

## Features of the Regional Political Process: The Case of Russia<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** *In the period of 1999-2007 Russia's development was characterized by rapid economic recovery, increased welfare of citizens, and formation of robust and stable political system. Actually the political competition was minimized at the federal level. This was achieved both by means of forming new institutional framework for the political process and political competition, and through direct struggle of political actors. Visible political competition, political opposition, and political protest disappeared in many of regions of the Russian Federation. The Financial Crisis, which started in 2008, radically changed the economic situation in Russia. As a result numerous protests were organized in many towns and regions. Regional opposition political groups used actively the current critical situation for the political struggle. It is becoming more difficult for the officials, political parties loyal to the government, and actors of the regional political process to maneuver between the critical socio-economic situation and the necessity of displaying loyalty to federal ruling elite.*

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### 1. Survey Methodology

The data presented in the article were obtained through a number of studies.

A) Two expert surveys. The first survey was aimed to reveal changes in the political process in Yaroslavl, Kostroma and Vladimir Oblast, the second one- to estimate impact of the Financial Crisis on main actors of the political process and main regional political institutes. More than 65 experts took part in each of the surveys, no less than per 20 experts from each of the regions.

The following categories were included in the regional expert groups:

- Representatives of regional authorities;
- Representatives of regional legislature;
- Election commission members;
- Heads of local government;
- Journalists;
- Activists and leaders of non-profit organizations;
- Representatives of academic institutions;
- Leaders of political parties;
- Business community representatives.

B) A study of the legislation on intersectoral collaboration in 83 subjects of the Russian Federation and an expert survey aimed to estimate the implementation of the legislatively fixed standards. The research tools were based on the technique developed by Professor V. N. Yakimets<sup>2</sup>.

C) A poll in Yaroslavl oblast aimed to identify the relationship and trust in the main social and political institutions (governor, legislature, non-profit organizations, Mass Media and others). The study was conducted with the representative sample of regions, taking into account the geographic, demographic and social features of the population and its settlement.

D) A method of analyzing socio-political process comprised an event-analysis of the protests for the period of January, 2007 – November, 2010 in Yaroslavl, Kostroma and Vladimir oblast. For the analysis there were collected reports in the Mass Media and profile organizations (including the Institute of collective action) to be analyzed on the following criteria:

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<sup>2</sup> Yakimets Vladimir, "The Index for the Assessment and Monitoring of Public Policy in the Regions of Russia", Proceedings of ISA RAS, v.25, 2006, 138-146; Vladimir Yakimets, "The Index for the Assessment and Monitoring of Public Policy in Compilation" in *Public Space, Civil Society and Power: the Experience of Development and Interaction (Moscow: RAPN, ROSSPEN, 2008). 107-121*

quantity, type, form, government attitude, content, mass, authorization, availability of violence. As a result, regularities and regional features, a degree of the relationship between the crisis and protests were identified.

## 2. Assessment of Regional Government Institutions

As the study shows, a considerable part of the population felt deterioration in socio economic status. One third of the citizens still feels, to varying degree, the negative tendencies.

Approximately the same per cent of the population notes positive changes. And a quarter of the population talks about stable status.

At the same time quite a predictable regularity is noted. The population of rural areas felt a negative impact of the Financial Crisis to a significantly greater degree than the population of towns did, and the last felt it to a greater degree than the populations of cities. Accordingly, the positive tendencies are observed mostly by the population of cities.

Despite the scale of the problems revealed, the population places the greatest responsibility for the situation on local authorities. As the results show, 63% of the citizens consider the local authorities responsible for the problems in their settlements. By the degree of responsibility the regional government takes the second place- 31 %, the government of Russia is on the third position- 26 %. Other 26 % consider president responsible for such problems. It is noted that the population of rural areas places more responsibility on the federal and regional government than the population of cities does.

To the citizens' point of view, heads of the regions have more opportunities to influence the solution of the emerged and current problems. The per cent of such citizens is a little bit less than a half of the whole population.

By the degree of affecting the situation, a head of the local government comes next (approximately two fifths of the population) and central government takes only the third place (a little bit more than one third of the population).

Actually, this let us say that when considering real problems and mechanisms for their solution, the population is much more focused on the regional and local authorities. The federal officials are considered as some faraway institutions being inactive in solving current problems in the regions.

It is also important to note that the degree of influence of the regional legislature is actually close to that of the Mass Media - less than 10 % of the population consider them able to influence the current problems solution.

At the same time, federal officials are most trusted by the population- nearly two thirds of the population have confidence in the president and chairman of the government. They are most trusted by the population from rural areas. The public expresses one and a half times less confidence in heads of the regions in comparison with the federal officials mentioned above. Only one quarter of the population shows trust in local authorities and regional legislature.

Pressed by federal structures and the necessity of government legitimacy, regional authorities were actively creating regional legal and regulatory framework for controlling different mechanisms of intersectoral collaboration in the period of 2007-2009. If in 2007 one third of the subjects of the Russian Federation did not have a single mechanism of intersectoral collaboration, in 2009 there were no such "backward" regions at all, and the number of subjects in the group of "not fulfilling their potential" was 9 times less.

When studying and analyzing intersectoral collaboration in the subjects of the Russian Federation, the researchers calculated the values of AZ-rating for all the 83 subjects of the Russian Federation. As a result, all the subjects are divided into 4 groups:

- "advanced" with AZ-rating value from 0, 75 and higher (10 regions);
- "good" with AZ-rating value from 0. 5 up to 0.75 (47 regions);
- "middle" with values from 0.35 up to 0.5 (21 region);
- "not fulfilled their potential"- the values of AZ-Rating lower than 0.35 (5 regions).

If we compare the "advanced" mechanisms of intersectoral social partnership in the districts, the Central Federal District will be the leader as it is provided with the intersectoral social partnership mechanism for 2/3 of the desired level (0.64). It gets a little bit worse in the Volga Federal District (0.59) and the Siberia Federal District (0.53). Other federal districts are provided with the intersectoral social partnership mechanisms for less than a half.

Thus, we conclude that charitable activities, taxation of non-profit organizations and donors, public listening, and public examination, as well as conditions and principles of collaboration of government, business and society, are insufficiently regulated for the effective mechanisms of intersectoral social partnership in the subjects of the Russian Federation.

In the federal districts with the delay in the promotion of the mechanisms of collaboration, the experience of the most advanced subjects in expanding regional regulatory framework is not used.

### 3. Factors of Transformation of Regional Political Process

The experts note the dynamics and changes in the political process in regions. On average, the scale of the changes is rated 3, 8 points on a 10-point scale. 30% of those participated in the poll think there have been no changes in the political process for the last three years. 13 % of the respondents noted small changes and rated 2 points. The same number of the experts (8% per each) rated 3, 5 and 7 points. The least number of the respondents (4 % per each) rated 8 and 9 points.

The main factors affecting regional political process are the following:

- Redistribution of power, positions in the regional government, creation of new bodies or structures;
- Financial Crisis;
- Election campaign outcome (the campaigns for the last three years such as election of the new convocation of the legislature, appointment of a new governor, etc.);
- Federal government activities;
- Involvement of new active economic groups into the political process;
- Population activity (protests, etc.);
- Opposition activity.

But they have different impacts. To the experts' point of view, the election campaigns outcome had the greatest impact on changing the nature and content of the political process in Yaroslavl, Kostroma and Vladimir oblast. Moreover, the federal government activities and reshuffle also affected to a great extent. The involvement of new active economic groups had the least impact.

19 % of the experts noted the influence of redistribution of power on changes in the political process (10 points). Other 19 % of the experts do not think the reshuffle had any impact on the political process in the region (0 points). Other points were distributed as follows: 23 % of the respondents rated 2-3 points, other 23 % rated 6-7 points. The average rate on the factor was 5 points.

The greatest part of the respondents (45 %) noted a great impact of the Financial Crisis of 2008-2009 on the political process and rated it from 3 up to 5 points. Only 6% of all the respondents do not think the Crisis had any impact on the regional political process. But on average, the Crisis impact was rated 4, 4 points.

27 % of the experts noted a great impact of the election campaigns outcome on the regional political process. Other 22 % of the respondents rated this factor impact from 7 to 9 points. 10 % of the respondents rated 0 points. The average rate on the factor was 6 points.

42 % of the experts noted little federal government effect on the political process in the region (from 1 to 3 points). No effect was noted by 8 % who gave 0 points. Only 10 % of the experts rated 10 points. The average rate on the factor was 4, 8.

The vast majority of the respondents (46 %) do not think the new economic groups affected the political process for the last years and they rated 0 points. Little effect of the factor was noted by 24 % (from 1 to 3 points). The average rate on the factor is 2 points.

The experts do not see any subjectivity of the population in the political process. No experts noted great impact of the population activity on the political process (7-10 points). 19 % of the respondents think the population activity did not affect the political process. This was rated from 1 to 3 points by 53 % of the experts, that proves little, inconsiderable impact of the factor. The average rate is 2, 2 points.

The opposition impact on the political process was rated on average from 1 to 3 points given by 63 % of the respondents. Other 10 % of the experts chose 5 points. 10 points on a 10 -point scale were chosen only by 2 % of the respondents. The average rate on the factor is 3 points.

Among main changes in the political process following should be mentioned:

- Reduction in the number of the political process actors;
- The on-going concentration of power relations;
- Declining interest of the population in politics, political actors, and decreasing trust in them (except the president and prime-minister);
- Active involvement of power structures into the political process;
- Increasing appeal to the federal Centre including the authority of federal officials, federal programs, budget, money;
- Reduced confidence in political party "United Russia", government on the whole, including the federal authorities;
- The Financial Crisis increased the authority and possible impact of the opposition structures, their political rating, and the political capital has grown but a little.

One of the main conclusions is that the Financial Crisis has a negative effect on the authority of federal leaders'. The greatest part of the experts note negative aspects of the changes: reduced confidence in the government, lack of political forces diversity, reduced publicity of the Mass Media.

#### 4. Regional Features of Transformation of the Regional Political Process

When analyzing the results of the expert survey, some regional features of transformation of the regional political process were determined.

In Yaroslavl oblast the major change was a replacement of the governor and management team, a partial update of the legislature (of the region and the city).

The experts think massive personnel changes in the region are the result of targeted building "the power vertical" in the country. To the experts' point of view, the reason for citizens' passivity is that they "got tired" of politics and do not believe empty words and promises.

Among the major features in Yaroslavl oblast there should be pointed out the increasing imbalance in the system of parties: opposition parties, but the Communist party, are getting weaker and take less active part in the political process.

In Kostroma oblast the essence of changes is, as most of the experts think, in tight control of protests, that causes passivity of the population, distrust in the authorities. Along with the negative changes in the political process of the region, the experts from Kostroma note some positive ones, such as the entrance of political party "Fair Russia" into the political arena, increasing number of self-promoted in the City Duma at the elections.

The experts believe the reason for these changes is the change of the government election system and financial troubles in our country for the last years.

In Vladimir oblast the experts noted a considerably increased impact of party "United Russia" and reduced role of the Communist Party. The experts noted that both a cause and a consequence of the process were strained relations between the governor and legislature. Changing the content of the Legislative Assembly in Vladimir oblast was associated with the past elections of deputies, where there was a significant increase in the role of "United Russia".

In all the regions of the survey the experts note the involvement of youth into the politics: young people take active part in the elections not only like electors, but like candidates to the authorities. Moreover in all the regions there was noticed a considerably increased widespread impact of "United Russia" on the political process- the respondents note "monopolization" and "totalitarianism" of the ruling party. However, the attempts to create a feedback from the public were also noticed (such as public listening, Internet), but to experts' point of view, such feedback is decorative.

#### 5. Impact of the Crisis on Relations between Institutions of Power and Elite Groups

By the survey results, one third of the experts thinks the Financial Crisis had an impact on behavior inside the political elite. To their point of view, there was neither growth nor decline of the contradictions within the regional elites. 17% of the respondents rated -3 points, and 13 % of the experts rated - 2 points. Extreme 5 points (maximum increased contradictions within the elite) and -5 points (maximum increased cooperation and consolidation of the elite) were given by the equal number of the respondents: 6 % per each.

The average rate on a 11-point scale (from -5 to +5) was -0, 75 that let us speak about forming and accumulating contradictions within the regional elites.

To the question of the Financial Crisis impact on the processes of political administrative centralization per 23 % of the respondents rated 0 and 5 (on a scale from "-5" – "promoting decentralization to the lowest level", "0" - no changes, to "5" - "promoting centralization to the highest level"). Per 10 % of the experts gave 2 and 4 points to the promoting centralization to the highest level. 3 points were chosen by 13 % of the respondents.

By the survey results, the average rate was 2 points. That let us think that the experts note a tendency of political administrative centralization in the relations "federal level-regional level".

When describing the tendencies of developing the relations "regional level- local government", the greatest number of the experts (27%) rated 0 points on the same scale, and it shows the lack of changes in the relations system. The most popular answers were 5 points and 3 points- 23 % and 15 % respectively. The equal number of the respondents (4 %) rated 1, 2 and -1 points. Per 2 % of the respondents gave from -2 to -5 points.

The average rate on the issue is also 2 points. That shows that the experts note the tendency of political administrative centralization in the relations "regional level- local government".

## 6. Impact on Civil and Democratic Institutions

As the experts think, the Crisis caused the curtailment of democratic reforms. 21 % of the experts responded that the Crisis did not affect democratic transformations in our countries. The average rate on the factor was -0,96 points. 27 % of the respondents noted significant curtailment of the democratic transformations, and only 6 % noted acceleration of democracy.

The major part of the experts (48%) thinks the civil society institutions got politically more dependent on the control bodies under the impact of the Financial Crisis. 42% of the respondents did not note any changes in the field. 48% of the respondents think the civil society institutions got politically more dependent on the control bodies. Political independence of the civil society institutions from the control bodies under the impact of the Crisis was noted only by 13 % of the respondents. And 29 % of the experts don't think there are any changes in the field.

52 % of the experts think the number of civil society institutions has not changed under the impact of the Crisis. A decrease was mentioned by 27 % of the experts, and the increase in the number of civil society institutions for the last few years was noted by 13 %.

The worsening quality of the civil society institutions for the last few years was noted by 44 % of the experts. Other 31 % did not note any changes in the quality, and 13 % think the quality of the civil society institutions was increased.

On the whole the experts note increased both political and economic dependency of the civil society institutions on the control bodies and the decrease in their quality for the last years.

To their point of view, the Crisis had little impact on political capital of the parties: the average rate to the issue is not more than 1 point. The experts think the political capital of such parties as Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, Patriots of Russia, Just Cause, and Apple, has not changed. In comparison with other parties, the political capital of "United Russia" and the Communist Party has increased considerably.

The majority of the experts note the political capital of "United Russia" has increased inconsiderably for the Crisis period. The average rate was 0,32 points.

To the respondents' point of view the Communist Party political capital was affected by the Crisis which helped the party strengthen its positions a little bit. On average the experts noted the Communist Party got the greatest increase in the political capital in the Crisis period. The average rate is 0,9 points (on the scale from -5 to +5).

The majority of the respondents think the character of population activity in the struggle for its political rights has not changed for the last years. 35 % of the respondents gave 0 points, other 31 %- 1 point that proves lack of changes. Little increase in this kind of the population activity was noted by 10 % of the experts (2 points). The extreme positions for a considerable increase or decrease of the activity were chosen by 6 % of the respondents per each.

The most common rates for the active struggle for social-economic rights of the population are from 0 to 2 points. The majority of the respondents (63 %) consider the character of such an activity has not practically changed for the last few years. The rate of 3-4 points is the second popular answer. It was given by 10% per each. Only 6 % of the respondents noted a considerable decrease of the population activity in the struggle for social-economic rights.

## 7. Formal and Informal Changes of the Political Process

By the expert survey, no considerable formal or informal changes in the regional political process and system of political institutions were revealed, especially those caused by the Financial Crisis.

At first, the experts noted approval of anticrisis programs of the authorities and a widespread increasing taxes and tariffs.

A kind of respond to the challenge of the Crisis and stimulating actions of the federal authorities is the approval of cluster development strategy and design of concepts for monocities development in Yaroslavl Oblast.

Among the most considerable informal changes there was the reduced role of municipal leaders in the last few years. In Yaroslavl oblast it was due to the personnel influence of the governor, who became a major figure in the political field of the region.

The Financial Crisis has exacerbated the conflicts in regional politics such as:

- The regional government- local elites. This conflict may become both visible ( for example, in Yaroslavl oblast the conflict between the governor and the head of Tutayev District and the head of Poshekhonye District; the governor of Kostroma oblast and the Lord Mayor of Kostroma), and invisible for the public (the governor of Yaroslavl oblast and the Lord Mayor of Yaroslavl).

- Interelite conflict. There can be mentioned two main examples. In Yaroslavl oblast the conflict is between the former government of the region in the face of the former governor, former elites (both at the regional and local levels) and the

present acting governor. In Vladimir oblast the conflict is between the supporters of communist ideas (the direct supporters of the governor) and the supporters of "United Russia".

- Interparty conflicts. This kind of the conflict was most visible in Vladimir oblast. This is due to the fact that the governor of the region is a supporter of the Communist Party, but common tendencies of political process development stimulate strengthening positions of "United Russia". The same conflict was also noted in Yaroslavl and Kostroma oblast. However, it was of less importance due to the undisputed dominance of "United Russia".

- A conflict between the population and government. It was most visibly demonstrated by the experts from Kostroma oblast, who noted the reduction in funding social projects.

## 8. Assessment of Anti-Crisis Measures in the Terms of the Financial Crisis

To stabilize the situation, the federal government has initiated implementing a range of special programs on the terms of co-financing with regional and municipal authorities. In particular, when fighting with unemployment, in the beginning of 2009, the Russian Government allocated 43 billion rubles on the terms of partial co-financing from regional budgets for implementing regional programs on advanced training of workers in the labor market organized in more than 40 subjects of the Russian Federation. The programs were aimed both at providing financial support to 36 thousand entrepreneurs and 11, 5 thousand citizens, and at retraining of 133 thousand workers and in-depth training of 5, 7 thousand graduates.

Undoubtedly, the programs played a serious role to prevent the development of a large-scale social crisis in Russia by providing many citizens of Russia with freedom of choice and new but few opportunities. They helped reduce social tension, minimize the scale of the protests.

But on the whole, the experts give low assessment to the effectiveness of the anti-crisis measures of the regional authorities- only 2, 8 points (on a scale from 0 to 10 points). 27 % of the respondents think the anti-crisis measures of the regional authorities were not effective (0 points). Points 1-3 (on a 10-point scale) were given by 42 % of the respondents. Maximum effectiveness of the anti-crisis measures was noted by 6 % of the experts.

Anti-crisis measures of the municipal authorities were less effective. The average rate of the experts is 1, 6 points. The majority of the experts (46 %) noted the anti-crisis measures of the municipal authorities did not have any results. Other 45 % of the respondents gave low assessment to the effectiveness of anti-crisis politics in municipalities and gave points from 1 to 5.

That let us say that the experts consider the actions of the regional authorities to be more effective to reduce a negative impact of the Financial Crisis. However, in general, they were not effective as well.

When questioned on the Mass Media objective coverage of the Financial Crisis impact on regional economy, the majority of the experts (21 %) gave the average rate of 5 points. Other points were distributed as follows: 15% of the experts chose extreme 0 point, per 13 % of the respondents chose 2 and 3 points. The least popular rates from 8 to 10 points were chosen by 6 % of the experts. The average rate is 3, 6 points. It can be concluded that the experts do not think the Mass Media is objective on the issue.

## 9. Protests Activity in the Subjects of the Russian Federation

Undoubtedly, uncontrolled increase of social tensions caused by the worsening economic situation had a great impact on the political process in the subjects of the Russian Federation. All-Russian sociological studies show that the citizens consider protests against a drop of living standards more real. 24 % of the experts think the protests are possible. Mostly citizens of cities and towns are sure in possible protests in their settlements (34 and 31% respectively). Every 5<sup>th</sup> citizen of Russia is ready to support a protest.

2009-2010 have demonstrated the possibility of citizens' rapid self-organizing to protect their rights and interests. The citizens were ready to use all the possible means of protesting- from mass demonstrations and processions (Kaliningrad) to power performances ("partisans" actions in the Far East, attack of the "defenders" of Khimki Forest on the administration of the town of Khimki). Activity of a well organized and socially united group of miners after the accident at mine "Raspadskaya" should be mentioned as well. The control bodies had to make great efforts and considerable concessions to reduce the social tensions and protests.

The event analysis of news sites reports in Yaroslavl, Kostroma and Vladimir oblast for the period from January, 2007, till November, 2010, revealed that the citizens' protest activity reached the peak in Autumn (from September till October) of 2007. That was mostly due to the electoral campaigns at federal and regional levels.

A sharp decline was observed in 2008 and later in 2009. New wave of protests was noted in May, 2010, but the number does not exceed the level of 2007. The citizens show the least activity in summer period. In total, for the analyzed period in the electronic Media there were reports on 287 protests.

The study showed that during the period of 2007-2010 there were three peaks of the activity. Firstly, around 15 actions were organized in March, 2007. Secondly, the activity increase was observed in September, 2007, in the period of preparations for the Russian State Duma elections (29 actions). Thirdly, more than 20 actions were organized in April, 2010. This was due to the increased activity of trade unions, public organizations, etc.

Increased activity in 2007 was evident in all the declared fields, where Kostroma oblast was a leader. In the electronic Media there were reports on more than 40 actions. In Yaroslavl oblast 36 actions were covered by the Media, in Vladimir oblast – 33 protests. But in 2008 a considerable decrease in the population activity was observed. In that year only 5 protests were organized in the Kostroma oblast, 25 in Yaroslavl oblast, and 19 in Vladimir oblast.

According to the reports in the Mass media, low protests activity was observed in Kostroma and Vladimir oblast also in 2009- there were the reports on only 5 or 6 protests respectively. But in Yaroslavl oblast there was a burst of 38 protests. In 2010, an imperceptible increase of the activity was noted in the regions. By the reports in the electronic Media, in Yaroslavl oblast there were 35 protests, in Kostroma oblast- 27 and in Vladimir oblast-14 protests.

The data let us talk about a kind of wave-like protest activity from election to election, and by next federal elections in 2011 the population of Kostroma and Vladimir oblasts will have become active. The situation is different with Yaroslavl oblast. The level of the activity is nearly just the same during the whole studied period (more than 35 protests a year), but the year of 2008, when only 25 protests were observed.

It should be noted, that the protest activity in Yaroslavl oblast is higher than that is in Kostroma and Vladimir oblast. The number of analyzed protests in Yaroslavl oblast exceeds twice the number of the protests in Vladimir and Kostroma oblast. In Yaroslavl oblast the protests are mostly negative: the citizens protest against utility tariffs, benefits, taxes, while in Vladimir oblast the protests are often organized by few members of The Young Communist League (YCL) and The Communist Party against NATO, that is beyond the competence of the local authorities and do not resonate with the public.

For the last 4 years in Kostroma oblast the most active protesters were human rights organizations (especially in 2007) and trade unions (2010). Protests were rather common in the sphere of culture, health care, education, environmental protection (in particular, the construction of a Nuclear Power Plant in the region). In the early 2010 there was a series of protests against the increasing utility tariffs, which resonated with the public.

The most massive protests were those in February and March, 2007, April, 2008, October, 2008, September, 2009, September and May, 2010. The Mass Media reported that on average 2500-3700 persons took part in the protests per month mentioned above.

It should be noted, that in the summer period there is a sharp decrease in the number of persons participating in protests due to the season of vacation (on average, only several hundreds of persons per month). Low degree of public participation in protests is also noticed during the winter period because of the New Year's holidays. The increase in the number of participants is typical for Autumn, that is the beginning of the school year and work season.

When summarizing the number of participants in the protests reported in the Mass Media, it can be mentioned that for the four years 43 505 persons participated in the protests in the three analyzed regions

The most popular forms of protesting are pickets and rallies. It should be noted, that in 2007 the most popular form was a picket, but by 2010 rallies prevailed. For the period of 2007- 2010 such forms of protesting as hunger and withdrawal of an official were isolated cases.

As rallies are more massive than pickets are, it can be concluded that in the Central Federal District different public groups such as interest holders, state employees, and others are becoming more and more active. Thus, the demonstrative activity of parties and public associations takes second place after the real public protest movement that indicates the increasing political literacy of the population.

In the "peak" 2007 different human rights organizations were most active and organized more than 20 protests. In July, 2010, people enjoying benefits became active and organized more than 12 protests. There have been many protests on the issue of wages and different services for this group of the population. Some spheres were named "other" and comprised different memorial actions, protest of Vladimir Communists against NATO, etc.

It should be noted that the majority of protests was authorized and held without force. A 4- years' prevalence tendency of peace and authorized protests changed- in 2009 in Kostroma oblast and in 2008 in Vladimir oblast, where there were more nonpeaceful and unauthorized protests. However, in Vladimir oblast the number of unauthorized protests was decreased in the period of 2007-2010.

For the period of 2007-2010 neutral government reaction to protests prevailed. In this case, the neutral reaction is follows: lack of reaction, mixed reaction, uncertain reaction. Thus, it can be concluded, that in the majority of the events (except riots and non-peaceful rallies and pickets) the government keeps indifferent to such activities. But in 2007 and 2010 (the periods of the greatest public activity- more protests) the authorities were more aggressive.

The most active protests organizer is the Communist Party often accompanied by movement "Social Resistance" and movement "Forward". Some protests of the organizations were supported by youth movements- The Young Communist League (YCL) and Red Youth Vanguard (RYV).

## 10. General Conclusions

The results of these studies suggest that in the subjects of the Russian Federation changes of the political process are minor for the period from 2008 till 2010. The methods of involving the population into the process, used by the control bodies, political parties are still the same.

The government has little interest to involve the population into the political process. Amorphous political parties do not see the reason for involving the population into the process in the pre-election period. Despite the fact, that in the regions elections are held almost every half a year, political parties seem not to invent any new methods. It should be noted, that the Financial Crisis let several opposition parties (first of all, the communists, Fair Russia, and less Liberal Democratic Party of Russia) use more "crisis" rhetoric for criticizing the government, party "United Russia".

The studies demonstrated insignificant connection between changes in social economic situation and political process. Among the most obvious changes in the political process, the experts single out concentration of power. They also single out the attempts of administrative pressure and building of the vertical power. This was reflected, primarily, in collaboration with local elites. In Yaroslavl oblast pressure of the regional government over the local authorities was expressed in conflicts with the Head of Tutayev municipality Y. Andreyev, in Kostroma oblast- with Mayor I.Pereverseva.

There were attempts of hard administrative pressure on the elections which brought to low-competitive elections. The experts noted a certain merge of politics and economics in the face of certain persons. The Crisis forced several political elites to do business but not politics. It was caused by the complicated economic situation of the structures controlled by politicians. As a result, consolidation of elites, reduced number of conflicts between the actors of the political process was noted. The main actions were transferred into the sphere of economics.

The study suggests, that in the subjects of the Russian Federation infrastructure changes (adoption of laws, establishment of control bodies, etc.) were not fulfilled under the impact of the Financial Crisis. The subjects were led by different motivations.

In the subjects of the Russian Federation accumulation of social tension was observed. In reply the government conducted several measures to minimize the negative outcome of the Crisis, including a growing protest mood, which helped to preserve relative stability and control of socio-political processes.

It should be noted, that the protests are still hardly controlled. It is mostly because they are organized not by certain political organizations but on the citizens' initiative to protect their rights and interests.

Formation of the protest organizations and movements is related to the coincidence of interests of a large number of protesters. Among them there are people ready to lead the protest. If the problem solution is blocked and all the possibilities are exhausted, the protest movement will turn to political slogans and force.

In principle, a protest signs that the administration committed serious errors. If they respond quickly to the demands of citizens and correct mistakes, the protests will disappear as easily as they appear. This let us say that real massive protests will be organized not on the initiative of some political forces but because of the infringement of citizens' interests. And the protests will last till these interests have been satisfied or the most active organizers of the protests have been killed. But killing organizers will just transform the protest into a latent one, ready to burst out at any time.

Accumulation of the protest potential reduces life satisfaction, causes conflicts, destroys the society. In the present situation the majority of protests arises spontaneously and the authorities are lacking any certain tools to work with the protest groups. This causes ineffective actions stimulating the growth of protests. As a result, social tension is growing and an additional base for the protests is being formed.

The present event-analysis of the protests in Yaroslavl, Kostroma and Vladimir oblast did not reveal a great burst of protests even for the period of the Financial Crisis. A growth in the number of protests was noticed, but the average number per month was not exceeded in comparison with the pre-election year of 2007, however, the period for the protest activity was a little bit longer in Autumn, 2008.



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