. If they reinforce the importance of crucial policy areas, it signals to the public that the government is actively addressing key societal needs. This alignment with regime priorities not only demonstrates the ruling party's commitment to public welfare but also serves as a mechanism for co-opting legislative discourse, ensuring that debates remain within parameters that do not challenge the regime's stability.

Therefore, tracking participation in specific policy discussions provides empirical evidence of changing legislative priorities. The analysis highlights how authoritarian regimes strategically navigate policy debates, focusing on areas that bolster regime stability and public welfare while sidelining or deprioritizing policies that could undermine their control. The subsequent analysis sheds light on how

these key actors navigate the legislative landscape, orchestrating shifts in policy focus that align with the regime's evolving priorities. By examining the relationship between formal legislative functions and the underlying informal power dynamics, this chapter aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how committee chairs, party leaders, and other influential figures exert control over the legislative agenda. Their ability to direct policy attention – favouring areas crucial for the regime's stability and public welfare while sidelining less pertinent issues – reveals the depth of authoritarian control mechanisms at play.

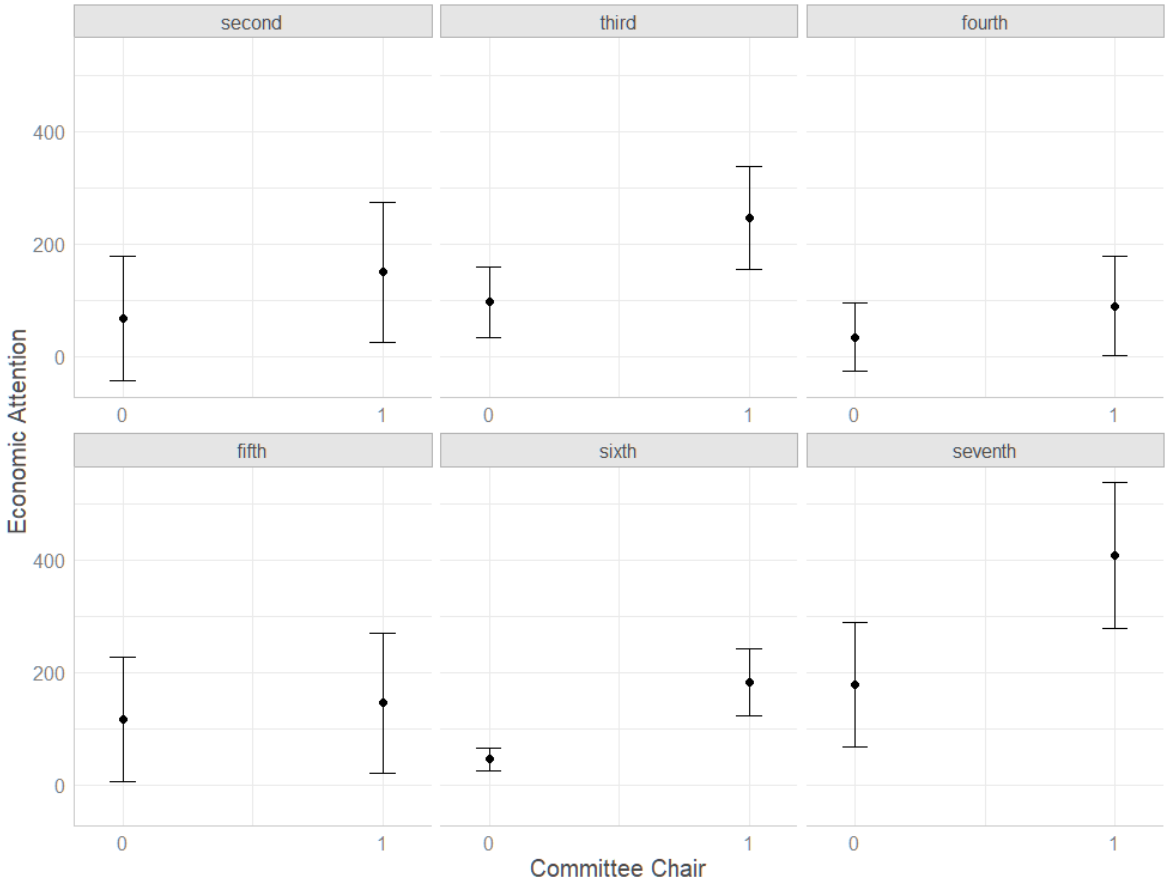
5.4.1 Economic Policies

Across all convocations, the convocational exposure of deputies ($\beta = 30.43$) demonstrates that active engagement in Duma sessions is strongly correlated with a focus on economic policy discussions. This underlines a critical aspect of legislative behaviour: the more deputies are involved in the day-to-day activities of the Duma, the more they contribute to contributing to economic debates. It reflects an environment where active participation is perhaps valued over seniority, despite the latter's significant association ($\beta = 4.15$) with policy attention.

Committee structures are among the most important factors for shaping economic debates. Committee chairs hold a substantial effect ($\beta = 113.68$) and demonstrate their status as key drivers in steering the economic policy dialogue, likely due to their agenda-setting powers and influence over committee actions. Similarly, deputy roles within committees, though less influential than chairs, still play a significant role ($\beta = 19.42$), affirming the importance of these positions in the legislative discourse on economic issues. However, convocational effects demonstrate temporal shifts in economic policy focus occurring most prominently in the Seventh convocation. While committee chairs and leadership posts in the Fifth convocation show a slight decrease ($\beta = -16.73$) in economic attention, committee chairs in the Seventh convocation exhibit a marked increase from the baseline

(β = 23.19), signalling a convocation where the regime emphasises the economic agenda through its committee leadership positions more than in previous periods (see *Figure 5.2*).

Figure 5.2. Average Marginal Effects of Committee Chair by Convocation with 95% Confidence Intervals (Economic Policy)

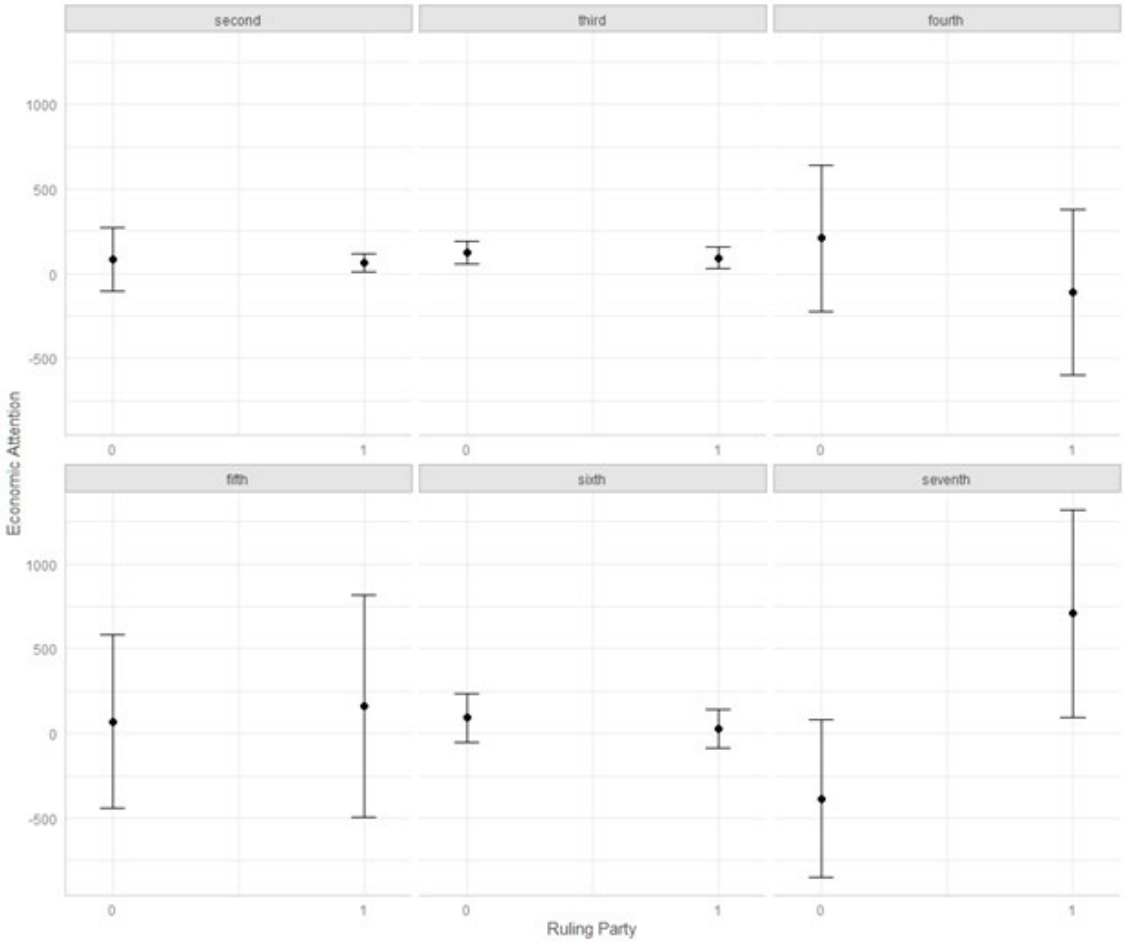


The marked increase in economic policy attention by members of the ruling party (β = 193.51) suggests a deliberate concentration of economic discourse within the hands of United Russia (see *Figure 5.3*). This reflects a broader strategy to reinforce the regime's economic governance narrative and to demonstrate to the public a focused and competent handling of economic affairs. Such a centralisation of discourse serves to consolidate the ruling party's economic authority, enhancing its visibility as the primary architect and steward of economic policy. Further, the observed decrease in economic discussions among larger systemic opposition parties (β = -305.79) is indicative of a strategic

sidelining by the regime. By reducing the opposition's voice in economic debates, the regime can minimise the risk of alternative economic narratives challenging its policy agenda.

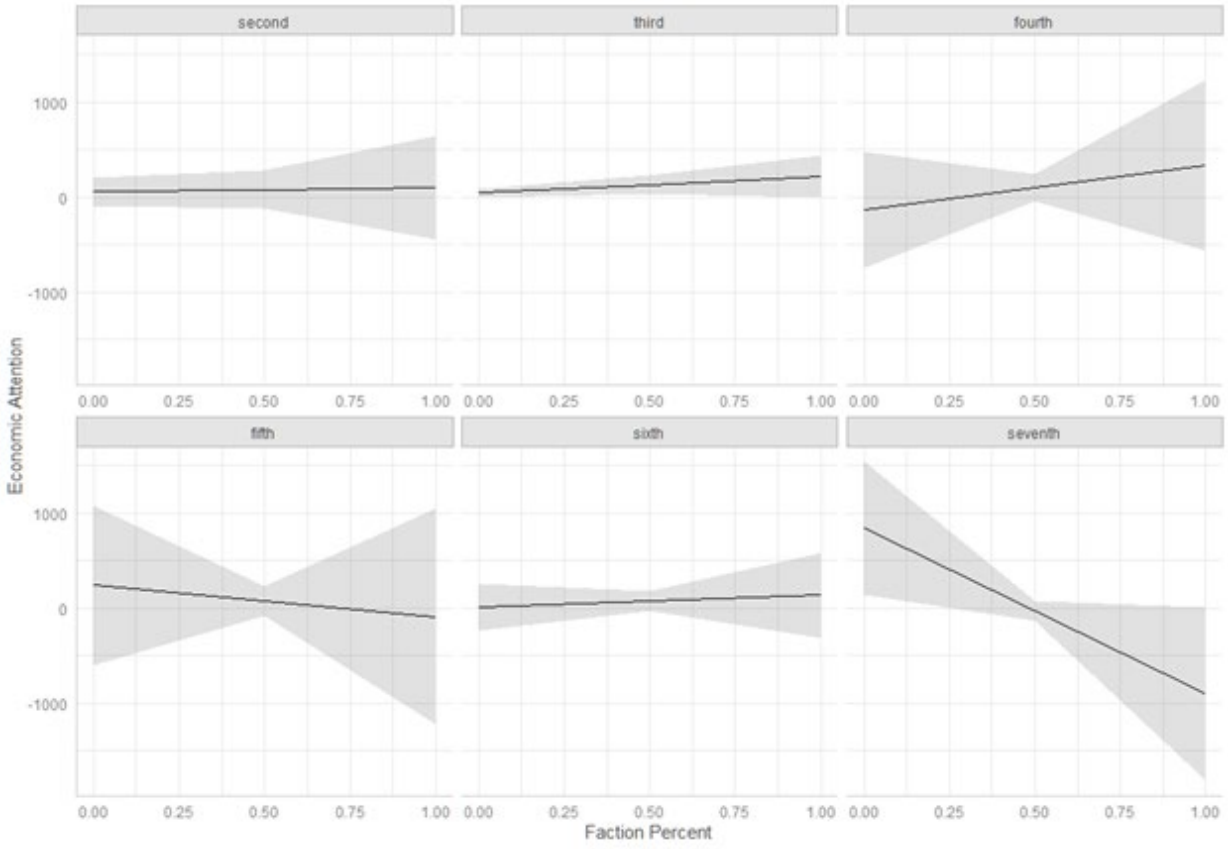
Therefore, United Russia's involvement in economic discussions reflects a broader effort to project the regime's control over state-driven economic management, reinforcing its grip on power. By monopolising these discussions in the latter convocation, the regime not only sidelines opposition parties from advancing alternative economic strategies or criticisms but also maintains United Russia as the sole legitimate voice on economic matters. This also allows United Russia to absorb criticism when the economy falters, thereby shielding the government from direct accountability during economic hardships brought on by executive decision making such as the sanctions which ensued from the 2014 annexation of Crimea.

Figure 5.3. Average Marginal Effects of Ruling Party by Convocation with 95% Confidence Intervals (Economic Policy)



The larger systemic parties such as the KPRF or LDPR seem to have less influence on economic policy during this period, highlighting a strategic centralisation of economic policymaking power. *Figure 5.4* highlights the dynamic between party size and engagement in economic discussions, indicating that smaller parties, despite overall floor time limitations, actively participate in economic policy debates inversely relative to their size, likely aiming to assert their presence and influence within the Duma. This engagement pattern suggests a calculated allowance by the regime for some level of debate on economic matters, possibly to maintain a façade of pluralism or to delegate the articulation of certain economic grievances to the systemic opposition, thus diffusing potential unrest.

Figure 5.4. Marginal Effects of Party Share by Convocation with 95% Confidence Intervals (Economic Policy)



However, the regime may also strategically allow the KPRF and LDPR to participate in some economic policymaking discussions as a means of securing their loyalty and ensuring stability within the system. This involvement provides these systemic opposition parties with opportunities to extract rents from economic policy discussions. By granting them access to economic debates, the regime integrates them into the system in a way that ensures their cooperation, effectively sharing some economic power to prevent them from turning back into genuine opposition forces. In this sense, participation in economic discussions may not only be about diffusing public unrest but about maintaining the systemic opposition system, where opposition parties are rewarded with economic rents or policy influence in exchange for their compliance on major issues (Hutcheson 2013). Hence, the involvement of the systemic opposition may also indicate rent-seeking behaviours within the

boundaries established by the regime (Simison 2020; Truex 2016) – a fact which the following chapter discusses in-depth. This type of controlled power-sharing allows the regime to co-opt potential rivals by offering them a stake in the economic policymaking process, thereby reinforcing the stability of the system while preventing opposition forces from fully mobilising against the regime.

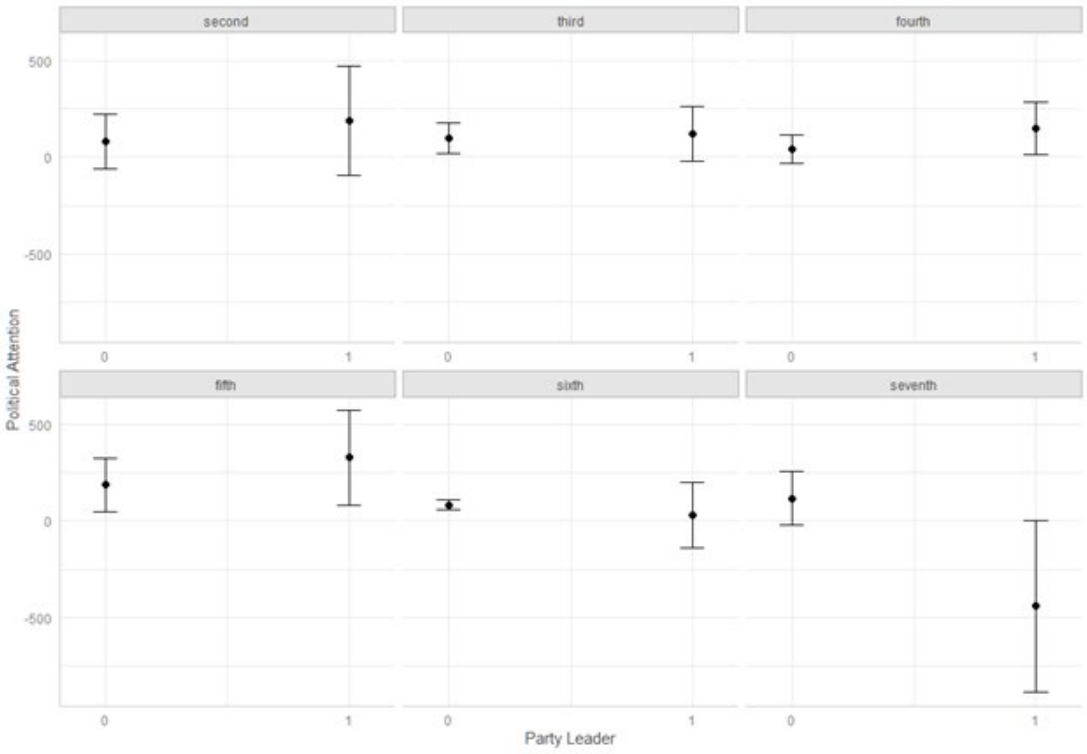
Concurrently, the decline in focus on economic debates from party leadership during the Seventh convocation ($\beta = -52.42$) can be seen as a deliberate move to distance themselves from the potential political fallout of economic mismanagement. By stepping back from direct involvement in economic policy discussions, party leaders are strategically positioning themselves away from public criticism when economic challenges arose during the Sixth and Seventh convocations (see *Figure 5.5*). This withdrawal helps to shield the leadership from direct accountability. Hence, party leaders, being high-profile figures, may prefer to endorse economic policies from a distance rather than being the front-line speakers during vulnerable periods to mitigate their personal vulnerability.

This connects with the fact that backbenchers, who are typically less visible in high-profile policy discussions in any case, follow suit by reducing their engagement in economic debates (see *Figure 5.2*). This behaviour aligns with the centralisation of economic policymaking among senior executive officials (Hanson 2019), leaving backbenchers with limited influence in these areas. As a result, backbenchers disengage from economic policy discussions, focusing instead on less sensitive matters where they can still exert influence without exposing themselves to the political risks associated with regime-controlled economic strategies.

These dynamics are connected to the broader macroeconomic context of Russia in the late Sixth and early Seventh convocations. From 2014 to 2018, Russia's economic management was centred on achieving macroeconomic stability through conventional – albeit severe – austerity measures in the face of sanctions, including public spending cuts and a budget rule that severed the link between oil prices and budgetary expenditure. Despite the harshness of these austerity measures, public resistance

was minimal, facilitated by the autocratic nature of the regime (Hanson 2019). Therefore, the data from this chapter indicates that for both party leaders and backbenchers, this environment of tightly controlled, state-led economic management leaves them with little room to manoeuvre. Since senior officials dominate the policymaking process, and reforms that could redistribute economic power are off the table, backbenchers retreat from economic discussions where they have minimal impact. Their disengagement reflects the regime's broader autocratic structure, where meaningful debate and influence are concentrated among a few trusted figures, and participation in key economic discussions is limited to protect the regime's stability and centralisation of power.

Figure 5.5. Average Marginal Effects of Party Leaders by Convocation with 95% Confidence Intervals (Economic Policy)



The increased focus on committee chairs in *Figure 5.2* emphasises a shift towards using the committee system, rather than party platforms, as the principal forums for economic policy

deliberation. Committees, particularly those led by chairs closely aligned with the regime, can be seen as more technical and less politicised environments for developing and discussing economic policy. This shift suggests that the regime may view committees as more effective vehicles for advancing its economic policies, providing a layer of technical legitimacy to its legislative initiatives. Therefore, the unique distribution of economic policy attention in the Seventh convocation compared against all others suggests a strategy wherein the regime attempts to strengthen the ruling party's voice, curtail opposition engagement, distance party leadership from potential economic policy pitfalls, and elevate the role of committees as key sites for economic policy development. This orchestration aligns with the regime's objectives of maintaining control over the economic narrative and limiting the potential for dissent or challenge within the legislative arena.

These findings align closely with the expectations laid out in the theory section. As the regime increasingly centralises power and aims to maintain or enhance governance capacity, there is a marked shift toward economic policy attention, particularly among technically skilled, pro-government legislators. The theory anticipated that economic policymaking would become a dominant focus for the ruling party in an authoritarian context, due to the direct impact of economic performance on public welfare and its potential to trigger social unrest. The results confirm this, showing that committee chairs and ruling party members play key roles in shaping economic debates, while the systemic opposition and backbenchers are strategically sidelined. This underscores the regime's deliberate effort to control economic discourse, reinforcing stability by prioritising debates that directly address economic concerns – even if the substance of such decision-making is produced elsewhere within the government (c.f., Hanson 2019; Noble 2017).

5.4.2 Political and Civil Policies

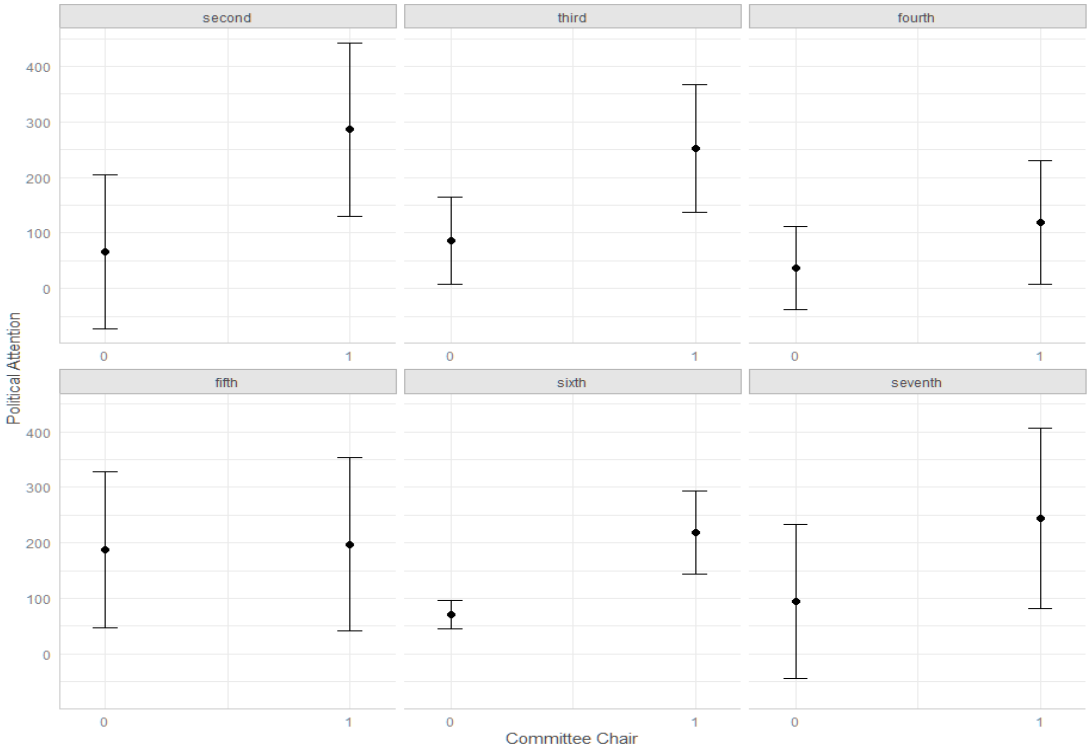
The convocational exposure of deputies ($\beta = 40.99$) suggests that deputies who are more frequently present at Duma sessions are significantly more likely to engage with political and civil

policy debates. Similarly, the positive coefficient for seniority (β = 3.27) indicates that increased tenure within the Duma correlates with a heightened focus on political policies. This relationship highlights the role of experience in the legislative process, where seasoned members leverage their accumulated knowledge and networks to influence political and civil policy debates.

As in the economic policy discussions, committee variables are highly correlated with political and civil policy across convocations. Holding a committee chair position is associated with a significant increase in attention to political policies (β = 129.23), emphasising the considerable influence these roles hold in directing policy discussions. As chairs of committees, deputies are well-positioned to steer debates towards political issues that align with the strategic interests of the government. Similar to committee chairs, those in general committee leadership positions also exhibit a strong association with political-civil policy attention (β = 37.15). This suggests that leadership roles within committees play a vital part in shaping the political discourse, although their influence is not as pronounced as that of the chairs.

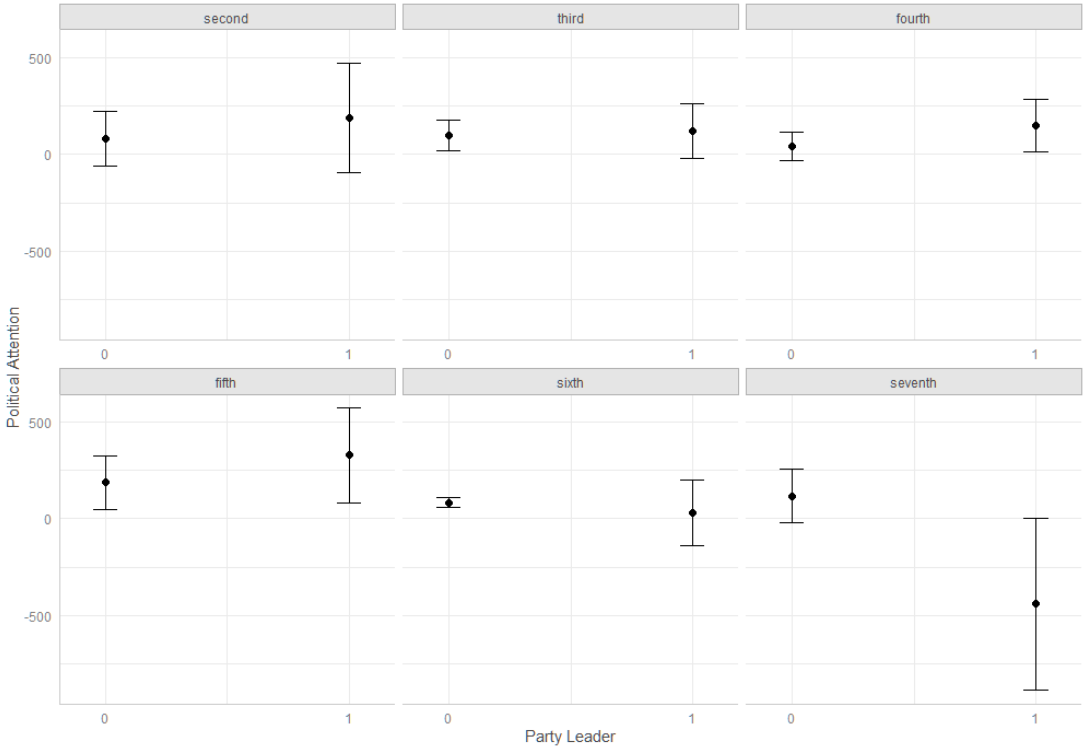
The Seventh convocation does not show any deviations from the baseline in regard to these committee placements. However, negative coefficients for the Fourth (β = -37.08) and Fifth (β = -36.59) convocations indicate that committee chairs during these periods were less engaged in political debates than might be expected from the baseline (see *Figure 5.6*).

Figure 5.6. Average Marginal Effects of Committee Chair by Convocation with 95% Confidence Intervals (Political and Civil Policy)



However, for the Seventh convocation, the negative coefficient for party leadership (β = -103.49) is noteworthy, suggesting a pronounced decrease in the engagement of party leaders with political policies during this period. This could be reflective of a strategic shift by the regime to either limit the role of party leaders in sensitive political debates or to reallocate their focus towards other policy areas (see *Figure 5.7*).

Figure 5.7. Average Marginal Effects of Party Leadership by Convocation with 95% Confidence Intervals (Political and Civil Policy)



Comparing these findings with those from economic policy discussions, it becomes evident that the factors influencing political-civil policy attention are similar in some ways but differ in the magnitude of their effects and the nature of interactions. The lack of significant effects based on ruling party status or party share in the Seventh convocation for political-civil policy discussions contrasts with the increase in ruling party participation observed in economic policy debates in the same period. The pronounced negative coefficient for party leadership echoes the decrease for these roles in economic engagement, suggesting a deliberate withdrawal of party leaders from political debates in a similar fashion. This retreat may reflect a strategic shift to mitigate risks associated with political debates that could expose leaders to controversy or dissent, indicating a preference to maintain a more controlled and stable political environment led by senior committee members. However, with no significant effects contingent upon ruling party or party share, party leaders and committee chairs may not be impacted by the party system in the same way as in economic policy.

The collective narrative from these results suggests that while economic policy is a domain of active engagement and leadership prominence, political-civil policy may be navigated with more discretion, particularly by those at the helm of the party system without regard to which party they belong to. The substantial decrease in political attention from party leaders in the Seventh convocation hints at a strategy where economic policies are given centre stage by rank-and-file members contingent upon their party, potentially as a more publicly palatable arena for addressing political and civil rights, while political discussions are managed with greater caution – across the party system – to avoid politicisation and potential instability. As in economic policy, such a dynamic indicates that while party leadership may strategically withdraw from politically sensitive debates, committee chairs serve as a stabilising and guiding force in key policy areas, thereby contributing to the balance between regime control and legislative engagement.

5.4.3 Social Policies

Despite increasing authoritarian control, social policy debates exhibit a distinct trajectory from either political or economic domains, characterised by relatively lower coefficient scores for exposure ($\beta = 13.19$) and seniority ($\beta = 1.26$). These findings suggest that while convocational exposure and overall tenure continue to influence legislators' engagement with social policy issues, their impact is less pronounced compared to their influence on economic and political debates.

Holding the position of a committee chair retains its strong positive relationship with policy attention regarding social policy ($\beta = 26.60$), though this coefficient is smaller than in economic and political-civil policy. This indicates that committee chairs are influential figures in driving discussions across these policy domains, but their relative influence is greatest in political-civil policy and least in social policy, possibly due to a larger number of social issues that are dispersed among various committees and hence, less centralised. Moreover, no significant effects for committee variables are present for the latter convocations.

The absence of a significant effect of party leadership and ruling party status on social policy attention, particularly in the Seventh convocation where it was observed in economic discussions (and party leadership in political debates), highlights a key difference in parliamentary engagement within this domain. Unlike economic and political policies, where party leadership and ruling party status demonstrated notable influence (either through engagement or strategic disengagement), the same factors do not seem to exert a measurable impact on social policy. This non-effect suggests that social policy discussions within the Duma may operate under different dynamics than those observed in other policy areas.

Therefore, social policy is more decentralised compared to economic and political-civil policy, with a broader base of deputies, including backbenchers and opposition members, contributing to discussions. This could dilute the direct influence of party leadership and ruling party status, as these discussions might be less about central legislative strategy and more about broader societal concerns that cross party lines. Social issues that have a direct impact on the welfare of the electorate, such as pensions, healthcare, and family policy, often require consensus-building efforts that transcend party boundaries to avoid public unrest. This was starkly demonstrated during the 2018 pension protests, where United Russia's unilateral push to raise the retirement age sparked widespread discontent. These protests were notably supported by the systemic opposition, showing how a failure to engage broader parliamentary consensus can amplify dissent and threaten regime stability (Logvinenko 2020). As a result, keeping the systemic opposition in line on social policies is a key concern when trying to mitigate these risks. Ensuring collaboration on these policies helps defuse potential unrest and prevents such issues from becoming rallying points for opposition forces.

As Chaisty and Whitefield (2023) argue, in authoritarian regimes, maintaining a broad voter coalition is a particularly important mitigation strategy. Therefore, social policies, which resonate deeply with diverse societal groups and key constituencies, must reflect a wide array of interests to keep these coalitions intact. This explains why party leadership effects are often absent in social policy discussions: these issues require input from various constituencies across the political spectrum, and the ruling party cannot unilaterally dominate the discourse. Instead, these debates necessitate broader agreement within the Duma, as accommodating the interests of opposition members and backbenchers ensures that critical voter groups see their needs met, reducing the potential for social unrest and maintaining regime legitimacy.

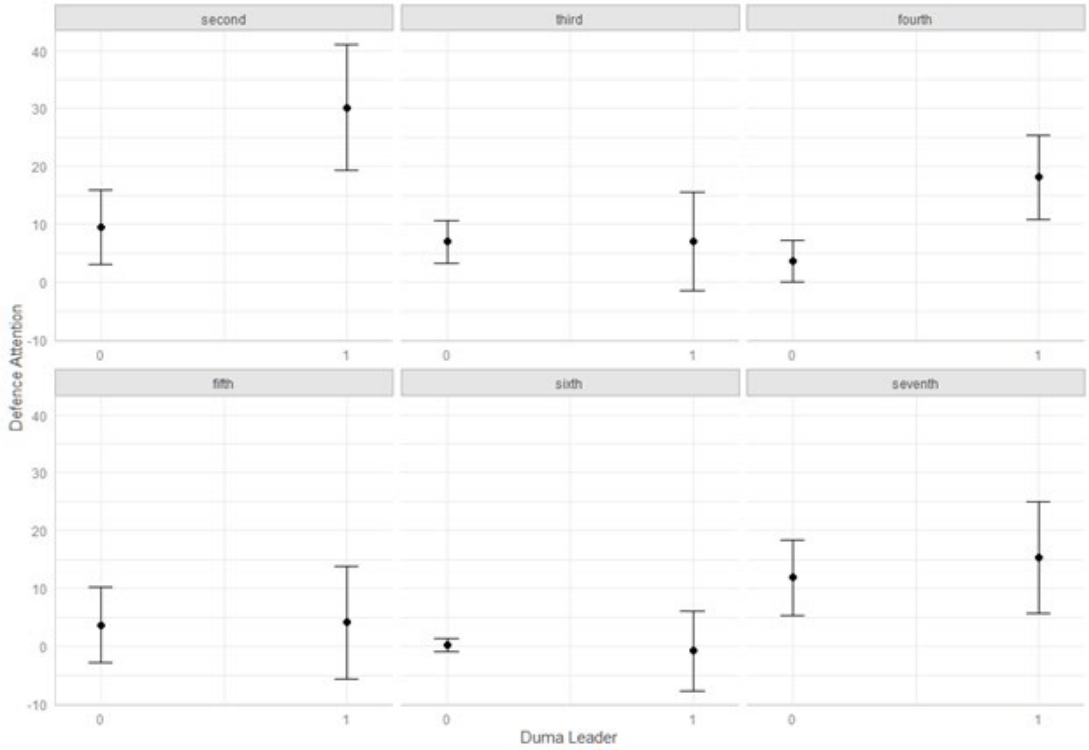
Therefore, on one hand, the relative stability of social policy discussions, despite the broader trends of diminishing legislative debate on other fronts, suggests that social policy remains a vital component of the legislative agenda. This is attributed to the regime's recognition of social policy's critical role in maintaining public welfare and quelling potential discontent (Khmelnitskaya and Zhou 2024), thus serving as a key element in the regime's survival strategy. On the other hand, the observed stability in social policy engagement, juxtaposed against the dynamic shifts in economic and political-civil policy attention, hints at a strategic differentiation in policy focus. While economic performance and political stability are prioritised as more immediate concerns for regime legitimacy and stability, social policy appears to be treated as a consistently important.

5.4.4 Defence Policies

The analysis of defence policy unveils significant variations across convocations, particularly under the influence of evolving authoritarianism, which underscore the strategic recalibrations within the legislative framework as the regime navigates through periods of heightened security concerns and geopolitical tensions. The main effect for Duma leadership positions ($\beta = 6.35$) indicate that these members are actively engaged in defence policy. However, this general tendency to engage with this

policy domain is mediated by convocation. Namely, the Third, Fifth, and Sixth convocations demonstrate negative coefficients. The following figure demonstrates these changes over time.

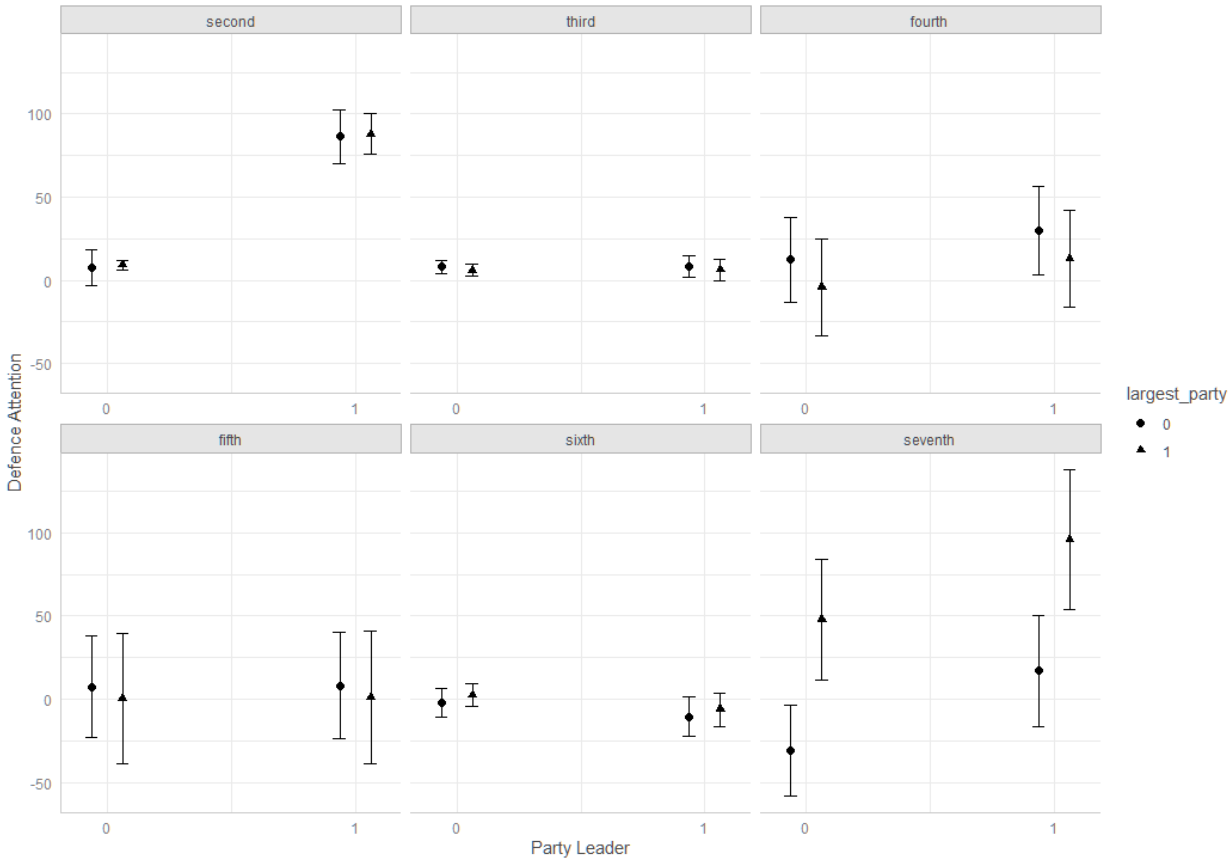
Figure 5.8. Average Marginal Effects of Duma Leadership by Convocation with 95% Confidence Intervals (Defence Policy)



A strong and consistent positive effect of party leadership (β = 22.70) on defence policy attention contrasts sharply with the strategic withdrawal of party leaders from economic and political discussions. However, the Third and Fourth Dumas suggest a withdrawal from this policy domain (β = -39.21; β = -7.41). This divergence for the other convocations suggests that defence policy may be a domain where party leaders assert more influence. In turn, this is notable since the party system stratifies itself in the Seventh convocation, with United Russia assuming a dominant role. This shift, highlighted by a positive coefficient for United Russia's involvement (β = 13.82) and a concurrent decrease in party percent (β = -21.83), suggests a strategic consolidation of defence policy discussions within the ruling party and its leaders. *Figure 5.9* illustrates this trend in the context of party leadership. It underscores that alongside United Russia's increased share of defence debates, party leadership

engages in these debates. Moreover, the Seventh convocation provides a stark contrast to the more balanced engagement observed in earlier convocations for both the ruling party and party leadership. This dominance likely reflects a deliberate strategy to centralise discourse on national security within the ruling party and shift those debates to party leaders, thereby solving the need to present a unified legislative stance on defence matters.

Figure 5.9. Average Marginal Effects of Party Leadership by Ruling Party Status and Convocation with 95% Confidence Intervals (Defence Policy)



An alternative explanation for United Russia's increased involvement and dominance in defence policy discussions during the Seventh convocation could be tied to strategic signalling. By allowing United Russia to occupy more time on the floor, the regime may be creating a calculated contrast with other parties, which are permitted or even encouraged to take more extreme stances.

This dynamic positions United Russia as the responsible, rational power broker on critical national security issues, thereby enhancing its image as the stable governing party, while framing more radical or fringe positions as the domain of the systemic opposition parties who would not allow many of their members on the floor. In turn, this signalling strategy would allow United Russia to present itself as the party of reason and pragmatism, emphasising its capability to manage sensitive defence policies responsibly compared to the potentially more extreme systemic opposition parties. *Chapter 6* demonstrates that defence policy remains one of the most contested on the floor within the Seventh convocation.

This approach ties into the observed dynamics within defence policy discussions, particularly in relation to committee chair roles. While the coefficient for committee chairs in defence policy (β = 3.56) is positive, it is smaller compared to their influence in economic and political discussions, where committee leadership plays a more central role. The relatively moderate impact of committee chairs in defence suggests that in this domain, the regime prefers to keep policy debates more dispersed and less dependent on individual chairpersons. This dispersal of influence within committees allows United Russia's leadership to remain the main actors in defence matters, while still giving some space to committee members and other parties, thus signalling that United Russia is the stabilising force in defence debates.

Considering the main effect in relationship to specific convocations reveals that defence policy has been averted by senior committee members as well. The interaction term for the committee chair in the Third Convocation (β = -2.57) shows a negative effect, indicating that during this period, committee chairs were less engaged in defence policy discussions. Similarly, the committee leadership in the Fifth Convocation (β = -0.71) indicates a period-specific reduction in the influence of committee leadership on defence policy, both suggesting a less centralised leadership role in defence policy discussions at that time.

The fact that committee chairs and leadership have a notable but not dominant influence suggests a balancing act in defence discussions, maintaining the importance of specialised roles without allowing them to overshadow the broader committee or Duma engagement, which the data suggests more strongly relates to the party system. Hence, defence issues contrast against the more central policy making avenues of the duma. The strategic significance of defence does not necessarily translate to an overwhelming dominance by committee composition, unlike in economic or political-civil policy where such a pattern is more evident. This reflects a legislative environment that values the input of a range of committee members in defence policy. Instead, the party system and its leadership are more effectual in describing defence policy attention.

5.4.5 Foreign Policy

As in other domains, representatives with more extensive tenure or higher frequency of convocational exposure tend to show a slightly increased propensity for engaging with foreign policy issues, with exposure exerting a more significant influence than seniority. Engagement in foreign policy is significantly influenced by the frequency of legislative activity and experience. The coefficient for convocational exposure ($\beta = 1.81$) indicates that deputies who are more actively involved in Duma sessions are also more engaged in foreign policy discussions, likely due to increased opportunities to influence or participate in these debates. Seniority ($\beta = 0.24$) has a positive but relatively smaller effect, suggesting that while experience matters, it is the active participation in the Duma's workings that is more directly correlated with foreign policy engagement. However, the effects of exposure and seniority are muted compared to politics or economy.

The main effect of the ruling party ($\beta = 35.19$) demonstrates a strong correlation. The interaction effects further demonstrate variability across convocations. It is more pronounced during the Fifth convocation ($\beta = 40.21$). But, in contrast, the Sixth convocation ($\beta = -12.35$) sees a decrease in the ruling party's foreign policy engagement, which is related to internal shifts in focus and changes in the

international landscape. For instance, following the mass protest movement in 2011-2012 concerning electoral fraud, the regime intensified its focus on consolidating domestic political control (Ananyeva 2021). The protests marked a critical juncture, prompting the regime to prioritise internal stability, by tightening control over the media, limiting civil society, and supressing genuine opposition. This internal shift toward political repression and governance restructuring likely redirected much of United Russia's focus away from foreign policy and towards managing the domestic challenges to the regime's stability. The introduction of laws aimed at suppressing political dissent, including the 'foreign agent' law[32], further exemplifies this inward turn, indicating that the regime's attention was concentrated on fortifying control at home.

The Sixth convocation also coincided with significant shifts in the global geopolitical environment, particularly after the 2014 annexation of Crimea and the ensuing international sanctions imposed on Russia by Western countries. These sanctions resulted in economic downturns, causing the Russian government to shift its focus toward economic resilience and dealing with the domestic impact of these punitive measures (Frye 2019; Oxenstierna and Olsson 2015). The international isolation that followed, coupled with economic challenges stemming from falling oil prices, necessitated that the regime focusses on economic stabilisation and domestic welfare policies rather than expanding its engagement in foreign policy debates, even if these are the root cause of much of the domestic strife.

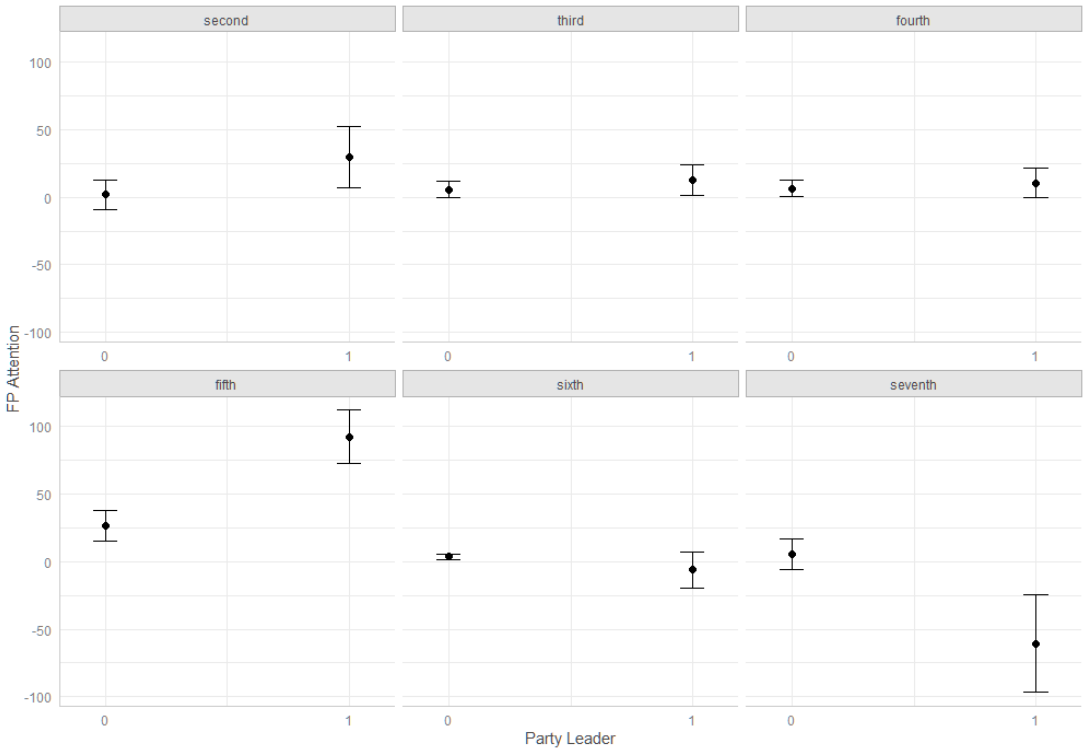
As in economic policy, party share presents a negative coefficient ($\beta = -64.68$), particularly notable in the Fifth convocation ($\beta = -73.15$). This suggests that as parties represent a larger percentage of the

[32] The 'foreign agent' law, passed in 2012, represents a key tool used by the Russian government to curtail the influence and activism of non-governmental organizations, particularly those engaged in human rights advocacy. The law requires any organization that receives foreign funding and engages in 'political activity' to register as a 'foreign agent', a label that carries significant economic and political ramifications. This legislation has been instrumental in the state's efforts to limit civil society's capacity to hold the government accountable, while maintaining an appearance of legal legitimacy (Goncharenko and Khadaroo 2020).

Duma, their engagement in foreign policy diminishes, possibly due to the ruling party's consolidation of this policy area.

Party leadership has a fluctuating impact on foreign policy attention. The negative coefficient in the Seventh convocation (β = -14.22) for party leadership implies a strategic withdrawal or shift in focus, which may be due to several factors, including a move to centralise foreign policy discussions within the backbenchers of United Russia and reduce its visibility for the party. However, the Fifth convocation sees a surge in party leadership engagement (β = 13.33). *Figure 5.10* elucidates these findings demonstrating the marked difference between the Fifth and Seventh convocations against all others.

Figure 5.10. Average Marginal Effects of Party Leadership by Ruling Party Status and Convocation with 95% Confidence Intervals (Foreign Policy)



These adjustments may reflect broader strategic considerations, such as the regime's desire to manage the narrative around foreign policy or to balance the need for a unified front on international issues with internal political dynamics and factional interests. Hence the allocation of this domain to

backbenchers and United Russia. By shifting the focus of foreign policy discussions to backbenchers, the regime could be allowing a controlled form of pluralism, enabling it to maintain an appearance of open debate without compromising key policy areas aligned with its interests.

Committee chair ($\beta = 4.62$) presents a positive effect, but this is relatively subdued compared to the pronounced effects seen in the ruling party and party share coefficients. This underlines that while committee roles contribute to foreign policy discussions, they do not dominate the discourse. The negative coefficients for committee chairs in the Third ($\beta = -5.804711$) and Seventh ($\beta = -1.059172$) convocations underscore a reduced committee influence during these periods, likely due to stronger centralisation or prioritisation of party-driven agendas.

These findings indicate that foreign policy within the Duma remains tightly controlled by the ruling party, with the committee structure playing a secondary, supportive role. The variation in party leadership's engagement across convocations may reflect shifting strategic priorities, influenced by the international context and domestic political pressures. One possible explanation is that the regime is deliberately adjusting its approach to foreign policy, sometimes centralising discussions to project unity and control, and at other times delegating them to different actors to diffuse responsibility. This flexibility allows the regime to navigate evolving foreign policy challenges while maintaining control over the narrative, responding both to global developments and internal political dynamics.

The decreasing involvement in foreign policy from party leaders also indicates a tightening of control by the executive. Hence, the party leaders strategically withdraw or engage based on the perceived political value of foreign policy discussions as they relate to the current international situation. In periods of heightened geopolitical tension, party leaders may step back, allowing backbenchers to handle debates to avoid associating leadership – and, therefore, publicity – with unpopular decisions or international failures as with the continued fallout from the war against Ukraine. Conversely, during times when foreign policy is seen as quotidian, party leadership may

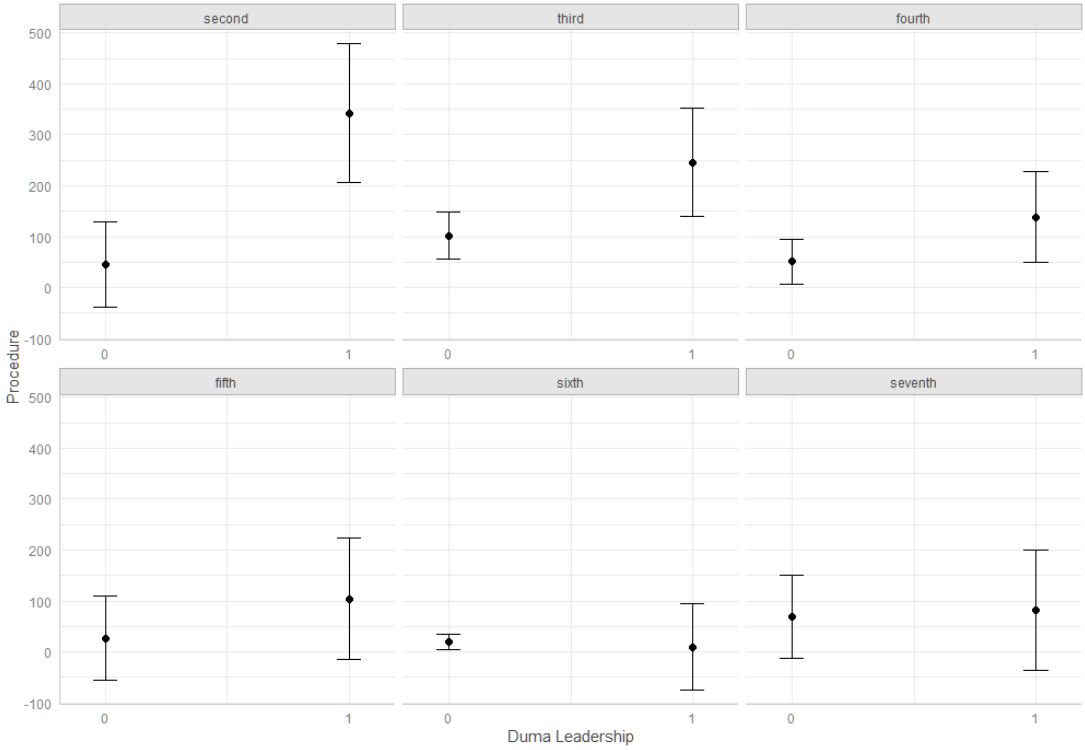
become more actively involved to signal strength and stability. This ebb and flow in engagement is less about internal strategy and more about the regime's efforts to mitigate risks or capitalise on foreign policy successes.

5.4.6 Procedural-regulatory Policies

The procedural-regulatory policies within the Duma, concerned with the internal regulations and day-to-day operations, provide a window into the structural dynamics and hierarchies of power within the legislative body. Convocational exposure shows a significant positive relationship ($\beta = 23.01$) with procedural policy engagement, indicating that those deputies who are more present and engaged in Duma sessions tend to contribute more to discussions about its operations. Seniority ($\beta = 2.08$) also has a slightly positive impact, suggesting that experience within the Duma correlates with a greater involvement in procedural matters to a degree. Interestingly deputies from single-member districts exhibit a significant aversion ($\beta = -19.85$) to engaging in procedural policy discussions.

Duma-wide leadership roles have a prominent positive effect ($\beta = 101.54$) on procedural policy discussions. This underscores the central role that the Duma's leadership plays in shaping the legislative agenda and guiding its operations. The negative coefficients across all convocations for Duma leadership (e.g., $\beta = -76.15$ in the Third) indicate that periods after the Second convocation experienced a decrease in engagement from these roles, which may reflect a shifting balance between the legislative agenda set by the leadership and the operational autonomy of individual deputies or committees. Or in other words after establishing the initial regulatory framework, these roles gradually allow more operational autonomy to committees and individual deputies. The following figure details the stark difference between convocations and the declining role of these positions over time.

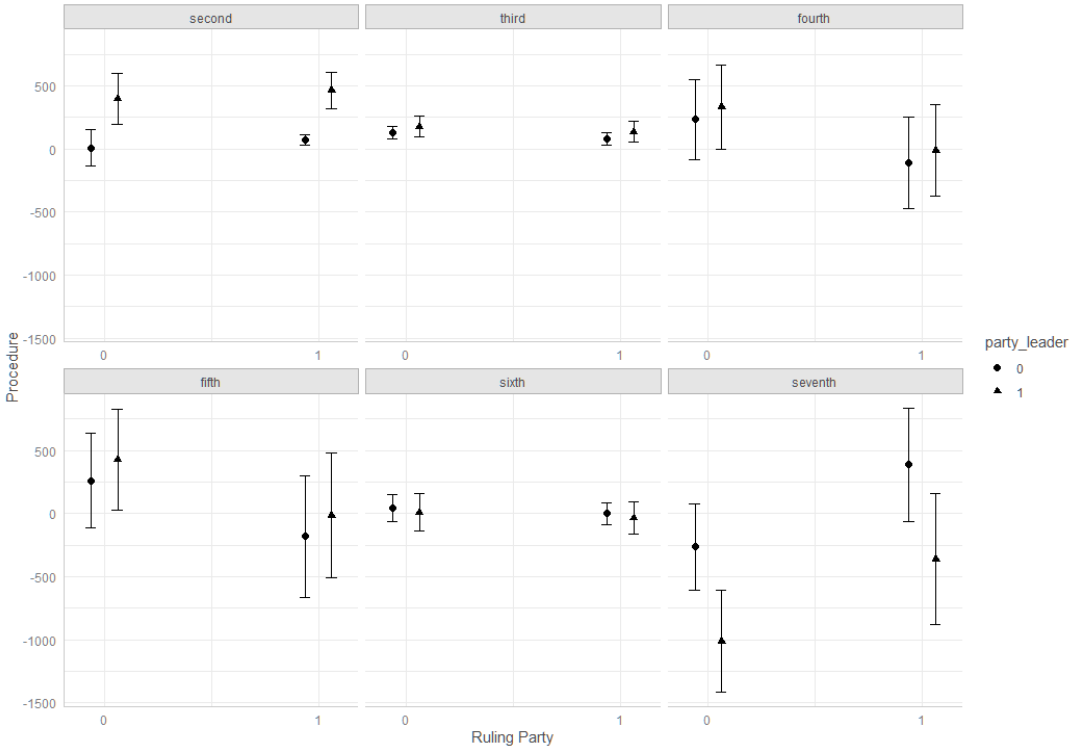
Figure 5.11. Average Marginal Effects of Duma Leadership and Convocation with 95% Confidence Intervals (Procedural-Regulatory)



Committee chairs (β = 58.42) and leadership (β = 15.82) show a robust involvement in procedural policy, indicative of their importance in managing committee operations and contributing to the legislative framework's shaping. Yet, the Fifth convocation demonstrates a marked decrease for committee chairs (β = -18.37) and leadership (β = -11.19) in this respect. However, the relative stability of these positions from the Second to Seventh convocations (excluding the Fifth) indicates that committee roles are important for structuring these debates.

The ruling party's variable influence, with a positive coefficient in the Seventh convocation (β = 135.61) and negative in the Third (β = -54.46), suggests strategic shifts in engagement over time, reflecting changes in the United Russia's internal strategy and their consolidation over this domain. Concurrently, party leadership shows a consistent trend of withdrawal from procedural discussions across convocations, indicating a focus a delegation of procedural matters to other roles within the party hierarchy. *Figure 5.12* demonstrates the effect of party leadership by party status over time.

Figure 5.12. Average Marginal Effects of Party Leadership by Ruling Party and Convocation with 95% Confidence Intervals (Procedural-Regulatory)



The shifting dynamics between party control and committee autonomy have strategic implications. The ruling party's assertive role in later convocations could indicate a move towards centralising procedural control to avoid the internal discord present in the Sixth convocation and maintain legislative efficiency. At the same time, the delegation of procedural tasks by party leadership might aim to enhance operational effectiveness and prevent any single entity within the Duma from becoming too powerful or autonomous.

However, the magnitude of effects reveals that while party control is significant, it does not necessarily overshadow the procedural contributions of committees and their leadership, which maintain a steady, if somewhat lesser, influence across convocations. This balance suggests that the United Russia seeks to maintain a firm yet flexible control over procedural regulations, ensuring that while the legislative process is tightly governed, it still allows for from committee actors.

In conclusion, the analysis suggests that while the ruling party has consolidated its influence over procedural discussions, especially in later convocations, there is a distribution of power that balances party leadership's broader strategic oversight with the operational expertise of committees. This approach reflects that the more authoritarian period in the Seventh convocation seeks a controlled yet efficient legislative floor, where party leadership dictates the broader agenda while leveraging the committee system to manage Duma operations.

5.5 Discussion

The analysis of policy domains within the Duma from 1996 to 2021 highlights how legislative attention has shifted in line with the regime's move toward increased authoritarianism. As the regime consolidates power, we would expect to see a shift in policy focus towards quotidian domestic issues that are critical for regime stability, such as economic and social welfare, and political-civil policies, while more sensitive areas like defence, foreign policy, and procedural-regulatory policies would be deemphasised. This reflects the regime's strategy to maintain control by steering debates toward policy domains that help bolster its domestic legitimacy, while avoiding areas that expose a lack of policy cohesion.

The theory predicts that as democratic backsliding occurs, legislative debates will increasingly reflect the regime's priorities, emphasising governance, economic management, and social welfare. These domains maintain the regime's legitimacy and ensure stability by delivering either material benefits to key constituencies or by protecting against dissenting actors. At the same time, discussions around defence and foreign policy, which are typically under executive control, are expected to be downplayed in the legislature, allowing the regime to signal openness to debate while keeping the most sensitive issues out of the legislative spotlight. By controlling the focus of legislative discussions in this

way, the regime effectively monitors dissent, channels political energy into safer policy areas, and maintains its image of competent governance.

The investigation lends mixed support to the initial hypotheses. There was a strong increase in economic and political-civil policy discussions in the more authoritarian Seventh convocation, fitting the expected pattern. However, the hypothesis surrounding decreased discussions around defence, foreign policy, and procedural-regulatory matters saw mixed evidence. The consistent pattern across convocations for defence and foreign policy discussions doesn't fully support or refute the hypothesis. The procedural domain did witness an overall decline in discussions, lending some support to its declining role. For political rights, there was a marginal decline in attention in the Seventh convocation.

However, the regression analysis demonstrates how patterns of engagement have changed in more detail. Across all policy domains, convocational exposure is consistently significant, indicating that the more deputies are involved in the Duma's activities, the more they engage in policy discussions. However, the magnitude of its effect varies, being highest in economic, political and civil matters, and procedural-regulatory policies and lowest in defence, foreign policy, and social policy. Similarly, seniority shows a weaker but still significant correlation with policy attention across all domains, with the strongest effect observed in economic policy ($\beta = 4.15$) and the weakest in foreign policy ($\beta = 0.24$), with no effect distinguishable for defence.

The roles of committee chair and leadership positions are also significantly correlated with policy attention across all domains but are most pronounced in economic policy ($\beta = 113.68$ for chair) and political and civil policy ($\beta = 129.23$ for chair). This indicates that committee chairs have a greater influence on these areas, likely due to the powers vested in these positions to direct the legislative agenda. These are notably less impactful in defence and foreign policy when compared to economics and politics, suggesting that while committee chairs are influential, their roles in defence and foreign

policy are relatively more circumscribed. This indicates that committee chairs have a greater influence on these areas, likely due to the powers vested in these positions to direct the legislative agenda.

In economic policy, party leadership seems to recede from prominence by the Seventh convocation (β = -52.42), whereas for political and procedural-regulatory policy, this withdrawal is even more pronounced (β = -103.49; β = -147.01). Foreign policy encounters a slight decrease in engagement as well (β = -14.22). However, defence increases in importance for party leaders (5.04), which follows a period of recession between the Third to Sixth convocations. This suggests a strategy where party leaders step back from direct engagement in debates that could carry higher domestic political risks, possibly to avoid the political costs associated with contentious policy outcomes or to focus their energies on domains deemed more important for their more public platforms.

Following the party leaderships' diminished role in economic and procedural-regulatory policy, the ruling party's engagement becomes more assertive in the Seventh convocation (β = 193.51; β = 135.61), indicating a deliberate move to dominate economic and procedural discourses, which contrasts with political-civil policy where the increase is noticeable but less significant (β = 63.48). These results underscore a focused consolidation on economic, political, and regulatory governance and policy centralisation, aligning with the theory that economic performance and political management are pivotal to the regime's legitimacy and the state's welfare. In terms of regulatory attention, this pattern reflects the regime's strategy to minimise the internal discord on the floor such as found during the Sixth convocation (2012) and maintain legislative efficiency, aligning with the theory's expectations of controlled legislative environments.

Hence, the dominance of United Russia in economic policy discussions reflects a strategic prioritisation designed to maintain the regime's image of competent governance, particularly in managing the economy. By monopolising economic discourse, United Russia effectively limits systemic opposition parties' influence, reinforcing the regime's control and ensuring that alternative

economic narratives are marginalised, which is characteristic of authoritarian regimes seeking to project stability through economic stewardship (Magaloni 2006; Svolik 2012). However, in contrast to economic policy, social policy does not exhibit the same degree of party-based dominance. The literature suggests that welfare distribution in authoritarian regimes often follows a broader set of dynamics, influenced by inter-bureaucratic competition and expert-led policy frameworks rather than direct party control (Duckett and Wang 2017; Kivinen and Li 2012). In Russia, this results in social policy debates that remain broadly focussed across parties. Therefore, they involve a wider range of actors beyond the ruling party as social welfare serves a technocratic function aimed at maintaining regime legitimacy through effective governance rather than purely partisan gains (Cook and Dimitrov 2017; Khmelnitskaya, Sätre, and Pape 2023). This dispersion of debate across parties suggests that while economic discussions are tightly controlled to safeguard the regime's narrative of economic competence, social policy operates on a more 'inclusive' basis, reflecting its role in addressing public welfare concerns through a technocratic process. This divergence from the theory's expectation points to the unique role that social welfare plays in authoritarian regimes, not as a tool for stabilising the dominant party system but as a mechanism for broader regime stability through public goods provision.

Defence policy likewise shows only a moderate positive effect for the ruling party in the Seventh convocation ($\beta = 13.82$). While, for foreign policy, the ruling party in the Fifth convocation shows a significant positive engagement ($\beta = 40.21$), which is not observed in the Seventh convocation (carrying a main effect of $\beta = 35.19$). This could imply that while the ruling party maintains a consistent presence in foreign policy debates, the larger systemic parties are somewhat excluded, possibly to maintain a tight ruling party narrative around national security issues.

Over the different convocations, there has been a strategic shift in the ruling party's engagement with policy debates. Initially, there was a broader participation across party lines in policy discussions,

reflecting a semblance of legislative pluralism. However, as the regime transitioned towards more authoritarian practices, United Russia's dominance became more evident, with party affiliation becoming a significant determinant of legislative focus. This shift underscores the regime's reliance on the legislative body as a tool for signalling governance competence, particularly in economic policy, where the regime seeks to demonstrate its handling of the economy.

Moreover, the increased emphasis on procedural-regulatory policy discussions by the ruling party also highlights a strategic use of legislative debates to reinforce control over the parliamentary process. By focusing on procedural matters, the ruling party ensures that legislative operations align with regime priorities, further consolidating its control over the political and legislative landscape. This domination of United Russia on procedural debates serves not only to streamline the passage of regime-favoured legislation but also to curtail oppositional efforts to challenge the regime's authority within the legislative body.

It follows that committee influence on policy domains was subtle compared to party dynamics. Committee chairs were revealed to play an integral role across various policy areas, but not as decisively as party affiliation did, suggesting a close tie between these positions and the ruling party's hierarchy. Notably, roles other than chairperson did not associate significantly with policy attention, indicating that committee influence emanates from the upper tiers of party structures. A significant development in economic policy emerged only in the Seventh convocation, where focus intensified, aligning with the thesis that authoritarian regimes prioritise economic discussions for legitimacy reasons. Political policies did not exhibit dramatic shifts, with chairpersons consistently engaging more than other members. A fair balance in social policy debates was seen between chairs and regular committee members. Foreign policy debates, on the other hand, saw equivalent participation from chairs and members, but the scarcity of such debates became evident starting in the Sixth convocation.

These differences across policy domains suggest an adaptive strategy by the regime and the ruling party to concentrate efforts where they matter most for regime stability and parliamentary functioning. Economic and procedural policies are clearly prioritised, with political-civil policy following suit albeit with less intensity and control, possibly to preserve the appearance of pluralism and controlled debate. Moreover, the strategic disengagement of party leadership from procedural-regulatory debates suggests a consolidated legislative system where the detailed management of regulatory matters after the 2012 regulatory amendments is delegated down the party hierarchy, allowing party leaders and United Russia in general to concentrate on larger strategic concerns. The regime's approach appears to be highly responsive and calculated, aiming to strengthen its position in critical areas while managing its legislative activities in a way that reinforces its control and addresses strategic priorities.

5.6 Conclusion

These shifts in policy attention across various domains suggest an overarching strategy where economic and procedural-regulatory domains are increasingly controlled by the ruling party, political and civil debate is managed carefully to avoid destabilising controversy, and social policy remains a field open for broader engagement. This pattern supports the primary theoretical perspective that as authoritarianism deepens, legislative debates become more focused on legitimising the regime through controlled discourse, sidelining opposition, and emphasising regime-supporting narratives. Due to the unexpected finding of the party system carrying no sway on social policy – a key policy domain – future inquiries must analyse the extent to which the Duma is operating within the broader state's ideological framework.

A primary observation from the analysis is the influence of party affiliation and institutional structures on the direction and intensity of policy attention. A broad range of policy discussions characterised the relatively autonomous legislative environments of the Second and Third Dumas.

This contrasts with the Fourth convocation, where we noted a distinct contraction in policy attention across sectors, likely attributable to an increased centralisation of control by the United Russia – a trend later coming to full fruition in the Seventh convocation.

The analysis demonstrates a pattern of diminished focus on procedural-regulatory, defence, and foreign policy domains. This pattern may reflect the authoritarian regime's increased consolidation of floor processes, as well as the growing influence of United Russia over floor time. The decreased attention to these domains indicates a strategic decision to navigate the parliament away from areas where executive decisions may be challenged or where the potential for political conflict is high.

The analysis also accounted for the influence of institutional changes and party leadership dynamics in shaping policy discussions. The erosion of legislative autonomy, indicative of an increasingly authoritarian regime, has played a significant role in redefining what issues are addressed and how they are approached. The institutional transformations observed to influence floor time and access are also likely to shape issue attention. In other words, the nature and extent of policy attention are both a product and an indicator of the broader political context within which the Duma operates.

Policy attention on the Duma floor is dynamic and evolves over time, moulded by a variety of factors. Leadership, both in terms of individuals and party dominance, played a considerable role, with those at the helm having a significant impact on the policy discourse. Economic conditions, international relations, and domestic pressures were also influential, demonstrating that policy attention is a product of both internal dynamics and external pressures.

An important element in this study was the understanding that the nature of the policy domain could affect policy attention. For instance, defence and foreign policy, by virtue of their executive nature, were anticipated to maintain a lower profile. This was corroborated by our findings, which suggest that the executive branch often dominates these policy domains, leaving little room for legislative input, and that input was typically led by United Russia and its leadership. Conversely,

economic and political policies emerged as a more dynamic area of discussion, likely due to their interrelationships with the executive wherein the executive needs to legislate these laws rather than issue dictates. Crisis events and periods of political upheaval could prompt spikes in economic and social policy debates – an example of which includes the 2008 global financial crisis. During this period, the Russian government implemented a significant stimulus package, increasing social expenditures from 33.7% to 40.6% of GDP, aimed at supporting struggling sectors of the economy by helping raise pensions and increasing the minimum wage (Carnegie Endowment Russia and Eurasian Program 2010). These measures were targeted not only at the most vulnerable populations but also at broader groups, such as residents of towns dependent on single industries, to stabilise public sentiment from the middle classes and maintain regime legitimacy.

The chapter also positioned the Duma within the broader landscape of legislative policy attention in autocratic regimes. Prior research suggests that legislative actors in these systems can wield varying levels of influence over policy decisions, mediated via interactions with the executive branch or elite coalitions. This chapter, by evaluating policy attention in the Duma against this wider backdrop, provides a more comprehensive understanding of the role policy attention plays in authoritarian parliaments as something which the executive and its parliamentary allies need to address on the floor and in front of the public. However, it also underscores that some policy areas (e.g., political-civil policy in the more authoritarian Seventh convocation), may be seen as toxic by party leaders. Hence, they shy away from contentiousness.

In conclusion, the role of policy attention within authoritarian parliaments such as the Duma is of critical importance. It is influenced by regime control over parliamentary discourse, party systems, institutional structures, and leadership dynamics. Understanding the role it plays not only illuminates the mechanisms of legislative decision-making in these systems but also has implications for how we understand power dynamics in these regimes more broadly.

The insights gained from this exploration of policy attention within the Russian State Duma provide a robust foundation for further investigations into legislative politics in authoritarian contexts. The next chapter will move on to probing whether the party system is dynamic in its policy attention. In other words, does pluralism decline alongside the development of authoritarian speech-practices on the floor?

6. Government-Opposition Politics on the Floor

The following penultimate chapter of the dissertation dissects the complexities of governmental and opposition rhetoric within policy dialogues. Building upon the data-centric methodology of the prior chapter, attention is directed to the Russian State Duma's deliberations from 1996 to 2021, spanning the Second through Seventh convocations. The core endeavour is to map out the distribution and temporal shifts of pro-governmental and oppositional policy stances. An examination of the parliamentary corpus reveals variations in pro-governmental rhetoric throughout these periods, which is operationalised by gauging the magnitude of 'permitted' oppositional discourse on the floor. In other words, higher levels of oppositional discourse signify robust pluralism within the chamber. The data points to intensified opposition during the Second and Third convocations, a semblance of stability through the Fourth and Fifth, followed by a marked tilt towards pro-governmental rhetoric from the Sixth convocation onward. These patterns are further marked by a discernible wane in relative oppositional focus within key policy arenas, especially economics, politics, social policy, and regulatory matters. Conversely, sectors where the Duma wields less sway (e.g., defence and foreign policy) witness a surge in oppositional engagement.

The evolution of the Duma provides a fundamental lens for understanding the limitations placed on the discourse of opposition members. Numerous studies have delved into the intricacies of polarization and party dynamics, examining facets like gubernatorial backing, electoral mandates, and sectoral influence (Chaisty 2013; Thames 2001), presidential support and the Duma's relationship to the executive (Noble 2020; Remington 2008; Remington 2006; Chaisty 2005), the extent of individual legislative freedom (Shevchenko and Golosov 2001), party cohesion in general (Chaisty 2005; Kunicova and Remington 2008) and electoral outcomes (White 2020). Yet, a conspicuous gap remains:

none of these studies have zeroed in on floor debates as a comparative measure to analyse the depth and breadth of oppositional politics. Instead, the prevailing academic trend gravitates towards more conventional metrics for legislative outcomes, such as roll-call votes, electoral outcomes, and overarching institutional evaluations, potentially overlooking the nuanced dynamics of on-floor discussions and their possible uses for extra-legislative politics.

To truly grasp the limitations imposed on the speechmaking practices of opposition members within the Duma, and why this is an important indicator of political pluralism, it is imperative to discuss the potential government-opposition cleavage as it is expressed in the systemic opposition and United Russia. As elucidated by Korgunyuk and Alekseev et al., the disparities in floor debates between the opposition and the government often echo the more expansive electoral rifts that characterize the Russian political terrain (Alekseev, Korgunyuk, and Pomiguev 2022; Korgunyuk 2014). These studies rely on the identification of two significant long-term electoral cleavages, 'pro-market modernists versus anti-market traditionalists' and 'authorities versus community', which provide a framework to interpret the dynamic political confrontations witnessed in the Duma (Korgunyuk 2014). The former, having left an indelible mark on the political discourse of the 1990s, finds its echoes in the Duma's economic policy debates and discussions on electoral legislation, drawing a distinct line between the ruling party and its opposition (Korgunyuk 2014). In contrast, the latter cleavage, gaining prominence post-2000, pivots around a 'authorities versus community' axis, a dichotomy frequently mirrored in the rhetorical tactics wielded by both government and opposition during floor exchanges (Korgunyuk 2014). The 'authorities versus community' cleavage delineates is characterised by differing stances toward governance and political authority. Politically, it aligns with the authoritarian-democratic division, distinguishing those who support a more authoritarian governance model – emphasising centralised control and limited political freedoms –

from those advocating for community-based, democratic governance that prioritises civic participation and broader political freedoms.

Entering the 2010s, a distinct 'power-opposition' cleavage emerged, centring predominantly on a gamut of domestic political and socio-economic concerns. This cleavage, stretching to encompass pivotal areas like electoral legislation and fiscal policy, sharply demarcates United Russia from other parliamentary parties. In such cases, the theory expects that these domains will be more heavily pro-governmental than oppositional.

Alekseev et al. supports those findings with a factor analysis of debate rhetoric, which offers a comprehensive lens through which the nature of political confrontation within the Duma can be analysed (Alekseev et al., 2022). A case in point is the palpable tension between the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF) and United Russia during the late Seventh convocation's 2020 constitutional amendments and their legislative repercussions. This tension unveils an intricate layer of oppositional politics, which, as Alekseev et al.(2022) suggest, might shape legislative discourse in tandem with the prevailing political climate. Their discourse analysis further uncovers the divergent rhetorical tactics adopted by the parliamentary opposition and the ruling bloc throughout the Duma's timeline. The opposition often resorts to impassioned language and incisive critiques, while the ruling majority and the government craft their discourse to distribute accountability for contentious decisions and temper oppositional censure. Yet, a critical observation is that Alekseev et al. do not validate this data's consistency across daily proceedings or its applicability across diverse policy arenas. This raises a pertinent question: could the government be strategically selective in deploying these rhetorical strategies?

The variations in discourse tactics illuminate not just possible latent ideological divides (although the counter argument is that these are more cynically related to elections and legitimacy) but also hint at the potential efficaciousness and tone of floor debates in terms of electoral engineering. This

dissertation underscores the notion that these debates are, to a significant extent, orchestrated by the government in later convocations. While the data from Alekseev et al. hint at a degree of governmental narrative dominance and an emerging pro-government consensus in those convocations, it falls short in quantifying how this control has evolved temporally and across policy sectors. Nor does it quantify how these cleavages may be activated on an individual basis.

Furthermore, the intermittent convergence of rhetoric between United Russia and its adversaries, set against the backdrop of the opposition's rebukes and somewhat populist propositions, deepens the complexity inherent in Duma debates. This complexity, though evident, remains an underexplored facet in the broader literature. Taken together, these issues underscore the interrelationships between ideological divides, electoral engineering techniques, rhetorical strategies, and potential public-facing coalition-building within the legislative domain (as demonstrated in the social policy domain). Such dynamics provide a refined lens to understand the cleavages between opposition and government, especially in the context of floor debates.

This perspective could in fact be pivotal in offering a more granular insight into Russian oppositional politics, and it should enrich the prevailing research domains, by introducing a discourse-centric dimension to the Duma's political tapestry. By homing in on floor debates and the evolving fault lines, there is an opportunity to discern the patterns of oppositional rhetoric and gauge its plausible effects on Russia's wider legislative and political narratives.

The previous chapter underscored several major timepoints in Duma party politics and their relationship with policy attention. The Second and Third convocations were characterised by a heightened emphasis on political and economic transitions, spotlighting politics, economics, and procedural-regulatory aspects. The Fourth and Fifth convocations marked a nascent consolidation accentuating economic considerations while diminishing the focus on politics and procedures. In contrast, the Sixth and Seventh convocations witnessed the maturation of a systemic opposition party

framework. Here, political and economic dialogues dominated floor discussions, sidelining procedural matters. Concurrently, social policy discussions gained relative prominence over procedural debates, while defence and foreign policy remained stable.

Examining the shifts in policy domain focus within the Russian Duma from 1996 to 2021 reveals discernible patterns. These patterns beckon a deeper exploration, especially concerning their congruence or divergence from the government's stance in those specific policy arenas. Importantly, these shifts are not mere reflections of individual or party-centric ideologies. Instead, they echo the broader political, economic, and social transformations shaping the nation's political terrain.

Krol finds that the Duma became much more active in legislation after the development and entrenchment of United Russia (Krol 2017; 2021). Put differently, diminished electoral competition appears to bolster the legislative prowess of the dominant party. This observation sheds light on the operational parameters – both restrictive and permissive – that shape the legislative behaviours of Duma members. While heightened legislative activity might hint at the degree of governmental oversight or the latitude afforded to the opposition within the assembly, a measure of oppositional autonomy on the floor remains inadequately explored in contemporary scholarship. A lingering question persists: Do floor debates act as precursors to legislative actions, or merely mirror the legislative dynamics observed during voting and amendment procedures?

Probing further into the prior studies of legislative performance and the attributes of deputies, it becomes evident that factors such as regional representation and SMD mandates might play pivotal roles in determining whether Duma members toe or deviate from the government's line. This is particularly salient when regional and sectoral priorities find themselves at odds with central governmental directives (Klimovich 2023). This tension was especially palpable during the Yeltsin era, marked by its aggressive push for market reforms. Insights from *Chapter 4* revealed an intriguing pattern: SMD deputies affiliated with United Russia in the Seventh convocation tend to be less vocal

compared to their PR counterparts, a trend that contradicts democratic norms (Proksch and Slapin 2015). Yet, the data remains silent on whether these quieter deputies are in lockstep with the party's directives. *Chapter 3*, on the other hand, offered a glimpse into the dynamics of debate participation, focusing on institutional and deputy-centric variables, but it stops short of delving into potential correlations with oppositional rhetoric. *Chapter 5* then moved forward to demonstrate that policy attention itself is connected to the party and committee structures without considering their impacts on the *language* of parliament. Therefore, this chapter aims to bridge these gaps by discerning the primary patterns and drivers behind pro-government and pro-opposition oratory displayed by Duma members. Specifically, how do these speech patterns align or diverge from the government's stance across different policy arenas?

6.1 Theoretical Considerations

Building on the insights from the preceding chapter, it is evident that Russia's leadership exerts considerable control over policy discourse, a dominance likely mirrored in the opposition's rhetoric. This hypothesis suggests that as legislative focus and speechmaking undergoes a transformation, particularly during the later convocations, the breadth of oppositional rhetoric diminishes even among legislators within those parties. Consequently, while the regime might accommodate pro-governmental narratives on pivotal policy arenas such as economics, dissenting voices in these domains might find little room to manoeuvre. Oppositional discourse, especially those challenging United Russia's stance, could be confined to areas deemed less critical, where the Duma's legislative influence is minimal, such as foreign policy or defence. Drawing from the previous chapter's conclusions, as the regime consolidates its hold over the Duma, oppositional rhetoric should gravitate towards less legislatively critical policy domains. Simultaneously, pro-government narratives might be amplified, reinforcing regime stability in those important policy sectors identified earlier.

The previous chapter showed that from the Sixth convocation onward, discourses centred on political, economic, and social policies gained prominence. In contrast, procedural discussions waned in significance, while foreign policy and defence remained consistently underemphasised. The underlying rationale, as posited, is the regime's calibrated approach to mitigate potential dissent from the opposition or the wider populace, while simultaneously carving out channels for legitimacy. Yet, that chapter's scope was limited; it did not explain oppositional rhetoric vis-à-vis policy focus. Instead, the emphasis was on gauging the propensity of the dominant party to engage in specific policy arenas.

Therefore, as discussions around economic and political policies intensify over time, acting as pivotal instruments of legitimacy (Hale 2014), there should concurrently be a surge in pro-governmental stances within these discourses. As highlighted in the prior chapter, this mirrors a quintessential survival tactic employed by authoritarian regimes: ensuring stability by curbing oppositional dissent (Gandhi 2008; Svolik 2012). Given the predicted inclination for pro-governmental rhetoric to gravitate towards increasingly dominant areas, this chapter anticipates a corresponding shift of pro-oppositional rhetoric towards domains witnessing a contraction in policy focus. In these less emphasised arenas, the Duma's legislative influence is diminished, potentially rendering them more conducive for oppositional discourse, especially given the inherent limitations on debate attention. This strategic manoeuvring allows the ruling regime to zero in on policy sectors that not only yield tangible electoral gains (Magaloni 2008), but also serve as arenas where they can shoulder responsibility for decisions that might not resonate favourably within the populace, thereby taking stress off executive performance (Sirotkina and Zavadskaya 2020).

In summary, as policy attention pivots towards goals deemed critical for the regime, a discernible migration of pro-governmental rhetoric towards these objectives (like economic and fiscal policy) is anticipated. Conversely, pro-oppositional discourse is likely to be relegated to areas deemed less relevant for legislative initiative, such as defence. This hypothesis accentuates the adeptness of

authoritarian regimes in orchestrating narratives within legislative debates, their calculated relationship with opposition parties, and the cleavage between opposition and government in their engagement with policy matters.

This chapter lays out six main hypotheses. The first three speak to broader institutional patterns, while the latter three discuss how these patterns play out at the individual and party level. *H1* addresses the impact of the Duma's policy attention on intensifying pro-governmental discourse. *H2* predicts an expected increase in pro-oppositional speech as the focus shifts away from certain policy domains. *H3* predicts a divergence across the policy spectrum between government and opposition stances, reflecting complex political narratives within the Duma. *H4* examines the relationship of the systemic party system with pro-governmental speech. *H5* predicts that institutional roles will be defined by pro-governmental speech in latter convocations. Finally, *H6* addresses whether the institutional variables in *H5* are moderated by the party system.

H1: The focus on social, political, and economic policy in earlier Duma convocations will be significantly influenced by opposition parties expressing their opposing stances to the government. Over time, these policy domains are hypothesised to intensify into pro-governmental discourse.

This shift in discourse is moderated by party affiliation and leadership roles, and by committee memberships and legislative responsibilities with a particular emphasis on later convocations. SMD deputies, due to their relative autonomy, are expected to show a correlation with pro-oppositional speech across convocations.

H2: As the Duma's legislative focus shifts away from foreign policy and procedural-regulatory matters, an increase in pro-oppositional speech is predicted for those policy domains.

Across convocations of the Duma, as the legislative focus shifts away from foreign policy and procedural matters, it is predicted to influence an increase in pro-oppositional speech. This trend is expected to manifest differently across convocations, with earlier periods potentially showing a larger

degrees of opposition influence. In later convocations, a relative increase in pro-oppositional speech compared to social, political, and economic policy should be moderated by party and institutional factors, including party affiliations and committee roles as personal autonomy limits in scope. However, deputies across all periods may exhibit caution in regime-critical areas like foreign policy, potentially limiting a full-fledged swing to oppositional rhetoric over time.

This cautious approach might reflect an underlying strategic calculus within the opposition parties – voicing concerns and critiques that align with government intentions that cannot be openly pursued by United Russia due to political constraints or potential backlash. Such a scenario underscores a legislative strategy where oppositional speech serves not as a medium for critique but also as a subtle conduit for advancing certain governmental agendas indirectly. This relationship between legislative focus, oppositional speech, and strategic political manoeuvring elucidates the intricate dynamics at play within authoritarian legislative settings, highlighting the delicate balance between control, opposition, and policy signalling within the Duma's evolving political landscape.

H3: Between convocations, a progression in the divergence between government-aligned and opposition rhetoric is predicted across all parties.

Initially, this divergence may not be stark, reflecting a more balanced and contested political environment. Over time, however, this divergence is expected to strengthen, mirroring the evolving political landscape and the increasing consolidation of power by the ruling party. Despite this growing divergence, the overall discourse in the Duma is unlikely to manifest as a strict binary opposition but will continue to showcase a spectrum of stances between parties, indicative of the complex and dynamic interactions within the party system's political narratives.

H4: As the Duma matured, the party system became more entrenched, leading to a stronger influence of party variables on deputies' pro-governmental discourse.

In later convocations, political affiliation, and leadership positions within the major long-running parties (i.e., United Russia, LDPR, and KPRF) are likely to become key determinants of rhetorical alignment. This shift reflects the increasing importance of the strategic objectives of political parties in shaping parliamentary discourse. Since the later convocations are characterised by a more established and rigid party system, the evolution over time signifies a transition from individual-driven to party-driven politics (especially across electoral rule change periods), where party affiliation and roles within the party and Duma hierarchy play an increasingly significant role in aligning deputies with government or opposition rhetoric.

H5: The Duma's institutional framework is predicted to become more influential in directing parliamentary discourse into a pro-governmental direction over time.

This hypothesis is based on the premise that as the Duma evolves, its institutional structures and norms solidify, thereby exerting a greater influence on how deputies engage in parliamentary debate and align themselves on various issues. This hypothesis underscores the dynamic nature of the Duma's political environment. Over different convocations, the institutional context gains prominence, reflecting a shift from a more fluid and pluralistic political discourse to one that is increasingly shaped by the deputies' institutional roles and responsibilities within the Duma.

H6: The influence of institutional variables on deputies' discourse is increasingly moderated by the party system between convocations.

While institutional factors such as committee roles, seniority, and legislative duties play a significant role in shaping parliamentary discourse, their impact is conditioned by the deputies' party affiliations and the strategic objectives of their respective parties. This hypothesis posits that the party system acts as a moderating variable, influencing how institutional roles and responsibilities are interpreted and acted upon by deputies. The rationale behind this hypothesis is twofold. Firstly, in a maturing legislative body with a hardening party system, party ideologies and objectives become

increasingly dominant, which should in turn guide the behaviour and discourse of party members. Secondly, while institutional roles define the framework within which deputies operate, it is the party system that provides the ideological and strategic direction for their actions within this framework. For instance, a deputy's role in a committee might dictate their involvement in certain policy areas, but how they approach these areas – whether they align with government or opposition rhetoric – is likely to be influenced by their party's stance on these issues.

Over time, as the party system in the Duma becomes more entrenched, its moderating effect on institutional variables becomes more pronounced. This hypothesis reflects an advanced stage in the Duma's evolution, where party affiliation and institutional roles become a key determinant of parliamentary behaviour and discourse. It suggests a shift from a simpler model where institutional roles directly influence discourse, to a more complex model where the influence of these roles is filtered through the lens of party affiliation. Hence, *H6* suggests a synthesis where the party system does not just coexist with institutional factors but actively moderates their influence on deputies' discourse.

6.2 Data and Methods

This section describes the dataset employed for this analysis, as well as the methodological framework and analytical tools and techniques used for parsing legislative debates into pro-governmental and pro-oppositional speech and examining variations and trends. The dataset deployed in this analysis is built upon the data introduced in the prior chapters of this dissertation. It encompasses legislator-level information, including the policy domain of a speech, and spans the Second to Seventh convocations on a daily level. In order to disaggregate the legislative discussions into pro-governmental and pro-oppositional positions, a Class Affinity Model (CAM) is used. This approach gauges the alignment of a legislator's speeches on a specific question on a given day against

the overarching speeches of party leaders on the same question throughout the year. This methodological choice furnishes insights into the relative proximity or divergence of a legislator's daily discourse from the established stance of United Russia vis-à-vis the aggregate viewpoints of the systemic opposition leadership.

The application of scaling methods on parliamentary text has been well-established in the broader literature (Benoit and Herzog 2017; Laver, Benoit, and Garry 2003). Yet, the majority of these methodologies either aim to categorize into distinct classes or employ dictionary-based methods to establish a continuous scale between idealised poles. In the latter, each word within the dictionary is ascribed a specific orientation (Grimmer and Stewart 2013). The CAM diverges from these traditional approaches by integrating intuitions found in both approaches (Perry and Benoit 2022). As articulated by Perry and Benoit (2022), the foundational premise of CAM is the fluidity of a speaker's orientation throughout a speech, oscillating between a *'Government* mode' and an *'Opposition* mode'.

When in the 'Government mode', a legislator's choice of words mirrors that of the governmental leadership. Conversely, in the 'Opposition mode', their lexicon aligns more closely with the opposition leadership's rhetoric (2022). This dynamic positioning of the speaker between these two poles is determined by the proportion of time they resonate with each mode. What sets the CAM apart is its theoretical backing. Instead of pigeonholing speeches into rigid categories by predicting their probabilities, it discerns the blend of classes within the speech. This not only offers a richer understanding but also enhances interpretability, sidestepping the pitfalls of more classification methodologies which are not explicit in how we should interpret predicted class probabilities (e.g., Joachims 1998).

The CAM offers a balanced approach to analysing legislative debates, particularly in polarised or confrontational contexts where the government and opposition should be clearly delineable (2022).

By comparing CAM to other established methodologies, Perry and Benoit elucidate both its similarities and unique attributes:

1. **Dictionary Scaling:** CAM aligns closely with dictionary scaling when reference distributions have disjoint supports. In such scenarios, each word type is exclusively associated with a specific class, allowing for a simplified log-likelihood calculation. The resulting class affinities are then determined by the frequency of token occurrences within these distinct sets.
2. **Wordscores:** This method, developed by Laver et al. (2003), calculates the score of a word type based on given reference distributions. By averaging these scores for a text's tokens, an unnormalized "text score" is derived. Perry and Benoit (2022) highlight the deep connection between Wordscores and affinity scaling, noting a high correlation in results for texts that are not strictly at the extremes.
3. **Support Vector Machines and Linear Regression:** When the pool of reference documents is limited, both Wordscores and affinity scaling can be likened to classification methods like support vector machines or linear regression. This analytical equivalence suggests that, under certain conditions, these methods can offer similar insights.
4. **Topic Models:** Both topic models and CAM perceive texts as mixtures of topics, each with its unique word distribution. However, while CAM derives class distributions from labelled reference texts, unsupervised topic models might not always align estimated topics with the desired scaling quantities.
5. **Supervised Topic Models:** Instead, the Supervised Latent Dirichlet Allocation (sLDA) is a supervised variant of topic models that resonates closely with the philosophy of CAM. sLDA links a text-specific label to a linear function of the text's topic weights. Despite their foundational differences, in practice, supervised topic models can produce scalings that align closely with the results from the affinity model.

In summary, while CAM draws inspiration from and shares similarities with various established methods, it introduces specific nuances that make it especially apt for discerning underlying orientations in legislative debates. By juxtaposing CAM against these methodologies, Perry and Benoit (2022) underscore its potential in offering deeper insights into the dynamics of polarised legislative settings.

As in the previous chapter, the data covers all question issues from 1996 to 2021, including 637,075 individual question-issue speech pairs. The analysis first processes the texts of the speeches, removes Russian stop words, and stems the endings. To maintain a balanced representation of speeches across different years, the dataset was stratified by year and split into training and testing sets. This stratification ensures that speeches from each year are proportionally represented in both subsets. Specifically, 70% of the data was earmarked for training, with the remaining 30% reserved for testing. A foundational premise of this analysis is the representative nature of party leaders' speeches. It is posited that these speeches encapsulate the core ideologies and stances of their respective parties.

Consequently, from the training subset, only the speeches of party leaders were retained for model training. To facilitate the CAM's linguistic analysis, a Document-Feature Matrix (DFM) was constructed for the leader speeches in the training subset. In this matrix, texts are represented as vectors, with each dimension corresponding to a unique word or feature from the speeches. This vectorised representation allows the CAM to discern and quantify linguistic patterns indicative of party stances. With the DFM in place, the CAM was trained using the vectorised leader speeches. During this training phase, the model learned to associate specific linguistic patterns with the respective party labels: 'GOV' for the government and 'OPP' for the opposition.

Post-training, the CAM was employed to predict the affinity scores for both the test subset and the entire dataset. These scores serve as indicators of a speech's party-stance alignment, revealing how closely a given speech resonates with the government or opposition. The predictions, encompassing

the entire dataset, were aggregated into a complete data frame. This aggregated data provides a holistic view of the ideological landscape, detailing the year of the speech, the associated question identifier, the deputy delivering the speech, and the affinity scores for both the "GOV" and "OPP" classes. Finally, to evaluate the model's performance, the predicted affinity scores were binarized based on a threshold, set at 0.5. Speeches with a "GOV" coefficient exceeding this threshold were classified as aligning more with the government's stance, and vice versa for "OPP".

In this context, directly comparing the binary predictions to the actual labels, such as the status of being in United Russia, to compute standard evaluation metrics like accuracy, precision, recall, and the F1 score, may not provide a straightforward interpretation. These metrics, in this scenario, are *indicative of the alignment or divergence between the linguistic patterns of governmental and oppositional language and the actual party affiliations of the deputies*. Hence, they do not necessarily measure 'accuracy' in the traditional sense. For instance, an F1 score of 0.80 suggests a high congruence between a deputy's actual party affiliation and the linguistic patterns *typical of that party leader*. Conversely, a score of 0.40 might indicate that members of the opposition are linguistically aligning more with the government's rhetoric, or vice-versa. Therefore, it is essential to interpret these metrics within the aforementioned context.

Table 6.1. Accuracy Measures for the Class Affinity Model

Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1
0.669	0.689	0.669	0.672

These accuracy measures underscore that speech orientations are within the predictive boundaries of party affiliation. This implies that the linguistic patterns observed in the speeches are largely consistent with the expected rhetoric of their respective party affiliations. A precision of 0.689 suggests that when the model predicts a speech to align with a particular party's rhetoric, it is correct about 68.9% of the time. The F1 score, which balances precision and recall, stands at 0.672, further

reinforcing the model's reasonably good performance in distinguishing between governmental and oppositional language based on party lines. However, it is also worth noting that while these metrics are indicative of the model's 'performance', there are still instances where deputies' speeches might diverge from the typical linguistic patterns of their party. This is where the Class Affinity Model (CAM) showcases its strength. Rather than viewing these divergences as shortcomings, CAM leverages them to highlight intriguing periods of debate where party lines do not strictly dictate the rhetoric. Such instances can be particularly revealing, shedding light on the complexities of political discourse, and underscoring the nature of legislative debates beyond mere party affiliations.[33]

The decision to train the CAM using only the speeches of party leaders is strategic. Party leaders often epitomise the core values, stances, and ideologies of their respective parties. Their speeches are likely to be representative of the party's official stance on various issues. By training the model on these speeches, the CAM is essentially being calibrated to recognize the linguistic patterns and word choices that are emblematic of each party's stances. Furthermore, by not adopting a train-test split centred on leadership speeches, the CAM model, given its mixture basis, is susceptible to overfitting. Essentially, the model should first be trained to discern and predict the ideological mixtures inherent in leadership speeches. This more accurately captures the facets of oppositional rhetoric which may differ between parties – only after mastering this can it be effectively applied to the broader corpus, ensuring a more generalised and robust performance.

The resulting coefficients for the entire corpus are appended to the original dataset and represent a proportion of the speech in question being pro-government or pro-opposition. These coefficients are then tested using the regression strategies found throughout this dissertation. A beta regression model accounts for the bounded nature of the coefficients. I propose the following model structure:

[33] In fact, it would be rather redundant to predict whether a speech is given by an opposition member or not.

$$Y_{it} = \beta_0 + K_t + X + t$$

Where *Y* represents the average coefficient of governmental alignment in a specific policy domain for deputy *i* in convocation *t*. Time-varying cross-convocational effects with the period variable *t*. *K* is a vector of relevant covariates that may vary in effect between convocations. *X* is a vector of the covariates established as unrelated to convocation such as age, seniority, and gender. Notably, ruling party status is disaggregated into four main categories: United Russia[34], LDPR, KPRF, and all other parties. The resulting specification leads to a model accounting for between convocation variation in policy orientation.

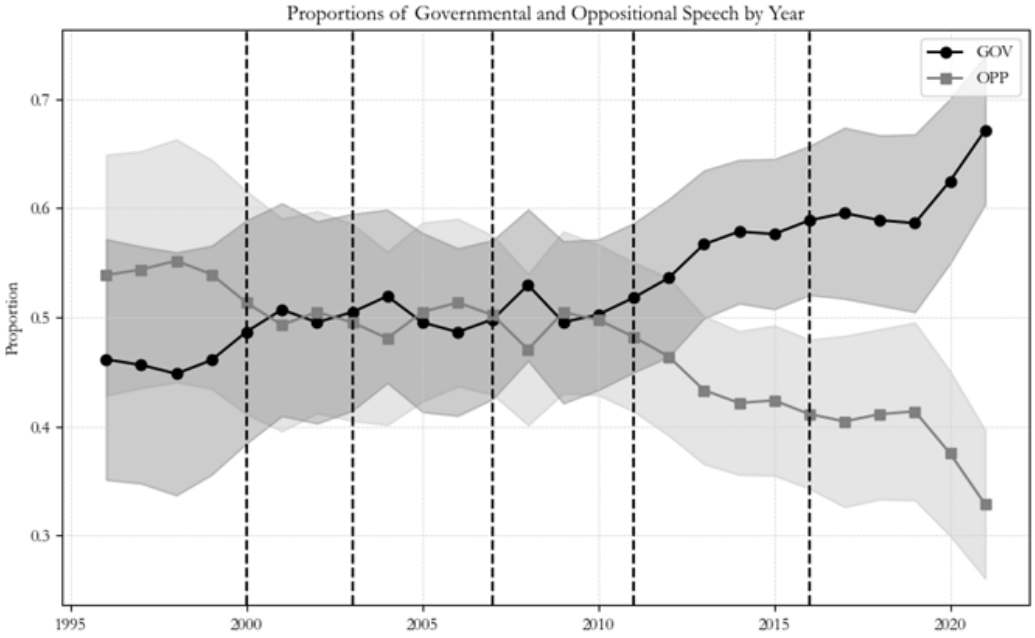
6.3 CAM Results

This section discusses the outcomes of the CAM analysis and explains how the data was aggregated and evaluated to reflect annual and convocational policy orientations. It provides a visual representation of mean CAM scores across years and discusses the implications of these findings.

Following the scaling procedure outlined in the prior section, class affinity scores were cumulatively compiled back into the original speeches' data frame rows. This enabled the generation of annual and convocational tallies of mean policy orientations (see *Appendix F*). Proceeding with these aggregate daily counts, the dissertation provides an evaluation of overall policy orientations proportions at the yearly level, spanning the period 1996 to 2021. Since the graphs in this section provide yearly aggregates of daily-level data, they provide a granular within convocational viewpoint on policy attention. *Figure 6.1* details the mean CAM scores per year for all pro-governmental and pro-oppositional policy stances with intermittent dashed lines serving as markers of convocational transition. Although the metric is binary, two lines are included to underscore the confidence intervals.

[34] United Russia is based on the previous chapters' specifications for 'ruling party'. The identification for ruling party prior to United Russia's emergence is based on coding pro-presidential parties that merged into United Russia – Fatherland, Unity, and Our Home.

Figure 6.1. Governmental and Opposition Orientation by Year with 95% Confidence Intervals (Aggregate CAM Mean Values)[35]

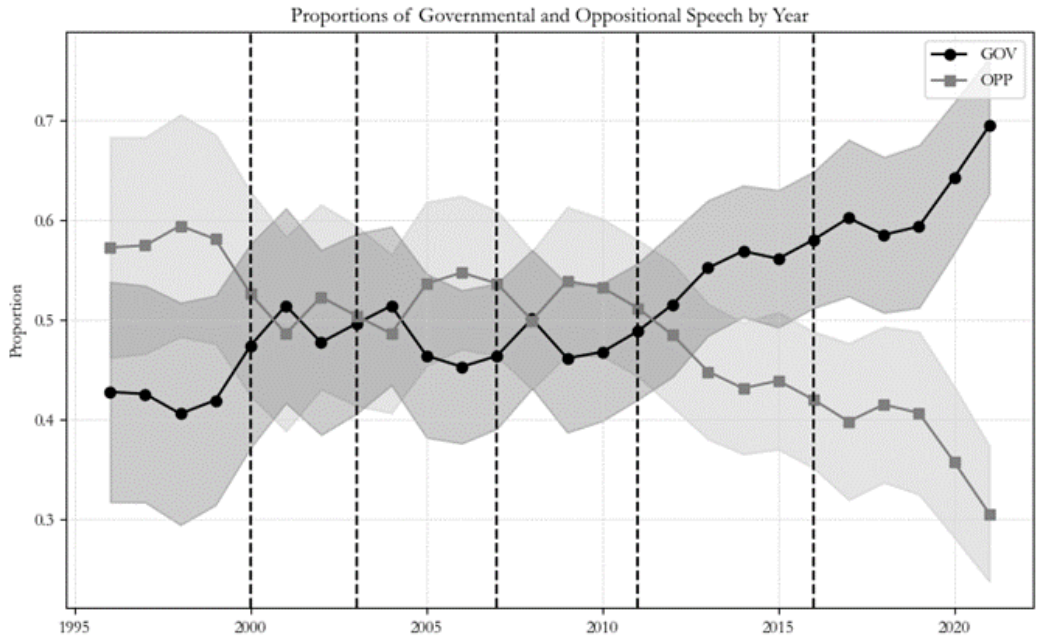


This figure shows a stark divergence between the latter two convocations and the first six, which aligns with *H3*. The proportion of *all* deputies taking a pro-governmental stance increases from approximately 45% in 1996 to 65% in 2021. Concurrent with this general rising trend in pro-governmental speech, oppositional stances across all deputies fall from approximately 55% in 1996 to 35% in 2021. Notably, *Figure 6.1* demonstrates that these rhetorical viewpoints are not directly related to party share in the Duma – if this were the case, the expected line of divergence would begin to occur in either the Fourth or Fifth convocations (2003-2011) – when United Russia held 69-70% of the seats. It is only after the 2011 period where oppositional rhetoric declines, which is surprising given United Russia's loss of the constitutional majority and the staunch oppositional moments in mid-2012.

[35] Note: For all CAM figures, dashed lines indicate convocational transitions.

However, it is important to discern whether the general structure of the data changes if we consider extreme policy stances. In other words, a graphing strategy should show when pro-governmental or pro-oppositional stances are *activated* in these speeches. Hence, the figures that follow illustrate these annual outcomes aggregated by the proportion of policy stances which are at the 'extreme' ends of either pro-governmental or pro-oppositional speech (defined by over 0.5 propensity for either category), which allows the measurement of the relative popularity of these stances over time rather than their simple mean aggregation, which could over bias outliers.

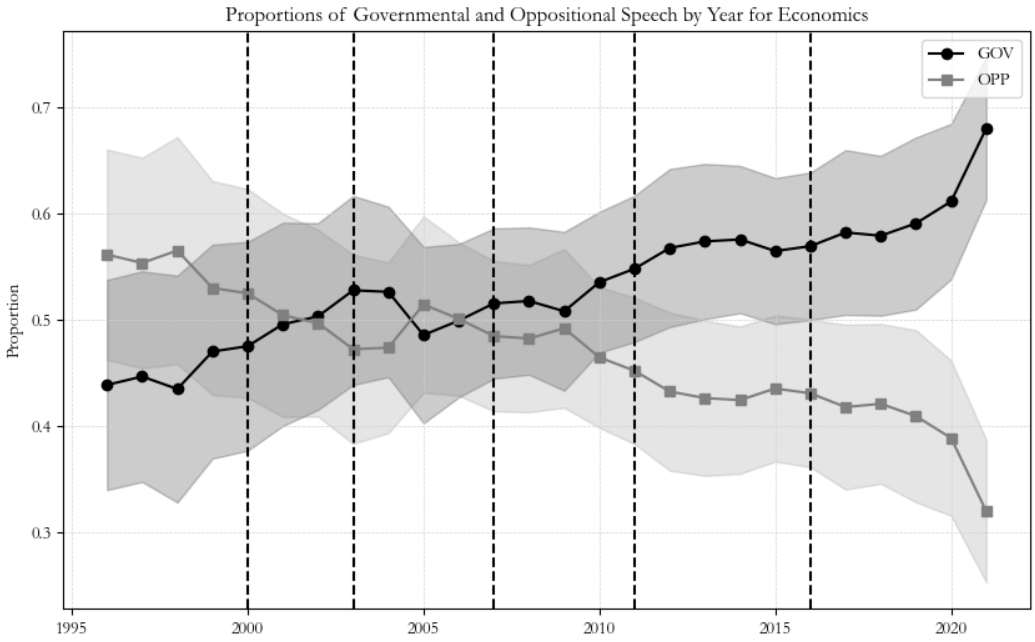
Figure 6.2. Governmental and Opposition Orientation by Year with 95% Confidence Intervals (CAM Proportion of Mean Values > 0.5)



The Duma's 'extreme' policy orientations, as visualised in *Figure 6.2*, closely mirror the trends observed in *Figure 6.1*, offering a compelling narrative of the government's escalating influence on floor rhetoric over consecutive convocations. This observation further supports *H3*, which predicts a divergence across the policy spectrum between the share of government and opposition stances. The Second convocation is particularly notable for its pronounced oppositional rhetoric, marking a peak

in counter-governmental discourse. This peak can be interpreted as part of the initial stages of the Duma's development, where the political environment was still taking shape, and opposition voices were more prominently visible. This indicates that the period is the most pluralistic compared to latter convocations. However, during the Third to Fifth convocations, a period of *relative* legislative pluralism is evident compared to the latter two convocations, where the distinction between governmental and oppositional speeches appears to be approximately 50-50. This phase indicates a competitive political environment, initially allowing for a broader spectrum of discourse. As we move into the later convocations, the Duma's pivot towards United Russia's policy stances progressively strengthens. This trend is indicative of the evolving dynamics posited in *H3*, where a divergence between government-aligned and opposition parties is anticipated to strengthen over time.

Figure 6.3. Governmental and Opposition Orientation towards Economic Policy by Year with 95% Confidence Intervals (CAM Proportion of Mean Values > 0.5)

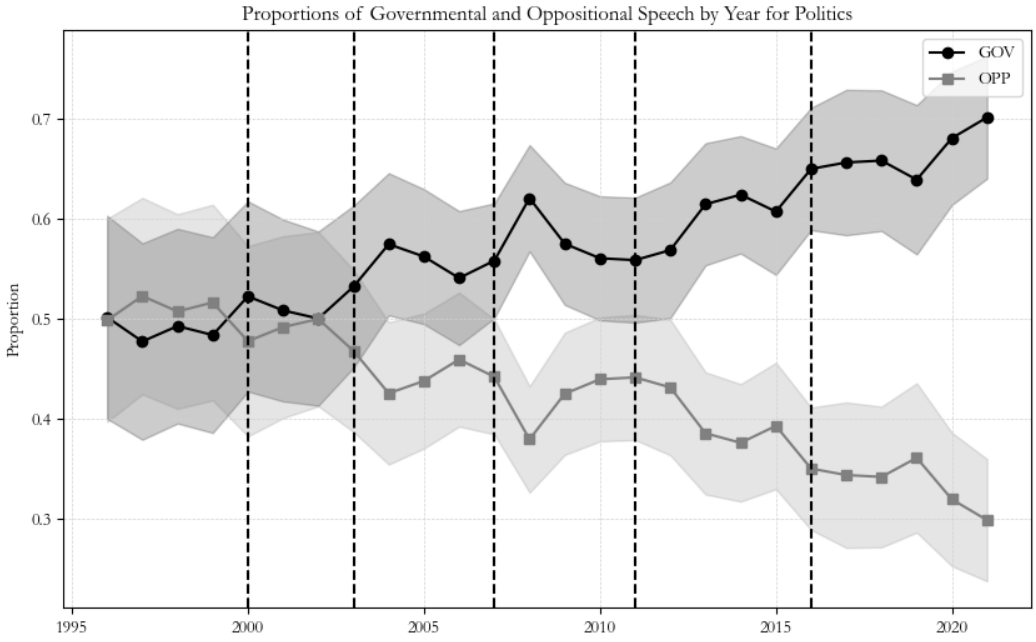


In economic policy (see *Figure 6.3*), a discernible rift between governmental and oppositional stances begins to manifest around 2010, aligning with the predictions of *H1* and *H3*. This divergence

suggests a significant shift in economic discourse within the Duma consistent with *H1*, which posits an intensification of pro-governmental discourse over time for critical policy domains. Around 2010, the data demonstrates that economic policies become less of a focal point of contention for the opposition, indicating a shift towards a more pro-governmental narrative. This trend can be interpreted as the regime's consolidating control over economic narratives, reflecting a strategic focus on these areas to reinforce its policy agenda. The increasing alignment of discourse with pro-governmental stances in the economic domain underscores the hypothesis that as the Duma's focus on certain policy areas becomes more pronounced.

Concurrently, this trend supports *H3*, which predicts a divergence across the policy spectrum between government and opposition stances. The observed divergence in the economic domain is a clear manifestation of this hypothesis. This diminishing oppositional orientation in economic matters corroborates the theory that as the regime tightens its grip, the space for oppositional politics within the Duma on critical regime functions (e.g., the budget) reduces, leading to a waning inclination towards oppositional discourse.

Figure 6.4. Governmental and Opposition Orientation towards Political and Civil Policy by Year with 95% Confidence Intervals (CAM Proportion of Mean Values > 0.5)



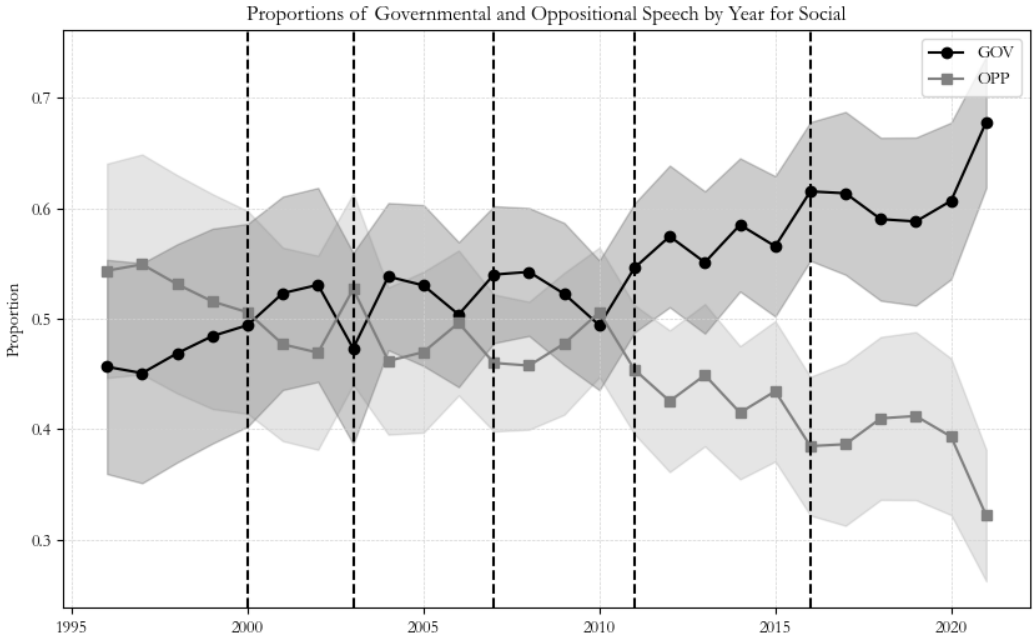
The political-civil domain's divergence, preceding that of the economic sphere, is indicative of the foundational shifts in the political landscape of the Duma consistent with the propositions in *H1* and *H3* (see *Figure 6.4*). Initiated during the Fourth convocation, rather than the Fifth, this divergence highlights the increasing alignment of the Duma towards the governmental narrative in terms of political legislation. This trend suggests that political issues, perhaps more than economic ones, became the initial battleground for ideological alignment, which ended up resolving itself at the end of 2003. This lines up with the first phase of consolidation by the United Russia and the near elimination of reform parties which coincided with the competitive electoral authoritarian turn (Riggs and Schraeder 2005).

The consistent gravitation of opposition members towards the governmental stance could be attributed to a combination of factors: the regime's tightening control over political discourse, the party system beginning to stabilize in favour of the dominant party system, strategic decisions by

(mainly nationalist) opposition members to align with dominant narratives, or the blurring of distinct party lines. The political-civil domain's early divergence underscores its centrality in the evolving dynamics of the Duma. The continued downward trend in oppositional rhetoric aimed against United Russia further enforces the idea that United Russia seeks to dominate political narratives on the floor, especially concerning the drastic shifts leading up to the end of the Seventh convocation.

Figure 6.5 demonstrates the results for social policy. Despite a more controlled legislative environment, social policy attention remains resilient, with its orientation following a similar pattern to the economic domain. Beginning in the Sixth convocation, oppositional speech in social policy declines in favour of pro-governmental speech at the end of the Fifth convocation. This trend line supports the hypothesis generated from the last chapter which posits that the resilience of social policy attention is related to the regime's endeavour to broaden its popular appeal by centring on socio-economic concerns. Hence, social policy orientations begin to diverge in the towards the pro-governmental line during the turbulent beginning of the Sixth convocation. It follows that this is also consistent with *H1* and *H3*.

Figure 6.5. Governmental and Opposition Orientation towards Social Policy by Year with 95% Confidence Intervals (CAM Proportion of Mean Values > 0.5)



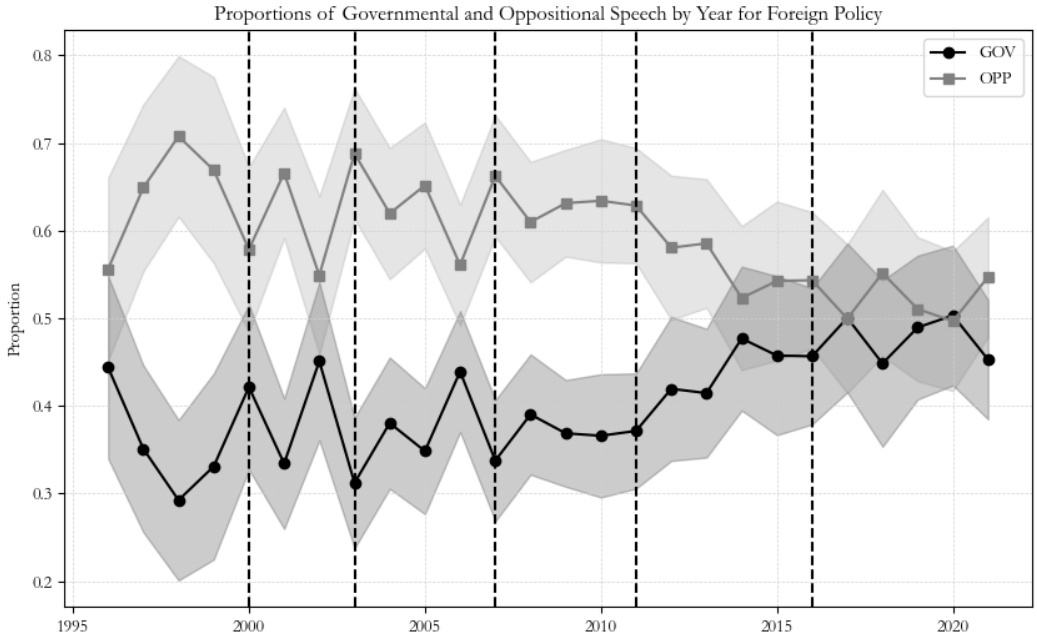
The results for foreign policy, defence, and procedural-regulations provide some evidence in support of accepting *H2,* which posits that as pro-governmental stances crowd out regime-critical legislative areas, they open room for oppositional positioning in foreign policy, procedural matters, and defence policy domains.

The foreign policy data reveals a discernible decline in oppositional speech from the Sixth to the Seventh convocations (see *Figure 6.6*). However, the results do not distinctly separate the opposition from the government, suggesting a balanced, or 50/50, plurality in the discourse on the floor. This stands in contrast to earlier convocations where oppositional perspectives dominated, accounting for 60-70% of all foreign policy speeches. While this shift indicates a significant departure from previous patterns, it also hints at a more strategic approach by the regime. Despite the overarching control, there seems to be a measured allowance for discussions on foreign policy, using this domain as

strategic move to maintain a semblance of democratic deliberation, especially since the Duma has little to no power over foreign policy compared to the executive.

This trend aligns with *H2* which posits that as pro-governmental stances become more dominant in certain legislative areas, it opens room for oppositional positioning in less emphasized domains like foreign policy. The observed decline in pro-governmental speech and the resulting balanced plurality in foreign policy discussions indicate a strategic allowance by the regime for more diverse viewpoints in this domain. Notably, the decline in oppositional rhetoric regarding foreign policy begins comes to a head in 2014, coinciding with the annexation of Crimea and the events of Euromaidan. This could be interpreted as a move to maintain a semblance of democratic deliberation over the burgeoning state of war, especially considering the Duma's limited power over foreign policy compared to the executive. Yet, despite the increasing levels of overarching control, the regime's allowance for a more relatively pluralistic discourse in foreign policy suggests a strategic decision to project a more democratic image, where United Russia may position itself in the centre, all while maintaining narrative control over more critical legislative areas.

Figure 6.6. Governmental and Opposition Orientation towards Foreign Policy by Year with 95% Confidence Intervals (CAM Proportion of Mean Values > 0.5)



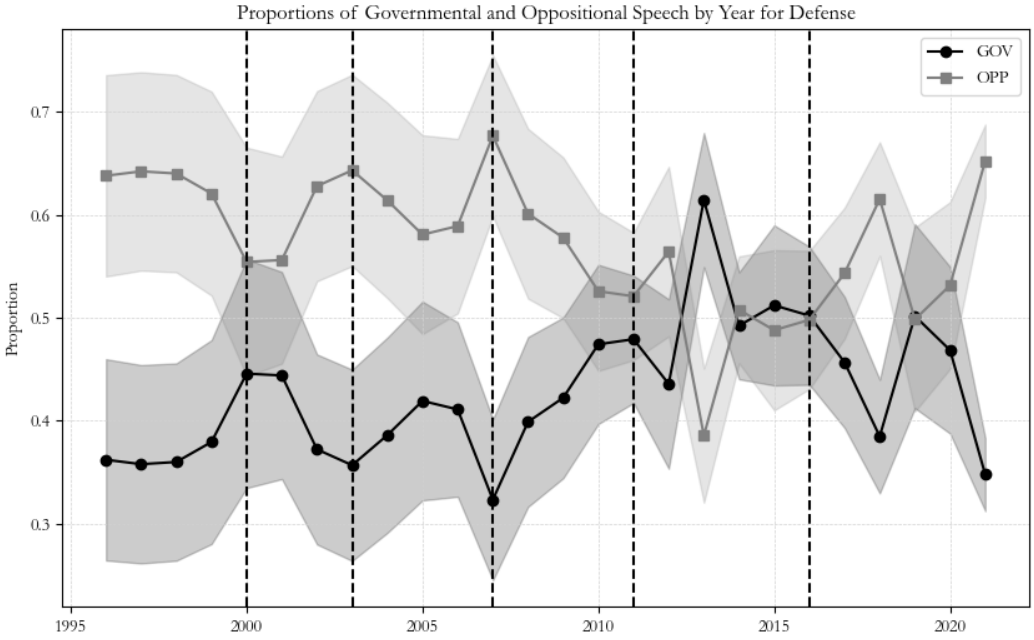
The annexation of Crimea in 2014 marked a decisive moment for the Russian regime, elevating the significance of foreign policy in the nation's domestic political landscape and solidifying its importance internal legitimacy (Rutland 2022). Notably, during the Crimea annexation, the Duma showcased near-unanimous support for the treaty of accession, with only *one* deputy, Ilya Ponomarev of *A Just Russia*, casting a dissenting vote (Gorelova and Bateson 2014). This overwhelming consensus is reflected in the narrowing of oppositional voices in foreign policy debates, a notion echoed in recent remarks by two influential committee chairs in the 8th Duma. Oleg Morozov, Chairman of the Committee on Control, remarked, 'Today, all factions of the State Duma do not compete but consolidate around the President's foreign policy strategy.' Similarly, Leonid Slutsky, Chairman of the Committee on International Affairs, asserted, 'the State Duma has no other foreign policy agenda but

only the foreign policy agenda of the President of the Russian Federation'.[36] These statements underline a significant public-facing alignment with the governmental prerogatives in the Duma, signalling a cohesive legislative backing for the President's foreign policy directives, thereby illustrating the legislature's role in bolstering the regime's geopolitical narratives and objectives outside of the parliament. However, as the data shows, the discussions on the floor remain relatively open compared to the other policy domains.

Similar to foreign policy, the defence domain, as illustrated in the *Figure 6.7*, demonstrates that until 2010, oppositional stances appear to be relatively dominant, peaking in 2007, which coincides with events in Chechnya such as the ascendency of Ramzan Kadyrov and the Dissenters' Marches across the country during that year. However, a shift towards increased pluralism is observed in the lead-up to 2010, only to be followed by a swing towards governmental dominance by 2013. Yet, this precedes the culmination of the Revolution of Dignity in early 2014 along with the subsequent annexation of Crimea and the establishments of the so-called Donetsk and Luhansk Peoples' Republics.

[36] (State Duma News 2024:http://duma.gov.ru/news/58801/)

Figure 6.7. Governmental and Opposition Orientation towards Defence Policy by Year with 95% Confidence Intervals (CAM Proportion of Mean Values > 0.5)



Yet, by 2014, the debates return to a balanced 50/50 pluralism, suggesting that the influence of Ukraine on these discussions might be transient – or the government wishes to eschew criticism specifically towards Ukraine, which in turn limits oppositional voices relative to their earlier freedoms. Intriguingly, the opposition regains a measure of autonomy in the discourse by 2018 and this trend remerges into 2021, even in the initial military buildup to the 2022 War against Ukraine. While the discourse on defence remains distinctively 'oppositional' in comparison to discussions in other domains, revealing the breadth of divergent viewpoints within legislative debates on foreign policy.

This persistence of oppositional rhetoric, even in a domain critical to national interest and regime legitimacy, points to a complexity within the Duma concerning how the government uses the systemic opposition for its own ends. For instance, the oppositional stance increased in the lead-up to the 2022 war against Ukraine. During this period, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF) proposed legislation for the recognition of the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's

Republic – a move that positioned them as adopting a more hardline approach than United Russia's longer-term and 'softer' proposal (*Meduza.io* 2022). The KPRF's proposal was ultimately accepted over United Russia's. This manoeuvring by the KPRF and tacit approval by the speaker of the Duma and United Russia not only showcased the opposition's capacity to influence contentious policy areas outside the 'acceptable' purview of the governing party, but also demonstrated the regime's adeptness in co-opting oppositional initiatives, thereby sanitising the adoption of controversial measures and insulating the Duma's leadership from direct endorsement of such policies (Meduza.io 2022). In turn, this harkens back to the foreign policy results, where the opposition has been more vocal: simply because the opposition is more vocal does not make them any less hardline than the ruling party. Instead, they may take the hardline space, and reduce pressure from Untied Russia all while fulfilling regime objectives.

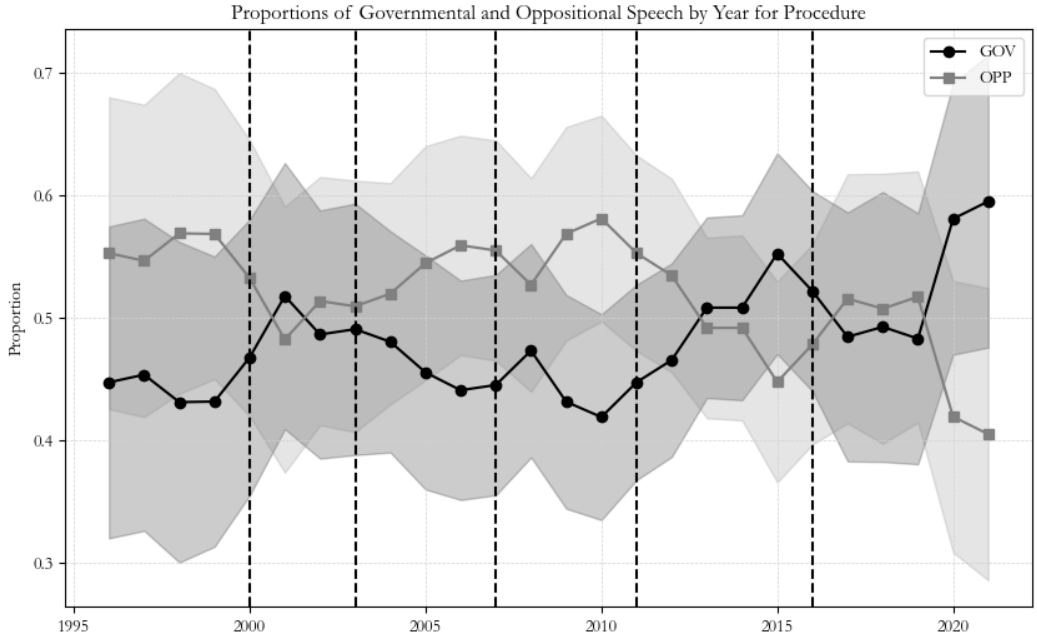
The oscillating nature of plurality in the defence domain discussions makes it challenging to draw definitive conclusions. Contrary to a scenario of complete dominance by United Russia, the defence debates in the Duma exhibit a relatively high degree of oppositional stances, underscoring the complexities of legislative discourse in this domain. The data moves from a pro-opposition dominated discourse across all deputies to a plurality discourse on the floor as pro-opposition and governmental stances converge. However, after the Sixth convocation, the trends tend to strongly oscillate and converge within convocations. Given these observations, the data does not provide robust enough support for the hypothesis *H2*, but it does highlight the complicated nature of defence policy discussions in the Duma which may reflect a more transient and directed approach to defence policy on the floor.

The data suggest that the opposition can outmanoeuvre the government by adopting hardline positions without facing significant political costs. Defence policy, in particular, emerges as a domain where the opposition is able to exercise freer debate practices, largely because the regime is less

concerned about opposition parties taking less aggressive stances than themselves. By permitting the opposition to pursue these hardline positions, United Russia is able to sidestep the political risks associated with controversial defence policies, allowing the opposition to absorb either the blame or some of the credit. This strategic positioning enables United Russia to maintain a more centrist stance, preserving its broader political standing while benefiting from the opposition's willingness to push the legislative envelope in defence matters.

The significance of procedural-regulatory politics in shaping the evolution of the Duma cannot be understated. These policies directly affect the agenda and day-to-day functioning of the Duma. As attention to the Duma's procedural matters wanes over time, particularly post-2012, one might expect this to create opportunities for oppositional manoeuvring, especially if this domain is perceived as less pivotal. However, and as the last chapter also demonstrated, the data presents a scenario that defies such expectations, revealing a persistent pluralism that suggests strategic calculations by deputies. *Figure 6.8* details the relatively consistent engagement patterns for this domain.

Figure 6.8. Governmental and Opposition Orientation towards Procedural-Regulatory Policy by Year with 95% Confidence Intervals (CAM Proportion of Mean Values > 0.5)



The observed parity in procedural politics indicate a consensus-driven approach, where both government and opposition find common ground. This could be a strategic move by both sides to ensure the smooth functioning of the Duma. Recognising the importance of procedural integrity for the overall legislative process, parties might be inclined to collaborate in these areas, setting aside more contentious issues to maintain operational stability. Alternatively, the blurred lines between governmental and oppositional stances in procedural matters might reflect a deliberate strategy by the regime. By allowing, or even encouraging, opposition participation in procedural matters, the regime can project an image of inclusivity and democratic functioning. This approach allows the regime to retain control over more contentious and publicly visible policy domains while giving oppositional stances input into the overarching process.

Furthermore, the relative pluralism in procedural politics might also suggest that the opposition is strategically exerting influence in areas where they perceive room for negotiation or impact. Post the

2012 'Italian strike' oppositional moment, with the rules of the game having become well defined, the opposition might be leveraging procedural matters as a domain where they can make a difference for their policy agendas across other policy domains without facing significant backlash. This approach would allow them to maintain a presence and voice in the legislative process, albeit in a more subtle and less confrontational manner.

Rather than overt confrontation, procedural debates are marked by subtle adjustments in alignment, which can reflect shifts in relative power and influence. This aligns with the expectations of *H2*, where pro-oppositional discourse tends to increase in legislative areas that are less central to the regime's immediate priorities. The analysis reveals that procedural politics offers the opposition space to express influence – even as broader policy domains remain more tightly controlled by the ruling party.

Notably, there is a significant shift in 2020-2021, where procedural discussions on the floor become more explicitly pro-governmental during the latter half of the Seventh convocation. As procedural debates become overtly pro-governmental, it indicates a curtailment of opposition influence even in areas that were previously more open to discourse. This trend reflects an intensification of the regime's consolidation of power and may be a deliberate move to ensure greater alignment between legislative procedures and the government's broader political objectives, especially as the convocation nears its end.

6.4 Regression Results

This section transitions into regression analysis, examining the variations in policy orientations by domain and convocation at the individual deputy-level. This approach therefore analyses the institutional, personal, and party determinants of pro-governmental speech, building off the insights from the prior empirical chapters. It presents significant effects from the policy domain regressions,

explaining the implications of these results and their contribution to understanding the dynamics of policy discourse within the Duma.

As previously noted, this chapter seeks to identify the legislators who are most likely to express varying political stances in these policy discourses. Therefore, I now shift focus to a regression analysis using beta regression models with interactions on convocation to evaluate between convocation variations in policy orientations by policy domain. The following table reports the significant effects from the first set of policy domain regressions and the full specification can be found in the appendix. The data excludes domains where a deputy did not speak on a given policy domain as this would bias the modelling strategy.[37]

Table 6.2. Beta Regression Specifications on Pro-Governmental CAM Scores by Policy Domain (Political, Economic, and Social Policy)

	Dependent variable:		
	Political	Economic	Social
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Third	**0.144651*****	**0.336882*****	**0.210498*****
	(0.052099)	(0.056823)	(0.076523)
Fourth	**0.229654*****	**0.156227*****	**0.288296*****
	(0.028391)	(0.028933)	(0.040765)
Fifth	**0.205973*****	**0.139537*****	**0.175352*****
	(0.019168)	(0.017885)	(0.028489)
Sixth	**0.132799*****	**0.094393*****	**0.100002*****
	(0.012758)	(0.012120)	(0.017915)
Seventh	**0.065212*****	**0.074692*****	**0.052397*****
	(0.009525)	(0.009303)	(0.013255)
Exposure	0.037306	**0.141429*****	**0.106008****
	(0.033833)	(0.034068)	(0.053850)
Age^2	**-0.000065*****	**-0.000074*****	**-0.000075*****
	(0.000011)	(0.000010)	(0.000014)

[37] For instance, if a deputy involved in labour rights never speaks on defence policy, it would be inappropriate to model their lack of attention and rhetoric towards defence policy.

Seniority	**-0.028524*****	**-0.017590*****	**-0.021238*****
	(0.002805)	(0.002588)	(0.003623)
KPRF	**-0.913198*****	**-0.812755*****	**-0.965546*****
	(0.032844)	(0.031674)	(0.043605)
LDPR	**-1.073312*****	**-1.070348*****	**-1.104896*****
	(0.047302)	(0.048657)	(0.064981)
Other	**-0.756347*****	**-0.714581*****	**-0.845273*****
	(0.032734)	(0.031956)	(0.042302)
Duma leadership	**-0.672044*****	**-0.415382*****	**-0.597521*****
	(0.077109)	(0.070564)	(0.098398)
Party leader	**-0.714986*****	**-0.671438*****	**-0.897228*****
	(0.118698)	(0.106483)	(0.132720)
SMD	**-0.052704****	**-0.052827****	-0.020402
	(0.026884)	(0.026745)	(0.036180)
Committee chair	**0.095477*****	0.043878	**0.166805*****
	(0.036865)	(0.035923)	(0.048395)
Committee leadership	**0.052699****	-0.037522	**0.098228*****
	(0.023661)	(0.023004)	(0.031868)
Committee percent	**0.820944*****	**0.887168*****	0.438573
	(0.255971)	(0.255302)	(0.335263)
Gender (female)	**-0.078884****	**-0.083910*****	**-0.079862****
	(0.030967)	(0.029703)	(0.038906)
Third * KPRF	**-0.209356*****	**-0.293920*****	**-0.243965*****
	(0.054201)	(0.058236)	(0.076955)
Fourth * KPRF	**-0.341554*****	**-0.248206*****	**-0.341590*****
	(0.031946)	(0.032408)	(0.043072)
Fifth * KPRF	**-0.196678*****	**-0.146514*****	**-0.142092*****
	(0.023210)	(0.021636)	(0.030269)
Sixth * KPRF	**-0.063969*****	**-0.051540*****	**-0.057091*****
	(0.015376)	(0.014126)	(0.020222)
Seventh * KPRF	**-0.028517***	**-0.024498***	**-0.050158*****
	(0.014851)	(0.013266)	(0.017717)
Third * LDPR	**-0.212040****	**-0.492372*****	**-0.471295*****
	(0.102482)	(0.114447)	(0.146718)
Fourth * LDPR	**-0.299034*****	**-0.151608*****	**-0.268164*****
	(0.050316)	(0.051366)	(0.069897)

Fifth * LDPR	**-0.109881*****	-0.035691	-0.005997
	(0.032619)	(0.031619)	(0.044322)
Sixth * LDPR	**-0.062703*****	**-0.046855****	**-0.050913****
	(0.019059)	(0.018937)	(0.024985)
Third * Other	**-0.083778***	**-0.231930*****	**-0.207445*****
	(0.047604)	(0.051933)	(0.068510)
Fourth * Other	**-0.330653*****	**-0.302280*****	**-0.277836*****
	(0.030969)	(0.031470)	(0.041838)
Fifth * Other	**-0.155126*****	**-0.086649*****	**-0.139130*****
	(0.025175)	(0.024106)	(0.032025)
Sixth * Other	**-0.087043*****	**-0.072343*****	**-0.099124*****
	(0.015874)	(0.015153)	(0.020138)
Seventh * Other	-0.010749	**-0.050283*****	**-0.036439***
	(0.016744)	(0.015473)	(0.019482)
Fourth * Duma leadership	**-0.228301*****	-0.040462	-0.015093
	(0.070491)	(0.065780)	(0.094199)
Fifth * Duma leadership	**-0.154638****	**-0.116372****	-0.029443
	(0.062614)	(0.054544)	(0.072642)
Sixth * Duma leadership	**0.122786*****	-0.055283	-0.006974
	(0.045171)	(0.040192)	(0.057423)
Third * Party leader	**0.335800****	**0.334128****	**0.705125*****
	(0.153881)	(0.148105)	(0.202299)
Seventh * Party leader	**-0.174202****	**-0.231542*****	**-0.145464***
	(0.076043)	(0.075556)	(0.079924)
Third * Committee chair	**0.109834***	0.087220	0.143965*
	(0.060814)	(0.063190)	(0.078723)
Seventh * Committee chair	**-0.026781***	**-0.041346*****	-0.013589
	(0.015433)	(0.014388)	(0.019278)
Fourth * Committee leader	0.018523	0.005250	**0.067772****
	(0.023634)	(0.023862)	(0.032739)
Fifth * Committee leader	-0.008838	**-0.028416***	**-0.041982***
	(0.018331)	(0.016915)	(0.024909)
Sixth * Committee leader	**-0.034899*****	0.007811	-0.006817
	(0.012088)	(0.011257)	(0.015755)
Third * Committee percent	**0.863211***	0.351045	0.643521

	(0.440486)	(0.460442)	(0.602041)
Fourth * Committee percent	**0.698333****	**0.763293****	-0.661607
	(0.321001)	(0.326775)	(0.429959)
Sixth * Committee percent	0.122030	**0.195859****	**0.292949****
	(0.100180)	(0.098045)	(0.128552)
Constant	**0.949952*****	-0.020706	0.320037
	(0.242218)	(0.244136)	(0.387545)
Observations	6,729	6,773	4,221
R^2	0.346322	0.311082	0.332377
Log Likelihood	2,377.965000	2,129.001000	1,172.968000
Note:			*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

The regression analysis presented investigates the CAM pro-governmental coefficients across three distinct policy domains: political, economic, and social policy, all of which relate to *H1*. The reference category for the convocation variable compares against the Second convocation. This is due to the relatively higher levels of democracy when compared to later convocations and allows a stable insight into between convocational trends. The reference category for parties is the ruling party/United Russia, which allows the model to provide detailed insights on oppositional behaviour.

One of the standout observations is the pronounced negative effect of convocation across all opposition parties. This demonstrates that all opposition parties are less likely than United Russia to engage in pro-governmental speech. However, these negative effects become weakened moving from the Fourth to Seventh convocations across all domains, with the economic domain witnessing the most substantial impact. In other words, a higher coefficient is related to stronger levels of pro-governmental support. The following tables underscore the percent change in odds from the Third to Seventh convocations for all parties against the baseline, United Russia, which demonstrates the variability in pro-governmental position-taking between opposition parties.

Table 6.3. Percent Change in Odds of Model Outcomes Across Convocations (KPRF)

Convocation	Political-Civil Policy	Economic Policy	Social Policy
Third	-18.89%	-25.47%	-21.65%
Fourth	-28.93%	-21.98%	-28.94%
Fifth	-17.85%	-13.63%	-13.25%
Sixth	-6.20%	-5.02%	-5.55%
Seventh	-2.81%	-2.42%	-4.89%

The KPRF demonstrates a notable decrease in pro-governmental speech from the Third to Fourth convocations (compared to the Second Duma) in political and social policy, with economic policy having a slight increase in odds. This decrease is most notable in the Fourth convocation, but it becomes less negative over time, showing a possible adaptation or alignment with governmental policy stances in later convocations (e.g., in the Seventh convocation, the KPRF is 2.81% less likely than the baseline). Similarly, social and economic policy becomes less negative over time, indicating a gradual increase or stabilization in pro-governmental speech.

The KPRF demonstrating close affinity to the government in terms of economics by the Sixth convocation is surprising because the party positions itself as a traditionally communist party with a platform that is ideologically distinct from the ruling party in terms of its leftwing stance on economic issues. The KPRF advocates for socialist principles, state ownership, and redistribution of wealth, which ostensibly conflicts with United Russia's more state-capitalist and market-oriented policies (Levintova 2012). Given these ideological differences, one would expect the KPRF to diverge sharply from the government on economic matters. However, the finding that the KPRF aligns closely with United Russia on this front challenges the assumption of clear ideological opposition.

Table 6.4. Percent Change in Odds of Model Outcomes Across Convocations (LDPR)

Convocation	Political-Civil Policy	Economic Policy	Social Policy
Third	-19.11%	-38.88%	-37.59%
Fourth	-25.85%	-14.07%	-23.52%
Fifth	-10.41%	-3.51%	-0.60%
Sixth	-6.08%	-4.58%	-4.96%
Seventh	-0.00%	-0.00%	-0.00%

For the LDPR, the data shows a decrease in their odds of pro-governmental speech from the Third to Fourth convocations in political-civil policy, suggesting an initial divergence from government policy. However, in economic and social policies, there is a substantial increase in the odds of pro-governmental speech, indicating an alignment with government stances. Over time, across all domains, the magnitude of these odds lessens, which is interpreted as further alignment with governmental policy. This is because a reduction in the magnitude of odds against governmental policy indicates a shift towards a more pro-governmental stance, even if it is not a direct increase in pro-governmental rhetoric compared to the baseline convocation. The Seventh convocation presents an intriguing case. The data does not show a statistically significant difference between the LDPR and United Russia, suggesting that by this convocation, the LDPR's policy stances cannot be significantly disentangled from those of the ruling party.

This convergence suggests that the opposition's ability to articulate a distinct policy platform diminishes over time, likely due to a combination of coercion, co-optation, and the institutional incentives that favour alignment with the ruling party (Reuter and Robertson 2015). The LDPR's trajectory from relative autonomy in political-civil matters to near-total alignment across all domains reflects the broader process of electoral authoritarian entrapment, where opposition parties are drawn

into a system designed to neutralise their ability to act as genuine alternatives to the ruling regime (Schedler 2013, 295). It also mirrors findings from collective action studies in authoritarian regimes, where opposition parties must carefully calibrate their engagement with the regime. As Reuter and Robertson note, opposition parties in Russia have historically traded their ability to organise large-scale mobilisations for access to institutional power, making them dependent on the regime for political survival. This dependence fosters a situation where oppositional rhetoric becomes increasingly diluted in key policy domains, as opposition parties, like the LDPR, prioritise maintaining their organizational capacity and political viability over challenging the regime on substantive issues. The reduction in the magnitude of differential odds against government policy signals that the LDPR is increasingly constrained within the regime's boundaries.

Table 6.5. Percent Change in Odds of Model Outcomes Across Convocations (Other)

Convocation	Political-Civil Policy	Economic Policy	Social Policy
Third	-8.04%	-20.70%	-18.73%
Fourth	-28.15%	-26.09%	-24.26%
Fifth	-14.37%	-8.30%	-12.99%
Sixth	-8.34%	-6.98%	-9.44%
Seventh	-1.07%	-4.90%	-3.58%

Other parties also follow the general pattern which indicates a notable decrease in pro-governmental orientations from the Third to Fourth convocations in political, economic, and social policy. From the Fourth to Seventh convocations, however, the odds substantially decline in magnitude over time. Ultimately, all other parties become closest to the governmental line in terms of political and social policy.

Calculating the change in log-odds between convocations underscores the exact degree of variation in these results compared to the Second convocation baseline. Overall, the KPRF experiences a 16.08% increase in odds for political-civil policy, a 23.05% increase for economic policy, and a 16.75% increase for social policy from the Third to Seventh convocations. For the LDPR from the Third to Sixth convocations, the odds increased by 13.03% for political-civil policy, 34.31% for economic policy, and 32.62% for social policy. For all other parties, there is an increase in odds for economic and social policy by 13.72% and 9.3%. Contrasting these parties against each other show a common tendency to move towards the governmental line. The KPRF has consistently significant negative relationships across all convocations, but the strength of the relationship weakens over time. However, the LDPR, begins with a very strong negative relationship (particularly for economic and social policies), which weakens and becomes less consistent over time. All other parties have varying degrees of negative relationships across convocations, with some reductions in the negative relationships over time, but not as consistently as KPRF. These party results indicate an increase or stabilization in pro-governmental speech over subsequent convocations and hint that this tendency begins during the Fifth convocation where governmental narratives began to take precedence.

This suggests that during these earlier convocations, deputies affiliated with opposition parties were much more likely to diverge from the governmental stance, especially in political and economic matters. This could be indicative of a period of more genuine opposition, which follows data presented earlier in this dissertation wherein the moves by the government were demonstrated to seek stronger party unity across all parties in the Fifth convocation including the myriad regulatory and electoral rule changes. Since all the negative coefficients decrease in magnitude over time, this underscores an increase in alignment of opposition deputies with the governmental narrative over time which lends direct support to *H4*. As these policy areas become more salient within the Duma as demonstrated in the previous chapter, there may be more stronger incentives for opposition parties to engage in pro-

government discourse, either because these issues are pressing and there is a national consensus or, more likely, because the government needs to show a united front on critical policy issues. Opposition parties, therefore, may retain political capital by engaging in these domains in ways which are conducive to gaining floor time (i.e., following the government's stances). This may indicate strategic moves which signal to United Russia that they are cooperating, which allows them to avoid marginalisation and potentially gain concessions. Therefore, the decreasing negativity in the percent changes from the Third to the Seventh convocation could be interpreted as a 'surge' in pro-governmental discourse, at least relatively speaking.

However, parties are not the only determinant of speech orientations over time. In fact, institutional factors, and leadership roles emerge as pivotal determinants of speech orientations. Deputies holding leadership positions, be it within committees or their respective parties, tend to veer *towards* oppositional rhetoric over time. For instance, in the Third convocation, party leaders were likely to be significantly more pro-government than their members. This is most stark for social policy, where their estimated odds of engaging with the governmental line increases by a striking 102.41% compared to their backbenchers. Yet, in the Seventh convocation, they became 13.54% less likely than their backbenchers to engage with pro-governmental stances. This indicates that party leaders experienced a 115.95% decrease in pro-governmental speechmaking from the Third to Seventh convocations. For political and economic policy, party leaders decrease in pro-governmental speech by 55.89% and 60.34% respectively. These results are somewhat mirrored for committee chairs in the political-civil domain, where their pro-governmental impact decreased by 14.25%. Yet, these results are almost opposite for Duma wide roles, where Duma leaders became more likely to align with the governmental stance in political matters. From the Fourth the Sixth convocations, the log odds move from a decrease of 20.41% to an increase of 13.06%, representing a 33.47% change in pro-governmental speechmaking.

This is intuitive since party and committee leadership roles should be consistent with more autonomy from the governmental line, since these are the members who are most apt to withstand governmental punishment and who have already reaped the rewards of the party system. Moreover, party leadership is clearly able to control their members and push them towards the government's stances as demonstrated in the previous tables. This leaves room for legislative leaders themselves to engage more freely in oppositional speechmaking, potentially as a calculated concession to 'dissenting' views within the legislature.[38] This manoeuvre allows these leaders to personally capitalise on the perceived benefits of oppositional rhetoric without necessitating any substantive follow-through or full commitment from their political party to adopt all these oppositional stances in their substantive policy agenda.

In parallel, SMD deputies display a tendency to adopt less pro-government positions compared to their colleagues elected through party lists, illustrating a marked degree of independence from the central government's policy directions. This independence not only underscores their direct accountability to the electorate in their specific constituencies but also serves a strategic function for the Duma as a whole. By allowing SMD deputies and party leaders the freedom to occasionally diverge from the government's line, the institution can cultivate an appearance of direct democratic representation, which is further amplified by the likelihood of party leaders' statements and positions being amplified by national media outlets, and SMD deputies' statements being picked up in local constituency media.

Conversely, those in Duma-wide leadership positions find themselves tightly ensnared by the government's narrative, adhering closely to the official line. This stringent alignment with the government's policies and narrative reflects the rewards and incentives system established by the

[38] As noted in section *6.3* these 'dissenting' views may be more hardline than United Russia.

government to ensure loyalty, indicating robust levels of co-optation. Those in leadership positions are often selected for these roles precisely because of their proven loyalty and their willingness to promote and defend the government's agenda, receiving political and possibly personal benefits in return. This dynamic reinforces a central control over the legislative process, even as the semblance of debate and divergence is maintained through the more autonomous stances of SMD deputies and party leaders in general.

The changing role of these institutional positions indicates a growing complexity in the Duma's institutional framework. Initially, these roles may align closely with pro-governmental rhetoric due to the perks and powers associated with them. However, as the Duma evolves, these roles begin to exhibit more autonomy, and their holders may use their positions to express oppositional views more freely. This shift suggests that the influence of institutional roles on deputies' speech is not static but grows in complexity over time supporting *H5*.

The tendency to become more oppositional with party rank and status, and institutional roles is followed through on the demographic front, where the analysis indicates that seasoned deputies, particularly those with extended tenures, lean towards oppositional stances. However, deputies who take to the floor more often (exposure), tend to be more pro-governmental in economic and social policy. In essence, longer tenures tend to produce less pro-governmental rhetoric, but higher amounts of days spent speaking increase those odds. Additionally, female deputies exhibit a propensity for oppositional rhetoric compared to their male counterparts.

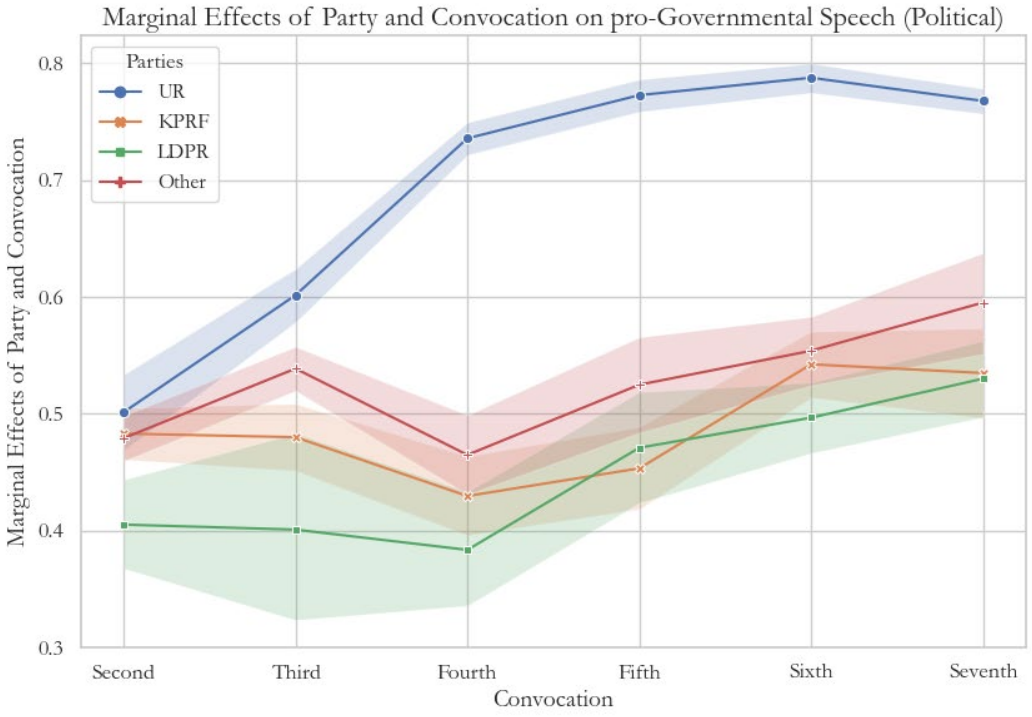
Interaction effects between convocations and committee percent reveal that larger committees tend to be more pro-governmental. This trend is varied across convocations, but in the Third convocation – especially in the political-civil domain – it increases in likelihood. In essence, the findings paint a multifaceted picture of the Duma's legislative discourse in these increasingly salient

domains, highlighting the importance of institutional roles, party affiliation, regime type, and individual deputy characteristics in structuring pro-governmental speechmaking.

Considering the above findings, *H5* receives substantial support. The Seventh convocation, especially in the economic domain, aligns well with the expectations. As the Duma amplified its attention towards economic matters, there was a corresponding surge in pro-governmental discourse, represented by the decreasing magnitude of the coefficients. This suggests that during this period, deputies across the board were more likely to align with the governmental stance. This finding strongly supports *H1*, indicating that as economic and political attention surged, pro-governmental discourse within these domains also increased. This suggests that during earlier periods, the alignment with the governmental narrative on economic matters was not as pronounced, further reinforcing the observations made for the Seventh convocation being substantively unique. Although, the granular data show that this developed over time as a process related to the party system itself.

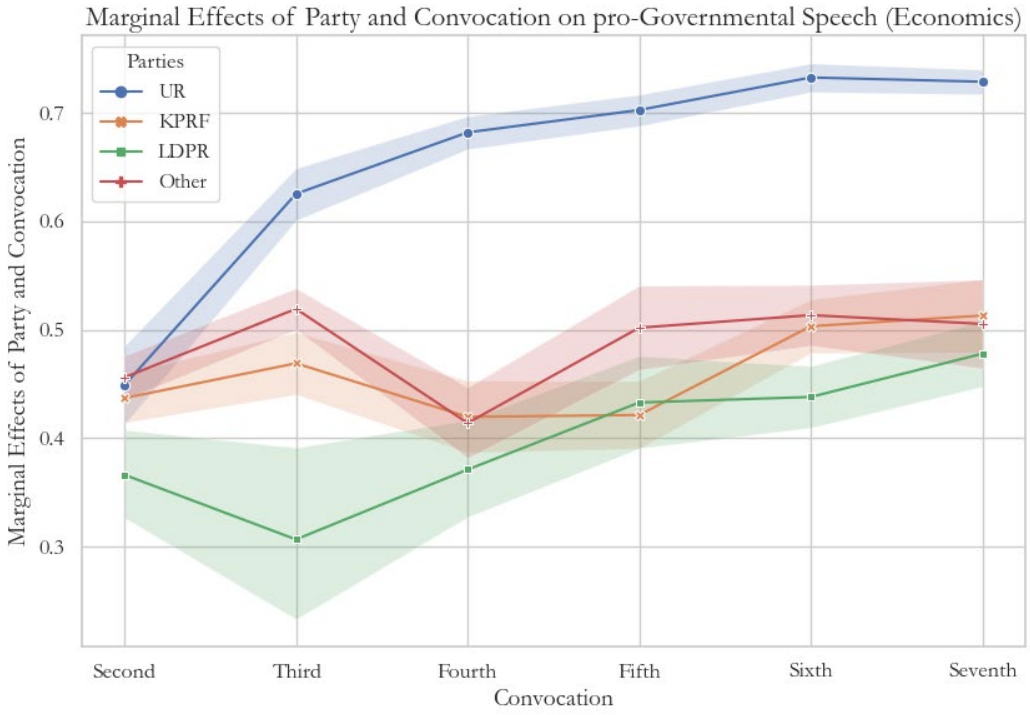
The following graphs demonstrate the marginal effects for these three policy domains by party and convocation. Note that United Russia is a composite variable until its founding in 2001.

Figure 6.9. Marginal Effects of Party and Convocation on Pro-Governmental Speech with 95% Confidence Intervals (Political-Civil Policy)



The results follow the regression tables in demonstrating a relative increase in pro-governmental speeches starting in the Fifth convocation. The ruling parties in the Second convocation are relatively close to the opposition but begin to sharply diverge in the Third convocation. This implies that deputies affiliated with the ruling party only began to consistently exhibit speech patterns that align with the governmental line only after the creation of United Russia, underscoring the party's overarching ability to control their party line on the floor. The opposition finds a similar pattern in convergence. In the Second to Fourth Dumas LDPR and KPRF are relatively stable on the scale, moving towards more oppositional rhetoric in the Fourth convocation. However, from thereafter, they increase in pro-governmental policy orientations with the LDPR relatively increasing more so than their opposition counterparts. These results are in line with the expectations of *H1* and *H4* for the political-civil domain during these periods and provide us with evidence that United Russia began to take narrative control starting in the Fifth convocation.

Figure 6.10. Marginal Effects of Party and Convocation on Pro-Governmental Speech with 95% Confidence Intervals (Economic Policy)

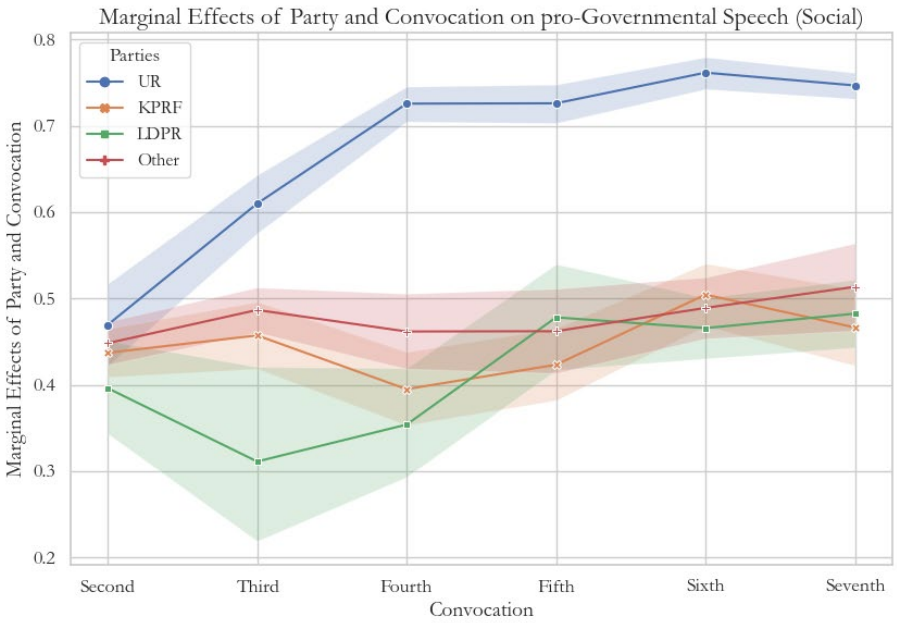


The results for economic policy closely follow the political-civil domain. However, there are notable deviations. For instance, the scale here is about 0.10 smaller than the political-civil domain, implying that there is more oppositional space for economic discussions. Moreover, the ruling parties in the Second convocation are as likely to engage with pro-governmental speech as the opposition. However, by the time United Russia is formed, the trendline diverges from those parties. The KPRF and all other parties are rather consistent in their policy orientations. However, they incur a sharp deviation in the Fourth convocation as did the other parties, but in both cases, these stabilise back to prior levels over time. The LDPR show the most aberrant case, with an extreme deviation towards opposition in the Third convocation, which converges with the other opposition groups over time. However, they do not follow the same aberration in the Fourth convocation. Instead, their trend line moves towards the government more consistently. The trends here also demonstrate support for *H4*: Pro-governmental speech relatively increases over time, primarily driven by United Russia at first, and

then by a convergence in opposition stances towards the governmental orientation compared to prior convocations.

Figure 6.11 details the results for social policy, which match economic policy closer than political and civil policy. For instance, the same general pattern arises in United Russia and its forerunners. Likewise, the KPRF and other parties demonstrate a similar pattern to their economic stances in terms of sustaining their levels of opposition, while LDPR moves initially further away from United Russia and then consolidates into the broader oppositional patterns from the Fourth convocation and onward. Again, the convergence of opposition parties showcases the development of the systemic opposition over time, where United Russia might drive overall pro-governmental stances on the floor, but other parties become more likely to move closer to the governmental line.

Figure 6.11. Marginal Effects of Party and Convocation on Pro-Governmental Speech with 95% Confidence Intervals (Social Policy)



The following table demonstrates the beta regressions for procedure and foreign policy. I excluded defence because the graphic visualization suggested that the covariates do not have enough power to accurately model disentangle their effects on the dependent variables.

Table 6.6. Beta Regression Specifications on Pro-Governmental CAM Scores by Policy Domain (Procedural and Foreign Policy)

Regression results		
	Dependent variable:	
	Procedural	Foreign Policy
	(1)	(2)
Third	**0.162263*****	**0.407993****
	(0.052290)	(0.159224)
Fourth	**0.105594*****	**0.336356*****
	(0.027832)	(0.077518)
Fifth	0.009271	**0.104590****
	(0.018568)	(0.048949)
Sixth	**0.024174***	**0.141514*****
	(0.013020)	(0.032603)
Seventh	**-0.058211*****	**0.114671*****
	(0.012264)	(0.024536)
Exposure	**0.102862*****	0.115626
	(0.031601)	(0.100840)
Age^{2}	**-0.000040*****	-0.000040
	(0.000011)	(0.000026)
Seniority	**-0.011564*****	**-0.028458*****
	(0.002809)	(0.006443)
KPRF	**-0.600354*****	**-0.742557*****
	(0.031553)	(0.079369)
LDPR	**-0.762920*****	**-1.033414*****
	(0.044708)	(0.109150)
Other	**-0.451039*****	**-0.589377*****
	(0.032007)	(0.079100)
Duma leadership	**-0.320661*****	**-0.575958****
	(0.070127)	(0.255006)
Party leader	**-0.821413*****	**-0.993828*****
	(0.110538)	(0.195241)
SMD	0.001665	**-0.182878****
	(0.027723)	(0.072765)
Committee chair	**0.130623*****	0.113612
	(0.035437)	(0.095763)

Committee leadership	0.030903	**0.230039*****
	(0.023853)	(0.057106)
Committee percent	**1.589689*****	**1.142250***
	(0.259043)	(0.668927)
Gender (female)	**-0.065837****	0.017590
	(0.032389)	(0.086342)
Third * KPRF	**-0.200037*****	**-0.425916*****
	(0.053577)	(0.151434)
Fourth * KPRF	**-0.219887*****	**-0.391395*****
	(0.031336)	(0.076594)
Fifth * KPRF	**-0.037971***	**-0.117588****
	(0.021355)	(0.048446)
Sixth * KPRF	**-0.050761*****	-0.047563
	(0.014539)	(0.033928)
Seventh * KPRF	0.008647	**-0.071292***
	(0.014579)	(0.037196)
Third * LDPR	**-0.324192*****	**-0.899861*****
	(0.094539)	(0.251997)
Fourth * LDPR	**-0.174396*****	-0.070092
	(0.044455)	(0.110871)
Fifth * LDPR	0.041688	**0.144229****
	(0.029521)	(0.069199)
Seventh * LDPR	**0.039306****	-0.002787
	(0.016406)	(0.034198)
Third * Other	**-0.060662**	**-0.427421*****
	(0.047777)	(0.142056)
Fourth * Other	**-0.216023*****	**-0.370238*****
	(0.029407)	(0.076036)
Fifth * Other	**-0.066758*****	**-0.096865***
	(0.024720)	(0.055923)
Sixth * Other	**-0.042088*****	-0.064226
	(0.015323)	(0.039434)
Seventh * Duma leadership	**0.092330*****	0.106129
	(0.027530)	(0.157615)
Third * Party leader	**0.393293*****	**0.971554*****

	(0.152410)	(0.339657)
Fifth * Committee chair	0.016822	**0.127889****
	(0.024687)	(0.062775)
Seventh * Committee chair	**0.043964*****	0.016157
	(0.015694)	(0.043393)
Fourth * Committee leader	**0.060108*****	0.030867
	(0.022770)	(0.057432)
Sixth * Committee leader	**0.019782***	-0.019856
	(0.011947)	(0.027606)
Seventh * Committee leader	0.015402	**0.047553****
	(0.011463)	(0.023583)
Third * Committee percent	**0.998568****	0.725308
	(0.427822)	(1.279257)
Fourth * Committee percent	**0.779781****	-1.208784
	(0.315726)	(0.825657)
Seventh * Committee percent	0.169222	**-1.163306*****
	(0.122777)	(0.291487)
Constant	-0.254846	-0.509980
	(0.226436)	(0.724805)
Observations	5,994	1,327
R^2	0.198148	0.366382
Log Likelihood	1,565.471000	356.228700
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

H2 posited that the Duma's reduced focus on foreign policy and procedural-regulatory matters would be accompanied by more relative levels of pro-oppositional rhetoric. Yet, the data does not uniformly support this notion. While overall Duma leaders and party figureheads have indeed shown reduced overall tendency towards pro-governmental speech, suggesting increased levels of oppositional discourse, the reality is more nuanced. For example, during the Seventh convocation, an increase in pro-governmental discourse concerning procedural issues was observed, contradicting *H2*.

Moreover, the dynamics of party affiliations over time illustrate that shifts towards an oppositional stance are not consistently observed across successive convocations or policy domains. Contrary to *H4*'s prediction, a stable or growing pro-oppositional trend is not evident. Instead, periods marked by heightened democratic tendencies show increased oppositional speech, which seems more aligned with the patterns of *H1* (related to political, economic, and social policies) than *H2*.

Committee behaviour also presents a complex pattern. Larger committees appear to exhibit a reduction in pro-governmental speech, hinting at a propensity for oppositional rhetoric, yet this alone does not constitute conclusive evidence for *H2*. The presence of oppositional voices is indeed more pronounced in specific roles and within certain parties, but this trend does not span all convocations nor is it a direct outcome of the Duma's shifting policy focus.

For instance, parties like the LDPR and the KPRF show an upward trajectory in pro-governmental speech over time, diverging from the Fourth convocation where stability is otherwise the norm.

While there are instances where oppositional discourse increases, the comprehensive data suggests mixed support for *H2*. The trend of oppositional rhetoric does not uniformly correlate with the Duma's policy emphasis as initially hypothesised, necessitating further analysis and a reconsideration of the hypothesis to account for the observed complexities and variances. This pattern is highlighted in subsequent tables which track the percentage change in odds across convocations and parties, providing a detailed overview of these changes.

Table 6.7. Percent Change in Odds of Model Outcomes Across Convocations (KPRF)

Convocation	Procedure	Foreign Policy
Third	-18.13%	-34.68%
Fourth	-19.74%	-32.39%
Fifth	-3.73%	-11.09%
Sixth	-4.95%	-4.64%
Seventh	0.87%	-6.88%

The overall change from the Third to the Seventh convocation for the KPRF indicates substantial increases in pro-governmental speech in both procedure and foreign policy.

Table 6.8. Percent Change in Odds of Model Outcomes Across Convocations (LDPR)

Convocation	Procedure	Foreign Policy
Third	-27.69%	-59.34%
Fourth	-16.00%	-6.77%
Fifth	4.26%	15.51%
Sixth	4.01%	-0.28%
Seventh	0.00%	-0.00%

The LDPR demonstrates an increase in pro-governmental rhetoric between convocations. These results strongly demonstrate an alignment with governmental policy stances occurring from the Fifth convocation and onwards. In fact, the Fifth convocation demonstrates an extreme shift in pro-governmental discourse for foreign policy, while the trend somewhat reverts thereafter.

Table 6.9. Percent Change in Odds of Model Outcomes Across Convocations (Other)

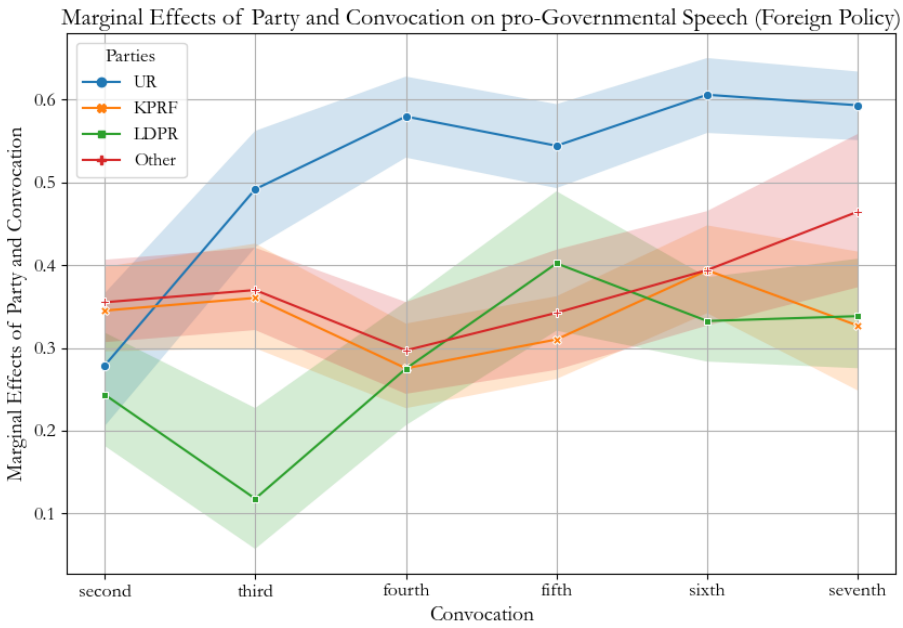
Convocation	Procedure	Foreign Policy
Third	-5.89%	-34.78%
Fourth	-19.43%	-30.94%
Fifth	-6.46%	-9.23%
Sixth	-4.12%	-6.22%
Seventh	0.00%	0.00%

Other parties demonstrate the same general pattern of falling into the governmental line over time. However, for procedure, there is a notable decrease during the Fourth convocation in the procedural-regulatory domain, indicating stronger levels of opposition during this time. However, this quickly rectifies in the following convocation which stabilises itself. Foreign policy experiences a significant increase in pro-governmental orientation during the Fifth convocation.

The changes in log-odds from the baseline offer additional insights. The KPRF sees its odds for pro-governmental speech increase by 23.21% in procedural policy and by 42.84% in foreign policy. The LDPR witnesses even more pronounced shifts with a 43.84% increase in procedural policy and a substantial 145.24% increase in foreign policy. The significant odds increases for the LDPR could be indicative of a strategic pivot towards the government's policy stances or an adjustment of their own policy preferences to align more closely with the ruling party. For other parties, there is a modest increase in odds for procedural policy by 1.87% and a more notable 43.79% for foreign policy. Such trends stand in stark contrast to the expectations set by *H2*, which posited an increase in pro-oppositional rhetoric with decreased Duma emphasis on these domains. Instead, what is observed is a movement towards pro-governmental speech, especially from the LDPR, suggesting a Duma-wide trend of convergence rather than the emergence of a distinct oppositional space also refuting aspects of *H4* – centring party – for these domains.

These dynamics indicate that rather than facilitating an environment where oppositional voices could flourish, there seems to be an incentivization for a unified approach within the systemic opposition. This unified approach aligns with governmental perspectives, suggesting that the government may have successfully encouraged a collective shift towards its positions across the political spectrum. Such a shift questions the validity of *H2* and signals the need for a considering a counter hypothesis that accounts for the observed partisan convergence on government policies. However, the next section of analysis will parse out the relative differences between these parties and United Russia for these two domains. The following figures present the marginal effects of party and convocation on pro-governmental speech for these domains and illuminate the convocational trends.

Figure 6.12. Marginal Effects of Party and Convocation on Pro-Governmental Speech with 95% Confidence Intervals (Foreign Policy)

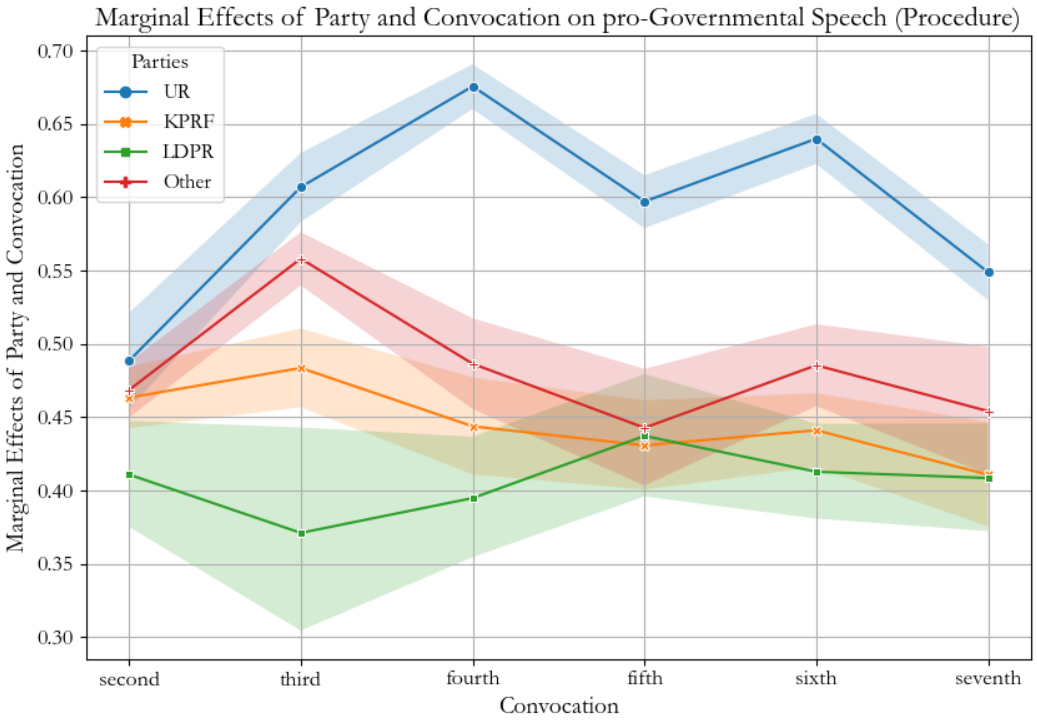


The analysis of the foreign policy domain indicates a discernible divergence between the government and opposition parties starting from the Third convocation, a trend which initially appears to align with *H2*, which anticipates a rise in opposition discourse as the emphasis on foreign policy diminishes. However, the subsequent alignment of opposition parties with the government's stance

post-Third convocation presents a contradiction to *H2*, suggesting a reduction in oppositional rhetoric among the opposition (see *Figure 6.12*). While this alignment points to a Duma-wide pattern of an acceptable opposition threshold, the relative intensity of pro-governmental speech in this domain is notably lower than in those policy domains associated with *H1*, as depicted in *Figures 9* through *11*. This aspect offers partial support to *H2* and *H4*, implying that the foreign policy arena allows for more oppositional freedom overall.

For United Russia specifically, the data presents a compelling narrative that counterintuitively corroborates *H2* and *H4*. There is less of a pronounced relative increase in pro-governmental speech for United Russia compared to the models for *H1*, implying that the overall domain is relatively freer for discussion. The convergence of opposition stances at a level below social, political, and economic policies suggests that while there is latitude for dissent in foreign policy, it is exercised within a common framework established in the Duma. Hence, their relative levels of opposition are marginally larger compared to the other three domains, but the figure for these domains (*6.12* compared against *6.9-6.11*) remain similar in a positive trend line. This provides mixed support for *H2*, reflecting that deputies, including those from United Russia, utilise the additional leeway afforded in this domain, albeit in a similarly controlled manner to the other domains. Yet, in context with the coefficients, foreign policy is more positively impacted by the development of the systemic opposition system and falls short of fully corroborating *H2*. The difference between these results and the former suggests that while deputies are given more space in this domain to run against the governmental narrative, they only do so in a way dictated by broader party system factors, which accounts for their relatively larger increases in pro-governmental speech but overall lower amounts. Therefore, this demonstrates mixed support for the expectations of *H2* and *H4* and provides evidence that United Russia deputies also benefit from the extra leeway in this domain.

Figure 6.13. Marginal Effects of Party and Convocation on Pro-Governmental Speech with 95% Confidence Intervals (Procedural-Regulatory Policy)



The results for procedural policy underscore a marked divergence between parties starting in the Third convocation, akin to the trends observed in the foreign policy domain. However, it then diverges with a downward trend in pro-governmental speech levels from the Fourth convocation, suggesting an expansion of oppositional space within the legislature as attention towards procedure weakens. Unlike the opposition, which maintains a reaches a convergent level of pro-government rhetoric in the Fifth convocation, United Russia exhibits a steadier decline over time, indicating an increased allowance for dissenting voices from within its ranks. When compared to the effects observed in the models related to *H1* concerning political, economic, and social domains, the procedural domain exhibits a starkly different pattern. United Russia shows a noticeable shift away from its own party lines, particularly from the Sixth to the Seventh convocations. This shift is not mirrored by a corresponding increase in oppositional rhetoric from the systemic parties; instead, United Russia deputies themselves occupy the oppositional space.

The transition from a dominance of pro-governmental speeches towards a more balanced distribution of discourse, approaching a 50/50 pluralism, indicates the existence of oppositional space for procedure. However, the regression analysis reveals that it is United Russia that predominantly begins to occupy more of this space over time, while the opposition remains steady. This partially supports *H2*, which predicts an uptick in oppositional speech as the focus on certain policy domains diminishes.

Therefore, the procedural-regulatory domain more closely adheres to *H2* and *H4's* expectations, while the foreign policy domain presents a more complex and contextually dependant scenario, which demonstrates that although there is potential for increased oppositional discourse as legislative focus shifts, the actual utilisation of this space by United Russia complicates the hypothesis. These outcomes suggest that internal party dynamics significantly influence the legislative discourse in these domains.

6.5 Discussion

The empirical investigation through regression analysis and Class Affinity Modelling (CAM) within the Russian Duma affords a comprehensive view into the legislative behaviours and policy orientations indicative of authoritarian signalling. These findings are situated within the dissertation's theoretical framework which illuminates the strategic dynamics authoritarian regimes employ to maintain stability and legitimacy within the context of parliamentary speeches. .

H1 posited an increase in pro-government discourse when the Duma heightened its focus on economic, social, and political policies, particularly from United Russia. The Seventh convocation's data largely corroborates this hypothesis, evidencing a pronounced pro-government rhetoric within United Russia, especially in the economic domain. This surge is indicative of the party's control over the legislative agenda, affirming the theoretical notion that a ruling party in an authoritarian regime

will amplify its narrative within critical policy arenas to consolidate legitimacy and suppress alternative voices.

The party system's role is pivotal, as United Russia's legislative agenda-setting reflects in the pro-government discourse patterns of the Duma originating at their founding and entrenching from thereafter. The data suggests United Russia's narrative becomes more cohesive and government aligned as the importance of economic matters escalates on the floor, with the party system's coalescence under United Russia's leadership being a determinant in shaping legislative discourse. This substantiates the overarching theory for the chapter regarding the confluence of pro-governmental rhetoric in key policy areas and reveals a discernible strategic realignment in legislative debates towards such rhetoric. This realignment is accompanied by a notable diminution in oppositional focus on key policy areas, effectively supporting the hypothesis that as an authoritarian regime consolidates, it endeavours to reinforce its legitimacy and policies through the strategic management of legislative debates.

Hence, *H2* anticipated a relative increase in pro-oppositional discourse with a diminished Duma emphasis on foreign policy, defence, and procedural-regulatory matters. The data offers mixed support. While the expectation suggests a rise in oppositional discourse among non-governing parties, United Russia displayed relatively higher levels of narrative diversity as well. This deviation in the ruling party's narrative could reflect the regime's calculated approach to signal pluralism or pre-empt opposition by internalising dissent. Institutional variables, such as committee memberships and leadership roles within the Duma, accord deputies a degree of discourse autonomy, challenging the hypothesis by showing a more pronounced oppositional discourse in these roles compared to the party system. This autonomy allows deputies to navigate the legislative landscape with some independence from the government's line, reflecting Simison's (2020) perspective on oppositional autonomy within authoritarian legislatures.

In procedural matters, the deviation serves to mitigate any public perception of rigidity or unilateralism which the deliberate tinkering of Duma procedures had previously made a public concern; as such, it pushes this narrative away from the systemic opposition. The foreign policy domain likewise presents a contextually dependant scenario. Throughout the Third, Fourth, Sixth, and Seventh convocations, deputies affiliated with the ruling party consistently distanced themselves from the governmental narrative on foreign policy matters. This trend was particularly pronounced during the latter convocations, periods marked by significant geopolitical developments. Such deviations are attributed to the difficulties inherent in Russia's foreign policy and the need for United Russia deputies to distance themselves from contentious events, while the systemic opposition maintained their levels of 'oppositional speech', indicating less of a need to do so. In fact, the 'oppositional' language from these deputies often takes a harder line than the regime. This implies that systemic parties are signalling to the government that they are steadfast in relatively following the governmental line on these regime-critical issues such as the War against Ukraine – in other words, they have not changed their expected levels of opposition.

Foreign policy stands out as a domain affording a significant degree of latitude in later years. This 'openness' in an environment characterised by higher levels of opposition rhetoric contrasts against United Russia, juxtaposing the results with the more rigidly controlled discussions in other policy areas. The strategic allowance for stepping away from the governmental line in foreign policy discourse can be interpreted as a tactical move by the regime. It serves multiple functions: projecting an image of deliberation on the international stage, defusing potential criticisms of authoritarianism, and, most importantly, testing and priming the waters for policy shifts without committing the regime to a specific course of action and without setting the blame onto United Russia. For opposition parties, this latitude provides an opportunity to articulate distinct positions and potentially influence the direction of foreign policy.

This approach aligns with the regime's broader strategy of managing dissent in a controlled environment. As Borozna (2022) points out, the Kremlin's foreign policy actions are shaped by the need to preserve regime stability while navigating external pressures. By allowing a greater range of parliamentary discussion on foreign policy, the regime can appear more democratic without ceding any real control. In practice, this serves as a pressure valve, where opposition voices are permitted to 'debate' policies that do not directly threaten the ruling party's core interests – such as those related to economic management or political-civil rights, which are tightly regulated by United Russia. In foreign policy, however, the stakes are perceived as less immediately destabilising, allowing opposition parties to present alternative – often hardline – viewpoints and thereby lending the regime an appearance of deliberation. At the same time, this controlled openness allows the regime to gauge public and elite reactions to potential policy shifts without taking responsibility for unpopular decisions, thereby creating a buffer that protects the ruling party from the fallout of foreign policy missteps, while also allowing the government to adjust its strategies based on the opposition's proposals without directly owning any controversial initiatives (Borozna 2022). In this way, the regime can maintain the facade of a functioning democracy, using the opposition as a tool for policy experimentation, all while retaining tight control over more politically sensitive domestic issues.

In defence matters, the results find a noteworthy trend in the Sixth and Seventh Dumas, characterised by a high degree of governmental alignment in 2014, followed by a notable decline by 2017. This trajectory suggests a period during which the opposition may have strategically outmanoeuvred the government, particularly evident as we approach the end of the Seventh Duma. The opposition's ability to navigate this domain with greater autonomy – potentially adopting hardline stances without significant political cost – highlights defence as a unique arena for legislative innovation.

Consequently, these patterns in defence and foreign policy indicate a calculated approach by the regime, which appears more inclined to preserve its centrist position while tacitly permitting the opposition to venture into more extreme positions. Such a strategy allows the ruling party to distance itself from the potential fallout of hardline policies and receive information about the public's preferences, thus maintaining a more moderate image. The opposition's latter engagement in defence policy, therefore, does not merely reflect a passive resistance but a proactive strategy that occasionally positions them as more hardline than United Russia. Hence, these policy domains become a canvas for broader political strategies, allowing opposition parties to assert some degree of influence without directly threatening the regime's stability. In fact, as defence and foreign policy become more central to the regime's internal legitimacy, these domains provide avenues for engagement on substantive policy initiatives by the opposition parties.

H2 acknowledged that deputies may exhibit restraint in their divergence from governmental narratives due to potential political repercussions or the need for the government to maintain a unified front in sensitive policy areas. It suggests that the dynamics of legislative discourse are influenced by internal party strategies, individual member calculations, and the broader geopolitical context. This hypothesis accommodates the observed behaviour of United Russia and proposes that shifts in legislative emphasis away from foreign policy and procedure might lead to an increase in intra-party plurality.

H3 predicts a discernible cleavage between government and opposition across the spectrum of policy domains, with more critical legislative functions being discussed more than non-critical functions. The data indicates that this cleavage is indeed present, but its manifestation is nuanced. While there is a general trend toward alignment with the government's stances, particularly in the economic domain, opposition parties maintain a distinct distance from the government, especially in earlier convocations. This divergence diminishes starting from the Third Convocation, suggesting that

the cleavage between government and opposition is not static but evolves as the legislative focus and party system dynamics shift into the current state of managed opposition. Moreover, the relative degrees of separation are likewise important and support *H3*. For instance, there is a higher likelihood of oppositional speech in procedure and foreign policy compared to social, economic, or political-civil policy.

Institutional variables such as committee sizes, leadership roles, and convocational shifts play a significant role in determining deputies' speech orientations. Larger committees, for instance, are associated with a reduction in pro-governmental speech, while leadership roles often correlate with a propensity for oppositional rhetoric. These variables suggest that institutional structures within the Duma provide both constraints and opportunities for deputies, influencing how they navigate the legislative space and articulate their policy stances. These roles emerge as pivotal determinants of speech orientations. The analysis shows that deputies in these roles initially veer towards pro-governmental rhetoric but exhibit a shift towards oppositional rhetoric over time, particularly in the Seventh convocation. This shift suggests a growing complexity and influence of institutional roles within the Duma, aligning with *H5*. The changing dynamics among deputies in leadership positions indicate an evolving influence of these roles on deputies' speech orientations, reflecting a maturation of the Duma's institutional framework.

However, the party system itself plays a pivotal role in shaping legislative discourse. As United Russia's narrative becomes more cohesive and government-aligned, it appears to drive the overall trend in legislative discourse. However, the systemic opposition parties also contribute to this dynamic. Their narratives tend to move towards United Russia's over time, particularly in later convocations, indicating a strategic adaptation to the prevailing legislative agenda. This convergence suggests a complex calculation by opposition parties, balancing the need to maintain their distinct voice with the strategic benefits of aligning with government narratives on key issues lending credence to *H4*.

The increase in pro-government discourse, particularly in the systemic parties, and especially in economic, social, and political-civil domains, is a testament to this strategic realignment. It demonstrates the regime's efforts to signal its unassailable position and consolidate control by co-opting opposition voices into its fold. This finding is consistent with the expectation that legislative debates will increasingly reflect and support the government's narrative, serving to bolster the regime's legitimacy and diminish the space for effective oppositional engagement.

The regression analysis reveals a significant trend where opposition parties, over time, show a weakening negative effect against pro-governmental speech (i.e., a higher likelihood of speaking in line with the government). This trend is particularly pronounced in the economic domain, suggesting a strategic adaptation or alignment with governmental policy stances in later convocations. The data indicates that parties like the KPRF and LDPR initially diverge from government policy but gradually align more closely with it, especially in economic and social policies. This alignment is indicative of the strengthening influence of the party system on legislative discourse, as posited in *H4*. The party system's evolution, particularly the coalescence under United Russia's leadership, becomes a determinant in shaping legislative discourse, reflecting a transition from a more individual-driven to a party-driven politics. If *H4* were to be refuted, there would be stronger signals of consistency across convocations, indicating that while party effects exist, they are limited in their variance over time.

The study's findings, juxtaposed with the theoretical framework, elucidate the mechanisms of narrative control within the Duma guided by the government. United Russia's coalescence around pro-government rhetoric in key policy areas like economics aligns with Magaloni's (2008) concept of authoritarian survival tactics. In contrast, the internal pluralism and narrative diversity, especially in less critical policy domains, signal a strategic flexibility reflective of an authoritarian regime's adaptability. Meanwhile, the systemic opposition parties present a subtle interaction with institutional structures, aligning with or diverging from government narratives depending on the policy domain

and convocation. This strategic alignment is significant, balancing the need to maintain a distinct voice with the strategic benefits of aligning with government narratives on key issues.

The integration of the party system and institutional variables appears to move legislative discourse in a direction that is not entirely predictable by the initial hypotheses. While the ruling party exhibits a strong alignment with governmental policies, it also allows for internal pluralism, reflecting a degree of strategic flexibility. Opposition parties, on the other hand, are beholden to institutional structures, sometimes aligning with and other times diverging from government narratives, depending on the policy domain and the specific convocation.

The party system, particularly the dominance of United Russia, appears to drive the overall trend in legislative discourse. However, the systemic opposition parties contribute to this dynamic, with their narratives moving towards United Russia's over time, especially in later convocations. Yet, institutional affiliations wax and wane in their importance between convocations, and do not reveal consistent cross-convocational patterns. This indicates that while they may hold significant within convocation effects on pro-governmental speech, this must be moderated by the party effects which are more consistent over time regarding both the direction of the trend line and statistical significance. This lends limited support for *H6* and suggests a calculation by leadership roles in the Duma, balancing the need to maintain their distinct voice with the strategic benefits of aligning with government narratives on key issues as they appear. The integration of the party system and institutional variables steers legislative discourse in a direction shaped by an array of forces, diverging in ways not fully anticipated by the initial hypotheses.

Therefore, the theory's expectation of co-optation is mirrored in the findings where, despite an overall trend of increased centralisation of discourse within the ruling party, there is an observed withdrawal of party leadership from active debate participation in the Seventh convocation. This suggests an approach to maintaining legislative control where the party apparatus is allowed to manage

discourse and ensure the regime's narratives remain front and centre, especially in economic, procedural, and political and civil matters.

Chapter 2 posited a strategic realignment towards pro-government rhetoric, a phenomenon clearly observed in the empirical data. The increase in pro-government discourse, particularly from United Russia and in the economic domain, supports the notion that authoritarian regimes strategically amplify narratives that bolster their legitimacy and control. This realignment acts as a signal, both domestically and internationally, of the regime's unassailable position and the co-optation of political discourse, aligning with the signalling aspects mentioned in the theory chapter.

Moreover, the discussion on the shifting dynamics of pro-governmental speech among opposition parties, especially concerning the strategic alignment observed in later convocations, echoes the theoretical discussions on managed opposition. This concept posits that authoritarian regimes allow for a controlled amount of opposition to help legitimise their rule while consolidating regime-stabilising policy domains within the ruling party. The empirical evidence of opposition parties gradually aligning with government narratives illustrates this mechanism in action. the empirical findings also demonstrate the evolution of legislative discourse over time, highlighting a transition from individual-driven to more party-driven politics. Hence, this evolution reflects the theoretical discussions on how authoritarian regimes adapt their strategies to changing political landscapes to ensure their longevity. The strategic realignment of legislative debates towards supporting the government narrative, while limiting oppositional discourse in critical policy areas, is a testament to the adaptive strategies employed by authoritarian regimes to reinforce their rule.

In summary, the findings from the regression analysis and CAM underscore the government's investment in controlling the narrative on the floor. The strategic dynamics within the Duma align with an authoritarian signalling function: the Duma's coalescence around pro-government rhetoric in key policy areas, such as economics, underscore the signalling function in these domains. In contrast,

the internal pluralism and narrative diversity, especially in less critical policy domains, signal a strategic flexibility reflective of the regime's adaptability, and may also contribute to a legitimation function. The systemic opposition parties present a more cohesive picture, aligning with or diverging from government narratives depending on the policy domain and convocation. This strategic alignment is significant, as it demonstrates a balancing act between maintaining a party image on one hand and aligning with government narratives on the other.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a comprehensive analysis of legislative discourse within the Russian Duma, employing regression models and Class Affinity Modelling to unravel the intricate shifts across various convocations. This analysis builds upon and augments the foundational findings of previous chapters, offering a comprehensive view of the relationship between policy focus and speechmaking practices within an authoritarian legislative context.

A key observation from this study is the significant role of party affiliation and institutional structures in shaping the direction and intensity of policy discourse. The findings underscore that rhetoric from both government and opposition benches is dynamic and responsive to a myriad of influences, including party dominance, committee configurations, and the overarching institutional framework of the Duma. The variation in policy orientation across convocations not only mirrors the changing priorities of Duma deputies but also reflects broader shifts in the Russian political milieu. This transition from a more democratic to an authoritarian system is marked by a distinct trend towards the development of systemic opposition and governmental narrative control.

The factional dynamics within the Duma are critical in steering its policy narrative. United Russia has demonstrated a steadfast command over its party line since its inception, progressively consolidating its narrative control over the legislative floor. However, certain convocations, such as

the Fourth, marked by stronger levels of dissent, illuminate the complexities of intra-party dynamics and the necessity for regulatory adaptations to reinforce party cohesion. This need for adaptation is evident in the government's focus on reforming legislative rules and procedures, as demonstrated throughout this dissertation.

Institutional variables also play a significant role in legislative discourse. Committee affiliation and leadership roles, while less influential than the party system, impact policy domains such as the economy, politics, and foreign policy. Leadership roles within the Duma and within parties highlight the capacity for autonomy and manoeuvring, with seasoned leaders often adopting higher levels of oppositional rhetoric. This trend underscores the power dynamics and space for dissent that rest on positions within the Duma's structure.

When juxtaposed with the proposed hypotheses, the findings offer further insights. *H1* garners robust support, particularly evident in the Seventh convocation's economic sphere, indicating a surge in pro-governmental discourse as the Duma's focus on key policy areas intensifies. *H2* which expects a rise in pro-oppositional discourse with reduced emphasis on foreign policy and procedural matters, finds mixed support. The procedural domain aligns more with *H2*'s predictions, whereas the foreign policy domain presents a layered picture, shaped by geopolitical concerns and party politics. *H3* anticipates a clear government-opposition cleavage which emerges over time across policy domains, which is strongly evidenced in the CAM and regression results, delineating a discernible increase in pro-governmental rhetoric over time. *H4* is substantiated by the observed trend where opposition parties, particularly from the Fourth to Seventh convocations, exhibit a weakening negative effect against pro-governmental speech (i.e., a strengthening of their pro-government stances). This trend suggests a strategic alignment or adaptation with governmental policy stances, indicating the *strengthening* influence of party variables on deputies' discourse in later convocations, since they tend to become less differentiated from United Russia.

H5 is supported by the evolving role of institutional variables, such as committee chairs and leadership positions. Initially aligning with pro-governmental rhetoric, these roles shift towards more oppositional stances over time, reflecting the growing complexity and usefulness of leadership roles for providing opposition within the Duma's framework. *H6*, while challenging to test directly due to model constraints, is indirectly supported by the overall trends observed. The convergence of oppositional and governmental positions, particularly in economic and social policies, suggests a complex calculation by opposition parties, while the more variable leadership roles suggest leaders are qualitatively different across parties. They balance maintaining a distinct voice with the strategic benefits of aligning with government narratives, indicating a plausible moderating effect of the party system on the influence of institutional roles.

These insights offer a detailed view of the Duma's legislative conduct and contribute to a deeper understanding of Russia's political and institutional fabric. The study elucidates the dynamics between the ruling party and the opposition, and the importance of institutional roles in a legislative body that is continuously evolving alongside reactive governmental reforms. In conclusion, this research emphasizes the critical nature of legislative pluralism, which must be considered within the broader political and institutional context to fully grasp its implications and underpinnings within the Duma.

7. Conclusion

This dissertation provides a comprehensive examination of the role and significance of legislative speech in divergent political environments, with a specific focus on contrasting authoritarian and democratic regimes. It emphasizes the vital yet often underestimated role of legislative debates in authoritarian contexts, showing how they significantly influence complex legislative outcomes. This is exemplified through an in-depth case study of the Russian Duma from 1996 to 2021. The study observed that as the Duma transitioned from a semi-democratic to a more authoritarian structure, the nature and function of legislative debates underwent a significant transformation. These debates emerged as key markers of party cohesion within the ruling party, as well as indicators of divisions within the opposition, and played a key role in crafting pro-government narratives, particularly as the government's control over parliamentary discourse strengthened. This inquiry is essential for a explaining the internal mechanisms of authoritarian systems.

The study of legislative speech within authoritarian regimes marks a significant point of departure from speechmaking analyses which have predominantly centred around democratic settings. The existing literature, as surveyed in *Chapter 2*, elucidates the roles that legislative debates play in democracies, ranging from platforms for policy deliberation to arenas for political contestation and representation. In those democratic contexts, legislative speech serves as a vital channel for political expression, offering insights into the mechanisms of decision-making, consensus-building, and opposition (Bäck, Debus, and Fernandes 2021). Studies within democratic frameworks highlight how speech acts facilitate the understanding of policy preferences, ideological divides, and the strategic positioning of parties and legislators.

Transitioning this analytical focus to authoritarian regimes represents a novel exploration of these legislatures, addressing a significant gap in the literature. In authoritarian settings, legislative bodies are

often perceived as rubber-stamp institutions, lacking the autonomous power to influence policy or challenge executive decisions significantly. However, recent research has examined the specific mechanisms by which these institutions contribute to regime stability, how these institutions develop in authoritarian contexts, and in what ways do they diverge from democratic institutions and fulfil specific authoritarian goals (Gandhi, Noble, and Svolik 2020).

Taking cue from this research agenda, the dissertation posits that legislative speech in such contexts is far from monolithic or purely ceremonial. Instead, it offers a novel analysis of the internal dynamics of authoritarian governance by using speech data, revealing the subtleties of control, opportunities for oppositional engagement, and the performative aspects of political legitimacy and the roles which legislative speeches play in generating stability. The theory chapter constructed a comprehensive analytical framework for understanding the evolution of legislative debates in authoritarian contexts. To do so, it interweaves the theories of co-optation, monitoring, and signalling to delineate the dynamic roles and functions of authoritarian legislatures, reflecting their adaptability and strategic significance within the political framework of the state.

Chapter 1 posed several significant empirical questions which guided this research:

1. How do the functions and characteristics of parliamentary debates differ between democratic and authoritarian regimes?
2. What are the conditions that create participation patterns in policy debates in authoritarian contexts?
3. How do the structures and rules within legislative institutions, such as control over agenda-setting and floor debates, shape the nature of legislative speech in authoritarian regimes? To what extent do electoral systems in backsliding regimes influence legislative debates, and how are these influences reflected in legislators' speech behaviour?

4. To what extent do shifts in party configurations within regimes experiencing democratic backsliding impact legislative debates, and how do these shifts manifest in the speech behaviour of legislators under authoritarian conditions?

These questions form the core theory set out in *Chapter 2*. *Chapter 2* highlights how the strategic use of legislative debates evolve over time, moving from platforms of democracy to controlled environments that prioritise regime stability. Under authoritarian conditions, legislative debates diverge from common assumptions under democracy (e.g., electoral politics, coalition-building, or representation [Bäck, Debus, and Fernandes 2021]). Instead, they integrate opposition, manage dissent, and project regime strength, serving multiple purposes involving the co-optation of opposition figures, reactive monitoring of legislative discourse, and signalling of governmental legitimacy and responsiveness to societal needs. Central to the theory is the adaptability of authoritarian legislatures, which adjust their functions and operations in response to the changing needs of the regime. It posits that legislative debates undergo a significant transformation, initially allowing for a semblance of democratic discourse but gradually shifting towards a more restricted and regime-centric dialogue. This transition is marked by an increased emphasis on pro-government rhetoric, a decrease in oppositional engagement, and a strategic realignment of debates to reinforce the regime's narrative.

The empirical investigation found that legislative speeches serve strategic uses for the regime. Aligning with co-optation theory, these debate practices reflect the incorporation and neutralisation of opposition voices, weaving them into the governance model without allowing them to undermine the regime's stability. In terms of monitoring, they provide a direct mechanism to monitor dissent and allow the regime to adjust its formal regulations and informal practices regarding floor access accordingly. This ensures the maintenance of a controlled but seemingly participatory political environment, where the ruling party increases the total time spent on the floor compared to semi-

democratic periods. Finally, regarding signalling, legislative debates facilitate the projection of the ruling party's stances to domestic audiences during hegemonic periods of the regime. However, opposition parties, while outwardly critical in specific policy domains, navigate a tightly controlled environment where their ability to critique is both encouraged and limited by informal rules, which can be described as self-imposed restrictions that prevent genuine opposition (March 2012). This dynamic allows the regime to project an image of political pluralism while simultaneously maintaining firm control over the political landscape.

Legislators continue to work on the public floor, not out of personal ambition for career advancement as evidenced by *Chapter 3* and within Anton Shirikov's work (2021), but due to a combination of political obligation, party loyalty, and the need to maintain their standing within the political system. The authoritarian environment in Russia centralises control over legislative activities, meaning that participation is often more about fulfilling obligations to the party and signalling loyalty to the government rather than pursuing purely personal political objectives. Deputies, particularly those aligned with United Russia, understand that continued participation is necessary to maintain access to resources, avoid political repercussions, and ensure their own political survival within a controlled and often precarious system. Additionally, even within these constraints, participating in debates allows them to secure a modicum of influence over legislative outcomes via their committee roles, stay relevant in their political circles, and remain visible to their party leadership. In this sense, legislators work to maintain their position within the system, recognising that disengagement could lead to marginalisation or loss of political favour. Ultimately, their continued participation reflects the regime's capacity to control political elites through institutional and party-based mechanisms.

Furthering the understanding of authoritarian legislatures, this dissertation leverages legislative speech as a novel and underutilised data source to analyse authoritarian regimes, offering novel insights into the operation of authoritarian parties and legislative bodies. They reveal the role of legislative

speech in such contexts: not just as a means for political posturing, but as an element in defining the bounds of authority, mechanisms of control, and types of possible 'resistance'. By exploring the nuances of legislative discourse in authoritarian regimes, this research contributes significantly to our understanding of how these regimes function and maintain their stability. The subsequent sections will integrate these findings and reassess the dissertation's contributions to political science by revisiting its central questions – the function of legislative speech in authoritarian regimes and the influence of regime type on speech practices – and suggest directions for future research.

7.1 Key Findings

This section offers a comprehensive summary of the dissertation, recounting the findings as they were unfolded in the preceding chapters. By following this sequential approach, the objective is to underscore the progressive development of the research, highlighting how each chapter incrementally builds upon the analysis and insights established in the prior sections. This format aims to showcase the cohesive and cumulative nature of the dissertation's arguments and conclusions.

7.1.1 The Dynamics of Legislative Debate in the Russian Duma

This chapter examined the evolution of speechmaking within the Russian Duma, underscoring an intensification of government oversight and influence over legislative debates. This transition is marked by notable alterations in the length and nature of speeches, the patterns of lawmaker participation, and the increasingly centralised nature of debates among pivotal party figures, all indicative of a shift toward more authoritarian methodologies. The investigation uncovers a strategy of using formal procedural alterations and informal party-based politics to influence floor time allocation and participation rates. Over time, there has been a noticeable tightening of the formal regulations that oversee debates, occurring in tandem with the amplification of informal, party-based control mechanisms. These developments collectively led to a more centralised debate structure and

a diminution of oppositional voices, thereby fortifying the parliamentary dominance of United Russia. By curtailing opposition involvement and enhancing the representation of the ruling party, legislative discourse on the floor is effectively steered to benefit the government's agenda.

This chapter elucidates the role of legislative debates as key indicators of the increasing coherence within the ruling party and their escalated dominance over opposition forces. This phenomenon became more distinct as the regime shifted towards authoritarianism as is evident in the regression analysis. The results demonstrate that this trend is not merely a byproduct of the party system evolving into the framework of systemic opposition. Instead, it reveals that United Russia's control over parliamentary proceedings strengthened long after the party system had ostensibly stabilised in the mid-2000s, which suggests that this centralisation of control was not an inevitable consequence of a maturing political system but rather a deliberate strategy by the regime to consolidate power.

To understand why this occurred, it is necessary to consider the broader political dynamics in Russia. After the mid-2000s, as the regime faced growing domestic and international pressures – including economic challenges, public protests, and external conflicts – United Russia had to actively consolidate its hold on the political system. This became particularly pertinent during the Sixth convocation when United Russia lost its constitutional majority, exposing the regime to potential vulnerabilities. The party's subsequent actions in the Duma, including tighter control over proceedings and debates, were not simply about stabilising the party system. Instead, they were deliberate adaptations to threats to the regime's legitimacy, including the strengthening opposition forces and public discontent between 2011-2012. The protests during this period, especially the mass demonstrations following the disputed Duma elections, reflected a moment of heightened political vulnerability for the regime. In response, United Russia enacted a series of procedural changes designed to suppress dissent and consolidate power. By tightening control over legislative debates,

United Russia successfully neutralised oppositional efforts, like those seen during the 'Italian Strike,' ensuring that parliamentary discourse consistently reflected and advanced the regime's priorities.

The Seventh convocation stands out as a key turning point in this process of authoritarian consolidation within the parliament. The distinctiveness of this period is in part attributable to the influence of Vyacheslav Volodin, who assumed the role of Chairman of the Duma in 2016. Volodin spearheaded a series of reforms that further centralised control over legislative proceedings. His emphasis on streamlining the legislative process and prioritising the agenda of United Russia led to the exclusion of oppositional voices and a more hierarchical approach to speechmaking. However, as the data in the dissertation reveals, this process as it is reflected on the floor truly began towards the middle of the Sixth convocation and fully coalesced during the middle of the Seventh convocation. Hence, Volodin's reform program only explains the latter half of the consolidation period – the Seventh convocation thus marked the culmination of a process that began in the aftermath of the 2011-2012 protests, wherein the regime increasingly utilised legislative institutions as instruments of control rather than as venues for genuine political debate. Volodin's reforms reinforced the dominance of United Russia on the legislative floor, ensuring that debates were tightly managed and reflective of regime priorities.

The empirical evidence provides a substantive corroboration of the theoretical expectations laid out regarding the transition from democratic to authoritarian governance. The theory posited a notable shift in the allocation of floor time and participation opportunities as the regime transitions from democratic to authoritarian. This was expected to be influenced by committee memberships, party leadership positions, and the ruling party's status. The evidence demonstrates this shift conclusively. Under democratic conditions, legislative roles were primarily defined by expertise. However, as authoritarianism took root, these roles increasingly reflected loyalty to the regime and indicated increasing party-based control, corroborating the expectation that committee leadership and

party leadership roles would evolve to signify a mechanism of co-optation alongside monitoring functions.

The empirical findings underscore that, consistent with expectations, floor time and participation opportunities have indeed become skewed towards members demonstrating loyalty to the regime. This not only validates the theory but also illustrates the mechanisms through which authoritarian regimes consolidate power within legislative bodies, effectively reducing the diversity of discourse and marginalising oppositional voices.

In line with the marginalisation of oppositional voices, the theory expects that the regime's authoritarian deepening would lead to the ruling party's legislators increasingly dominating legislative debates. This has been evidenced by the observed patterns in the Duma, where the quantity of floor time and frequency of participation heavily favour ruling party members. This dominance is reflective of the regime's consolidation of power and control over legislative discourse, aligning with the theoretical framework's anticipation of how authoritarian regimes strategically leverage legislative institutions to suppress oppositional engagement and amplify regime-centric narratives.

Furthermore, the theoretical framework also highlighted the expectation that changes in legislative procedures, such as the imposition of time constraints or the strategic grouping of amendments, would be employed to limit the opposition's capacity to challenge effectively. The data reveals that such procedural adjustments have been utilised from the Sixth convocation onwards, serving dual purposes of curtailing oppositional challenges and enabling the government to closely monitor and steer legislative discourse. This finding supports the theory's assertion that authoritarian regimes actively adapt legislative processes to mitigate potential threats and ensure the perpetuation of their agenda. Therefore, the centralisation of debates and the tightening of formal regulations, alongside increased informal party-based control, manifest the co-optation strategy by integrating opposition into the regime's fold, ensuring loyalty through leadership roles and committee positions. Meanwhile, the

diminution of oppositional voices and the dominance of United Russia legislative discourse exhibit the monitoring aspect, where the regime keeps a close watch on legislative behaviours and curtails dissent.

The convergence between the empirical findings and the theoretical expectations provides a robust validation of the theory posited regarding government oversight and influence in legislative debates within authoritarian settings. By examining the dynamics of legislative control and participation through the lens of committee memberships, party leadership, and ruling party status, the study has illuminated the mechanisms through which authoritarian regimes, such as that observed in the Russian Duma, exercise and consolidate their control over legislative bodies.

This chapter not only underscores the applicability of the theoretical framework to the Russian case but also enhances our understanding of the evolving nature of legislative behaviour in the face of authoritarian consolidation. It offers compelling evidence of how legislative institutions, traditionally seen as platforms for either democratic discourse or 'rubber-stamping', can be transformed into instruments of authoritarian control, highlighting the critical role they play in the broader strategy of regime maintenance and opposition suppression.

7.1.2 The Effect of Election Rules on Legislative Debate Participation

This chapter examined the impacts of electoral system changes on legislative floor participation in the Russian Duma, particularly during the transition periods of the Fourth through Seventh convocations. This is an important step forward for the analysis of debate under authoritarian conditions since in democracies it is well understood that electoral system type largely determines speechmaking practices (Proksch and Slapin 2015, 2021). However, the analysis reveals significant behavioural anomalies in the Duma, particularly in the transition back to mixed-member majoritarianism (MMM) in the Seventh convocation, which diverged markedly from the behavioural

patterns typical of earlier MMM periods. This deviation suggests a fundamental difference in the incentives for legislative speechmaking between democratic and authoritarian parliaments.

The chapter underscores that the Seventh convocation, under the reintroduced MMM system, displayed unique legislative behaviours. This divergence from democratic norms implies that factors beyond the electoral system, possibly linked to the evolving authoritarian regime, significantly influenced legislative conduct. The analysis demonstrates a stark contrast between the authoritarian context of the Duma and democratic models. Under proportional representation (PR), deputies experienced stringent party control over their floor participation, while those elected through single-member districts (SMD) ostensibly aligned more with local interests yet did not adhere to democratic expectations of taking more floor time. This finding indicates that the institutional and party determinants of floor access and time, as discussed in the first empirical chapter, are more effective in explaining speechmaking practices in this context. Notably, the influence of the electoral system on legislative behaviour was found to be less significant compared to the institutional and party controls in the models.

The insights provided in this chapter are pivotal for several reasons. Firstly, they illuminate unique legislative behaviour emergent under authoritarian contexts, where electoral systems are strategically manipulated to fulfil specific political goals, diverging from the consistent incentive structures offered by electoral systems in democratic principles. Secondly, the findings enrich the understanding of legislative politics within authoritarian regimes, showing that legislative behaviour is not solely dictated by the electoral system but is also shaped by party-based control and broader authoritarian consolidation patterns.

The theory posited that legislative behaviours in authoritarian regimes are influenced more by party and institutional variables than by the type of electoral system due to the divergent behaviours generated by electoral authoritarianism (e.g., less competition) (Schedler 2006). The observed

deviation in the Duma's Seventh convocation, despite the reintroduction of the MMM system, corroborates this hypothesis. It indicates that the electoral system, while important in democracies for shaping speechmaking practices (Proksch and Slapin 2014), does not generate similar incentives in authoritarian settings. This supports the notion that the regime's manipulation of legislative debates and control mechanisms overshadows the electoral system's impact, aligning with the theory's claim that institutional and party factors, rather than the electoral system type, are more significant in determining legislative behaviour.

Consequently, the chapter reveals that the authoritarian regime's strategic manipulation of electoral systems and party dynamics significantly influences legislative conduct, diverging from democratic norms. This finding enriches the theoretical discussion by demonstrating that authoritarian regimes' control over legislative speech extends beyond simple electoral system manipulation. Instead, it highlights an unequal relationship between party control and institutional dynamics and electoral system reform, emphasising the regime's overarching strategy to maintain stability and control through legislative practices.

Hence, the findings from the prior empirical chapter can be further corroborated. The evidence presented in the chapter challenges traditional democratic expectations about the role of electoral systems in shaping legislative speechmaking. It illustrates that in authoritarian settings like the Russian Duma, legislative behaviour is primarily dictated by the authoritarian regime's consolidation efforts and the strategic deployment of party and institutional controls. This empirical observation offers a critical assessment of how legislative speech is influenced in authoritarian versus democratic contexts, underlining the unique nature of legislative practices within authoritarian regimes as compared to their democratic counterparts.

The chapter confirms and extends the theoretical framework by demonstrating that the type of electoral system becomes less influential in contexts where a regime becomes authoritarian. The

findings highlight the central role of party and institutional factors in shaping legislative speech and participation, echoing the theoretical perspective that these cooptative and monitoring elements, rather than electoral systems, are paramount in shaping authoritarian legislative behaviour. Therefore, the chapter sheds light on the complexities and peculiarities of legislative practices within the Russian Duma, particularly in the context of shifts in electoral systems. It highlights the distinct nature of legislative behaviour in authoritarian regimes as compared to democratic settings, emphasising the role of regime type and party dynamics in influencing legislative discourse and participation. This analysis provides a further evidentiary basis for the main objective of the dissertation: developing a comprehensive understanding of the broader mechanisms at play in authoritarian legislatures and their divergence from democratic legislative norms.

7.1.3 Policy Attention of Russian Legislators

This chapter investigates policy focus within the Russian State Duma from the Second to the Seventh convocations, examining the dynamics of policy attention across various domains—economic, political, social, defence, and foreign policy—and identifying temporal trends and patterns. The analysis delineates a discernible transition in policy focus, mirroring the Duma's evolving political milieu. Initially, a broad spectrum of policy issues was addressed, indicative of a more autonomous legislative environment. However, commencing with the Fourth convocation, a marked contraction in policy attention, particularly in the realms of defence, procedure, and foreign policy, becomes evident. Concurrently, the relative importance of political and economic policy increases. This transition is pivotal in comprehending the role of policy attention in authoritarian settings, where legislative discourse extends beyond mere public debate to a strategic instrument for regime consolidation and narrative control.

The chapter situates the Russian scenario within the larger framework of authoritarian legislatures, underscoring the stabilising and coalescing function of policy attention in such contexts. Legislative

actors in autocratic regimes often wield varying degrees of limited influence over policy decisions, frequently mediated through interactions with the executive branch or elite coalitions where executive factionalism determines legislative priorities (Noble 2017a, 2020). This complexity is exemplified in the Duma, where the distribution of policy attention mirrors the relationship between party affiliations and institutional structures as demonstrated with the regression analysis.

A notable observation is the sustained focus on economic and social policies and increasing relative importance of political-civil policy, indicative of their significance for regime legitimacy. Specifically, economic development and social policy surface as paramount areas of focus, presumably due to their direct implications for public welfare and the regime's stability. In later convocations, attention to contentious domains like defence and foreign policy diminishes, consistent with authoritarian regimes' tendency to concentrate on more publicly tangible issues to uphold stability and maintain control. Additionally, the analysis finds temporal deviations in discussions about political rights, reflecting the regime's strategy to curtail public discourse on these topics when appropriate.

The increased focus on economic policy and sustained focus on social policy, as evidenced in the analysis, supports the hypothesis that authoritarian legislatures will prioritise discussions on economic stability and policies benefiting key constituencies of the regime. This focus serves to legitimise the regime's actions and mitigate dissent by demonstrating governmental attention to public needs, aligning with the strategic purposes of legitimising the regime and curbing dissent. In contrast and consistent with theoretical expectations, the analysis finds a relative diminution in discussions on more contentious domains like defence and foreign policy when compared to other domains. This trend suggests a strategic reprioritisation of the Duma away from policy areas less central to the regime's immediate objectives or those outside the direct scope of the legislature.

The initial theory posited that these de-prioritised areas would leave room for opposition and backbencher engagement. However, the findings for defence note an opposite effect. Allowing party

leadership and United Russia members room to engage more freely in these discussions restricted room for criticism against these domains, thereby maintaining the appearance of open debate while ensuring that policy areas remain closely aligned with regime interests. Foreign Policy, in contrast, did not see the same diverging expectation: party leadership withdrew from these discussions, thereby indicating more room for backbencher engagement.

The involvement of co-opted legislators, particularly from party leadership positions, in substantive policy discussions reflects the processes of co-optation and signalling. Their speeches and interventions, closely aligning with the regime's priorities, exemplify the significant role that co-opted elites play in reinforcing regime narratives and policies within authoritarian legislatures. This involvement underscores the regime's strategic use of legislative debates to promote limited 'pluralism', thereby observing opposition activities without risking significant policy deviations.

This chapter articulates the multifaceted nature of policy attention in the Duma as resultant from myriad factors including party dominance, institutional structures, and wider sociopolitical contexts. As the Duma evolves towards an increasingly authoritarian regime, the focus of policy attention accordingly shifts and becomes subject to institutional and party factors, mirroring the regime's strategic priorities and survival mechanisms discussed in the first empirical chapter. This exploration of legislative discourse represents a critical component of the overarching narrative established in the preceding chapters. It expands upon the initial analysis of legislative speech patterns, party dynamics, and institutional transformations, correlating the shift from diverse policy discussions in earlier convocations to a more controlled focus in subsequent years with the findings of increasing governance and strategic legislative speech use by United Russia and its leaders. By strategically directing legislative attention towards issues that reinforce regime stability and public welfare, and by sidelining or deprioritising policies that could pose a threat to regime security while controlling access

to those discussions, the Duma's evolving policy focus illustrates the adaptability and strategic manoeuvring characteristic of authoritarian regimes.

Furthermore, the strategic engagement of pro-government legislators in policy discussions reinforcing the regime's priorities illustrates a mechanism of selective policy responsiveness. This approach enhances the regime's legitimacy and attempts to shirk dissent by appearing responsive to certain public demands. Therefore, this chapter's elucidation of policy attention patterns aligns with the themes of authoritarian control and party cohesion explored in prior chapters. It demonstrates how legislative debates in the Duma serve not only as policymaking forums but also as tools for narrative control and public agenda setting. This chapter underscores the interconnection between legislative speech, policy focus, and the regime's authoritarian trajectory, revealing the ways in which institutional mechanisms influence policy discourse, shaping the legislative landscape of the Russian Duma.

7.1.4 Government-Opposition Politics on the Floor.

The penultimate chapter of this dissertation delves into an analysis of pro-governmental and oppositional rhetoric across the policy domains discussed in the prior chapter. It builds on that work by analysing the distribution and temporal shifts in policy stances by domain. This analysis reveals a transition in pro-governmental rhetoric over time and operationalises the government-opposition cleavage by examining the extent of pro-oppositional discourse on the floor. The study identifies intensified opposition during the early convocations, stability in the middle, and a marked tilt towards pro-governmental rhetoric in later convocations. Notably, it finds a waning of oppositional focus within the same key policy areas discussed in the prior chapter: economics, politics, and social policy. It also notes a surge in oppositional engagement in less influential sectors like defence and foreign policy.

These transitions in pro-governmental rhetoric and the development of a government-opposition rhetorical cleavage on the legislative floor, underscore a realignment in legislative debates towards pro-government narratives. This aligns with the theoretical expectation that, as an authoritarian regime consolidates, legislative debates will increasingly reflect the narrative of the ruling party or government, reinforcing the regime's legitimacy and policies. The findings indicate a marked tilt towards pro-government rhetoric in later convocations, especially within the key policy areas of economics, politics, and social policy. This shift serves to bolster the regime's narrative, as anticipated by the theory. It evidences a strategic effort by the regime to control legislative discourse, ensuring that debates primarily amplify pro-government positions, particularly on issues central to the regime's stability.

Consistent with theoretical expectations, there is a reported waning of oppositional focus within the same key policy areas, alongside a *relative* increase in oppositional rhetoric in less influential sectors like defence and foreign policy. This reduction in oppositional engagement in critical policy areas suggests a strategic limitation imposed by the regime on the opposition's ability to challenge or influence legislative outcomes effectively. The theory posits that oppositional voices will become less critical of the government, especially on policies important to the regime's stability, which is corroborated by the observed decrease in oppositional rhetoric in key policy domains. The alignment of legislative debates with pro-government narratives and the decrease in critical oppositional engagement reflect the regime's efforts to signal its dominance and co-opt opposition voices.

This strategic management of legislative debates underscores how the regime not only seeks to reinforce its narrative but also aims to diminish the effectiveness of oppositional rhetoric, showcasing a methodical approach to controlling not only the legislative floor, but legislative discourse in its entirety revealing a robust signalling mechanism. This final section suggests that the strategic realignment of legislative debates towards pro-government rhetoric and the systematic diminution of oppositional discourse are central to the authoritarian regime's broader strategy of maintaining control.

By dictating the terms and focus of legislative debates, the regime not only secures its narrative dominance but also subtly erodes the opposition's ability to mobilise legislative discourse as a platform for challenging the regime's legitimacy or policy directions.

The chapter contextualises these findings within the broader scholarly discourse on legislative behaviour in authoritarian regimes, filling a gap in the literature by focusing on floor debates as a comparative measure of oppositional politics. It elucidates how the strategic manipulation of legislative rhetoric serves as a critical mechanism for reinforcing regime stability and legitimacy, offering insights into the complexities of authoritarian control mechanisms. In turn, this affirms the theoretical expectations while providing a detailed examination of the authoritarian regime's tactics to co-opt and control legislative discourse and use that discourse as a signalling tool, further underscoring the sophistication and adaptability of authoritarian strategies in managing opposition and consolidating power within legislative bodies. It highlights the importance of legislative debates as instruments for narrative control and the importance of the regime's manoeuvring regarding floor time as mentioned in the first empirical chapter as key for guiding pro-governmental narratives. This goes beyond conventional metrics like roll-call votes and electoral outcomes in analysing regime support.

7.2 Key Contributions

The structure of legislative institutions in electoral authoritarian regimes significantly shapes legislative speech behaviour, though this influence is neither unidirectional nor purely deterministic. In these regimes, legislative debates serve less as forums for genuine policymaking and more as tools for enhancing regime legitimacy and narrative control. This makes them potent sources for signalling rather than substantive policy discourse. The development of these institutions is influenced by both

democratic and authoritarian elements, particularly in hybrid or backsliding regimes, where these forces coexist and shape legislative evolution.

Legislative debates thus emerge as instruments designed to consolidate the ruling party's dominance. Through formal and informal mechanisms – such as party-based delegation of speech roles, agenda-setting controls, electoral system manipulations, and regulatory amendments – these institutions are structured to serve authoritarian purposes. While allowing limited political expression, the primary function of these debates remains tightly controlled to reinforce the regime's power and maintain its dominance.

The impact of the electoral system on legislative speech in these regimes is less pronounced than originally presumed. While legislators elected through different systems face distinct incentives, leading to varied engagement in debates, the dissertation argues that these effects are somewhat mitigated by overarching party system dynamics and institutional factors, such as committee positions. These latter factors provide alternative sources of incentives that can be more readily adjusted to align with regime goals than altering constitutional or electoral frameworks since they are deputy specific: deputies are rewarded for their work with leadership appointments, but these may also be stripped from them. Alongside party system consolidation, the dissertation argues that this is a key dynamic in generating speechmaking incentives. Thus, the study challenges the notion of a straightforward relationship between electoral systems and legislative speech, highlighting the importance of the party-system under backsliding and authoritarian conditions.

The configuration of the party system is critical in electoral authoritarianism, profoundly influencing legislative debates. The dominant party's control over the legislative process extends to speech opportunities and content. However, this dominance is not only about institutional control but also reflects the broader political context where opposition parties, though constrained, play a role. The dynamic between the dominant and opposition parties shapes the nature of legislative

debates in unique ways. While opposition speeches are limited, they contribute to a veneer of pluralism, and speeches from ruling party members are tailored to project unity and strength. Furthermore, under direct authoritarian settings (e.g., the Seventh convocation), opposition speeches veer heavily towards being more pro-governmental than not, indicating a shift in parliamentary practice. The dissertation counters by emphasising that opposition parties, despite constraints, find ways to assert their presence by reinforcing the dominant party's narrative. Such findings highlight the sophistication of authoritarian strategies in leveraging legislative institutions for broader political objectives, including regime legitimacy and the maintenance of power. In essence, the research agenda underscores the complex nature of legislative speech in authoritarian regimes, challenging the notion of monolithic control and highlighting subtleties in the exercise of power and expression.

Critically, this work expands on the theories of co-optation, monitoring, and signalling within authoritarian legislatures by demonstrating how these processes are intricately linked to the broader political strategy of the regime. Unlike existing studies that might view these mechanisms in isolation or overly focus on their role in reinforcing authoritarian stability, this dissertation contextualises them within a broader framework of regime evolution and adaptation.

Furthermore, by challenging the presumed impact of electoral systems on legislative speech and highlighting the paramount importance of party-system dynamics and institutional factors, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how authoritarian regimes manipulate legislative incentives to align with their goals. It argues that the conventional focus on electoral systems as a primary determinant of legislative behaviour is insufficient in contexts where the party system and institutional arrangements offer alternative mechanisms for legislative engagement.

This comprehensive approach to examining legislative behaviour in authoritarian contexts fills a critical gap in the literature by integrating theories of co-optation, monitoring, and signalling with empirical findings from the Russian Duma. It moves beyond the depiction of authoritarian legislatures

as mere façades of democracy to uncover the strategic roles these institutions play in the political machinations of authoritarian regimes. This contribution not only enriches the academic discourse on legislative studies in non-democratic settings but also offers valuable perspectives for understanding the resilience and adaptability of authoritarian regimes in the face of domestic and international challenges.

This dissertation significantly advances the literature on legislative debates in authoritarian regimes, extending and refining theories typically applied to democratic systems (e.g., Bäck et al., 2021; Fernandes et al., 2021; Proksch & Slapin, 2015). Through a comprehensive analysis of the Russian Duma, it provides an explanation of how authoritarian institutions use legislative debates for strategic purposes. This work not only adapts existing models from democratic contexts but also innovates by developing a unique framework suitable for authoritarian regimes, especially in the realm of electoral authoritarianism. One of the dissertation's primary contributions lies in adapting these theories from democratic legislative studies to the authoritarian setting.

The deliberative approach, often associated with democratic norms of consensus-building and open debate, is recontextualized in the authoritarian framework. Here, the deliberative aspect of legislative debates often serves to obfuscate the strategic nature of discourse (He and Warren 2011; S. Martin et al. 2014; Mo and Yiming 2005), aiming more at regime legitimation and narrative control than genuine policy deliberation. This shift from a normative to a strategic utilization of deliberative practices is a critical insight, highlighting how authoritarian regimes co-opt democratic institutions for their sustenance.

In authoritarian settings, the strategic and rational-choice approaches to legislative speech reveal complex dynamics of power and control (Proksch and Slapin 2015). The dissertation demonstrates how floor time in authoritarian parliaments is a *carefully* managed resource, used by party leaders to reinforce party unity, suppress dissent, and push the government's agenda. This management of

discourse aligns with the interests of the ruling regime, revealing a stark contrast to the democratic notion of debates as platforms for genuine policy deliberation and information sharing.

The dissertation also explores the concept of representation in authoritarian legislatures. While democratic studies often emphasize individual characteristics like gender and ethnicity in shaping legislative behaviour (Bäck and Debus 2019), this research extends these ideas to authoritarian contexts. It shows how individual legislator characteristics such as age and gender are not substantive in influencing floor time, policy agendas, or stance-taking. Rather, these are influenced by the specific nature of a deputies' institutional and party status. These are more efficacious in affecting speech behaviour in such settings, thus providing a more comprehensive view of representation within these regimes as peripheral to the functions of debate.

A notable contribution of this work is drawing parallels between legislative speech in presidential systems and authoritarian regimes, particularly focusing on the evolution of executive dominance in Russia. The dissertation illustrates how, in both contexts, the executive branch exercises significant influence over the legislative process (Taylor, 2021) – even if there is a parliament in place such as the case with Russia. In authoritarian systems, this control is more pronounced, with legislative debates often choreographed to align with the autocrat's agenda, differing from the democratic model of independent legislative function.

Perhaps the most significant contribution is the development of a theoretical framework tailored to electoral authoritarian regimes. This framework considers the nuances of such regimes, including the role of electoral system and the dynamic between government and opposition. It underscores how debates in competitive and hegemonic authoritarian legislatures like the Russian Duma are not mere reflections of democratic legislative practices but are constitutive of authoritarian control and manipulation practices.

This dissertation enriches our understanding of legislative behaviour in authoritarian regimes, challenging the traditional view that legislative debates in such contexts are mere formalities. By adapting and extending democratic theories and proposing a new framework, it opens avenues for future research in comparative legislative studies, particularly in the context of electoral authoritarianism.

7.3 Future Research

Expanding on the research agenda in the context of electoral authoritarianism, especially regarding legislative speech, offers fertile ground for further exploration. This is especially pertinent for cross-national comparative research. Do regimes follow similar patterns in gaining and exercising control over the floor? Understanding the mechanisms and patterns authoritarian regimes employ to gain and control legislative speech is key moving forward. It provides insight into the strategies used to consolidate power, manage opposition, and maintain regime stability. Investigating this across various regimes can reveal the causal pathways by which managed opposition emerges, and elucidate commonalities and differences in authoritarian tactics, contributing to a broader understanding of authoritarian resilience and adaptability.

Do backsliding democracies adopt methods developed in other competitive authoritarian countries for controlling legislative speech? This question probes the extent to which strategies for controlling legislative speech are localised or part of a larger, possibly global trend in authoritarian practices. The answer could shed light on the diffusion of authoritarian tactics and the role of international influences or learning among authoritarian leaders. It also has implications for understanding how democracies can resist or succumb to authoritarian tendencies.

How do changes in the electoral system impact legislative speech behaviour under electoral authoritarianism in other contexts? Electoral systems are often manipulated in authoritarian settings.

This does not only refer to broad system changes such as the electoral rule changes found in Russia, but also to electoral tooling regarding thresholds, registration rules, and seat allocation requirements. Understanding their impact on legislative speech can reveal how electoral changes are used as a tool to shape political discourse and control. This research can elucidate the relationship between formal institutional changes and informal political practices, offering insights into the subtleties of authoritarian control mechanisms.

What role do opposition parties play in shaping the nature legislative debates in electoral authoritarian regimes, and how does this impact regime legitimacy? Further investigation into the roles and strategies of opposition parties in legislative debates can provide an explanation of their function and impact in these regime types. This research can uncover how opposition parties navigate the identified constraints in this dissertation, the tactics they use to challenge or reinforce the regime, and how their participation affects perceptions of regime legitimacy. It is also important for understanding the boundaries of political expression and resistance within authoritarian systems. These questions delve into the intricacies of legislative control, electoral manipulation, opposition strategies, and the broader implications for regime legitimacy in electoral and competitive authoritarian contexts. Addressing them can significantly enhance our understanding of authoritarianism's evolving nature and the resilience of democratic institutions under pressure.

7.4 Conclusion

This dissertation concludes by returning to the contrasting perspectives offered at its outset by Chairmen Boris Gryzlov and Ivan Rybkin, each capturing distinct eras of the Russian Duma's evolution. Gryzlov's remark, '[Parliament is not a place for discussion]', far from dismissing debate, hints at a strategic recalibration under United Russia's tenure, signifying a shift towards discussions that bolster the regime's narrative. This shift became particularly pronounced under the leadership of

Vyacheslav Volodin, who assumed the role of Chairman in the Seventh convocation. While Volodin played a pivotal role in centralising control over legislative processes, streamlining debates, and ensuring that parliamentary discourse consistently aligned with the regime's priorities, the groundwork for these transformations had been laid in earlier convocations. Structural procedural shifts and informal party-based delegation practices had already taken root before Volodin's tenure, gradually reinforcing United Russia's dominance by limiting opposition participation and tightening control over who could speak on the floor. Volodin's reforms accelerated and consolidated these trends, marking a more decisive departure from previous Duma practices. This veers away from the more democratic ideals encapsulated by Rybkin's statements about the realities of democracy in the nascent days of the Duma. This transformation, particularly under Volodin's leadership, encapsulates the essence of this dissertation's exploration into the dynamics of legislative speech within the Russian Duma, amidst its journey from a semi- or deficient democracy to an increasingly hegemonic electoral authoritarian regime.

The fabric of legislative debates in authoritarian contexts, as unravelled in this research, demonstrates a strategic complexity far surpassing mere ceremonial exchanges or post-hoc realisations of law. These debates are not redundant artifacts of a bygone democratic process but are instrumental in the architecture of authoritarian resilience and stability. Through examining the Duma, from its inception to its authoritarian pivot, this dissertation has shed light on the roles legislative speeches play in authoritarian regimes – as tools of co-optation, mechanisms of monitoring, and instruments of strategic signalling.

As evidenced in the empirical chapters, the Duma's evolution reveals a marked transition in legislative discourse, shaped by informal party dynamics and structures and formal regulatory innovations This transition underscores a shift from broader viewpoints spread across the opposition towards more controlled, regime-aligned debates. Such a transformation, while curtailing genuine

political expression, serves the authoritarian agenda of narrative control, opposition management, and regime legitimacy.

In essence, this dissertation posits that Gryzlov's portrayal of the Duma signifies not a negation of dialogue but of the ongoing realignment of legislative discourse under progressively authoritarian conditions, serving as a reflection of the broader political evolution from a contested space to a controlled authoritarian arena. It underscores how legislative debates have been strategically repurposed to consolidate authoritarian rule, illustrating the adaptability and strategic ingenuity of authoritarian regimes in leveraging institutional mechanisms for political control.

This dissertation has navigated the dynamics of legislative speech between regime types in Russia, moving from an unconsolidated democracy to a competitive and, ultimately, hegemonic authoritarian regime, and has revealed how parliamentary institutions, often perceived as mere shadows of their democratic counterparts, play a pivotal role in the intricate balance of power, control, and legitimacy. Each speech, whether from the ruling party or opposition, is not merely an act of policy discussion but a strategic move in the chess game of authoritarian governance. This underscores the inherent tension between the appearance of democratic processes and the underlying authoritarian control mechanisms that shape legislative discourse.

This work highlights the adaptability of authoritarian regimes in repurposing democratic institutions to sustain their rule, as well as the ingenuity of those navigating these constraints. It lays the groundwork for future research to explore further the role of legislative speech in authoritarian contexts and its connection to the shifting dynamics of power and politics in regimes that blur the boundaries between democracy and authoritarianism.

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Appendix A

The following table outlines the pertinent changes to the Duma's rules of procedure regarding floor access and speech time. Data are collected from the electronic fund of legal and regulatory technical documents, which contains the amendments to the *Reglamenty* (2020; (Kodeks 2021). Translations are the author's own and slightly abridged from the original text for space. Amendments include substantive changes on time allocation as well as procedural wording. Note that the majority of substantive amendments occurred in the lead up to the June 2012 'Italian Strike' or directly thereafter.

Table A.1. Articles of the Regulations Concerning Speechmaking

Article and Section	*Current Rule**	*Year of Amendments*
Article 50 Section 5	No more than 25 overall minutes shall be allotted for discussion of amendments	2005; 2010
Article 56 Section 1	The duration of reports, co-reports, and closing words is established by the chairperson in agreement with the speakers and rapporteurs, but should not exceed 15 minutes for a report, five minutes for a co-report, and five minutes for a final word.	2000; 2010; 2012 (April)
Article 56 Section 2	The speaker is given up to seven minutes. For speeches regarding procedures or amendments, the speaker is given up to three minutes.	2012 (April); 2012 (Sept)

Article 56 Section 5	The chairperson may establish the total discussion of an issue and extent time for a speech with consent of the majority	2012 (April)
Article 59 Section 1	Discussion of an issue may be terminated after its time expires or by decision of the Duma	2012 (April)
Article 59 Section 2	The chairperson may give deputies who did not speak on an issue floor time.	2007; 2012 (April)

Article 50 Section 5, amended in 2005 and 2010, regards the rules allocating overall floor time for discussing bill amendments. In 2010, this was amended to restrict the overall time allotted for discussing amendments to 25 minutes. This could potentially limit the depth and breadth of debate on amendments, as the allocated time might not be sufficient to cover all points of view or allow much cross-party dialogue. It also likely reduces the number of legislators who can participate in the discussion of each amendment.

Article 56 Section 1, amended in 2000, 2010, and 2012 (April), sets the maximum time limits for various types of speeches: 15 minutes for a report, five minutes for a co-report, and five minutes for closing remarks. By establishing these time constraints, the rule may streamline the discussion process but also constrain the detailed presentation of reports and co-reports. The establishment of tight controls by the chairperson offers the presiding chair flexibility in allocating this time, hence the overall effect is likely a controlled and concise discussion phase.

Article 56 Section 2, amended in April and September 2012, provides a maximum of seven minutes for general speeches and three minutes for speeches regarding procedures or amendments. The quick succession of amendments in 2012 relate to the 'Italian strike'. Hence, this rule significantly curtails the time available for legislators to express their views, particularly on procedural matters and

amendments, thus potentially limiting the thoroughness of debate and reducing the number of legislators who can contribute.

Article 56 Section 5, amended in April 2012, allows the chairperson to establish the total discussion time for an issue and to extend the time for a speech with the majority's consent. This provides some flexibility, but also places considerable control in the hands of the chairperson and the majority (read: United Russia), thereby limiting opportunities for minority viewpoints to be heard if the majority opts not to extend discussion time. This is a key control mechanism over floor time and was introduced during the parliamentary unrest of 2012.

Similarly, *Article 59 Section 1*, amended in April 2012, states that discussion of an issue may be terminated after the allocated time expires *or by a decision of the Duma*. This change implies that debates can be cut short before all viewpoints are expressed, especially if the majority decides to end discussion prematurely. *Section 2* of the same article, amended in 2007 and April 2012, gives the chairperson discretion to allow deputies who did not speak on an issue to have floor time. While this could offer opportunities for wider participation, it also places significant power in the hands of the chairperson to decide who gets to speak, which could be used to favour certain deputies over others.

This table offers a compelling context to understand the dynamics of legislative speechmaking under increased governmental scrutiny and procedural formalism. Clearly, the number of amendments concerning speechmaking rights were impacted by the 2012 oppositional moment. The concerted effort by opposition parties to delay the vote on controversial legislation through a prolonged session and numerous amendment proposals exemplified a rare moment of assertive opposition within the Duma. However, the government's response to this event – altering procedural rules to limit debate and amendment discussion – reflects a strategic move to consolidate control and curb those same levels of oppositional dissent from reappearing.

Appendix B

The dataset assembled for this study encompasses comprehensive information on 1,611 legislators who were members of the Russian State Duma during the period from 1996 to 2021, including all 637,075 speeches. This data is organised at two levels: legislator-day and legislator-convocation. For variables that are subject to change annually, such as age, the data is categorised at the legislator-year level. Conversely, for attributes that remain constant throughout a legislative convocation, such as speaker status or committee chairmanship, the dataset classifies them at the convocation level. This methodological choice, to treat certain positions as invariant within each convocation, stems from constraints in data granularity. Specifically, there are instances where deputies transitioned between committees or assumed new roles within a convocation, but precise dates for these changes are not available in the dataset. Moreover, committee promotions are rare in general during the brunt of a given convocation. Consequently, the primary office and committee held by each deputy during a convocation is recorded as the significant data point. For example, if the committee chairperson of agriculture is previously a member of the committee on social welfare, they will be recorded as the chairperson of agriculture. This approach aligns well with the overall structure of the paper, which is organised by legislative convocations.

The construction of this dataset involved an extensive collection of data from diverse sources. It includes information gleaned from news reports, interviews, and biographies, as well as official records from the election commission and various deputy and state websites. This multi-source approach ensures a comprehensive compilation of data – including cross-referencing for potential mistakes in these websites. As Shirikov notes, 'Duma legislators are public officials who attract substantial attention', so in their data collection case, 'there have been virtually no cases with substantial uncertainty regarding key points of their professional biographies' (Shirikov 2021).

The dataset is assembled at the speech-level, and is capable of aggregating upwards based on the dates. Hence, the structure of the non-aggregated dataset looks as follows.

Table B.1 Speech Variables

Variable	**Example**
Date	1996-11-29
Name	*Абдулатипов Рамазан Гаджимурадович* (Ramazan Gadzhimuradovich Abdulatipov)
Deputy ID	99100491
Speech Text	Уважаемый Геннадий Николаевич… (Dear Colleague Gennady Nikolaevich)
Meeting Number	59
Question	Об обеспечении территориальной целостности Российской Федерации в связи с мерами, принимаемыми Президентом и Правительством Российской Федерации по ситуации в Чеченской Республике. (On ensuring the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation in connection with measures taken by the President and the Government of the Russian Federation regarding the situation in the Chechen Republic).
Question Stage	- (No Stage)

Table B.2. Deputy Variables

Variable	Example
Date	1996-11-29
Name	*Абдулатипов Рамазан Гаджимурадович* (Ramazan Gadzhimuradovich Abdulatipov)
Deputy ID	99100491
Party ID	72100020
Convocation	Second
Start Date	1995-12-17
End Date	1999-03-19
Vote Type	SMD
Region	Dagestan
Economic Region	North Caucasus
Federal District	North Caucasus
Federal Subject (current)	Dagestan
Committee Role	Member
Committee	Regional Policy
Year of Birth	1946
Gender (Female)	0
Party Leader	0
Party	Депутатская группа "Российские регионы" (Deputy Group 'Russian Regions')
Ruling Party	0

Age	50.94521
Committee Chair	0
Committee Leadership	0
SMD	0
Duma Leadership	0
Length of Speech[39]	0
Length of Speeches (Day Aggregate)	775
Length of Speeches (Convocation Aggregate)	11,419
Length of Speeches (Year Aggregate)	4,387
Speeches given on the Day	9
Speeches given that Year	29
Speeches given that Convocation	77
Days in Office (per Year)	348
Years in Office (Per Year)	0.9512
Years in Office (Convocation)	3..25034
Seats of Party	44
Party Share	.09778
Committee Size	0.8677
Largest Party	0

[39] Note speeches under 50 words are counted as 0.

Appendix C

Table C.1 detailed below presents the linear mixed-effects models, including interactions of convocation on predictor variables. Age, gender, and seniority are excluded from the interactions because of the theoretical prior that their effects should not vary between convocations. SMD is excluded from the interaction since convocation 4 and 5 have no SMD deputies (and hence introduce a rank deficiency). The models are therefore interpreted taking SMD as an overall control into account All interactions are included in a single model.

Table C.1. Primary Specification for *DV2* (Floor Participation)

Primary Model (*DV2*)	
	Dependent variable:
	count_text_by_speech
Age	-0.03
	(0.24)
log(exposure_convocation)	-2.45
	(3.29)
years_office.convocation	**-1.26****
	(0.59)
convocationThird	17.07
	(25.37)
convocationFourth	14.67
	(42.31)
convocationFifth	-58.79
	(64.97)
convocationSixth	-2.22
	(39.51)
convocationSeventh	165.40***
	(44.15)
largest_party1	0.98
	(41.84)
faction_percent	-23.82

	(191.29)
Leadership1	-10.58
	(39.93)
party_leader1	8.69
	(51.71)
SMD1	-8.47
	(5.23)
Committee.chair	-4.50
	(17.54)
Committee.leadership	1.38
	(12.26)
com_perc	-36.80
	(116.73)
female1	1.71
	(7.26)
convocationThird:largest_party1	4.28
	(43.54)
convocationFourth:largest_party1	-218.62
	(255.73)
convocationFifth:largest_party1	**-569.11***
	(321.93)
convocationSixth:largest_party1	**-312.72*****
	(82.55)
convocationSeventh:largest_party1	**541.26***
	(296.03)
convocationThird:faction_percent	-31.66
	(203.94)
convocationFourth:faction_percent	410.42
	(456.06)
convocationFifth:faction_percent	**987.05***
	(574.15)
convocationSixth:faction_percent	**735.38*****
	(271.05)
convocationSeventh:faction_percent	**-858.86***
	(478.53)

convocationThird:Leadership1	28.34
	(52.09)
convocationFourth:Leadership1	67.29
	(48.34)
convocationFifth:Leadership1	**174.30*****
	(51.69)
convocationSixth:Leadership1	**126.94****
	(50.90)
convocationSeventh:Leadership1	**239.37*****
	(51.24)
convocationThird:party_leader1	-4.20
	(57.00)
convocationFourth:party_leader1	74.37
	(57.75)
convocationFifth:party_leader1	**210.48*****
	(66.89)
convocationSixth:party_leader1	**118.30***
	(61.80)
convocationSeventh:party_leader1	153.14
	(98.88)
convocationThird:Committee.chair	-24.45
	(25.61)
convocationFourth:Committee.chair	-32.18
	(25.56)
convocationFifth:Committee.chair	-1.08
	(24.05)
convocationSixth:Committee.chair	-2.86
	(23.98)
convocationSeventh:Committee.chair	30.85
	(25.87)
convocationThird:Committee.leadership	-7.99
	(15.75)
convocationFourth:Committee.leadership	-10.94
	(15.88)
convocationFifth:Committee.leadership	-20.93

	(16.13)
convocationSixth:Committee.leadership	-3.31
	(15.67)
convocationSeventh:Committee.leadership	12.40
	(16.25)
convocationThird:com_perc	13.65
	(166.10)
convocationFourth:com_perc	-276.83
	(192.34)
convocationFifth:com_perc	-41.95
	(157.41)
convocationSixth:com_perc	-124.27
	(137.37)
convocationSeventh:com_perc	-245.06
	(166.64)
Constant	114.79***
	(32.87)
Observations	2,547
Log Likelihood	-15,081.79
Akaike Inf. Crit.	30,273.57
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	30,594.92
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

The methodological approach for analysing overall floor participation in the Russian Duma employs two distinct model specifications. This analysis, detailed in *Table C. 2*, adopts a stepwise regression strategy, beginning with a null model and incrementally integrating control variables, culminating in the full model that incorporates both fixed and random effects. Notably, convocation fixed effects are included in both dependent variable models to ensure cross-legislature comparability These models account for the entirety of the Duma rather than looking for between convocational effects as in the primary specification).

For the first dependent variable (*DV1*), the application of negative binomial regression models addresses the data's inherent overdispersion effectively, as evidenced by the overdispersion parameter theta set at 1.00. The comprehensive model, distinguished by its lower Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) value, demonstrates superior performance, highlighting the robustness of the chosen specifications.

Further analysis through *Models 3* and *4*, using Ordinary Least Squares (OLS), and Model 5, employing a linear mixed-effects framework to incorporate deputy-specific random effects, refines the understanding of legislative participation dynamics. *Model 4's* revelation of the convocation fixed effect modestly enhances the model's fit, as reflected in an adjusted R^2 value of 0.21, a noteworthy achievement given the model's complexity and the potential for variability. *Model 5*, with an AIC of 15,787.32, outperforms the null model's AIC of 16,582, and its conditional R^2 of 0.40 signals a strong model fit, indicating a significant alignment of the model with the observed data patterns.

Table C.2. Model Specifications (Negative Binomial, OLS, LME)

	Dependent variable:				
	Speeches in convocation (*DV1*)		Words/exposure in convocation (*DV2*)		
	Negative binomial		*OLS*		*Linear mixed effects*
	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Age	0.003	0.003	-0.03**	-0.02**	-0.02
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Exposure (logged)	1.05***	1.03***			
	(0.05)	(0.05)			
Seniority	0.05***	0.05***	0.41***	0.33***	0.29***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Ruling party	-0.02	-0.01	-1.21***	0.06	0.08
	(0.08)	(0.09)	(0.45)	(0.48)	(0.44)
Party share	-1.03***	-1.12***	-1.68**	-6.02***	-5.57***
	(0.14)	(0.19)	(0.81)	(1.04)	(0.96)

Leadership	-0.02	-0.08	2.01**	2.26***	0.65
	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.85)	(0.84)	(0.83)
Party leader	0.15	0.22	5.33***	5.58***	2.80***
	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.86)	(0.86)	(0.87)
SMD	0.19***	0.12**	-0.30	0.28	0.17
	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.24)	(0.28)	(0.27)
Committee chair	0.71***	0.73***	4.73***	5.00***	4.95***
	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.44)	(0.44)	(0.42)
Committee deputy chair	0.15***	0.19***	0.70***	0.86***	0.75***
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.25)	(0.25)	(0.24)
Committee percent	-2.46***	-2.70***	-4.78	-4.71	-5.87
	(0.86)	(0.85)	(4.81)	(4.76)	(4.69)
Gender female	0.04	0.05	0.17	0.04	0.06
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.35)	(0.34)	(0.37)
Constant	-4.12***	-4.04***	4.17***	5.69***	5.52***
	(0.34)	(0.35)	(0.68)	(0.76)	(0.78)
Convocation FE	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Deputy RE	No	No	No	No	Yes
Observations	2,542	2,542	2,542	2,542	2,542
Adjusted R^2			0.19	0.21	
Marginal/Conditional R^2					0.18/0.40
theta	1.00*** (0.03)	1.02*** (0.03)			
Akaike Inf. Crit.	22,877.47	22,833.47			15,787.32
Note:					*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

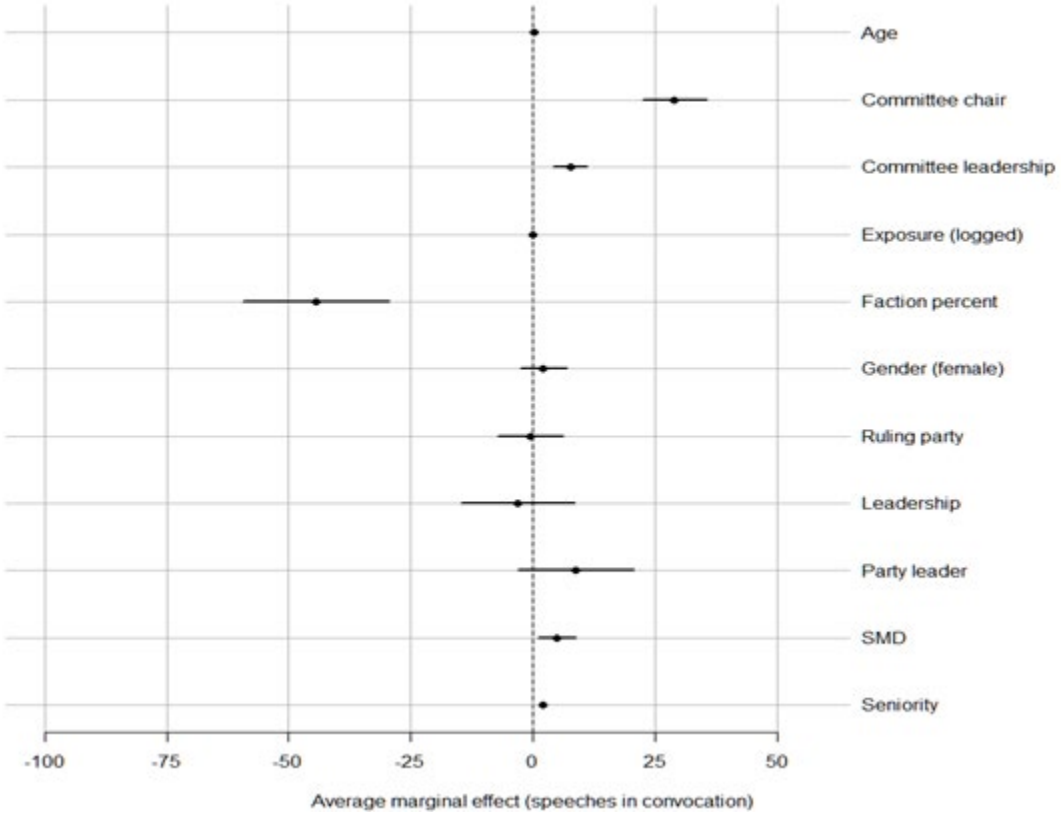
This analysis of legislative behaviour on aggregate (convocational fixed-effects) within the Russian Duma through model specifications unveils four significant insights. Seniority, quantified by the tenure of deputies in office, exhibits a marginal positive influence on both the quantity of speeches delivered and the total floor time. Nevertheless, this effect is so subtle that it borders on being negligible. This finding suggests that while experience might afford a slight advantage in floor participation, its impact is not as pronounced as one might anticipate.

The proportion of party membership within the Duma exerts a considerable negative effect on both the volume of words spoken and the frequency of speeches. This indicates a competitive environment within parties, where a larger party share correlates with reduced speaking opportunities for individual members. For example, a deputy from a party holding 75% of seats is expected to speak significantly fewer words than a member from a party with only 25% of the seats. This underscores the intense competition for floor time within larger parties and highlights the central role of parties in the Duma's debate structure.

Holding leadership positions within committees significantly boosts both the number of words spoken and the frequency of speeches. Committee chairs are predicted to speak and participate more extensively than their non-chair counterparts, reinforcing the notion of a hierarchical structure that privileges committee leaders with enhanced access to the legislative floor. A notable discovery in *Model 2* is the diminishing effect of a committee's size on floor access. This trend parallels the implications of party share and underscores a hierarchical debate structure where leadership figures are more vocal, and regular members face constraints in their active participation.

Figure C.1, elucidating the average marginal effects for Model 2, provides a visual representation of these trends. It illustrates how party leaders and committee chairs dominate in terms of speech frequency, contrasting with the negative impact of party percent on speech opportunities. Despite the absence of committee percent from the graph due to visualization constraints, its negatively skewed effect aligns with the broader theme of a stratified speaking structure within the Duma.

Figure C.0.1. Average Marginal Effects of Floor Access with 95% Confidence Intervals



Note: Committee percent is omitted due to the extreme negative values (AME=-107.28, lower β -174.27, upper = -40.28). These values, albeit with a wide range, indicate that committee percent has a non-negligible negative effect.

The exploration of average marginal effects within this appendix offers insights into the evolving patterns of legislative participation within the Russian Duma, particularly underscoring the transformative shifts observed in the later convocations. This analytical approach reveals that while aggregate effects across all convocations might appear negligible at first glance, the primary specification in *Chapter* 3 suggests significant variations upon close examination, especially when convocation-specific interactions are considered instead of treating convocations as fixed entities.

In turn, this appendix finds that the legislative dynamics within the Duma cannot be fully appreciated through a broad, convocation-agnostic lens. Instead, the distinct political, social, and institutional contexts of each convocation play a pivotal role in shaping the participation patterns of

deputies. The dramatic shifts highlighted in the later convocations underscore a period of heightened strategic manoeuvring, where the ruling party's influence becomes increasingly pronounced, altering the traditional paradigms of floor participation and speechmaking.

By employing a model that interacts with convocation variables, *Chapter 3* better captures the subtleties of these shifts, revealing how the effects of various predictors of legislative behaviour become markedly more significant in the context of these later periods. This approach aligns with the dissertation's broader findings, which document a deliberate evolution in the mechanisms of debate and participation, reflecting a move towards more centralised control and a narrowing of the participatory scope within the legislature. In summary, the analysis of average marginal effects elucidates the need for analysing the between convocational effects of legislative practices as the regime consolidates. Therefore, the approach in *Chapter 3* not only enriches the dissertation's findings but also contributes to a deeper understanding of the shifting sands of political discourse and legislative engagement in post-Soviet Russia, capturing the essence of a legislature in transition.

Appendix D

Balance tables are used in this appendix to support the findings from the pre-test regressions. These are useful for assessing the comparability of treatment and control groups in observational studies. They typically report differences in means for various covariates between the treated and control groups, both before and after any adjustments (e.g., through regression, matching, or weighting).

These tables include a metric – Differences Adjusted – that represents the difference between the treatment and control groups after adjusting for covariates. In the context of the regressions, small or negligible adjusted differences suggest that the treatment and control groups are balanced on these covariates. The tables also detail interactions between treatment status and other covariates. These interactions can be particularly insightful, indicating how the relationship between certain characteristics and the outcome variable might differ for the treatment and control groups.

For both panels, most differences are small in magnitude, suggesting that the treatment and control groups are not significantly different on these observed covariates. This is a positive indicator because it suggests that any observed differences in outcomes post-treatment are more likely attributable to the treatment itself rather than pre-existing differences. Smaller adjusted differences (Diff.Adj) values suggest that many of the covariates might not significantly differ between groups after adjustments. This lack of significant difference supports the argument that the groups were similar before the treatment.

Furthermore, the inclusion and analysis of interaction terms between treatment and other variables (e.g., ruling party, committee leadership) provide a more nuanced view of how treatment effects might vary across different subgroups. The balance on these interactions further supports the notion that the treatment effect is not confounded by these characteristics.

Table D.1. Balance Table, *Panel A*

	Type	*Diff.Adj*
Treatment	Binary	-0.006504751
Age	Contin.	0.000604946
Age^2	Contin.	0.009284402
Seniority	Contin.	0.095800102
Party share	Contin.	0.028373477
Committee share	Contin.	-0.017817972
Ruling party	Binary	0.011350402
Duma leadership	Binary	0.006127154
Year factor	Binary	-0.021140022
Treatment 0 * Party share	Contin.	0.060802585
Treatment 0 * Committee share	Contin.	0.026786039
Treatment 0 * Ruling party 0	Binary	-0.027407817
Treatment 0 * Ruling party 1	Binary	0.033912568
Treatment 0 * Duma leadership 0	Binary	0.001649307
Treatment 0 * Duma leadership 1	Binary	0.004855444
Treatment 0 * Party leader 0	Binary	-0.001619336
Treatment 0 * Party leader 1	Binary	0.008124087
Treatment 0 * Committee chair 0	Binary	-0.014309729
Treatment 0 * Committee chair 1	Binary	0.020814479
Treatment 0 * Committee leadership 0	Binary	-0.024952056
Treatment 0 * Committee leadership 1	Binary	0.031456807
Treatment 1 * Party share	Contin.	-0.041673186
Treatment 1 * Committee share	Contin.	-0.038767141
Treatment 1 * Ruling party 0	Binary	0.016057415
Treatment 1 * Ruling party 1	Binary	-0.022562166
Treatment 1 * Duma leadership 0	Binary	-0.007776462
Treatment 1 * Duma leadership 1	Binary	0.001271711
Treatment 1 * Party leader 0	Binary	-0.002512649
Treatment 1 * Party leader 1	Binary	-0.003992102
Treatment 1 * Committee chair 0	Binary	0.02476614
Treatment 1 * Committee chair 1	Binary	-0.031270891
Treatment 1 * Committee leadership 0	Binary	-0.00998395
Treatment 1 * Committee leadership 1	Binary	0.003479199

Table C.2. Balance Table, *Panel B*

	Type	*Diff.Adj*
Treatment	Binary	0.007651
Age	Contin.	0.027991
Age^2	Contin.	0.016356
Seniority	Contin.	0.053698
Party share	Contin.	0.008559
Committee share	Contin.	-0.00193
Ruling party	Binary	0.001243
Year Factor	Binary	0.00047
Treatment 0 * Party share	Contin.	-0.04358
Treatment 0 * Committee share	Contin.	-0.15295
Treatment 0 * Ruling party 0	Binary	0.014024
Treatment 0 * Ruling party 1	Binary	-0.02167
Treatment 0 * Duma leadership 0	Binary	-0.01522
Treatment 0 * Duma leadership 1	Binary	0.007572
Treatment 0 * Party leader 0	Binary	-0.01599
Treatment 0 * Party leader 1	Binary	0.008343
Treatment 0 * Committee chair0	Binary	0.01903
Treatment 0 * Committee chair 1	Binary	-0.02668
Treatment 0 * Committee leadership 0	Binary	-0.01528
Treatment 0 * Committee leadership 1	Binary	0.007626
Treatment 1 * Party share	Contin.	0.035535
Treatment 1 * Committee share	Contin.	0.145463
Treatment 1 * Ruling party 0	Binary	-0.01527
Treatment 1 * Ruling party 1	Binary	0.022918
Treatment 1 * Duma leadership 0	Binary	0.015231
Treatment 1 * Duma leadership 1	Binary	-0.00758
Treatment 1 * Party leader 0	Binary	0.012854
Treatment 1 * Party leader 1	Binary	-0.0052
Treatment 1 * Committee chair 0	Binary	0.005409
Treatment 1 * Committee chair 1	Binary	0.002241
Treatment 1 * Committee leadership 0	Binary	0.010878
Treatment 1 * Committee leadership 1	Binary	-0.00323

Appendix E

The process of implementing the elastic net logistic regression for multiclass classification involves several key stages. The following section of *Appendix E* will outline the steps taken. Initially, 2000 unique question issues were randomly sampled from the broader speech dataset. These examples were then hand-coded, which required manually labelling each instance with the correct classification, ensuring that the model has a reliable ground truth for training. The following table demonstrates an example from this coding scheme.

Table E.1. Coding Scheme Example for Multiclass Policy Doman Classification

On draft federal law No. 251196-4 "On amendments to the Federal Law "On state regulation of the production and turnover of ethyl alcohol, alcoholic and alcohol-containing products" (introduction of a state monopoly on the turnover of ethyl alcohol; introduced by State Duma deputies V.V. Zhirinovsky and M S. Rokhmistrov).	**Economy**
O proyekte federal'nogo zakona № 251196-4 "O vnesenii izmeneniy v Federal'nyy zakon "O gosudarstvennom regulirovanii proizvodstva i oborota etilovogo spirta, alkogol'noy i spirtosoderzhashchey produktsii" (vvedeniye gosudarstvennoy monopolii na oborot etilovogo spirta; vneson deputatami Gosudarstvennoy Dumy V. V. Zhirinovskim i M. S. Rokhmistrovym).	
On the draft federal law "On introducing amendments to Article 21 of the RSFSR Law "On State Pensions in the RSFSR" (on establishing an additional pension to the pensions of persons awarded honorary titles).	**Social**
O proyekte federal'nogo zakona "O vnesenii dopolneniy v stat'yu 21 Zakona RSFSR "O gosudarstvennykh pensiyakh v RSFSR" (ob ustanovlenii nadbavki k pensiyam lits, udostoyennykh pochetnykh zvaniy).	

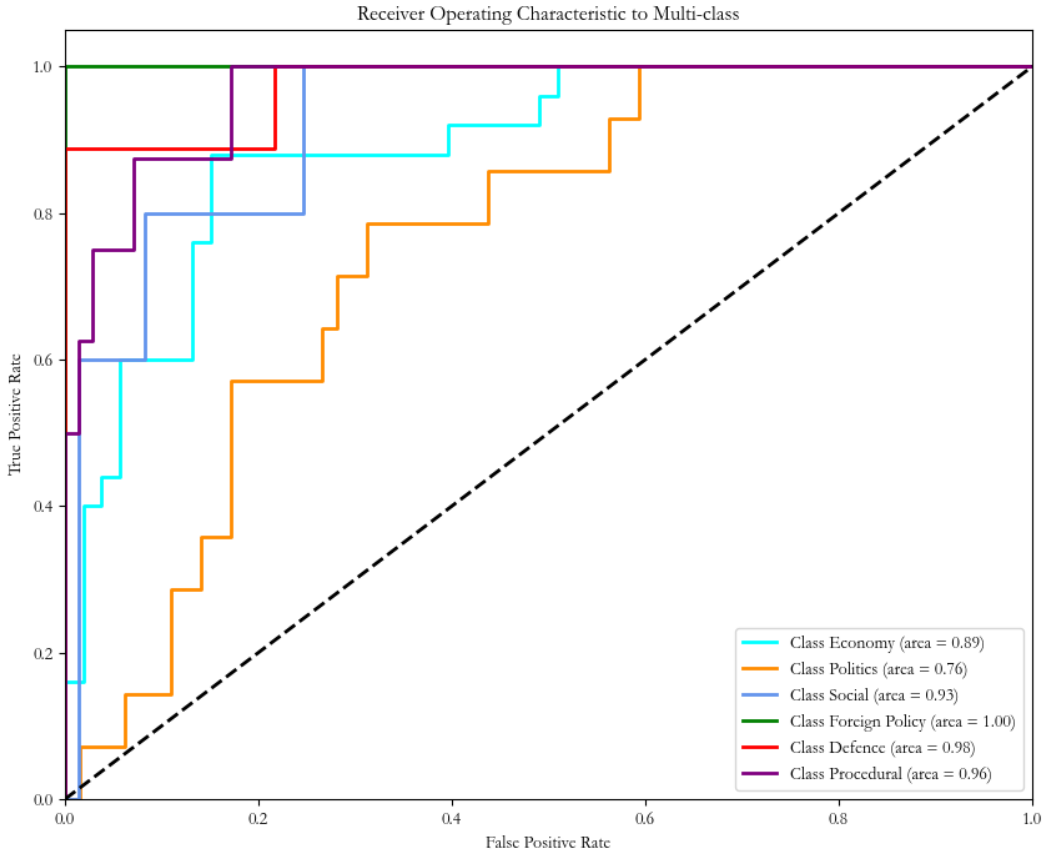
Upon coding the manual annotations, the dataset was split into a training set and a testing set. In this case a standard 70/30 split was adopted. 70% of the data was allocated to the test set to evaluate the model's performance with the remaining 30% in the training set. The split ensures that the model is trained on one subset of the data (training set) and validated on a separate, unseen subset (testing set), which helps assess its generalisation capability. However, before training the model, the text data needs to be converted into a numerical format that the algorithm can work with. This was achieved using a *CountVectorizer*, which transforms the text into a sparse matrix of token counts (bag-of-words representation). Words that occur very infrequently (less than 2 speech dates) or frequently (more than 95% of speech dates) were filtered after this step alongside common Russian stop words.

With the textual features prepared, the analysis then trained a logistic regression model with elastic net regularisation. Elastic net is a linear regression model with both L1 and L2 regularisation. The L1 regularisation encourages sparsity, which means it facilitates feature selection by driving some feature coefficients to zero. The L2 regularisation helps to prevent overfitting by ensuring the coefficients do not become too large. The *LogisticRegressionCV* class in the Python package *scikit-learn* was used to find the optimal regularisation strength and l1 ratio through cross-validation. This class performs logistic regression with built-in cross-validation to determine the best parameters. By specifying a range of l1 ratios, the algorithm was directed to explore different combinations of L1 and L2 regularisation, finding a balance that minimises prediction error on the validation folds of the data.

After training, the model's predictive performance was evaluated using the test set. A detailed evaluation method was employed to assess the model's accuracy using Receiver Operating Characteristic curves and Area Under the Curve scores to compute accuracy for each class. This step involved predicting the probabilities of the different classes for the test set and comparing these against the true labels (binarized to facilitate multi-class ROC analysis).

The following figure details the Receiver Operating Characteristic curve which details the performance of the elastic net regression model for the multi-class classification problem. In the context of a multi-class classification problem, a ROC curve can be extended beyond binary classifications by evaluating the performance of the model on each class against all others in a 'one-vs-all' approach.

Figure E.0.1 Receiver Operating Characteristic for Multi-class Categorisation



Hence, for each class, the problem is treated as a binary classification where predictions for a given class are separated from the rest. This means each class is considered as the positive class, and all other classes are considered as the negative class. Therefore, each line on the plot represents a different class, with the performance of each class given by the Area Under the Curve (AUC) metric. The AUC

values range from 0 to 1, where 1 indicates perfect classification and 0.5 indicates no discriminative power (equivalent to random guessing).

The AUC values for the six classes – Economy, Politics, Social, Foreign Policy, Defence, and Procedural – vary, reflecting differences in the model's ability to distinguish between each class and all other classes:

1. Economy (AUC = 0.89): This class is well-predicted by the model, with an AUC value close to 1, indicating a high true positive rate and a low false positive rate.
2. Politics (AUC = 0.76): This class has a lower AUC value, suggesting that while the model has some predictive power, it is less capable of distinguishing between 'Politics' and other classes compared to 'Economy'. There may be more overlap or less distinct features defining this class.
3. Social (AUC = 0.93): The model performs very well on this class, with a high AUC value indicating strong discriminative ability.
4. Foreign Policy (AUC = 1.00): The model appears to perfectly classify 'Foreign Policy', which suggests that this class has very distinct features that do not overlap with other classes, or that the cases in the dataset are very clear-cut.
5. Defence (AUC = 0.98): Similar to 'Foreign Policy', the 'Defence' class is almost perfectly distinguished from the other classes, indicating very effective predictive performance.
6. Procedural (AUC = 0.96): This class also shows excellent model performance, with the high AUC value suggesting distinct and well-defined features that the model can capture.

Given the directed nature and potentially narrower scope of 'Foreign Policy', 'Defence', and 'Procedural' classes, the high AUC values suggest that these categories have unique, well-defined characteristics that your model can easily learn and distinguish from others. In contrast, classes with

lower AUC values, such as 'Politics', may have more overlap in features with other classes or more variability within the class itself, making them harder to predict.

Overall, the elastic net regression approach seems to have performed well for distinguishing policy domains, particularly for classes that are likely more defined and distinct. For classes with lower AUC values, there may be room for improvement, potentially through feature engineering or tweaking the model's hyperparameters to better capture the nuances of those classes. Future research would benefit from defining this policy domain more clearly. Although for the purposes of this research, the values were adequate. Therefore, finally, the trained model was applied back to the full dataset to make predictions.

The next section of this appendix details the full results of the secondary regression analysis.

Table E.2. Pooled Regressions (Economy, Politics, Social)

	Dependent variable:		
	Economy	Politics	Social
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Log (exposure)	31.427440***	43.278580***	13.646710***
	(6.065295)	(7.622190)	(2.831120)
Age^2	-0.014175	-0.106933	0.118283
	(0.425966)	(0.531991)	(0.196521)
Seniority	4.425967***	2.539864*	1.137775**
	(1.051682)	(1.318395)	(0.488609)
Ruling party	-9.369593	-1.251446	-5.240787
	(15.006670)	(18.892800)	(7.028604)
Party share	-89.911640***	-92.307530**	-29.132880*
	(32.340960)	(40.717610)	(15.148270)
Leadership	-28.368820	-2.269033	-0.476498
	(27.527850)	(34.603600)	(12.854300)
Party leadership	12.047950	49.579320	-4.213654
	(29.866000)	(37.467010)	(13.893440)
SMD1	-6.474923	3.051480	1.548996
	(9.377933)	(11.769000)	(4.366008)

Committee chair	108.547300***	125.793000***	27.031310***
	(14.436320)	(18.145410)	(6.740335)
Committee leadership	16.839790**	36.980620***	13.055890***
	(8.136164)	(10.223500)	(3.796846)
Committee percent	741.367000***	1,236.961000***	449.304600***
	(84.592950)	(106.187800)	(39.400950)
Gender (female)	-13.209110	-30.085740*	0.872873
	(12.993510)	(16.215210)	(5.985731)
	(1.933804)	(2.426499)	(0.900110)
Constant	-195.554000***	-285.140400***	-100.520400***
	(46.016490)	(57.741460)	(21.418790)
Time FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	2,547	2,547	2,547
Log Likelihood	-16,827.410000	-17,402.900000	-14,896.260000
Akaike Inf. Crit.	33,694.820000	34,845.790000	29,832.510000
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	33,811.680000	34,962.650000	29,949.360000
Marginal/Conditional R^2	0.10/0.38	0.10/0.37	0.09/0.35
Note:			*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table E.3. Pooled regressions (Defence, Foreign Policy, Procedural)

	Dependent variable:		
	Defence	Foreign Policy	Procedural
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Log (exposure)	1.782202***	2.175802***	26.377280***
	(0.371452)	(0.629285)	(4.665196)
Age^2	0.010723	0.050378	0.205348
	(0.025245)	(0.042958)	(0.338201)
Seniority	0.061690	0.133142	1.157439
	(0.063519)	(0.107827)	(0.818472)
Ruling party	0.250006	-1.989296	-15.149840
	(0.927968)	(1.570013)	(11.439010)
Party share	-6.332408***	-7.753334**	-41.938430*
	(1.999837)	(3.383610)	(24.640450)
Leadership	4.642547***	9.868987***	109.395700***
	(1.685042)	(2.855723)	(21.098000)

Party leadership	9.376992***	10.123680***	87.000670***
	(1.809137)	(3.070254)	(23.129230)
SMD1	-0.898712	-0.001381	-15.552840**
	(0.570006)	(0.966687)	(7.260932)
Committee chair	3.031155***	4.634344***	50.330120***
	(0.883921)	(1.497792)	(11.077710)
Committee leadership	0.808945	0.326847	12.157480*
	(0.497768)	(0.843451)	(6.258187)
Committee percent	20.479690***	38.589260***	358.535400***
	(5.147052)	(8.728153)	(65.393570)
Gender (female)	-0.623024	-2.265207*	-9.111863
	(0.766490)	(1.305233)	(10.350000)
Constant	-9.605264***	-13.474070***	-158.010300***
	(2.796162)	(4.741966)	(35.672190)
Time FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	2,547	2,547	2,547
Log Likelihood	-9,753.380000	-11,087.790000	-16,177.760000
Akaike Inf. Crit.	19,546.760000	22,215.580000	32,395.520000
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	19,663.610000	22,332.430000	32,512.370000
Marginal/Conditional R^2	0.08/0.29	0.06/0.29	0.09/0.43
Note:			*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table E.2 highlights the pooled regression outcomes for the economy, politics, and social domains. Notably, the exposure of Duma deputies during a given convocation consistently demonstrates a significant positive impact across these domains. The committee positions show a significant positive influence, particularly in economic and political discussions, reflecting the critical roles of tenure and leadership within the Duma's committee structure in shaping policy discourse.

Conversely, party size exhibits a slight negative effect, suggesting that a higher percentage of party membership might correlate with a reduced focus on these policy areas, possibly due to factional strategies or priorities. Gender shows a negative influence on political discourse, indicating potential gender disparities in engagement with political issues within the Duma.

Table E.3 presents the results for defence, foreign policy, and procedural domains. Here, leadership roles, including committee chairs and party leadership, significantly affect engagement across these less discussed areas. Interestingly, the party share again shows a negative effect, particularly pronounced in the procedural domain, highlighting how factional alignment might influence legislators' engagement with Duma's internal regulations and procedures.

The conditional R^2 values, indicative of model fit, reveal that the inclusion of random effects for individual deputies substantially improves the models' explanatory power. This improvement is especially notable in procedural discussions, where the conditional value reaches as high as 0.43, suggesting a significant variance in engagement with procedural issues can be attributed to individual differences among deputies.

As the study progresses to dynamic interaction models, it seeks to unravel the subtleties of how these engagement patterns may vary across different convocations, further enriching the understanding of legislative behaviour within the Russian Duma. This exploration is particularly pertinent given the observed institutional changes and their potential impact on legislative discourse, as outlined in previous chapters.

Table E.4. Regression Results with Interactions on Convocation (Economics, Politics, Social)

	Dependent variable:		
	Economics	Politics	Social
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Log (exposure)	30.437500***	40.993430***	13.190880***
	(6.093081)	(7.663952)	(2.858519)
Age^2	-0.099276	-0.282317	0.030766
	(0.436239)	(0.546492)	(0.201973)
Seniority	**4.154710*** **	**3.270364** **	**1.257079** **
	(1.080874)	(1.357127)	(0.504094)
Ruling party	124.150600	81.378360	40.092090
	(169.327400)	(212.860500)	(79.280290)

Party share	-210.921900	-200.409600	-87.009050
	(289.907600)	(364.291200)	(135.553700)
Leadership	-29.206190	-2.585648	-3.110517
	(28.144820)	(35.405150)	(13.205890)
Party leadership	-26.399080	-38.968180	-16.110790
	(43.808440)	(55.112170)	(20.558900)
SMD	-7.585307	2.112383	0.842246
	(9.614207)	(12.081230)	(4.496076)
Committee chair	**113.686500*****	**129.239200*****	**26.603180*****
	(14.610310)	(18.379710)	(6.856457)
Committee leadership	**19.428740****	**37.154100*****	**12.855870*****
	(8.244986)	**(10.369150)**	**(3.866104)**
Committee percent	**720.013400*****	**1,109.156000*****	**420.872800*****
	(94.808030)	(119.136400)	(44.336120)
Gender (female)	-14.848850	**-29.252120***	0.789523
	(13.071350)	(16.364500)	(6.038783)
Ruling party: Third	-5.990812	-48.114720	-14.667830
	(39.980120)	(50.234330)	(18.693390)
Ruling party: Fourth	-98.266030	-218.437600	-112.313700
	(156.769500)	(197.413700)	(73.822100)
Ruling party: Fifth	53.135040	255.106900	84.254780
	(149.318800)	(188.162300)	(70.473830)
Ruling party: Sixth	0.393887	-33.085290	1.109908
	(43.926990)	(55.370920)	(20.753110)
Ruling party: Seventh	**193.515700****	63.487380	65.373260
	(93.811530)	(118.195900)	(44.250530)
Party share: Third	65.624430	107.811800	72.604780
	(187.723800)	(235.970600)	(87.893430)
Party share: Fourth	119.869400	355.798700	180.432900
	(262.759300)	(330.882500)	(123.733200)
Party share: Fifth	-139.593100	-442.096500	-151.887600
	(254.323700)	(320.471900)	(120.019500)
Party share: Sixth	7.908516	95.799920	4.683789
	(90.874060)	(114.558400)	(42.946040)
Party share: Seventh	**-305.794500****	-92.182490	-100.228700
	(142.887900)	(180.031000)	(67.402580)

Leadership : Third	-5.996508	-0.209679	5.853920
	(48.710170)	(61.390200)	(22.999350)
Leadership : Fourth	-7.333215	-36.792120	1.206324
	(23.930240)	(30.189980)	(11.336770)
Leadership : Fifth	1.757459	-10.633160	0.946246
	(17.838730)	(22.497440)	(8.441198)
Leadership : Sixth	-16.400840	-27.552740	-0.342959
	(13.536340)	(17.062440)	(6.394296)
Leadership : Seventh	-7.670872	-12.559550	0.966588
	(10.955480)	(13.812070)	(5.178668)
Party leadership: Third	-47.360790	-42.287690	16.428850
	(53.647260)	(67.691290)	(25.427560)
Party leadership: Fourth	4.607183	14.306140	9.587630
	(24.391340)	(30.768180)	(11.550620)
Party leadership: Fifth	-9.424458	15.781440	14.628750
	(22.497900)	(28.367010)	(10.638510)
Party leadership: Sixth	-23.014730	-29.403320	-4.236393
	(14.553070)	(18.359630)	(6.894097)
Party leadership: Seventh	**-52.420370***	**-103.493200*****	-17.801710
	(27.941690)	(35.288930)	(13.283990)
Committee chair : Third	33.213720	-27.128520	**-19.132760***
	(23.845910)	(30.030660)	(11.231730)
Committee chair : Fourth	-20.166130	**-37.085170****	-8.197725
	(13.792990)	(17.390520)	(6.521338)
Committee chair : Fifth	**-16.738550***	**-36.592760*****	-4.823737
	(9.015836)	(11.364300)	(4.258902)
Committee chair : Sixth	11.552410*	5.474011	1.123239
	(6.991590)	(8.808607)	(3.297467)
Committee chair : Seventh	**23.199370*****	4.192534	-1.939803
	(6.312433)	(7.951962)	(2.976031)
Committee leadership : Third	-1.568377	-13.397140	-1.822876
	(14.552430)	(18.303780)	(6.826852)
Committee leadership : Fourth	-8.685740	-9.886488	-4.022727
	(7.927636)	(9.977553)	(3.726559)
Committee leadership : Fifth	**-12.406480****	-9.756106	-2.801830
	(5.633772)	(7.093636)	(2.652007)

Committee leadership : Sixth	2.717049	2.667588	2.134832
	(4.123396)	(5.190612)	(1.939444)
Committee leadership : Seventh	-0.087309	-4.479400	-2.254300
	(3.571765)	(4.494013)	(1.677373)
Committee percent : Third	50.007210	170.820400	-24.041920
	(153.985100)	(193.792000)	(72.374020)
Committee percent : Fourth	-62.138670	-76.296660	-19.283720
	(107.577900)	(135.481600)	(50.674560)
Committee percent : Fifth	26.859560	-7.588739	**82.202330***
	(60.481320)	(76.162590)	(28.481620)
Committee percent : Sixth	14.878220	**117.323800***	17.978500
	(35.989060)	(45.296860)	(16.919340)
Committee percent : Seventh	**74.347130***	26.646430	14.568560
	(40.090840)	(50.438770)	(18.823080)
Constant	**-176.272900***	**-246.260700***	**-85.411830***
	(53.075660)	(66.682520)	(24.805860)
Time FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	2,547	2,547	2,547
Log Likelihood	-16,655.490000	-17,225.830000	-14,762.520000
Akaike Inf. Crit.	33,420.990000	34,561.650000	29,635.040000
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	33,742.340000	34,883.000000	29,956.380000
Marginal/Conditional R^2	0.11/0.40	0.12/0.39	0.10/0.36
Note:			*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table E.5. Regression Results with Interactions on Convocation (Defence, Foreign Policy, Procedural)

	Dependent variable:		
	Defence	Foreign Policy	Procedural
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Log (exposure)	1.593772***	1.819818***	23.010450***
	(0.358261)	(0.614557)	(4.568804)
Age^2	0.002814	0.043019	0.058345
	(0.024756)	(0.043297)	(0.341186)
Seniority	0.092631	0.246275**	2.080105**
	(0.062492)	(0.108230)	(0.824513)

Ruling party	9.792284	35.197340**	-26.963320
	(9.893582)	(17.036220)	(127.508500)
Party share	-14.657470	-64.686650**	26.423730
	(16.876910)	(29.119890)	(219.216400)
Leadership	6.358273***	6.519448**	101.542300***
	(1.652596)	(2.838969)	(21.011510)
Party leadership	22.702590***	4.913357	-12.219930
	(2.573303)	(4.419862)	(32.696940)
SMD	-0.887122	-0.963050	-19.852780***
	(0.560321)	(0.965925)	(7.276915)
Committee chair	3.565476***	4.620308***	58.424480***
	(0.858773)	(1.474084)	(10.915150)
Committee leadership	1.048614**	0.509676	15.821570**
	(0.483997)	(0.831073)	(6.188328)
Committee percent	23.926210***	38.276510***	402.582100***
	(5.523893)	(9.524898)	(71.727760)
Gender (female)	-1.072701	-2.449105*	-13.138950
	(0.737036)	(1.293868)	(10.279130)
Ruling party: Third	-1.754750	-1.826150	-54.469100*
	(2.331139)	(4.016097)	(30.346820)
Ruling party: Fourth	-5.431502	8.283518	-118.854000
	(9.308298)	(15.883930)	(116.132600)
Ruling party: Fifth	-0.352377	40.217700***	-83.397220
	(8.920529)	(15.171110)	(109.822600)
Ruling party: Sixth	2.085479	-12.357480***	29.136580
	(2.631667)	(4.468601)	(32.213350)
Ruling party: Seventh	13.824780**	-0.646436	135.610900**
	(5.594326)	(9.524593)	(69.078280)
Party share: Third	5.955212	11.241070	221.637500
	(10.985600)	(18.888700)	(141.871900)
Party share: Fourth	2.373397	-15.216550	168.149800
	(15.602860)	(26.623210)	(194.670600)
Party share: Fifth	-2.742059	-73.150780***	121.839100
	(15.189270)	(25.836330)	(187.121400)
Party share: Sixth	-4.790565	23.361550**	-20.389940
	(5.449758)	(9.247942)	(66.605980)

Party share: Seventh	-21.832210**	2.967277	-200.163600*
	(8.521948)	(14.508040)	(105.202600)
Leadership : Third	-10.320790***	-0.105912	-76.150130**
	(2.912496)	(4.951517)	(35.753410)
Leadership : Fourth	1.384570	0.647630	-44.361080**
	(1.444114)	(2.442516)	(17.396910)
Leadership : Fifth	-2.847235***	6.356697***	-24.696870*
	(1.072774)	(1.818163)	(13.004270)
Leadership : Sixth	-1.983969**	-2.173519	-32.337550***
	(0.810290)	(1.376757)	(9.921606)
Leadership : Seventh	-0.580502	-1.557979	-17.536730**
	(0.657103)	(1.115196)	(8.015431)
Party leadership: Third	-39.211110***	-10.220610*	-167.727700***
	(3.240916)	(5.478919)	(38.928450)
Party leadership: Fourth	-7.412291***	-4.423997*	-40.714560**
	(1.470078)	(2.488349)	(17.748550)
Party leadership: Fifth	-7.832697***	13.338640***	-3.007912
	(1.350877)	(2.291136)	(16.446400)
Party leadership: Sixth	-6.550776***	-7.227838***	-42.475210***
	(0.878181)	(1.485328)	(10.581410)
Party leadership: Seventh	5.040463***	-14.221770***	-147.011700***
	(1.702092)	(2.864260)	(20.090480)
Committee chair : Third	-2.577803*	-5.804711**	-17.656340
	(1.416689)	(2.416792)	(17.644290)
Committee chair : Fourth	0.173648	-2.103026	-10.833260
	(0.827815)	(1.404402)	(10.086780)
Committee chair : Fifth	-0.702667	-0.779585	-18.371000***
	(0.539795)	(0.916994)	(6.610656)
Committee chair : Sixth	-0.415992	-0.505548	5.884850
	(0.416717)	(0.709728)	(5.148750)
Committee chair : Seventh	-0.039835	-1.059172*	5.548348
	(0.375933)	(0.640498)	(4.656175)
Committee leadership : Third	0.069118	-0.738425	-6.383303
	(0.855767)	(1.467721)	(10.920080)
Committee leadership : Fourth	-0.092734	-0.535482	-7.460673
	(0.468583)	(0.801524)	(5.906589)

Committee leadership : Fifth	-0.713337**	-0.608133	-11.199770***
	(0.334219)	(0.570577)	(4.177808)
Committee leadership : Sixth	0.021318	0.389823	0.225641
	(0.244059)	(0.417193)	(3.064758)
Committee leadership : Seventh	-0.140585	-0.106171	-2.655573
	(0.210587)	(0.360701)	(2.669557)
Committee percent : Third	-12.557710	-6.426508	100.580800
	(9.100659)	(15.566250)	(114.843400)
Committee percent : Fourth	-3.607288	-3.924216	-11.991250
	(6.394053)	(10.904250)	(79.623680)
Committee percent : Fifth	-1.795687	11.775820*	-29.435250
	(3.591839)	(6.128331)	(44.799830)
Committee percent : Sixth	-5.480614***	-4.615959	-63.271140**
	(2.127603)	(3.639147)	(26.796440)
Committee percent : Seventh	-1.856619	-9.634351**	-48.779810
	(2.362391)	(4.047512)	(29.990340)
Constant	-7.849126**	-5.551519	-146.999900***
	(3.088372)	(5.328534)	(40.257730)
Observations	2,547	2,547	2,547
Log Likelihood	-9,575.548000	-10,927.760000	-15,959.170000
Akaike Inf. Crit.	19,261.100000	21,965.520000	32,028.350000
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	19,582.440000	22,286.870000	32,349.700000
Marginal/Conditional R^2	0.17/0.36	0.12/0.37	0.13/0.49
Note:			*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Appendix F

Table F.1. Full Model Specifications A

	Dependent variable:		
	Political	Economic	Social
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Third	**0.144651*****	**0.336882*****	**0.210498*****
	(0.052099)	(0.056823)	(0.076523)
Fourth	**0.229654*****	**0.156227*****	**0.288296*****
	(0.028391)	(0.028933)	(0.040765)
Fifth	**0.205973*****	**0.139537*****	**0.175352*****
	(0.019168)	(0.017885)	(0.028489)
Sixth	**0.132799*****	**0.094393*****	**0.100002*****
	(0.012758)	(0.012120)	(0.017915)
Seventh	**0.065212*****	**0.074692*****	**0.052397*****
	(0.009525)	(0.009303)	(0.013255)
Exposure	0.037306	**0.141429*****	**0.106008****
	(0.033833)	(0.034068)	(0.053850)
Age^2	**-0.000065*****	**-0.000074*****	**-0.000075*****
	(0.000011)	(0.000010)	(0.000014)
Seniority	**-0.028524*****	**-0.017590*****	**-0.021238*****
	(0.002805)	(0.002588)	(0.003623)
KPRF	**-0.913198*****	**-0.812755*****	**-0.965546*****
	(0.032844)	(0.031674)	(0.043605)
LDPR	**-1.073312*****	**-1.070348*****	**-1.104896*****
	(0.047302)	(0.048657)	(0.064981)
Other	**-0.756347*****	**-0.714581*****	**-0.845273*****
	(0.032734)	(0.031956)	(0.042302)
Duma leadership	**-0.672044*****	**-0.415382*****	**-0.597521*****
	(0.077109)	(0.070564)	(0.098398)
Party leader	**-0.714986*****	**-0.671438*****	**-0.897228*****
	(0.118698)	(0.106483)	(0.132720)
SMD	**-0.052704****	**-0.052827****	-0.020402
	(0.026884)	(0.026745)	(0.036180)

Committee chair	**0.095477*****	0.043878	**0.166805*****
	(0.036865)	(0.035923)	(0.048395)
Committee leadership	**0.052699****	-0.037522	**0.098228*****
	(0.023661)	(0.023004)	(0.031868)
Committee percent	**0.820944*****	**0.887168*****	0.438573
	(0.255971)	(0.255302)	(0.335263)
Gender (female)	**-0.078884****	**-0.083910*****	**-0.079862****
	(0.030967)	(0.029703)	(0.038906)
Third * KPRF	**-0.209356*****	**-0.293920*****	**-0.243965*****
	(0.054201)	(0.058236)	(0.076955)
Fourth * KPRF	**-0.341554*****	**-0.248206*****	**-0.341590*****
	(0.031946)	(0.032408)	(0.043072)
Fifth * KPRF	**-0.196678*****	**-0.146514*****	**-0.142092*****
	(0.023210)	(0.021636)	(0.030269)
Sixth * KPRF	**-0.063969*****	**-0.051540*****	**-0.057091*****
	(0.015376)	(0.014126)	(0.020222)
Seventh * KPRF	**-0.028517***	**-0.024498***	**-0.050158*****
	(0.014851)	(0.013266)	(0.017717)
Third * LDPR	**-0.212040****	**-0.492372*****	**-0.471295*****
	(0.102482)	(0.114447)	(0.146718)
Fourth * LDPR	**-0.299034*****	**-0.151608*****	**-0.268164*****
	(0.050316)	(0.051366)	(0.069897)
Fifth * LDPR	**-0.109881*****	-0.035691	-0.005997
	(0.032619)	(0.031619)	(0.044322)
Sixth * LDPR	**-0.062703*****	**-0.046855****	**-0.050913****
	(0.019059)	(0.018937)	(0.024985)
Seventh * LDPR	-0.000354	-0.001109	-0.009391
	(0.015007)	(0.014544)	(0.019330)
Third * Other	**-0.083778***	**-0.231930*****	**-0.207445*****
	(0.047604)	(0.051933)	(0.068510)
Fourth * Other	**-0.330653*****	**-0.302280*****	**-0.277836*****
	(0.030969)	(0.031470)	(0.041838)
Fifth * Other	**-0.155126*****	**-0.086649*****	**-0.139130*****
	(0.025175)	(0.024106)	(0.032025)
Sixth * Other	**-0.087043*****	**-0.072343*****	**-0.099124*****
	(0.015874)	(0.015153)	(0.020138)

Seventh * Other	-0.010749	**-0.050283*****	**-0.036439***
	(0.016744)	(0.015473)	(0.019482)
Third * Duma leadership	-0.071882	-0.163815	-0.246371
	(0.124259)	(0.127797)	(0.165746)
Fourth * Duma leadership	**-0.228301*****	-0.040462	-0.015093
	(0.070491)	(0.065780)	(0.094199)
Fifth * Duma leadership	**-0.154638****	**-0.116372****	-0.029443
	(0.062614)	(0.054544)	(0.072642)
Sixth * Duma leadership	**0.122786*****	-0.055283	-0.006974
	(0.045171)	(0.040192)	(0.057423)
Seventh * Duma leadership	-0.007594	0.023462	0.043541
	(0.030149)	(0.026630)	(0.040535)
Third * Party leader	**0.335800****	**0.334128****	**0.705125*****
	(0.153881)	(0.148105)	(0.202299)
Fourth * Party leader	0.100518	0.079004	0.128621
	(0.074588)	(0.067792)	(0.092029)
Fifth * Party leader	0.020552	0.086143	-0.081362
	(0.098578)	(0.069036)	(0.109779)
Sixth * Party leader	-0.016415	-0.041413	0.039887
	(0.048991)	(0.043044)	(0.050350)
Seventh * Party leader	**-0.174202****	**-0.231542*****	**-0.145464***
	(0.076043)	(0.075556)	(0.079924)
Third * Committee chair	**0.109834***	0.087220	0.143965*
	(0.060814)	(0.063190)	(0.078723)
Fourth * Committee chair	-0.034720	-0.004005	-0.033036
	(0.038726)	(0.039621)	(0.052341)
Fifth * Committee chair	-0.034180	-0.036427	-0.010280
	(0.026464)	(0.024866)	(0.035667)
Sixth * Committee chair	-0.004751	-0.015369	0.015525
	(0.019117)	(0.017818)	(0.024600)
Seventh * Committee chair	**-0.026781***	**-0.041346*****	-0.013589
	(0.015433)	(0.014388)	(0.019278)
Third * Committee leader	-0.023875	-0.027665	0.019949
	(0.040940)	(0.043057)	(0.056219)
Fourth * Committee leader	0.018523	0.005250	**0.067772****
	(0.023634)	(0.023862)	(0.032739)

Fifth * Committee leader	-0.008838	**-0.028416***	**-0.041982***
	(0.018331)	(0.016915)	(0.024909)
Sixth * Committee leader	**-0.034899*****	0.007811	-0.006817
	(0.012088)	(0.011257)	(0.015755)
Seventh * Committee leader	-0.005845	-0.007091	0.013069
	(0.009680)	(0.009085)	(0.012537)
Third * Committee percent	**0.863211***	0.351045	0.643521
	(0.440486)	(0.460442)	(0.602041)
Fourth * Committee percent	**0.698333****	**0.763293****	-0.661607
	(0.321001)	(0.326775)	(0.429959)
Fifth * Committee percent	-0.173789	0.030339	-0.311099
	(0.186498)	(0.177201)	(0.237886)
Sixth * Committee percent	0.122030	**0.195859****	**0.292949****
	(0.100180)	(0.098045)	(0.128552)
Seventh * Committee percent	0.162609	0.051110	0.184505
	(0.104313)	(0.100871)	(0.130488)
Constant	**0.949952*****	-0.020706	0.320037
	(0.242218)	(0.244136)	(0.387545)
Observations	6,729	6,773	4,221
R^2	0.346322	0.311082	0.332377
Log Likelihood	2,377.965000	2,129.001000	1,172.968000
Note:			*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table F.2. Full Model Specifications B

Regression results

	Dependent variable:	
	Procedural	Foreign Policy
	(1)	(2)
Third	**0.162263*****	**0.407993****
	(0.052290)	(0.159224)
Fourth	**0.105594*****	**0.336356*****
	(0.027832)	(0.077518)
Fifth	0.009271	**0.104590****
	(0.018568)	(0.048949)
Sixth	**0.024174***	**0.141514*****

	(0.013020)	(0.032603)
Seventh	**-0.058211*****	**0.114671*****
	(0.012264)	(0.024536)
Exposure	**0.102862*****	0.115626
	(0.031601)	(0.100840)
Age^2	**-0.000040*****	-0.000040
	(0.000011)	(0.000026)
Seniority	**-0.011564*****	**-0.028458*****
	(0.002809)	(0.006443)
KPRF	**-0.600354*****	**-0.742557*****
	(0.031553)	(0.079369)
LDPR	**-0.762920*****	**-1.033414*****
	(0.044708)	(0.109150)
Other	**-0.451039*****	**-0.589377*****
	(0.032007)	(0.079100)
Duma leadership	**-0.320661*****	**-0.575958****
	(0.070127)	(0.255006)
Party leader	**-0.821413*****	**-0.993828*****
	(0.110538)	(0.195241)
SMD	0.001665	**-0.182878****
	(0.027723)	(0.072765)
Committee chair	**0.130623*****	0.113612
	(0.035437)	(0.095763)
Committee leadership	0.030903	**0.230039*****
	(0.023853)	(0.057106)
Committee percent	**1.589689*****	**1.142250***
	(0.259043)	(0.668927)
Gender (female)	**-0.065837****	0.017590
	(0.032389)	(0.086342)
Third * KPRF	**-0.200037*****	**-0.425916*****
	(0.053577)	(0.151434)
Fourth * KPRF	**-0.219887*****	**-0.391395*****
	(0.031336)	(0.076594)
Fifth * KPRF	**-0.037971***	**-0.117588****
	(0.021355)	(0.048446)
Sixth * KPRF	**-0.050761*****	-0.047563

	(0.014539)	(0.033928)
Seventh * KPRF	0.008647	**-0.071292***
	(0.014579)	(0.037196)
Third * LDPR	**-0.324192*****	**-0.899861*****
	(0.094539)	(0.251997)
Fourth * LDPR	**-0.174396*****	-0.070092
	(0.044455)	(0.110871)
Fifth * LDPR	0.041688	**0.144229****
	(0.029521)	(0.069199)
Sixth * LDPR	-0.031358	-0.024032
	(0.019193)	(0.041460)
Seventh * LDPR	**0.039306****	-0.002787
	(0.016406)	(0.034198)
Third * Other	**-0.060662**	**-0.427421*****
	(0.047777)	(0.142056)
Fourth * Other	**-0.216023*****	**-0.370238*****
	(0.029407)	(0.076036)
Fifth * Other	**-0.066758*****	**-0.096865***
	(0.024720)	(0.055923)
Sixth * Other	**-0.042088*****	-0.064226
	(0.015323)	(0.039434)
Seventh * Other	0.014156	0.014166
	(0.016838)	(0.037428)
Third * Duma leadership	-0.035594	-0.280489
	(0.119470)	(0.274624)
Fourth * Duma leadership	-0.083300	-0.218038
	(0.066771)	(0.165040)
Fifth * Duma leadership	0.081248	-0.087712
	(0.059301)	(0.135035)
Sixth * Duma leadership	-0.015231	0.046858
	(0.035300)	(0.181830)
Seventh * Duma leadership	**0.092330*****	0.106129
	(0.027530)	(0.157615)
Third * Party leader	**0.393293*****	**0.971554*****
	(0.152410)	(0.339657)
Fourth * Party leader	0.102672	0.147930

	(0.069157)	(0.144152)
Fifth * Party leader	-0.131888	-0.179542
	(0.081548)	(0.164512)
Sixth * Party leader	0.025519	-0.103641
	(0.043188)	(0.082609)
Seventh * Party leader	-0.111050	-0.096126
	(0.075164)	(0.096779)
Third * Committee chair	0.062887	-0.106401
	(0.059207)	(0.168942)
Fourth * Committee chair	0.044935	-0.059599
	(0.037530)	(0.101186)
Fifth * Committee chair	0.016822	**0.127889****
	(0.024687)	(0.062775)
Sixth * Committee chair	-0.008710	0.009071
	(0.017702)	(0.044348)
Seventh * Committee chair	**0.043964*****	0.016157
	(0.015694)	(0.043393)
Third * Committee leader	0.012317	-0.030053
	(0.039829)	(0.107130)
Fourth * Committee leader	**0.060108*****	0.030867
	(0.022770)	(0.057432)
Fifth * Committee leader	-0.014501	-0.000194
	(0.017624)	(0.041573)
Sixth * Committee leader	**0.019782***	-0.019856
	(0.011947)	(0.027606)
Seventh * Committee leader	0.015402	**0.047553****
	(0.011463)	(0.023583)
Third * Committee percent	**0.998568****	0.725308
	(0.427822)	(1.279257)
Fourth * Committee percent	**0.779781****	-1.208784
	(0.315726)	(0.825657)
Fifth * Committee percent	-0.002335	-0.144238
	(0.177157)	(0.438729)
Sixth * Committee percent	0.140492	-0.354985
	(0.099009)	(0.240714)
Seventh * Committee percent	0.169222	**-1.163306*****

	(0.122777)	(0.291487)
Constant	-0.254846	-0.509980
	(0.226436)	(0.724805)
Observations	5,994	1,327
R^2	0.198148	0.366382
Log Likelihood	1,565.471000	356.228700
Note:	$^{*}p<0.1$; $^{**}p<0.05$; $^{***}p<0.01$	