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Kinship Networks and Russia's Bureaucratic Elite

Nepotism and kinship ties are a common feature of recruitment patterns in bureaucracies around the world. In Russia, anecdotal evidence suggests that in the last years, children of top officials have risen through the ranks and occupy strategic positions in state and economy themselves. This paper provides a first attempt to assess the scale of this phenomenon. A positional analysis is conducted to define the universe of top state officials in the executive in the period between 2008 and 2018. In a second step, biographical data and network ties are collected on these officials and their offspring. Preliminary findings suggest that for less than half of these 146 top officials, kinship ties conceptualized as social capital might have had a beneficial effect on the career path of their children. However, contrary to popular expectation not everyone becomes a "princeling": Surprisingly few second-generation actors take up positions in public administration themselves, and top positions in the state capitalist business giants are also rather an exception than the rule. This suggests that in addition to kinship ties, other forms of strong patronage ties such as a common educational or regional background, as well as meritocratic criteria, are crucial for successful career paths in public and business administration. To account for the diversity of career paths of the bureaucrats' offspring, a typology of lineage and kinship ties is proposed that comprises the types "state capitalist", "roving bandit", "dynastic meritocrat", and "entrepreneurial meritocrat".