Russia's Internal Borders: Institutions, Territory, Identity

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Abstract

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This thesis examines the politics of post-Soviet Russia's internal borders. The central argument is that the dynamics of center-regional relations in Russia can best be understood by examing borders as social and political institutions. Borders configure interests, distribute resources, and regulate identity. While the institutional qualities of borders often lay hidden, they are laid bare by conflicts over their status and content. This thesis takes advantage of the centralization processes initiated by Russian President Vladimir Putin to examine the relationship of Russia's internal borders to the dynamics of federal reform, democratization, and state building. The bulk of the thesis compares four Russian regions – the Republic of Kareliia, the Republic of Buriatiia, Perm oblast', and Tiumen oblast' – in their responses to state centralization along several dimensions: the creation of the Federal Districts and Putin's reform of the institution of Presidential Representatives; the revision of regional charters and republican constitutions; the conduct of gubernatorial elections; and the push for regional enlargement. The analysis reveals that Putin's centralization found willing accomplices insofar as it opened up opportunities for regional elites to exploit the discourse and repertoires of centralization within their own regions. The politics of centralization demonstrate how the multiple linkages of internal borders to territory, regional identity, and federal status, established the parameters for political contestation on the regional level and regulated the directionality of center-regional relations.

The thesis makes use of qualitative data gathered through extensive fieldwork in Russia, primarily consisting of interviews and regional press archives. It makes an original contribution to the general political science literature in developing and applying the theoretical notion of borders as social and political institutions. It further makes a substantive contribution in suggesting why Russia's governors willingly gave up the autonomy gained in the 1990s when confronted with state centralization in Putin's first term.

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Note on Transliteration

The transliterations in this thesis follow the Library of Congress method, which renders soft vowels such as "я" or "ю" with a preceding "i" ("ia" or "iu"), "ы" as "y", and "й" as "i". Soft signs (′) and hard signs (″) are included for proper names (El′tsin or Rossel′), but are left out for terms that appear frequently in the text ("oblast" instead of "oblast′"). All footnotes and references are fully transliterated with soft and hard signs. Russian terms are italicized when introduced, though some terms are used frequently in this study and in Russian political discourse that they no longer warrant italics (such as *polpred* for "Presidential Representive").

References to the Perm and Tiumen regions are often transliterated in Western studies, incorrectly, as Perm′ and Tiumen′. While the names of the capital cities of these regions do end in soft signs, the oblast names do not. In the provinces, this sort of error is jokingly referred to as a "Moscow mistake" (*moskovskaia oshibka*), typically committed by journalists in the central press. In this thesis, the use of the soft sign after Perm or Tiumen is only used with specific reference to the cities, not the regions.

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Chapter One: Russia's Internal Borders in Theoretical Perspective

Introduction

Why did Russia not disintegrate in the 1990s? For nearly a decade, political analysts, Russian specialists, pundits, politicians, and even President Boris El'tsin warned that the country stood on the brink of collapse. It was thought that the forces that tore the Soviet Union asunder would continue their work within Russia's borders. Of the most striking political developments over the turbulent El'tsin era, one must surely include the simultaneous processes of political and economic decentralization, the rapid expansion of executive power at all levels of government, and the growth of regional autonomy – the latter reflected in part by the sheer variety of political regimes among Russian regions. As regional administrations began to flex their muscles, the requirements of democratization and the preservation of the Russian Federation presented contradictory mandates. The separatist politics pursued by the leading Russian republics, and the outright attempt at secession by Chechnia, seemed to confirm that post-Soviet Russia's birth certificate was issued with an expiration date.

But Russia did not cease to exist. After the deft transfer of power to Vladimir Putin, Russia's new president attacked the sources of regional autonomy and began a re-centralization of the state. The governors were removed from the upper house of parliament, the Federation Council (*Sovet Federatsii*). Regional legislation was to be brought in line with federal law in short order. The tax code was restructured in the center's favor and regions were encouraged to abandon bilateral agreements signed with Moscow during the El'tsin period. To monitor and coordinate politics in

Russia's 89 regions, seven Federal Districts (*Federal'nye Okruga*) were created as an extra-constitutional reform of the Presidential Administration. And with few exceptions, Russia's governors capitulated almost overnight. Why? Did the disorganization of El'tsin's regional policy mask the brittleness of regional autonomy? Is Russia really an aspiring unitary state, temporarily masquerading as a federation? Possibly, but such arguments conceal the diversity of political regimes sheltered within the borders of Russia's regions, ranging from (relatively) democratic to sultanistic. Could such diversity persist if regional autonomy is on the decline? The one area which appeared to remain impervious to both outright change and credible threats from Moscow throughout the 1990s was the question of altering Russia's internal borders. Under Putin, the country's internal borders are on the move.

The change is not coincidental. Consider the difference that ten years can make: in 1991, internal borders could be promoted in federal status (often unilaterally), activated as salient components of ethno-national identity, identified with arbitrary and imperial Soviet central planning, and utilized to claim jurisdiction over natural resources and tax collection within a region's territorial boundaries. But by 2001, the asymmetrical federal structure that enshrined differences in regional status was under assault, the front runners of ethno-national separatism became the outliers[1], anti-imperial claims all but vanished from center-regional relations, and Moscow was reclaiming its jurisdiction over taxation and natural resources. From this brief comparison it seems likely that the politics of Russia's internal borders is inextricably bound with the construction of the Russian state, the emergence of regional political regimes, and the content of regional (and possibly national)

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[1] "Obviously, time has revealed the 'ethnic' revival account of a potential disintegration of Russia as flawed, since non-compliance with federal state-building and secession potential has been a serious challenge in just two republics: Tartarstan and Chechnya." James Hughes, "Managing Secession Potential in the Russian Federation," in *Ethnicity and Territory in the Former Soviet Union*, ed. James Hughes and Gwendolyn Sasse (London: Cass, 2002), 40.

identity.[2]

It is surprising, then, that there are no existing studies of Russia's internal borders. The reason for this has less to do with Russian studies than with the relative lack of attention to borders in political science. This study argues that borders are social and political institutions in their own right that are vital yet contingent components of the state.[3] Borders bear directly on the cultivation (or dissipation) of state capacity as reservoirs for identity and normative legitimacy. Border changes are rare, but often spectacular when they occur. Most of the time, they organize constituencies, resources, and interests below the level of political awareness as accepted rules of the game. When the state's territorial shape is in flux, however, borders are claimed and contested by actors on the national, provincial, and local levels of the regime. The outcomes of such "transforming episodes" define the shape of politics, the bases of the state's legitimacy, its potential capacity, and ultimately the nature of the regime.[4]

The empirical touchstone for this study is Vladimir Putin's reform of center-regional relations during his first term in office from 2000 to 2004. Beginning with the creation of the seven Federal Districts, and culminating in the accomplishment of the first regional merger in December 2003, Putin's first term constitutes just such a "transforming episode" in which the decentralization of the El'tsin era was reversed,

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[2] This set of relationships is not unique to Russia. Duchacek's study of territorial communities suggests multiple historical analogies. Ivo D. Duchacek, *Comparative Federalism: The Territorial Dimension of Politics* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1970), Ch.s 1-3.

[3] "...the territorial shape of a state, *qua* institution, is one of its most salient *contingent* dimensions. Understanding patterns of change and stability in the territorial composition of a state thus entails analysis of processes of institutionalization and deinstitutionalization." Original emphasis. Ian S. Lustick, "Thresholds of Opportunity and Barriers to Change in the Right-Sizing of States," in *Right-Sizing the State: The Politics of Moving Borders*, ed. Brendan O'Leary, Ian S. Lustick, and Thomas Callaghy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 80.

[4] "State borders are politically important because they serve as a constraint which advantage certain groups and rival elites within the state at the expense of others. Substantial changes in the territorial shape of a state represent institution transforming episodes. Struggles over the size and shape of the state must accordingly be understood as struggles over the 'rules of the game.'" Ibid., 79.

the regime abandoned the rhetorical legitimacy of claims to democratization in exchange for an étatist veneer, and the diminishing of Russia's central state capacity ground to a halt. As such, it provides an opportunity to re-evaluate the scholarly literature on Russia's center-regional relations in the 1990s. In particular, this study is concerned to resolve the puzzle of how Putin has managed to revive central state capacity, seemingly out of thin air.

While such an approach is something of a departure from the existing literature, examining internal borders as institutions provides greater leverage for understanding the puzzling trends in Russia's center-regional relations. In this regard it differs from existing studies of Russian regional politics, which take different pieces of the puzzle in isolation. It also reveals deeper issues that are often neglected in political science regarding the relationship of internal borders and territorial integration, to state-building and democratization. This is not to say that these issues have been altogether neglected. The bulk of Western literature on Russian regional politics to date has focused on idiographic case studies, though by the mid-1990s one could identify three broad areas of theoretical concentration: federalism, ethno-nationalism, and the dynamics of regime transitions.[5] Taken together, these studies show a collective movement in focus from suggesting why the Russian Federation was at risk of disintegration in the early-1990s, to puzzling over how it remained intact at the decade's end. The following sections take these approaches in turn with an eye towards the insights and limitations of each approach in application to Russian regional politics. The extent to which each of these approaches is found to be wanting sets the stage for the discussion of what it means to examine borders as political

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[5] Vladimir Gel'man, "Politics Beyond the Garden Ring: Rethinking the Post-Soviet Experience" (paper presented at the Ten Years since the Soviet Union, School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College, London, 9-10 November 2001). Gel'man also includes studies of local government and regional elites in his list.

institutions and the "value added" of such an approach. The chapter concludes with a discussion of methodological issues involved in researching borders and the particular methods utilized for this study.

Russian Federalism

Federalism is a territorial arrangement for distributing power, meaning that the first crucial issue in establishing or designing federal institutions is to find the proper territorial base.[6] Post-Soviet Russia's federal system inherited its territorial base from the Soviet Russian Republic (RSFSR), and as of 2000 consisted of twenty-one republics, forty-nine oblasts (provinces), eleven autonomous okrugs (districts), six krais (territories), two cities "of federal significance" (Moscow and St. Petersburg) and one autonomous oblast. Of these, the republics and autonomous okrugs are ethnically defined, even if the "titular" group (the group for which the region is named) constitutes a majority in only nine of these regions.[7]

By far the largest amount of scholarly attention has focused on the ways Russia's federal institutions structure center-regional interactions, particularly in the form of bargaining games between central and regional elites. This bargaining did not establish the federal system, however, but took place after the emergent institutions were already in position. The implications for federal dynamics and the potential for secession are made clear by the general literature on federalism and federal systems. At a minimum, the short-term success of federal systems requires accommodation

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[6] Duchacek, *Comparative Federalism.* This is not to say that federalism is exclusively territorial, as non-territorial federal (or partial federal) arrangements are both theoretically possible and actively discussed. Thus it is worth bearing in mind Kahn's warning that, "to suggest that the only expression of federalism is territorial federation is of little help in interpreting the myriad combinations possible in the application of federalism." Jeffrey Kahn, *Federalism, Democratization, and the Rule of Law in Russia* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002), 63.

[7] According to 1989 census data, the titular group comprised a majority in seven republics (Checheno-Ingushetiia, Chuvashiia, Kabardino-Balkariia, North Ossetiia, Kalmykiia, Tatarstan, Tyva) and two autonomous okrugs (Agin-Buriatskii and Komi-Permiatskii). Note that the Republic of Checheno-Ingushetiia split into two republics, Chechnia and Ingushetiia.

among elites, or Riker's notion of striking a "federal bargain."[8] By contrast, Russia's cumbersome system was the product of political expedience since redrawing the Russian map in 1992 proved to be unwieldy and divisive. As Lapidus describes,

> conflicts arose over whether the constitutive elements of the federation would be the existing or new administrative units; whether these constitutive units would be equal in local powers and representation at the center or whether distinctions should be made on the basis of size of population or ethnicity; and whether existing administrative units should be redrawn without regard to ethnic distinctiveness.[9]

Rather than pry open this Pandora's Box, El'tsin attempted to side-step restructuring the federation. As a result, Russia's federal system remains saddled with Soviet institutional legacies, the most intractable of which remains the very territorial grid that defines the boundaries of regional autonomy while making "the production of loyalty to a common state authority problematic."[10]

While there is a scholarly consensus that this system is improbably large, complex in Kafkaesque proportions, burdened with history and threatened by the onset of ethnonational mobilization along regional borders, there is disagreement over the binding or integrative features of Russia's asymmetrical federalism. Asymmetry may exist in terms of constitutional status (as with special rights or privileges accorded to individual regions or a subset of regions) and relative levels of socio-economic development. Some degree of socioeconomic asymmetry is inevitable (indeed, it may be necessary for the functioning of internal markets) and regardless could not be redressed without extraordinarily intrusive redistributive policies by the

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[8] William Riker, *Federalism: Origins, Operation, Significance* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1964), Ronald L. Watts, "Federalism, Federal Political Systems, and Federations," *Annual Review of Political Science* 1 (1998): 128.

[9]Gail W. Lapidus and Edward W. Walker, "Nationalism, Regionalism, and Federalism: Center-Periphery Relations in Post-Communist Russia," in *The New Russia: Troubled Transformation*, ed. Gail W. Lapidus (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), 92.

[10] Mark R. Beissinger and Crawford Young, "Convergence to Crisis: Pre-Independence State Legacies and Post-Independence State Breakdown in African and Eurasia," in *Beyond State Crisis? Postcolonial African and Post-Soviet Eurasia in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Mark R. Beissinger and Crawford Young (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2002), 22.

state. Likewise, constitutional asymmetry reflects "the extent to which component states share [or do not share] in the conditions and thereby the concerns more or less common to the federal system as a whole."[11] Asymmetrical federalism has attracted a great deal of scholarly and journalistic attention with particular regard to the special status accorded Russia's ethnically defined regions. The republics determine their own constitutions and presidents, state symbols, official languages, and anthems – in other words, they are allowed the vestments of state sovereignty, while the remaining regions possess mere charters and governors.

On the one hand, the extension of constitutional privilege to the ethnic republics arguably prevented these regions from mobilizing against the federal center and upgrading their declarations of sovereignty to outright secession.[12] Even if maintaining the Soviet-era administrative divisions was less than optimal for post-Soviet Russia, the center's overriding concern was to maintain the territorial integrity of the state. The fact that Russia has not disintegrated suggests that, however undesirable, the political expedient managed to fulfill this basic requirement of state building. But federalism is unlikely to endure in the long-term without the support of civil society and a political culture supportive of "federal constitutional-institutional arrangements and relationships."[13] In this sense, asymmetrical federalism has been a political liability in center-regional relations. The content and meaning of Russian federalism – particularly the notions of sovereignty and delineation of joint and exclusive jurisdictions – remains controversial. Among the regions denied special

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[11] Charles D. Tarlton, "Symmetry and Asymmetry as Elements of Federalism: A Theoretical Speculation," *Journal of Politics* 27, no. 4 (1965): 861. Tarlton continues that this form of asymmetry is inevitable as well, since "the federal relationship, in any realistic sense, means something very much different to nearly every participant unit in the system."

[12] Though the likelihood that the international community would neither support nor recognize a secession attempt probably had a significant effect on the way that republican elites calculated their interests.

[13] Daniel J. Elazar, "International and Comparative Federalism," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 26, no. 2 (1993): 192-3.

status (almost uniformly featuring ethnic Russian, or *russkii*, demographic majorities), the extension of constitutional privilege to the republics is a persistent source of discontent. The autonomous okrugs present an additional source of discontent, owing to their ambiguous constitutional status as simultaneously full subjects of the federation and constituent parts of a neighboring oblast or krai.[14] For the most part, however, this ambiguous status has a greater impact on the regions to which the autonomous okrugs are attached – the oblasts and krais already dissatisfied with the differential privileges accorded the federal republics. With regard to the latter, these privileges may be viewed as chiefly symbolic for presidents of perennially weak republics, while the diminutive title of governor does little to diminish the power of regional leaders of stronger oblasts and krais.

Russia enjoyed neither the short-term advantage of elite accommodation, nor the long-term stability of a federal political culture. If neither of these can explain the durability (however tenuous, at times) of Russia's federal system, the answer may have more to do with the system's ability to manage or defuse conflict and the incentives it generates for actors at both the central and regional levels. Yet the measures utilized to preserve the federation in the 1990s relied on personalist relations between El'tsin and republican presidents and extra-constitutional measures that only accentuated federal asymmetry by accommodating regions' particularist demands. Beginning in 1994, the central government began to sign bilateral power-sharing treaties with the federal republics and (gradually) some oblasts. By 1996 there were forty-six bilateral treaties between Moscow and individual regions, often extending authority over areas of specific interest to the regional administrations. The treaties were signed by the Russian President and the heads of regional administrations with

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[14] Since the autonomous okrugs are able to float candidates and participate in oblast or krai elections, the latter tend to share this discontent. Ironically, this may prove to be a force for the integration of regional administrations over the long-term (see Chapter Six).

no oversight or confirmation by either the federal or regional legislative assemblies. As Stoner-Weiss observes, "this rather arbitrary policy of assigning extra powers to some regions but not to others...has created the potential for further uneven economic (and political) development across the Federation."[15] In this sense, the bilateral treaties directly exaggerated elements of socioeconomic asymmetry in the Russian Federation.

The persistence of Russia's federal system despite the clearly debilitating elements of socioeconomic, constitutional, and ethnic asymmetry continue to puzzle experts and guide research. The literature on Russian federalism tends to examine the consequences of constitutional and socioeconomic asymmetry in explaining the trajectory of center-regional relations. The following sections examine these more closely.

Socioeconomic Asymmetry

The literature addressing the consequences of Russia's asymmetrical federalism tends to emphasize either socioeconomic or constitutional dimensions of asymmetry. The former tends to view socioeconomic asymmetry as informing regional preferences for maintaining constitutional asymmetry and exploiting extra-constitutional (or, for that matter, anti-constitutional) measures. It is ultimately the weakness of the federal center and the lack of unifying national institutions that regulate the devolution of power to the regional level. Adopting this perspective, Lapidus points out that the potential for Russia's republics to secede was exaggerated. She argues that the explanation lies not so much in the strength of the regions as in the weakness of the

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[15] Kathryn Stoner-Weiss, *Local Heroes: The Political Economy of Russian Regional Governance* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1997), 88.

center – the real issue was not separatism, but regional assertiveness.[16]

The overall picture is therefore less concerned with the divisive effects of constitutional asymmetry. Quite the contrary, "the demands of republic and regional elites tended to converge around similar issues: greater political and economic control over decisions affecting their regions or republics, and more favorable treatment with respect to taxation and resource allocation."[17] Center-regional elite confrontations concerned questions of political jurisdiction and resource allocation, though it was ultimately the growing weakness of the center and declining regional expectations that multiply the conflicts between center and periphery over jurisdictional and distributive issues as the regions sought to assert greater control over power and resources.[18]

Approaching the matter from a game theoretic perspective, Solnick describes the dilemma of Russia's asymmetrical federalism in terms of devising effective mechanisms by which the federation becomes "jointly constraining" upon center and regions. The key to the coordination of regional action is to establish a commonly held understanding of when the center has "transgressed" against the regions, and a credible guarantee that a challenge to an individual region will be perceived as a challenge to all regions at once.[19] The problem is that regional preferences may derive as much from asymmetrical socioeconomic status as from constitutional status, such that the two are mutually reinforcing. If one region were strong enough to

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[16] Gail W. Lapidus, "Asymmetrical Federalism and State Breakdown in Russia," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 15, no. 1 (1999): 75-7. Some might even say the issue was regional *survival*. Indeed, case studies of individual cities and regions like Ruble's study of Iaroslavl' show local authorities struggling to make policy in a vacuum left by the center's paralysis. See: Blair A. Ruble, *Money Sings: The Changing Politics of Urban Space in Post-Soviet Yaroslavl* (Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Cambridge UP, 1995).

[17] Ibid.: 78

[18] Ibid.: 80.

[19] Steven L. Solnick, "Is the Center Too Weak or Too Strong in the Russian Federation?" in *Building the Russian State: Institutional Crisis and the Quest for Democratic Governance*, ed. Valerie Sperling (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000), 137-8.

oppose the center, it would have little incentive to make common cause with other regions; neither would the center have an interest in cultivating broad-based support among the regions when it could form selective coalitions that inhibit inter-regional cooperation against Moscow.[20] Solnick argues that the devolution of real power to the regional level was less a result of regional strength than the center's ability to maintain regional disunity.

Partly this arrangement was beneficial to the center, as regional administrations came to exhibit "increasingly diverse leadership strategies and capacities, making the Russian federation a virtual laboratory for testing different developmental models" in striving for greater self-sufficiency.[21] Stoner-Weiss also adopts a center-oriented approach, though she recasts the "central weakness" thesis in arguing that *de facto* autonomy on the regional level arose from the center's default on its jurisdictional responsibilities.[22] As illustrated by the bilateral treaty process, Russia's regions largely determined the pace of decentralization, given a federal center that was more reactive than proactive in its approach to the regions. Rather than undermine constitutional asymmetry, Stoner-Weiss estimates that the bilateral treaties served to reinforce differences in constitutional status.[23] This process was furthered by the tendency of democratization to shift the locus of accountability and the effects of marketization from the center to the provinces in encouraging increased devolution.

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[20] "If one region can unilaterally oppose transgression by the sovereign, the capacity of other regions to enforce cooperation will be eroded. The result will be an asymmetric equilibrium in which the center exploits weaker regions and shares the confiscated surplus with the strong region." Ibid., 139.

[21] Lapidus, "Asymmetrical Federalism.," 81.

[22] "Regions, to the degree that they are able, are left to fill the empty policy space as best they can. Others cannot afford to implement central policy and so have carved out for themselves a different sort of autonomy - the freedom to do nothing." Kathryn Stoner-Weiss, "Central Weakness and Provincial Autonomy: Observations on the Devolution Process in Russia," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 15, no. 1 (1999): 94.

[23] "They have served to establish Russia's federal relations more on a contractual than on a national-constitutional basis, carving out far more freedom of action for the subjects of the Federation than the drafters of the 1993 Constitution had intended. ...the treaties and agreements in general contradict the declared intention of the Constitution to render all subjects of the Federation equal to one another." Ibid.: 92.

Meanwhile, the absence or weakness of potentially unifying national institutions frustrated attempts to counter these trends.[24]

Where the center succeeded was in exploiting the divisions among regions through the use of selective benefits mechanisms, including the bilateral treaties and various forms of fiscal favoritism, though there is some controversy over appeasement's short-term impact and long-term viability. The dependence of the bulk of Russia's regions upon federal transfers and subsidies handed the center a set of extra-constitutional budgetary mechanisms ranging from budgetary transfers to the timely payment of wage arrears. Treisman suggests that center-regional confrontations served as integrative mechanisms in their own right, since the conditions of transitional uncertainty made anti-center protests the only credible means of signaling preferences.[25] In determining whether to mobilize against the center, regional leaders balanced the expected benefits of revolt against the expected costs of central sanctions. The absence of strong central sanctioning capacity meant that regional leaders had greater mobilization incentives. The center's regional policy of selective fiscal appeasement thus amounted to selective accommodation of those regions prone to staging "disruptive protest actions" and preventing bandwagons of regional protest.[26]

Treisman's thesis has been challenged on methodological grounds for examining only direct financial transfers, whereas tax revenues-sharing rules often constituted a much more substantial and opaque form of fiscal appeasement.[27] In any

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[24] For a theoretical treatment of the problem of the lack of unifying national institutions for Russian federalism, see: Peter C. Ordeshook, "Russia's Party System: Is Russian Federalism Viable?" *Post-Soviet Affairs* 12, no. 3 (1996).
[25] It should be noted, however, that Treisman employs a paper-thin notion of integration, which appears to be the absence of disintegration. Daniel S. Treisman, *After the Deluge: Regional Crises and Political Consolidation in Russia* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), Ch. 1.
[26] Ibid., 22-24.
[27] *Russian Regional Report*, 30 August 2000.

case, Stoner-Weiss argues that that,

> Federal fiscal transfers are a bit of a clumsy instrument of control over regional governments anyway. If they did prevent some regions from actually separating from Russia in the early 1990s...they were far less successful in preventing less sensational, but almost as damaging forms of regional power grabs and pervasive regional noncompliance to the constitution and federal laws.

In addition, the federal government does not collect or publish data on the central government's own expenditures in the regions.[28] When calculated differently, fiscal appeasement can also be shown to have rewarded loyal regions and sanctioned separatist regions.[29]

Most of these approaches rely on a thin concept of regional identity in explaining regional preferences and strategies when engaging the federal center. Approaches that analyze center-regional relations in terms of rational bargaining schemes tend not to distinguish between regional identities and the regional elite preferences. Instead, they portray identity as the product of instrumental manipulation by regional elites, deployed in negotiations (or confrontations) to raise the bargaining stakes or make common cause with elites in other regions. Alternatively, regional preferences and strategies are portrayed as emerging from the region's structural characteristics, particularly the concentration of a region's resources[30] or a region's administrative status within the federal hierarchy.[31] Instrumental and structural imputation of regional identity is often intertwined with the hypothesis that identity issues become salient in relations with Moscow depending

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[28] Alastair McAuley, "The Determinants of Russian Federal-Regional Relations: Equity or Political Influence?" *Europe-Asia Studies* 49, no. 3 (1997): 440. See also Treisman's rejoinder: Daniel Treisman, "Deciphering Russia's Federal Finance: Fiscal Appeasement in 1995 and 1996," *Europe-Asia Studies* 50, no. 5 (1998).

[29] "Some regions may pay a greater share of their total revenues to the center, but then can be compensated via the transfer flows in the opposite direction. To complicate things further, taxes are not necessarily paid in regions where output is produced..." Vladimir Popov, "Fiscal Federalism in Russia: Rules Versus Electoral Politics," (2002).

on a region's strength and autonomy versus the center: weaker regions are more vulnerable to, or dependent upon, the federal center, while stronger regions are less vulnerable to federal intervention and are able to force increasingly particularistic demands on the center.

Similarly, the coordination of regional strategies – for instance, with the attempted Urals Republic in 1993[32], the interregional association "Siberian Accord" (*Sibirskoe Soglashenie*)[33], or the "Fatherland-All Russia" (*Otechestvo-Vsia Rossiia*) regional movement led by Moscow's Mayor Iurii Luzhkov and former Prime Minister Evgenii Primakov in the 1999 Duma elections – is often portrayed as reflecting shared elite interests. The articulation of regional identity thus depends on opportunity structures, but it does not independently shape the interests of regional elites, nor does it constrain the formation of regional elite strategies. Rather, it is the relative strength and autonomy of the federal center that regulates the salience of regional identity.

Constitutional Asymmetry

Approaches that emphasize constitutional asymmetry are sensitive to the salience of socioeconomic asymmetry, though they address the cultivated ambiguity in center-regional relations in less instrumental terms. Whereas studies focusing on socioeconomic asymmetry emphasize material power issues, those concerning constitutional asymmetry usually proceed from liberal assumptions about the institutional requisites of federalism and the boundaries of the polity. From this perspective, the election of regional administrations served to establish claims to

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[30] Stoner-Weiss, *Local Heroes*.
[31] Daniel S. Treisman, "Russia's "Ethnic Revival": The Separatist Activism of Regional Leaders in a Postcommunist Order," *World Politics* 49, no. 1 (1997).
[32] See: Gerald M. Easter, "Redefining Centre-Regional Relations in the Russian Federation: Sverdlovsk Oblast'," *Europe-Asia Studies* 49, no. 4 (1997).
[33] See: James Hughes, "Regionalism in Russia: The Rise and Fall of Siberian Agreement," *Europe-Asia Studies* 46, no. 7 (1994).

sovereignty (or at the minimum, significantly increased autonomy) that shaped regional elite understandings of the federal process as contractual "from the bottom up" (*snizu vverkh*).[34] While the maintenance of the RSFSR's national-territorial structure was thus viewed as a compromise on the regional level, the center perceived it as a transitional arrangement that served as a short-term political expedient to maintain the country's territorial integrity.[35]

Conflictual relations thus were built into the institutional structure of Russian federalism and prevented agreement over basic constitutive principles. The lack of consensus between the center and the provinces over federal principles not only prevents the resolution of constitutional ambiguities, but structures elite incentives to favor the same extra-constitutional measures that undermine the potential for achieving any such consensus.[36] Central weakness plays a role here, as well, though the emphasis is less on state capacity than on the absence of a coherent state ideology or a "federal culture." In this, the non-democratic fashion in which Russia's federal system was adopted, the questionable circumstances under which it was ratified by national referendum[37], and the extra-constitutional means by which the center sought

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[34] Kahn, *Federalism, Democratization, and the Rule of Law in Russia*, Darrell Slider, "Elections to Russia's Regional Assemblies," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 12, no. 3 (1996), Steven L. Solnick, "Gubernatorial Elections in Russia, 1996-1997," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 14, no. 1 (1998).

[35] Nicholas J. Lynn and Alexei V. Novikov, "Refederalizing Russia: Debates on the Idea of Federalism in Russia," *Publius* 27, no. 2 (1997).

[36] That liberal and ultra-conservative central elites did not agree on the proper model of center-regional relations was, in this sense, less significant than the fact that neither were satisfied with the present model. Indeed, it was not unusual for regional administrations to publicly court ultra-conservative support while attempting to implement liberal economic policies. For instance, see Mikhail A. Alexseev and Vladimir Vagin, "Fortress Russia or Gateway to Europe? The Pskov Connection," in *Center-Periphery Conflict in Post-Soviet Russia: A Federation Imperiled*, ed. Mikhail A. Alexseev (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999).

[37] According to official statistics, the 1993 Constitution was supported by 58.43% of voters in the December 1993 referendum, though this only represented 30.7% of the total electorate. It has been repeatedly alleged that voter turnout was falsified and never reached the 50% threshold required for the referendum to be valid, though this has never been substantiated and ballot papers and area tallies were quickly destroyed. Richard Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 2002), 60. Moreover, the Constitution was outright rejected in 24 federal subjects, while it failed to be ratified in a further 17 federal subjects owing to low voter turnout. Combined with Chechnia's boycott of the referendum, this means that the Constitution was not ratified in 42 of 89 regions. Cameron Ross,

to hold the federation together combined to undermine the democratic content of Russian federalism.[38] Added to this are the regional constitutions and charters that often were drafted in outright violation of the federal constitution, and the presence of elected presidents and governors whose legitimacy was arguably greater than that of the federal presidency (at least until the 1996 presidential elections[39]).

Approaches focusing on constitutional asymmetry unerringly prescribe the adoption or consolidation of liberal governance institutions as necessary for ongoing federal integration.[40] In doing so, they rightly call attention to the debates behind the adoption of Russia's federal institutions, the preferences of key political actors, and the extent to which these processes were characterized by contrasting (if not openly conflictual) understandings of the nature of the process. While approaches that focus on constitutional asymmetries present a more nuanced account, they ultimately rely on the prevalence of socioeconomic asymmetry to explain the lack of regional integration. This tendency appears most often in the conflation of the center's strategy of bilateralism with the weakness of the Russian state. In doing so, they undervalue the role of Soviet institutional legacies and path dependence in constraining the range of institutional solutions available at the time.[41] One could further argue that constitutional-legal approaches focus almost exclusively on the role of Russia's federal republics, tending to view the remaining two-thirds of Russia's federal subjects

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"Federalism and Democratization in Russia," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 33, no. 4 (2000): 407.

[38] "What is an exception to democracy, however, is the fact that Russia has forty-six aconstitutional, bilateral treaties...without being signed, or even shown, to the Russian Parliament. This occurrence is procedurally exceptional in a democratic federation." Alfred Stepan, "Russian Federalism in Comparative Perspective," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 16, no. 2 (2000): 144.

[39] Though one could reasonably argue that the 1991 election for the Russian presidency (which brought El'tsin to power) was more fair than the 1996 election.

[40] "...a stable, democratic and federal Russia must satisfy the same general theoretical principles of decentralized political institutional design that all other such states satisfy." Ordeshook, "Russia's Party System: Is Russian Federalism Viable?" 196-7.

[41] "...institutions of bilateralism resulted from earlier institutional development and were not any longer subject to choice by the time of Russia's independence." Mikhail Filippov and Olga Shvetsova, "Asymmetric Bilateral Bargaining in the New Russian Federation: A Path-Dependence Explanation," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 32, no. 1 (1999): 63.

as riding the republics' coat tails. The presumed strength of republican initiatives lies in their ethnic mandate – Russia in this sense is a dual-federal system: partly ethnofederal (with regard to the republics) and partly territorial (with regard to the remaining federal subjects). This suggests that regional identity is a crucial factor almost exclusively for the republics. For this reason, much literature has focused on federal asymmetry in terms of the privileges and benefits accorded the republics on the basis of ethnicity.

Ethnofederal Asymmetry

It has become almost commonplace to observe that the ethnofederal structure of the USSR directly contributed to its fragmentation along the lines of the fifteen Union Republics.[42] In assessing the nature of post-Soviet Russian federalism, the fact that this structure was left largely intact stimulated a number of studies on the effects of this institutional structure on the propensity for ethnic or nationalist separatism. With regard to the Soviet collapse, the Union republics' institutional development accounted for the ability of ethnic elites to mobilize effectively against the center. Though this explanation is convincing, it leaves aside the question of how to specify the thresholds at which institutional development facilitates the escalation of ethnic claims from obtaining greater autonomy to outright secession.[43] Moreover, an

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[42] The literature on this subject is massive. For a few representative works, see: Ian Bremmer, "Post-Soviet Nationalities Theory: Past, Present, and Future," in *New States, New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations*, ed. Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), Carol Skalnik Leff, "Democratization and Disintegration in Multinational States: The Breakup of the Communist Federations," *World Politics* 51, no. 2 (1999), Philip G. Roeder, "Soviet Federalism and Ethnic Mobilization," *World Politics* 43, no. 2 (1991), Yuri Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism," *Slavic Review* 53, no. 2 (1994).

[43] The salience of ethnic or national identity is thus presented as a consequence of institutional and economic development. Such approaches proceed from the observation of regional ethno-national mobilization and attempt to explain it. This is methodologically suspect in that it amounts to selecting cases based upon the dependent variable, meaning that the relevant observations may obscure the other sources of regional identity.

underlying assumption of the argument is that (non-Russian) ethnic majorities translated into preferences for ethnic separatism, whereas regions with ethnically Russian majorities were presumed to be less inclined towards separatism. Thus, Treisman's examination of ethnic separatism in the early 1990s finds that "a region's administrative status lines up almost precisely with its level of activism," with Russia's republics proving to be the most separatist of all.[44]

At the same time, there is reason to doubt whether investing federal institutions with ethnic content provides a sufficient basis for separatist (or, for that matter, integrationist) mobilization. Ethnicity and nationality are notoriously pliable concepts in both theory and practice.[45] Gorenburg's examination of Tatar and Bashkir communities on the border between Tartarstan and Bashkortostan helpfully refines approaches to ethnofederal mobilization, revealing that a panoply of state and regional incentives compel people to change their public ethnicity.[46] If one adjusts the above hypothesis such that Russia's republics and autonomous okrugs were more prone to ethnic separatism by virtue of the institutional endowments flowing from their titular national designations, there remains a latent hypothesis that the oblasts and krais were more integrationist by virtue of their common ethnic (*russkii*) composition. Lapidus holds that the Russian Federation was less vulnerable to collapse than the USSR owing to the relatively homogeneous ethnic population of post-Soviet Russia and the lack of non-Russian ethnic majorities in over half of the

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[44] Treisman, "Russia's "Ethnic Revival": The Separatist Activism of Regional Leaders in a Postcommunist Order," 229. It is worth noting that Treisman examines republics and autonomous okrugs – 32 out of 89 regions – and only conjectures about the remaining oblasts and krais.
[45] Lowell W. Barrington, ""Nation" and "Nationalism": The Misuse of Key Concepts in Political Science," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 30, no. 4 (1997): 712-7. Commenting on the lack of coherence in the field, King comments: "If it would be difficult to know a nation if we saw one, it would be even more difficult to know a theory of nationalism." Charles King, "Nations and Nationalism in British Political Studies," in *The British Study of Politics in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Jack Hayward, Brian Barry, and Archie Brown (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999), 342.
[46] Dmitry Gorenburg, "Identity Change in Bashkortostan: Tatars in Bashkirs and Back," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22, no. 3 (1999): 554-80.

republics.[47] Hanson makes the argument explicit in arguing that the larger number of ethnically-Russian regions (in post-Soviet Russia, as compared with the USSR) and the weaker local autonomy granted to the federal units of the RSFSR (as compared with the Soviet Union's republics) meant that "secession catalysts and potential followers are largely concentrated within the former autonomous ethnic regions, *while the majority of Russian oblasts are integrationist in orientation.*"[48]

Yet this approach, too, begs the question of what is meant by "integrationist"? Only if one adopts a minimal concept of integration as the opposite of disintegration could such statements bear up under empirical scrutiny. Moreover, such an approach has little to say regarding the emergence of non-ethnic regional identities.[49] One does not have to look far to find multiple examples of oblasts and krais in conflict with Moscow. Indeed, Treisman goes on to note that, "the demands and actions of Russia's ethnic regions seem in many ways similar to the bargaining ploys and pressure tactics employed by some of the country's *non*-ethnic regions to extract benefits from the center."[50] Upon closer scrutiny, then, the distinctiveness of republic-based nationalism lies not so much in the content of ethnic-based claims as in the ability of the republics to utilize ethnic claims to organize collectively in the defense of their common interests.[51] There has been a growing consensus that the key determinants of separatism and center-regional conflict have less to do with regional

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[47] Lapidus, "Asymmetrical Federalism.," 75.
[48] Stephen E. Hanson, "Ideology, Interests, and Identity: Comparing the Soviet and Russian Secession Crises," in *Center-Periphery Conflict in Post-Soviet Russia: A Federation Imperiled*, ed. Mikhail A. Alexseev (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 29. Emphasis added.
[49] Cf.: Hughes, "Regionalism in Russia: The Rise and Fall of Siberian Agreement.", Jean-Charles Lallemand, "Politics for the Few: Elites in Bryansk and Smolensk," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 15, no. 4 (1999), Marie Mendras, "How Regional Elites Preserve Their Power," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 15, no. 4 (1999).
[50] Treisman, "Russia's "Ethnic Revival"" p.247.
[51] "Ethnic claims, therefore, have serves as a coordinating mechanism across different ethnic republics, distinguishing them from the Russian regions. Any proposal to eliminate the distinction between oblasts/krais and republics was recognized immediately by each of the republics as a direct threat to its own interests." Steven L. Solnick, "Federal Bargaining in Russia," *East European Constitutional Review* 4, no. 4 (1995): 57.

ethnocracies *per se*, and are more significantly related to "...the striking weakness of the Russian state, and the capricious and ad hoc quality of decision-making, that are largely responsible for the growing assertiveness of regional elites and that have encouraged the regions to act independently, and often in outright defiance, of central authority."[52] As with the literature covering the effects of socioeconomic and constitutional asymmetry, then, the focus of research on ethno-nationalism has drifted away from the regions toward the weakness of the center. In other words, regional identity and assertiveness are stylistically and analytically presented as mere functions of the state's weakness.

Insofar as regional identity is presumed to matter in confrontations with the center, strong regional identity presumably translates into rocky federal relations while weak regional identity is equated with federal domination. To a large extent, this perception emerges from the focus on the determinants of regional separatism, for which the notion of regional integration is as thin as the concept of regional identity: integration is merely the absence of disintegration. Such approaches thus miss the integrative or non-confrontational manifestations of regional identity. Yet regional identities may be strong even if a region is in a weak position vis-à-vis the center. Strong identities may in fact limit the repertoires of political action available to regional elites in their interactions with Moscow. If one correlates strength of regional identity with a region's status as a net "donor" to the federal budget or a "debtor" region, it is worth noting that the list of donor regions has varied on a yearly basis (See **Table 1.1**). Given the high rate of turnover in donor status, it would be difficult to maintain that regional identity ceases to play a significant role merely due to changes in a region's economic position relative to

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[52] Lapidus, "Asymmetrical Federalism.," 76-7.

Table 1.1: Donor Regions of the Russian Federation, 1993-2001*

1993 (35)		1994 (23)**	1995 (11)	1996 (14)	1997 (8)	1998 (13)	1999 (13)	2000 (18)	2001 (19)
Bashkortostan	**Rostov**	Bashkortostan	Bashkortostan	Bashkortostan	Bashkortostan	Bashkortostan	Bashkortostan	Bashkortostan	Bashkortostan
Kareliia	Riazan	**Komi**	Krasnoiarsk	Krasnoiarsk	Krasnoiarsk	*Komi*	Komi	Komi	Komi
Komi	Samara	**Sakha (Iakutiia)**	Lipetsk	***Primorsk***	Lipetsk	*Tatarstan*	Tatarstan	Tatarstan	Tatarstan
Sakha	Sverdlovsk	Krasnoiarsk	**Nizhegorod**	***Irkutsk***	Samara	Krasnoiarsk	Krasnoiarsk	Krasnoiarsk	Krasnoiarsk
(Iakutiia)	**Tver**	**Primorsk**	Samara	***Kamchatka***	Sverdlovsk	Lipetsk	Lipetsk	*Vologodsk*	*Belgorod*
Tatarstan	**Tomsk**	**Belgorod**	Sverdlovsk	Lipetsk	Moscow	*Moscow*	Moscow	Lipetsk	Vologodsk
Krasnoiarsk	**Tula**	**Vologodsk**	**Iaroslav**	***Moscow***	Khanty-	*Perm*	Perm	**Moscow**	Lipetsk
Primorsk	Cheliabinsk	**Irkutsk**	Moscow	***Murmansk***	Mansiisk	Samara	Samara	*Nizhegorod*	Nizhegorod
Arkhangelsk	Iaroslav	Lipetsk	**St. Petersburg**	***Perm***	Iamalo-	Sverdlovsk	Sverdlovsk	Perm	*Orenburg*
Belgorod	Moscow	**Moscow**	Khanty-	Samara	Nenets	Moscow	Moscow	Samara	Perm
Vladimir	St.	**Murmansk**	Mansiisk	Sverdlovsk		*St. Petersburg*	St. Petersburg	Sverdlovsk	Samara
Volgograd	Petersburg	Nizhegorod	Iamalo-Nenets	Moscow		Khanty-	Khanty-	*Tiumen*	Sverdlovsk
Vologodsk	Khanty-	**Perm**		Khanty-		Mansiisk	Mansiisk	***Cheliabinsk***	Tiumen
Ivanovsk	Mansiisk	**Riazan**		Mansiisk		Iamalo-	Iamalo-	*Iaroslav*	Iaroslav
Irkutsk	Iamalo-	Samara		Iamalo-		Nenets	Nenets	Moscow	Moscow
Kursk	Nenets	Sverdlovsk		Nenets				St. Petersburg	St. Petersburg
Leningrad		***Ul'ianovsk***						Khanty-	*Nenets*
Lipetsk		**Cheliabinsk**						Mansiisk	Khanty-
Moscow		Iaroslav						Iamalo-	Mansiisk
Murmansk		Moscow						Nenets	Iamalo-
Nizhgorodsk		St. Petersburg							Nenets
Orenburg		Khanty-Mansiisk							
Perm		Iamalo-Nenets							

* regions not receiving financial assistance from the *Federal'nyi fond finansovoi podderzhki sub"ektov RF* (http://www.budgetrf.ru/index.htm)
** data for quarters II-IV
Italics = Region which was not a donor in the previous year
Bold = Region which was not a donor in the following year

other regions or the federal center. Even if one accepts that economic development is the primary influence on the formation or regional elite preferences, this does not automatically explain the choice of strategies to pursue those interests.

Furthermore, Hughes argues that asymmetrical federalism was helpful in managing potential ethnic conflict in Russia, rather than exacerbating it.[53] More to the point, he suggests that the alternative of symmetrical federalism "would mean a concentrated Russian domination of minorities, a politics of exclusion, and potentially more, not less, political instability since it would most likely be accompanied by a strong control regime for the management of multi-ethnicity."[54] Additionally, there appear to be even greater disparities – politically and economically – within rather than between regions.[55] While the literature on Russia's asymmetrical federal system does not address these within-region differences, approaches focusing on regime transitions are better suited to the task.

Regime Transition & Democratization

A transition is the interval between one political regime and another. In the case of transitions from authoritarianism, this period typically begins with the launching of liberalization and ends with the installation of the new regime.[56] While a full review of the transitions and democratization literature here would go beyond the scope of

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[53] "The institutional engineering of a refederalization of Russia was critical to its non-collapse and, moreover, this refederalization was undoubtedly shaped by other institutional choices made as part of Russia's broader attempt at transition to democracy after 1991." Hughes, "Managing Secession Potential in the Russian Federation," 39.

[54] Ibid., 46.

[55] For instance, Berezkin *et al* discovered significant discontinuities within regions with regard to the distribution of voter preferences during the 1996 presidential elections. At issue was not mere proximity to urban areas, but specific proximity to the region's political center. Andrei V. Berezkin, Mikhail Myagkov, and Peter C. Ordeshook, "The Urban-Rural Divide in the Russian Electorate and the Effect of Distance from Urban Centers," *Post-Soviet Geography and Economics* 40, no. 6 (1999).

[56] The endpoint of the transition is not necessarily democracy. Transitions may also result in half-measures, hybrid regimes (*democradura* or *dictablanda*), or authoritarian regression. Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions About Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1986).

this chapter[57], it is worth noting that there seems to be broad agreement concerning the sources of the Soviet state's disintegration. Yet as Brown points out, there are problematic analytical consequences when "the systemic transformation...is conflated with the breakup of the Soviet Union."[58] In particular, controversy exists over the manner in which the USSR was dismantled and the implications for post-Soviet Russia's "derailed transition."[59] How does one explain the fragmentation of political space and proliferation of regional political regimes? Prior studies of failed attempts at democratization have dealt with reversions to authoritarianism in predominantly unitary states which did not approach the degree of political and territorial fragmentation one witnesses in Russia today.[60]

Part of the explanation surely lies with Rustow's argument regarding the necessity of national unity.[61] Democracy can be created without the demand of the masses, but it cannot be consolidated without them. Russia's transition has been an

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[57] There is an extensive literature on regime transitions and democratization. Representative works include: Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (London: Yale UP, 1971), Giuseppe Di Palma, *To Craft Democracies: An Essay on Democratic Traditions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), O'Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions About Uncertain Democracies*, Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America, Studies in Rationality and Social Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991), Dankwart Rustow, "Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model," *Comparative Politics* 2/3 (1970).

[58] Archie Brown, "Transformational Leaders Compared: Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin," in *Gorbachev, Yeltsin, & Putin: Political Leadership in Russia's Transition*, ed. Archie Brown and Lilia Shevtsova (Washington DC: Brookings Institution, 2001), 11-12. See also the symposium of articles on the dismantling of the Soviet Union and systemic transformation in: *Slavic Review* 63, no. 2 (2004), 459-554.

[59] Cynthia Roberts and Thomas Sherlock, "Bringing the Russian State Back In: Explanations of the Derailed Transition to Market Democracy," *Comparative Politics* 31, no. 4 (1999). See also the 1994-5 debate in *Slavic Review*: Valerie Bunce, "Paper Curtains and Paper Tigers," *Slavic Review* 54, no. 4 (1995), Valerie Bunce, "Should Transitologists Be Grounded?" *Slavic Review* 54, no. 1 (1995), Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl, "The Conceptual Travels of Transitologists and Condolidologists: How Far to the East Should They Attempt to Go?" *Slavic Review* 54, no. 1 (1994), Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl, "From an Iron Curtain to a Paper Curtain: Grounding Transitologists or Students of Postcommunism?" *Slavic Review* 54, no. 4 (1995).

[60] Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, eds., *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

[61] "...the vast majority of citizens in a democracy-to-be must have no doubt or mental reservations as to which political community they belong to." Rustow, "Transitions to Democracy."

elite-driven process from the start and remains so today – more than a decade into the post-Soviet era, political power remains concentrated in the hands of executive and business elites at both the federal and regional levels. National unity has become a function of unity among federal and regional elites. Political and territorial fragmentation is more likely when elite consensus is accepted as a surrogate for national consensus, particularly in multinational settings.

As Linz and Stepan emphasize, democratization in multinational settings requires inclusive standards of citizenship, equal rights and a common "roof" (in Russian, *krysha*).[62] While the first two of these criteria exist on paper in Russia, the absence of a government *krysha* clearly prevents them from becoming truly meaningful legal categories. Meanwhile, the "proper" sequencing of elections – regional elections only *after* crafting a federal arrangement – was not followed in Russia. Instead, a Federal Treaty was signed in 1992 by just half of Russia's regions, only to be truncated in El'tsin's 1993 constitution.[63] Meanwhile, elections proceeded apace in the federal republics.

On the whole, El'tsin may have missed a number of crucial opportunities to capitalize on the transitional regime's early legitimacy to force through broader institutional changes: to stand for election as leader of a democratic national party, to craft a binding federal arrangement, to build a consensus for market reforms and put the appropriate institutions in place to mitigate the political effects of marketization on support for democratization. It is sometimes too easy, however, to identify missed

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[62] Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, Ch.s 1-2.
[63] Graham Smith, "Federation, Defederation and Refederation: From the Soviet Union to Russian Statehood," in *Federalism: The Multiethnic Challenge*, ed. Graham Smith (New York: Longman, 1995), 170. Only twelve of the twenty-one republics voted in favor of the 1993 constitution. Particularly upsetting for the republics was the omission of the right to secede, which was included in the 1992 Federal Treaty.

opportunities in retrospect.[64] As much as successful transition depends on timely action and proactive leadership, it may also be confounded by significant structural problems. Among these, the problem of bringing the state's territorial borders in line with the boundaries of the political community figures prominently in Russia.[65] Despite the similarities between the transitions in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union with prior transitions in Latin America and Southern Europe, the issue of territory combined with economic transformation and regime transition makes for what has become known as the "triple transition."[66] As pointed out by Offe, the triple transition presents a particularly thorny paradox: producing a market economy requires some restraining of democratic rights, and only developed market economies provide the necessary social structural conditions necessary for stable democracy. At the same time, the introduction of the market is, itself, a political project which only succeeds if it has strong, explicit democratic legitimation. Given this problem of "mutual obstruction," the difficulty of cultivating the patience to accomplish simultaneous market and political transitions grows – in the absence of the appropriate mediating institutions, perceptions of exploitation are likely to arise from ensuing inequalities, potentially giving rise to demands to roll back the clock.[67]

Still, it must be said that Offe does not confront the territorial issue head on, for the most part holding to analysis of how simultaneous market and political transformations interact. After some twenty years of scholarship on regime

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[64] And even in light of these missed opportunities, they still do not provide a *prima facie* explanation for the proliferation and diversity of regional political regimes in Russia.

[65] "When there are profound differences about the territorial boundaries of the political community's state and profound differences as to who has the right of citizenship in that state, there is what we call a 'stateness' problem." Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, 16.

[66] Claus Offe, "Capitalism by Democratic Design? Democratic Theory Facing the Triple Transitions in East Central Europe," in *Varieties of Transition*, ed. Claus Offe (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), 35.

[67] Ibid., 41-4. Hellman has provided compelling reason to doubt this scenario, however, illustrating how the early "winners" in marketization attempt to stave-off further reform in order to consolidate their gains, thus forming a "partial reform equilibrium." Joel S. Hellman, "Winners Take All: The Politics of Partial Reform in Postcommunist Transitions," *World Politics* 50, no. 2 (1998).

transitions and democratization, however, it seems safe to say that the prior regime type affects the trajectory of any transition[68] as much as its institutional structure – particularly, whether the state is structured along unitary, federal or ethnofederal lines. With specific regard to the Soviet experience, the state's formally federal structure provided the organizational basis for ethnic cadres to expand and protect resources under their control, to blunt the redistributive consequences of all-Union policies, and to ensconce claims for autonomy in their region's federal status.[69] As Union republican national organizations sought a re-ordering of power relations with the center,

> ...democratization generally lent itself to the further demarcation of boundaries between political subsystems and diminished both the incentive and the capacity to build bridges across those boundaries. ...The result was to decouple elite recruitment from central control and to lend institutional legitimacy and the claim of an electoral mandate to republican elites committed to changing the ethnonational bargain.[70]

The territorial issue thus played a significant role, not merely in determining the mode of the USSR's (and Russia's) transition, but also in terms of Russia's spectacularly troublesome form of asymmetrical federalism as emerging from the institutional legacies of Soviet ethnofederalism. As Laitin observes, the inevitable consequence in such circumstances was declining state capacity.[71]

In general, then, the chief problem in the Russian transition associated with its asymmetric federal structure and the chief source of weak state capacity was the

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[68] Barbara Geddes, "What Do We Know About Democratization after Twenty Years?" *Annual Review of Political Science* 2 (1999). Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, Ch. 4.

[69] Roeder, "Soviet Federalism and Ethnic Mobilization," 220.

[70] Leff, "Democratization and Disintegration in Multinational States: The Breakup of the Communist Federations," 218-19.

[71] "While a state may be able to handle administratively the separation of a region, a succession of such administrative procedures, coming from a ramifying set of smaller and smaller regions, will without doubt consume the administrative capacity of central elites. (Anyone who has observed Nigeria moving from three regions to twelve states in 1967, to thirty-one states in 1991, will have a good idea of the process.)" David Laitin, "Transitions to Democracy and Territorial Integrity," in *Sustainable Democracy*, ed. Adam Przeworski (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995), 26.

instability in the definition of the polity and its impacts on center-regional relations. In the early 1990s, many regions claimed sovereignty and attempted to unilaterally upgrade their status, continuing the "parade of sovereignties" within Russia's borders (see **Table 1.2**). Regional elites continued through the decade to capitalize on anti-center sentiment and real central neglect to increase regional autonomy. The "capture" of federal actors in the regions was relatively easy given resource scarcities and the center's reluctance to support its agencies (especially worrisome with regard to the regionalization of armed forces, border guards, and tax police). In the absence of domestic investment, regions were forced to look abroad for investment partners. Those with a more developed economic base were better suited for the task and moved ahead, while other regions lost out in competition and fell further behind. In the absence of national unity and consensus on transitional goals, the citizens of "winner" regions attributed performance legitimacy to their regional administrations ("in spite of" legitimacy). By contrast, "losers" became increasingly dependent upon central subsidies, but the center's diminishing capacity left it constrained in its ability to impose conditionality on the extension of subsidies. This meant that regional elites had little incentive either to democratize or to continue with a painful economic transformation. Citizens often felt cut off from the center and deprived of their rights (when they are aware of their existence), encouraging sentiment in favor of rolling back the clock as a less-worse alternative to the status quo. Meanwhile, the "winners" were transformed into net "donors" to the federal budget, effectively subsidizing less successful regions. The resentment among donors towards "debtor" (*dotatsionnye*) regions further undermined interregional and national cohesion. Similarly, institutional legacies affected the distribution of skilled labor and management expertise, education, media outlets, and so forth. The disparities in development

among regions only increased over time as transition dragged on through the 1990s.

Table 1.2: Declarations of Sovereignty, 1988-1991

1988		1989		1990				1991	
Estonia	Nov 16	Lithuania	May 18	RSFSR	Jun 12	**Buriatiia**	Oct 8	**Kabardino-Balkariia**	Jan 31
		Latvia	Jul 29	Uzbekistan	Jun 20	**Koriak**	Oct 9		
		Azerbaijan	Sep 23	Moldova	Jun 23	**Komi-Permiak**	Oct 11	**Dagestan**	May 15
		Georgia	Oct 12	Ukraine	Jul 16	**Baskhkortostan**	Oct 11	**Adygeia**	Jul 2
		Belarus	Dec 7	**N Ossetiia**	Jul 20	**Kalmykiia**	Oct 18		
				Kareliia	Aug 9	**Iamal-Nenets**	Oct 18		
				Khakassiia	Aug 15	**Marii-El**	Oct 22		
				Turkmenistan	Aug 22	**Chuvashiia**	Oct 24		
				Armenia	Aug 23	**Gorno-Altai**	Oct 25		
				Abkhaziia	Aug 25	Kazakhstan	Oct 26		
				Tadzhikistan	Aug 25	Kirghizstan	Oct 28		
				Komi	Aug 29	**Tuva**	Nov 1		
				Tartarstan	Aug 30	**Karachai-Cherkessiia**	Nov 17		
				Udmurtiia	Sep 20				
				S Ossetiia	Sep 20	**Checheno-Ingushetiia**	Nov 27		
				Iakutiia	Sep 27				
				Chukotka	Sep 29	**Mordova**	Dec 8		

Note: **Bold-face type** indicates regions located within Russia.
Source: Kahn, Jeff. "The Parade of Sovereignties: Establishing the Vocabulary of the New Russian Federalism." *Post-Soviet Affairs* 16, no. 1 (2000): 58-89.

The regime transitions approach thus provides a reasonable understanding of how Russia's political space fragmented along regional lines, so much so that

> ...it seems useful in the analysis of regional political regimes in Russia to treat regional entities as if they were nation-states. Within this framework, federal authorities (as well as other actors outside a particular region) may be regarded as "external" actors. That is, one may consider their impact on regional politics as if one were analyzing the impact of international influence on national politics.[72]

Taking a regional perspective on Russia's transition provides a useful corrective to treating Russia as a uniform political space where all authority resides in Moscow. In some regions, weak institutions and the concentration of political power in a single leader closely approximated the model of "delegative democracy."[73] Others veered closer to a "democratic situation" where no single actor dominates the others, working

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[72] Vladimir Gel'man, "Regime Transition, Uncertainty and Prospects for Democratisation: The Politics of Russia's Regions in a Comparative Perspective," *Europe-Asia Studies* 51, no. 6 (1999): 942.
[73] Guillermo O'Donnell, "Delegative Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 5, no. 1 (1994), Andrei Tsygankov, "Manifestations of Delegative Democracy in Russian Local Politics: What Does It Mean for the Future of Russia?" *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 31, no. 4 (1998).

through formal institutions and utilizing compromise strategies.[74]

Still, there are a few troubling aspects to the regime transitions approach. Among them, Linz and Stepan's argument about the sequencing of regional and federation-wide elections may hold for the Union republics of the USSR, but it is more ambiguous regarding the regions of post-Soviet Russia. Their argument is that federal elections should take place prior to regional elections in order to build up national coalitions and stimulate party formation. Otherwise, holding regional elections first threatens to fragment federal politics by focusing political mobilization on local interests.[75]

In essence this is what appears to have occurred on the level of Russia's autonomous republics, where elections were held earliest. They were spurred in this direction by El'tsin's now (in)famous statement in Kazan' that the republics should "take as much sovereignty as they can swallow."[76] That El'tsin exploited the "parade of sovereignties" in his struggle with Gorbachev, however, is significant. Republican elections took place simultaneously with, and contributed to, the dismantling of the Soviet Union and sovereignization of Russia's borders. Moreover, they contributed to the fragmentation of political space in post-Soviet Russia, which was already crippled by the weak capacity of state institutions.[77] The resulting condition of "dual power" (which was experienced on the regional level as a condition of "no power") allowed republican elites to consolidate power within their respective territories largely without central intervention. Yet the goal of the emerging republican regimes could

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[74] V. Gel'man, S. Ryzhenkov, and M. Brie, eds., *Rossiia Regionov: Transformatsiia Politicheskikh Rezhimov* (Moskva: Ves' Mir, 2000), 52-5.

[75] Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, 34. Linz & Stepan rule out the 1989 all-Union elections to the Congress of People's Deputies because they were not multi-party (while one-third of the seats were reserved for the CPSU and affiliated organizations), did not produce a new government, and never produced a new constitution. Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, 379-82.

[76] *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 27 March 1992.

[77] Soviet central institutions effectively doubled for republican institutions in the RSFSR, meaning that Russia lacked the 'proto-state' institutions of the other fourteen union republics.

not be categorized as seeking "liberation" or "independence"; rather, republican elites angled for more favorable terms of "integration" in the Russian Federation, culminating in the Federal Treaty of 1992.[78]

If the "improper" sequencing of federal and republican elections is helpful in understanding the extent of variation in *republican* regime types, it is not so illuminating when considering the situation in the *oblasts* and *krais*. In addition to the Federal Treaty signed with the republics, separate treaties were signed in 1992 with the oblasts and krais, and with the autonomous okrugs. In contrast with the newly-elected republican regimes, the bulk of the oblast and krai executives were appointed directly by El'tsin and elections for regional governorships were not held until 1995.[79] The dismantling of local soviets and subsequent introduction of regional legislative elections in 1993 were expected to allow El'tsin's appointed governors to consolidate power and ensure that anti-reform forces would not gain control of the regions. For most of Russia, the 1993 elections to the State Duma ought to have facilitated this process by accomplishing multiparty elections to a federal body two years prior to the larger round of regional elections. Yet one also finds significant variation in regime type among the oblasts and krais, signaling that weak state capacity and electoral sequencing do not uniquely explain varying regime outcomes, neither for the republics, nor for the oblasts and krais.[80]

Rather, these conditions transformed El'tsin's encouragement of republican elites (and appointment of other regional executives) from an institutional bargain into

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[78] This typology of claims is borrowed from: Bremmer, "Post-Soviet Nationalities Theory," 12-18.
[79] An excellent account of this process is found in: Vera Tolz and Irina Busygina, "Regional Governors and the Kremlin: The Ongoing Battle for Power," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 30, no. 4 (1998).
[80] Prior to the 1993 elections, Hahn suggests an interesting counter-factual hypothesis that "nation-wide elections for governors might have produced greater regional support for the parliament in its struggle with the president." Jeffrey W. Hahn, "Democratization and Political Participation in Russia's Regions," in *Democratic Changes and Authoritarian Reactions in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova*, ed. Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997), 166 (fn 22).

an invitation for personal loyalty while subnational elites put their respective houses in order. This points to a far more active regional politics during the transition than is commonly assumed. If the state's weakness made it possible for different regime types to take root in regional soil, it does little to explain why some regional regimes blossomed while others grew weeds. The explanation likely has as much to do with the assertiveness and opportunity structures for regional elites as with the structure of regional politics. Indeed, much of the scholarly literature on regional politics in the 1990s shed light on this dimension through detailed case studies of individual regions. At the same time, idiographic studies suffer from treating regions in isolation from one another, and even in isolation from the federal center.[81] To some extent this is understandable, given that many regions are only distantly aware of decisions made in Moscow or even in their immediate neighboring regions. While one can arrive at an understanding of how regional politics have replaced "high politics," it is important to bear in mind that this analytic leap is only possible by extending analysis of institutional legacies of Soviet rule to include the territorialization of power in Russia's federal subjects. Moreover, this move leaves one with few tools to analyze how the regions attempt to exploit the territorial organization of power for their own interests, or to conceptualize the processes that might encourage (re-)integration of the regions into a uniform political space.

For instance, one prominent method for explaining variations in regional regime performance examines the role of civic community in promoting democratization. The civic community is characterized by high levels of civic engagement, political equality, societal trust and tolerance, and dense networks of

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[81] An important exception to this trend is: Gel'man, Ryzhenkov, and Brie, eds., *Rossiia Regionov*.

civic association.[82] If one views institutional performance as a form of solving collective action problems through the provision of public goods, the presence of civic communities fosters "features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions."[83] In this sense, the civic community is a key source of social capital: "social organization constitutes social capital, facilitating the achievement of goals that could not be achieved in its absence or could be achieved only at a higher cost."[84] Social capital translates into better institutional performance through the fostering of norms of reciprocity and networks of civic engagement that undergird social trust.

In Putnam's study of regional administrative reform in Italy, differences in the quality of institutional performance between northern and southern Italian regions are explained by way of traditions of civic involvement – greater in the north while lacking in the south.[85] Putnam's evaluation of regional institutional performance is based on a model of governance in which government is responsive to societal demands and effective in implementing policy choices using limited resources. There is, to be sure, a normative (liberal) content to this notion of institutional performance, as the modes of explaining institutional performance (institutional design, socioeconomic factors, sociocultural factors) tested by Putnam's study bear no *a priori* relationship to democratic governance.[86]

Whether the content of institutional performance correlates with good governance or regime type is another matter, and it is a key concern emerging from Stoner-Weiss's examination of "local heroes" – regional governments which proved

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[82] Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1993), 87-9.
[83] Ibid., 167.
[84] James S. Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1990), 304.
[85] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, Ch. 5.
[86] One might argue that the connection was drawn by the location of the study: the internal boundaries of Italy were presumed democratic, varying only in degrees and not in regime types.

to be higher performers than others during Russia's First Republic (1990-1993). Following Putnam, Stoner-Weiss sheds light on the reasons for the significant variation in the performance of regional government institutions.[87] She argues that the extent of regional economic concentration – itself an institutional legacy of the Soviet era – was related to the predisposition of regional political and economic elite interests towards cooperative arrangements. These arrangements ensured that economic concerns were included in the policy process and guaranteed a regional policy consensus. In turn, this meant that business elites helped promote the efficacy of regional political institutions and their legitimacy within civil society. While the short-term result proved to be more efficient and responsive institutions, the scope of responsiveness was largely limited to an elite constituency. Consequently, Stoner-Weiss warns that these hand-in-glove arrangements between political and economic elites on the regional level could stifle policy responsiveness to emerging regional interests over the long term.

While Stoner-Weiss's work is impressive and thorough, there are also significant reasons to be skeptical of its conclusions. As with Putnam's study, the normative implications of her research flow not so much from what is measured and observed as from what is presumed in the case selection and operationalization of key variables. In spite of her contention that "context matters," Stoner-Weiss argues that,

> ...whereas in Putnam's Italy, social context mattered most in accounting for variations in regional government performance, in post-Soviet Russia, where there was virtually no civil society nor a tradition of civicness and where a simultaneous change in economic institutions was (and is still) under way, social context did not yet appear to matter much.[88]

Such a restrictive conceptualization of social context is potentially self-defeating when context is reduced to a common set of paper powers owned by oblasts and the

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[87] Stoner-Weiss, *Local Heroes*.
[88] Ibid., 23.

sectoral concentration of regional economies.[89] Moreover, her case selection is justified on the grounds that one can hold institutional design and nationality factors constant by focusing exclusively on the oblasts to the exclusion of the national republics, autonomous okrugs, krais, and federal cities. The presumption behind this case selection is that there was little variation in the oblasts' political resources and capabilities at the time of the USSR's demise. It also assumes that regional elites were relatively insulated from their neighbors.

Additionally, there is a significant danger in assuming that an ethnic Russian majority in any region renders nationality politics unproblematic. Arguably, the key nationality problem in Russia is not so much the consolidation of minority ethnic identities as it is the fragmentation of *russkii* national identity. By ruling out the need to consider issues of identity politics, Stoner-Weiss's "local heroes" become little more than economic actors and administrators who happen to occupy Russian space. In other words, her methodological framework effectively decontextualizes Russian politics, rather than isolating and observing the influence of social context on institutional performance.[90]

In order to overcome the concerns raised by this approach, one needs to take literally Stoner-Weiss's metaphorical observation that, "the performance of new political institutions depends on the ground in which these institutions are planted."[91] Whether a social capital approach is able to do this, however, is still a matter of doubt. Marsh's application of Putnam's framework to Russian regions finds a statistical correlation between social capital resources and the degree of democratization across

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[89] This perhaps explains why Stoner-Weiss modified Putnam's model of governance to focus on the interactions of regional business and political elites in overcoming collective action dilemmas.
[90] At the same time, Stoner-Weiss is right to focus on elite arrangements. While her calculation of institutional performance is drawn from notions of popular legitimacy, the analysis suggests the greater salience of elite legitimacy. Of course, this form of legitimacy also requires contextualization, though it is a matter that I will return to in greater detail below.
[91] Stoner-Weiss, *Local Heroes*, 3.

regions,[92] while Petro's analysis of Novgorod oblast provides a qualitative account of how regional administrations can foster social capital through active social engagement, the institutionalization of economic and political reforms, and the framing of reforms in terms of shared regional histories and cultural traditions.[93] Yet two problems remain: first, statistical correlations of this sort are too sensitive to methods of variable selection. Marsh's study, for example, utilizes just two indicators to establish an index of democratization of Russian regions based on a polity's level of electoral competition and participation.[94] Second, it is unclear how social capital can be cultivated (or lost) across regional boundaries and in relations with the federal center. In taking Russian regions as one's unit of analysis, there is a risk of treating them in isolation from one another and then amalgamating the results to come to a general view of social capital across Russia.

Summing up: Territory, Institutions, Identity

Several points emerge from the above review. First, it is clear that the issue of territory is a persistent and common concern among all approaches. In general this appears unremarkable, given that control over a defined territory is an elemental feature of state sovereignty. In the post-Soviet case, however, the issue becomes more significant as a legacy of the Soviet era that shapes (and frustrates) the cultivation of state capacity and the organization of power in the Russian Federation.

Second, agency and historical contingency "matter." Without some reference to strategic choices made by central and regional elites, it would seem difficult to

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[92] Christopher Marsh, "Social Capital and Democracy in Russia," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 33, no. 2 (2000).
[93] Nicolai Petro, "The Novgorod Region: A Russian Success Story," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 15, no. 3 (1999). See also: Petro, Nicolai N. *Crafting Democracy: How Novgorod has Coped with Rapid Social Change*. Ithaca: Cornell U.P., 2004.
[94] Marsh, "Social Capital and Democracy in Russia." This is not an insuperable obstacle, however, as the results of statistical analysis could be confirmed by controlling for alternative possible explanations like relative degrees of socio-economic development among regions.

account for the sheer variety of regional political regimes and diversity of elite strategies relying on structural characteristics, alone. Yet the approaches above are often weak at specifying regional actors' preferences as deriving from anything other than socioeconomic structure.

Third, the predominantly institutional focus of the approaches calls attention to the importance of those institutions linking actors within and between territorial levels of governance, underlining the processes of territorial integration of the state and the negotiated status of its internal and external borders. The relative status of territorial and administrative borders relates both to the conditions of the dismantling of the Soviet state and the trajectory of center-regional relations in post-Soviet Russia. Borders are claimed by a variety of institutions linking actors from different political arenas. Insofar as borders constitute political resources, define the polity, demarcate jurisdictions and establish normative proximity, they are also related to the kinds of political regimes and elite strategies that inhabit them.

Most scholars recognize that territory forms an essential component of regional identity, though few in political science are willing to confront the means by which territory comes to form that component on either an empirical or theoretical basis: it seems that borders are in the blood, for they certainly are not in the books. The few studies that do exist on the topic suggest that borders serve a number of functional and cultural interests. Most significantly, they specify who are potential participants and objects of the political game.

From a theoretical and multi-disciplinary perspective, borders clearly demonstrate characteristics that, when taken together, deserve to be classified as

institutions.[95] This study argues that examining Russia's internal borders as institutions helps to overcome the blind spots in the analysis of center-regional relations and regional integrative processes in the literature on Russian federalism and regime transition. The difficulty lies in the shared liberal assumptions that undergird both bodies of literature while diverting attention away from the institutional characteristics and processes of regional borders. Centering analysis on borders *qua* institutions is thus a necessary first step in understanding the theoretical ramifications of the maintenance and contestation of borders for federalism and democratization. But doing so requires a different analytic framework, for which the "new institutionalism" is appropriate.[96]

Borders and the New Institutionalism

The "new institutionalism" arose in response to the tendency of behavioral methods and rational choice theories to marginalize the role, autonomy, and influence of political institutions in analysis. As one might expect, the charge to "bring institutions back in" was led in the name of the state, but has since branched into broader linkages between the state and the polity.[97]

The new institutionalism emphasizes institutional relations (formal and conventional) that bind the components of the state together, structure its relations

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[95] Institutions here are understood as formal or informal procedures, routines, norms, and conventions embedded in the organizational structure of the polity. Peter Hall and Rosemary C. R. Taylor, "Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms," *Political Studies* 44 (1996): 938.

[96] Though are several varieties of the new institutionalism in political science, economics, and sociology, the common themes in this literature mark it as a distinctive approach: the focus on formal and informal structures, the stability of institutions over time, the affect of institutions on individual behavior, and the attention to shared values and meanings. B. Guy Peters, *Institutional Theory in Political Science: The 'New Institutionalism'* (New York: Pinter, 1999), 18-19.

[97] Joel S. Migdal, "Studying the State," in *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*, ed. Mark Irving Lichbach and Alan S. Zuckerman (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997), J.P. Nettl, "The State as a Conceptual Variable," *World Politics* 20, no. 4 (1968), Theda Skocpol, "Bringing the State Back In," in *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueshemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985).

with society, and provide the context for the conduct of politics.[98] From the perspective of historical institutionalism, institutions may be analyzed as independent variables in terms of how institutional change affects actors' identity, power and strategies. Taking institutions as dependent variables reflects "how institutional performance is conditioned by history."[99] The key variables in new institutionalist analysis are the institutional distribution of power and the formation of political strategies.[100] With regard to the latter, individuals are not autonomous actors but are embedded in institutional milieux, selecting among institutional influences and interpreting the meaning of their commitments. Decision-makers' preferences are not exogenously given, nor must one assume their stability over time. The extent to which borders relate to these variables is suggested by Lustick: "The territorial shape of the state thus helps determine what interests are legitimate, what resources are mobilizable, what questions are open for debate, what ideological formulas will be relevant, what cleavages could become significant, and what political allies might be available."[101]

With regard to the distribution of power, institutions act as "ligatures fastening sites, relationships, and large-scale processes to each other."[102] The new institutionalism assigns a central role to norms and values within organizations in explaining political behavior and how institutions "affect the flow of history."[103] Borders occupy a central place in this regard as "spatial and temporal records of

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[98] Peter Hall, *Governing the Economy: The Politics of State Intervention in Britain and France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 18.
[99] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, 8.
[100] Thomas A. Koelble, "The New Institutionalism in Political Science and Sociology," *Comparative Politics* 27, no. 2 (1995): 236.
[101] Ian S. Lustick, *Unsettled States, Disputed Lands: Britain and Ireland, France and Algeria, Israel and the West Bank-Gaza* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993), 41.
[102] Ira Katznelson, "Structure and Configuration in Comparative Politics," in *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*, ed. Mark Irving Lichbach and Alan S. Zuckerman (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997), 103.
[103] James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, *Rediscovering Institutions: The Organizational Basis of Politics* (New York: The Free Press, 1989), 18.

relationships between communities and between states."[104]

In approaching the institutional roots of territorial identity, one is concerned with how they feature in discourse as loci of legitimation and "logics of appropriateness." They define a community's normative obligations, shaping and constraining political behavior such that changes in political space make specific types of political action not only conceivable, but compelling.[105] In examining post-colonial states, for example, Lustick points out that "stable borders are reflections of presumptive beliefs which remove potentially intractable questions of the composition of the political community from the political arena."[106]

Borders and Institutional Change

By their nature, institutions are resistant to change and exhibit strong path dependent effects. Institutional change thus tends to be long-term and incremental. In general, institutional change may come about via three avenues: first, broad changes in the socioeconomic or political context can cause previously latent institutions to become salient with implications for political outcomes, as when old institutions are pressed into service for different ends as new actors pursue (new) goals. Old ("indigenous") institutions may be revived and pressed to new ends, particularly where they can claim an organic or historical link to the territory in question. Duchacek documents the case of the *départements*, or prefectures, introduced by Napoleon to break down territorial loyalties and provincial patriotism. By the time of de Gaulle, the *départements* were no longer practical under conditions of national economic planning and rapid transportation. President de Gaulle attempted to group the 95

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[104] Thomas M. Wilson and Hastings Donnan, "Nation, State and Identity at International Borders," in *Border Identities: Nation and State at International Frontiers*, ed. Thomas M. Wilson and Hastings Donnan (Cambidge: Cambridge UP, 1998), 5.
[105] Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*, 23-5.
[106] Lustick, *Unsettled States, Disputed Lands*, 38-9.

départements into 21 *régions*, yet

> ...the *départements* that had been artificial under Napoleon had over the past 150 years become units reflecting not only the geographic limits of local administration but also corresponding economic activities, transportation networks, and a modest degree of vested interests. The new administrative regions...[were] criticized mostly on the grounds that they destroy what has become natural (although this was originally artificial).[107]

In this sense, the constellation of social and political factors related to the drawing or activation of borders affects the form and content of political organization. In seeking to understand social change and cultural transformation as situated within inter-connected spaces, anthropological approaches to borders uncover the exercise and distribution of power at the state's margins.[108] The challenge for political science is to contend with political transformations that take place in the state's interstices.

Second, exogenous changes may generally produce a shift in actors' goals and strategies pursued within institutions. The changes wrought by nation- and market-building in political organization at the local level can challenge or confirm the same processes at a larger (state-wide) level. In this fashion, cultural boundaries often demonstrate their durability in outlasting the shifting borders of state and empire. For those who study borders within anthropology, there has indeed been an increasing awareness of the historical continuities generated by borders.[109] The impact of such continuities may be to reinforce separate identities. Berdahl's study of communities along the former border between East and West Germany provides a compelling case in demonstrating the persistence of an East German identity sustained by the very

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[107] Duchacek, *Comparative Federalism*, 30.

[108] Malkki's (1992) genealogy of the conceptual mapping of refugee camps is instructive in highlighting the implicit exercise of power involved in assuming an organic link between culture and territory: "The territorialization expressed in the conceptual, visual device of the map is also (and perhaps especially) evident on the level of ordinary language. The term 'the nation' is commonly referred to...by such metaphoric synonyms as 'the country,' 'the land,' and 'the soil.'" Liisa Malkki, "National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity among Scholars and Refugees," *Cultural Anthropology* 7, no. 1 (1992): 26.

[109] "The specific permanence and longevity of border peoples in forming lasting social bonds and in political economic struggle is crucial." Robert R. Jr. Alvarez, "The Mexican-US Border: The Making of an Anthropology of Borderlands," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (1995): 462.

dynamics of political and market transformation that coincided with German reunification.[110] Borders may also serve integrative purposes. Donnan and Wilson point out that borders draw attention to local divisions, but that they also domesticate them via the exigencies of daily life. Local conflicts over ethnicity have the potential to escalate into a question of nationality, but this potential may be held in check by cross-cutting linkages (i.e., of common kinship, residence, economic interest) which make "open and continuous breach" unsustainable.[111]

Third, institutional change may obtain when political actors adjust their strategies to accommodate changes in institutions, themselves (i.e., at moments of dramatic change, or as a result of ongoing struggles within the institution).[112] In examining the process by which the border between France and Spain was established, Sahlins finds that the nation "appeared on the periphery before it was built by the center."[113] Territorial disputes accelerated through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, advancing simultaneously with state-building processes:

> As each state defined, through its land surveys, the precise territorial boundaries of the communities, the village communities themselves sought to defend their maximum territorial dimensions. The more visible and intrusive the state, the more likely the community was to identify and defend its own boundaries against neighboring communities.[114]

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[110] Daphne Berdahl, *Where the World Ended: Re-Unification and Identity in the German Borderland* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

[111] Hastings Donnan and Thomas M. Wilson, *Borders: Frontiers of Identity, Nation and State* (New York: Berg, 1999), Ch. 2. This perspective owes much to the seminal work of Barth (1969), who asked why the boundaries between ethnic groups tend to persist despite the movement of people through and across them. His answer lay in the examination of ethnic groups as organizational types mediated by "a systematic set of rules governing inter-ethnic social encounters. ...Stable inter-ethnic relations presuppose such a structuring of interaction: a set of prescriptions governing situations of contact...and a set of proscriptions on social situations preventing inter-ethnic interaction in other sectors, and thus insulating parts of the culture from confrontation and modification." Frederik Barth, ed., *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1969), 16.

[112] Kathleen Thelen and Sven Steinmo, "Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics," in *Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Analysis*, ed. Sven Steinmo, Kathleen Thelen, and Frank Longsreth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 16-17.

[113] Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

[114] Peter Sahlins, "State Formation and National Identity in the Catalan Borderlands During the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," in *Border Identities: Nation and State at International Frontiers*, ed. Thomas M. Wilson and Hastings Donnan (Cambidge: Cambridge UP, 1998), 42.

It is perhaps in this vein that one should understand Malcolm Anderson's observation that, "The more closed the frontier, the stronger has been its impact as a practical and symbolic threshold, the stronger rulers' belief that strict control of the frontier was essential to the maintenance of their power."[115]

While it is sometimes argued that a theory of institutional change needs to stipulate some cognitive mechanism by which organizations are capable of learning[116], work in sociological institutionalism reveals that institutional change may take place via different paths of coercion, mimesis, or professionalization.[117] In such cases, powerful structural forces compel organizations within a common field to become more similar (or isomorphic) to such an extent that the symbolic importance of organizational structure may ultimately displace organizational performance as the source of legitimacy and locus for change.[118]

Other mechanisms of institutional (re-)production include: the tendency of systems of control to expand their jurisdiction; complex interdependencies of organizational practices and structures; and taken-for-granted assumptions which preclude their scrutiny. Rather than resulting necessarily in "lock in," these mechanisms generate tensions and contradictions that, in turn, become sources for institutional dynamism. Institutional change emerges as innovation from the periphery, where incentives for conformity are weakly embedded in broader institutional arrangements. "Multiplier organizations" change the rates at which other

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[115] Malcolm Anderson, *Frontiers: Territory and State Formation in the Modern World* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 5.

[116] As a result, Peters (1999) argues that mechanisms of institutional change fundamentally involve the question of how to change ideas – for instance, how policy learning leads to the reframing of policy issues and the reframing of associate institutions. Peters, *Institutional Theory in Political Science*, 68-70.

[117] Paul J. DiMaggio and Walter W. Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields," *American Sociological Review* 48, no. 2 (1983): 150-2.

[118] John W. Meyer and Brian Rowan, "Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony," *American Journal of Sociology* 83, no. 2 (1977).

organizations are founded (or dismantled). Unsuccessful imitation occurs when organizational routines are transplanted across sociopolitical contexts, leading to partial diffusion or hybrid arrangements. Lastly, as organizations borrow from dissimilar sources, novel recombinations of familiar structures and practices may result.[119]

Mann's analysis of state power draws attention to the structural forces of institutional reproduction that link state-building processes with territory. He argues that the source of the state's autonomy lies in its territorial reach and shape:

> ...the power of the state is irreducible in quite a different sociospatial and organizational sense. Only the state is inherently centralized over a delimited territory over which it has authoritative power. Unlike economic, ideological or military groups in civil society, the state elite's resources radiate authoritatively outwards from a center but stop at defined territorial boundaries.[120]

As the state acquires infrastructural supports, it is increasingly able to regulate social and territorial relations. Mann predicts that this role increases in proportion with the state's infrastructural powers: the greater they become, "the greater the territorializing of social life."[121]

In modeling West European center-periphery relations, Rokkan and Urwin contest radial depictions of the state's authority, such as the one suggested by Mann above. Instead, they describe state-building as a set of reciprocal relationships between processes of centralization and efforts at boundary accentuation. These processes occur simultaneously in the construction of military, administrative, economic, and cultural systems, and the differences in the rates of system-building explain tensions between political, cultural, and territorial boundaries. Despite the

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[119] Walter W. Powell, "Expanding the Scope of Institutional Analysis," in *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*, ed. Walter W. Powell and Paul J. DiMaggio (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 197-9.
[120] Michael Mann, *States, War and Capitalism: Studies in Political Sociology* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 16.
[121] Ibid., 26.

consolidation of modern European states and the relative freezing of their frontiers, these basic tensions continue to generate territorial claims and contestation. In part this is also due to the periphery's awareness that,

> spatial distinctiveness is counteracted by the lack or weakness of established procedures for the defense and control of the boundaries separating them from the outside world. The degree to which the political, economic and cultural boundaries can be penetrated has important consequences for the internal structuring of the peripheral populations.[122]

In their estimation, then, the political salience of territorial borders is likely to be uneven across territorial divisions, especially across the state's internal borders. The reproduction of power relations in the form of internal borders, particularly when borders remain static through periods of regime change, is not just a subject for historical investigation.[123] As Chandler points out, "the question of boundary formation *within* the USSR is...integrally related both to the emergence of nationalism in the late Soviet period and to the renegotiation of federalism today within the Russian Federation."[124]

Borders, Institutions, and Behavior

In evaluating the effects of institutions on individual and group behavior, two broad approaches emerge from the literature. Rationalist approaches focus on instrumental behavior based on strategic calculation of actors' interests and resources. Yet institutions alter goals and expectations about other actors' behavior such that they affect one's choice of action. Self-interested behavior from this perspective is

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[122] Stein Rokkan and Derek W. Urwin, *Economy, Territory, Identity: Politics of West European Peripheries* (London: Sage Publications, 1983), 4.
[123] "Territorial boundaries may vary even though the formal lines on maps remain unchanged; the meaning attached to those boundaries in the image of the state may be challenged in a variety of ways." Joel S. Migdal, *State in Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001), 26.
[124] Andrea Chandler, *Institutions of Isolation: Border Controls in the Soviet Union and Its Successor States, 1917-1993* (London: McGill-Queen's UP, 1998), 12.

meaningless without institutional context.[125] Institutions are "sticky" in part because deviations from established routines and practices make individuals or organizations worse off.[126] One consequence for political behavior is that actors commonly "satisfice": given limited time, material resources, and organizational capacity, they choose the first acceptable option rather than balancing all policy alternatives and objectively choosing the best option. As policy solutions become institutionalized, moreover, they acquire constituencies (and patrons) which seek to expand their range of applications: the solutions seek out new problems, rather than the reverse.

Sociological approaches emphasize the extent to which individuals rely on established routines and patterns of behavior. Because actors must be able to interpret a situation before making instrumental calculations, institutions provide cognitive shortcuts in the form of moral and rational templates for legitimate action. It is in this sense that March and Olsen argue that institutions constitute "logics of appropriateness" (vs. the more technical decision-making involved in "logics of consequentiality").[127] When organizational structures and practices are highly institutionalized or embedded, they are more easily transmitted and reproduced without direct social control or personal intervention. Indeed, the sanction for deviating from institutionalized practices can be "a redefinition of the actor rather than the act."[128] In other words, not just interests but identities are constituted by institutional environments.

Both sets of accounts find purchase in the problem of the transformation of colonial administrative borders into state borders during decolonization. Borders

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[125] Thelen and Steinmo, "Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics," 7-8.
[126] Hall and Taylor, "Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms," 939-40.
[127] March and Olsen, *Rediscovering Institutions*.
[128] Lynne G. Zucker, "The Role of Institutionalization in Cultural Persistence," in *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*, ed. Walter W. Powell and Paul J. DiMaggio (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 88.

usually are treated as accidents of history and geography which conspired together with politics to form today's international system of states. The process of decolonization called this image into question, however, where inherited colonial borders quickly became one of the most enduring and conflict-laden legacies of imperial rule. Significantly, the legal doctrine that emerged to regulate changes to the status of internal borders, *uti possidetis*, holds that "states emerging from decolonization shall presumptively inherit the colonial administrative borders that they held at the time of independence."[129] This doctrine remains the "default rule of international law" in cases of state failure and secession, including the dissolution of the USSR and Yugoslavia.[130]

Yet from the standpoint of democratic theory, *uti possidetis* represents more of an organizational expedient than a theoretically-desirable policy option in determining the appropriateness of the democratic unit. In relation to Yugoslavia, the Badinter Commission ruled that federations could dissolve along the lines of their constituent units, but that there could be no reconsideration of borders ("no secessions from secessions"). The decision was justified in terms of maintaining the stability of frontiers and territorial integrity, but as Moore points out, "the external frontier was not disputed. There is also a significant moral distinction between insisting on the inviolability of borders against external aggression and insisting on it against the people themselves."[131] The doctrine thus disregards the variations in the historical salience of internal borders, which "reflect distinct identities and patterns of behavior, in particular, borders inherited from long ago, such as those of Scotland and

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[129] Steven R. Ratner, "Drawing a Better Line: *Uti Possidetis* and the Borders of New States," *American Journal of International Law* 90, no. 4 (1996): 590.
[130] With particular regard to Yugoslavia, the Badinter Commission ruled that Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina did not declare independence so much as the federation fell apart. In doing so, the issue of secession (against which there are significant international norms) was sidestepped.
[131] Margaret Moore, "The Territorial Dimension of Self-Determination," in *National Self-Determination and Secession*, ed. Margaret Moore (New York: Oxford UP, 1998), 139.

Bavaria."[132] In other words, *uti possedetis* was a product of satisficing during decolonization, and later emerging as an institutionalized solution to border problems in search of further applications.

Furthermore, *uti possidetis* appears to rehearse the problem of borders within liberal political theory. The fact that the state's borders are invariably a consequence and cause of historical injustice turns the reticence of liberal theory from an embarrassment to a silent scandal. The difficulty, as Dahl points out, is that

> ...we cannot solve the problem of the proper scope and domain of democratic units from within democratic theory. Like the majority principle, the democratic process presupposes a proper unit. *The criteria of the democratic process presupposes the rightfulness of the unit itself.*[133]

One possible explanation for this conundrum is that the maturation of liberal theory occurred simultaneously with the emergence of modern nation-states. As a result, "liberal theory would take shape constrained by this parameter but would not itself subject that presupposition [of state borders] to rigorous critical examination."[134]

Regardless, this blind spot in liberal theory is replicated in legal doctrines (like *uti possidetis*), in which the problem of borders is defined away: it does not matter how one draws the line as long as you fill the space between borders with the right sorts of institutions. From this perspective, *uti possedetis* constitutes a highly institutionalized practice for the territorial organization of power – a "logic of appropriateness" that is easily transmitted, while deviations from the practice is threatening to liberal theory and identification. The reason, to borrow from Gupta and Ferguson, is that "the presumption that spaces are autonomous has enabled the power of topography to

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[132] Ratner, "Drawing a Better Line: *Uti Possidetis* and the Borders of New States," 605.
[133] Robert A. Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1989), 207. Original emphasis.
[134] Loren Lomasky, "Toward a Liberal Theory of National Boundaries," in *Boundaries and Justice: Diverse Ethical Perspectives*, ed. David Miller and Sohail H. Hashmi (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001), 56.

conceal successfully the topography of power."[135]

Borders, Legitimacy, and State Capacity

The recognition that borders developed simultaneously with the modern state draws attention to the manner in which borders function as repositories of power and social knowledge. As Mann describes, clearly defined borders are characteristic features of modern states that developed along with the growth of the state's infrastructural power.[136] Mann's observation builds upon Weber's seminal analysis of the forms of legitimate domination, or authority.[137] According to Weber, the growth of rational-legal authority exercised through bureaucracy was a characteristic common to the development of modern states.[138] And Weber's definition of the state proceeded from the observation that the political content of a ruling organization derives from the extent to which "its existence and order is continuously safeguarded within a given *territorial* area by the threat and application of physical force on the part of the administrative staff."[139]

There is a certain correspondence between the role of borders in the modern state and that of bureaucracy in the Weberian state. The practice of rule application

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[135] Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, "Beyond "Culture": Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference," *Cultural Anthropology* 7, no. 1 (1992): 8.

[136] "...the increase in infrastructural penetration has increased dramatically territorial boundedness. This seems a general characteristic of social development: increases in state infrastructural powers also increase the territorial boundedness of social interaction." Mann, *States, War and Capitalism*, 28.

[137] Weber identified three "pure types" of legitimate domination, or authority: 1) rational - resting on a belief in the legality of enacted rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands (legal authority); 2) traditional - resting on an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of those exercising authority under them (traditional authority); or finally, 3) charismatic - resting on devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him (charismatic authority). Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, vol. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 215.

[138] Ibid., 223.

[139] Ibid., 54. Emphasis in the original. Weber also places territory at the center of his definition of political community as "a community whose social action is aimed at subordinating to orderly domination by the participants a "territory" and the conduct of the persons within it... The territory must at any time be in some way determinable, but it need not be constant or definitely limited." Weber, *Economy and Society*, 901.

by bureaucracies is implicated in the creation of social knowledge, for instance, in the definition of shared tasks, the creation and definition of new categories of actors, the creation of new interests for actors, and the transmission and reproduction of organizational models. Weberian bureaucracies exercise power because they appear to function impersonally and, therefore, outside of politics.

Borders implicitly and explicitly create and transmit social knowledge in each of these respects. In defining the territorial reach of the state, they define and frame the scope of programs for socioeconomic development. They also demarcate normative proximity, by which the obligations of a governing body to a people inhabiting any given region are denied to others nearby, justified and accepted by virtue of juridical or "natural" barriers.[140] In bounding the polity, they define categories of actors (electors, populations) as distinct from those on the other side of the border. If the interests of the state or its components varies depending on the resources (material, natural, organizational) at its disposal, the drawing or activation of borders *creates* those interests – including interests in fortifying or developing border structures, themselves. Insofar as borders are interlocking and are treated as interchangeable from legal and theoretical perspectives, they also implicitly suggest that models of political organization are transferable across borders.

To what extent, then, are borders related to the forms of legitimacy and organization of political regimes? This is a difficult question to answer, thanks in part to the analytic silence on the issue. What is clear, however, is that the question of state capacity is closely tied to the question of the legitimacy of the state's borders –

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[140] Campbell defines proximity as "the condition of possibility for the inter-human relationship of the one-to-one, the basis on which one cannot escape the universal demand of particular responsibility. The disturbance caused by the entry of the third party is the requirement of justice: in spatial terms, it is the functioning of state borders to diminish responsibility to one's neighbor." David Campbell, "The Deterritorialization of Responsibility," in *Moral Spaces: Rethinking Ethics and World Politics*, ed. David Campbell and Michael J. Shapiro (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1999), 36-40.

internal and external. The examination of the literature on constitutional and socioeconomic asymmetry in Russia converges on a common focus on state weakness, or lack of state capacity, as the root cause of the growth of regional autonomy and assertiveness. While much attention was drawn by the ethno-national movements in the federal republics in the early 1990s, the appearance of regionalist movements in the oblasts and krais with appointed governors indicates that ethno-national mobilization is neither a necessary nor sufficient explanation for the trajectory of center-regional relations and federal development.

Instead, a safer generalization is that the central state's weakness was a necessary condition for the activation of regional borders as means of organizing political interactions with the center, and for ensuring regional administrations' access to resources that would otherwise have been claimed by a strong central state. This conclusion is supported theoretically by O'Leary's observation that any theory of "right-sizing" the state must address: (1) the factors, from the perspective of central elites, governing the right-sizing of the state's domestic (and external) territorial shape; and (2) the factors governing the right size of the state's despotic and infrastructural powers.[141] Moreover, this conclusion is supported empirically by observations of increased regional autarchy and assertiveness in the wake of the 1998 economic crisis, with some regions going so far as to ban imports from neighboring regions and erecting roadblocks at regional borders.

The literature on democratization in Russia, particularly as regards the growth of diversity in regional regime types, also proceeds from the starting condition of central state weakness. Here it is worth recalling Brown's distinction between the causes of the Soviet state's disintegration and the process by which it was

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[141] Brendan O'Leary, "Introduction," in *Right-Sizing the State: The Politics of Moving Borders*, ed. Brendan O'Leary, Ian S. Lustick, and Thomas Callaghy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 10. O'Leary is specifically citing Mann's (1984) categories of state capacity.

dismantled.[142] The quasi-federal structure of the Soviet state is necessary for understanding why the USSR broke into its constituent parts along the borders of the Union republics, but it is not a sufficient condition for explaining why the process stopped at these borders. Nor is it sufficient for explaining the trajectory of political development within the borders of the regional regimes of post-Soviet Russia.

A problem common to both of these bodies of literature is the tendency to conflate the lack of state capacity with a lack of legitimacy. The importance of the distinction between state capacity and legitimacy emerges when confronted with two questions: when are borders legitimate? And when are borders legitimately activated or changed?

Within the context of regime transitions or transformations, it is the claim that the present set of borders is illegitimate that enables political actors to contest existing borders and lay claim to new ones. With particular regard to Russia, Brown observes that

> the Soviet Union spectacularly illustrated Rustow's generalization about the problem of lack of agreement on the part of substantial minorities concerning the legitimacy of state borders and Dahl's related point on the impossibility of determining boundaries of the polity which would be in the best interests of everybody.[143]

The "parade of sovereignties" grounded the promotion of internal borders as state borders within a nationalizing discourse. To the extent that this process continued within post-Soviet Russia's borders, the republican claims to national self-determination within their respective boundaries proved unassailable in the early 1990s. At the same time, the *practice* of activating or promoting regional borders within the new post-Soviet Russian state did not remain tied to nationalizing claims. Rather, such exclusivist formulas generated countervailing claims among the so-

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[142] Brown, "Transformational Leaders Compared."
[143] Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1996), 256.

called "non-ethnic" regions – the oblasts and krais – that focused less on the privileges of ethnic status and more on the disproportionate distribution of constitutional privileges and material benefits to the republics.

The legitimacy-seeking activities of regional elites shifted as they sought out alternative means to link territory with demands for greater regional autonomy. The sorts of claims generally fell into three categories. First, regional leaders sought to capitalize on their respective region's traditional or historical role and status. Lallemand provides the example of regional movements in Briansk and Smolensk oblasts:

> regional elites cultivate the theme of the neglected periphery, in order to blame the center for the institutional disintegration and economic crisis. At the same time, the governments of each region try to mobilize their constituents around a kind of provincial patriotism, singing the praises of the *Bryanshchina* and the *Smolenshchina*, which are increasingly considered to be autonomous territorial entities.[144]

Multiple other cases may be found among Russia's oblasts and krais. In Perm, for instance, the preferred historical referent is the *Permskaia guberniia* from tsarist times.

Second, some leaders exercised charismatic authority in galvanizing regional support for challenging the center and seeking the promotion of status. Eduard Rossel''s attempt to establish a "Urals Republic" in 1993 is perhaps the best known (some might say notorious) case.[145] Third, regional leaders claimed a unique ability to more efficiently utilize local resources for regional development and social welfare than the center.[146] Such concerns were particularly salient in regions with strong ecological concerns, such as the zone around Lake Baikal. In this form, the anti-imperial claims that characterized republican drives for sovereignty and pervasive

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[144] Lallemand, "Politics for the Few," 314.
[145] Easter, "Redefining Centre-Regional Relations."
[146] Alla Chirikova and Natalya Lapina, "Political Power and Political Stability in the Russian Regions," in *Contemporary Russian Politics: A Reader*, ed. Archie Brown (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001), 388.

anti-Moscow sentiment in Russia's provinces were transformed into justifications for limiting the center's control over the material implements of administration.

As the range of legitimate claims expanded for the practice of activating internal borders, the exclusivist principles that made the efforts of republican nationalist elites so successful in the early 1990s were diminished in scope and influence. The alternative claims that appeared to support regionalist movements were equally open to contestation and appropriation by the center – whether by reference to the historical experience of Russian statehood, the occasionally spectacular charisma of Boris El'tsin, or the Kremlin's accusations that Russia's economic travails started at the local level. In this fashion, the attempts by regional leaders to expand the range of legitimate claims for augmenting the status of internal borders created opportunities for the center to legitimately reclaim control – an unintended consequence of regional leaders' drive for autonomy.

The question of whether the Kremlin would effectively make use of these opportunities is the subject of the empirical investigation that forms the rest of this study. But the brief historical sketch above is suggestive of the linkages between borders, legitimacy, and state capacity, in foregrounding the manner in which the practice of claiming and defending internal borders was institutionalized on the regional level.

First, the autonomy of regional borders was tied to the autonomy of regional political regimes. From the center's perspective, the diversity of appeals to regional uniqueness granted regional leaders a degree of electoral legitimacy that made it impossible to bypass (or for that matter, to dismiss) regional administrations. The center was also deprived of allies in the regions, for the growth of regional autonomy limited the appeal of working in central institutions for regional elites.

Second, the breakdown of hierarchical command relationships within central agencies was tied to the recognition of internal borders as sovereign or autonomous. The well-known result was the balkanization of central agencies and ministries. The diffusion of federal property among the regions and cooptation of federal agents further enhanced the autonomy of regional regimes. This was both a consequence of the lack of a coherent central policy towards the regions and an obstacle to the formulation of such a policy.

Third, the autonomy of regional borders proved an obstacle to inter-regional coordination and integration. Insofar as claims to particular regional interests reinforced the autonomy of regional administrations within their respective territories, they also limited the appeal of such claims to neighboring territories. A tangible consequence was the weak development of potentially unifying national institutions, in particular of national political parties that might otherwise have served to bring regional interests into conformity with federal interests. At the same time, vicious competition for foreign and domestic investment inhibited inter-regional economic coordination and reinforced regional preferences for bilateral negotiations with the federal center.

By the time that Vladimir Putin succeeded Boris El'tsin, the Kremlin's ability to bring the regions under control was constrained by the manner in which claims to legitimately change regional borders were institutionalized through the diversity of regional political regimes, the disruption of the center's control over its own agencies in the regions, and by the lack of horizontal integration among Russia's regions. The remaining chapters examine Putin's attempts to rein in regional autonomy and assert central control over regional borders. Chapter Two establishes the historical context of center-regional relations in Russia, beginning with the tsarist era through to the late

Soviet period. The chapter traces the attempts of the tsarist and Soviet regimes to manipulate Russia's internal borders to cultivate (or restore) central state capacity. Particular attention is paid to the four regional case studies and their evolution into their present borders. Analysis then turns to the processes by which regional borders were locked in place during the Brezhnev era and the extent to which center-regional engagements shaped (and were shaped by) regional identities in the Gorbachev and El'tsin eras.

Chapter Three begins with the arrival of Putin and his attempts to reform Russia's federal system, focusing on the creation of the seven Federal Districts. At issue are the various ways that their implementation was interpreted at the provincial level in terms of regional interests, autonomy, and institutional performance. The key question concerning Putin's centralizing measures is why regional administrations capitulated so quickly after a decade of decentralization under El'tsin? To the extent that Putin's envoys in the Federal Districts have been successful, the Russian case demonstrates the utility of institutional legacies for generating state capacity by inducing (or restoring) relationships of command and compliance – in a word, legitimacy – among elites.

Chapter Four continues with this theme, turning more explicitly to the composition of regional political regimes. The chapter focuses specifically on the revision of regional charters and constitutions, spearheaded by then-deputy head of the Presidential Administration Dmitrii Kozak. The revision of regional charters and constitutions provided opportunities for altering (or consolidating) the balance of power within the regions. At the same time, however, regional political space was increasingly demarcated by a mandate from the center. As a result, the governors may have grown stronger within their own domains, but possibly at the cost of greater

vulnerability to central intervention.

Chapter Five picks up the role of the governors in examing the conduct of gubernatorial elections and the activation of regional borders. The first competitions for regional office brought border issues to the forefront, such that regional elections provided dramatic evidence of their salience in the rejection of El'tsin's appointed governors. During Putin's first term, the Kremlin played an active and increasingly successful role in influencing the outcome of gubernatorial elections.

Chapter Six examines the question of regional mergers (*ukrupnenie sub"ektov*) and the ongoing delineation of jurisdictional powers between levels of governance in Russia. The chapter analyzes the first real attempts at combining regions and reducing the number of federal subjects, primarily focusing on the processes in Perm and Tiumen. Particular attention is paid to the central and regional debates on the merits and justifications for regional mergers, as well as the conditions enabling this dramatic change in the status of regional borders.

A final chapter provides some concluding observations. The open-ended beginnings of this project and the ambiguous status of borders in political science theory left some important questions to be answered, among them: How strong (or weak) are borders as institutions in Russia? How do borders constrain political behavior formally and informally? And do Russia's borders serve as sources of political stability or instability? The concluding chapter suggests tentative answers to these questions based on the research in the proceeding chapters, and speculates on the future of Russia's internal borders given the changes introduced in Putin's second term of office after the Beslan crisis.

Research Methodology

In investigating the role of internal borders as political institutions, this study is by nature exploratory and does not seek to test hypotheses in positivist fashion. To claim to be seeking "generalizable laws" from the study of four regions out of 89 would be foolhardy (at best) and duplicitous (at worst), particularly when branching into a field of study for which there is no coherent, developed body of literature – such is the study of borders in political science.

In methodological terms, this project perhaps comes closer to Eckstein's *disciplined-configurative* study: "In essence, the chain of inquiry in disciplined-configurative studies runs from comparatively tested theory to case interpretation, and thence, perhaps, via *ad hoc* additions, newly discovered puzzles, and systematized prudence, to new candidate theories."[147] The value of such studies stems from the generation of case studies from existing theory in such a way that "a case can impugn established theories if the theories ought to fit it but do not. It may also point up a need for new theory in neglected areas."[148] Constructing a new theory is not my pretense, but the problem of borders – internal and external – is shared to different degrees by all states. How Russian regions handle a future reduction in the number of their borders may have some resonance with, say, the reform of the system of *départements* in France, the reduction of administrative units in Nigeria, or the creation of new administrative units in Italy.

Though this project does not utilize variable analysis, it may be helpful to address briefly how borders might serve as independent or dependent variables. Like the various theoretical approaches to institutions, the meaning, status, and utility of

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[147] Harry Eckstein, "Case Study and Theory in Political Science," in *Handbook of Political Science: Strategies of Inquiry*, ed. F.I. Greenstein and N.W. Polsby (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1975), 100.
[148] Ibid., 99. The consequence of such an approach, according to Eckstein, is that theory-building appears to suffer, though I would argue that it is by definition impossible to jump directly to a *crucial case* study in the absence of competing theories.

borders vary depending on one's perspective.[149] A quick answer would be that borders appear to function most often as *intervening* variables, mediating between structural conditions of politics and individual decisions. This is necessarily the case since borders and internal boundary changes rarely are confronted head-on in politics.[150] In the Russian context, for example, claims regarding borders tend to be cast in terms of expectations regarding center-regional relations, particularly as related to regional autonomy and central intervention. Yet borders are not exclusively intervening variables. The question of regional mergers in Russia comes close to placing regional borders as dependent variables. But even here the debates and decisions about merging regions is shaped by the existing set of internal borders – that is, how they are perceived to contribute to (or detract from) central state capacity, the nature and malleability of the regional identities that they contain and represent, and the political practices that they shelter and reproduce – and by the position or source of the claims regarding internal borders.

One thus faces a choice between holding that borders are intervening variables, though with (potentially ever-increasing) exceptions, or holding that the question at hand is not whether internal borders are independent or dependent variables in analysis: rather, it is *when* are they treated as independent or dependent variables, under what conditions, and *by whom* in Russian politics? As detailed in the review of the "new institutionalist" literature above, I am attempting to incorporate the main strands of institutionalism in social science – rationalist, historical, and

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[149] "To rational choice institutionalists, institutions are an intervening variable capable of affecting an individual's choices and actions but not determining them. To the historical institutionalists, institutions play a determinant role since they shape the actions of individuals but are at times affected by collective and individual choices. To the sociologists, institutions are themselves dependent upon larger "macro level" variables such as society and culture, and the individual is a largely dependent and rather unimportant variable." Koelble, "The New Institutionalism in Political Science and Sociology," 232.

[150] See: Lustick, "Thresholds of Opportunity.," 76.

sociological – to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of borders as institutions, both in theory and in specific reference to Russia's internal borders. This obviously comes at the cost of theoretical parsimony, though arguably with the benefit of increased accuracy and comprehensiveness of my research findings.

Analytical Framework

In choosing the Russian region as the unit of analysis, I take up Gel'man's observation that "...it seems useful in the analysis of regional political regimes in Russia to treat regional entities as if they were nation-states. Within this framework, federal authorities (as well as other actors outside a particular region) may be regarded as 'external' actors."[151] Working with multiple regions within a single state has a number of methodological advantages, among them the potential ability to hold a greater number of conditions equal in analysis than in cross-country comparisons.[152] At the same time, the ability to examine regional responses to state centralization in Russia also presents a unique opportunity – a "natural experiment" similar in scope to that studied by Robert Putnam in *Making Democracy Work*. The sheer variety of regional regimes and relative levels of socioeconomic development, when countered with the imposition of isomorphic state institutions in the form of Putin's Federal Districts, potentially provides an even greater degree of variation among intra-state units than is possible in established Western democracies.

But more important is the normative dimension – the question of how different

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[151] Gel'man, "Regime Transition, Uncertainty and Prospects for Democratisation," 942. Gel'man was writing prior to Putin's arrival and the creation of the seven Federal Districts. Even before 2000, however, the federal authorities were somewhat more integrated than Gel'man suggests in regional politics. Indeed, this was an important element of variation among cases.

[152] "...comparability can also be enhanced by focusing on intranation instead of internation comparisons. The reason is again the same: comparative intranation analysis can take advantage of the many similar national characteristics serving as controls." Arend Lijphart, "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method," *American Political Science Review* 65, no. 3 (1971): 689. See also: Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1994), 219-23.

mechanisms for regional integration relate to the quality of political life in post-Soviet Russia. The public rationale for Putin's centralization measures was to improve the quality of Russian democracy by clamping down on regional separatism, consolidating uniform administrative and information spaces, and bringing government "closer to the people." For their own parts, regional elites present a variety of cross-border claims in their interactions with central elites, particularly as regards other regions' economic obligations to their neighbors. In a number of cases this translates into attempts by regional elites to influence or even sabotage elections in other regions. By diving into this fray, one may acquire a sense of the role that regional identity plays in calculating the stakes of center-regional engagements.

It is worth pointing out that research on this project was begun in 2001, before it was certain that Putin's efforts at state centralization would take root and prove successful. In other words, the research was not designed to explain a known or anticipated outcome. Rather, the research process was investigatory in nature with a number of general and specific goals. Among the general goals were: to isolate the salience and influence of regional borders for regional identity and political engagements with the center among the case studies; to account for the stability or instability of regional borders; to examine the prevalence of border-related issues in daily political life, including their binding or constraining effects; and to probe the (potentially) integrative dimensions of internal borders. These general goals guided the examination of specific research questions, which formed the basis for each of the chapters: to explain the impact of the Federal Districts on the salience and meaning of regional borders; to evaluate the effectiveness of changes to regional constitutions and charters in the demarcation of regional political space; to assess the relationship between gubernatorial elections and the activation of regional borders; and to probe

the prospects and conditions for outright changes to regional boundaries, particularly through the merging of existing regions.

Fieldwork Methods

Fieldwork was conducted in regions located across four Federal Districts, primarily through interviews with Russian specialists on regional politics, members of regional administrations, legislatures and local government, as well as representatives of federal agencies. Interviews were semi-structured in that a common set of issues was raised in each session, tailored to the particular region concerned.[153] For the purposes of getting at representations of regional border issues, semi-structured interviews were useful in allowing respondents to re-phrase (or in some instances, to correct) my questions in local idioms. Such nuances would have been impossible to capture through a survey approach.[154] Moreover, I quickly found that even the "semi-structure" of my interview questions could prove stifling, diverting the respondent away from the stories and issues that mattered to their own perceptions.[155] While I sought to conduct interviews with people of analogous position in each region, this was simply impossible owing to too many individual schedules, variations in administrative structures among regions, and differing degrees of openness to foreign

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[153] I am grateful to Alla Chirikova of the RAS Institute of Sociology for help with the drafting and editing of my interview questions.

[154] "As implementation problems are often created by different understandings of policy language, it is as important for analysts to access these other interpretations – the local knowledge held by communities of meaning in constructed texts." Dvora Yanow, *Conducting Interpretive Policy Analysis*, *Qualitative Research Methods* (London: Sage, 2000), 10.

[155] This does not seem to me to generate particular problems of reliability and validity, however, given the nature of the research design: "One cannot simply expect answers on one occasion to replicate those on another because they emerge from different circumstances of production. Similarly, the validity of answers derives not from their correspondence to meanings held within the respondent, but from their ability to convey situated experiential realities in terms that are locally comprehensible." James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium, "Active Interviewing," in *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice*, ed. David Silverman (London: Sage, 1998), 117.

interviewers.[156] Most interviews were recorded on an unobtrusive, noiseless digital dictaphone with the respondent's permission.[157] In a few cases respondents either declined to be recorded or were so visibly uncomfortable with the notion such that I relied on taking notes by hand.

In addition to interviews, I made scans of articles from primary newspapers in each region for the year starting from the announcement of Putin's reforms.[158] Where time constraints applied, I bypassed papers that were otherwise available via the internet or online full-text databases. The scans allowed me to evaluate common themes and highlight significant differences in representations of Putin's reforms and other border-related issues. Every region has at least one newspaper attached to (or run outright by) the regional administration. Many have an additional newspaper attached to the legislative assembly and possibly a third paper that is independent or tied to the opposition within the region. This is not always the case, though, and one should be careful in claiming that representations in the press are illustrative of public opinion. This is not the claim made in this study. Rather, the press is taken to represent the public face of the regional administration as it seeks to cajole, mobilize, or sedate regional constituencies.[159]

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[156] In one instance, I was denied an interview by an official in Tiumen's regional administration on the grounds that "it is the official's duty to refuse interviews to foreigners." The official in question was a former member of the KGB, which might have something to do with his interpretation of duty. In another case in Kareliia, the process of working through receptionist, assistant (*pomoshchnik*), and deputy (*zamestitel'*) to get to the official in question took weeks and even resulted in my being offered bogus phone numbers. Fortunately these were not typical instances, though there were always a few in each region.

[157] All recorded interviews were later downloaded onto my laptop and recorded onto a CD for further use.

[158] Newspapers were selected after consulting with local experts on regional politics. I used a portable flatbed scanner and laptop computer. The scans were imported into Acrobat format so as to preserve their original layout.

[159] Official regional websites present another potential source of this kind of information, though obviously targeted at different audiences.

Case Selection & Summaries

Cases were selected with an eye towards achieving as much variation as possible across relevant socioeconomic and demographic indicators. I also sought to vary federal status by choosing two federal republics and two oblasts (see **Table 1.3**). As demonstrated earlier in the chapter, most predictions of regional separatism were oriented around a combination of federal status (with republics being the chief suspects) and socioeconomic development (with the richest being the most difficult). In seeking to understand how borders can be integrative rather than divisive, cases were also chosen with regard to contrasting "border situations": the two republics had not gone the route of ethnic separatism, but attempted to mobilize different sides of the state border – Buriatiia cultivated ties with other Siberian regions, while Kareliia staked its hopes on relations with Finland and the European Union. The two oblasts had complicated federal relationships with ethnically-based autonomous okrugs in common, though their economic situations are radically different.[160]

Cases were also chosen so as to fall within different Federal Districts: North-Western, Volga, Urals, and Siberian. I purposely did not chose any district "centers" (capitals) in order to avoid the additional layer of confusion that this new identity might present. Altogether I conducted fieldwork in Moscow and the four regions during March-April 2001, September-December 2001, March-June 2002, April 2003, and May 2004. I also conducted interviews in Komi-Permiatskii Autonomous Okrug and interviewed a few officials from Khanty-Mansiiskii Autonomous Okrug, though the primary focus in both cases with the relationship of the autonomous okrugs with their respective oblasts.

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[160] Russian analysts have come to refer to such regions as "complexly-constructed" (*slozhnopostroenye* or *slozhnosostavnye*).

Table 1.3: Basic Demographic and Economic Indicators

Region Name	Buriatiia	Kareliia	Tiumen	Perm
Location (FD)	Siberian	North-West	Urals	Volga
Population (thousands, 1999)	1038.2	771.1	3243.5	2969.7
Ethnic composition	Buriat – 24% Russian – 70% Ukrainian – 2.2% Other – 3.8%	Karel – 10% Russian – 73.6% Belorussian – 7% Other – 9.4%	Russian – 72.6% Ukrainian – 8.4% Tatar – 7.3% Other – 11.7%	Russian – 83.8% Tatar – 4.9% Komi-Permiak – 4% Other – 7.3%
Primary industrial sector(s)	Energy (45.9%) Machine and metal working (12%)	Logging & Paper (41.8%)	Fuel (81.8%) Energy (10.9%)	Chemical and Petrochemical (20.6%) Energy (18.3%) Fuel (14.6%)
Gross Regional Product (billions of rubles, 1997)	11541	10067	209198	51531
Avg monthly income (rubles, 1998)	601.4	1052.4	2793	1137

Source: Goskomstat. *Regiony Rossii: Statisticheskii Sbornik. Tom 1*. Moskva: Goskomstat Rossii, 1999.

The **Republic of Buriatiia** (*Respublika Buriatiia*) lies between Lake Baikal and Mongolia in eastern Siberia, and was included in the Siberian Federal District. Though the majority population is Russian, the Buriat autonomous okrugs in neighboring Irkutsk and Chita oblasts have majority Buriat populations. The autonomous okrugs were originally part of Buriatiia until they were split apart by

Stalin.[161] Owing to these and other past grievances, as well as the republic's location on the border with Mongolia, in the early-1990s it was thought that Buriatiia would join the ranks of Russia's ethnic separatists. Instead, it has proven to be as quiet (and conservative) politically as its environs – the head of the republican administration has not changed since the Soviet era.

The **Republic of Kareliia** (*Respublika Kareliia*) is located in the north-west of Russia on the border with Finland. Owing to the presence of a Kareliian diaspora in Finland and a history of contentious borders, Kareliia was also thought to be vulnerable to ethnic separatism.[162] Like Buriatiia, these suspicions have proved unfounded. In recent years Kareliia has attempted to parlay its border position into the status of being Russia's gateway to the European Union.

Tiumen oblast lies on the edge of western Siberia, though the region was included in the Urals Federal District. Its impressive economic statistics conceal the disparities between the oblast and the autonomous okrugs attached to it. While the autonomous okrugs produce enormous amounts of gas and oil for the country, the oblast proper is largely agrarian and, until recent years, received little of the northern okrugs' revenues. This issue became significant in the 1990s, in what became known locally as the "war between north and south," during which Tiumen's governor sought Moscow's support in formally bringing the okrugs under the oblast's control. The matter was effectively resolved when Sergei Sobianin, a candidate from the okrugs, won the oblast governorship.

Perm oblast is very much the mirror-opposite of Tiumen. The region has always been considered part of the Urals, and the inclusion of Perm in the Volga Federal District was the source of much consternation. Perm is blessed with a diverse

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[161] See Chapter Two.
[162] A popular joke in Kareliia following the collapse of the USSR was that Kareliia should declare war on Finland...and immediately surrender.

economy and ranks among Russia's "donor" regions. Its own border problems stemmed from the Komi-Permiatskii autonomous okrug – an economic backwater that was deeply dependent upon the oblast's economy, but whose separate existence was justified by its ethnic status. Following a referendum held simultaneously with the 2003 State Duma elections, the two regions were headed to become the first regional merger in post-Soviet Russia.[163]

[163] See Chapter Six.

Chapter Two: A Brief History of Russia's Internal Borders

Introduction

In late 2004, the flag of Vladimir oblast became a legal and historical battleground. In this traditionally loyal, ethnically Russian region in the country's center, the oblast government adopted a flag that reflected its accumulated history with the Soviet Union's hammer and sickle alongside the symbols of the Vladimir *guberniia* conferred by Ekaterina II. The oblast procurator charged that the tsarist-era symbols implied the strict subordination of the region to the center, essentially reducing the status of the federal subject to that of a vassal of the crown. Meanwhile, the Russian President's heraldic council argued that the inclusion of the hammer and sickle "usurps the state symbols of the USSR" *and* the RSFSR.[1] The difference in perspectives was revealing: while the oblast procurator saw the violation in terms of diminishing the region's status, the Presidential council perceived exactly the opposite problem.

The episode illustrates that the messy state of center-regional relations emerging from the 1990s did not develop in a vacuum, but neither was it the merely the result of history repeating itself. Rather, it was fostered by institutional continuities that shaped political roles, repertoires, and identities, stretching across regimes and revolutions. This chapter briefly examines these continuities in the development of Russia's system of internal borders, starting with the imperial age of Russia and continuing through to the late Brezhnev era. At issue is the extent to which Russia's experience with state-building reveals its internal boundaries to be

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[1] *Kommersant*, 4 October 2004. One of the deputies of Vladimir oblast's legislative assembly responded, "We will see what the heraldic council has to say after the State Duma adopts all of the president's proposals [concerning the elimination of gubernatorial elections]."

both constitutive of its external borders as well as vital institutions in the cultivation (or frustration) of state capacity. Of related interest is the extent to which internal borders, when activated as political and social institutions, come to be repositories of regional identity. To this end, the chapter focuses on the making of Kareliia, Buriatiia, Perm and Tiumen, throughout the imperial and Soviet periods.

In part, the material in this chapter serves as a helpful addendum to the El'tsin era debates concerning center-regional relations and Russian federalism (discussed in the introductory chapter), providing a historical perspective that is so often lacking in Western analyses. But it also helps to demonstrate the more salient theoretical point that internal borders are not mere products of state centralization or decentralization. Rather, they have featured as the primary instruments for achieving centralization or decentralization in Russia's history of state-building. As will be covered in later chapters, it is a point that the Putin regime seems to understand well.

The Tsarist Era: Internal Borders, Empire, and Modernization

As an imperial power, the Russian state's expansion was characterized by the accretion (or annexation) of borderland territories which then became internal divisions within the empire. The Russian empire was distinctive for its lack of "blue water" territorial possessions – the empire expanded through the acquisition of contiguous rather than distant territories. As Russia entered the modern age, imperial expansion required the rationalization of the system of provincial government.

Prior to the time of Petr I, the provinces were governed through feudal arrangements that were chaotic and difficult to control. Initial steps towards rationalizing provincial governance were taken in the 16th century when Ivan IV introduced the system of *voevodstva* to administer the border regions. Later, the

voevodstva were distributed across the rest of the country by the first Romanov, Tsar Mikhail Fedorovich, who viewed it as a means for centralizing the state after the Time of Troubles. It was also seen as necessary for developing more effective local governing mechanisms. Mikhail further established territorial divisions – the *riazriady* – that resembled Russia's present day military districts in their administrative and functional characteristics. [2]

By the eighteenth century, Russia was divided unto 166 districts, called *uezdy* (also called *kniazhskie zemli*, *udely*, *prikazy*, *razriady*, and *cheti*) and *volosti*. Petr I sought to bring order to this system with his decree of 18 December 1708, which divided Russia into eight *gubernii* (governorships) and placed governors in charge of each.[3] Initially the borders of the gubernii were based roughly on those of the *razriady*, though the number of gubernii climbed to eleven by the end of the Petrine era.[4] While Petr's governors were initially charged with broad responsibilities for regional development and administration, their powers would later be pared back with the further subdivision of the gubernii into *provintsii* (provinces) and *uezdy* (revived after a brief disappearance) in 1719. [5]

The territorial reform was ambitious, though the empires' resources were stretched too thin to support the administrative network envisioned by Petr I. As Riasanovsky describes, "changes began in a somewhat haphazard manner, largely under pressure of war and a desperate search for money."[6] Petr's reform had the unintended effect of *decreasing* central control over the activities of the local

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[2] A.G. Trifonov and B.V. Mezhuev, "General-gubernatorstvo v Rossiiskoi sisteme territorial'nogo upravleniia," *Polis* 9, no. 5 (2000): 19-20.
[3] The original eight gubernii were: Ingermanlandskaia (later Peterburgskaia), Moskovskaia, Kievskaia, Smolenskaia, Arkhangelogorodskaia (Arkhangel'skaia), Kazanskaia, Azovskaia, and Sibirskaia.
[4] Trifonov and Mezhuev, "General-gubernatorstvo v Rossiiskoi sisteme territorial'nogo upravleniia," 20.
[5] Sergei Tarkhov, "Izmenenie administrativno-territorial'nogo deleniia Rossii v 18-20 vekakh," *Logos*, no. 1 (2005). The provinces were later eliminated and the uezdy restored within the gubernia.
[6] Nicholas Valentine Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 6th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 232.

authorities. In theory, the local procurators were supposed to exercise legal oversight, but they lacked the political power to overturn the governors' decisions. Petr's governors focused on local concerns to such an extent that they ceased to be reliable agents for conducting the center's policy. Indeed, the disconnection between the center and the provinces made the system incapable of adapting to changes in the center's political and economic priorities.[7]

By the end of Petr's rule in 1725, Russian provincial administration was a "tangled mess" that would task his successors for another half a century.[8] The number of gubernii continued to grow, reaching 23 by the middle of the 18th century.[9] The governors had become more autonomous of the center and more capricious on their own turf, yet the bases of local power also became less secure. It was the inability of the provincial authorities to stop the spread of Pugachev's peasant rebellion in 1773-1775 that convinced Ekaterina II of the need for fundamental changes. Her decree from 7 November 1775 reduced the size of the gubernii and increased their number to 40 (plus 2 oblasts). Ekaterina rationalized the structure of internal administration by determining their boundaries solely on the basis of population, with gubernii holding between 300,000 and 400,000 people.[10] Historical and regional considerations were not taken into account in the drawing of the new boundaries.[11] But for the first time in Russian history, provincial boundaries were clearly and meticulously demarcated by special government agents who criss-crossed

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[7] Trifonov and Mezhuev, "General-gubernatorstvo v Rossiiskoi sisteme territorial'nogo upravleniia," 21.
[8] Richard G. Robbins, *The Tsar's Viceroys: Russian Provincial Governors in the Last Years of the Empire* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 6-8.
[9] O.V. Shul'gina, "Izmeneniia administrativno-territorial'nogo deleniia Rossii: istoriko-geograficheskii analiz," *Resursy regionov Rossii*, no. 4 (2001): 17.
[10] Robbins, *The Tsar's Viceroys*, 9. Each guberniia was in turn subdivided into districts containing approximately 30,000 inhabitants each.
[11] Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 261-2.

the map over a period of six years.[12] The size and borders of the majority of gubernii established in 1775-1785 did not change until the 1920s. It was during this time that the Perm and Tobol'sk gubernii were established, which eventually formed the bases for today's Perm and Tiumen oblasts.[13] By the end of her rule, the number of Ekaterina's gubernii reached 50 (plus one oblast).[14]

An additional innovation of Ekaterina's was the creation of the governors-general (*general-gubernatory*, also called *namestniki*) to oversee the governors. The governors-general typically had authority over three or four gubernii each. Perm and Tobol'sk were joined in a single *namestnichestvo* with its center in the city, Perm'.[15] The governors-general were granted sweeping powers, including the abilities to countermand governors' edicts and to bring criminal charges against governors. Indeed, their powers were sufficiently great (within their own domains) as to be seen as a potential threat by Ekaterina's son and heir, Pavel I, who eliminated the office in the majority of central Russian regions shortly after coming to power.

Pavel I instituted his own provincial reform, though far less sweeping than his mother's. Some gubernii were enlarged while thirteen were eliminated, reducing the overall number from 51 to 42, as the new tsar re-centralized power in St. Petersburg. Aleksandr I also pursued state centralization, though the most important development during his rule was the creation of the central ministries in 1802.[16] Contrary to what one might have expected, the gradual rise in ministerial power appears to have been related to the rising power of Russia's governors in the 19th century. The regions occupied a pivotal position in the imperial system of rule, straddling the divide

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[12] A. Ushakov, *Kak upravlialsia permskii krai ran'she i kak upravliaetsia teper'* (Perm': Permskoe knizhnoe isdatel'stvo, 1958), 25. Riasanovsky (2000) points out that the survey of boundaries was also "an important step in legalizing and confirming landholdings."
[13] Ibid., 24.
[14] Tarkhov, "Izmenenie administrativno-territorial'nogo deleniia Rossii v 18-20 vekakh."
[15] I.S. Kaptsugovicha, *Istoriia urala. Tom I* (Perm': Permskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1976), 126.
[16] Robbins, *The Tsar's Viceroys*, 12.

between branch and territorial principles of rule. As Robbins describes, the governors came increasingly under the control of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), which sought to professionalize the service. At the same time, the MVD attempted to increase gubernatorial powers in order to make them into more effective local agents. As tension grew between the ministries and the emperor, the power of regional executives was further augmented. The governors presented the emperor with a mechanism for circumventing the developing bureaucratic structures, whether by appointing friends to governorships or assigning them special tasks to carry out in the emperor's name.[17]

The creation (or elimination) of the gubernii and the carving up of Russia's internal boundaries was bound up with Russia's state-building project, rather than an organic process of a "gathering of lands." The overall trend during the 19th century was toward expansion and addition of gubernii and oblasty. A further ten gubernii were added, mostly in conjunction with Russia's expansion into Siberia, the Far East, and the division of the Caucasus into smaller gubernii.

In 1809, all of Finland was joined to Russia as an autonomous grand duchy. The territory between lakes Ladoga and Onega formed the Olonets guberniia, or the southern portion of today's Republic of Kareliia, while the Archangel'sk guberniia contained the northern portion of Kareliia.[18] During this time, however, the area of today's Kareliia was still more Finnish than Russian. Kareliia was claimed as a locus of Finnish culture with the crafting of the Finnish national epic, the *Kalevala*, from folk poetry discovered in Kareliia in the early 19th century. As Paasi observes, "the boundary established between Finland and Russia (and later the Soviet Union), which remained in broad outline the same for the period 1833-1940…was regarded as stable

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[17] Ibid., Ch.s 1-2.
[18] Ott Kurs and Rein Taagepera, "Karelia: Orthodox Finland," in *The Finno-Ugric Republics and the Russian State*, ed. Rein Taagepera (New York: Routledge, 1999), 106.

and sanctioned by history."[19] In other words, this internal boundary of the empire simultaneously formed a cultural or national boundary between Russia and Finland. When Finland became independent in 1917, the internal border briefly became international.

In Siberia, the territorial grid of provincial administration evolved in pace with Russian colonization. Zamiatina describes this process as one of establishing "archipelagos" of power, by which administrative centers were prioritized over economic or commerce functions: "the ruling of Siberian territories was not so much the development of territory (*osvoenie territorii*), and not even the acquisition of territory (*ovladenie territorii*), so much as the establishment of ruling centers on the territory."[20] At the time of Petr I's provincial reform, Russian penetration into Siberia was relatively limited and the whole of Siberia was enclosed within a single, massive guberniia. It was not until 1796 that the Siberian guberniia was divided into the Tobol'sk and Irkutsk gubernii.[21]

This situation changed dramatically in the 19th century. In eastern Siberia, the Buriats were granted local autonomy in the 18th century in return for serving as Cossacks to guard Russia's frontier with Chinese Outer Mongolia. This autonomy was to be short-lived. Buriat territories were further subdivided to facilitate the acceleration of Russian colonization, eventually being split between the Irkutsk guberniia and the Transbaikal oblast (*Zabaikal'e*). In addition, the two provinces fell under the authority of separate governors-general. As the number of settlers east of Lake Baikal grew, Buriats were removed from the border zone so that the area came

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[19] Anssi Paasi, *Territories, Boundaries and Consciousness: The Changing Geographies of the Finnish-Russian Border* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1996), 86.
[20] N.Iu. Zamiatina, "Modeli politicheskogo prostranstva," *Polis* 9, no. 4 (1999): 30-31. Zamiatina argues that this explains the tendency in Russia to perceive cities as the center of government, in contrast to the the European perception of cities as centers of trade and industry.
[21] A.A. Elaev, *Buriatiia: put' k avtonomii i gosudarstvennosti* (Moskva: Antal, 1994), 17.

to be inhabited exclusively by Russians. Forsyth argues that this resettlement policy was aimed at creating "an alien frontier zone devoid of native population...corresponding to the empty zone formed by the Manchus on their side of the frontier."[22]

Ethnic, regional and geopolitical tensions continued to rise in eastern Siberia towards the end of the 19th century. The zemstvo reform of Aleksandr II permitted the emergence of *oblastnichestvo* – a social and cultural movement that focused on the specific character of individual Russian regions, and which promoted local customs and culture. Moreover, the elimination of serfdom in 1861 was equally crucial in encouraging the spread of regionalism, since "for the leaders of *oblastnichestvo*, Siberia was a sort of serf for the Russian empire."[23] On the southern flank of Siberia, the Transbaikal region was seen as a potential beach-head for Russian interests in Korea, Manchuria, and Northern China, but only if the proportion of Russian inhabitants dramatically increased.[24] The imperial government attempted to force through an agrarian reform to make room for Russian settlers, starting with the liquidation of native governing institutions and replacement with the *volost'* system of rural government used in Russian peasant communities.[25] This sparked several waves of nationalist sentiment as Buriats in Irkutsk and Transbaikal openly resisted the reform and, in 1905, established the first All-Buriat Congress. The Congress reduced tensions by formally acceeding to the center's reform, though it

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[22] James Forsyth, *A History of the Peoples of Siberia: Russia's North Asian Colony 1581-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992), 168-9.
[23] Vladimir Shlapentokh, Roman Levita, and Mikhail Loiberg, *From Submission to Rebellion: The Provinces versus the Center in Russia* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), 50-1.
[24] Elaev, *Buriatiia*, 23.
[25] Forsyth, *A History of the Peoples of Siberia*, 172.

subverted central authority by merely renaming native boundaries at the lower level of administration (from the traditional *aimak* to *buluk*).[26]

By 1914, the Russian Empire was divided into 60 gubernii and 21 oblasts. The oblasts were located along the edge of the empire, the majority of which were divided among four *general-gubernatorstva* (Irkutsk, Priamursk, Stepnyi, and Turkestan). Five additional oblasts in the Transcaucasus guberniia and three other oblasts (*voiska* Donskogo, Ural'skaia, Turgaiskaia) were independent of the governors-general and possessed the same status as the gubernii.[27]

The Early Soviet Era: Imperial Legacies, Revolutionary Compromises

The 1917 revolution ushered in nearly 50 years of instability as Russia's internal borders were drawn and re-drawn. The Soviet Union's state-building experience was bound-up with the seemingly endless quest begun during the tsarist era to find the optimal internal division of state power and territory. Regional boundaries continued to expand or contract in alternation, but the dynamics now followed somewhat different logics from those of the tsarist period. If the tsarist period sought to overcome the morass of inherited provincial boundaries and rationalize them in the interest of empire-building, the Soviet leadership found multiple uses for those boundaries – in pacifying the countryside during the Civil War, as vehicles of revolution, and as instruments for the consolidation of power. Lenin considered the tsarist system of gubernii to be medieval and inextricably bound with the repressive imperial state. He further criticized the system for ignoring the distribution of industry and other economic conditions, and for not giving due consideration to non-

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[26] Elaev, *Buriatiia*, 24-32.
[27] Tarkhov, "Izmenenie administrativno-territorial'nogo deleniia Rossii v 18-20 vekakh."

Russian nationalities.[28] These latter two complaints essentially formed the dual principles for the re-drawing of Soviet Russia's internal boundaries.

With regard to the non-Russian nationalities, Slezkine details the extent to which the nature and function of internal borders were both instrumental to, and the essence of, the Bolsheviks' break with the *ancien régime*:

> The most remarkable aspect of [Lenin's and Stalin's campaign for a strictly territorial definition of autonomy] was the assertion – rarely challenged either before or after 1917 – that all territorial divisions could be described as either "medieval" or "modern," with modernity defined as democracy (borders "based on popular sympathies") and with democracy resulting in "the greatest possible homogeneity in the national composition of the population."[29]

The Bolsheviks initially encouraged the non-Russian minorities' declarations of self-determination and secession, maintaining this position well into the Civil War. Their courting of the national minorities was aided by the White's refusal to tolerate secessionist tendencies.[30] The strategem perhaps confirmed for the Reds that national enmity in the tsarist colonies was a product of past oppression. If it did, however, it also underlined the extent to which the Bolsheviks underestimated its strength and appeal.

Lenin viewed nationalism as epiphenomenal, and expected that the national-territorial model of federal management would ultimately amount to a temporary arrangement.[31] Indeed, the Soviet leadership moved quickly to stem the tide of secession. Already in 1920, Stalin wrote in *Pravda* that, "the interests of the masses of the people render the demand for the secession of the border regions at the present

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[28] Shul'gina, "Izmeneniia administrativno-territorial'nogo deleniia Rossii," 18.
[29] Yuri Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism," *Slavic Review* 53, no. 2 (1994): 417. Slezkine is quoting from Lenin here.
[30] Walker Connor, *The National Question in Marxist-Leninist Theory and Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1984), 46-7.
[31] Gregory Gleason, *Federalism and Nationalism: The Struggle for Republican Rights in the USSR* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), 28-33.

state of the revolution a profoundly counter-revolutionary one."[32] The right of self-determination continued to be respected and even institutionalized, but it was recast as a right belonging not to nations, but to national proletariats. Experts criss-crossed the land during the 1920s, marking internal boundaries in a manner somewhat reminiscent of the time of Ekaterina II. This time, however, the process was guided by the principle that administrative and ethnographic boundaries ought to coincide, "which meant that most of the imperial territory would have to be divided into borderlands and that professional ethnographers would have to play an important role in the endeavor."[33]

The initial volley of boundary changes occurred with the onset of Civil War (1918-22) as regions underwent a process of republicanization or sovereignization.[34] In 1918, alone, five new republics were declared (Stavropol'skaia, Terskaia, Tavrida, Donskaia, Kubano-Chernomorskaia), as well as autonomies in Siberia, Kuban, Crimea, and the Far East. New soviet and non-soviet autonomies, and even independent states, were declared during 1918-1920 among the predominantly non-Russian gubernii and oblasts (in Ukraine, Belarus, the Transcaucasus, and Central Asia). Poland, the Baltics, Finland, and Bessarabia fully split off from the country. Between 1919 and 1922, at least four governments existed in the Far East and Siberia.

In Siberia, representatives from Irkutsk, Chita, and Verkhneudinsk (later Ulan-Ude) at the All-Buriat Congress held in April 1917 called for a single, continuous Buriat territory with its own Duma.[35] Their efforts were preempted by the October Revolution and the beginning of the Civil War. Buriats resisted Bolshevik rule during

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[32] Quoted in: Connor, *The National Question in Marxist-Leninist Theory and Strategy*, 50.
[33] Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment," 427.
[34] The following section draws heavily on the original research of Sergei Tarkhov. Tarkhov, "Izmenenie administrativno-territorial'nogo deleniia Rossii v 18-20 vekakh." I am grateful to Julia Sineokaya and Valerii Anashvili for providing me with an advance copy of Tarkhov's article.
[35] Forsyth, *A History of the Peoples of Siberia*, 271.

the Civil War and, unsurprisingly, local Bolshevik leaders determined that Buriat self-government was neither feasible nor desirable. Nevertheless, they were overruled by the central leadership and autonomous Buriat regions were established, though territorially divided: the Buriat lands to the east of Lake Baikal (*Zabaikal'e*) were enclosed within the Far Eastern Republic, while the western Buriat lands fell within the territory of the Irkutsk Soviet. When the war ended in 1922, the Far Eastern Republic was absorbed into the RSFSR and the two Buriat autonomies were joined into the Buriat-Mongol ASSR (BMASSR) in 1923.[36]

Along the Russian-Finnish border, the Kareliian Labor Commune (KTK) was formed in 1920 upon the initiative of émigré Edvard Giulling. Giulling had persuaded Lenin that a prosperous socialist republic on the border of Finland would serve the dual purpose of attracting exiled Finnish communists and inspiring northern Europe. Though Kareliians repeatedly took up arms against the Bolsheviks in 1921-2 (with some unofficial help from Finland), the uprisings were put down and some 33,500 refugees fled to Finland. Meanwhile, several thousand defeated Reds from the Finnish Civil War travelled in the opposite direction and settled in eastern (Russian) Kareliia. Giulling secured significant economic autonomy for the border region and was able to sustain this autonomy until the 1930s thanks to Lenin's personal involvement in forming the region, as well as the propaganda value that it provided.[37] But autonomy came at a cost. The Olonets guberniia was dissolved in summer 1922 and its territory added to the KTK.[38] When the KTK was upgraded to the Kareliian ASSR in 1923, its territory was increased by 31,000 km^2, adding 72,000 people from eastern, predominantly Russian-inhabited areas. It is worth noting Baron's contention

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[36] Ibid., 273-5, E.E. Tarmakhanova, ed., *Istoriia Buriatii, chast' II (1917-1998 gg.)* (Ulan-Ude: Belig, 2000), 21-24.
[37] Nick Baron, "The Karelian ASSR," in *Centre-Local Relations in the Stalinist State, 1928-1941*, ed. E. A. Rees (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 117.
[38] Tarkhov, "Izmenenie administrativno-territorial'nogo deleniia Rossii v 18-20 vekakh."

that these moves were instigated by Kareliia's Finnish leaders, who privileged economic over national criteria and sought to prevent the rise of (non-Finnish) Kareliian nationalism by including ethnically mixed and non-Kareliian areas in the republic's territory.[39] As a result, the Kareliian population of the republic was diluted such that it was down to 37% by 1926.[40]

As concerns the economic principle for drawing internal boundaries, the 1920s produced massive attempts at enlarging and combining regions known as economic "districting" (*raionirovanie*). Since the administrative-territorial divisions of tsarist Russia were considered "connected with the entire system of bourgeois-landed aristocracy government and reflected its interests," the Bolsheviks believed that the old divisions had to be destroyed and replaced with new ones before any serious local reform could be attempted.[41] The Civil War was helpful in breaking up the gubernii. In April 1918 it was decided to divide the Perm guberniia into two okrugs: Perm and Ekaterinburg. But in May 1918, the Urals Military District was founded, which included the Perm, Viatka, Ufa, Orenburg, and Kazan gubernii. At the end of 1919, the Perm guberniia was partially dismembered. The Ekaterinburg okrug was "promoted" to a separate guberniia, while another portion of the Perm guberniia was attached to the new Bashkir republic.[42] It was also during this time that the the Tobol'sk guberniia was divided into the Tiumen, Omsk, and Cheliabinsk gubernii.[43]

With the formal establishment of the USSR in 1922, the Soviet leadership turned its sights on moulding the country's internal borders to conform to its vision of economic planning. Essentially, the idea was to replace the older, smaller gubernii

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[39] Baron, "The Karelian ASSR," 117.
[40] Kurs and Taagepera, "Karelia: Orthodox Finland," 107-9.
[41] Ushakov, *Kak upravlialsia permskii krai*, 56.
[42] Ibid., 56-60.
[43] Tarkhov, "Izmenenie administrativno-territorial'nogo deleniia Rossii v 18-20 vekakh."

with enormous oblasts that corresponded with Gosplan's economic raions.[44] Ideally, such a scheme would take into consideration "the concentration of industry, particularities of agricultural development, direction and character of transport infrastructure, gravitation of the populace towards one center or another, national content, population size and density."[45] From 1923 to 1928, the tsarist gubernii were replaced with oblasts in Russian areas and krais in non-Russian areas, with the goal of enlarging administrative-territorial units at every level of the hierarchy. Hence, the next largest level would be the okrug (larger than the uezd), followed by the raion (significantly larger than the volost'). The Soviet government started work on the raionirovanie of the country on 3 November 1923 with the Central Committee's resolution on the creation of a massive Urals oblast. This new entity would include the territories of the former Ekaterinburg, Perm, Cheliabinsk, and Tiumen gubernii, with its administrative center located in Ekaterinburg (later renamed Sverdlovsk).[46]

Though the process began with the Urals, the overall trend moved from the outer edges of the USSR inwards. As Tarkhov points out, the last stage in the reform was accomplished with the Central Committee's resolution of 14 January 1929 on the complete liquidation of gubernii and creation of oblasts and krais in the remaining parts of the country – that is, the central Russian regions and the European north.[47] In other words, the new regime focused on changing the country's internal borders at the periphery first, leaving the center and European north until the very last. By the end of the 1920s, then, the gubernii had been completely replaced with six oblasts and

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[44] The country was divided into 21 economic regions in 1921, but these divisions were used solely for planning purposes and were not accorded administrative status or institutions. Iu.N. Gladkii and A.I. Chistobaev, *Regionovedenie* (Moskva: Gardariki, 2003), 48-50.
[45] Ushakov, *Kak upravlialsia permskii krai*, 61.
[46] I.S. Kaptsugovicha, *Istoriia urala. Tom II* (Perm': Pemskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1977), 159.
[47] Tarkhov, "Izmenenie administrativno-territorial'nogo deleniia Rossii v 18-20 vekakh." The new oblasts created were: Zapadnaia, Ivanovskaia, Promyshlennaia, Nizhegorodskaia, and Tsentral'no-Promyshlennaia, as well as the Severnyi krai.

seven krais, which also contained within them 17 national-territorial autonomies. Alongside these new units stood ten autonomous republics (ASSR).

The 1930s: Reduction and Repression

Shortly after the completion of the re-drawing of borders in the 1920s, the USSR entered a new phase of reducing the size of its constituent regions. The enormous oblasts produced by the economic districting proved too difficult to manage and had to be broken down into smaller units. Once again the process began at the country's extremities, starting with the Far Eastern krai in 1932, and concluded with the interior regions at the end of the decade. As Shlapentokh points out, the process may have had a benign public justification, but "the decomposition of giant regions into smaller divisions during the period of mass terror, such as occurred with Iaroslavl, Tula, Kursk, Cheliabinsk, Arkhangelsk, Gorky, and many others, was also a result of Stalin's completely unfounded fears."[48]

In 1934, the Urals oblast was divided into three smaller oblasts – Sverdlovsk, Cheliabinsk, and Obsko-Irtysh (on the territory of today's Tiumen oblast).[49] Two of the national okrugs created in 1930, Ostiaksko-Vogul'skii (today Khanty-Mansiiskii) and Iamal'skii (Nenetskii), were transferred to the Obsko-Irtysh oblast. But the latter was eliminated by the end of 1934 and its territory distributed between the new Omsk oblast and Cheliabinsk oblast, while the two national okrugs were merely transferred to Omsk oblast.[50] In October 1938, Perm oblast was split off from Sverdlovsk oblast once more. The Komi-Permiatskii national okrug, which had been created in 1925 and originally subordinated to Sverdlovsk, was now transferred to Perm. By the end of the 1930s, no large oblasts or krais remained in the RSFSR. The new oblasts were

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[48] Shlapentokh, Levita, and Loiberg, *From Submission to Rebellion*, 62.
[49] Ushakov, *Kak upravlialsia permskii krai*, 66.
[50] Tarkhov, "Izmenenie administrativno-territorial'nogo deleniia Rossii v 18-20 vekakh."

significantly smaller and to some extent resembled the tsarist gubernii. Indeed, the borders of the "new" Perm oblast virtually coincided with those of the Perm guberniia of 1919-1923.[51] In the summer of 1944, the Tomsk and Tiumen oblasts were established in western Siberia. Tiumen oblast was created from portions of Omsk oblast, including the two national okrugs to the north. Both Perm and Tiumen oblasts retain these borders to the present day.

For the non-Russian regions, ethnic identity was becoming ever more territorial in the 1930s, as "each individual got stuck with a nationality and most nationalities got stuck with their borders."[52] Already the existence of a national-territorial division became recognized as evidence of legitimate claims to a distinctive national identity – part of what Brubaker has referred to as the crystallization of territorial-political identity.[53] This granted the Stalinist state a particularly effective weapon for containing expressions of national identity, insofar as the withdrawal of a national-territorial division would "denationalize" that community.[54] With the start of World War II, national groups considered to be "unloyal" found their territorial autonomies liquidated. Many of these groups were deported to Central Asia, Kazakhstan, and Siberia, while their territories were distributed among neighboring Russian oblasts and "loyal" autonomies. Changes to internal borders ominously reflected deportations of entire peoples, conspicuous by their absence – the Crimean Tatars and the Volga Germans, and particularly in the Caucasus.[55]

Among the first regions to be affected by this tactic was the Buriat-Mongol ASSR. Possibly motivated by concerns of the rise of Japan in the Pacific and the

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[51] Ushakov, *Kak upravlialsia permskii krai*, 69.
[52] Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment," 444.
[53] Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
[54] Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment," 445.
[55] Tarkhov, "Izmenenie administrativno-territorial'nogo deleniia Rossii v 18-20 vekakh."

need to safeguard Russia's southern flank, the Politburo vivisected the BMASSR in September 1937: its territory north-west of Lake Baikal was turned into a separate national autonomy, the Ust'-Orda Buriat-Mongol national okrug, while the transfer of surrounding territory to Irkutsk oblast left the new okrug detached from the ASSR and isolated. Similarly, a portion of the republic's eastern territory was made into the Agin Buriat-Mongol national okrug, also separated from the BMASSR. The republic's leadership was replaced shortly afterwards.

Different explanations have been suggested for this move. The administrative justification was the desire to integrate the okrugs into the economies of the surrounding Russian oblasts – an argument, it is worth mentioning, that remains popular in Putin's Russia concerning regional enlargement in Irkutsk[56] - while formally respecting the indigenous people's autonomy. Another possibility was the center's fear that Buriats, who are linguistically and culturally (at least as regards the predominant Buddhist culture) closer to Japan than Russia, might be tempted to collaborate with Japan.[57] Added to this was the fact that the Buriats were the largest nationality native to Siberia (with 237,500 people in 1926) and possessed a strongly developed national consciousness.[58] As a consequence of the territorial re-division, the ratio of Buriats to Russians within the BMASSR greatly diminished. Moreover, the effect was compounded by the migration of Buriats to Mongolia and Inner Mongolia in the wake of the 1937 boundary change, and by ongoing Russian in-migration to the area. If the overall population of the republic increased during 1926-1939 by 156,900 people (despite the reduction in its territory), the Buriat population *decreased* by 13,800 people while the Russian population during this period grew by

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[56] See Chapter Six.
[57] A.A. Elaev, *Buriatskii narod: stanovlenie, razvitie, samoopredelenie* (Moskva: 2000), 216-7.
[58] Forsyth, *A History of the Peoples of Siberia*, 330.

154,900 people.[59] In other words, the Buriats went from comprising 43.8% of the republic's population before 1937 to only 21.3% after 1937.[60]

In Kareliia, the change of leadership preceded, or perhaps was viewed as preparation for, territorial change. Giulling and the republican leadership were arrested for "nationalist deviations" and replaced by figures from Leningrad.[61] From 1935, the region was effectively under the control of Andrei Zhdanov, who had taken over in Leningrad following the assassination of Sergei Kirov in December 1934. Through the 1930s, Zhdanov's obkom effectively transformed the republic into "the local executive arm of Leningrad."[62] As war in Europe grew more probable, the USSR sought to open negotiations with Finland to move the border further from Leningrad. Despite the Finns' willingness to make some concessions, the Soviet Union attacked Finland on 30 November 1939, starting the brief "Winter War." The war ended in March 1940 with Finland ceding large areas of Finnish Kareliia (and some northern portions of Finland), which were joined to the Kareliian ASSR.[63]

The enlarged republic was formally upgraded at the end of March 1940 to a full union republic, the Karelo-Finnish SSR (KFSSR). The move was partly a means to prepare for the possible annexation of all of Finland, or at least to keep Finland continuously "under the gun." At the same time, portions of the Kareliian isthmus and the entirety of the coast of the Gulf of Finland were detached from the KFSSR and transferred to Leningrad oblast (in the Russian Republic) from 1940 to 1946.[64] Finland (re-)occupied Kareliia during World War II (from 1941 to 1944), during which time about 70% of the republic's population was evacuated deeper within the

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[59] Elaev, *Buriatskii narod*, 218.
[60] Forsyth, *A History of the Peoples of Siberia*, 334.
[61] Khelena Valta, ed., *Chto takoe Kareliia* (Helsinki: Soiuz Karelii, 1997), 30.
[62] Baron, "The Karelian ASSR," 135.
[63] Paasi, *Territories, Boundaries and Consciousness*, 106.
[64] Kurs and Taagepera, "Karelia: Orthodox Finland," 109.

USSR.[65] This, combined with the departure of 420,000 inhabitants to Finland after the war and the slow pace of re-settlement, left Kareliia sparsely populated for the following decade.[66]

The 1950s: Khrushchev's Sovnarkhoz Reform

The last round of changes to internal borders occurred during the Khrushchev era. The autonomies that had been liquidated during the war were restored by January 1957 (with the exception of the Volga German autonomous republic). In July 1956 the Karelo-Finnish SSR was enfolded within the RSFSR as an autonomous republic and its name restored to the Kareliian ASSR. Similarly, the Buriat territories dropped the "Mongol" from their names, so that the Buriat-Mongol autonomous republic became, simply, the Buriat ASSR.[67] In both cases it is reasonable to assume that the Soviet leadership sought to diminish the potential for territorial claims made on behalf of Finns or Mongols on the other side of the border.

Despite these elements of stabilization, Khrushchev launched a revision of the country's internal borders in February 1957, proposing to abolish the central economic ministries and replace them with a network of regional economic councils, or *sovnarkhozy*. The reform created 105 councils, or one for almost every province and region (68 within the RSFSR).[68] In effect, the reform was "roughly equivalent to replacing American states with a new set of territorial-administrative entities."[69] In part the reform was aimed at disrupting tendencies toward "localism" (*mestnichestvo*)

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[65] Valta, ed., *Chto takoe Kareliia*, 30.
[66] Paasi, *Territories, Boundaries and Consciousness*, 113.
[67] Elaev relates a story, which may be apocryphal, regarding the change in the republic's name: at a meeting with the republic's leadership in 1958, Khrushchev asked, "Why is your republic called Buriat-Mongol? Are there any Mongols there?" When the republican leadership responded that there were not, Khrushchev proposed that the republic's name be changed. Elaev, *Buriatskii narod*, 246-7.
[68] Of the 68 within the RSFSR, 60 were based on existing regions while eight were formed by combining regions. Shlapentokh, Levita, and Loiberg, *From Submission to Rebellion*, 236.
[69] William Taubman, *Khrushchev: the Man and his Era*, 1st ed. (New York: Norton, 2003), 303-4.

among the regions – and it is worth noting that no distinction was drawn between the Russian and non-Russian territories on this count. Yet the sovnarkhoz reform was predominantly an instrument for Khrushchev to deprive his rivals in the central ministries of a political base.[70] The reform's decentralizing nature also represented a concession to Khrushchev's supporters among the regional and republican party apparatus, "who had long resented and complained about the power of the central ministries."[71] The reform had little effect on the problem of *mestnichestvo* (except, perhaps, to exacerbate it) [72], and decentralization was steadily reversed. First the sovnarkhozy were herded under 17 larger economic regions in 1961, then again under a single Supreme Sovnarkhoz in September 1963. The last vestiges of Khrushchev's experiment with decentralization were swept away by September 1965 as the central ministries' positions were reinstated.[73]

Along with the fading of economic decentralization, the national question started to fade from the public agenda at the start of the 1960s. The 1961 Party Program confidently proclaimed that,

> The borders between the union republics within the USSR are increasingly losing their former significance, since all the nations are equal, their life is organized on a single socialist foundation, the material and spiritual needs of the people are satisfied to the same extent, and they are all united into one family by common vital interests and are advancing together toward a single goal communism.[74]

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[70] Hough argues that this is a mischaracterization since "nearly all of the twenty-four ministers whose ministries were abolished were given strategic industrial positions in the sovnarkhoz period." Yet it is hard to imagine that either the USSR Minister of the Coal Industry, who was dispatched to Kemerovo, or the Ministry of the Fish Ministry, sent to head the sovnarkhoz in Murmansk, would view their new assignments outside of Moscow as status-enhancing. Jerry F. Hough, *The Soviet Prefects: The Local Party Organs in Industrial Decision-making* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), 55-62.
[71] William J. Tompson, "Industrial Management and Economic Reform under Khrushchev," in *Nikita Khrushchev*, ed. William Taubman, Sergei Khrushchev, and Abbott Gleason (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 142-3.
[72] Ibid., 145.
[73] Gleason, *Federalism and Nationalism*, 68-9.
[74] Quoted in: Ibid., 66.

In the wake of the re-centralization of the state, the Party began to debate whether the USSR should *de-federalize*. Though the results were indeterminate, they pointed to the ongoing relevance of the shape and status of the country's internal borders as "an extraordinarily sensitive matter" despite the Party's claims to the contrary.[75]

The Brezhnev Era: Stabilizing Boundaries and Regional Identities

The Brezhnev era was a time of relative stability in center-periphery relations. If the political upheavals of the previous decades coincided with the promotion, demotion, enlargement or reduction of regional borders, it is not surprising that internal borders stayed put during what came to be known as the era of political and economic stagnation. This raises interesting questions about the shaping of regional interests and identities within those borders. The activation of new borders, division of existing borders, or even the minor "adjustment" of borders tend to generate interests and bring identities into open contestation. The process of institutionalization, by contrast, develops gradually by augmenting prior-existing relationships among borders, interests and identities. Even if outright changes in borders are not observed during this period, then, one must still examine the processes that inhabit them and affect their status. Two crucial dimensions of regional development concerned the "nativization" of regional Party leaderships and the routinization of center-regional engagements.

The stabilization of regional boundaries in the Brezhnev era was matched by the relative stabilization of regional administrative cadres. It was common policy throughout the Soviet era to rotate members of the managerial and political elite through different regions during their careers as a way of broadening experience while

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[75] Grey Hodnett, "The Debate over Soviet Federalism," *Soviet Studies* 18, no. 4 (1967): 481.

diminishing individual ties to particular regions. Despite the overall centralizing trend of the Brezhnev era, the rotation of regional elites actually declined and "natives" increasingly were promoted to party leadership in their own regions. In his speech to the 24th Party Congress in 1971, Brezhnev even stressed the increasing number of "local" workers in regional leaderships as a positive development, emphasizing that outsiders had only been appointed in "exceptional cases."[76] As Moses reports,

> Those "insiders" recruited from lower positions inside the very same region have increased from 44 to 65 percent of all [obkom] bureau members, with the corresponding proportion directly assigned from outside the region and the regional area declining from 45 to 25 percent. The data also seem to bear out Brezhnev's conclusion that more "local workers" have been elected obkom first secretary. Obkom first secretaries originally recruited to the bureau from a position in the same regional middle elite have increased from 16 to 39 percent.[77]

This trend towards the "nativization" of regional administration was concentrated among the more urbanized regions of the RSFSR, suggesting that status and the stability of regional cadres went hand in hand.[78]

This is not particularly surprising, perhaps, given that the career patterns of leaders in communist regimes (not just the USSR) generally exhibited successful periods of service in local or provincial administration.[79] In Soviet Russia, provincial leaders were held responsible for maintaining political stability, for plan fulfillment of all the enterprises and institutions within their region, and generally for the integrated economic development of the area. By the 1960s, the Kremlin had specific incentives

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[76] Quoted in: Joel C. Moses, *Regional Party Leadership and Policy-Making in the USSR* (New York: Praeger, 1974), 146.
[77] Ibid., 218. While about half of regional first secretaries remained "outsiders," the increase in "natives" among the regional leadership was clearly palpable.
[78] Ibid., 221.
[79] Daniel N. Nelson, "Dilemmas of Local Politics in Communist States," *Journal of Politics* 41, no. 1 (1979): 29. The exceptions to this rule were those leaders who directly participated in staging communist revolutions. This trend continues to the present day in China. Deng Xiaoping's successor, Jiang Zemin, became general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party following a successful stint in Shanghai province. Zemin's successor, Hu Jintao, had previous experience running China's poorest province, Guizhou, and Tibet.

to promote local cadres "from within." From a *realpolitik* perspective, regional cadres had been decisive in overcoming the attempt to unseat Khrushchev by the "Anti-Party group" in 1957, and equally decisive in approving his removal in 1964. The Brezhnev regime had a vested interest in co-opting, rather than antagonizing, the most powerful elements of the regional leadership. Hence, Party statutes adopted under Khrushchev in 1961 that mandated the turnover of one-third of the Party committees at each election were repealed by the 23rd Party Congress in 1966.[80] From an economic perspective, central planners arguably became increasingly dependent upon regional elites for reliable information regarding plan fulfillment and for the implementation of planning directives. The need for privileged "insider" knowledge of the region became especially pressing since plan fulfillment often meant the redirection of resources or priorities within a region by "authorizing or requiring some specialized administrator to deviate from his directives or plans so that some other administrative unit has a better chance to carry out its mission."[81]

While increasing the "native" content of regional administration may have been politically expedient and economically necessary, it also carried its share of risks for the central authorities. In the Soviet system, the regional Party leaders often appeared all-powerful within their domains. Ironically, the ongoing bureaucratization of the Soviet state facilitated the growth of regional power. In a fashion somewhat similar to the tsarist era, conflicts among central departments and ministries opened space on the provincial level for the obkom secretary to gain more power:

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[80] Philip G. Roeder, *Red Sunset: The Failure of Soviet Politics* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993), 107. Roeder continues that the annual turnover of provincial first secretaries was significantly lower during the Brezhnev years as a result, though he does not analyze the extent to which this was related to changes in the rotation of elites among different regions.

[81] Jerry F. Hough, *How the Soviet Union is Governed* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1979), 492.

> the very multiplicity of regulations, plans, and directives flowing down the different governmental lines of command…inevitably come to contradict each other to some extent as Party policy becomes associated with different departmental emphases and self-interest. Because of these contradictions and divergencies, many conflicts inevitably arise among local administrators. It is precisely when the actions of one specialized hierarchy begin to interfere with the work and interests of other hierarchies and groups that a *politicheskii* question emerges. It is here that the local Party organ has the authority to countermand an administrative order or regulation and to obligate an administrator to take action.[82]

One should note that this is not the same as saying the regional secretaries were deliberately granted greater autonomy by the Kremlin, nor does it imply the regional leaders necessarily had greater input in central decision-making.[83] Rather, the growth of the provincial secretaries' discretionary powers, along with extended tours of duty in their "home" regions, points to a subtle process of local power accretion among Soviet Russia's more developed regions.[84]

Indeed, under such conditions it would be surprising if regional officials and party leaders did not develop group identities with intense affective or normative ties to "their" territory. The organizational boundaries of provincial administration became persistent markers of regional belonging and responsibility. As a 1964 editorial in *Partiinaia zhizn'* argues,

> [Prior to 1962] the administrative divisions of the country had been changed. The names of the organizations had been changed. But always within the boundaries of this or that administrative unit, there was a single Party organization which embraced all of the given area. The Party organ in this area united and coordinated the activity of all the Soviet, economic, and public organizations. It led and bore complete responsibility for all sides of the political, economic, and cultural life.[85]

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[82] Hough, *The Soviet Prefects*, 106. Original emphasis.
[83] The point is worth belaboring since Shlapentokh et al. misconstrue Hough's analysis in this fashion, apparently, in order to reject it out of hand. Shlapentokh, Levita, and Loiberg, *From Submission to Rebellion*, 74-5.
[84] The term is drawn from: Nelson, "Dilemmas of Local Politics in Communist States."
[85] Quoted in: Hough, *The Soviet Prefects*, 124.

Understandably, the more tightly integrated that a provincial Party organization of "natives" became as a bureaucratic unit, the more likely it was to be resentful of Moscow's interference in local affairs.[86] This would be a natural result of (increasingly) "native" Party leaders seeking to improve the rational economic administration of their region, as was often the case.[87]

This interpretation appears to be supported by analyses of regional interest articulation and the (re-)institutionalization of center-regional engagements. Despite a dip in the open articulation of regional interests during the 1960s, regional leaders became more open and forceful in voicing region-specific concerns by the late-Brezhnev era. By the 26th Party Congress in 1981, regional interest articulation was perceived to be acceptable and a routine step in the planning process.[88] Indeed, regional secretaries increasingly went beyond the confines of the Party congresses and published their demands and criticisms in the central press. Moreover, their concerns became more forceful and ambitious in scope: "In articulating the needs of their regions, [regional party leaders were] much more likely to seek solutions to local administrative, economic, and social issues in changes in national policy or in greater devolution of authority to the region."[89] The most demanding and assertive stratum

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[86] Moses, *Regional Party Leadership and Policy-Making in the USSR*, 143-4.
[87] "The reasons for localism on the part of local Party officials go beyond the pressures of self-interest. Perhaps the most important of these reasons has been the absence of a rational price system and a set of success-indicators that would give local officials a reliable means of judging whether a proposal is indeed 'localistic.'" Hough, *The Soviet Prefects*, 266. Of course, one should not be too apologetic for regional Party elites. Manifestations of localism and anti-Moscow sentiment (particularly during the Brezhnev era) could easily point to the entrenchment of corrupt, sultanistic provincial elites. In such cases, however, one would expect the regional elites to seek to avoid drawing the center's attention, either for fear of prosecution or out of reluctance to share the spoils.
[88] Howard L. Biddulph, "Local Interest Articulation at CPSU Congresses," *World Politics* 36, no. 1 (1983): 39.
[89] George W. Breslauer, "Provincial Party Leaders' Demand Articulation and the Nature of Center-Periphery Relations in the USSR," *Slavic Review* 45, no. 4 (1986): 655.

of provincial secretaries tended to be from regions of traditional political importance or high political status.[90]

There are several conclusions that can be drawn from these observations. First, the rising tide of regional interest articulation, particularly as concerned demands for changes in national policy, was surely just the visible tip of the iceberg. The presence of anti-Moscow sentiment among the regions became abundantly clear only in the post-Soviet period. Second, regional status had concrete implications for a region's development prospects, as well as the career prospects of the regional leadership. Generally speaking, the fusion of political and economic power in communist regimes meant that, "just as access to political resources, for example, carries with it access to economic resources, so exclusion from political power necessarily implies exclusion from social and economic resources."[91] Among the Soviet provincial leaderships, this translated into increasingly tough competition for development projects, allocation of central investment and priorities, personnel (especially the allotment of *nomenklatura* lists to regional leaderships), and so forth.

Finally, the combination of the above factors likely accentuated the sense of regional separateness as regional borders increasingly demarcated the prospects for economic and political survival. Requests (or even demands) by regional secretaries for more rational planning and distribution were oriented towards improving a region's economic self-sufficiency. Hough documents the presence of such demands already in the late-Stalin era.[92] In other words, even if regional leaders possessed a

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[90] Ibid.: 660-64.

[91] Valerie Bunce, "The Political Economy of the Brezhnev Era: The Rise and Fall of Corporatism," *British Journal of Political Science* 13, no. 2 (1983): 132.

[92] "Many obkom secretaries [at the Nineteenth Party Contress in 1952] proposed large-scale investment projects in their regions, even though this might mean more work and worry for them personally. The first secretary of the Khabarovsk kraikom, for example, stated that his territory needed timber-processing and chemical plants so that the large amounts of timber scrap there could be put to industrial use. The Rostov leader argued for the construction of a blast furnace at the Taganrog Steel Plant so that it could produce its own pig iron from local ore and would not have to import pig iron from distant

common variety of anti-Moscow sentiment, they were divided by their competition for the resources allocated by Moscow. The more "nativized" a region's leadership, the more that their success in maintaining or improving their region's economic performance was tied to the life opportunities of their families, friends, and colleagues.

How compelling is this interpretation of the stabilization of regional boundaries and the development of regional identity during the Brezhnev era? This author is unaware of any serious research on the matter, unfortunately, so one can only make a best guess based upon the strength of alternative explanations.[93] The analysis here suggests that formal federal or hierarchical status only partly explains the growth of local power accretion in Soviet Russia, since the salience of regional borders was expressed in terms of their implications for differences in regional status and prestige. Aside from economic or traditional status, another source of local power accretion in communist regimes was ethnic or national sentiment.[94] The explanation proposed here would be confirmed if the development of ethno-territorial identity *within* the borders of the RSFSR followed a similar trajectory to the development of regionalist sentiment in the "non-ethnic" provinces, even if the content of politics was tailored to a different variety of claims against the center.

Insofar as internal borders were drawn according to different principles – either to bring borders in line with compact, non-Russian nationalities, or to organize and unify regional economic production – one might expect that regional status also

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enterprises. And from the Molotov obkom came an insistent appeal for the beginning of preparatory work for the construction of a hydroelectric station at Solikamsk on the Upper Kama River. Unless this was done, the Party leader warned, the new enterprises to be built in the oblasty in the next five-year plan would find themselves without sufficient electricity." Hough, *The Soviet Prefects*, 259.

[93] Admittedly, the uncovering of regional disputes over the relocation of internal borders would provide much more leverage on the question, but this sort of historical research has not been undertaken and is beyond the confines of the current project.

[94] Nelson, "Dilemmas of Local Politics in Communist States," 33.

fluctuated differently for borders of different categories, with certain regions designated as ethnic homelands while others (predominantly Russian) were ascribed a formally neutral administrative status. Questions of regional status affected the non-Russian regions in a myriad of ways, especially concerning the consequences of the drawing of internal borders for nation-building. For instance, education in one's national language depended upon residency in an autonomous republic – a point particularly salient to regions that had been dissected during the Stalin era, such as Buriatiia:

> In a typical situation, approximately one-third of the group [assigned a republic within the RSFSR] was left outside of the republic's borders (a mean of 33.2 percent, a median of 31.2 percent). In only two of the twelve autonomous republics were the borders so drawn as to incorporate more than 90 percent of the titular group's membership, and in two others they excluded a substantial majority of the titular group (62.7 percent and 73.2 percent). Recalling that residence within one's own autonomous unit became a prerequisite for schooling conducted in one's native language, the impact of this initial gerrymandering upon the rate of acculturation must have been considerable.[95]

Regional status also extended from the choices made in lumping regions together (or splitting them apart) as economic units, regardless of their national content. The expansion of Kareliia's borders to include the former Olonets guberniia provides a vivid example. The fateful decision to tie the Khanty-Mansiiskii and Iamalo-Nenetskii national okrugs to Tiumen oblast is another.

The Brezhnev era effectively locked in the consequences of boundary changes for the status and development of the national autonomies. The relative power and status of a region was more likely to derive from its economic indicators and relative input in central decision-making during this period. Thus, Hough's seminal study of regional leaderships and industrial decision-making proceeds from the premise that smaller Union republics like Moldova were on equal footing with, if not less powerful

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[95] Connor, *The National Question in Marxist-Leninist Theory and Strategy*, 304.

than, stronger "non-ethnic" regions within the RSFSR like Sverdlovsk oblast.[96] While the "national question" did not fade from public discourse, the national content of regional political engagements with the center was occluded (or concealed) by their economic content. If national concerns were to be addressed, they would have to be framed in such a way that they reflected the greater interest of Soviet society: "what is good for Yakutsk must be justified as essential for the Union."[97] Alternatively, they would have to be expressed through cultural or other putatively apolitical venues for expression.

Yet even if this fell within the broader discriminatory pattern of Soviet nationalities policy, the non-Russian nationalities and regions were not exclusively affected. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Brezhnev regime faced a creeping crisis of legitimacy as the official ideology lost its salience among society and the elite. In the non-Russian republics, party and government leaders sought out new sources of legitimacy "in the histories and traditions of the republics' titular nationalities, and in representing these nationalities' interests at all-Union fora."[98] Similarly, Brezhnev and Mikhail Suslov tacitly cultivated Russian nationalism among the intelligentsia because it offered an alternative basis of legitimation that did not require political and economic reform.[99] At the same time, "the extraordinary attention to Russian nationalist concerns went hand in hand with an unwillingness to recognize the validity of these concerns or introduce policy changes in the areas where these concerns appeared to be justified."[100] The regime's attempt to compensate for the declining

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[96] Hough, *The Soviet Prefects*. Later, in his broader study of Soviet politics, Hough examines the national question only as concerns the Union republics. Otherwise he holds that "the oblast, krai, and autonomous republic are sufficiently comparable to be treated as identical…" Hough, *How the Soviet Union is Governed*, 483.
[97] Biddulph, "Local Interest Articulation at CPSU Congresses," 30.
[98] Vera Tolz, *Russia*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 204.
[99] Yitzhak M. Brudny, *Reinventing Russia: Russian Nationalism and the Soviet State, 1953-1991* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 16-17.
[100] Ibid., 111-2.

salience of its official ideology thus had the opposite effect of what was intended, for Russia and the other Union republics. For the ethnically Russian regions, "localism" remained a dangerous political offense, and the Party secretaries in oblasts and krais were compelled to express region-specific concerns in terms of their all-Union significance. The shape of those concerns had everything to do with the ways that regional boundaries were drawn or altered during the first decades of Soviet rule. Indeed, one could argue that they went further back since the majority of the RSFSR's internal borders (especially in European Russia) echoed the contours of Ekaterina II's gubernii. The sense of discrimination from Moscow – even claims of colonial imposition – were present in the Russian regions well before the Soviet era, particularly in Siberia.

That the open expression of these claims, rooted in the social and cultural dimensions of regional identity, could not be openly addressed (at least, not without the forbearance of the Party's leadership and the KGB) surely contributed to the official impression that regional identity in the Soviet Union, insofar as it possessed political content, was almost exclusively ethnic and inextricably tied to the country's administrative-territorial divisions. Similarly, the possibility of different regional identities among the "non-ethnic" regions in the Soviet era has become the veritable "dog that didn't bark" in Western scholarship on Russian regional politics, and it has not been seriously scrutinized.[101] To be sure, one should be careful not to diminish the claims of systematic repression against non-Russian nationalities under the Soviet regime. When compared with the non-recognition of how regional identities were suppressed, however, it is possible to see the gap in reasoning in schematic fashion: concerning the Soviet Union's minority nationalities, national concerns tend to be

[101] Though a collaborative work that makes an initial step in this direction is: Vladimir Gel'man and Ted Hopf, eds., *Tsentr i regional'nye identichnosti v Rossii* (Sankt-Peterburg: Izd-vo Evropeiskogo universiteta v Sankt-Peterburge; Letnii sad, 2003).

portrayed as privately held in spite of their public expression and official treatment (say, as economic or developmental concerns).[102] By contrast, the ethnically Russian regions were seen to be limited to the realm of particularist economic concerns precisely because of the way that they were publicly expressed, addressed, and prioritized. The implication was that regional claims emerged within a more "diffuse" form of authoritarian repression that was unrelated to the development of regionalist (as opposed to Union republican) sentiment or identity. The analytical assumption that the processes that (unexpectedly) cultivated nationalist sentiment in the national autonomies did not have similar consequences for the development of regionalist sentiment in the (predominantly Russian) oblasts and krais seems to have acquired *de facto* standing as fact in the absence of challenge.[103]

The analysis above suggests that this assumption deserves greater scrutiny. Skeptics might still ask, for example, why the oblasts and krais of post-Soviet Russia did not join Chechnia in pushing for independence, or follow the separatist path of Tatarstan? The answer concerns the broader historical processes and dynamics of center-regional relations during the Gorbachev and El'tsin periods.[104]

It is true that decentralization during the Gorbachev era was spearheaded by the Union republics in the name of national self-determination. Gorbachev was first confronted with the salience of the national issue in December 1986 when riots broke out in Alma-Ata following the replacement of Kazakhstan's First Party Secretary,

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[102] See: Mark R. Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), 54.

[103] This is the flipside of the argument discussed in Chapter One that the oblasts and krais in post-Soviet Russia were more likely to be integrationist than separatist due to their being predominantly Russian or "non-ethnic." Indeed, one is tempted to suggest that the ambiguity of the "Russian idea" in the post-Soviet era could be related to the fragmentation (or dilution) of Russian national identity along regional lines in the Soviet era.

[104] Both periods have been covered extensively elsewhere and are only treated in cursory fashion here. The El'tsin period, however, receives constant attention throughout the rest of this study insofar as it relates to the Putin regime.

Dinmukhamed Kunaev, with an ethnic Russian, Gennadii Kolbin.[105] The national question gained further prominence with the outbreak of violence over Nagorno-Karabakh, the Armenian exclave located within Azerbaijan, in February 1988. In particular, the Armenian desire to reclaim Nagorno-Karabakh directly questioned the status and desirability of the USSR's internal borders. Once those borders became the target of open political contestation, any central response – even a lack of response – could not help but be politicized. Thus, Egor Ligachev's attempt to defuse the situation in Azerbaijan by forcefully articulating the Politburo's opposition to changing national territorial borders was interpreted as support for Azerbaijan's position. At the same time, Aleksandr Iakovlev's similar efforts in Armenia were interpreted as supporting the Armenian position precisely because he neglected to address the border issue.[106] The imposition of direct rule from Moscow over Nagorno-Karabakh therefore did little other than freeze the conflict in place.

During the last three years of the USSR, the national issue gained momentum as Soviet troops clashed with nationalists. Among the most significant moments were the "Tbilisi massacre" in April 1989, when the Soviet army fired on peaceful demonstrators in the Georgian capital, and the army's crackdown on Lithuania in January 1991. The tragedy in Tbilisi effectively sealed Georgia's eventual exit from the Soviet Union, while the departure of the Baltic states was inevitable. Yet violent confrontation was not the exclusive route to the political assertion of regional identity and status. Gorbachev's policies of *glasnost* ("openness") and *perestroika* ("restructuring") encouraged the expression of regional interests. Of particular significance was the Nineteenth Party Conference's approval of Gorbachev's proposal

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[105] This is often considered one of Gorbachev's blunders, though Brown documents that it was Kunaev who advised Gorbachev to appoint a non-Kazakh. Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1996), 261.
[106] Ibid., 262.

to transform local and regional soviets (councils) into elected assemblies.[107] After the elections to local councils began in 1990, "each successive turnover of control to a republican or regional authority left that institution that much less reason for allegiance to the center and that much more of an incentive to listen to the voices of a newly empowered local electorate."[108] Stoner-Weiss argues that the 1990 elections thus "initiated a struggle over the shape of the new Russian federal system and an ongoing power struggle between the Russian center and the periphery" that clearly was not limited to the Union republics and the autonomies.[109]

As El'tsin moved the Russian republic into open confrontation with Gorbachev and Soviet central authority, the regions became key components in the struggle for Russia. Gorbachev took the lead in March 1990 with the creation of his Federation Council, an advisory body composed of the heads of the fifteen Union republics which served to diminish El'tsin's standing among other republican leaders. It quickly became apparent, however, that the autonomous republics and oblasts were an important, untapped political resource. During 1990-1991, both Gorbachev and El'tsin sought to outbid the other for the support of the autonomies. The first step towards activating this resource was the promulgation of the law, "On the Delimitation of Powers between the USSR and the Subjects of the Federation" on 26 April 1990.[110] The law effectively drew no distinction between Union republics and autonomous republics, transferring economic rights under exclusive and concurrent

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[107] Kathryn Stoner-Weiss, *Local Heroes: The Political Economy of Russian Regional Governance* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1997), 72.
[108] Jeffrey Kahn, *Federalism, Democratization, and the Rule of Law in Russia* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002), 86.
[109] Stoner-Weiss, *Local Heroes*, 73.
[110] Cameron Ross, *Federalism and Democratisation in Russia* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2002), 20.

powers. By the end of 1990, Gorbachev's Federation Council had been expanded to include the heads of twenty autonomous republics. [111]

El'tsin's supporters feared that Gorbachev's moves to enfranchise the autonomies (most of which were located within the RSFSR) would threaten their position.[112] Russia's declaration of sovereignty on 12 June 1990 may have been interpreted as an attempt to maintain the RSFSR's position as a gateway to the autonomies. As the autonomous republics followed suit and began issuing their own sovereignty declarations, El'tsin increased the pressure on Gorbachev with his now-infamous exhortation in Kazan' for the republics to "take as much independence as you can."[113] On 15 December 1990, the Russian Congress of People's Deputies amended the republican constitution to raise the status of its sixteen autonomous republics to constituent republics. The following summer, the Russian Supreme Soviet approved the promotion of four autonomous oblasts (excluding the Evreiskaia AO) to republican status.[114]

Yet the process of republicanization did not stop with the autonomies. In response to the ASSRs' declarations of sovereignty and unilateral promotion of four autonomous oblasts to republican status, some of the newly-elected oblast governments asserted themselves by threatening to withhold taxes from collection by the federal treasury.[115] By 1990-1, regional leaders were less inclined to respond to the economic demands of the center and frequently resorted to hoarding, such that "goods and foodstuffs were more readily available in some provincial towns than in the capital."[116] From 1990 to 1993, the "republicanization" process among oblasts

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[111] Kahn, *Federalism, Democratization, and the Rule of Law in Russia*, 93-5.
[112] Ibid., 95.
[113] Richard Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 2002), 216.
[114] Ibid., 207.
[115] Stoner-Weiss, *Local Heroes*, 81.
[116] Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor*, 270.

and krais gained momentum as various regions moved from economic protest to outright attempts at unilateral promotion in status. The proposals and demands during this time included a Pomor Republic centered in Arkhangel'sk, a Central Russian Republic formed from eleven regions and centered in Orel, a Leningrad Republic centered in St. Petersburg, a Neva Republic for St. Petersburg alone, a Urals Republic centered in Ekaterinburg, a Southern Urals Republic formed around Cheliabinsk, a Siberian Republic based in Novosibirsk, an East Siberian Republic centered in Irkutsk, and a Maritime Republic with its capital in Vladivostok. Other oblasts sought to unilaterally and directly promote their federal status to that of republic.[117]

The (attempted) republicanization of oblasts and krais in the late-Soviet and early post-Soviet periods points to the importance of sequencing in the activation of Russia's internal borders, the dismantling of the Soviet Union, and the problems in cobbling together a new "federal bargain" for post-Soviet Russia. Whereas the sovereignty declarations of the Union republics challenged Soviet rule, the non-republican declarations challenged the Russian republic's authority.[118] For a brief moment, however, these two processes were intertwined. Gorbachev's push to establish a new Union Treaty began with talks at Novo-Ogareva in April 1991. The negotiations were attended by the head of nine Union republics (Georgia, Moldova, and the Baltics did not participate). The autonomous republics were invited to attend, as well, but were not extended full negotiating rights in the proceedings.[119] Gorbachev had a fleeting opportunity to enfranchise the autonomies, oblasts, and krais in the struggle for control of Russia and the crafting of a new Union Treaty to preserve the USSR. As it happened, he did not appreciate the extent to which the

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[117] Shlapentokh, Levita, and Loiberg, *From Submission to Rebellion*, 109.
[118] Ian Bremmer, "Post-Soviet Nationalities Theory: Past, Present, and Future," in *New States, New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations*, ed. Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 11.
[119] Kahn, *Federalism, Democratization, and the Rule of Law in Russia*, 97.

interconnectedness of Russia's internal borders established the grounds for overlapping claims and grievances against both Union and republican authority. Instead, he focused exclusively on the non-Russian republics and autonomies, and arguably deprived himself of a potentially significant political resource: Russia's many oblasts and krais.

Gorbachev was not alone in this regard. Relations among the center and the regions in the El'tsin era exuded ambiguity, contradiction, and double-think. When talks resumed following the August Coup in the fall of 1991, El'tsin excluded the autonomous republics from the process. The El'tsin regime soon bowed to the regional opposition, however, in the drafting of Russia's constitutional structure. The constitutional commission established by the Russian Supreme Soviet in June 1990 put forth several proposals for Russia's post-Soviet constitutional structure by fall 1991. Among them, the suggestion that oblast boundaries be re-drawn to create larger *zemli* ("lands," similar to Germany's *länder*) from several regions met with resolute opposition from both republics and oblasts. The republics opposed the proposition on the grounds that they would lose their special status:

> ...republic authorities thought that the creation of zemli from the combination of several oblasts would mean effectively the creation of at least forty-five new republics with forty-five new presidents and forty-five new parliaments that would overwhelm the special interests of the ethnic republics in further negotiations with Moscow.[120]

Oblast authorities viewed that plan as an attempt to do away with the most vocal regional leaders.[121] The center retreated and the Federal Treaty completed the massive decentralization of Russia's political system on 31 March 1992. The Treaty granted joint jurisdiction over public programs such as education, health care, and management of natural resources, and even stipulated powers reserved to the

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[120] Stoner-Weiss, *Local Heroes*, 84.
[121] Ibid.

regions.[122] Oblasts and krais obtained full "subject" status (constituent regions) of the federation. The republics earned the right to secession, though Bashkortostan and Sakha-Iakutiia only signed after receiving special dispensions regarding their contributions to the federal budget.[123] Starting in 1994, the Presidential Administration and the heads of most republics began signing bilateral power-sharing treaties which fixed in place extra-constitutional privileges without legislative oversight or approval.[124]

At the same time, El'tsin's encouragement of regional sovereignization movements came to an abrupt halt once his position at the apex of Russian politics was consolidated. One of the first steps taken by the new regime was the creation of the institution of Presidential Representatives in 1991. El'tsin's representatives in the regions were supposed to ensure some degree of *kontrol'* ("oversight"), effectively filling the void left by the Communist Party. As Huskey points out, it was a measure in keeping with the traditions of Russian state-building, "with parallels to the *namestniki* of the tsarist era and the *polpredy* of early Bolshevik rule. In each case, a fledgling central government placed personnel in the provinces to assist in the regathering of power."[125] The December 1993 constitution left out much of the Federal Treaty, putting into place a system of government that was "federal in form but unitary in content."[126] El'tsin attempted to strengthen the hand of his Presidential Representatives over regional administrations in 1997, but it was not until Vladimir Putin's reform of the system of presidential envoys that they began accumulating

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[122] Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society*, 219.
[123] Ross, *Federalism and Democratisation in Russia*, 24. Bashkortostan also obtained to right to maintain a separate legal system. Tatarstan and Chechnia refused to sign the Treaty.
[124] Most of these treaties are published in: M.N. Guboglo, ed., *Federalizm vlasti i vlast' federalizma* (Moscow: IntelTekh, 1997).
[125] Eugene Huskey, *Presidential Power in Russia* (Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe, 1999), 191.
[126] Ibid., 186.

power independently of regional governments.[127] As discussed in later chapters, the drafting of regional charters and constitutions, and the conduct of gubernatorial elections, similarly evidenced unsuccessful attempts by the El'tsin administration to rein in regional assertiveness and separatism.

Conclusion: Boundary-Making and State-Building

The historical narrative presented above suggests some broad conclusions regarding the relationship between state centralization and regional boundaries. First of all, one finds a rather pronounced cyclical pattern of territorial centralization and decentralization corresponding with regional enlargement (*ukrupnenie*) and reduction (*razukrupnenie*). Indeed, the alternation between enlargement and reduction that began with the creation of Petr I's gubernii continues in fits and starts through to the present day (see **Table 2.1**). The number of subnational divisions appears to decrease when the salience of ethno-territorial principles for determining regional borders is on the decline, or with the rise of economic rationale favoring regional enlargement. Yet as Tarkhov observes, the products of enlargement were always too large: "large territories are hard to manage, their administrative centers are not accessible for the population, the level of spatial self-organization declines (owing to their size), and losses on communications and organization of large territories are disproportionate compared to smaller units."[128] By contrast, the number of subnational divisions increases as ethno-territorial principles and/or administrative rationale for decentralizing power are on the rise. Indeed, each cycle seems to create problematic conditions that beget the next.

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[127] See Chapter Three.
[128] Tarkhov, "Izmenenie administrativno-territorial'nogo deleniia Rossii v 18-20 vekakh."

Table 2.1: Cycles of Regional Enlargement and Reduction

	Imperial Russia		*Soviet Union*			*Russian Federation*
Enlargement	Petr I	Pavel I	1923-1929		1956-1964	2003-present
Reduction	Ekaterina II		1917-1922	1934-1954		1990-1993

What is not illustrated by this cycle is the relative "stickiness" of Russia's internal borders, many of which have remained in place for more than two or three centuries. The disappearance of regions during periods of enlargement is somewhat misleading in this regard. Particularly since the formalization of Soviet Russia's territorial grid, regions that have been enlarged or merged with their neighbors often persist as internal districts (*raiony* or *okruga*). When they reappear, then, they tend to retain those previous borders. This illustrates a peculiar tendency in Russian politics to view territorial boundaries as more or less fixed, while the political arrangements binding them together are treated as temporary.

A second observation that emerges from this cyclical pattern concerns variation in the relationship between state centralization or decentralization and regional enlargement or reduction (see **Table 2.2**). During the Imperial and post-Soviet periods, decentralization has been accompanied by reduction in the size of regional units, while centralization has generally been implied by regional enlargement. During the Soviet era, this relationship was reversed such that decentralization was effected through enlargement, while reduction marked periods of centralization. For instance, the amalgamation of smaller regions into larger units was seen as a means towards increasing central control over the provinces in Imperial Russia, but in the Soviet period enlargement was seen as necessary for devolving limited decision-making authority. Correspondingly, the dominant rationale for enlargement and reduction reversed again between the Soviet and post-Soviet eras.

The ethno-territorial principle was employed in the reduction of the size of regions and the simultaneous intensification of central control under Stalin in the 1930s, while the same principle served the cause of decentralization and sovereignization of the former ASSRs under El'tsin in the 1990s.

Table 2.2: State Centralization and Regional Enlargement or Reduction

	Imperial Russia	*Soviet Union*	*Russian Federation*
Enlargement (fewer)	Centralization	Decentralization	Centralization
Reduction (more)	Decentralization	Centralization	Decentralization

The main point here is that the way that political actors in Russia have defined the geographical and political boundaries of legitimate authority appears to affect the valence of center-regional relations (towards centralization or decentralization).[129] It also raises questions about the persistence of Russia's internal borders, state capacity, and regime type. Imperial Russia and Soviet Russia were governed by radically different principles, both political and economic, and yet both faced significant problems in generating and/or maintaining state capacity. One factor that remained constant across both periods, as illustrated by the experiences of Kareliia and Buriatiia, was the occasional revision of internal boundaries as a means to strengthen those international borders upon which they touched or overlapped, particularly during times of rising international tension. But the Soviet regime's notion of "strengthening" was closer to one of "thickening" by hollowing out territories along the border. As a result, Soviet Russia's longest border with Europe, Kareliia, was not

[129] This borrows from the analysis of the alternation between national and juridical conceptions of sovereignty in the international system in: J. Samuel Barkin and Bruce Cronin, "The State and the Nation: Changing Norms and the Rules of Sovereignty in International Relations," *International Organization* 48, no. 1 (1994).

exploited as a vital and lucrative conduit for trade or exchange. On the contrary, it came to be known popularly as "the closest Siberia to Moscow."

Post-Soviet Russia provided the country's first extended experience with democratic forms of government, yet the El'tsin regime also saw state capacity drain away through the country's latticework of internal borders. One wonders whether it is the country's internal borders that weaken central authority and render it illegitimate, rather than the reverse? During both the Imperial and Soviet eras, the state created and manipulated the administrative/provincial grid in order to facilitate resource extraction, development, and political control. That this grid would form the basis for the development of regional and ethno-territorial identities was an unintended and unexpected development, and it was one that the Imperial Russian state was forced to redress repeatedly.

During the Soviet era, the compromise between the national and administrative components of the formally federal arrangement was no more successful. The Leninist formula of "national in form, socialist in content" essentially committed the same error as the liberal assumption of the neutrality of borders, even if it arrived there by a different route.[130] Meanwhile, the various attempts to alter the boundaries of the oblasts and krais foundered upon the center's inability to manage or control larger regional entities, or to break down regional resistance to central interference. By the Brezhnev era, the regime partially abandoned attempts to domesticate the regions and settled, instead, for the nativization of regional leaderships. In this fashion, the development of regional identity went hand in hand with the diminishing of state capacity and frustration of the center's efforts to restore it.

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[130] See Chapter One for discussion of liberal political theory and the assumption of the political and normative neutrality of territorial borders.

Russia's internal borders thus appear to have stood expected historical processes on their heads. The drawing of borders was a primary instrument for, and not a result of, centralization or decentralization of the state. The changes were almost always initiated "from above," yet the center inevitably faced the problem of local power accretion. Indeed, the problem grew steadily as internal boundaries acquired bureaucracies and strong local executives. Rather than taming the regions, these became the vehicles for the developing sense of regional distinctiveness and, eventually, distinctive regional identities. Only when the central state is disintegrating do boundary changes emerge "from below." The first such instance occurred during the Civil War, and ended in the reconstitution of central control and the dashing of hopes for more democratic government. The second instance followed the breakup of the Soviet Union. El'tsin responded to the activation of regional boundaries with decentralization, yet this crippled the central state vis-à-vis the regions. When Vladimir Putin took power in 2000, he set out to restore central state capacity. And when viewed in historical perspective, it was entirely predictable that his first step would be to reconfigure Russia's internal borders – this time with the creation of the seven Federal Districts.

Chapter Three: Federal Districts and Regional Responses

Introduction

Throughout the 1990s, it was generally held that the status and trajectory of center-regional relations was regulated by the fundamental weakness of the central state. As discussed in the introductory chapter, the lack of central state capacity was used in analysis to explain the assertiveness of regional elites, the growth of regional autonomy, the growing diversity of regional political regimes, and the inability of the Kremlin to reclaim control over Russia's political space. At the minimum, this set of conditions predicted that the center could no longer dictate the terms of federation to its constituent regions, while the extreme prediction was the ongoing fragmentation of the Russian state and possible secession by well-placed regions.

The arrival of Vladimir Putin challenged these interpretations by the apparent ease with which his centralizing measures were implemented. Among Putin's reforms, the creation of seven Federal Districts (*Federal'nye okruga*) and reform of the institution of Presidential Representatives (*polpredy*) was the most visible and controversial innovation. It was controversial precisely because the reform amounted to a reconfiguration of the country's political geography and (purportedly) the demotion of the status of regional borders. In the process, it raised important theoretical questions regarding how internal borders serve as reservoirs of legitimacy and locomotives for restoring state capacity. If the activation of regional borders was linked to the growth of regional separatism or autonomy in the 1990s, Putin's reform sought to activate their *integrative* features. To put it differently, how might the disintegrative features of internal borders be diminished or reversed? The Federal Districts demonstrated how internal borders might be pressed into service to reverse

the processes of political fragmentation. In this sense they appear as instruments and resources available to weak states mired in extended (or stalled) regime transitions. At the same time, internal borders are institutional legacies of the previous regime, suggesting that they are not only implicated in questions of legitimacy and the prospects for democratization but also in the potential for authoritarian reversal.

This chapter begins by examining the processes by which Putin's Federal Districts were established, their legal and political content, and the challenges and interpretations arising as a result. This is followed by an analysis of the appointment and staffing decisions that structured the new institutions, and an extensive review of regional responses to the appearance of the Federal Districts. To put the reform within the broader context of Putin's centralizing measures, the process of selecting new senators to the Federation Council is considered with particular regard to the role played by the new presidential envoys. The chapter concludes with a theoretical re-assessment of the strengths of the new institution and its sources of power.

The Anatomy of a Decree

Putin signed the Federal Districts (FDs) into existence with decree (*ukaz*) n. 849 on 13 May 2000.[1] The decree was drafted in the Security Council, which possibly accounts for the stronger wording of Putin's decree as compared to El'tsin's 1997 decree reforming the post of presidential representative.[2] It also explains why the FD borders were changed to correspond to the Interior Ministry districts rather than the existing inter-regional associations. This apparently was a last minute change, as the

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[1] "O Polnomochnom Predstavitele Prezidenta Rosiiskoi Federatsii v Federal'nom Okruge." *Rossiiskaia Gazeta*, 16 May 2000; "Polozhenie O Polnomochnom Prestavitele Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii v Federal'nom Okruge." *Rossiiskaia Gazeta*, 16 May 2000; "Perechen' Federal'nykh Okrugov." *Rossiiskaia Gazeta*, 16 May 2000.

[2] *Izvestiia*, 16 May 2000. The new polpreds were appointed members of the Security Council shortly after the decree. *Rossiiskaia Gazeta*, 26 May 2000.

clause requiring the polpreds to coordinate their work with the inter-regional associations was left in the decree.[3] In fact, the decree bore all the markings of having been hastily-prepared and issued. This is perhaps best illustrated by the conspicuous absence of Moscow in the list of regions included in the Central District, which was corrected the following day.[4]

The speed with which Putin moved to create the FDs and implement reform of the Presidential Representatives is easy to understand from a tactical perspective – the newly-inaugurated President wanted to send a clear message from the very beginning of his administration. All the same, the concept of the FD was not a new one to the Presidential Administration. Various plans to create a system of FDs were drafted in 1994-5 within the Analytical Department of the Presidential Administration, the most radical of which foresaw districts whose borders did not correspond to existing regional or traditional economic district borders.[5] The 1995 plan envisioned a network of 23 districts consisting of two to six regions each. In order to prevent the new structures from falling under the control of regional administrations, the district capitals would be located away from regional capitals, taking advantage of proximity to the borders of neighboring regions and transport infrastructure.[6] In 1998, Putin began making preparations for the consolidation of regions and reform of the

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[3] Natal'ia Zubarevich, Nikolai Petrov, and Aleksei Titkov, "Federal'nye okruga - 2000," in *Regiony Rossii v 1999 g.: Ezhegodnoe prilozhenie k "Politicheskomu al'manakhu Rossii"*, ed. N. Petrov (Moscow: Moskovskii Tsentr Karnegi, 2001), 174. The FDs clearly were patterned after the MVD's districts, rather than the military districts (as is commonly assumed). Among the most significant differences, the Volga military district headquarters were located in Samara, not in Nizhnyi Novgorod, while the Siberian military district headquarters were in Chita and not Novosibirsk (though it was later relocated to the FD capitol).

[4] "Utochnenie." *Rossiiskaia Gazeta*, 17 May 2000.

[5] N.Iu. Zamiatina, "Sozdanie federal'nykh okrugov: proekt 1995 goda," *Region: ekonomika i sotsiologiia*, no. 1 (2001): 78.

[6] Ibid.: 78-82.

Presidential Representatives as deputy chief of staff in the Presidential Administration, though his plans were put on hold when he left for work in the FSB.[7]

Putin's decree of 16 May 2000 designated a three-month period in which the Russian government and the Presidential Administration would work out and affirm a territorial division of powers between the branches of executive power, "bearing in mind the necessity of its correspondence" with the new districts. The new envoys, themselves, were given a month to form their staff and have them approved by the then-head of the Presidential Administration, Aleksandr Voloshin. Within the same month, the Presidential Administration's Main State-Legal Administration (*glavnoe gosudarstvenno-pravovoe upravlenie*) was tasked with suggesting any necessary legal acts to be issued by the President in relation to the decree.

The provisions attached to decree 849 structured the work of the new envoys into overall tasks (*zadachi*), functions, rights, and organizational support. The *polpredy* were tasked overall with reinforcing oversight (*kontrol'*) over the branches of federal power in the regions and ensuring that the decisions of federal organs were implemented. In addition, the envoys were to oversee the realization of the center's cadres policy in the FDs[8], and to issue regular reports to the president covering national security issues as well as the general political, economic and social situations within their respective districts.

The actual powers and functions delegated to the envoys have been a matter of dispute since the issuing of decree 849. As such, they are worth listing at length. According to the original decree, the envoys' functions included: coordinating of the

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[7] Eugene Huskey, "Political Leadership and the Center-Periphery Struggle: Putin's Administrative Reforms," in *Gorbachev, Yeltsin, and Putin: Political Leadership in Russia's Transition*, ed. Archie Brown and Lilia Shevtsova (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2001), 118.

[8] According to former presidential advisor Leonid Smirniagin, there are 410,000 federal employees, with 30,000 in Moscow and 380,000 in the regions. The 89 regions taken together employ only half as many, 190,000.Leonid Smirnyagin, "The Great Seven," *EWI Russian Regional Report* 5, no. 20 (2000).

activities of executive structures in the FDs; analyzing the effectiveness of law enforcement bodies; organizing the cooperation of federal executive organs with regional and local government, political parties, and other social and religious associations; cooperating with the existing inter-regional associations to work out programs for regional socio-economic development; approving all federal appointments within their respective districts; approving draft decisions of federal agencies which affect either district-wide or region-specific interests; approving and presenting state awards and honors recommended by regions within their districts; participating in the work of regional and local governments; organizing procedures for the resolution of conflicts between federal executive bodies and the regions; recommending the suspension of regional executive acts which conflict with the Russian Constitution, federal law, Russia's international obligations, or human and civil rights; and cooperating with the Main Monitoring Administration (*glavnoe kontrol'noe upravlenie*) and the procurator's offices in verifying that the center's laws are enacted in the regions.

In carrying out these functions, the envoys were granted a number of "rights" by the decree. They could request any "necessary materials" from the divisions of the Presidential Administration or governmental bodies at any level, and were entitled to use federal and presidential data banks and all state or governmental systems of communications. The envoys could further direct their deputies "to participate in the work of" regional and local government. Though the extent of this involvement was unspecified, the envoys could organize inspections (*proverki*) of the implementation of presidential decrees and orders (*rasporiazhenie*), the realization of federal programs within their districts, and the use of federal property and budgetary resources. In carrying out such *proverki*, the envoys could make use of personnel

from the Main Monitoring Administration and other executive organs as necessary. Further, they were able to investigate citizens' complaints regarding level of government. They could also investigate directors of federal bodies, though their sanctioning authority appears to have been limited to recommending disciplinary measures. In a particularly vague formulation, the envoys were also entitled to "form consultative organs." Equally ambiguous, the representatives had the right of "unrestrained access to any organization" in carrying out their duties.

Lastly, the envoys were organizationally subordinated to the head of the Presidential Administration, who confirmed the structure and number of staff for each envoy. The representative's *apparat* had the legal status of an independent branch of the Presidential Administration, though the Main Monitoring Administration's district inspectorate was automatically included in each. The envoys' headquarters were located in the FD capitals, decorated by the Russian state flag and crest. Perhaps most significantly, the decree stated that all informational, documentary, legal, material-technical and transportational support (including the provision of property, residences, and medical and social services) for the work of the envoys and their *apparat* were ensured by the corresponding divisions within the Presidential Administration and its Administration of Affairs (*upravlenie delami*), as well as by regional executive bodies in agreement with the Presidential Administration. The expenses incurred for these facilities were based on estimates made by the Presidential Administration rather than regional authorities.

It is often argued that Putin's creation of the FDs avoided constitutional questions as, technically, he was reforming his own administration rather than directly

restructuring the Russian Federation.[9] Indeed, Article 78 of the Russian Constitution provides that, "The federal bodies of executive power in order to exercise their powers may create their own territorial organs and appoint corresponding officials." In addition, the Constitution grants the President broad powers in Article 80 in what many constitutional scholars refer to as the "hidden presidential powers."[10] In other words, Putin's decree was fully constitutional from the start, though partly because the substance of the President's powers is somewhat ambiguous.

Interpretations of the Federal Districts

Significantly, no justification for the reform or creation of the FDs was provided by the decree itself, leaving central and regional politicians alike to interpret the new institution's powers and intentions. The public rationale for the FDs was set within a hierarchy of long-term and short-term goals. At base, the reform, as part of Putin's moves towards state re-centralization, was intended to halt the disintegration of Russia and restore the "ruling vertical." At the most abstract level, this would involve the restoration of a "uniform legal space" and "uniform information space" within the country (some commentators also added the notion of a "uniform economic space" to this list). The first task assigned to the polpreds was to coordinate the reform of regional constitutions, charters, and legislation so that they no longer contradicted the federal Constitution and legislation.[11] After its first year of existence, the goal of reforming regional legislation was claimed to have been achieved and Putin directed

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[9] Robert Orttung, "Putin Creates Seven Federal Districts to Better Manage Regions," *EWI Russian Regional Report* 5, no. 19 (2000), Richard Sakwa, "Putin's New Federalism," *EWI Russian Regional Report* 5, no. 21 (2000).

[10] Mikhail Aleksandrovich Krasnov, "O nekotorykh konstitutsionno-pravovykh aspektakh sozdaniia instituta polnomochnykh predstavitelei prezidenta RF v federal'nykh okrugakh," in *Polprey Prezidenta: problemy stanovleniia novogo instituta, Nauchnye doklady* (Moscow: Nauchno-issledovatel'skii institut sotsial'nykh sistem, 2001), 16. Article 80.2 reads: "[The President] shall adopt measures to protect the sovereignty of the Russian Federation, its independence and state integrity, ensure coordinated functioning and interaction of all the bodies of state power."

[11] See Chapter Four.

his polpreds to focus on the problem of demarcating spheres of competency between central, regional, and local levels of government, and in particular to marginalize the role of power-sharing treaties in federal relations.[12] The polpreds also were encouraged to take a more active role in regional economic development, though the precise means were left to their own initiative.

In addition to these formally stated goals, the FDs were also to serve central goals with regard to specific regional administrations. Cherkesov's team in the North-West FD focused on finding ways to weaken and remove St. Petersburg governor Vladimir Iakovlev, while Latyshev's staff in the Urals FD worked to diminish the influence of Sverdlovsk governor Eduard Rossel′ and, more subtly, Tiumen governor Leonid Roketskii. Many speculated that the inclusion of Tatarstan and Bashkortostan in the Volga FD under polpred Sergei Kirienko was intended to dilute the influence of the regions' problematic governors.

Broadly speaking, the interpretations and nature of challenges posed by the new institution and its rationales followed the horizontal and vertical axes along which the polpreds and FDs were situated. The horizontal axis concerned how other central institutions (the central ministries, federal agencies, and Presidential Administration) related to the FDs. Central institutions shared an interest in the President's stated goals of restoring the "ruling vertical" in the provinces, but challenges to the new institution emerged with regards to its coordinating role and status. Within the Presidential Administration itself, the head of the Main Territorial Department, Sergei Samoilov, attempted to oversee the polpreds by establishing separate subdivisions for each of the FDs.[13] Samoilov and deputy head of the Presidential Administration Aleksandr Abramov grew increasingly uneasy over the

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[12] *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 26 December 2000.
[13] Huskey, "Center-Periphery Struggle," 130.

polpreds' activities, particularly as Volga FD envoy Sergei Kirienko (following consultations with the other polpreds) pressed for increased powers to control federal transfers to the regions, to verify the implementation of Government resolutions, and to directly control the territorial divisions of federal agencies.[14] The source of their unease was the fear that their department would be reduced to the purely technical role of supporting the work of the polpreds.[15] At the end of 2000, Putin moved to transfer the seven departments of the Main Territorial Department to the polpreds' staff, effectively reducing the size of Samoilov's department by two-thirds.[16] Samoilov was dismissed in February 2001. But Putin also reminded the polpreds and their Main Federal Inspectors that the FDs were not new administrative-territorial divisions and discouraged the creation of "okrug governments."[17] By the end of January 2001, Putin issued a decree that placed the polpreds under the direct supervision of the head of the Presidential Administration, whereas previously they had answered only to the President.[18]

Another significant horizontal challenge emerged from the Russian Government. This was an unsurprising development, perhaps, as the ministries were directed to establish working relations with the polpreds. In August 2000, vice-prime minister Viktor Khristenko was at pains to emphasize that the Government shared the aims of the President. Rather, the real issue was to work out a scheme for cooperation.[19] The result was a resolution that provided for the polpreds to attend monthly meetings of the Government, for federal agencies to establish divisions for coordinating with the polpreds, and for seeking the polpreds' approval on

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[14] *Kommersant-Vlast'*, 12 December 2000.
[15] *RFE/RL Russian Federation Report*, 20 December 2000.
[16] *Moskovskii Komsomolets*, 27 December 2000.
[17] *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 26 December 2000.
[18] "O vnesenii dopolneniy i izmeneniy v polozhenie o polnomochnom predstaviteli prezidenta RF v federal'nom okruge." *Rossiiskaia Gazeta*, 31 January 2001.
[19] *Kommersant-Vlast'*, 15 August 2000.

appointments to federal agencies.[20] As a number of ministries and federal agencies moved to re-organize their departments along FD lines, however, jurisdictional conflicts and overlap ensued. More specifically, the fact that the "power ministries" (except for the FSB) established offices at the FD level did not clarify the status of the new offices – were they directly subordinate to the central agencies, or were they accountable to the polpred?[21] As a result, territorial branches became "subject to an awkward dual-subordination, with the [envoys] competing with the prime minister and his staff for the attention of the federal civil service."[22] A 2001 survey of workers in the Volga FD office of the General Procurator and regional procurator offices provided a vivid illustration of the consequences of dual-subordination: those in the General Procurator's FD office gave the new FD institution a positive evaluation, whereas regional procurators had a difficult time even responding because they were uncertain of what the new office's powers were and lacked information about the results of its activities. Regional procurators further claimed that the new office took over all administrative (*upravlencheskie*) functions of the central apparat, often exceeding its powers and jurisdiction. In particular, the new office was accused of overloading (if not paralyzing) the regional procurators with additional tasks (*zadaniia*). Where the assigned tasks duplicated those required by the central agency, differences in deadlines led to further duplication and excessive paperwork.[23] More recently, conflicts have emerged between the Presidential Administration and the

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[20] Postanovlenie Pravitel'stva Rossiiskoi Federatsii ot 12 avgusta 2000 g. N 592 g. Moskva "O vzaimodeistvii Pravitel'stva Rossiiskoi Federatsii i federal'nykh organov ispolnitel'noi vlasti s polnomochnymi predstaviteliami Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii v federal'nykh okrugakh i skheme razmeshcheniia territorial'nykh organov federal'nykh organov ispolnitel'noi vlasti." *Rossiiskaia Gazeta*, 22 August 2000.

[21] Rostislav Turovskii, "Federal'nye okruga: politiko-geograficheskii podkhod v teorii i na praktike," *Federalizm*, no. 1 (2003): 229.

[22] Huskey, "Center-Periphery Struggle," 133.

[23] V.G. Bessarabov, V.P. Riabtsev, and V.A. Makarchenko, "Upravleniia general'noi prokuratury Rossiiskoi Federatsii v Federal'nykh Okrugakh i puti sovershenstvovaniia ikh deiatel'nosti," *Pravo i politika*, no. 11 (2001): 28-30.

central ministries over the polpreds' roles in the strategic coordination of regional development, investment activities and inter-regional ties.[24]

The vertical axis concerned relations as defined by the "ruling vertical" – that is, relations among branches of executive authority at all levels of government. Here it is important to bear in mind that the FDs were established within the context of a broad-based assault on regional autonomy, lending emphasis to the apparently coercive role of the polpreds. Under such circumstances, one would assume that there were few regional incentives for compliance, given the relatively weak legal standing of the polpred (deriving from a solitary presidential decree) and the governors' potentially greater base of resistance by way of their electoral legitimacy. The polpreds also had a weak foundation in the public consciousness: according to a VTsIOM survey, less than half of Russia's population even knew that the institution existed one year after its creation.[25] Moreover, it was often claimed that the new polpreds and their federal inspectors would be no less dependent upon the governors for office space and other amenities.

Yet challenges to the new FDs were muted. Part of the reason, as Turovskii incisively notes, was that the polpreds were introduced in a fashion similar to the revolutionary commissars, with the FDs established "along the political-cultural matrix of the party-state, in which the place of the CPSU was taken by the president." Within two years, however, relations between the FDs and the regions moved from intervention to partnership and even routinization.[26] A careful examination of the appointment and staffing decisions of the polpreds helps explain this evolution.

Federal District Appointments and Staffing

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[24] Turovskii, "Federal'nye okruga," 227-8.
[25] *Izvestiia*, 21 May 2001.
[26] Turovskii, "Federal'nye okruga," 223-4.

While Putin directly appoints the first deputy Presidential Representatives, the polpreds appoint the rest of their deputies, staff and federal inspectors.[27] The polpred's staff size (about 100 members) and policy portfolios of the deputy polpreds were similar across all FDs by the end of 2000, though the appointments and turnover among deputy PRs were revealing of the polpred's organizational preferences and the FD's utility for central and regional elites, alike.

Table 3.1: Backgrounds of Deputy Presidential Representatives, 2000-2003

	NW	Central	Southern	Volga	Urals	Siberian	Far East	Total	%
MFI*	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	3.3
Military	3	0	2	0	0	0	2	7	11.6
Special services	2	2	1	0	2	2	1	10	16.6
Central	1	4	2	7	2	3	2	21	35
Regional	2	1	1	1	4	1	1	11	18.3
City/local	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2	3.3
Business/ non-govt.	2	1	2	2	0	0	0	7	11.6
Totals	11	8	8	12	8	7	6	60	

* Main Federal Inspector
Source: Compiled by the author.

Much has been made of the military veneer of the new FDs – five of the original polpreds were generals, and the districts themselves were patterned after the existing Interior Ministry districts. If, however, one compares the distribution of selections of district deputies across the North-West, Volga, Urals, and Siberian FDs, the military and special services (nine deputies) were less well represented than federal agencies and ministries (thirteen) and combined regional and local governments (ten). The district with greatest representation by the *siloviki* (combined military and special services) was the North-Western FD (five), probably reflecting

[27] Deputy Presidential Representatives technically are appointed with a resolution by the head of the President's Administration. In most cases this is a formality, though it does give the chief of staff some say over the composition of the polpred's team.

Viktor Cherkesov's tendency to see the staffing and functions of the polpred's office as an extension of the FSB's intelligence and public opinion functions.[28] In the Urals FD, however, Petr Latyshev's deputies were predominantly from regional government (four) with only two deputies chosen with FSB backgrounds. Siberian envoy Drachevskii also had two deputies from the FSB, but most were chosen from among his contacts in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry for CIS Affairs, and the central state bureaucracy. The emphasis on representation of central agencies was most pronounced in the Volga FD with seven central representatives and none with military or law enforcement career profiles.[29] In choosing his staff, Kirienko mostly selected from his contacts from the Komsomol, Krasnoe Sormovo shipbuilding company, Garantiia Bank, Norsi Oil, and the Fuel and Energy Ministry.[30]

The Volga FD also demonstrated the most extensive turn-over in personnel, where only the first deputy polpred, Sergei Novikov, remained from the initial ranks of deputies by 2003. The remarkable turn-over was matched by the upward mobility of Kirienko's former deputies and staff, including five appointments to the Federation Council, Vladimir Zorin's appointment as Minister for Nationalities Issues, and Valentin Stepankov's appointment to deputy secretary of the Security Council.[31] In the North-West FD, first deputy Vladimir V'iunov left to become head of the North-West Customs Administration, while first deputy Aleksandr Kuznetsov was appointed first deputy Railroads Minister. Most prominently, polpred Viktor Cherkesov was brought to Moscow in 2003 to head a new agency to fight the drug trade and was

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[28] Alexander Duka and Peter Rutland, "North-West Federal Okrug," in *The Dynamics of Russian Politics: Putin's Reform of Federal-Regional Relations*, ed. Robert Orttung and Peter Reddaway (Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).

[29] Valentin Stepankov was the closest to a law enforcement official to be chosen with his background as General Procurator and good relations with local law enforcement agencies in Perm.

[30] Gul'naz Sharafutdinova and Arbakhan Magomedov, "Volga Federal Okrug," in *The Dynamics of Russian Politics: Putin's Reform of Federal-Regional Relations*, ed. Robert Orttung and Peter Reddaway (Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).

[31] Aleksandr Zarubin left to become chief advisor to the head of the Republic of Komi, though it is debatable whether this counted as a move upwards in status.

replaced by Valentina Matvienko.[32] Matvienko's tenure was brief, primarily making use of the office to secure her election as governor of St. Petersburg.[33] In the Urals FD, the office of the polpred was also the launching point for first deputy Sergei Sobianin's successful bid for governor in Tiumen (see next chapter). The only other departure was deputy Anatolii Antipin, who left the polpred's office in 2001 for work in the private sector with gas giant Novatek.[34] The sole departure from the Siberian FD was deputy Nikolai Reshetniak, who resumed his previous work as advisor to then-State Duma Speaker Gennadii Seleznev.[35]

In addition to the career trajectories of the polpreds and their deputies, changes in the deputies' policy portfolios reflected both changing priorities and organizational development across the FDs. In the North-West, deputy Valerii Bol'shakov was initially tasked with coordinating federal agencies in St. Petersburg. With the removal of governor Vladimir Iakovlev, his job changed to monitoring the implementation of federal law. Evgenii Makarov's broad mandate for "political-informational work" was now re-specified as relations with parties, social and religious organizations, and unions. Andrei Stepanov was appointed in September 2001 (on the decision of the Security Council) to concentrate on the situation in Kaliningrad. In the Volga FD, deputy Leonid Gil'chenko was appointed in July 2001 to coordinate with local self-government and the European Council's commission on local government. In both

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[32] After Matvienko's appointment as polpred for NWFD, first deputy Aleksandr Fedorov and deputy Sergei Sviridov were dismissed from office. Fedorov followed Cherkesov to Moscow.

[33] As noted earlier, this was the culmination of the campaign begun by Cherkesov to remove St. Petersburg's governor, Aleksandr Iakovlev. While several governors prior to Putin's decree #849 appeared willing to give up their posts to become presidential envoys, the situation clearly changed once it became clear that Putin did not intend to eliminate the post of elected governors in the near future.

[34] Antipin's departure is probably linked with Sobianin's election, though the official reason given for his departure was that he left of his own accord to move to Tiumen where his family lives. During the gubernatorial campaign in Tiumen, an alleged transcript of a conversation involving Antipin was circulated in which the deputy polpred explicitly discussed means of financial, administrative, and propaganda support for Sobianin's campaign.

[35] Officially Reshetniak was dismissed in order to tend to an illness in his family, though there were many rumors of Drachevskii's dissatisfaction with his deputy's work.

the Volga and Urals FDs, the heads of the district inspectorate of the Main Monitoring Department were "promoted" to deputy polpred. In the Siberian FD, Valerii Khalanov assumed key responsibilities in negotiating the merging of Irkutsk and Ust'-Ordynskii Buriatskii autonomous okrug after his appointment as deputy polpred in March 2002. In other words, the common organizational template of the FDs provided flexible and convenient staging points for focusing on the Kremlin's target policy areas. Another subtle yet striking trend across all four FDs was that the polpreds were starting to promote from within their *apparat* rather than recruit from without (as was necessary when staffs needed to be cobbled together from scratch). Kirienko went furthest in formalizing this process through the institution of annual competitions for open positions in the polpred's staff. This suggests that the FDs were developing mechanisms for maintaining organizational coherence despite changing mission objectives and personnel.

Federal Inspectors

In addition to the staff and deputies in the FD capitals, the polpred has a network of federal inspectors based within the district's constituent regions. The inspectorates are led by the Main Federal Inspector (MFI), whose job mandate derives from carrying out the functions of the polpred in the territories – in other words, a mandate with powers that are only vaguely-specified. In many cases the new MFIs took over the offices of the former Presidential Representatives (indeed, in many cases the former Presidential Representative simply became the new MFI). A key difference between the new network of MFIs and the former representatives was that all regions

of the Russian Federation were now covered.[36] The MFIs apparently were selected keeping "ethno-relevance" in mind, meaning that the MFIs should know the local language(s) and have some prior experience in the region.[37] In more troublesome regions, however, Muscovites were selected as MFIs (Bashkortostan, Tatarstan, Primorskii krai, Kemerovo). A number of regions were also combined into single inspectorates, primarily in the Far Eastern (three combined inspectorates) and Southern (three) FDs, as well as parts of the Siberian (three) and Volga (one) FDs.[38]

Perhaps more closely than the selection of deputies, the polpred's choice of MFI reflected his organizational predilections and strategy for dealing with the regions. In the North-West, four MFIs came from backgrounds in the *siloviki* and three were former Presidential Representatives. Kirienko's selections for the Volga FD drew heavily from regional governments and federal agencies or ministries, with only one representative bearing a military background. The Urals FD was split almost evenly among military, special services, regional government and city government. The latter were particularly well represented among Latyshev's staff, as well.[39] Notably absent were any prior Presidential Representatives among Latyshev's MFIs. Drachevskii's choices for MFI reflected his own career in diplomatic service. The lion's share of MFIs in the Siberian FD came from the ranks of former Presidential Representatives (seven), in most cases merely transferred from their "home" region to another. While Drachevskii led all FDs in selecting former Presidential Representatives to be MFIs, this also reflected an over-all trend in appointments.

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[36] Previously coverage was spotty, with the representative's office often going unfilled or substituted by the head of the regional administration.
[37] Zubarevich, Petrov, and Titkov, "Federal'nye okruga - 2000," 189.
[38] Some of these combinations made sense geographically and politically, such as the combined inspectorate for Perm and Komi-Permiatskii autonomous okrug, or Irkutsk and Ust'-Ordynskii Buriatskii autonomous okrug.
[39] Zubarevich, Petrov, and Titkov, "Federal'nye okruga - 2000," 191.

Table 3.2: Backgrounds of Main Federal Inspectors, 2000-2003

	NW	Central	Southern	Volga	Urals	Siberian	Far East	Total	%
Frmr PR	3	6	3	2	0	7	1	22	30.9
Military	1	2	1	1	1	0	0	6	8.4
Special services	3	4	1	0	2	1	0	11	15.4
Central	0	1	0	4	0	1	2	8	11.2
Regional	2	0	0	5	1	1	1	10	14
City/local	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	3	4.2
Business/ non-govt.	1	4	2	2	0	0	2	11	15.4
Totals	10	18	7	14	5	11	6	71	

Source: Compiled by the author.

Overall, the single greatest number of MFIs previously served as Presidential Representatives, followed closely by representatives of the military and special services. Representatives of federal agencies surprisingly ranked behind representatives of regional government (and even of business), contrary to the trend in the appointment of deputy polpreds. In comparing the distribution of deputy envoys and MFIs by backgrounds, however, the relative proportions of representatives from the military, special services, regional government and city government remain approximately the same. The key difference is the prominence of central agency representatives among the deputy envoys, which can largely be explained by the need of the new FD apparat to develop contacts and establish working relations with the central agencies. By contrast, it is reasonable to assume that the MFIs were drawn largely from the ranks of former PRs precisely because the polpreds required individuals experienced in interfacing with regional and local government. This would also explain the significantly greater representation of business among the MFIs.

The job of the MFI was to provide a crucial link in the relationship of the seven polpreds with regional branches of federal agencies and regional governments.

Whether they were able to serve this function effectively appears to vary among cases. In Kareliia, the outgoing PR, Viacheslav Ushakov, put the plight of the incoming MFI, Valentin Shmykov, rather bluntly:

> The inspector's salary is only one-third of what I received, and he has only one-third the staff. Moreover, he is subordinate to the presidential representative to the North-West Federal District rather than directly to the president, as I was. Plus he has much more work. Frankly speaking, I feel for Valentin Aleksandrovich.[40]

Like Ushakov, Shmykov spent most his career in the KGB. From 1993 to 2000, he was head of the Kareliian branch of the federal tax police. Shmykov maintained a relatively low profile throughout his first year on the job, notably playing little or no role in the revision of Kareliia's republican constitution. From mid-2001 onwards he played an increasingly public role in chairing local commissions on the demarcation of joint and exclusive regional powers and the reform of local government charters and legislation.[41] A public reception office was also opened in September 2001 to hear public concerns twice a month in Petrozavodsk (and occasionally in the raions), similar to offices opened elsewhere in the NWFD under Cherkesov's program "Dialog."[42] Shmykov described the role of the polpred's apparat as a transmitter (*provodnik*) for "the President's ideology in the regions," primarily through conducting regular meetings of the heads of federal agencies in order to make their work more efficient and harmonious. With regard to the conduct of regional

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[40] *Russian Regional Report*, 13 September 2000.
[41] *Severnyi Kur'er* (Petrozavodsk), 30 August 2001.
[42] *Severnyi Kur'er* (Petrozavodsk), 18 September 2001. The public reception is run by the MFI's staff and appears to be poorly attended (by both the public and the federal inspector). The author attended one reception at which it was advertised that the MFI would preside. Instead, an assistant appeared, explained that the MFI was ill, and provided a phone number to contact him at a later date (which proved to be fake). The public reception has a website (http://dialog.onego.ru/), though it does not appear to have been updated since 2002.

elections, he said the MFI should help parties and movements to find the best candidates for all levels of government – federal, regional, and local.[43]

In Buriatiia, the MFI named by Drachevskii was the former PR, Boris Danilov. Danilov's career background was mostly centered in academia, though for a time he also served as head of the Buriat branch of the pro-government party, *Nash Dom Rossiia*, and president of the Buriat Chess Federation. The new MFI stated that nothing in his job mandate changed from his work as PR except that he would answer to the polpred instead of directly to the President.[44] He indicated that Drachevskii demanded information on sources of social tension in the region, including disruptions of inter-regional ties, crime, narcotics, and border issues. In describing his own duties, Danilov emphasized monitoring functions in relation to the federal agencies in Buriatiia, as well as preventing "mafia types" (*mafioznaia lichnost'*) from participating in elections.[45] The extent of his actual powers and functions, however, were questionable. Like the MFI in Kareliia, Danilov maintained a low public profile. It is likely that he was subject to the same organizational requirements as all MFIs – to inventory federal cadres and property, to create commissions to discuss the demarcation of powers, to open a public reception office – though one searches in vain to find any evidence of such activity.[46] Moreover, the attempt by the republic's legislative assembly to select disgraced ex-General Procurator Iurii Skuratov as Federation Council senator (see below), and the schism within the republican branch

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[43] *Kareliia*, 20 November 2001.
[44] *Buriatiia*, 5 September 2000. Indeed, in a laudatory article on Danilov published a year after his appointment, a number of regional officials continued to refer to him as the President's Representative, apparently oblivious to his change in title. *Buriatiia*, 7 November 2001.
[45] Author's interview, Ulan-Ude, 5 June 2002.
[46] According to the Siberian FD website (http://www.sfo.nsk.su/), a public reception office does exist in Ulan-Ude. Whether anyone in Ulan-Ude knows about it, however, is another matter.

of *Edinstvo* prior to Buriatiia's 2002 elections[47] were events that showed Danilov as left out of local politics, responding to events rather than shaping outcomes.

The MFI chosen for Tiumen was Sergei Smetaniuk, recruited by first deputy polpred Sergei Sobianin. At the time Smetaniuk was speaker of the Tiumen city Duma, which was in perpetual conflict with the regional administration of Leonid Roketskii. Given Sobianin's prior work as Duma speaker in Khanty-Mansiiskii autonomous okrug, it is likely that the first deputy polpred specifically sought out a popular candidate that could be counted as an ally against the oblast administration. The new MFI was allocated office space in the oblast Duma (which also opposed governor Roketskii), but was initially given meager resources: he inherited a two-member staff (out of three) from the former PR and took a significant pay cut.[48] Smetaniuk took an active role in reforming the oblast charter and regional legislation, indicating that the process would continue to the level of local government.[49]

Significantly, he targeted the oblast's Property Management Committee, creating an inventory of federal property that was improperly managed and its employees.[50] The MFI also inventoried the 86 federal agencies operating in the oblast and prepared a list of priority problems that required federal intervention, most significantly strengthening the border with Kazakhstan. As with the other MFIs, Smetaniuk established oblast-level commissions to debate the demarcation of powers between central and regional levels.

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[47] See Chapter Five.

[48] *Tiumenskaia Pravda*, 11 October 2000; *Nashe Vremia* (Tiumen'), 22 November 2000. On the pay cut, Smetaniuk dolefully commented, "I don't even want to talk about it." He indicated that the size of the MFI's staff would likely only increase if he "earns it." By 2004, his staff had risen to eleven.

[49] Author's interview, Tiumen', 16 May 2002. About 330 oblast laws required change or amendment to be brought into accordance with federal legislation.

[50] *Tiumenskaia Pravda*, 11 October 2000. Smetaniuk somewhat belied his outsider status in expressing his surprise, "when a federal employee is given a tiny work space next to the toilet while nearby hundreds of square meters of federal property are occupied by stores and banks."

A public reception office was formed and immediately inundated with citizens' inquiries concerning all levels of government – federal, regional, and local. Judging from Smetaniuk's characterization of the evolution of the public reception office, its primary role has been to educate the public as to which level of government is accountable for certain problems. For the most part, citizens' complaints centered on the operations of the oblast procurator, the judicial branch in general, and housing and communal services. According to Smetaniuk, the primary result and benefit of the public reception was to clarify the division of powers and responsibilities, both for citizens and among governing institutions.[51]

Perm's MFI was among the last to be appointed in the Volga FD. The long delay was interpreted by many as indicative of wavering over whether Perm would remain in the Volga FD or be transferred to the Urals FD, though it was clear early on that the MFI would be a *Permiak*.[52] Perm's MFI was officially named in late September as Vladimir Solomonov.[53] Solomonov spent the first part of his career in county (*raion*) administration. After unsuccessfully running for mayor of Perm′ in 1996, he was appointed director of the territorial branch of the Anti-Monopoly Ministry on the recommendation of the oblast's former Presidential Representative. The regional press portrayed Solomonov as a "classic bureaucrat," identifying first and foremost with the department he serves and uncompromising in standing equidistant from the main political actors in Perm.[54] The new MFI was allocated office space within the oblast administration with a staff of two federal inspectors (one of them from Moscow) and a director of the public reception office.[55]

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[51] Author's interview, Tiumen′, 16 May 2002.
[52] *Novyi Kompan'on* (Perm′), 22 August 2000.
[53] Perm oblast's inspectorate included Komi-Permiatskii autonomous okrug.
[54] *Novyi Kompan'on* (Perm′), 3 October 2000.
[55] *Mestnoe Vremia* (Perm′), 15 November 2000.

Solomonov described his work as facilitating the President's policy, particularly with regard to cadres, and monitoring the implementation of federal legislation in the region. Initial attention would be focused on bringing regional legislation into accordance with federal law, though Perm had few changes to make in comparison with other regions of the Volga FD. He also indicated that a key function would entail the organization of a system for crisis management – an extension of Kirienko's idea that the MFIs should play an active role in regional economic processes. In the meantime, his first task would be to prepare recommendations for a host of law enforcement appointments, emphasizing that the governor's consent would not be required: "we will consult, coordinate, and consider opinion. But consent – no."[56]

Solomonov later admitted that he essentially was not able to start work until after Perm's gubernatorial elections in late 2000.[57] The first year of operations for the MFI saw a flurry of activity in creating regional structures designed to bring the 60 federal structures in Perm back under the center's control, as well as organizing regular channels for interaction with the oblast and local governments. As in other regions, the MFI established a public reception office and a regional branch of the planning think tank, the Center for Strategic Planning.[58] In early 2001, the MFI started to convene a regular collegium of military and law enforcement officials to coordinate on security issues as diverse as the region's state of preparedness for crisis situations, the dumping of chemical and nuclear waste in Perm, relations between *siloviki* and Perm's governor, and relations between the Ministry of Justice and the

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[56] *Novyi Kompan'on* (Perm'), 3 October 2000.
[57] See Chapter Five.
[58] Solomonov's *Prikamskii Tsentr Strategicheskogo Planirovaniia* was fashioned after the analogous structure created within Kirienko's apparat under Petr Shchedrovitskii.

procuracy.[59] Solomonov also established a commission for eliminating administrative barriers to the development of small business. The commission's members were heads of the oversight (*kontrol'nye*) structures in the region (tax, anti-monopolies, customs, and registration), who in turn would implement the commission's recommendations within their own organizations.[60]

In January 2002, Solomonov left his post as MFI to become Federation Council senator for Komi-Permiatskii autonomous okrug.[61] His replacement was Nikolai Fadeev, an economist who previously served in Perm's city administration under former mayor (then-governor) Iurii Trutnev. Fadeev led Trutnev's own think tank in 2001, the Center for Planning Strategic Initiatives (CPSI), created in parallel with the MFI's organization. As Fadeev described it, the CPSI initially focused on "how to interface" Trutnev's team with federal structures, essentially working to attract specialists working on the federal level.[62] Fadeev's appointment could be interpreted as an attempt to co-opt a talented bureaucrat from the oblast administration, particularly one focused on drawing talented cadres away from the center. But it was more likely a shift in priorities from Nizhnyi Novgorod, from re-establishing control over federal security and law enforcement agencies to strengthening budgetary and financial levers of centralization. As Fadeev described, his key instruments were forging (or forcing) consensus among the heads of federal agencies, utilizing a combination of moral suasion through appeals to the President's "general line" and threats issued through the procuracy.[63]

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[59] *Novyi Kompan'on* (Perm'), 30 January 2000; *Novyi Kompan'on* (Perm'), 8 May 2001. Though organized under the MFI's authority, the meetings were in fact chaired by deputy polpred Valentin Stepankov.
[60] *Novyi Kompan'on* (Perm'), 19 June 2001.
[61] *Zvezda* (Perm'), 4 January 2002. Kirienko played a decisive role in Solomonov's decision, telling him that he was needed more in the Federation Council than as MFI.
[62] *Novyi Kompan'on* (Perm'), 22 May 2001.
[63] *Zvezda* (Perm'), 12 December 2002; *Russian Regional Report*, 12 September 2003.

When viewed in comparison, the appointments and activities of the MFIs for Kareliia, Perm, Tiumen, and Buriatiia reveal a common agenda among their respective FDs, but display striking differences in operational tactics. All MFIs were to provide on-site reporting to keep the polpreds abreast of key political developments in their districts, the most visible manifestation being the campaign to reform regional legislation. They were also expected to re-establish central control over federal agencies in the regions, including the crucial process of identifying and evaluating possible appointees to head the agencies. In general, their work was intended to provide *kontrol'* to ensure the implementation of the center's policy in the regions. In establishing public reception offices, the MFIs were also supposed to provide outlets for citizens to seek redress for problems they had been unable to solve through local or regional administration.

The MFIs in the four regions under examination took different approaches to their tasks. In Kareliia, Shmykov worked largely behind the scenes in a manner consistent with his prior work in the federal tax police. In Perm and Tiumen, the MFI sought out additional methods of inducing compliance with the center's demands, including the creation of regional collegia of the heads of federal agencies, creating inventories of federal property and its administration, and utilizing the public reception offices to clarify the division of responsibility among levels of government. In Buriatiia, there was little change in operation as the former Presidential Representative, Danilov, was kept on as MFI. While this ensured a degree of continuity and stability in relations between the center and Buriatiia, it also produced the least tangible changes in the re-affirmation of the center's power in the republic.

Regional Responses to the Federal Districts

Initially regional leaders were virtually unanimous in supporting Putin's formation of the Federal Districts, varying only in degrees of caution. To outside observers, this was more than a little surprising. After all, Putin and the Presidential Administration had reorganized Russia's political geography and armed his lieutenants with vaguely-specified powers without so much as consulting regional leaders (not to mention the Government or the Federal Assembly). Given that the FDs were established in the midst of a broad-based attack on regional autonomy, it stands to reason that the governors were unwilling to make history by becoming Putin's first victims. But one should also remember that the governors had experienced (and often survived) attempts at centralization under the El'tsin administration. Rather than provoke the President outright, a more viable strategy was to wait for his intentions and resolve to become clear while attempting to broker a better deal in the new regime. As then-Federation Council chairman Egor Stroev indicated, many governors initially were willing even to give up their posts to become one of Putin's new polpreds.[64]

Even after the polpreds were officially named, the opportunity for regional elites to become "anonymous presidential advisors" led even problematic regional leaders as Tatarstan's Mintimer Shaimiev and Bashkortostan's Murtaza Rakhimov to support the new presidential envoy.[65] At best, the new institution eventually would go the way of its predecessors and either be captured by regional elites or reshuffled out of existence. At worst, the governor who did not oppose the President would not give Putin cause to arrange for his immediate dismissal.

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[64] *Izvestiia*, 18 May 2000. At the time, many governors considered realistic the possibility the Putin would end gubernatorial elections and revert to the system of appointing governors.
[65] *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 18 May 2000.

A few regional leaders anticipated Putin's reform in proposing the resurrection of the (Tsarist-era) *guberniia*.[66] After the creation of the FDs, a number of regional leaders attempted to share credit with Putin. Most publicized were Moscow Mayor Iurii Luzhkov and Sverdlovsk oblast Governor Eduard Rossel', both of whom had created mid-level administrative districts within their own regions. In Perm, First Deputy Governor Iurii Belousov claimed that he serendipitously recommended similar measures to the Urals Economic Forum despite "not knowing anything about the presidential decree."[67]

Some like Perm oblast Governor Gennadii Igumnov commented on the new institution even before reading Putin's decree. Igumnov initially stated that it was time for such measures to be taken and that the creation of the FDs represented an attempt to improve the role of the center while not extinguishing the rights of the regions. He quickly added, however, that "in any case, this decree doesn't present any danger for the heads of regions who act strictly within the law."[68]

Tiumen oblast Governor Leonid Roketskii was somewhat bolder. In a meeting between regional leaders and Putin, Roketskii not only claimed credit for recommending the creation of a FD the previous year, but also recommended himself for the post of deputy Presidential Representative![69] He also warned Putin that locating the capital of the Urals FD in Ekaterinburg risked strengthening Rossel' to

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[66] *Russian Regional Report*, 15 March 2000.
[67] *Mestnoe Vremia* (Perm'), 17 May 2000. Belousov also stated that "practically everyone agrees" that Putin should have the right to remove governors and mayors (*Mestnoe Vremia*, 24 May 2000). Amusingly, both Perm's Governor Igumnov and Mayor Iurii Trutnev publicly voiced opposition to appointing governors only two months prior (*Novyi Kompan'on*, 14 March 2000).
[68] *Novyi Kompan'on* (Perm'), 16 May 2000.
[69] *Tiumenskii Kur'er*, 22 May 2000. Roketskii had not so much suggested the creation of a Federal District as attempted to subordinate federal agencies based in Khanty-Mansiiskii AO and Iamalo-Nenetskii AO to those based in Tiumen oblast – to establish "unified federal structures." *Nashe Vremia* (Tiumen'), 1 June 2000.

the point that he might attempt once more to establish an Urals Republic.[70] Otherwise, Roketskii made an effort to show his agreement with the President, though he appeared more concerned after a July meeting with Putin in Ekaterinburg, stressing that he did not want to see the FDs become super-regions. He also noted that there was no unified position among the regions of the Urals FD, and was careful to observe that, "I support Putin in all matters, even if I don't like all of it."[71]

In Kareliia, Sergei Katanandov appeared upbeat (to the point of being defensive) following the May decree: "Under no circumstances could one consider this an attempt to reconstruct Russia's territorial divisions. I have no doubts that the country's internal borders will be maintained. As will remain the system of electing the heads of regions."[72] Rather than limiting the autonomy of the governors, Katanandov echoed Putin's claim that he would continue to rely on regional leaders and not attempt to lower their status.[73] Instead, he saw the brunt of the reforms as falling on the 60 federal agencies operating in Kareliia which "simply do not know what their job is." Apparently mistaking the thrust of Putin's reforms, Katanandov claimed that it was up to the governors to figure out which ministries to leave at the federal level and which to transfer to the regional level.[74]

The response in Buriatiia was balanced. The speaker of Buriatiia's legislative assembly, Mikhail Semenov, stated that Putin's measures did not violate the Constitution and that the FDs would work as long as they did not infringe the region's powers. State Duma Deputy Bato Semenov voiced support for the reforms, holding

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[70] In 1993, Rossel' attempted to upgrade the federal status of Sverdlovsk Oblast (along with Orenburg, Cheliabinsk, and Kurgan oblasts) to that of a federal republic. The attempt failed and resulted in Rossel' being sacked by El'tsin. See: Gerald M. Easter, "Redefining Centre-Regional Relations in the Russian Federation: Sverdlovsk Oblast'," *Europe-Asia Studies* 49, no. 4 (1997).
[71] *Tiumenskaia Pravda*, 20 July 2000.
[72] *Kareliia*, 17 May 2000.
[73] *Kareliia*, 24 May 2000.
[74] *Russian Regional Report*, 24 May 2000.

that effective coordination of the work of federal agencies in the regions was needed "now more than ever."[75] After Putin presented his envoy to the Siberian FD, Mikhail Semenov further commented that the FDs were intended to improve the efficiency of economic and legal administration, but that regions would not lose their independence. At the same time, he expressed frustration that he was unable to get answers to his questions regarding the fate of the Federal Treaty or the "future of national-territorial relations."[76]

Regional Identity and Territorial (re-)Organization

Few regional leaders were willing to question Putin's right to reform the institution of Presidential Representatives, or the purposes for which the FDs were created. In part this was due to a lack of understanding of what the governors' role would be in the system. There also was concern about disruption of traditional regional and economic ties. Numerous regions were taken out of their traditional orbits, among them Bashkortostan, Udmurtiia, Komi, and Volgograd. Volgograd Governor Nikolai Maksiuta worried that inclusion in the North Caucasus FD would interfere with its work through the Great Volga Inter-regional Association, while Bashkortostan's leadership feared economic ties with the Urals would suffer as a result of its inclusion in the Volga FD.[77] In Perm, there was speculation that the Urals FD did not include "traditional" Urals regions (and all members of inter-regional association Great Ural) in order to keep Rossel' from eclipsing the new polpred.[78] Many regions also voiced status concerns related to the designation of district capitals. Samara's administration

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[75] *Inform-Polis* (Ulan-Ude), 24 May 2000.
[76] *Buriatiia*, 31 May 2000. Buriatiia's President Leonid Potapov was noticeably silent throughout this period, though he attended the same meetings with Semenov.
[77] *Russian Regional Report*, 24 May 2000.
[78] "The fewer the powers of the polpred, the greater the influence of 'transregional' leaders like Shaimiev and Rossel'." *Novyi Kompan'on* (Perm'), 6 June 2000.

was clearly dismayed that the Volga FD capital would be Nizhnyi Novgorod, while the capital of the North Caucasus FD, Rostov-na-Donu, was concerned that it would become associated with the ethnic problems in the Caucasus.[79] Tomsk Governor Viktor Kress complained that Novosibirsk, the Siberian FD capital, "should stop thinking of itself as the capital of Siberia."[80] In the Urals capital, Ekaterinburg, the appointment of polpred Petr Latyshev caused some concern owing to his prior work as head of the UVD in neighboring Perm.

In Kareliia and Buriatiia, the territorial shape of the FDs did not generate any noticeable reaction as both republics were included in their traditional areas. In both cases, the NW and Siberian polpreds refrained from making explicitly negative comments about the republics. Kareliia's Katanandov did not meet individually with Cherkesov until October 2000 and their interactions were mostly limited to discussing problems related to federal funding of "northern privileges" and the reform of regional legislation.[81] In early 2001, Katanandov expressed unease over the possible changes to internal (regional) borders that might ensue, but cautiously supported the notion in arguing that, "in time, it is possible, that it will be necessary to re-examine the existing borders," but only "significantly later and after seriously developing and preparing this idea."[82]

In his first visit to Buriatiia, the Siberian polpred Drachevskii emphasized that cadre "rearrangement" was underway, and that "horizontal rotation will continue further now that we have come to a common understanding with the heads of oblasts and republics." Drachevskii continued that one of the FD's priorities would be to

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[79] *Russian Regional Report*, 24 May 2000. The North Caucasus FD was later renamed the Southern FD on the recommendation of polpred Viktor Kazantsev, in part because of concerns of some prominent regions of being considered part of the turbulent Caucasus area.
[80] *Russian Regional Report*, 7 June 2000.
[81] *Kareliia*, 11 October 2000; *Kareliia*, 20 December 2000.
[82] *Russian Regional Report*, 24 January 2001.

create a uniform database of federal and regional cadres. He also focused on the lack of a "unified information and transport space" in Siberia, noting in particular that one could not fly directly to Ulan-Ude from Novosibirsk. On inter-ethnic relations, Drachevskii approved of Buriatiia's policy of proportional representation of Buriats in the republic's legislative and administrative structures. In the end, Drachevskii emphasized that he would not interfere with regional governments, saying that he did not intend to be a *tolkach*.[83]

Tiumen and Perm, however, are instructive cases insofar as they were made into "internal borderlands," straddling the traditional Siberian, Urals, and Volga regions. Tiumen had always been considered part of Siberia and its inclusion in the Urals FD came as a surprise. Nevertheless, there was little in the way of public or elite outcry. The first visit by Urals polpred Latyshev to Tiumen passed relatively peacefully. Latyshev stated that his main task was increasing legality in the FD, starting with "bringing federal structures to life."[84] The condition of border-crossing points with Kazakhstan was singled out as needing federal intervention. In addition, Latyshev pledged that he and his apparat would follow the upcoming elections in Tiumen closely.[85] It is worth recalling that Roketskii had been fighting a vicious legal and political struggle with the governors of Khanty-Mansiiskii and Iamalo-Nenetskii autonomous okrugs since the mid-1990s. Roketskii interpreted the strengthening of federal power as benefiting Tiumen vis-à-vis its neighbors to the north, despite the fact that the FD headquarters were located in Ekaterinburg and the speaker of the Khanty-Mansiiskii AO legislative assembly, Sergei Sobianin, was

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[83] *Buriatiia*, 1 September 2000. A *tolkach* is a term often used in the Soviet era for a sort-of political enforcer.
[84] *Tiumenskie Izvestiia*, 17 August 2000.
[85] *Tiumenskie Izvestiia*, 22 August 2000.

appointed first deputy polpred.[86] By contrast, the head of Khanty-Mansiisk's mission in Tiumen, Nikolai Dobrynin, predicted that, "a number of surprises await us, including some that are not very welcome. There is no reason to doubt this."[87] Both the autonomous okrugs quickly moved to join the *Bolshoi Ural* inter-regional association, but they also maintained membership in the Siberian inter-regional association, *Siberskoe Soglashenie*. In any event, the question of Tiumen's territorial attachment was effectively postponed until the gubernatorial election in January 2001 (see next chapter).

Perm had always been considered part of the Urals, yet was unexpectedly placed in the Volga FD. Unlike Tiumen, this occasioned a great deal of confusion and concern, resulting in a somewhat confused interplay of central and regional interests concerning whether Perm would stay in the Volga or return to the Urals. The issue was particularly important in symbolic terms of traditional conceptions of membership in "the Urals" or "the Volga," but also in terms of organizing regional and central interests around the principles of inclusion in the new FD structures. After the official ceremony presenting Sergei Kirienko as the Volga FD's polpred, Putin surprised Governor Igumnov by admitting that Perm might have been included in the Volga FD mistakenly and stated he would be willing to consider moving Perm to the Urals FD. Petr Latyshev, the Urals FD polpred, was in favor of such a move.[88] Though there were conflicting reports on whether Kirienko would support such a move, the region's transfer to the UFD was vigorously opposed by Kirienko's party, the Union of Right Forces (SPS).[89] Interestingly, the question of Perm's inclusion in

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[86] The staff of Urals polpred Latyshev also included a deputy governor from Iamalo-Nenetskii AO and the former head of the FSB for Tiumen oblast'.
[87] *Tiumenskaia Pravda*, 16 September 2000.
[88] *Novyi Kompan'on* (Perm'), 6 June 2000.
[89] *Novyi Kompan'on* (Perm'), 27 June 2000. The opposition was probably motivated both by interest in protecting Kirienko's turf and supporting Putin.

the Volga FD was raised not by Igumnov, but by Cheliabinsk oblast Governor Petr Sumin.[90] Moreover, despite speculation regarding the historical rivalry with Ekaterinburg, Perm's transfer to the Urals FD was supported by Sverdlovsk's governor Eduard Rossel'. At the same time, Tatarstan's Shaimiev lobbied to keep Perm in the Volga. He characterized Perm's inclusion in the Volga FD as important and positive, citing the already extensive and expanding ties between the regions as providing the economic foundation for strengthening political integration within the framework of the FD.[91] The speed with which political actors *outside* of Perm moved to support or oppose its membership in the Volga FD revealed the extent to which regional interests territorialized along the lines of the Federal Districts.

In the end, Perm remained in the Volga, though it managed to keep one foot in the Urals. Initially, Igumnov consulted with heads of local government and enterprises, claiming that most appeared to be in favor of "returning" Perm to the Urals (including the mayor of Perm' and future governor, Iurii Trutnev).[92] A written request on behalf of Perm's government was addressed to the Kremlin, as suggested by Putin. The request was denied, however, without any formal response. The situation provided a vivid illustration of the new President's political inexperience. On the one hand, allowing one region to change districts would establish a precedent and potentially cause dozens of other regions to make similar requests. The point was driven home by Igumnov, who couched the issue in terms of maintaining good relations with Kirienko: "If Volgograd, which very much wants to return to the Volga, succeeds in doing so, then we would have cause to return to our native Urals without offense to the president's representative."[93] On the other, rejecting the request by

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[90] Cheliabinsk oblast was included in the Urals FD.
[91] *Mestnoe Vremia* (Perm'), 7 June 2000.
[92] *Mestnoe Vremia* (Perm'), 7 June 2000.
[93] *Mestnoe Vremia* (Perm'), 7 June 2000.

Perm's elite would damage Putin's credibility. The best option for the Kremlin was if Igumnov changed his mind and requested, instead, that Perm remain in the Volga FD, which is precisely what happened.[94] On Kirienko's first trip to Perm as polpred, he stressed that the FD borders "do not have any real significance from the perspective of economic associations," and that in any case the FD borders were determined by Putin, not the polpred. In the event, Igumnov tactfully stated that he would have "battled" to leave the Volga FD if someone other than Kirienko had been appointed polpred.

Perm's attempt to move to a different FD suggests that it is not only ethnic or national issues at the periphery that have the potential to escalate to the national level. Putin's federal reforms, not merely the new districts, provoked discontent that remained, for the most part, muted. Yet the possibility that Perm's transfer to the Urals FD would create a precedent for the fragmentation of Putin's districts – not least because of the fact that Perm's transfer was desired and opposed by other regions in both the Urals and Volga FDs – also suggests the extent to which the center required Perm's acceptance of Volga membership to provide a telling example for other regional administrations. Perm's compliance legitimated the new FD borders, but at the cost of the purposeful de-emphasis of their significance for regional identity. What Perm gained through compliance was the ability to appropriate the center's rationales in its relations with other regions. In publicly closing the debate on Perm's membership in the Volga FD, Igumnov argued that the region's inclusion in the Volga illustrated the organization of the FDs on the principle of equal rights among federal subjects. He had in mind the federal republics (especially fellow Volga FD members Tatarstan and Bashkortostan), which he had long criticized for claiming asymmetrical

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[94] *Novyi Kompan'on* (Perm'), 18 July 2000. Igumnov went on vacation immediately afterwards and did not talk to reporters about his change of mind.

financial privileges and not contributing their share to the federal budget. At the same time, however, Igumnov stressed that inclusion in the Volga FD opened up opportunities to "work on two fronts" since it now occupied a bridging position between the Volga and the Urals, participating in both the Great Volga and Great Ural inter-regional associations.[95]

Federation Council Appointments

While it is sometimes difficult to identify open challenges to the process of centralization initiated by Putin, the reform of the Federal Council and selection of new senators illustrated the role and involvement of the new FD structures within their respective territories. The reform of the Federation Council was initially opposed by the incumbent senators,[96] who were motivated by the potential loss of privileged positions in federal politics and the weakening of their abilities to defend regional interests.[97] Perm's Governor Igumnov gave voice to this latter concern in complaining that people who work constantly in Moscow become "detached" from their territory after two or three months and start "to think differently."[98] In the compromise solution, the reformed upper house would be comprised of one senator chosen by the regional legislative assembly and a second senator appointed by the regional administration (and confirmed by the legislative assembly). As Remington points out, "there is every indication that the presidential administration was active in

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[95] *Novyi Kompan'on* (Perm'), 12 September 2000.
[96] From 1995 to 2000, membership in the Federation Council consisted *ex officio* of the heads of regional administrations and legislative assemblies.
[97] Matthew Hyde, "Putin's Federal Reforms and their Implications for Presidential Power in Russia," *Europe-Asia Studies* 53, no. 5 (2001): 729. Hyde also points out that Putin's representative to the Federation Council, Aleksandr Kotenkov, threatened that at least sixteen governors would face prosecution after losing parliamentary immunity. Most governors were clearly offended by Kotenkov's remark, though it is debatable whether any took the threat seriously.
[98] *Mestnoe Vremia* (Perm'), 31 May 2000.

coordinating this process, but its role varied from region to region."[99] The cases under review here demonstrate the range of incentives and coercive pressures that led regional leaders to acquiesce to the reform of the Federation Council. Governors that complied with the center's interests (or that did not, at a minimum, offend the center's preferences) found the new senatorial appointments to be an opportunity for rewarding allies or removing political opposition, as was the case in Kareliia and Tiumen. In the case of Buriatiia, and to a lesser extent in Perm, the center was equally willing to intervene when legislative assemblies selected the "wrong" person for the job. In addition, the appointments also reflected salient concerns regarding "native" representation (as opposed to the recruitment of Muscovite politicians and businessmen) in the Federation Council.

Kareliia

Despite initial concern that the regions were not consulted in the drafting of Putin's package of reforms, Katanandov and Kareliia's other senator, Vladimir Shil'nikov, begrudgingly approved of the notion of appointing senators from the executive and legislative branches of the republican government.[100] Both Katanandov and Shil'nikov notably lacked enthusiasm, suggesting throughout that there was "no need to rush" the process. Shil'nikov doubted that the influx of non-elected bankers, businessmen and industrialists would be positive for the Federation Council.[101] He later expressed concern that the upper house was "losing its functions," and that the

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[99] Thomas F. Remington, "Majorities without Mandates: The Russian Federation Council since 2000," *Europe-Asia Studies* 55, no. 5 (2003): 674.
[100] *Kareliia*, 20 May 2000; *Kareliia*, 15 July 2000; *Kareliia*, 22 July 2000.
[101] *Kareliia*, 9 June 2001.

manner in which the new Federation Council was formed threatened to transform Russia from a federation to a unitary state.[102]

Though the law reforming the Federation Council was passed by the State Duma in July 2000, the new senators from Kareliia were not appointed until December 2001.[103] While much journalistic attention was lavished on Putin's success in removing the governors from Moscow, in practice the reform also allowed some governors to name potential rivals as their senators and "deport" them to Moscow. Katanandov was able to remove from Petrozavodsk his predecessor and potential challenger in the April 2002 gubernatorial elections, Viktor Stepanov.[104] To replace Shil'nikov, the legislative assembly selected local businessman Iurii Ponomarev as its senator. Ponomarev ran virtually unopposed. Three other candidates for the position were officially considered, but only as a formality required by law. When it came to a vote, they withdrew themselves from consideration leaving only Ponomarev's name on the ballot.[105] On the whole, the center appeared to take little interest in the selection of Kareliia's senators, though the lack of intervention regarding the voting process for Ponomarev suggests tacit approval.[106]

Tiumen

Tiumen's new senators came from the ranks of the northern okrugs, which had long opposed Tiumen's previous governor. Both of the new senators were particularly beholden to Governor Sobianin for their new posts. Sobianin moved quickly to replace Roketskii in the Federation Council after the latter's defeat in the January

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[102] *Kareliia*, 15 January 2002; Severnyi *Kur'er*, 15 January 2002.
[103] All four of Kareliia's deputies in the State Duma voted in favor of the law.
[104] *Gubernia*, 19 December 2001; *Russian Regional Report*, 8 May 2002.
[105] Press-sluzhba Zakonodatel'nogo Sobraniia Respubliki Kareliia, 28 December 2001.
[106] By contrast, the same voting process was targeted by Buriatiia's procurator in order to prevent the selection of Iurii Skuratov as senator (see below).

2001 gubernatorial elections. The new senator was Aleksandr Gavrin, known for succeeding Sobianin as mayor of Kogalym in 1993, and more recently for serving as Minister of Energy in the Russian government since May 2000.[107] Gavrin was fired from his ministerial post on 5 February 2001 by Putin in connection with the energy crisis in Primorskii krai. Curiously, Sobianin appointed Gavrin to the Federation Council on 27 January 2001, ten days prior to his dismissal. In effect, Tiumen's new governor utilized the senatorial appointment to remove his predecessor's (Roketskii's) last position of influence over Tiumen politics, to salvage Gavrin's political career and simultaneously maintain an influential ally in Moscow.

The oblast Duma waited considerably longer to appoint its senator, eventually choosing Andrei Artiukhov in February 2002. Artiukhov had previously served as State Duma deputy for Iamalo-Nenetskii autonomous okrug, as well as deputy in the Tiumen oblast Duma, and at the time of his appointment he had become deputy governor in the oblast administration.[108] For a while it appeared that Tiumen's senator would be deputy polpred Mikhail Ponomarev, but the delay in appointing a senator from the oblast legislature meant that the upper chamber's key positions had already been distributed and a post of sufficient status (allegedly) could no longer be secured.[109] In general, there was little in the way of central influence over Tiumen's senatorial appointments. At the same time, Sobianin's brief tenure as first deputy polpred in the Urals FD and apparent success in defusing tensions between the oblast and the northern okrugs gave him great latitude in securing appointments for local allies.

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[107] *Tiumenskie Izvestiia*, 28 February 2001.
[108] *Tiumenskie Izvestiia*, 15 February 2002.
[109] Biulleten' Analiticheskoi Informatsii Region-Politika. Prilozhenie k Regional'nomu Delovomu Zhurnalu "Aktsent-Tiumen'". Ianvar' 2002 g. No 1(3): 9-10.

Perm

Perm's new governor, Iurii Trutnev, chose Oleg Chirkunov to be his senator in the Federation Council. Chirkunov was a close associate of Trutnev's, having run the governor's 2000 election campaign and previously having been a member of Trutnev's EKS business group.[110] Chirkunov quickly made a name for himself on the national level as the lone vote in the Federation Council against the new-old Russian state anthem.[111] He was also publicly critical of Putin's strengthening of the "ruling vertical" and the President's acquisition of a "controlling stake" in both the Federation Council and State Duma.[112]

The reform of the Federation Council was initially opposed by Perm's legislative assembly speaker, Nikolai Deviatkin, who favored either maintaining the existing composition of the upper house or amending the Russian Constitution to transfer its powers to the State Duma.[113] Perm's Duma again generated controversy when it came time to select its new senator. Businessman Vladimir Dobrosotskii was nominated by the speaker of Perm's legislative assembly, Nikolai Deviatkin, who had become acquainted with the nominee through his work in the upper house's agriculture committee.[114] The nomination occasioned a discussion over whether Perm's senator should be a local or a Muscovite (since Dobrosotskii lived and worked chiefly in Moscow). The fact that Dobrosotskii was born in Bashkortostan was raised in the legislative assembly as if to indict his loyalties to the region.[115] Deputy polpred (and native of Perm) Valentin Stepankov interceded on Dobrosotskii's behalf, arguing

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[110] *Novyi Kompan'on* (Perm'), 26 December 2000.
[111] *Novyi Kompan'on* (Perm'), 20 March 2001.
[112] *Novyi Kompan'on* (Perm'), 24 April 2001. Chirkunov took the edge off his comments, however, by noting that he was cautiously optimistic now that Putin was making attempts at "concrete legal reform."
[113] *Novyi Kompan'on* (Perm'), 25 July 2000.
[114] *Novyi Kompan'on* (Perm'), 18 September 2001.
[115] *Novyi Kompan'on* (Perm'), 23 October 2001.

that a senator could be a more effective lobbyist of regional interests if he has contacts on the federal level.

Stepankov also suggested that the polpred's apparatus would not allow a regional legislature to mistakenly appoint a crook, stating cryptically that, "if a region doesn't have full information about the candidate, we try to get that information to the people who make the final decision."[116] After Dobrosotskii's candidacy had been endorsed by oblast Duma Speaker Deviatkin, Governor Iurii Trutnev, and even polpred Kirienko, Perm's MFI Solomonov attempted to block (or at least to stall) Dobrosotskii's confirmation by leaking information that indirectly linked Dobrosotskii with court proceedings against the general director of a company where he served as deputy general director, as well as evidence of misuse of budgetary funds by a corporation where he was first deputy president in 1995-6.[117] The action was perceived as an attempt by Solomonov to insert himself into the selection process, though it perhaps did more to demonstrate the extent to which he had been left out.

Buriatiia

Buriatiia's leadership initially approached the reform of the Federation Council with equanimity. The speaker of the republic's legislative assembly, Mikhail Semenov, supported the nomination of senators, arguing that an elected upper house would only turn the upper house into a copy of the State Duma.[118] The republic's first new senator was Vladimir Agalov, appointed by the executive branch in January 2001. Agalov had been serving as first deputy head of Buriatiia's government and, in accordance with a decree by Buriatiia's President Leonid Potapov, would continue as

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[116] *Novyi Kompan'on* (Perm'), 18 September 2001.
[117] The information was leaked through the newspaper *Permskii obozrevatel'*, which was controlled by the MFI. *Novyi Kompan'on* (Perm'), 16 October 2001.
[118] *Buriatiia*, 23 May 2000.

a member of the republic's government. As a career politician who worked in both local and regional government, Agalov's appointment was uncontroversial. When asked about the other regions that chose "politicians-Muscovites" as their senators, Agalov's laconic reply was, "that is their business."[119]

Buriatiia's legislative assembly, the *Narodnyi Khural* (NKh), initially selected as its senator Iurii Skuratov, the former General Procurator RF who left office towards the end of the El'tsin era in the midst of scandal.[120] Skuratov's nomination was made by a group of deputies belonging to a legislative faction affiliated with the Communist Party, the People's-Patriotic Union of Russia (NPSR). The only other candidate for the post was Sergei Mesenin, a deputy of the NKh with no experience at the federal level. Skuratov's chief claim to office was as the only native son of Buriatiia to have reached the upper echelons of government – someone perceived as having the contacts and professional reputation to be able to represent and defend Buriatiia's interests in the center. He stated that he was not ready to dispose of the treaty-basis of federal relations, and insisted on the need to bring federal legislation "in accordance with the constitutional-legal status of Russia's [federal] subjects." When questioned as to whether his selection would be viewed as "undesirable," Skuratov replied that "the family"[121] was on its way out from the Kremlin and would not present any problems.[122] The NKh appointed Skuratov as senator by a vote of 39-17.[123]

The Kremlin responded within short order. The republic's Procurator protested that the NKh had violated procedural requirements of both federal law and

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[119] *Buriatiia*, 39 March 2001.
[120] The Federation Council refused to accept El'tsin's dismissal of Skuratov until Putin came to power and won its approval.
[121] The reference was to the clannish circle of friends and advisors in El'tsin's administration.
[122] Vosemnadtsadtaia Sessiia Narodnogo Khurala Respubliki Buriatiia. 19 Noiabr' 2001 g. Stenograficheskii Otchet. Chast' I: 25-7.
[123] Mysteriously, the vote for Mesenin was recorded as 12-44, indicating a discrepancy of (at least) five votes since deputies could only cast one ballot. In order for a candidate to receive a majority of votes from the 65-member chamber, a minimum of 33 votes would be required. Without the additional five votes, Skuratov's total would be 34 – still a majority, but only just.

the legislative assembly's own rules of order, first in not considering "multiple" candidates, and secondly in opting to bypass discussion of the candidates and proceeding directly to vote after the candidates' statements. The protest forced a special session of the NKh to decide whether to recall Skuratov. The debate was heated, during which deputies displayed disbelief, shame, and indignation at the local and national astonishment at Skuratov's appointment. Several deputies singled out the MFI, Boris Danilov, for making offensive remarks on television.[124] Many deputies felt that Skuratov had misled them about the state of his relations with the Kremlin, while others spoke of endless phone calls from polpred Drachevskii, the Russian government, and the heads of federal agencies in Moscow, threatening to bankrupt Buriatiia if Skuratov was not recalled. There were constant references to the sudden arrival of Muscovites and members of the Presidential Administration, even going so far as to identify the hotel room where a direct line to the Kremlin had been established (in the swankiest hotel in Ulan-Ude, no less).

Buriatiia's President Leonid Potapov published an editorial on the day before the proceedings in which he detailed how previously he had supported Skuratov as General Procurator, but that he had decided to cease opposing the President with Putin's arrival. He also claimed that he traveled specially to Moscow and was told unequivocally that Skuratov would not be allowed to join the Federation Council. Lastly, Potapov stated that he had refused to appoint Skuratov as senator for the executive branch earlier that year, and that now he had asked Skuratov to remove his candidacy, arguing that, "as a countryman (*zemliak*), you should agree with my position."[125] On the day of the NKh session, however, Potapov (who was in

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[124] Even here, deputies continued to refer to Danilov by his previous title as "Presidential Representative." An attempt to open debate on the MFI's comments was diverted to committee and was not revived in ensuing sessions of the NKh.

[125] *Buriatiia*, 27 November 2001.

attendance) tipped his hand by announcing that he had fired the advisors responsible for persuading him to support Skuratov and urged the NKh to correct their "gross error" (*grubaia oshibka*) in order to protect political stability and prevent political isolation of the republic.[126]

Skuratov's response to the procurator's protest and various charges was strident. He argued that the federal center respected neither federal nor republican constitutions,

> Otherwise there would not be any phone calls from Prime Minister Mikhail Mikhailovich Kas'ianov... there would not be phone calls from Leonid Vadimovich Drachevskii... there would not be in Ulan-Ude an advisor of the Main Territorial Department of the Presidential Administration... There would not take place special meetings with [presidential Chief of Staff] Voloshin. There would not be new representatives of the Presidential Administration coming to Buriatiia.

Skuratov drew attention to the violation of the separation of powers by the executive branch in interfering with the selection of the legislative branch's operation. He also pointed out that MFI Danilov's claim that Skuratov opposed Putin was little more than an assertion.[127]

In the end, Skuratov was recalled by a vote of 49-1 (with one abstention).[128] The NKh quickly selected a new senator, Vladimir Bavlov, who previously served as a head of local government.[129] Despite the procedural issues that served as pretext for Skuratov's removal, there still was only one alternative candidate to Bavlov, who duly retracted his candidacy prior to the vote. This time, however, the procurator did not protest.

The Skuratov episode was revealing in a number of respects about Buriatiia's relations with the federal center. The exact comment by Danilov mentioned by

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[126] Vneocherednaia Sessiia Narodnogo Khurala Respubliki Buriatiia (Vtoroi Sozyv). 28 Noiabr' 2001 g. Stenograficheskii Otchet: 32-3.
[127] Ibid., 26-31.
[128] *Inform-Polis* (Ulan-Ude), 5 December 2001.
[129] *Buriatiia*, 20 December 2001. Bavlov was head of the Bauntovskii raion administration.

Skuratov was, "On the eve of elections for president of Buriatiia, we do not need any unnecessary shocks. Skuratov is famous for his opposition to the President of Russia. To reanimate him today is to provoke a confrontation with the Russian government."[130] Linking Skuratov's appointment to Buriatiia's upcoming elections made plain the price of the Kremlin's support for Potapov's re-election. Skuratov received support from the Communists (as did Potapov), and was also supported by a number of prominent businesses in the republic, not to mention a significant proportion of the legislative assembly. Judging by Potapov's comments about firing his advisors, he clearly played a more supportive role in Skuratov's nomination than he claimed publicly. The debate over Skuratov thus became linked with the republican leadership's survival. Indeed, the extraordinary session of the NKh saw deputies opposed to Potapov lining up to support Skuratov. Nevertheless, Buriatiia's politicians displayed a surprising degree of naïvety in nominating someone as notorious as Skuratov, particularly when his positions on federal relations clearly ran counter to the prevailing winds from Moscow and Novosibirsk. What made this naïvety possible, clearly, was the republic's lack of channels of access to the Presidential Administration, or even the polpred's office. In selecting its new senators, the republican government and legislative assembly put a premium on choosing "its own" people, its *zemliaki*. When the full wrath of the Kremlin fell on Ulan-Ude's parliament, however, republican politicians began to calculate Buriatiia's interests differently – less as a matter of gaining in representation and status in the center, and more as a function of retaining office, as well as the four billion rubles of federal transfers that made up over 60% of the republican budget.

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[130] *Inform-Polis* (Ulan-Ude), 28 November 2001. Note that the elections Danilov mentioned did not take place until June 2002.

Despite the fact that the Kremlin succeeded in blocking Skuratov's appointment through an impressive mobilization of the Presidential Administration, it also revealed limitations in the center's powers of influence and information-gathering. The fact that Skuratov's candidacy went as far as it did demonstrated the under-developed surveillance capacities of the MFI's office, the Siberian FD, and by extension, the Presidential Administration. The procurator's protests were understood by all as procedural pretexts for political decisions already taken in Moscow, and the fact that they involved abuse of the procurator's power (in assuming jurisdiction over procedural issues regulated by the NKh's rules of order) and selective application did little to serve Putin's "dictatorship of law."

Assessing the Role and Significance of the Federal Districts

For all their apparent weakness and ambiguities, the polpreds with the Federal District structures and apparat moved quickly to establish themselves as key institutions in regulating center-regional relations. This point is worth reinforcing, for many commentators – academic and journalistic, alike – tend to view the FDs as ineffective, at best. In these accounts, analysis tends to focus on the overwhelming disadvantages of the new structures: first, the territorial shape of the FDs is unwieldy and "unnatural," taking many regions out of their traditional orbits; second, the status of the polpreds and FDs as an ongoing concern is tenuous, based on a solitary presidential decree and subject to the whims of the president; third, the polpreds must deal with overt and covert opposition from entrenched regional administrations; and

lastly, the polpreds lack concrete levers of economic influence and decision-making to force compliance from regional administrations.[131]

Regarding the first pair of critiques, the polpreds have developed organizational responses to these weaknesses. If the territorial shape of the FDs was "unnatural," it also deprived regions of prior bases for coordinated action or opposition based on "natural" territorial groupings. The case of Perm was illustrative in that its placement in the Volga generated both interest and resistance from other regions in both the Volga and Urals FDs. Perm's acquiescence to remain in the Volga legitimated the FD borders and forestalled further challenges to the center's right to draw them without consulting the regions. At the same time, the opportunities for regional elite mobility through the FD apparat meant, in part, that the polpreds were able to "naturalize" the new territorial entities through manipulation of cadres policy. As one set of observers put it, the appearance of the FDs was a "cadre-quake" (*kadrotriasenie*), at least as significant as the achievement of a "unified legal space."[132] This was matched by processes "from below," as

> [The Federal Districts] have begun to take root as elements of reality, forming the ontological map... Government enterprises in the sphere of geodesics and cartography will now map the country in terms of the Districts. Soon history will be studied in terms of Federal Districts, as is already the case with geography. Authors are re-writing textbooks, courses are being revised.[133]

Even weather forecasts in Russia are now framed in terms of the FDs.[134] This is not to argue that regional borders have lost their significance. Rather, the polpred's selections for Main Federal Inspector revealed both sensitivity to local conditions and

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[131] On these last two points in particular, the most comprehensive treatment to date is found in: Robert Orttung and Peter Reddaway, eds., *Dynamics of Russian Politics: Putin's Reform of Federal-Regional Relations* (Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).
[132] Zubarevich, Petrov, and Titkov, "Federal'nye okruga - 2000," 174.
[133] Vladimir Kaganskii, *Kul'turnyi landshaft i sovetskoe obitaemoe prostranstvo* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2001), 501.
[134] The significance of this is suggested by Billig's mention of the role of weather broadcasts in the US as "banal" ways that the boundaries of the nation are patrolled in the media. Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage Publications, 1995).

an active search for allies in the regions. In this sense, the pursuit of strengthening the "ruling vertical" was in certain respects a means of activating the integrative features of internal borders. To the extent that Putin's Federal Districts were effective, it was in reorienting both regional-territorial affiliations and the point of contact in center-regional relations to coincide with the FD capitals.

To the question of tenuous legal status, it would appear that the polpreds managed to compensate with tactics of organizational inter-positioning. By exploiting the dual-subordination of territorial branches of central agencies, the FD apparat could paralyze regional governments and disrupt the work of the central ministries. In organizing collegia of the heads of federal agencies, the polpreds and MFIs introduced a degree of vertical, personal accountability to the operation of the agencies' territorial branches. The institution of public receptions has been used to provide a formal outlet for dissatisfied citizens to express discontent with local or regional administration (and, potentially, to provide the polpred with additional legal grounds for direct intervention in local affairs), as well as to resolve jurisdictional issues between federal agencies, regional government, and local administration. One should not forget, as well, that the polpreds also acquired gatekeeper powers to sign off on all key appointments to federal structures in their respective districts. The governors may have retained some say in the process of appointing federal officials to their regions, but ultimately their input depends on their working relationship with the polpred.

The envoys' have buttressed their status by assuming increasingly important informal roles. Though their one-on-one meetings with Putin became less frequent, they were still well placed to represent the interests of regions within their respective

FDs and regional leaders increasingly sought to take advantage of this channel.[135] In addition, it became more common that the polpreds and their staff in the regions were called upon to mediate intractable disputes between the governors and regional Dumas, or between regional and local administrations. As Orttung points out, these roles suggest that the FDs potentially offered a source of pluralism in regions that formerly were dominated by the governor:

> By establishing an alternative power center in the office of his envoy, Putin's reform opened up a wider space for differing viewpoints than existed before. His intention was to establish strong federal control to replace strong gubernatorial control. In reality, however, he weakened the governors by introducing a rival. Thus independent-minded politicians, businessmen, and journalists can now maneuver between the federal and regional authorities to pursue their various goals. Such freedom did not exist when the governors held almost exclusive authority.[136]

In analyzing these criticisms regarding territorial shape and status, then, it becomes clear that the FDs were organizational actors that did not rely exclusively on coercive measures to achieve their goals. Like any organization, the FDs had limited resources and capacity for achieving the goals set for them. This meant that the polpreds in some cases needed to cultivate good working relations with the governors by creating incentives for cooperation and compliance. It was not necessarily in the Kremlin's interests to replace governors with polpreds. Rather, the center's immediate interests would be better served by strong, loyal governors that carried out the center's directives and maintained political stability on the ground.

At the same time, the polpreds appeared to be working towards cultivating regional opposition, introducing a measure of pluralism in regional politics, and coordinating District-wide social and economic activities. This already suggests the

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[135] P.A. Fedosov et al., "Perspektivy rossiiskogo federalizma: federal'nye okruga, regional'nye politicheskie rezhimy, munitsipalitety," *Polis*, no. 4 (2002).
[136] Peter Reddaway and Robert Orttung, "What Do the Okrug Reforms Add Up To? Some Conclusions," in *The Dynamics of Russian Politics: Putin's Reform of Federal-Regional Relations*, ed. Robert Orttung and Peter Reddaway (Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004).

answers to the second set of criticisms regarding the governors' opposition and the apparent lack of economic levers of influence. Moreover, these critiques draw upon two sets of assumptions concerning the preferences of regional elites and the effects of socioeconomic structure on center-regional relations.

First, the critiques tend to assume that the preferences of regional elites were synonymous with the preferences of the region in which they are located. For elites from "strong" regions, it is assumed that their main policy preference was to limit central intervention, which in turn is taken as synonymous with expanding regional autonomy. Among weaker regions that were dependent upon federal transfers, regional elites are assumed to favor measures to maintain patron-client relations with the federal center. In this fashion, the preferences of regional elites are seen as inhering in the region's socioeconomic structure. Similarly, the center's preferences are assumed to be the diminishing (if not outright domination) of the role of strong regions in federal politics and maintenance of weak regions' dependence on central intervention. In other words, the preferences of regional and central elites are portrayed as exogenously determined and incommensurate in structure, thereby occluding the possible bases for convergence.

Second, the critiques reveal a structural assumption that the trajectory of federal relations was determined almost exclusively by the material distribution of power. The relative strength of center and regions is portrayed as a zero-sum relationship which rules out simultaneous increases in regional autonomy and central power (though the simultaneous loss of both regional autonomy and central capacity is not excluded). Consequently, center-regional relations are characterized in terms of the center's strategies of bribery and blackmail, regardless of whether one is discussing financial transfers or intervention in regional elections. Likewise, regional

strategies are depicted in terms of their ability to avoid blackmail and cultivate bribery from the center.

Ultimately, then, the critiques rely on regional socioeconomic characteristics for determining both the preferences of regional elites and the trajectory of center-regional relations. One problem with this approach is that it denies alternate bases of identification that transcend regional boundaries (for example, organizational affiliation with central ministries or agencies) at the same time that such bases are claimed to be appropriated or co-opted within regional borders. Similarly, the possibility that some form of regional identity could exercise an independent influence on center-regional relations is reduced to a deceptively simple calculation of the relative strength or weakness of the region in relation to the federal center.

A related problem is that this restrictive view of power denies the binding effects of legitimacy and authority in obtaining compliance or cooperation among central and regional agencies. To put it differently, authority is expressed and confirmed only in terms of the center's ability to impose coercive policies on the regions. Routine interactions between center and regions that do not result in public victory or defeat are thus treated as policy failure: when things are quiet, presumably, nothing of any significance is occurring. As Turovskii (2003) notes, the more that the polpreds are involved in real politics and the less "noise" they make on the federal level, the more one hears expectations that institution will be eliminated.[137]

Yet the FDs were designed essentially as organizations that function to coordinate the work of central agencies and oversee the activities of the executive agencies at the regional and local levels. To most Western observers, such functions appear incomprehensible, if not outright superfluous, as the FDs do not conform to

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[137] Turovskii, "Federal'nye okruga," 225.

the model of a Weberian bureaucracy. They do correspond, however, to the sorts of organization identified by T.H. Rigby as "task-achieving" bureaucracies within a "goal-rational" system. Writing about the organization of power and legitimacy in communist systems, Rigby explained that such regimes are concerned with directing activities, not merely regulating them through rule application. Officials are judged by success in fulfilling tasks, not by success in achieving compliance with regulations. Rule violations are tacitly condoned in the interests of task-fulfillment. The supreme legitimating value ("communism") constitutes

> a concept whose contours are sufficiently vague, like those of justice, order, democracy...which figure in other authority systems, but which differs from these in that it is not seen as an existing quality of the socio-political order but as something to be worked and fought for in the future... [138]

In such a system, the distribution of power is dominated by those responsible for coordinating the activities of lower-order bureaucracies and vetting their performance.[139] Rigby's modification of Weber's categories of legitimacy helps to make sense of the authority exercised by the polpreds and the FD apparat. In post-communist regimes like Russia where the democratization process stalled early on, the concepts of democracy, justice, and order remain as vague as the ideological predecessor of communism.

Insofar as it is often claimed that Russia's Presidential Administration has supplanted the role played by the CPSU, the analysis offered by Rigby suggests that this is not merely an organizational continuity with the Soviet past. Rather, it is an ideological continuity that affects the distribution of power and the status attributed to organizations designed to achieve the tasks set by the President. In this manner, legitimacy inheres not in state-society relations, but in the relations among command-

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[138] T. H. Rigby, "A Conceptual Approach to Authority, Power and Policy in the Soviet Union," in *Authority, Power and Policy in the USSR: Essays dedicated to Leonard Schapiro*, ed. T. H. Rigby, Archie Brown, and Peter Reddaway (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1980), 19.
[139] Ibid., 22.

administrative staffs – in other words, legitimacy is a function of relationships among political elites. In creating the FDs, Putin activated an institutional legacy of communism to achieve the compliance of regional elites and central agencies based in the regions. It is precisely this form of power and legitimacy that is missed by the critiques of the FDs as lacking coercive measures to overcome gubernatorial opposition.

To be sure, these critiques understate the range of instruments available to the polpreds to influence political outcomes in the regions. While the next chapter examines the question more closely in terms of the revision of regional charters and constitutions, for the moment it should suffice to point out the significant role played by the polpreds in the selection of Federation Council senators. "Loyal" regional administrations were able to pack off potential opposition to Moscow or to choose reliable members of their teams. By contrast, the Skuratov imbroglio in Buriatiia demonstrated the full wrath of the Presidential Administration at work. In this fashion, the polpreds were influential in managing regional representation in central institutions like the State Duma and the Federation Council. On the regional level, the rotation of elites through the FD and other federal structures granted the polpreds the ability to co-opt regional actors. One must also assume that the polpreds had access to a cache of *kompromat* on regional actors that may be deployed when deemed necessary.

As to the question of economic levers of influence and inter-regional coordination, generally no one discounts the fact that the FDs largely supplanted the inter-regional associations as the bases for long-term development planning, particularly with the establishment of FD branches of German Gref's think tank, the

Center for Strategic Planning.[140] More threateningly, the anti-crisis management program developed by Kirienko in the Volga FD provided for the possibility that the administrations of bankrupt or financially irresponsible regions could temporarily be replaced by professional (non-elected) managers appointed by the President on the advice of the polpred.[141]

In sum, these criticisms of the FDs only provide a univocal interpretation of the districts' functions and significance, relying on a zero-sum conceptualization of power in center-regional relations. But is such a conceptualization reasonable? After all, Putin emphasized repeatedly in meetings with the polpreds and federal inspectors that their job was not to interfere with regional government. While the polpreds were assigned general tasks to fulfill, they were left largely to their own devices in determining what role the districts would play and the strategies and tactics by which they were to achieve their objectives. In this sense, few clear criteria were issued from the center to determine the ongoing viability of the institution. Rather, the institution enjoyed a presumptive legitimacy from the start and sought to locate missions that would enhance and expand that legitimacy. Despite predictions to the contrary, the institution that was created with a weak legal basis for existence, vaguely defined mandates, and apparently inadequate resources for operation, quickly became "a universal matrix for the far-reaching reorganization of numerous federal structures."[142]

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[140] The one exception is the Siberian FD, where Dracheskii has chosen to coordinate directly with the association *Sibirskoe Soglashenie.*

[141] This provision was eventually incorporated into the reform of local self-government.

[142] Nikolai Petrov, "Federal reform, two and a half years on," *Jamestown Foundation Russia & Eurasia Review* 2, no. 1 (2003).

Conclusion

The analysis in this chapter suggests that the key advantage of the polpreds and FDs – the source of this presumptive legitimacy – was the authority of the "presidential line" to shape and fill Russia's political space. The ambiguity of the polpreds' mandate effectively allowed them to change roles and select tactics as necessary, playing the enforcer in some cases, arbiter among regional elites in others, or even act as spokesmen for regional interests. The flexibility of the polpred's organization and movement between tasks assigned by Putin, in many ways, reflected the "goal-rationality" form of legitimation that Rigby used to characterize the Soviet system of political order.[143] At base, the imposition of the institution of the polpreds and the FDs was a mechanism to regulate relations among central and regional elites, and as such called upon forms of legitimacy that inhere in relations between the ruling group and administrative staffs, rather than relations between the ruling group and society as a whole. Indeed, it has been noted that the process by which the new Federation Council senators were selected bears much in common with the *nomenklatura* system utilized by the CPSU to fill key administrative posts.[144]

The point may be generally extended to the cadres policies initiated under Putin and his polpreds, for it is often observed that the horizontal rotation of cadres bears more than a passing resemblance with Brezhnev-era cadres policy.[145] This would certainly make sense given that the polpreds mostly came to political maturity during the Brezhnev era (though Kirienko and Matvienko are significant outliers in this regard). More significantly, perhaps, was that the appearance of the district structures disrupted the patterns of elite mobility established in the 1990s under

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[143] Rigby, "A Conceptual Approach to Authority, Power and Policy in the Soviet Union.", T. H. Rigby, "Introduction: Political Legitimacy, Weber and Communist Mono-organisational Systems," in *Political Legitimation in Communist States*, ed. T. H. Rigby and Ferenc Feher (London: Macmillan, 1982).
[144] Remington, "Majorities without Mandates," 674.
[145] Reddaway and Orttung, "What Do the Okrug Reforms Add Up To?"

El'tsin.[146] The polpred's office presented opportunities for second- and third-tier regional elites to gain access to the center's resources and, from there, to rotate back into regional politics and contest higher offices or to move vertically into central political institutions. The most visible examples of this process included Tiumen's Sergei Sobianin and Valentina Matvienko in St. Petersburg. More generally, the working of the FD cadres policy revealed how Putin's re-centralization provided increasing points of contact with the central state through which regional interests can gain expression. These opportunities potentially offset the coercive elements of the structures.[147] But they also served to de-politicize the significance of Russia's regional borders as legal and metaphorical boundaries between central and regional levels of governance.

This process of de-politicization was aided by two dynamics facilitated by the institution of the FDs. In the first place, the polpreds and FD structures became focal points for regional lobbying and conflict mediation. Regional leaders quickly came to understand that the polpreds could be useful in communication regional interests through their meetings with the President and actively made use of this channel.[148] The polpred became the point of appeal in instances of irresolvable executive-legislative conflict on regional level, as well as the first port of call for governors seeking to express their interests and appeal the Kremlin's decisions. This intermediary position reinforced the center's predominance insofar as the center could exercise discretion over whether to intervene at a region's behest. This power was not

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[146] For a description of regional elite mobility in the El'tsin era, see: Alla Chirikova and Natalia Lapina, "Regional Elite: A Quiet Revolution on a Russian Scale," (Zurich: Center for Security Studies and Conflict Research, 2001), Nikita Tiukov, "Geografiia rossiiskogo pravitel'stva: 1990-1999 gg.," in *Regiony Rossii v 1999 g.: Ezhegodnoe prilozhenie k "Politicheskomu al'manakhu Rossii"*, ed. N. Petrov (Moscow: Moskovskii Tsentr Karnegi, 2001).

[147] This is not to say that they necessarily serve democratic purposes, but neither do they automatically harbinger the onset of authoritarianism. Indeed, the Russian case suggests that re-centralization may actually threaten to decrease the state's autonomy relative to regional interests, but only to the extent that regional institutions are not colonized by the center.

[148] P.A. Fedosov et al., "Perspektivy rossiiskogo federalizma."

unlimited, however, as the center's discretionary intervention was limited by the potential to set precedence for other regions to make common cause with the region-petitioner. Perm's failed attempt to move from the Volga to the Urals FD provided an early test case to this end.

Secondly, the de-politicization of regional borders had a "ratchet-down" effect within the regions. In other words, centralization on the national level ratified centralization processes at the regional level that served the interests of regional administrations. As discussed in the following chapter, the imperative of bringing regional legislation in line with federal and constitutional law presented regional executives with opportunities to redraft constitutions and charters and further consolidate their control within the regions. Similarly, opportunities arose to further enhance intra-regional control via mimicry of the FDs and repetition of central justifications for recentralization. "Successes" at the regional level thus did not necessarily require a heavy hand on the part of the polpred; rather, central rhetoric, justifications and institutional forms for the territorial organization of power provided the tools for regional executives to claim or re-assert control, while "success" at the regional level provided ongoing momentum for centralization on the national level.

Chapter Four: Constitutions, Charters, and Centralization

Introduction

In Russia's post-Soviet era, the constitutions of the federal republics demarcated and filled political space in claiming national self-determination, sovereignty, and control of natural resources. As discussed in Chapter One, the asymmetrical federal structure in Russia's Constitution granted the republics the most leeway in determining the structure and principles of regional governance. Republican constitutions became notorious in the 1990s for their assertions of sovereignty, of the right to conduct independent foreign policies, claims to land, water, natural and mineral resources, establishment of republican citizenship and official languages, and so forth.[1] This was due in part to the pervasive belief among republican elites that the federation was no more than the sum of its parts and that federal solutions should be constructed "from the bottom up" (*snizu vverkh*).[2] Arguably, the assertiveness of the republics promoted the impression that they tended to be separatist, while Russia's oblasts and krais were more integrationist in orientation.

Yet the scholarly focus on republican separatism often obscures the assertiveness of Russia's allegedly integrationist regions. Regional charters (*ustavy*), like republican constitutions, established the parameters of political contention in delineating what resources may legitimately be mobilized, which institutional arrangements count as formal or informal, and which actors may participate. In numerous oblasts and krais the regional charter violated the federal constitutional

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[1] All republics (except Ingushetiia and Kalmykiia) asserted their status as sovereign states in their constitutions. A number of republics further claimed the superiority of republican law over federal law, including the power to ratify federal laws and the ability to suspend the Russian Constitution and federal laws on their territory. L.M. Karapetian, *Federativnoe Ustroistvo Rossiiskogo Gosudarstva* (Moskva: NORMA, 2001), 101-2.

[2] Jeffrey Kahn, *Federalism, Democratization, and the Rule of Law in Russia* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002), 147.

principle of the supremacy of the Russian constitution and federal law.[3] Herrera's study of claims to economic sovereignty among non-republican regions during 1990-3 found that fifteen regions unilaterally changed their administrative (federal) status, four asserted that regional law took precedence over federal law, sixteen claimed the right to conduct independent foreign economic policy and nine claimed the right to control natural resources on regional territory. Equally telling was that only twelve regions showed no indication of economic separatism whatsoever.[4] Perhaps the most vivid illustration of regional activism was the case of Eduard Rossel''s attempt to upgrade Sverdlovsk oblast's status and establish a "Urals Republic" in 1993. Even after the attempt failed, Rossel' successfully managed to push a revised oblast charter through the regional assembly which fundamentally altered the landscape of regional politics. In particular, the new charter provided for gubernatorial elections, which conflicted with El'tsin's decree of October 1994 prohibiting elections for governors.[5] The oblast Duma filed an appeal with the federal Constitutional Court, seeking reversal of the presidential decree. Eventually a compromise was reached by which the oblast Duma withdrew its appeal and El'tsin issued a new decree permitting Russia's first gubernatorial election to take place. Following Rossel''s election as governor, he immediately pressed for a bilateral treaty with Moscow to put the oblast on equal footing with the republics.[6]

Thus, a significant problem emerging within the literature on Russian center-regional relations concerns the lack of attention to the content of regional charters

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[3] I.A. Umnova, *Konstitutsionnye osnovy sovremennogo Rossiiskogo federalizma* (Moskva: Delo, 2000), 109-10.

[4] Herrera utilized roughly the same measures of separatism as those used by Treisman (1997) to rank 57 regions. Yoshiko Herrera, "The Economic and Political Bases of Separatism: Imagined Economies and Regionalism in Russia," (2001). (located at: http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~herrera/)

[5] Ukaz ot 4 oktiabria 1994 g. N1969 "O merakh po ukrepleniiu edinoi sistemy ispolnitel'noi vlasti v RF."

[6] Gerald M. Easter, "Redefining Centre-Regional Relations in the Russian Federation: Sverdlovsk Oblast'," *Europe-Asia Studies* 49, no. 4 (1997).

outside of republican constitutions. The Russian constitution formally extends broad powers to the regions to establish their own structures of governance, and informal deal-making requires willing allies with resources. In both these respects, regional borders emerge as markers of political space and containers of regional political regimes.

Borders are not unidimensional, however, in establishing normative and political proximity. They are shaped as much from without as they are constructed from within. If scholars of regional politics in Russia have gone too far in assuming the integrationist orientation of the oblasts and krais, there has been a similar tendency to understate, misrepresent, or outright ignore the role of the center in regional politics. For instance, it was commonly observed by the end of the 1990s that regional governors had become more unruly and separatist vis-à-vis the Kremlin, but few (if any) pointed out that El'tsin cultivated strong governors in the wake of the October 1993 conflict with the Supreme Soviet. The standoff between president and parliament was replicated on the regional level, after which El'tsin sought to place allies in the regions that would be more loyal to the center.[7] Gel'man's analysis of regional political regimes treats the center as an "external influence" lacking consistent preferences or even sufficient capabilities to influence the trajectory of regional politics.[8] While his account was shaped by the center's apparent desertion of the regions in the wake of the 1998 economic crisis, his own work makes multiple references to instances of intervention by central institutions and actors.

A related difficulty concerns the journalistic impulse to treat all politics as dominated by strong, charismatic governors, where formal rules are trumped by informal lines of authority. Studies of regional regime types in Russia have focused

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[7] Darrell Slider, "Elections to Russia's Regional Assemblies," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 12, no. 3 (1996): 249.
[8] Vladimir Gel'man, "Regime Transition, Uncertainty and Prospects for Democratisation: The Politics of Russia's Regions in a Comparative Perspective," *Europe-Asia Studies* 51, no. 6 (1999).

less on describing how powerful the governors are, and more on explaining the diversity of regional politics often hidden behind the assumption that the governors are uniformly dominant. For instance, a recent survey of 31 regions found that legislatures tended to be strong in the republics while oblasts were evenly split between strong and weak assemblies.[9] While governors are often the pivotal actors in regional politics, the assumption that all governors are dominant often serves to conceal variations in regional politics. Moreover, this tendency in analysis generates rather contradictory positions, whereby central institutions (formal or informal) are said to affect or regulate center-regional relations, but regional politics appear to develop in isolation from (or in outright opposition to) the center. This is difficult to square with the governors' constant pleas for consistency and stability in federal policy.

This chapter unpacks these assumptions regarding the role and content of regional charters and constitutions, their relationship to the structure of governance on the regional level, the role of the federal center, and their combined consequences for the status of Russia's internal borders. The process of revising regional charters and constitutions took center stage in Putin's first year in office, and it provides insight into the relative salience of the Kremlin's efforts at centralization and attempts by the regions to maintain the autonomy of regional boundaries. The chapter begins with an overview of the center's role in structuring regional government during the 1990s and Putin's legislative initiatives through 2003. It then proceeds with a narrative analysis of the process of revising regional charters and constitutions in the four case studies. This approach not only helps to flesh out the nuances of regional politics when

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[9] A.C. Kuz'min, N.Dzh. Melvin, and V.D. Nechaev, "Regional'nye politicheskie rezhimy v postsovetskoi Rossii: Opyt tipologizatsii," *Polis* 12, no. 3 (2002). Still, the authors hold that there is no stable correlation between constitutional status and informal domination by the executive branch.

confronted with the concerted federal effort at centralization, but also brings to light essential (and counterintuitive) commonalities in the process among these cases.

Structuring Regional Government

The Russian Constitution only mentions regional constitutions (for republics) and charters in passing. Article 66 indicates that regional status is regulated by the federal Constitution and regional constitutions (in the case of the republics) or charters. Article 77.1 permits the federation's constituent regions to adopt their own system of regional governance "independently and according to the principles of the constitutional system of the Russian Federation and the general principles of the organization of representative and executive bodies of state authority fixed by federal law." Presumably, then, the regions had a great degree of latitude in determining how to structure regional governance.

As Umnova points out, however, the substance of regional charters was regulated by a pair of presidential decrees from late 1993, while the decrees were only "recommended" for application in the republics. As a result, only the republics really exercised the constitutional ability to design their own systems.[10] Regional assemblies were limited in size to 50 deputies – many times smaller than the soviets they replaced[11] – and the number of deputies working on a permanent salaried basis could not exceed two-fifths of the elected deputies. While the assemblies were extended the power to examine and confirm regional budgets, the heads of regional administrations had the exclusive power to draft and present the region's budget. In addition, the regional heads were generally charged with managing and disposing of the region's property, as well as taking "other measures to facilitate legality, the rights

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[10] Umnova, *Konstitutsionnye osnovy sovremennogo Rossiiskogo federalizma*, 153-4.
[11] Slider, "Elections to Russia's Regional Assemblies," 250.

and freedoms of citizens, the protection of property and social order, and to combat crime."[12]

The decrees regulated the structure and operation of regional legislative assemblies to a much greater extent than regional executive branches. In this regard they reflected El'tsin's distrust of regional legislatures following the October 1993 standoff with the Supreme Soviet (during which many regional legislatures sided with the national parliament) and his determination to control the reform of regional legislative structures. Outside of the republics, El'tsin continued to appoint the heads of regional administrations until 1995-6 and doubtless expected these governors to oversee the drafting of regional charters by the newly-constituted regional assemblies.[13] A federal law to regulate the structure and content of regional government was first discussed in the State Duma in 1994, though it was delayed by El'tsin for seven months in 1995, then subject to long debates in the State Duma and multiple vetoes by the Federation Council.[14] As a result, the law was not adopted until October 1999.[15] By then, however, the law could only codify the existing state

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[12] Ukaz ot 22 oktiabria 1993 g. N 1723 "Ob osnovykh organizatsii gosudarstvennoi vlasti v sub"ektakh Rossiiskoi Federatsii" (as well as attached "Polozhenie ob osnovnykh nachalakh organizatsii i deiatel'nosti organov gosudarstvennoi vlasti kraev, oblastei, gorodov federal'nogo znacheniia, avtonomnoi oblasti, avtonomnykh okrugov Rossiiskoi Federatsii na period poetapnoi konstitutsionnoi reformy"); Ukaz ot 22 dekabria 1993 g. N 2266 "O deistvii zakonodatel'stva Rossiiskoi Federatsii ob organakh gosudarstvennoi vlasti kraev, oblastei, gorodov federal'nogo znacheniia, avtonomnoi oblasti, avtonomnykh okrugov Rossiiskoi Federatsii."

[13] "One of the most important items on the agenda of the new assemblies was the drafting of republic constitutions and oblast' charters (ustavy) that formalize the governmental structure in each region. Given the lack of central direction over this process, the result will likely be regional governmental structures that are easily manipulated and controlled by the executive branch at the regional level and with minimal democratic supervision." Ibid.: 263-4.

[14] The Federation Council vetoed the law on 11 June 1997, 20 May 1998, 17 July 1998, and 2 July 1999.

[15] Federal'nyi zakon RF ot 06.10.1999 N 184-FZ "Ob obshchikh printsipakh organizatsii zakonodatel'nykh (predstavitel'nykh) i ispolnitel'nykh organov gosudarstvennoi vlasti sub"ektov Rossiiskoi Federatsii."

of affairs, as "all the regional constitutions and charters had already been adopted, and the political regimes in several regions had been essentially consolidated."[16]

The October 1999 law, "On the General Principles of Organization of Legislative (Representative) and Executive Governing Bodies in the Subjects of the Russian Federation," permitted greater room for regional assemblies to maneuver in determining the total number of deputies, their length of term (though not exceeding five years), and the number of deputies working on a permanent salaried basis. It also extended to assemblies the power to remove governors by a two-thirds vote of no confidence, but only following a court ruling that the governor had issued illegal decrees, violated regional or federal laws, or otherwise violated civil rights and freedoms on a mass scale. While deputies were prohibited from occupying any other government post (federal or regional), they were still permitted to work simultaneously in business or local government.[17]

Insofar as the law reflected the gains of regional executives over regional assemblies, the governors appeared to be the dominant players in regional politics. Generally, the governors' powers were expanded, including the ambiguous ability to "participate in the work" of regional assemblies and to call extraordinary sessions of regional parliaments. The new law limited governors to two terms[18] and removed the standard feature in regional charters that required governors to be residents of the region. But the regional assemblies' power to remove governors via a vote of no confidence was complemented by the governors' power to dissolve the assemblies

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[16] Vladimir Gelman, "New Law on Regional Institutions Preserves Status Quo," *Russian Regional Report* 4, no. 42 (1999).

[17] Gel'man argued at the time that the effect of this provision would be "to doom regional legislatures to serve as boards of directors or boards of municipal entities under the governor, rather than full-fledged legislative branches." Ibid.

[18] Term limits were introduced in 80 regions following the law's passage in 1999. *Izvestiia*, 31 January 2001. By 2001, only four regions had not introduced term limits: Republic of Kabardino-Balkariia, Komi Republic, Republic of Tatarstan, and Novogorod oblast'. *Kommersant-Daily*, 25 January 2001.

should the latter adopt legislation in violation of federal law or regional charters. Moreover, the governors required merely a court ruling to dissolve the assemblies, while the assemblies required both a court ruling and a two-thirds vote to impeach the governors. As for the Kremlin's control over the governors, it was largely limited to the President's ability to cancel any legal act (decree or resolution) issued by the governor or any part of the regional administration.

The October 1999 law provided for a two-year transition period, meaning that the regions were expected to have brought their charters and constitutions into conformity with federal law by October 2001. Observers at the time were split between those who thought the law was meaningless and those who thought it was toothless. Few expected that the center possessed the will or capacity to force the regions to implement the necessary changes, so attention focused instead on the December 1999 elections to the State Duma. After the surprise showing of Unity (*Edinstvo*) and the even more surprising resignation of El'tsin, however, post-Soviet Russia's second president, Vladimir Putin, appeared to have the resolve, political resources and opportunity to make the reform of regional charters and constitutions a priority. The process took on the dimensions of a Soviet-era campaign that was vigorously pursued on both the central and regional levels.

Putting the "Center" in Centralization

On the central level, the process began with the Constitutional Court's ruling on 7 June 2000 that the provisions in the Altai Republic's constitution asserting republican sovereignty and claiming all land, water, mineral, and forest resources were unconstitutional. The Court further ruled that the decision was applicable to all

regional constitutions or charters with analogous provisions.[19] As a result, the Presidential Administration's agents in the regions were empowered to inspect regional charters without waiting for a court ruling in every instance.[20] On 27 June 2000, the Court ruled that parts of the constitutions of six republics (Adygeia, Bashkortostan, Ingushetiia, Komi, North Osetiia, and Tatarstan) violated the Russian Constitution. This broadened the basis of the earlier ruling to apply to republics claiming sovereignty from the republican *narod* ("people"), as well as assertions that republican laws took precedence over federal laws.[21]

The process continued in the State Duma with the amending of the 1999 federal law "On the General Principles of Organization..." in July 2000 to give the president the power to remove governors and dissolve regional assemblies.[22] The range of violations for which the governors could be held accountable was expanded to include threats to the unity and territorial integrity of the Russian Federation, to national security and defensive capacity, or to the unity of its legal and economic space. While the procedure for removing governors was cumbersome,[23] the principle

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[19] *Rossiiskaia Gazeta*, 10 June 2000; *Rossiiskaia Gazeta*, 21 June 2000. Interestingly, the case was brought by the head of Altai Republic's administration, Semen Zubakin, in the attempt to roll back what he viewed as disproportionate legislative control over the republic's executive office. In particular, Zubakin protested provisions which prevented him from firing ministers without the assembly's approval and which granted deputies the potential to influence the recall of the governor, but which did not grant the governor the ability to dissolve the assembly. *Kommersant-Daily*, 7 June 2000.

[20] *Kommersant-Daily*, 7 June 2000.

[21] *Rossiiskaia Gazeta*, 25 July 2000; *Russian Regional Report*, 12 July 2000. The Court also struck down the republican claims that they were subject to international law and that they owned the natural resources on their territory.

[22] Federal'nyi zakon RF ot 29.07.2000 N 106-FZ "O vnesenii izmenenii i dopolnenii v federal'nyi zakon "Ob obshchikh printsipakh organizatsii zakonodatel'nykh (predstavitel'nykh) i ispolnitel'nykh organov gosudarstvennoi vlasti sub"ektov Rossiiskoi Federatsii."

[23] The procedural requirements stipulated that the governors were to be given two months to rescind or replace offending legal acts following a court ruling or a presidential decree canceling the act, after which the Russian President issued a warning to the governor or head of administration. If the problem persisted one month after the warning, the President could remove the governor from office. The governor could appeal the decision in the Supreme Court within ten days. It should be noted that the procedural requirements for dissolving regional assemblies were much more strict and time-consuming. In such cases, the assemblies were allowed six months to amend or remove offending legislation following a court ruling. If there was no change after six months, the Russian President would issue a warning, after which the assembly had three months to act. If there was no change after three months,

of central intervention and presidential authority along the "ruling vertical" was established. The fact that the Federation Council's veto of the law was overridden by the State Duma further underlined the strength of Putin's hand in parliament.[24] The amendment also granted the president the ability to appoint an interim governor in the event that regional charters did not establish guidelines for the succession of power in regional government, and it opportunistically afforded the president the right to temporarily appoint a replacement in the event that the General Procurator started criminal proceedings against a governor.

Additional amendments were passed throughout 2001-2. One of the more controversial of these was the February 2001 amendment, in which the term limits for governors was held to apply without consideration of the number of terms prior to the law's coming into force. In other words, governors elected to a second term before October 1999 were given the opportunity to run for two further terms.[25] In concrete terms, this meant that 69 incumbent governors obtained the right to run for a third term and 17 more for a fourth term.[26]

In May 2002, another amendment forbade deputies in regional assemblies to work simultaneously in the regional administration or local government.[27] This hit

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the President would introduce a bill to the State Duma to dissolve the regional assembly, which had to be considered within two months. The procedure from the initial warning to the passage of a federal law dissolving the regional assembly was not to take longer than one year.

[24] *Russian Regional Report*, 19 July 2000. The State Duma's vote was 362-35, with 8 abstentions. The law provoked strong reactions from several governors, particularly given that the vote occurred during conciliation procedures regarding the structure of the new Federation Council. *Russian Regional Report*, 26 July 2000.

[25] Federal'nyi zakon RF ot 08.02.2001 N 3-FZ "O vnesenii dopolnenii v federal'nyi zakon "Ob obshchikh printsipakh organizatsii zakonodatel'nykh (predstavitel'nykh) i ispolnitel'nykh organov gosudarstvennoi vlasti sub"ektov Rossiiskoi Federatsii."

[26] *Kommersant-Daily*, 25 January 2001; *Obshchaia Gazeta*, 1 February 2001. Among the most significant beneficiaries of the law were Moscow's Mayor Iurii Luzhkov (third term) and Tatarstan's President Mintimer Shaimiev (fourth term). It is perhaps worth noting that the attempt to impose term limits in part motivated the Federation Council to veto the draft law on 2 July 1999 (by a vote of 25-96-5) and recommend the formation of a conciliation council.

[27] Federal'nyi zakon RF ot 07.05.2002 N 47-FZ "O vnesenii izmenenii v Federal'nyi zakon "Ob obshchikh printsipakh organizatsii zakonodatel'nykh (predstavitel'nykh) i ispolnitel'nykh organov gosudarstvennoi vlasti sub"ektov Rossiiskoi Federatsii."

directly at the many regions where the governors hand-picked the heads of local government who, in turn, served as deputies in the legislative assembly.[28] A further amendment in July 2002 required that 50% of the deputies in regional assemblies (or 50% of one chamber in regions with bicameral assemblies) be elected by proportional representation.[29]

By July 2003, a sizable package of amendments was passed after heavy lobbying by Dmitrii Kozak, then-deputy head of the Presidential Administration.[30] The reform package was the culmination of an extensive effort begun with the creation of a commission within the Presidential Administration in June 2001 (which came to be known colloquially as simply "the Kozak commission") to examine the division of powers among federal, regional, and local levels of government. Originally the commission was to be composed of 22 members "from all levels" of government.[31] In practice, however, the commission's membership was heavily skewed towards the center with fourteen members from the central ministries, federal agencies, and Presidential Administration, while six members were drawn from regional government and only two from local government.[32] By 2003 the commission had expanded to 32, with all ten additions drawn from the center's representatives (including the seven Presidential Representatives), while the number

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[28] This practice in regional governments is identified by Kahn (2002) as a form of "intra-bicameralism."
[29] Federal'nyi zakon RF ot 24.07.2002 N 107-FZ "O vnesenii dopolnenii i izmenenii v stat'iu 4 federal'nogo zakona "Ob obshchikh printsipakh organizatsii zakonodatel'nykh (predstavitel'nykh) i ispolnitel'nykh organov vlasti sub"ektov Rossiiskoi Federatsii."
[30] Federal'nyi zakon RF ot 04.07.2003 N 95-FZ "O vnesenii izmenenii i dopolnenii v Federal'nyi zakon "Ob obshchikh printsipakh organizatsii zakonodatel'nykh (predstavitel'nykh) i ispolnitel'nykh organov gosudarstvennoi vlasti sub"ektov Rossiiskoi Federatsii."
[31] *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 27 June 2001.
[32] Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii ot 21.07.2001 N 741 "Sostav komissii pri prezidente Rossiiskoi Federatsii po podgotovke predlozhenii o razgranichenii predmetov vedeniia i polnomochii mezhdu federal'nymi organami gosudarstvennoi vlasti, organami gosudarstvennoi vlasti sub"ektov Rossiiskoi Federatsii i organami mestnogo samoupravleniia."

of regional and local representatives remained fixed as before.[33] Analogous commissions were established under each of the seven Presidential Representatives to examine regional powers, as well as within each region by the Federal Inspectors to examine local government.[34] Urals polpred Latyshev claimed as early as mid-July 2001 that independent 'sections' for working out recommendations had been established in each regions of the Urals Federal District and in some large cities. Siberian polpred Drachevskii described his job more diplomatically in terms of gathering as many ideas and suggestions as possible.[35]

The majority of Kozak's reforms were aimed at federal relations – most explicitly towards minimizing the sources of regional autonomy by establishing legislative oversight for bilateral power-sharing treaties (which now required new and existing treaties to be approved by regional assemblies and the State Duma), and demarcating responsibility for constitutional areas of joint competency.[36] It also provided the first federal legislative regulation of relations among the so-called "complexly-constructed" (*slozhnopostroenye*) regions, or oblasts and krais with attached autonomous okrugs.[37] To some observers, Kozak's amendments whittled away at the dominance of the governors such that they were deemed a greater threat than the Federal Districts.[38] For the first time, the right of regional electorates to recall the head of administration was established by federal law, and under fairly

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[33] Updated list located at: http://www.kremlin.ru/state_subj/group39537.shtml (accessed 6 March 2003).
[34] *Izvestiia*, 26 June 2001; *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 27 June 2001.
[35] *Izvestiia*, 17 July 2001.
[36] The amendment lists 41 powers within the areas of joint competency for which the regions would be responsible for executing and funding from regional budgets or targeted federal subventions.
[37] To the autonomous okrugs were extended 18 of the 41 powers, including setting regional taxes and collection, and the ability to conduct external economic affairs. Irina Nagornykh, "Karaiushchaia vertikal'-3," *Kommersant Vlast'*, 30 June - 06 July 2003. The complex relationship among these regions is discussed in the chapter on regional mergers. The second portion of Kozak's reforms was directed towards local self-government.
[38] *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 22 October 2002.

lenient conditions at that.[39] The center also gained ground over the regions via provisions for temporary rule by Moscow in the event of natural disaster, legal infraction(s) committed with subventions from the federal budget, or where regional debt exceeded 30% of the region's budget revenue.[40]

Despite these signs of domination by the center, the Kremlin ceded some ground during the draft law's evolution. Certain harsh provisions were included in the original draft to provide room for negotiation with the regions. For instance, the provision for temporary financial administration was initially to be directly under the Russian Government's authority. This was later changed to the Higher Arbitrazh Court, and then only after a court ruling on the abuse of federal funds by the region in question.[41] The previous softening of term limits was again revised, this time starting the count from the first election held after 19 October 1999 in regions where there was no prior limitation on term limits. If such a limit already existed (as was the case in almost all regional charters and constitutions), the matter was left to the regional assembly to decide.

Taking Centralization to the Regions: Case Studies

On the regional level, the campaign relied first and foremost on the reinvigoration of central control over federal agents in the regions. The centerpiece was to be the newly-reformed Presidential Representatives in the seven Federal Districts. The first task assigned the new Presidential Representatives was to lead the process of revising regional charters and legislation to conform to federal law and the Russian

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[39] The law required a petition signed by 3% of the registered voters in the region to initiate a vote to recall the governor. A successful recall required only a simple majority of participating voters.
[40] The idea of imposing external financial administration was drawn from *polpred* Kirienko's plans for crisis management in the Volga Federal District, though Kirienko's proposals were far more extensive in defining gross violations of electoral law and the use of "administrative resource" as kinds of crisis situations. *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 3 December 2002.
[41] Nagornykh, "Karaiushchaia vertikal'-3."

Constitution. For this purpose, the *polpredy* tasked their Federal Inspectors with conducting an inventory of violations of federal and constitutional law within their respective region's charter or constitution. The inspectors would then coordinate with regional procurators to bring violations to court – for all appearances, a means (or at least a threat) to trigger the conditions for removal of the governor or dissolution of the legislative assembly. The threat was an effective one. The long-held attitude among the regional elite that compliance with federal law was merely a function of political convenience quickly changed "as the presidential envoys flexed their muscles and Putin's other proposals became federal law."[42]

During Latyshev's first year as Urals polpred, 350 laws were revised and all six regions in the Federal District amended their charters.[43] In the Volga Federal District, procurators discovered 853 regional laws that violated federal norms. Kirienko claimed that 99% of these had been dealt with by the beginning of 2002.[44] In May 2002, North-West polpred Cherkesov claimed as his major achievement the revision of 600 laws throughout the Federal District.[45] Siberian polpred Drachevskii fared less well, facing entrenched resistance and failing to stop certain regions from producing new laws which continued to violate federal norms.[46]

Many observers regarded this process as an elaborate public relations exercise, presumably because regional laws were assumed not to matter in regional politics,

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[42] Kahn, *Federalism, Democratization, and the Rule of Law in Russia*, 251.
[43] Sergei Kondrat'ev, "Urals Federal Okrug," in *The Dynamics of Russian Politics: Putin's Reform of Federal-Regional Relations*, ed. Peter Reddaway and Robert W. Orttung (Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 191.
[44] Gul'naz Sharafutdinova and Arbakhan Magomedov, "Volga Federal Okrug," in *The Dynamics of Russian Politics: Putin's Reform of Federal-Regional Relations*, ed. Robert Orttung and Peter Reddaway (Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 159.
[45] Alexander Duka and Peter Rutland, "North-West Federal Okrug," in *The Dynamics of Russian Politics: Putin's Reform of Federal-Regional Relations*, ed. Robert Orttung and Peter Reddaway (Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 62.
[46] Maksim Shandarov, "Siberian Federal Okrug," in *The Dynamics of Russian Politics: Putin's Reform of Federal-Regional Relations*, ed. Peter Reddaway and Robert W. Orttung (Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 218-9.

most of the changes to regional charters were more technical than substantive, or more importantly, regional charters were presumed to have little influence over the trajectory of center-regional relations. An analysis of the process by which regional constitutions and charters were amended, however, suggests that regional leaders converted the threat of centralization and diminished regional autonomy into political advantage. The quantity and extent of technical revisions needed to bring regional charters and constitutions into conformity with federal law varied across regions. This variation arguably was less reflective of the cosmetic aspect of the reform, however, than the very diversity among regional political regimes. If the end result was a relatively homogenous set of executive and legislative powers across all regions, it would be difficult to argue that the reform process has had little influence over the trajectory of center-regional relations. Moreover, a careful tracing of the reform process suggests that Putin's centralizing initiatives affected the tactics adopted by the heads of regional administrations and facilitated the governors' success in attempting to reduce the political weight of regional parliaments.

Perm

While politics in Perm is never quiet, it often gives the appearance of consensus. In part this consensus is the result of a certain sense of isolation from Moscow.[47] More generally, the regional political elite tend to deal with political conflicts by minimizing their visibility, or as McAuley characterizes the "Perm approach": "muffle them, smooth them out wherever possible."[48] If this is a viable description of the political style in Perm, the region was fortunate to have Gennadii Igumnov as governor. Igumnov cultivated a "polycentric model" of regional government. In

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[47] This is typically expressed in the agonizing question among locals, "Why does Moscow always confuse Perm with Penza?"

[48] Mary McAuley, *Russia's Politics of Uncertainty* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997), 163.

characterizing his own role in oblast politics, Igumnov stated: "I should be the center that can integrate the healthy forces in the oblast and try to do what is necessary so that they resolve issues irregardless of personalities."[49]

By comparison with other regions in the Volga Federal District, Perm's burden in revising regional legislation was relatively light. Perm's Main Federal Inspector, Vladimir Solomonov, indicated in October 2000 that over 300 laws in the Federal District needed to be brought into conformity with federal law, but in Perm only eight needed to change.[50] The process of amending the oblast charter got underway in late May 2000 with amendments authored jointly by Igumnov and assembly speaker Nikolai Deviatkin. On the face of it, the amendments balanced new executive and legislative powers as prescribed by federal law. The first major amendment introduced the means for the governor to dissolve the assembly, whereas previously the assembly could only be dissolved by its own decision. But the new charter also included a limit of two terms for the governor for the first time. The assembly also gained the power to remove the governor as well as any other member of the regional administration appointed with the assembly's approval. The term of office for governor and assembly deputies was increased from four to five years, but shifted the power of appointing the date for elections from the governor to the assembly.[51] While a provision was introduced that deputies in the legislative assembly could be recalled by the electorate, a similar provision allowing for the recall of the governor was excised from the revised charter.

The proposals caused a heated debate in the legislative assembly's Committee for Social Policy, provoking deputy Mikhail Kasimov to allege that they represented a

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[49] Quoted in: N. Lapina and A. Chirikova, *Strategii Regional'nykh Elit: Ekonomika, Modeli Vlasti, Politicheskii Vybor* (Moskva: INION, 2000), 161.
[50] *Novyi Kompan'on* (Perm'), 3 October 2000. In a later interview, Solomonov recalled the number as slightly higher (12 to 15). *Novyi Kompan'on* (Perm'), 8 May 2001.
[51] *Mestnoe Vremia* (Perm'), 24 May 2000.

"gentlemen's agreement." Deputy Arkadii Kats suggested the palpable sense of the center's hand in the process in contending that, "the issue is not the maintenance of equality between branches…but the preservation of any kind of power on the regional level."[52] The deputies adopted the changes to the charter on its second reading in July, facing pressure both by the center's demand to reform the charter within six months, as well as the upcoming gubernatorial elections that fall.[53] In an editorial on the revisions, assembly speaker Deviatkin appeared to make common cause with the governor in voicing his opposition to empowering regional procurators to remove the heads of regional administrations.[54] On balance it would be difficult to claim that the revisions decisively favored the governor, though the regional legislature clearly exercised restraint. A proposal by Kasimov to make all deputy governors subject to dismissal by the legislative assembly was rejected on the grounds that it would infringe the governor's sphere of competency to determine the structure of his own administration.[55] The assembly further decided not to extend the right of legislative initiative to the region's mayors, instead granting it to the governor's Council of Heads of Local Administration.[56]

A number of additional amendments to Perm's charter managed to evade coverage in the local press. The assertion that "all power in Perm oblast derives from its population" in the charter's preamble presumably steered too close to an assertion of regional sovereignty. The new draft replaced it with the formula, "all power in

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[52] *Novyi Kompan'on* (Perm'), 23 May 2000.
[53] *Mestnoe Vremia* (Perm'), 26 July 2000.
[54] *Novyi Kompan'on* (Perm'), 25 July 2000.
[55] Perm's charter made four key committee chairs (committee for property management, committee for environmental protection, department for rational use of natural resources, and department of finance) subject to dismissal by the legislative assembly. This structure was essentially preserved in the new charter with only the two first deputy governors and the heads of the tax and finance ministries subject to dismissal.
[56] *Zvezda* (Perm'), 28 July 2000. Municipal assemblies retained the right of legislative initiative, but the head of the regional assembly's working group on the charter revisions, Liubov' Zotina, pointed out that, "it is well known that in the majority of cases the heads of cities and raions are also the speakers of local assemblies."

Perm oblast derives from the multinational people of the Russian Federation." To the section delineating the borders of the region's administrative-territorial units was added that, "the oblast government can create economic districts containing several administrative-territorial units with common social-economic features, for conducting unified regional policy…" With this, the oblast administration acquired the power to create its own bodies analogous to the Federal Districts on the oblast level.[57] With regard to municipal government, the new charter made legislative projects on issues that affect the interests of local government subject to agreement by the municipalities. On paper, at least, this effectively granted a veto to local government in the drafting of oblast legislation. At the same time, the new charter provided the means to discipline local government by granting the governor the right to recommend that municipal government bring its laws into accordance with Russian legislation if they contradict federal or oblast law, and to take the matter to court should they fail to comply.

Altogether, the revision of Perm's charter was both extensive and balanced. This evinced certain institutionalization of the "rules of the game" within oblast politics, particularly insofar as the governor and assembly hastened to complete the revisions before the onset of the gubernatorial elections. At the time, the outcome of those elections was more or less decided as the only legitimate challenger, the mayor of Perm' Iurii Trutnev, had agreed to stay out of the race and support Igumnov on the condition that Igumnov would endorse Trutnev for governor in 2005. The expectation of stability in the top rungs of the oblast leadership doubtless facilitated the speedy revision of the oblast charter.[58]

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[57] A key difference with the Federal Districts is that the oblast districts would have stronger legal footing than their federal analogs.

[58] As discussed in the next chapter, however, these expectations proved to be misguided.

Tiumen

Of the four cases under examination here, Tiumen oblast made the fewest changes to its charter. Part of the explanation has to do with the fact that the charter had been under constant revision throughout the 1990s – from the charter's adoption on 15 June 1995, it had been amended thirteen times prior to the adoption of the October 1999 federal law. Main Federal Inspector Sergei Smetaniuk stated by November 2000 that there were "about thirty" laws that needed to be brought into accordance with federal law.[59]

Yet the situation in Tiumen was far from quiet. Like Perm oblast, Tiumen was known as a "complexly-constructed" (*slozhnopostroennyi*) region, meaning that neighboring autonomous okrugs formally "entered into" the oblast at the same time that they were constitutionally recognized as separate federal subjects. The relationship between Perm and Komi-Permiatskii autonomous okrug were fairly quiet, largely due to the latter's economic backwardness and reliance on access to the oblast's resources. But the situation was reversed in Tiumen, where the oblast economy lagged far behind the autonomous okrugs to the north. Tiumen's governor, Leonid Roketskii, fought a vicious struggle with the autonomous okrugs in the second half of the 1990s over the applicability of oblast laws in the autonomous okrugs and, more significantly, the oblast's entitlement to the royalties the northern neighbors received from their oil and gas industries.[60] When gubernatorial elections were first held in the oblast on 22 December 1996, the autonomous okrugs boycotted them.[61] The result was that Roketskii was elected by the oblast proper, but faced an oblast

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[59] *Nashe Vremia* (Tiumen'), 22 November 2000.

[60] Iamalo-Nenetskii autonomous okrug produces 90% of Russia's gas, and Khanty-Mansiiskii autonomous okrug produces over 60% of the country's oil.

[61] The assembly of Iamalo-Nenetskii autonomous okrug passed a resolution directing the okrug's population not to take part in the election. The administration of Khanty-Mansiiskii autonomous okrug exercised more passive resistance in refusing to organize the election on its territory. A.F. Fedorov, *Rossiiskii Federalizm: istoricheskii opyt i sovermennost'* (Moskva: Nauchnaia Kniga, 2000), 118.

Duma elected from all three regions with fourteen deputies from the autonomous okrugs (four from Iamalo-Nenetskii autonomous okrug, ten from Khanty-Mansiiskii autonomous okrug) and eleven from the oblast. By contrast, Perm oblast's legislative assembly was not only larger (with 40 deputies, as opposed to 25 in Tiumen), but the representation from Komi-Permiatskii autonomous okrug was limited to a purely symbolic number (two deputies) with no potential for legislative interference.

In September 2000, the oblast Duma attempted to change the region's charter so as to require the assembly's approval for the governor's appointments to the heads of raion administration. Deputy Governor L. Volkov objected that this would amount to an illegal increase in the assembly's powers. In attendance was deputy Urals polpred Sergei Vakhrukov, who supported the oblast administration's objection. Vakhrukov observed that the process of bringing regional legislation into conformity with federal law was proceeding slowly and only with the combined pressure of the procurator and Federal District apparatus.[62]

Changes to the oblast charter were passed by the regional Duma in its last session of the year with barely any mention in the local press.[63] As with most other regions, the terms of office for governor and deputies of the oblast Duma were lengthened from four years to five years. The governor's power to dissolve the assembly increased insofar as the only condition for dissolution in the old charter was the extended absence of a quorum. In accordance with the 1999 federal law, the governor in the revised charter could dissolve the assembly if the oblast Duma adopted legal acts that violated the Russian Constitution, federal laws pertaining to the exclusive and joint competencies of the Russian Federation, or the oblast charter, and if the contradiction was not removed within 6 months of a ruling by the court of

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[62] *Sibirskii Posad* (Surgut), 26 September – 03 October 2000.
[63] *Tiumenskie Izvestiie*, 27 December 2000.

the "appropriate level." The governor thus made an incremental gain in the additional justification for dissolving the oblast Duma, though obtaining the necessary court ruling (much less determining "the appropriate level") probably would be no less time consuming and politically difficult than the previous standard. In addition, the required vote in the oblast Duma for adopting changes to the charter was increased from a simple majority to a two-thirds majority – an important change, given that the structure of territorial representation in the oblast Duma automatically gave the autonomous okrugs a majority.

Regarding the ability of the assembly to remove the governor, the revised charter effectively raised the burden for the oblast Duma in bringing the charter into accordance with the prescriptions of the 1999 federal law. However, the process was also made slightly easier than in the previous draft in that the constraint that the oblast Duma pass a resolution within one month of the court's ruling was removed. By contrast, the governor now had but one month to correct the offending legislation or normative legal acts – the shortest possible period allowed by law.

The situation in Tiumen oblast was so strikingly different from that in Perm that it is worth devoting some attention to the matter. Judging by the coverage (or rather, the lack thereof) in the Tiumen press, the reason ostensibly had to do with the timing of the upcoming gubernatorial elections. As noted above, Perm's regional assembly pointedly sought to amend the charter well in advance of the gubernatorial elections and quickly managed to arrive at a balanced formula. This met the center's expectations without sacrificing significant powers for either the legislature or the administration, though it was not expected that the incumbent governor would depart for another five years. In Tiumen, however, the process dragged through the fall and was overtaken by the gubernatorial campaign. Roketskii had neither the style, nor the

resources of Igumnov, and it was clear that the autonomous okrugs would not repeat the error of boycotting the oblast's gubernatorial election. In such a highly-charged political contest, any revision to the oblast charter could only be cosmetic as long as both the oblast administration and assembly were equally incapable of domination and compromise. The autonomous okrugs instead concentrated on capturing the oblast administration by uniting behind a common candidate, Sergei Sobianin – the former speaker of the Khanty-Mansiiskii autonomous okrug's legislative assembly and newly-appointed first deputy Urals polpred. The extent to which the "war between the north and the south" overshadowed the legislative changes was demonstrated at the final session of the oblast Duma: on the same day that the assembly passed minor revisions to the oblast charter, Sobianin pitched his proposal for economic-social cooperation among the three regions. The other "northern" candidate in the gubernatorial election, oblast Duma Speaker Sergei Korepanov (from Iamalo-Nenetskii autonomous okrug), withdrew his candidacy at the same session and endorsed Sobianin.[64]

Still, the situation might not have been as confrontational if Tiumen's charter did not seek to define and regulate relations with the autonomous okrugs. The charter placed relations with the autonomous okrugs in a pseudo- or mini-federal system, but maintained the provision that the autonomous okrugs "enter into" (*vkhodiat v sostav*) the oblast. The meaning and implications of "entering into," however, was a contentious legal and political issue, defined differently by each region.[65] For the autonomous okrugs, it meant that the oblast governor could act only as coordinator for

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[64] *Tiumenskie Izvestiie*, 27 December 2000; *Tiumenskaia Pravda*, 29 December 2000. While the election will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter, it is relevant to note that Sobianin won the election and Korepanov retained his position in the oblast Duma.
[65] Fedorov, *Rossiiskii Federalizm*, 117.

oblast-wide programs, effectively diminishing the governorship to a symbolic role.[66] The oblast charter made reference to coordinating bodies, such as the Council of Governors, and made provision for relations to be regulated on the basis of the Russian Constitution as well as treaties among the three regions. But in the absence of any federal law regulating relations among oblasts, krais, and autonomous okrugs, the ability to sign a treaty among the regions depended upon the ability of the leadership in the north and south to find willing allies.

In the context of Tiumen's gubernatorial campaign, this key section of the oblast charter became a crucial advantage for Sobianin as the candidate with the best chance of healing the breach between the oblast and the autonomous okrugs. Such issues took on a different dimension in Perm since its charter left relations with Komi-Permiatskii autonomous okrug on a more ambiguous footing.[67] In the course of Perm's gubernatorial campaign, Trutnev made unification with the autonomous okrug a key issue, but one that was relatively cheap to deploy since there were few legal repercussions after the charter's revision. Trutnev prevailed and unilaterally terminated Perm's power-sharing treaty with the Kremlin the following year, leaving the oblast's relations with the autonomous okrug to be regulated by the Russian Constitution and the silence of federal law.[68]

Buriatiia

Buriatiia was among the leaders of the "Parade of Sovereignties," declaring its sovereignty in 1990 after Tatarstan and Sakha-Iakutiia. Much of the content of the

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[66] *Tiumenskie izvestiia*, 29 November 2001.

[67] The revised charter stated that the division of areas of competency and jurisdiction between the Russian Federation and Perm oblast was regulated by Russian Constitution, the Federal Treaty, and the treaty on the division of competencies of the Russian Federation, Perm oblast, and Komi-Permiatskii autonomous okrug.

[68] Perm, Nizhegorod, and Ulianovsk oblasts, along with the Republic of Marii El, were the first regions to unilaterally cancel their power-sharing treaties with the federal center. *Izvestiia*, 9 July 2001.

declaration was preserved when the republic formally adopted its constitution in 1994, including the right to suspend or contest laws that "violate the interests of the people of Buriatiia." Land, natural resources, and the economic potential of the republic were claimed as republic property. Both Russian and Buriat were designated as state languages.[69] On the ten year anniversary of the Republic of Buriatiia's declaration of sovereignty, the region's leadership attempted to situate the symbolic importance of the event within the realities of Putin's Russia. In almost apologetic fashion, president Leonid Potapov and assembly speaker Mikhail Semenov stressed that the declaration of sovereignty was dictated by the necessity of signing the Federal Treaty and becoming a full member of the Russian Federation.[70] The necessity of amending the republic's constitution was presented in a very similar tone.

In an interview in late May 2000, the Chairman of Buriatiia's Constitutional Court, Kapiton Budaev, listed extensive changes required to bring the republic's constitution in accordance with the 1999 federal law "On the General Principles..." and in response to the Russian Constitutional Court's ruling against several republics (see above). Budaev recommended substantial amendments, the most significant of which targeted: the requirement that changes to the republic's status be approved by more than half of the republic's ethnically Buriat population via referendum; the claims to the republican sovereignty and possession of natural resources; the claim that the Republic of Buriatiia represented the realization of the Buriat people's self-determination; the establishment of Buriat citizenship; the republic's right to protect Buriat citizens beyond its territory (including in other countries); the right to refuse to

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[69] Marjorie Mandelstam Balzer, "Dilemmas of Federalism in Siberia," in *Center-Periphery Conflict in Post-Soviet Russia: A Federation Imperiled*, ed. Mikhail A. Alexseev (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 143.
[70] *Buriatiia*, 7 October 2000.

allow the redeployment of its soldiers to other areas of the federation;[71] and the joint right with the federal government to limit the rights and freedoms of its citizens.

In addition, Budaev raised the possibility of extending the terms of office for republican president and deputies of the legislative assembly, the *Narodnyi Khural* (NKh) from four to five years and of making the assembly bicameral instead of unicameral. He further suggested that the republican president be accorded the power to dissolve the assembly (as stipulated by federal law). In the event that the republican president was incapacitated or removed from office, Budaev called attention to a separation of powers issue insofar as the speaker of the assembly was supposed to succeed the president in cases of the latter's incapacity or removal. To this end, he recommended the creation of the post of republican vice president. Lastly, he urged that the republican procurator be granted the right of legislative initiative, pointing out that over 800 "illegal legislative acts" were eliminated as a result of the procurator's protests.[72]

The republican assembly debated a number of changes proposed by Potapov in Fall 2000. Unsurprisingly, the least controversial issue was the extension of the terms of office for assembly deputies and the republican president to five years.[73] The hottest disputes to emerge during the assembly debates concerned executive-legislative relations, and the question of border changes. With regard to the former, the key issues concerned the extent of the republican presidency's powers. Debate focused broadly on three areas: the qualifications for the republican president, the

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[71] The republican assembly attempted to exercise this right in 1995 when it voted against sending Buriat soldiers to Chechnia. Balzer, "Dilemmas of Federalism in Siberia," 145.
[72] *Buriatiia*, 23 May 2000.
[73] At the end of 2001, the assembly additionally granted Potapov the possibility of running for a third term as president by removing the explicit two-term limit in the constitution and replacing it with the formula, "The President of the Republic of Buriatiia is elected for a five-year term in accordance with federal law." *Inform-Polis* (Ulan-Ude), 26 December 2001.

president's powers of appointment to the republican government, and the line of succession for the republican presidency.

The assembly recommended early on that the qualifications for the republican presidency be altered to remove the required length of residency in Buriatiia and maximum age, while the minimum age of 30 years ought to be retained.[74] More divisive was the requirement that the president have command of the Buriat language. The issue was avoided in public debates, though it persisted on the agenda throughout.[75] The republican Constitutional Court ruled that the existence of such a requirement was valid in principle since the republic had a system of education in the Buriat language and a republican law on official languages.[76] Some deputies in the assembly suggested that the requirement was ineffective insofar as a candidate for the presidency had only to study Buriat a few months prior to election.[77] The main concern emerging from the assembly debates, however, was to avoid a confrontation with the federal center, as deputies repeatedly attempted to solicit the opinions of the Siberian polpred Drachevskii, the republican electoral commission, and the republican procurator.[78] As explained by Tsydenzhap Batuev, chairman of the republican government's Committee for State-Building, Local Self-Government and Legality, the issue was resolved by way of legal finesse: while it might contradict federal law to require knowledge of *Buriat*, the republican constitution could legally require knowledge of the republic's *state languages*.[79] The criteria for evaluating the

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[74] *Buriatiia*, 7 October 2000.
[75] *Buriatiia*, 22 November 2000. Anecdotal evidence suggests that Potapov was able to frighten off candidates by suggesting that campaign debates by held in Buriat.
[76] *Inform-Polis* (Ulan-Ude), 11 October 2000.
[77] *Buriatiia*, 18 November 2000.
[78] Odinnadtsataia sessiia narodnogo khurala respubliki buriatiia (vtoroi sozyv), 2-3 oktiabria 2000 g. Stenograficheskii otchet, chast' I (Ulan-Ude, 2000): 69-85.
[79] *Inform-Polis* (Ulan-Ude), 25 October 2000.

president's (or candidates for the presidency) knowledge of the language was left unspecified.

Concerning the president's appointment powers, Potapov had proposed that the assembly should have the right to confirm only the first deputy and deputy prime minister in the republican government, while all remaining ministers and committee chairs would be freely appointed or dismissed by the president. The president's proposal made specific reference to the wording of the 1999 federal law that the assembly should have the power to confirm the appointment and dismissal of members of the regional government, drawing in particular on the decision of the Russian Constitutional Court regarding Altai Republic's constitution.[80] The assembly opposed Potapov's proposal, seeking to retain the right to confirm the appointments of all cabinet ministers. In this, the NKh also made explicit reference to the situation in Altai Republic where the members of the government were "changed like gloves" and included people "unfamiliar with the republic."[81]

Assembly speaker Mikhail Semenov linked the importance of the decision to the broader weakening of the power of regional assemblies across the Russian Federation.[82] The Congress of the Buriat People elaborated on Semenov's concern in pointing out that the president's simultaneous role as head of the republican government meant that the president could remove the heads of *raion* administration and independently hire or fire members of the republican government. It was feared that the assembly would lose its only powerful lever of voting no confidence in the republic's government, making the president's powers virtually unlimited.[83] Erdem

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[80] Odinnadtsataia sessiia narodnogo khurala respubliki buriatiia (vtoroi sozyv), 2-3 oktiabria 2000 g. Stenograficheskii otchet, chast' I (Ulan-Ude, 2000): 90.
[81] *Buriatiia*, 25 October 2000.
[82] Odinnadtsataia sessiia narodnogo khurala respubliki buriatiia (vtoroi sozyv), 2-3 oktiabria 2000 g. Stenograficheskii otchet, chast' I (Ulan-Ude, 2000): 96-8.
[83] *Buriatiia*, 18 November 2000.

Dagbaev of Buriat State University characterized the problem as inhering in the republic's semi-presidential system. While the republican president had the ability to form the government, his appointments to (and dismissals from) the government required the approval of the *Narodnyi Khural*. In this sense, the republican constitution established dual accountability for each government institution before the president and the assembly. In attempting to limit the assembly's confirmation powers over appointments to the government, the president's proposals suggested a drift towards a more clearly presidential system in which the president's accountability increased at the expense of the assembly.[84] The end result was a compromise variant in which the republican president required the confirmation of the assembly in appointing the first deputy and deputy prime ministers, as well as the minister of the economy and minister of finance.

In a similar vein, the assembly fought to retain the constitutional provision that the president would be succeeded by the speaker of the *Narodnyi Khural* in the event of the president's inability to continue his duties. Potapov proposed that the first deputy prime minister should succeed the president, but Ts. Batuev pointed out that the removal of the president necessitated the immediate dismissal of the republican government and therefore pre-empted such a procedure.[85] Eventually the assembly voted to keep the provision for the speaker to become acting president, but added the constraints that the acting president could not introduce changes to the constitution or dissolve the assembly.[86]

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[84] "Today the President answers in the literal sense for everything, beginning with the payment of wages in every enterprise and ending with the quality of legislation… Now he will answer directly for the work of every minister and department." *Buriatiia*, 22 November 2000. Indeed, it was even rumored at the time that the term limits on the Buriat Presidency would be altogether removed in the new constitution. *Inform-Polis* (Ulan-Ude), 4 October 2000.

[85] Odinnadtsataia sessiia narodnogo khurala respubliki buriatiia (vtoroi sozyv), 2-3 oktiabria 2000 g. Stenograficheskii otchet, chast' I (Ulan-Ude, 2000): 106-8

[86] Chetyrnadtsataia sessiia narodnogo khurala respubliki buriatiia (vtoroi sozyv), 28 fevralia 2001 g. Stenograficheskii otchet, chast' II (Ulan-Ude, 2001).

The dispute over changes to the republic's borders was even more contentious, so much so that many deputies were reluctant even to discuss the matter. In introducing the issue to the assembly, Potapov pointed out that the existing constitution made changes to the republic's borders contingent upon a republic-wide referendum in which at least half of the titular nationality voted in favor. Given that internal passports ceased to indicate nationality in 1996, however, it would be logistically impossible to meet such a requirement without violating voters' rights to a secret ballot. Moreover, citizens could not legally be compelled to reveal their nationality. Instead, the assembly debated imposing stricter requirements than those stipulated in federal law by making border changes contingent upon referendum in the affected areas as well as agreement of *all* municipalities.[87] Potapov's representative to the assembly revealed that this arrangement was designed specifically to prevent a raion or municipality from leaving the republic and merging with a neighboring region.[88] The impetus came not from any specific threat, but rather from the latent threat posed by the centralization processes. Several deputies pointed out that the goal was to keep the federal center from depriving Buriatiia of its status by manipulating the republic's borders.[89] This implicitly expressed the lasting awareness of the damage wrought by Stalin's partitioning of Buriat lands in the 1930s.[90] Even the republic's Main Federal Inspector, Boris Danilov, suggested that the issue would be best left out of the republican constitution altogether, but that "the situation in the country compels us to look at the issue anew."[91]

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[87] *Buriatiia*, 7 October 2000; *Buriatiia*, 25 October 2000.
[88] Odinnadtsataia sessiia narodnogo khurala respubliki buriatiia (vtoroi sozyv), 2-3 oktiabria 2000 g. Stenograficheskii otchet, chast' I (Ulan-Ude, 2000): 53.
[89] Ibid., 54-62.
[90] See Chapter Two.
[91] *Buriatiia*, 18 November 2000.

In order to pass the changes proposed by Potapov and approved by the assembly, the assembly had to vote to convene a Constitutional Assembly (*Konstitutsionnoe sobranie*). The extent of subterranean opposition to the changes was suggested in that the vote on convening the assembly was blocked three times until a roll call vote, at which point it was approved unanimously.[92] The Constitutional Assembly was broadly representative, comprised of 179 members: the president, 65 members from the *Narodnyi Khural*, 65 from executive agencies, 23 heads of local government (ten of which also served as deputies in the republican assembly), 23 representatives of local assemblies, and three members of the republican constitutional court. The one day session occasioned little in the way of debate – the heavy lifting had already been done by the assembly – and the new constitution was overwhelmingly approved.[93]

Kareliia

The process of re-writing Kareliia's constitution effectively began simultaneously with Putin's election. The republican government proposed to hold a referendum on two fundamental changes to the republic's constitution simultaneous with the Russian presidential elections in March 2000: whether the republic's chief executive, then known as "Chair of the Government" (*predsedatel' pravitel'stva*),[94] would be re-titled as "Head of the Republic" (*glava respubliki*); and whether to change from a bicameral

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[92] *Inform-Polis* (Ulan-Ude), 22 November 2000.
[93] Of the 179 members, 161 were present and 156 voted on the new constitution. The vote was by secret ballot with four ballots ruled invalid, the final vote being 147-5. Zasedanie konstitutsionnogo sobraniia respubliki buriatiia, 25 dekabria 2000 g. Stenograficheskii otchet (Ulan-Ude, 2000).
[94] While the literal translation of *predsedatel' pravitel'stva* is "Chair of the Government," though it is commonly translated in English as "Prime Minister" on the federal level. The term "governor" is used here as interchangeable with the formal titles of "Chair of the Government" and "Head of the Republic."

to a unicameral assembly.[95] Both questions received overwhelming support in the referendum: the question for a unicameral legislative assembly received 68% support, while the change of title for the republic's chief executive received 58.5%.[96]

By May 2000, three constitutional projects were introduced into the Constitutional Committee of the assembly's lower house, the Chamber of Representatives (*palata predstavitelei*) – the first by the governor ("Chair of the Government") Sergei Katanandov, another by the Kareliian chapter of Our Home is Russia (*Nash Dom – Rossiia*), and the third by the social organization for the titular nationality, the Kareliian Congress (*Karel'skii Kongress*).[97] A fourth draft was proposed by several opposition deputies in the Chamber of the Republic (*palata respubliki*), but met with stiff opposition and was never considered by the Chamber of Representatives.[98] The deputies' draft differed from the other drafts on a number of significant points. It proposed a permanently-operating legislative assembly, whereas the other drafts envisioned a mixed body. Their draft also maintained the right of legislative initiative for social organizations, judges, the procurator and the Constitutional Court, while Katanandov's draft did not extend legislative initiative to these bodies.[99] The committee ruled that only Katanandov's draft did not contradict

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[95] An attempt by the local chapter of *Iabloko* (registered as a social organization, not as a political party) to hold a referendum on whether Kareliia needed a new constitution was blocked by the Chamber of Representatives (*palata predstavitelei*) in Fall 1999. While agreeing with the need for making changes to the republic's constitution, the Chamber's constitutional committee argued that legislative initiative as concerns changes to the republic's founding law should not be open to social organizations. *Kareliia*, 25 September 1999. The Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Kareliia later refused to register Iabloko's referendum initiative for multiple contradictions with the Russian Constitution. *Kareliia*, 6 October 1999.

[96] *Kareliia*, 8 April 2000.

[97] *Kareliia*, 20 May 2000.

[98] *Kareliia*, 13 May 2000. The deputies were Aleksandr Chazhengin, Aleksandr Lukin, Sergei Iaskunov, Mikhail Maksimov, Sergei Ushakov, and Aleksandr Gavrilov. These deputies sought approval of their draft by the Chamber of the Republic's Committee for State-Building, Local Self-Government, and Nationalities Policy in order to introduce the draft constitution separately to the Chamber of Representatives. The Chamber of the Republic's committee refused to approve the draft, however, as well as the request to publish the draft in the government press.

[99] *Kareliia*, 27 May 2000. A statement by two of the draft's authors was printed in the government's press only three days after the Chamber of Representatives voted to adopt Katanandov's version. In it,

the Russian constitution, though the Chamber's Speaker, Nikolai Levin, argued that the other drafts need not be discarded.

The constitutional draft was recommended by the Chamber of Representatives on its first reading on 24 May 2000. On the day of the vote, Our Home is Russia withdrew its draft from consideration and called on deputies to support Katanandov's draft.[100] The Chamber's approval allowed the committee to begin preparations for the second reading in mid-October.

The influence of the centralizing processes unfolding in Moscow were palpable in the early stages of re-writing Kareliia's constitution. The first indication was an open letter by Chamber of the Republic deputies Lukin and Iaskunov, requesting in connection with Putin's decree on the Federal Districts and legislative initiatives to "reconstruct executive and legislative branches at all levels [of government]" that all draft constitutional projects be withdrawn until the Federal Assembly voted on Putin's package of laws.[101] Inevitably rumors began to circulate that Katanandov would seek to dissolve the parliament early in order to put the new unicameral assembly into place as soon as possible. The government's press service hastened to point out, however, that "in light of Putin's relations with the governors, it would not be prudent to make a sudden move."[102]

In August 2000 the republic's procurator notified the Supreme Court that several portions of Kareliia's existing constitution were invalid.[103] In the next session of the parliament's Constitutional Committee, the deputies (led by the mayor of

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the deputies made clear that the government silence on their project was matched by much noise and disinformation in the republican media.

[100] *Kareliia*, 27 May 2000.

[101] *Kareliia*, 20 May 2000.

[102] *Kareliia*, 3 June 2000. Other factors mentioned included the necessity of maintaining a positive image in the European Union, as well as the time required to pass the new constitution and electoral laws for the new executive and legislative bodies. In any case, Katanandov's draft constitution included the provision that the existing executive and legislative structures would continue operating to the end of their terms in 2002.

[103] *Kareliia*, 16 September 2000.

Petrozavodsk, Andrei Demin) were forced to delay their examination of the corrections recommended by the committee's working group because they lacked the corresponding legal review. Demin explained the committee's cautiousness: "We know what threatens the republic if we adopt laws that contradict federal legislation – dissolution of the legislative body. The President of Russia has warned of this."[104]

The Constitutional Committee proposed some 200 changes and corrections to the draft constitution, which passed its second reading in the Chamber of Representatives on 19 October 2000.[105] The changes reflected the Kremlin's insistence on the primacy of federal law. Legal categories of "citizen of the Republic of Kareliia" and "people of the Republic of Kareliia" were eliminated, as was the use of the term "state" (*gosudarstvo*) as applied to Kareliia's government. In other places, standard caveats such as "if not otherwise stipulated by federal law" or "within the framework of power as determined by federal law" were used to avoid uncertainty.[106]

Yet the old constitution's provision for two state languages for the republic (Russian and Karel) was effectively maintained (though softened with the neutral formula: "The Republic of Kareliia has the right to establish its own state languages").[107] This inclusion was surprising, as Katanandov's administration had been waging a press battle against the rival draft constitution presented by the Kareliian Congress, led by Anatolii Grigor'ev, since the beginning of the process of constitutional revision. During the deliberations prior to the second reading, a highly critical editorial appeared in the government press that singled out Grigor'ev for trying to establish constitutional privileges for Karels, Finns and Vepps living in Kareliia.[108] This vividly expressed the extent to which the republican administration had grasped

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[104] *Kareliia*, 23 September 2000.
[105] *Kareliia*, 21 October 2000. The draft constitution was published in *Kareliia*, 25 October 2000.
[106] *Kareliia*, 25 November 2000.
[107] *Kareliia*, 25 October 2000.
[108] *Kareliia*, 1 July 2000.

the new political line from Moscow that ethno-political claims were no longer compelling, while the Kareliian Congress had failed to do so. After the draft constitution passed its second reading, Grigor'ev complained that not a single recommendation of the Kareliian Congress or other ethnic organizations was supported by either the working group or the Constitutional Committee. In effect, he claimed, the draft constitution ignored "the constitutional right of Karels, Finns, and Vepps to self-determination..." and accused the republican administration of "anti-Karel" policy.[109]

Within a month, Katanandov introduced a series of additional changes that were presented as a startling change of opinion. In the first article of the constitution, he added that the Karel spelling for Kareliia, Kar'iala, was an equal official designation for the Republic of Kareliia (though to be used interchangeably, not in the sense of "Sakha-Iakutiia"). Immediately following this, he added that, "the historical and national specificities of the Republic Kareliia are determined by the Karels living on its territory." The revised Article 11 explicitly made Karel a second state language, though added that "the order of usage of Karel as a state language is to be determined by law." Where Article 21 of the draft constitution previously made reference to the necessity of protecting "small indigenous peoples" (*korennye malochislennye naroda*), Katanandov's amendment changed this to make specific reference to Karels, Finns, and Vepps.[110]

While Katanandov did not provide a public justification for his volte face, there was speculation that representatives of the Kareliian Congress managed to persuade him to change. Given Katanandov's insistence on maintaining a neutral stance up to that point, this explanation seems unlikely. Perhaps more convincing

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[109] *Kareliia*, 21 October 2000.
[110] *Kareliia*, 25 November 2000; *Kareliia*, 29 November 2000; *Kareliia*, 20 December 2000.

was the opinion voiced by Chamber of the Republic deputy Aleksandr Lukin. Lukin's argument, which is worth quoting at length, was that

> if one pays close attention to political trends in the federal center, there is a sufficiently obvious tendency towards reducing the number of subjects of the Russian Federation... The idea of the impermissibility of adopting Karel as a second state language is very dangerous for the statehood (*gosudarstvennost'*) of Kareliia. It is as if to say to these federal actors: "look, there is nothing to distinguish us from any other region of Russia." And it may be that there, in the federal center, they decide, "What is this Kareliia? There are some Karels and there are Russians, [but] they only speak Russian so there's nothing more to think about." And henceforth there will no longer be Kareliia, but the Petrozavodsk raion of Leningrad oblast', or Murmansk, or Arkhangel'sk. But the decision will not be made in Kareliia.[111]

The Chamber of Representatives passed the draft constitution in its third and fourth readings, making minor changes but rejecting the explicit inclusion of Karel as state language.[112]

When the draft was finally sent to the Chamber of the Republic, however, it was rejected and suggested to the Chamber of Representatives that a conciliation commission be formed.[113] The Chamber of the Republic recommended 25 changes to the conciliation commission. While most of the changes were minor in nature, two were of note. First, the draft proposed by Katanandov removed the legislative assembly's ability to confirm the appointments of deputy Prime Ministers, the Minister of Finance or the Minister of Economics, or to remove them with a vote of no confidence. These powers were restored in the commission's corrections. Second, the rather detailed and lengthy list of measures envisioned in Article 21 for the protection and development of Karel, Finnish, and Vepps cultures was drastically shortened to a single line: "In the Republic of Kareliia are measures taken for the

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[111] *Kareliia*, 16 December 2000.
[112] Instead, the compromise version was changed to read, "The state language of the Republic of Kareliia is Russian. The Republic of Kareliia has the right to establish other state languages on the basis of the direct will of the population of the Republic of Kareliia, expressed by way of referendum." Press-sluzhba Zakonodatel'nogo Sobraniia Respubliki Kareliia, 7 December 2000; Press-sluzhba Zakonodatel'nogo Sobraniia Respubliki Kareliia, 20 December 2000.
[113] *Kareliia*, 27 December 2000.

rebirth, protection and free development of Karels, Vepps and Finns living on its territory."[114] The conciliation commission also made recommendations to ensure that current elected officials would serve out their terms in order to avoid the possibility of early elections.

The commission's recommendations were not positively received by supporters of the previous draft in the Chamber of Representatives, raising the possibility of a constitutional crisis: if the conciliation commission's changes were not accepted, the legislative assembly would be forced to start over with a new draft. Six months remained before the deadline to bring the republic's constitution in accordance with federal law. Failure to do so would mean the legislative assembly's dismissal, and work on the current draft constitution had gone on for eight months already. Seeking to avoid just such a scenario, the commission's recommendations were approved by the Chamber of the Republic *before* the Chamber of Representatives in a breach of existing (out-going) constitutional procedure.[115] Recognizing the *fait accompli*, the draft constitution was adopted in full by the Chamber of Representatives on 7 February 2000.[116]

Of course, problems remained to be solved. Most significantly, the new constitution re-named the governor from "Chair of the Government" to "Head of the Republic," effective from its signing into force, but it also altered the governor's powers. The previous constitution allowed for the governor to dismiss the legislative assembly only by calling a referendum. If the governor "lost" the referendum, he would be required to resign. In the new constitution, no such procedure was envisioned and the governor's ability to dismiss the republican parliament was

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[114] Press-sluzhba Zakonodatel'nogo Sobraniia Respubliki Kareliia, 26 December 2000.
[115] Press-sluzhba Zakonodatel'nogo Sobraniia Respubliki Kareliia, 16 January 2001.
[116] Press-sluzhba Zakonodatel'nogo Sobraniia Respubliki Kareliia, 7 February 2001; *Severnyi Kur'er* (Petrozavodsk), 8 February 2001.

checked only by a decision of the court "of the appropriate level" or by federal law. In addition, a briefing by the republic's Ministry of Justice following the adoption of the new constitution pointed out four "serious" contradictions with federal law, including the possibility that the governor might be recalled by the electorate.[117] Upon signing the new constitution into law, Katanandov indicated that he did so only to avoid the dissolution of the republican parliament, and that he would introduce additional corrections or else he would be forced to resign (which, in turn, would force elections for governor almost a year before they were expected to take place).[118] The additional corrections were approved by both chambers of the legislative assembly in quick succession at the end of March 2001.[119] Kareliia had a new constitution at last.[120]

Comparing the Revision of Regional Charters and Constitutions

A number of commonalities in the process of revising regional constitutions and charters emerge from the analysis of the four cases in this chapter. First, many regions took advantage of the ability to increase the length of office for both assemblies and governors from four years to five. Among the four cases under examination here, only Kareliia did not extend the length of office. The explanation may be as banal as the self-interested behavior of politicians seeking to lengthen their

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[117] *Severnyi Kur'er* (Petrozavodsk), 10 February 2001.
[118] *Kareliia*, 10 February 2001.
[119] Press-sluzhba Zakonodatel'nogo Sobraniia Respubliki Kareliia, 21 March 2001; Press-sluzhba Zakonodatel'nogo Sobraniia Respubliki Kareliia, 23 March 2001; *Kareliia*, 29 March 2001.
[120] Kareliia finally had a new constitution, though not everyone was happy. The republican Procurator immediately protested eight articles of the new constitution in the republican Supreme Court. On 14 May 2001, the court ruled that several aspects of the new constitution were in violation of federal law, particularly the granting of additional powers to the republic's Constitutional Court and various norms that allowed a broad interpretation of the republic's jurisdiction. *Kareliia*, 18 August 2001. Opposition deputy Chazhengin succeeded in defending two articles of the new constitution that allowed the legislative assembly the right to have an independent budgetary-control committee, and that granted the right of legislative initiative to the Supreme and Arbitrazh Courts. Shortly thereafter, Chazhengin also succeeded in defending the article granting the electorate the right to recall the head of the republic in the Supreme Court in Moscow. *Gubernia* (Petrozavodsk), 24 May 2001.

tenure. It is also possible that the decision was taken with the foresight that future regional elections would not coincide with federal elections. The center typically took greater interest in regional elections when they coincided with federal elections, placing greater pressure on regional leaders to deliver votes. Regardless of whether the extension of term length was intended as a measure to increase regional autonomy, then, this was a practical result. Similarly, placing regional elections on a separate cycle from national elections meant that regional elections were more likely to be focused on region-specific issues.

Second, the process of revising regional charters was often initiated and guided by the governor (or republican president). This was clearly the case in Kareliia and Buriatiia. In Perm, the revisions were jointly initiated by the governor and assembly speaker, while the process in Tiumen was dominated by the assembly throughout. Judging from the examination of the revision process discussed above, this appears to accurately reflect the extent of the governor's ability to manipulate the assembly – strongest in Kareliia and Buriatiia, weaker in Perm, and weakest in Tiumen. One should also note that the position of the executive was stronger vis-à-vis the assembly in the regions where the most extensive revisions were required (Kareliia and Buriatiia) and weaker in regions requiring minimal revisions (Perm and Tiumen). This is a somewhat counterintuitive observation. Putin's centralizing initiatives appeared to target the republics most directly, and it was generally assumed that the republics would offer the greatest resistance by virtue of having the most to lose. In the cases of Kareliia and Buriatiia, however, the republican leadership initiated and vigorously pursued the revision of their respective constitutions. And in both cases, the leadership represented the revision of republican constitutions as both a legal imperative mandated by federal law, and as a political inevitability given the

resolve of Putin's administration to take the battle to the regions. The other side of this was that the republican leaders also cast themselves as doing what was necessary to preserve the territory and status of their regions at the same time that they demonstrated their loyalty to the Kremlin – positions that could hardly be challenged by regional assemblies. Putin's centralization thus offered incentives to the regional leaders who had to tackle the most extensive revisions of their charters and constitutions, as "one centralizing measure requires another concession to regional or subregional elites."[121] As a result, those who had the most to lose may also have had the most to gain.[122]

As an illustration of this, it is useful to compare changes in gubernatorial powers across constitutions and charters. Drawing on the method developed by Shugart and Carey, **Table 4.1** breaks down gubernatorial powers in the four regions before and after the revisions of their charters and constitutions.[123] The first set of columns (from the left) covers the governors' legislative powers, while the second set covers nonlegislative powers. There was noticeable stability in legislative powers across all cases[124], but the governors gained incrementally in three cases in terms of nonlegislative powers after the revision of regional charters and constitutions. One

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[121] Kimitaka Matsuzato, "From Communist Boss Politics to Post-Communist Caciquismo - the Meso-Elite and Meso-Governments in Post-Communist Countries," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 34, no. 2 (2001): 176.

[122] If this was the case for the oblasts, it appears to have been even more so with the republics. Russia's republics tended to have strong legislatures while oblasts were more diverse. Kuz'min, Melvin, and Nechaev, "Regional'nye politicheskie rezhimy," 150-3.

[123] For a description of the method and operationalization of values, see: Matthew Soberg Shugart and John M. Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1992), 148-52. This method was first utilized for categorizing regional regime types in Russia in: Kuz'min, Melvin, and Nechaev, "Regional'nye politicheskie rezhimy." The authors convert the measure to a dichotomous value ("strong" and "weak"), though they do not indicate to what extent they adapted Shugart and Carey's method to the context of Russian regional politics.

[124] The apparently precipitous decline of presidential legislative powers in Buriatiia deserves mention here. The change in formal powers is somewhat exaggerated given that most were not exercised (for instance, the President of Buriatiia never attempted to introduce a state of emergency). Otherwise the loss of powers for exclusive introduction of legislation can be accounted for by the requirements of the 1999 federal law "On the General Principles…" and not as a result of executive-legislative confrontation.

should also note that Shugart and Carey did not design these measures with the context of regional Russia in mind – significant areas of gain for the governors are not included here.[125] Neither do these measures factor in center-regional, inter-regional or regional-local relations. At a bare minimum, however, the evidence indicates that the governors lost far less power within their own regions as a consequence of centralization than is often presumed. The cynic might reply that this only goes to prove the superfluous nature of regional law, though one would then be hard pressed to explain why the governors committed extensive resources and influence in pursuing the reform of regional charters and constitutions.[126]

A third aspect of the process that was shared among the regions was that it provided an element of performance legitimacy to the newly-reformed institution of Presidential Representatives. The establishment of a "unified legal space" was the first significant task that Putin gave to his envoys. While the process technically began with the passage of the federal law "On the General Principles…" in October 1999, it is generally agreed that the coercive veneer of the new *polpredy* and their network of federal inspectors gave the reform its teeth.[127] Moreover, the envoys' involvement in the process established institutional channels for central intervention in regional legislation by establishing procedures and precedents for central oversight and regulation. The fact that the process of revising regional charters and constitutions occurred parallel to the establishment of the Federal District apparatus is significant in this regard.

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[125] For instance, the fact that the re-naming of the chief executive office in Kareliia's constitution from "Chair of the Government" to "Head of Republic" permitted Katanandov the chance to run for a third term of office.

[126] Even if one accepts a limited electoral accountability in many Russian regions, the law still has consequences for intra-elite, center-regional, and local-regional political contests.

[127] As Matsuzato observes, "federal districts have proved to be playing a pivotal, if not decisive, role, in particular in the campaign to overcome contradictions between federal and regional legislations." Matsuzato, "From communist boss politics," 177.

Table 4.1: Legislative and Nonlegislative Powers of Regional Chief Executives

	Pack. Veto	Part. Veto*	Decree**	Excl. introd	Budget***	Referenda	Total	Cab. Form.	Cab. Dismiss	Censure	Dissolve	Total
Buriatiia, 1994	2	0	3[a]	4[b]	0	2	11	3	2[c]	4[d]	0	9
Buriatiia, 2001	2	0	3[e]	1	0	0	6	3	3[f]	3[g]	1	10
Kareliia, 1994	2	0	3	1	0	2	8	3	4	3[h]	0[i]	10
Kareliia, 2001	2	0	3	1	0	2	8	3	4	0	1	8
Perm, 1999	N/A[j]	0[l]	3	1	0	N/A	4	3[k]	4	0	0	7
Perm, 2001	2	0[l]	3	1	0	2	8	3[m]	4[n]	0[o]	1	8
Tiumen, 1999	2	0	3	1	0	2	8	3	4	3	1[p]	11
Tiumen, 2001	2	0	3	1	0	2	8	3	4	3	1	11

* Though no charter/constitution makes provision for a partial veto, the category is included to maintain consistency with Shugart & Carey (1992).
** Includes administrative orders for oblast governors.
*** Only reflects budget powers granted on paper; does not include extra-budgetary funds.
a Decrees cannot violate laws of Republic of Buriatiia.
b Extensive powers include declaring state of emergency, concluding international treaties, etc.
c Presents dismissals to the Narodnyi Khural.
d President brings the question of no confidence before the assembly.
e As long as does not violate federal law.
f Assembly may vote no confidence in First Deputy and Deputy Prime Ministers, Minister of the Economy and Minister of Finance.
g President has option to take disciplinary action or dismiss government after vote of no confidence.
h Requires court ruling.
i Prime Minister can call referendum, but must resign if loses.
j Governor's veto powers are regulated by oblast law, not by charter.
k Assembly confirmation required for heads of Property Management Committee, Natural Protection Committee, Committee for the Rational Use of Natural Resources, and Finance Department.
l Governor has partial veto over assembly resolutions, but not laws.
m Assembly confirmation required for First Deputy Governors and head of the Main Department for Finance and Tax Policy.
n Via governor's reserve powers.
o Only for First Deputy Governors and head of the Main Department for Finance and Tax Policy.
p Only in the event of the extended absence of a quorum.

Conclusion

Taken together, these commonalities underline the relationship between centralization on the federal and regional levels. It was in this context that the attention of regional administrations and assemblies inevitably focused on the status and regulation of the boundaries of administrative-territorial divisions *within* the regions. All regions under review stipulated that their boundaries and status could only be changed by agreement with neighboring regions and referendum within their respective territories, in accordance with federal law. Within the regions, however, the status of internal borders was left to regional governments. The formula for determining internal boundaries varied in degrees of ambiguity. Perm's charter merely stated that the boundaries of administrative-territorial divisions were regulated by regional law. In Kareliia, changes to internal borders were permitted "taking into account" (*s uchetom*) public opinion in the affected areas. At the other extreme, Tiumen's charter devoted two chapters to internal boundaries – one concerning relations with the autonomous okrugs, another concerning the status of the oblast's internal units. As the assembly debates on the status of municipal boundaries within Buriatiia revealed, the ability to manipulate the conditions for internal border changes was interpreted as a function of the integrity of a region's borders with its neighbors. Similarly, Tiumen's charter and Kareliia's constitution enumerated the regions' administrative-territorial divisions, meaning that any procedure for altering the boundaries, name, or status of their internal units would require amending the charter or constitution. [128]

In this important sense, regions maintained significant control over their own borders via control over their *internal* boundaries. In part this supports the broad hypothesis posed in the introduction that the internal boundaries of the state are linked

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[128] Such a list was not included in Kareliia's 1994 constitution. Its inclusion in the revised constitution is further suggestive of an increasing defensiveness regarding the republic's internal boundaries.

to the process of state-building and the constitution of its external boundaries. With specific regard to centralization in Russia, such cases illustrate the extent to which the process involved the "ratcheting down" of the state's authority: the regions are pulled further under the center's control, while the municipalities are pulled further under the regions' control.

This focus on the boundaries of internal units was motivated further by the example of the Federal Districts. Perm's revised charter included a new provision permitting the oblast government to establish internal economic districts (*khoziaistvennye okruga*) "for the purpose of conducting a unified regional policy within them." In Kareliia, a plan to create analogous economic districts was floated in January 2001 by Vladimir Surzhikov of Kareliia's Ministry of Economics. The plan proposed dividing the region into five economic *okruga*, each composed of four or five raions. Like Putin's Federal Districts, Surzhikov's okrugs would be implemented as a reform of the republic's administration and would not require changes to existing legislation.[129] Proceeding from the premise that local self-government was guilty of failing to perform basic and necessary functions, the proposed okrugs would serve to "divide spheres of activity and, correspondingly, spheres of accountability of different levels of government," such that the republic would be able to make more efficient use of government resources and local government would concentrate on strictly local concerns, "not involving itself in global economics and politics."[130] Surzhikov initially described the proposed okrugs as an intermediate level of government, but quickly backed off and stated that the okrugs would "create a team of professional managers in the name of the government," "bring administrative organs closer to the territories," and would actually decrease the number of bureaucrats by eliminating

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[129] *Gubernia* (Petrozavodsk), January 11-17, 2001.
[130] *Severnyi Kur'er* (Petrozavodsk), January 6, 2001.

departments (*otdely*) in the republic's ministries that dealt with *raion*-specific issues.[131]

Nonetheless, Surzhikov's proposal created a minor sensation. Heads of local government voiced their concern, yet they were constrained by the obvious political correctness of the plan.[132] The head of Kaleval'skii raion, Cheslav Skripin, was blunt in his assessment: "the idea's logic is understandable and correct. It fits with the logic of a federal system of government administration: from anarchy to the principles of democratic centralism."[133] Surzhikov's plan faded from public discussion and was not revived, but it is significant that the plan was floated while the republic's legislators were re-writing Kareliia's constitution under threat of dissolution by Katanandov and the possibility of early elections.[134] The timing was not lost on the heads of local government who simultaneously served as deputies in Kareliia's Chamber of the Republic, which duly voted for the governor's draft constitution and, effectively, voted itself out of existence in approving the switch to a unicameral assembly. Ironically, distrust among leaders of local government increased while the potential for coordinated political opposition declined – in essence, opposition to the centralization of regional budgetary control was demobilized in much the same way that Putin demobilized regional opposition to his reform of budgetary federalism. This was accomplished while the regional government openly stated that local

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[131] *Gorod* (Petrozavodsk), January 19-25, 2001.
[132] The response of the head of Lakhdenpokhskii raion, Nikolai Lysenko, was largely typical: "if the economic strengths of the raions will be joined for the resolution of common problems thanks to this plan, then I am in favor of such okrugs. But if these new structures are created to put more bureaucrats in the raions, then I am against them. Even worse would be if these bureaucrats carried out control and oversight of local self-government." *Kareliia*, January 20, 2001.
[133] *Kareliia*, January 20, 2001.
[134] *Gubernia* (Petrozavodsk), February 22-28, 2001.

government would be increasingly responsible for generating its own revenue without providing the legal basis for the use of local resources.[135]

And similar to the power exercised by Putin to force the governors to bring regional charters and constitutions into conformity with federal law, the new charters and constitutions granted the governors the same powers to force local government to bring municipal charters and legislation into accordance with regional and federal law. The fact that the revision of regional charters and constitutions occurred simultaneously with the establishment of the Federal Districts and establishment of the "ruling vertical" had a knock-on effect on regional-local relations: Putin's centralization provided both political opportunity and the discursive weaponry for the governors to (re-)assert control over local government.

In addition to the forms of "goal-rational" authority evoked by Putin's Federal Districts reform, then, the revision of regional charters and constitutions as a process contributed performance legitimacy to both central and regional actors. The nature of that legitimacy, however, was framed by the relative salience of Russia's internal borders. For the Kremlin, the process confirmed Putin's goal of making Russia into a "uniform legal space" as a necessary step for restoring central state capacity. For the regions, the process opened up new opportunities to re-negotiate and preserve regional identities and status, which regional leaders then sought to consolidate through the ballot box.

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[135] In a manner reminiscent of Putin's first salvos of 2000, the republican administration's newspaper *Kareliia* started a "name and shame" campaign, regularly featuring articles about troublesome raions during this period. Olonetskii raion was the subject a particularly fierce attacks, perhaps related to the fact that Katanandov's most likely opponent in the upcoming elections for head of the republic was the mayor of Olonets.

Chapter Five: Gubernatorial Elections in Putin's Russia

Introduction

The previous chapters examined the re-imposition of central control over the regions, particularly through the establishment of the Federal Districts and the revision of regional charters and constitutions. While it is clear that centralization has been successful in re-connecting lines of vertical authority among federal agencies and diminishing the legal variations among types of regional regimes, there has been a trade-off at each stage of the process by which the governors benefited from a "ratchet-down" effect of centralization. If one judges by the relative changes in jurisdiction and control over internal borders, the Russian president's position improved in relation to the governors, while the governors' position was strengthened in relation to other regional and local forces. Putin may have purchased the governors' support for his initiatives that affected the balance of power in the federal center, but at the cost of leaving the governors even further entrenched in the regions. In this regard, the conduct and outcome of gubernatorial elections since Putin came to power ought to provide important indicators of the effects of centralization and its longer term prospects in regional politics.

It seems clear that gubernatorial elections were implicated in the various dimensions of the politics of Russia's internal borders, particularly the content of regional political regimes. It is commonly observed, for instance, that the switch from appointing governors to allowing gubernatorial elections contributed to the growth of regional autonomy during the 1990s. It has also been suggested, indirectly, that regional elections provided platforms for activating forms of regional identification – whether it lay in anti-Moscow sentiment, comparisons with neighboring regions, ethnic affiliation, or some combination of these. Taken together, then, gubernatorial

elections intersected the dimensions of regional autonomy in federal relations, democratization, and regional identity. This chapter begins with a theoretical discussion of the relationship between gubernatorial elections and regional democracy, taking into account post-Soviet Russia's accumulated history of gubernatorial elections throughout the 1990s. It then proceeds to analyze the conduct and outcome of gubernatorial elections during Putin's first term, utilizing election results from across Russia's regions as well as in-depth examination of elections in the four regional case studies.

Gubernatorial Elections and Regional Democracy

At first glance, gubernatorial elections were the most readily observable and identifiable indicators of democratization on the regional level. They were among the fiercest competitions across post-Soviet Russia, which is no surprise since the governor remained the single most important actor in regional politics. Election campaigns were highly visible, at times provoking the involvement of central actors (particularly the Central Electoral Commission) and in many cases attracting coverage by the national media.[1] The involvement of the latter potentially granted a greater degree of openness to the election, particularly where it provided a needed counter-balance to biased coverage in regional media. In addition there was a wealth of data available from regional electoral commissions made publicly available (including on their websites).[2] In principle, voters in gubernatorial elections ought to have better knowledge of the candidates, their positions, and obvious attempts to tamper with the electoral process. Moreover, there was ample reason to view gubernatorial elections as a barometer for democratization that links together the regional and national levels

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[1] This is not to say, however, that the national media was un-biased.
[2] But only for a limited time, and the data generated by regional electoral commissions sometimes contradicted the results made available by the Central Electoral Commission.

of governance: "clean" elections on the regional level were positive signs, as were effective central interventions to ensure free and fair electoral competition.

Yet as regional political actors gained electoral experience, clearly identifying violations of electoral law, tampering, or subterranean central interventions became more difficult. Indeed, observers of regional elections were more often struck by their non-democratic aspects than the reverse. Incumbent governors were well known for employing a whole range of dirty tricks to preserve power, including the notorious use of "administrative resources" to boost voter turnout, the deployment of bogus opposition candidates (*dublery* or *dvoiniki*), the monopolization or intimidation of regional media, and various manipulations of regional electoral law.[3] The Kremlin also played an active role in regional elections, often seeking to prevent undesirable (*sluchainye* or "accidental") candidates from participating. The federal center could alter the balance of power at election time by manipulating key appointments and by the payment (or rather, non-payment) of federal officials in the regions. Informal channels for influencing the outcome of regional elections were equally significant: earning Putin's endorsement was a crucial advantage, as it also served as an implied threat to those backing the "wrong" candidate.

In assessing the democratic content of gubernatorial elections, then, there is a tragic irony in that Robert Dahl's dimensions of democratization – participation and competition[4] – may equally serve as indicators of managed democracy (*upravliaemaia demokratiia*). In studies of regional elections in Russia, participation has been operationalized in terms of voter turnout, while the degree of

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[3] Cameron Ross, *Federalism and Democratisation in Russia* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2002), 158-64.

[4] Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (London: Yale UP, 1971). Dahl presents these dimensions as constituted by eight institutional guarantees: (1) The freedom to form and join organizations, (2) freedom of expression, (3) the right to vote, (4) eligibility for public office, (5) the right of political leaders to compete for support, (6) alternative sources of information, (7) free and fair elections, and (8) institutions for making government policies depend on votes and other expressions of preference.

competitiveness is sometimes represented by the number of effective candidates, the percent of votes cast against the winner, or the frequency of replacement of incumbent governors. While these may be viable criteria in established democracies, they can be dubious indicators for regional gubernatorial contests. Voter turnout can reach levels that rival European democracies (60-80%), but not without frequent allegations of falsification, tampering, and intimidation. The number of competitors for a given post may overlook the effect of *dublery* or bogus opposition candidates. In the regional context, running for governor was also a means to become established in regional politics even if the candidate did not expect to garner more than a few percentage points. This was particularly noticeable when challengers failed to unite behind the leading opposition candidate in run-off elections. The frequency of incumbent replacement can miss cases in which the incumbent stepped aside for a designated successor, chosen from among the ranks of the regional elite.

Another tendency in the analysis of gubernatorial elections (particularly among journalistic accounts) was to judge their democratic content by the putatively democratic credentials of the victor. Yet the gap between words and deeds often widened to a gulf between democratic promises and the undemocratic means employed to obtain or maintain power. An added layer of complexity concerns the governors' relationship with the Kremlin. During the 1990s, some governors could adopt stridently anti-Moscow positions while implementing unexpectedly liberal policies at home. Personal loyalty to the president trumped a governor's democratic credentials. This latter trend was prominent during the El'tsin era and appears to have accelerated in Putin's Russia as incumbents and opposition, alike, claimed to have the Kremlin's support.[5]

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[5] As Moses notes, this presented particular difficulties for the Presidential Administration in singling out genuine Putin loyalists among contenders. Joel C. Moses, "Political-Economic Elites and Russian Regional Elections 1999-2000: Democratic Tendencies in Kaliningrad, Perm and Volgograd," *Europe-Asia Studies* 54, no. 6 (2002): 912.

The Evolution of Russia's Gubernatorial Elections

The evolution of the regional governorship was bound up with Russia's emergence from Soviet rule. Following Gorbachev's proposal at the 19th Party Conference in 1988 to transfer power from regional Party committees to the soviets, the executive committees of regional soviets (*ispolkomy*) were strengthened in 1990. El'tsin later proposed that executive power in the regions be transferred from the *ispolkomy* to the new post of "head of administration" (*glava administratsii*) during the RSFSR's presidential campaign in spring 1991. This new post was supposed to be subject to multi-candidate elections and the Russian Congress of People's Deputies adopted legislation for the election of heads of administration in October 1991. When El'tsin was granted emergency decree powers in November 1991, however, he was handed the power to appoint regional governors. Gubernatorial elections were postponed three times until December 1996.[6]

In the few regions where El'tsin permitted gubernatorial elections (by decree), the results were disastrous for the Kremlin's appointees. In December 1992, the legislative assemblies in eight regions voted no confidence in the governor.[7] When gubernatorial elections were held in April 1993, incumbents lost to Communist-supported candidates in all but one region (Krasnoiarsk).[8] Only one election was allowed in 1994, while 13 elections took place in 1995.[9] Nevertheless, 45 out of 49

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[6] Vera Tolz and Irina Busygina, "Regional Governors and the Kremlin: the Ongoing Battle for Power," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 30, no. 4 (1998): 402, 10-11.

[7] The regions were Amur, Briansk, Cheliabinsk, Lipetsk, Orel, Penza, and Smolensk *oblasty*, and Krasnoiarsk krai.

[8] In Cheliabinsk the incumbent, El'tsin's appointee Petr Sumin, refused to leave office and El'tsin nullified the election results. Steven L. Solnick, "Gubernatorial Elections in Russia, 1996-1997," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 14, no. 1 (1998): 50. Republican elections were also held in Ingushetiia, Kalmykiia, Bashkortostan, and Chuvashiia.

[9] The 1994 election was in Irkustk oblast and was won by incumbent Iurii Nozhikov. Among the 1995 elections, the most significant was the April 1995 election in Sverdlovsk oblast. In this case, El'tsin's former appointee, Eduard Rossel, contested the moratorium on gubernatorial elections in the Constitutional Court and forced a compromise in which the complaint was withdrawn in exchange for a

oblast governors were appointed by El'tsin (39 in the months following the August 1991 coup attempt) until December 1995.[10] The first large round of gubernatorial elections occurred from June 1996 to March 1997 during which elections took place in 55 regions. In 48 of these regions (excluding republics), El'tsin's appointees faced election for the first time.[11] Incumbents suffered significantly throughout Russia's regions during the 1996-1997 election cycle. Of the 52 elections held in 1996, incumbents were defeated in 36 regions (69%), and in 1997 incumbents were defeated in nine regions out of 17 (53%).

The gubernatorial elections in 1996-1997 yielded a number of important lessons for the Kremlin and for local political elites. The widespread rejection of El'tsin's appointed governors may have reflected dissatisfaction with the center's lack of a regional policy, though an equally plausible interpretation is that the Kremlin lacked a consistent strategy for supporting El'tsin's appointees. The Presidential Administration often split over whom to support, tacitly supported challengers, or failed to provide adequate resources to incumbents.[12] Governors who were appointed in 1991-1993 fared the worst with few exceptions.[13] The most successful of El'tsin's appointees were those who came to power later in 1994-1996, who ran on platforms that there had been insufficient time for them to implement their goals. Among the opposition candidates, the most successful were those who had previously served as chairs of regional assemblies.[14]

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decree allowing the election to take place. Gerald M. Easter, "Redefining Centre-Regional Relations in the Russian Federation: Sverdlovsk Oblast'," *Europe-Asia Studies* 49, no. 4 (1997).

[10] Jeffrey W. Hahn, "Democratization and Political Participation in Russia's Regions," in *Democratic Changes and Authoritarian Reactions in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova*, ed. Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997), 157.

[11] Solnick, "Gubernatorial Elections in Russia, 1996-1997," 48.

[12] Ibid.: 62-4.

[13] Among them were Nikolai Volkov in Evreiskaia autonomous oblast', Aleksandr Filipenko in Khanty-Mansiiskii autonomous okrug, Nikolai Poluianov in Komi-Permiatskii autonomous okrug, and Viktor Chub in Rostov oblast'.

[14] Aleksandr Shatilov and Vladimir Nechaev, "Regional'nye vybory: osobennosti tekhnologii i kharakter predpochtenii," *Svobodnaia Mysl'*, no. 6 (1997): 60.

At the time, it was suggested (optimistically) that this trend reflected "people's concern over the concentration of power in the hands of governors at the expense of the representative bodies."[15] More likely it reflected the degree of cohesion among the regional elite, as incumbents tended to lose in regions where the elite were divided or unconsolidated.[16] Two further elements that facilitated success in the 1996-1997 gubernatorial elections were the strikingly apolitical nature of regional political discourse and opposition to the federal center. Regional contests often were determined by the personal characteristics of the candidate, particularly as related to administrative experience within, and knowledge of, candidates' native region. Regional identity became an important feature in gubernatorial contests across the board. This was facilitated by opposition to Moscow insofar as regional consciousness was formed in part through opposition to the center.[17] The very conduct of elections stimulated the ideological expansion of regional elites, such that "the establishment of a monopoly on the representation of all societal interests by the local elite signified the completion of the formation of regional ideologies."[18] In this regard, elections activated regional identities in ways that echoed the experience of Russia's republics in the early 1990s.

Regionalism combined with electoral legitimacy was a potent combination, reflected in the immediate rise in the durability of incumbent governors. The difference between El'tsin's appointed governors and the elected representatives of the regional elite was vividly illustrated by the next large round of gubernatorial elections in 1999-2000, in which incumbents lost in just 20 out of 59 contests (34%).[19]

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[15] Tolz and Busygina, "Regional Governors and the Kremlin," 421.
[16] E.V. Popova, "Problemnye izmereniia elektoral'noi politiki v Rossii: gubernatorskie vybory v sravnitel'noi perspektive," *Polis*, no. 3 (2001).
[17] Shatilov and Nechaev, "Regional'nye vybory," 64-6.
[18] Sergei Barzilov and Aleksei Chernyshov, "Manevry mestnoi elity: politika informatsii i manipuliatsii v regionakh," *Svobodnaia Mysl'*, no. 3 (2001): 35.
[19] Ross calculates similarly that "in 60 elections which were held over the period December 1999 to January 2001, incumbents won 68% of the seats." Ross, *Federalism and Democratisation in Russia*, 105.

Moreover, incentives for governors to cooperate with the Kremlin diminished and separatism ceased to be the exclusive purvue of the republics. Slider points out that deviations from federal laws and presidential decrees previously were more characteristic of the republics, but that gubernatorial elections changed this by providing a "shield of democratic legitimacy" for provincial leaders.[20]

The importance of regionalism and the dominance of the governor among the regional elite appeared to be borne out by the variously inconclusive attempts to find alternate explanations for the ability of incumbent governors to retain power, particularly those explanations focusing on electoral manipulation. It has been noted that electoral manipulation was more likely in rural regions as evidenced by particularly exaggerated rates of voter turnout in the republics.[21] It has also been suggested that ethnicity played a role as there were significantly greater instances of electoral manipulation in the republics than in the ethnically Russian (*russkie*) regions.[22] As Hale suggests, the logic behind the two observations are related:

> Since a farm represents an isolated cluster of residents, typically constituting a single electoral precinct, it is very easy for regional officials to determine which farms are loyal and which are not, making the threat of punishment very credible. In many ethnic republics, the minority groups are also clustered in rural areas, magnifying the potential for patron-client relationships in electoral politics.[23]

Yet studies of democratization on the regional level find widespread disparities among regions of similar levels of socio-economic development.[24] Moreover,

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[20] Darrell Slider, "Pskov Under the LDPR: Elections and Dysfunctional Federalism in One Region," *Europe-Asia Studies* 51, no. 5 (1999): 765-6. In examining the case of Pskov oblast', Slider eloquently articulates the law of unintended consequences in noting that "political decentralization and the introduction of elections, instead of facilitating democratization and the creation of a free market economy, can have the opposite effect."

[21] Valentin Mikhailov, "Regional Elections and Democratisation in Russia," in *Russian Politics Under Putin*, ed. Cameron Ross (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2004), 218.

[22] D.B. Oreshkin, "Geografiia elektoral'noi kul'tury i tsel'nost' Rossii," *Polis*, no. 1 (2001).

[23] Henry E. Hale, "Explaining Machine Politics in Russia's Regions: Economy, Ethnicity, and Legacy," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 19, no. 3 (2003): 245.

[24] Christopher Marsh, "Measuring and Explaining Variations in Russian Regional Democratisation," in *Russian Politics Under Putin*, ed. Cameron Ross (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2004), Kelly M. McMann and Nikolai V. Petrov, "A Survey of Democracy in Russia's Regions," *Post-Soviet Geography and Economics* 41, no. 3 (2000), Nikolai Petrov, "Regional Models of Democratic Development," in *Between Dictatorship and Democracy: Russian Post-Communist Political Reform*,

Mikhailov makes an important normative point in observing that, "administrative pressure and deception have no ethnic background, and their victims include both Russians and members of the titular population."[25]

Gubernatorial Elections in Four Regions

In the absence of clear structural cleavages, one is left with the deceptively simple conclusion that, "region as an independent variable does matter" - in other words, a regional effect exists beyond socio-economic or ethnic characteristics, though the lack of a coherent explanation for this effect "reflects our lack of knowledge about regional cultural differences and our limited ability to identify and assess differences in local political conditions."[26] The following sections attempt to redress this gap in understanding by examining in detail the gubernatorial contests held in Perm, Tiumen, Kareliia, and Buriatiia during Putin's first term. As discussed in previous chapters, Putin's centralization had a chilling effect on expressions of regional identity on the federal level at the same time that it provided opportunities for regional elites to centralize and consolidate power on the regional level. One would expect these trends to be magnified in local contests for control of regional executive branches, where the stakes were higher than for any other position in regional government. At issue is the extent to which local political conditions adjusted to take account (or advantage) of the centralization processes unfolding in the center. The chapter concludes with a reappraisal of the relationship between gubernatorial power and political space in Russia's regions.

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ed. Michael McFaul, Nikolai Petrov, and Andrei Ryabov (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2004).

[25] Mikhailov, "Regional Elections and Democratisation in Russia," 219. He continues that, "In our view, any attempt to link the strength of administrative pressure and manipulation during elections with voters' ethnic make-up has no explanatory value."

[26] Matthew Wyman et al., "Regional Voting Patterns in Post-Communist Russia," in *Regional Politics in Russia*, ed. Cameron Ross (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2002), 30-4.

Perm

Perm's governor in 2000, Gennadii Igumnov, was one of the few El'tsin appointees who managed to secure election in 1996.[27] Just six months before the December 2000 election, Igumnov lacked any realistic challengers to his re-election. Possible competitors were considered to be State Duma deputies Pavel Anokhin and Viktor Pokhmelkin, Lukoil executive Andrei Kuziaev, deputy Volga polpred Valentin Stepankov, and Igumnov's opponent in the 1996 election, Sergei Levitan, though none of them seemed to pose a serious threat.[28] Similarly, the popular mayor of the oblast center, Iurii Trutnev, trailed Igumnov by more than 25% in public opinion polls.[29] At the time, however, Trutnev and Igumnov had an informal agreement to support each other's bids for re-election: Trutnev would not run for governor until 2005, at which time Igumnov pledged to support Trutnev as his successor.

By late August, the regional branch of Unity (*Edinstvo*) announced its support of Igumnov's and Trutnev's re-election bids, followed by Union of Right Forces (SPS) in early September.[30] Igumnov himself claimed to have the backing of Putin, Volga polpred Sergei Kirienko, and the Presidential Administration.[31] Then Igumnov unexpectedly withdrew from the race on 6 October 2000, officially because he was stunned by the extent of mud slinging aimed at him (including death threats), and endorsed Trutnev for governor.[32]

By all accounts the Kremlin was closely involved in this change. Igumnov's endorsement of Trutnev followed consultations in Moscow. It was later reported that Igumnov first raised the possibility of his withdraw from the race in a closed meeting

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[27] Igumnov was appointed by El'tsin in January 1996. Robert W. Orttung, ed., *The Republics and Regions of the Russian Federation: A Guide to Politics, Policies, and Leaders* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2000), 425.
[28] *Novyi Kompan'on* (Perm'), 14 June 2000.
[29] *Novyi Kompan'on* (Perm'), 22 August 2000.
[30] *Mestnoe Vremia* (Perm'), 6 September 2000.
[31] *Novyi Kompan'on* (Perm'), 12 September 2000.
[32] *Mestnoe Vremia* (Perm'), 11 October 2000. Igumnov's withdraw followed the initiation of criminal proceedings against his daughter, Elena Arzumanovaia, and a week of rumors that business figures close to him were under investigation. *Zvezda* (Perm'), 12 October 2000.

of his informal political council, which included Trutnev, in late September. The council continued discussion in Moscow at the start of October in order to sound out the opinion of the Kremlin.[33] Trutnev flew to Moscow before Igumnov's announcement for consultations with the Presidential Administration and the Security Council. Following Igumnov's announcement, the head of the regional electoral commission stated that Igumnov could not transfer his signatures to Trutnev for registration, but that Trutnev probably still had time to collect them. Indeed, Trutnev needed only three hours to register his candidacy.[34]

Igumnov flew to Moscow for further meetings in the Presidential Administration just a few days after his announcement.[35] On 12 October 2000, Igumnov decided to rejoin the gubernatorial campaign, but Trutnev refused to withdraw from the race. Both claimed to have been acting on orders from the Kremlin, though this was never confirmed by the Presidential Administration.[36] The local press in the oblast center was quick to support Trutnev's candidacy, seeing the tacit rationale of centralization in the developments if not the overt hand of central intervention. In one particularly insightful editorial, the weekly *Novyi Kompan'on* argued that a change of governors was necessary to break up regional patronage networks since new governors would no longer have their own people working in federal agencies and therefore be more reliant on the center for support.[37] In late November, pro-Kremlin ideologue Gleb Pavlovskii's characterization of Igumnov as part of the "governors' opposition" (*gubernatorskaia oppozitsiia*) on the pro-Kremlin website *strana.ru* circulated in the local press.[38] Volga polpred Sergei Kirienko

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[33] *Novyi Kompan'on* (Perm'), 5 December 2000.
[34] *Novyi Kompan'on* (Perm'), 10 October 2000. The Volga *polpred*'s press secretary stated that Kirienko was not involved, but that he was informed throughout. He also categorically rejected the possibility that Valentin Stepankov would join the campaign.
[35] *Zvezda* (Perm'), 10 October 2000.
[36] In fact, the other two main candidates, Anokhin and Levitan, also made trips to Moscow prior to joining the race. *Novyi Kompan'on* (Perm'), 17 November 2000.
[37] *Novyi Kompan'on* (Perm'), 31 October 2000.
[38] *Mestnoe Vremia* (Perm'), 29 November 2000.

adopted a neutral stance regarding the candidates. One might reasonably argue that a neutral stance under such conditions would be perceived as a lack of support for the Igumnov and tacit support for Trutnev. More concretely, when Igumnov initiated legal proceedings against Trutnev in an attempt to remove him from the ballot, Kirienko personally intervened to persuade Igumnov to drop the action.[39]

Trutnev received indirect support, ironically, from one of his competitors – State Duma Deputy Pavel Anokhin. Earlier in 2000, Anokhin initiated investigations into official corruption in Perm oblast after writing directly to Putin and General Procurator Vladimir Ustinov. The General Procurator's office charged the head of the regional MVD, the regional procurator, the head of the regional tax police, and the head of the regional FSB with accepting bribes of 100,000 rubles or more. The head of the regional MVD eventually resigned and the region's procurator was sacked.[40] When the gubernatorial campaign officially started, then, Igumnov's team could not rely on the regional *siloviki* in exercising its "administrative resource." The fact that Kirienko's newly-appointed deputy, Valentin Stepankov, was placed in charge of overseeing law enforcement during this time did not go unnoticed.[41]

In the election held on 3 December 2000, Trutnev won in the first round with a decisive 51.48% while Igumnov trailed with 34.95%. Trutnev's support was concentrated primarily in urban areas, while Igumnov fared better in rural areas.[42] There were, however, notable exceptions to the trend. Trutnev defeated Igumnov in almost all electoral districts in (predominantly rural) Komi-Permiatskii autonomous okrug. He also managed to garner the support of Perm's most depressed raions,

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[39] V.P. Mokhov, "Permskaia elita v period gubernatorskikh vyborov 2000 g." (paper presented at the Moscow Carnegie Center Seminar: Gubernatorskie vybory i problemy stanovleniia grazhdanskogo obshchestva na granitse Evropy i Asii, Perm', 21-23 February 2001). Available online at: http://www.carnegie.ru/ru/news/59387.htm

[40] *Kommersant-Vlast'*, 21 November 2000.

[41] Stepankov blamed Igumnov for losing his re-election bid for the State Duma in 1999, claiming that the governor had instructed the heads of local administration and industry to oppose him because he was considered a potential threat in the 2000 gubernatorial election. *Novyi Kompan'on* (Perm'), 15 February 2000.

[42] *Zvezda* (Perm'), 5 December 2000.

organizing personal meetings with the heads of local government and capitalizing on dissatisfaction with the incumbent governor. He further won the support of Lukoil, which translated into electoral success among the sparsely-populated oil-extracting districts.[43]

Perhaps most striking in the campaign was the speed with which the oblast elite deserted the incumbent governor for Trutnev. Igumnov caused unrest among the regional elite by supporting Pavel Anokhin's candidacy for the State Duma in 1999, only to have Anokhin turn on the governor in the run-up to the election season.[44] For the electorate, he no longer projected the image of honesty and stability that won him power in 1996. Igumnov remained the target of negative campaigning and charges of corruption after his decision to rejoin the race, while the decision itself "made him a political liability for key economic power holders in Perm."[45] The change in administration left little doubt about the new center of power in the oblast. Upon coming to power, Trutnev replaced all but two members of Igumnov's administration with people from his city administration. Over 1000 people attended his inauguration, including Kirienko and Urals polpred Petr Latyshev, while only 27 of 40 invited guests bothered to attend Igumnov's farewell.[46]

Tiumen

Tiumen's Governor Leonid Roketskii was elected in 1996 in the midst of the oblast's struggle to gain control over Khanty-Mansiiskii and Iamalo-Nenetskii autonomous okrugs (AOs). Despite a presidential decree requiring the autonomous

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[43] N.V. Borisova, ""Permskii fenomen": Tendentsii transformatsii politicheskogo rezhima pod vozdeistviem elektoral'nykh praktik" (paper presented at the Moscow Carnegie Center Seminar: Gubernatorskie vybory i problemy stanovleniia grazhdanskogo obshchestva na granitse Evropy i Asii, Perm', 21-23 February 2001). Available online at: http://www.carnegie.ru/ru/news/59387.htm

[44] The move was controversial owing to Lukoil's monopoly position within the oblast – Anokhin was known as a representative of a financial-industrial group that was a daughter company of Sibneft'. Svetlana Fedotova, *Vol'nyi putevoditel' (zametki o Permskoi oblasti)* (Perm': Izdatel'skii dom "Kompan'on", 2001), 213-5.

[45] Moses, "Political-Economic Elites and Russian Regional Elections," 921.

[46] *Novyi Kompan'on* (Perm'), 19 December 2000.

okrugs to participate in the election, Iamalo-Nenetskii AO boycotted the vote. Khanty-Mansiiskii AO participated in the first round but declared the results to be void after turnout in the region fell below 25%.[47] The oblast Duma then lowered the turnout requirement for the second round to permit the governor to be elected with a sufficient turnout from within the oblast proper, such that Roketskii was elected without the participation of the autonomous okrugs.[48] Afterwards, the autonomous okrugs changed tactics: instead of attempting to separate from the oblast, they focused on capturing control of its administration in the next gubernatorial elections.

Preparations began in earnest in January 2000. Roketskii called a special session of the oblast Duma to attempt to move the gubernatorial election forward to coincide with the presidential election in March 2004.[49] Like many incumbent governors that year, Roketskii clearly hoped to ride Putin's coattails to re-election. Yet there were complications: federal law stipulated that gubernatorial elections could be moved forward by a maximum of nine months, but it was unclear how the law applied in the case of two-round elections. If one counted from the first round (22 December 1996), as Roketskii intended, there would be no legal obstacle to the move. If one started from the second round (12 January 1997), however, the move would be rendered illegal. Despite the support of presidential representative Gennadii Shcherbakov[50] and oblast Duma Speaker Sergei Korepanov, Roketskii's motion failed by a vote of nine to eleven. Leading the opposition was Andrei Artiukhov, who also served as speaker of the Iamalo-Nenetskii AO's legislative assembly.

Roketskii was incensed and railed against the practice of assembly deputies and members of administration from the autonomous okrugs simultaneously serving as

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[47] Pete Glatter, "Continuity and Change in the Tyumen' Regional Elite 1991-2001," *Europe-Asia Studies* 55, no. 3 (2003): 417-8.
[48] Robert W. Orttung, ed., *The Republics and Regions of the Russian Federation: A Guide to Politics, Policies, and Leaders* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2000), 575.
[49] *Tiumenskaia Pravda*, 18 January 2000.
[50] *Tiumenskie Izvestiia*, 20 January 2000.

oblast Duma deputies at the close of the session. Later he published an open letter in which he called attention to the fact that gubernatorial elections in both the autonomous okrugs had been moved forward to coincide with the presidential election.[51] The Iamalo-Nenetskii assembly responded that it favored holding gubernatorial elections in January 2001 principally because the oblast's charter remained unclear regarding the governor's powers over the autonomous okrugs.[52] When the oblast Duma resumed work in the fall, the gubernatorial election was set to correspond with assembly elections in the autonomous okrugs on 14 January 2001.[53]

Both governors of the autonomous okrugs were re-elected by overwhelming margins on 26 March 2000.[54] During April and May, controversy erupted over allegations that the oblast administration had drafted a proposal for the Presidential Administration that would subordinate the laws and executive branches of the autonomous okrugs to the oblast.[55] Ultimately the debate was forgotten in the wake of Putin's reforms, though the matter did little to encourage dialogue and trust among the three regions. Indeed, Roketskii interpreted Putin's federal reforms as support for his struggle with the autonomous okrugs.[56]

In July 2000, Putin appointed the speaker of Khanty-Mansiiskii AO's assembly, Sergei Sobianin, to be first deputy polpred in the Urals Federal District. His appointment immediately sparked rumors that Sobianin intended to participate in Tiumen's gubernatorial elections. As head of the Federation Council's constitutional legislation committee, Sobianin played a key role in getting Putin's laws passed through the Federation Council, allegedly in return for the Kremlin's promise of

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[51] *Tiumenskaia Pravda*, 20 January 2000.
[52] *Tiumenskaia Pravda*, 5 February 2000.
[53] *Sibirskii Posad* (Surgut), 26 September – 3 October 2000.
[54] In Khanty-Mansiiskii AO, Aleksandr Filipenko was re-elected with 90.82% and 67.96% voter turnout. Iamalo-Nenetskii AO re-elected Iurii Neelov with 88.1% and 68.66% turnout.
[55] *Tiumenskie Izvestiia*, 25 April 2000; *Tiumenskaia Pravda Segodnia*, 27 April 2000; *Moskovskii Komsomolets v Tiumeni*, 11-18 May 2000; *Tiumenskaia Pravda*, 27 May 2000.
[56] See Chapter Three.

support in January 2001.[57] Roketskii was ambivalent about Sobianin's appointment, noting that he was unable to predict what impact he would have on the oblast's relations with the autonomous okrugs, but that, "in any case, I won't irritate (*razdrazhat'*) him."[58]

Sobianin was nominated for oblast governor in mid-November, though he largely refrained from commenting on the election until his registration was official. On the oblast's relations with the autonomous okrugs, he stated that the main obstacle was the difference in industrial potential between the north and south and that the main task would be integration to jointly raise the region's economy.[59] Without officially campaigning, Sobianin made numerous trips across the oblast in his new capacity as a federal official, focusing on the development of the region's fuel-energy complex and the south's machine-building industry.

Meanwhile, the governors of the autonomous okrugs made their intentions known. In a press conference in late November, Iamalo-Nenetskii AO Governor Iurii Neelov complained that the autonomous okrugs could not find an understanding with Roketskii and urged him to retire. He further made it explicit that the autonomous okrugs would not support Roketskii if he ran for re-election.[60] Khanty-Mansiiskii AO Governor Aleksandr Filipenko went a step further in signing an agreement on 14 December 2000 with the mayor of the oblast capital, Sergei Kirichuk, in which the autonomous okrug pledged to invest 1.5 billion rubles for the construction of three suburbs, including apartments, schools, shops, service enterprises, roads, engineering networks, and so forth.[61] The two northern governors further issued a joint statement

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[57] *Tiumenskaia Pravda*, 15 July 2000.
[58] *Tiumenskaia Pravda*, 20 July 2000.
[59] *Tiumenskaia Pravda*, 14 November 2000.
[60] *Tiumenskaia Pravda*, 29 November 2000.
[61] *Tiumenskie Izvestiia*, 15 December 2000; *Tiumenskaia Pravda*, 16 December 2000. The text of the agreement was published in: *Tiumenskie Izvestiia*, 19 December 2000.

on 21 December 2000 in support of Sobianin's candidacy.[62] They were shortly joined by oblast Duma chairman Sergei Korepanov, who was also a candidate in the race. Though Korepanov had been nominated before Sobianin, he admitted to being a "backup" candidate.[63] He laid the oblast's problems in relations with the autonomous okrugs solely at Roketskii's feet, accusing the latter of violating the Russian constitution and regional law in his attempts to subordinate the okrugs to the oblast.[64]

In the closing days before the election, Sobianin's campaign centered on his proposal for coordinating social-economic policy among the three regions. Sobianin presented the plan to the oblast Duma in its last session of the year.[65] Shortly afterwards, Korepanov officially withdrew from the race and endorsed Sobianin.[66] Roketskii did not attend the debate in the oblast Duma. Speaking before the assembly, deputy polpred Sergei Vakhrukov made the case for greater integration of the regions in noting that there were closer ties between Sverdlovsk and Cheliabinsk than between Tiumen and the autonomous okrugs, and that the okrugs cooperated more with Kurgan, Perm, Sverdlovsk, and Cheliabinsk oblasts than with Tiumen oblast.[67]

The election campaign was generally recognized as particularly dirty, even by post-Soviet standards.[68] The regional media swelled with polemics and *kompromat* leveled against the candidates, and both Roketskii and Sobianin attempted to remove the other candidate from the ballot (unsuccessfully) through the courts.[69] Whereas

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[62] *Tiumenskaia Pravda*, 21 December 2000.
[63] Korepanov was put forward as a candidate only after Iamalo-Nenets Governor Iurii Neelov decided against running for governor of Tiumen oblast'. Prior to serving as speaker of the oblast Duma, Korepanov had been speaker of the Iamalo-Nenetskii AO legislative assembly.
[64] *Tiumenskaia Pravda*, 22 December 2000.
[65] *Tiumenskie Izvestiia*, 27 December 2000. The text of the proposal was published in: *Tiumenskaia Pravda*, 30 December 2000.
[66] *Tiumenskaia Pravda*, 29 December 2000.
[67] *Tiumenskie Izvestiia*, 11 January 2001.
[68] One of the best English-language accounts of the 2001 election is: Glatter, "Continuity and Change in the Tyumen' Regional Elite 1991-2001," 422-7.
[69] Roketskii was particularly ambitious, submitting an 11-page complaint to the oblast' electoral commission that named Sobianin, Latyshev, Neelov and Filipenko, as well as the central and local

Roketskii was blamed exclusively for the deterioration of the oblast economy and relations with the okrugs, Sobianin was labeled "one of the best known ideologues of okrug separatism."[70] In a press conference in late December, the head of the Russian Central Electoral Commission, Aleksandr Veshniakov, Urals polpred Petr Latyshev, and Urals procurator Iurii Zolotov criticized the extent of violations, mudslinging (*chernyi piar*), and abuse of administrative resources.[71] Their complaint was later echoed by Vakhrukov, who had been tasked with monitoring the election.[72] Yet the Kremlin was not neutral in the contest. In a meeting with the three governors in late November, Putin stated that he "was not opposed" to Sobianin's participation in the election. Latyshev had been favorably disposed towards Roketskii when he started work as Urals polpred in mid-2000, but came increasingly to favor Sobianin (who was not required to leave his post as first deputy polpred for the campaign). Several days before the election, a telephone conversation between deputy polpred Anatolii Antipin (previously head of the FSB in Tiumen oblast) and head of the Urals department for organized crime Valerii Borisov was broadcast in which it was made clear that the region's *siloviki* supported Sobianin.[73]

In the end, numbers were on the okrugs' side. Roketskii won a majority in the oblast (52.18%), but was trounced in the autonomous okrugs by Sobianin (74.4% in Khanty-Mansiiskii AO and 77.8% in Iamalo-Nenetskii AO, versus only 23.87% in Tiumen oblast). The distribution of the electorate clearly favored the united front of the autonomous okrugs: the voting public in the oblast numbered 945,000, while

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press as illegally agitating for Sobianin. The regional electoral commission examined over 200 complaints by 1 January 2001, none of which went to court. *Tiumenskii Kur'er*, 11 January 2001.

[70] *Tiumenskaia Pravda Segodnia*, 7 December 2000.

[71] *Tiumenskie Izvestiia*, 25 December 2000. The election campaign was particularly striking for the involvement of consulting and PR firms from outside Tiumen, including Moscow, St. Petersburg, Ekaterinburg, Ufa, Nizhnyi Novgorod and Udmurtiia. S.V. Kondrat'ev, "Vybory gubernatora Tiumenskoi oblasti: pobeda severa nad iugom?" (paper presented at the Moscow Carnegie Center Seminar: Gubernatorskie vybory i problemy stanovleniia grazhdanskogo obshchestva na granitse Evropy i Asii, Perm', 21-23 February 2001).

[72] *Tiumenskaia Pravda*, 12 January 2001.

[73] Kondrat'ev, "Vybory gubernatora Tiumenskoi oblasti".

KhMAO had 920,000 and IaNAO had 339,000. Sobianin became governor of Tiumen oblast, but he was elected by its neighbors – just the opposite of what transpired in 1996.

Kareliia

The mayor of Kareliia's capital, Sergei Katanandov, defeated Viktor Stepanov to become the head of the republican administration in 1998. Despite the fact that Katanandov made the political error of supporting Fatherland-All Russia rather than Unity in the 1999 elections, the republic's 2002 elections were not marked by a significant degree of central intervention. Indeed, the general course of state centralization worked to the advantage of the head of the republic. Though the elections did not take place until 28 April 2002, the campaign season effectively began in January 2001.[74] As discussed in the previous chapter, the process of revising the republican constitution unfolded under Katanandov's threat to resign and force early elections. The new republican constitution granted the governor broader powers to dismiss the assembly as well as conferring a change of title from "Chair of the Government" (*predsedatel' pravitel'stva*) to "Head of the Republic" (*glava respubliki*) in order to "facilitate the exercise of executive authority."[75]

Equally significant was the change in the new constitution from a bicameral to a unicameral republican assembly. As in most Russian regions, the weakness of Kareliia's party structure and the relative lack of independent organized interests meant that politics was territorialized along the lines of the republic's 19 raions. The legislative stronghold for the mayors in opposition to Katanandov had been the republic's upper chamber, the Chamber of the Republic (*Palata respubliki*), where representation was structured on the territorial principle and mayors often served

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[74] *Guberniia* (Petrozavodsk), 25 January 2001.
[75] *Kareliia*, 10 February 2001.

simultaneously as assembly deputies. The move to a unicameral parliament threatened to diminish the salience of the legislative opposition to the governor, thereby raising the stakes for the upcoming gubernatorial election.

During 2001, Katanandov traded blows with the mayor of Petrozavodsk, Andrei Demin, and the mayor of Olonets, Vasilii Popov. In July 2001, the republican Ministry of Finance announced that Petrozavodsk would not receive thirteen million rubles as a result of changes to the republican budget.[76] Katanandov later defended the move in a meeting with the Petrozavodsk city council by blaming the federal government, claiming that the reason why the republican budget was growing faster than city budgets was due to increased budgetary demands on the republic for funding local projects.[77] Demin was personally subject to attacks for breach of authority in purchasing 25 Mercedes buses for 25 million rubles without first seeking the approval of the municipal council.[78]

Popov was also subject to a campaign of *kompromat*, though he managed to strike back and force the resignation of Deputy Governor Andrei Kriger under allegations of corruption.[79] Popov also publicized favorable treatment extended to local oligarch Leonid Beluga, including the sale of a major enterprise in Petrozavodsk for $250,000 to Beluga's in-laws.[80] Popov left his position as mayor of Olonets in January 2001 as he prepared to oppose Katanandov in the April 2002 election, stating that he did not want the raion's residents to suffer as a result of his opposition to the governor.[81] In particular, he feared the impending elimination of 300 jobs from the

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[76] *Kareliia*, 31 July 2001; *Guberniia* (Petrozavodsk), 2 August 2001.
[77] *Kareliia*, 1 September 2001.
[78] *Kareliia*, 20 October 2001. Only ten buses were actually delivered, four of which were below operating standards.
[79] *Guberniia* (Petrozavodsk), 9 January 2002. Katanandov quickly appointed Kriger to a ceremonial post in Moscow.
[80] *Kommersant-Vlast'*, 23 April 2002.
[81] *Guberniia* (Petrozavodsk), 9 January 2002.

raion's key source of tax revenue, the Il'insk timber factory (which had been sold to Beluga with the help of the republican administration).[82]

Before the campaign season officially began, Katanandov had a clear lead over all potential candidates in his bid for re-election though not a clear majority. His strategy focused first on co-opting potential competitors in advance of the campaign season – most prominent among them being the republic's previous governor, Viktor Stepanov, whom Katanandov named as his senator in the Federation Council in September 2001.[83] In a survey conducted in the republican center in November 2001, 36% of Petrozavodsk's residents indicated that they would vote for Katanandov, followed by State Duma Deputy Valentina Pivnenko (12%) and the general director of *Karellesprom*, Viktor Masliakov (8.5%).[84] Katanandov earned Pivnenko's endorsement for re-election, while Masliakov ran for mayor of Petrozavodsk with Katanandov's blessing.

Katanandov also worked to garner (and display when possible) the Kremlin's support for his re-election. Of particular note was a press conference in February 2002, where he stridently supported ongoing centralization in stating that Russia's governors should be appointed by the president since "elections only interfere with the fulfillment [of governors'] functions, insofar as they are dependent upon the electorate."[85] The appearance of a potential outsider candidate in cosmonaut Sergei Avdeev was greeted with initial caution (and some degree of amusement in both the central and republican press).[86] The opposition press suggested that Avdeev was sent by the Kremlin as a reflection of its dissatisfaction with Katanandov.[87] Avdeev was a

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[82] *Kareliia*, 12 January 2002; *Kommersant-Vlast'*, 23 April 2002.
[83] *Guberniia* (Petrozavodsk), 19 September 2001. Stepanov later admitted that he essentially agreed to support Katanandov when he consented to be his representative in the Federation Council. *Guberniia* (Petrozavodsk), 13 February 2002.
[84] *Severnaia Kur'er* (Petrozavodsk), 8 November 2001.
[85] *Kareliia*, 16 February 2002.
[86] *Severnaia Kur'er* (Petrozavodsk), 31 January 2002; *Kareliia*, 5 February 2002.
[87] *Guberniia* (Petrozavodsk), 6 February 2002.

rank amateur, however, who had little impact on the election campaign and withdrew from the race on the eve of the election.[88] Katanandov's efforts ultimately were rewarded with a personal audience with Putin in Moscow on 4 April 2002. As a result of the meeting, Putin instructed then-Prime Minister Mikhail Kas'ianov to extend financial support for the realization of two large projects in conjunction with celebration of Petrozavodsk's 300-year anniversary in 2003.[89] Two weeks before the election, Katanandov further received the endorsement of United Russia.[90]

Having been marginalized by the republican administration, the opposition pinned its hopes on forcing a second round by denying Katanandov a clear majority in the first round and then uniting behind a common candidate. In a press conference on the steps of the State Duma in Moscow, opposition candidates Popov, State Duma Deputy Artur Miaki (SPS), the head of the republican branch of the KPRF, Boris Tiukov, and the head of the republican branch of Yabloko, Aleksandr Chazhengin, announced their intent to join forces to remove Katanandov from office.[91] The united front was anything but united, however, and may have facilitated its own marginalization. Popov (who came to be supported by Yabloko) and Miaki competed for the same liberal constituency, replicating national trends in their inability to join forces.[92] Tiukov was even less successful. The press conference with the "rightists" sowed dissent within the ranks of the republican communists, as well as generating a rift between the republican and national party organizations.[93]

The absence of a united front left the opposition vulnerable to a vicious disinformation campaign, principally aimed at Popov since he was considered

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[88] *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 19 March 2002. Indeed, the central press drew the conclusion that the Kremlin must have been satisfied with Katanandov, otherwise it would have put forward a more serious candidate than Avdeev.
[89] *Kareliia*, 6 April 2002.
[90] *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 15 April 2002.
[91] *Guberniia* (Petrozavodsk), 20 February 2002. Chazhengin did not participate in the gubernatorial election, but ran against Masliakov in Petrozavodsk's mayoral election.
[92] *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 19 March 2002.
[93] *Kareliia*, 7 March 2002; *Guberniia* (Petrozavodsk), 27 February 2002.

Katanandov's most serious opposition. Popov's campaign focused primarily on reforming inter-budgetary relations, proposing specifically to cut 252 million rubles from spending on the republican administration and re-distribute the funds to the municipalities.[94] The proposal elicited a sharp retort from the republic's deputy Minister of Finance, who threatened that the result of such a plan would be "either anarchy or the appearance of 19 new subjects of the Russian Federation in place of the former raions."[95] Rumors also circulated that Popov was supported by such notorious figures as exiled oligarch Boris Berezovskii and even Chechen field commander Shamil Basaev.[96] There were multiple reports of various abuses of administrative resource by republican officials and attempts to silence or shut down the opposition press. While campaigning in Kareliia on behalf of Miaki, Boris Nemtsov alleged that Katanandov had attempted to block his visit to the republic through his contacts in Moscow. He further claimed that Katanandov's team had threatened to fire factory workers to prevent them from attending SPS meetings.[97]

On election day, Katanandov won easily with 53.45% overall (voter turnout was 50.36%) and did not lose in a single raion. The closest opposition candidate was Miaki (14.05%), followed by "against all" (10.72%) and Popov (10.37%). Katanandov's victory was all the more complete for Masliakov's defeat of Chazhengin in Petrozavodsk's mayoral race and United Russia's domination of the new unicameral assembly (31 of 57 seats), producing what the opposition press dejectedly admitted to be a "pocket parliament."[98]

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[94] *Guberniia* (Petrozavodsk), 27 February 2002.
[95] *Kareliia*, 2 March 2002.
[96] *Kareliia*, 25 April 2002. Liberal Russia's co-chairman Viktor Pokhmelkin denied that the party had announced support for any candidate in the election. *Guberniia* (Petrozavodsk), 13 March 2002.
[97] *Kareliia*, 18 April 2002.
[98] *Severnaia Kur'er*, 30 April 2002; *Guberniia* (Petrozavodsk), 1 May 2002.

Buriatiia

Republican President Leonid Potapov had run Buriatiia effectively since he became the region's *obkom* secretary in 1990. In the republic's first presidential elections in 1994, Potapov won in the second round and was re-elected in 1998 with 63% of the vote. In the fall of 2001, Buriatiia's electoral commission began studying Sakha-Yakutiia President Vladimir Nikolaev's attempt to run for a third term with an eye towards the possibility that Potapov might do the same.[99] Buriatiia's 1993 constitution placed a two-term limit on the presidency, but this limit was removed by the legislative assembly in December 2001.[100] The constitutional changes were presented on the legislative initiative of the president's office after careful study of the situation in Sakha-Yakutiia, as well as measures taken in Tartarstan, Chuvashiia, Tambov and Orlov oblasts. The revised constitution stated merely that term limits would be determined in accordance with federal law, and federal law established that the two-term limits began from the law's adoption in October 1999.[101]

Consequently, the issue was no longer whether Potapov could run for a third term, but rather that he had only served one term since 1999. In parliamentary hearings, only two deputies spoke out in opposition to the constitutional changes, arguing that a protest from the procurator was needed in order to consider changes to the republic's constitution since the federal constitution was silent on the issue of term limits for regional leaders. In response, the chairman of Buriatiia's Supreme Court (*Verkhovnyi sud*), Anatolii Khorinoev, stressed the necessity of bringing Buriatiia's constitution in accordance with federal legislation: "We live in one

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[99] As reported by Strana.ru, 14 November 2001. Putin persuaded Nikolaev not to run for a third term in exchange for abandoning his preferred candidate and supporting the head of the Alrosa diamond company, Viacheslav Shtyrov. *Russian Regional Report*, 16 January 2002.

[100] For discussion see Chapter Four.

[101] Federal'nyi zakon RF ot 06.10.1999 N 184-FZ "Ob obshchikh printsipakh organizatsii zakonodatel'nykh (predstavitel'nykh) i ispolnitel'nykh organov gosudarstvennoi vlasti sub"ektov Rossiiskoi Federatsii."

Russia...Let's live under one law."[102] One of the two dissenters was ridiculed for requesting a secret ballot on the matter.[103] The motion failed, 10-28, with three abstentions. The constitutional change was adopted with legislators voting 47-1 in favor with no abstentions.[104]

In addition to congenial constitutional changes, Potapov's candidacy benefited from across-the-board political support from Buriatiia's parties and movements. In particular, Potapov was supported by the largest faction in the legislative assembly, the People's Patriotic Union of Russia (*Narodno-Patrioticheskii Soiuz Rossii*).[105] He was further endorsed by the Communist Party, the mayor of Ulan-Ude and 25 other heads of local government, 48 representatives in the legislative assembly, and three of the republic's State Duma deputies.[106] Veterans' organizations also threw their support behind the incumbent president, indignant at opposition candidate Bato Semenov's campaign slogan "From a Republic of Stagnation to a Republic of Dignity!" (*Ot respubliki zastoinoi – k respublike dostoinoi!*)[107]

Potapov also enjoyed tacit support from Moscow. In justifying his decision to run for a third term, Potapov presented himself as a force for "stability" and "governability" (*upravliaemost'*).[108] Though Putin did not openly state a preference for any candidate, Potapov's line was supported by the deputy head of the Presidential Administration, Vladislav Surkov.[109] Potapov received further central blessing for

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[102] Deviatnadtsataia sessiia narodnogo khurala respubliki buriatiia , 18 dekabria 2001 g. Stenograficheskii otchet, chast' I (Ulan-Ude, 2001): 42-3.
[103] *Buriatiia*, 20 December 2001.
[104] Timing was on Potapov's side since the Russian Constitutional Court only began to examine the issue of third terms in April 2002. Even if the Court delivered a decision prior to the election, changes would need to be made to federal legislation, examined by both the State Duma and Federation Council and signed into effect by Putin. The fact that all candidates were registered and the date of elections already set effectively precluded the possibility that the federal government would be able to intervene. *Pravda Buriatii*, 6 June 2002.
[105] *Buriatiia*, 14 June 2002.
[106] *Buriatiia*, 21 June 2002; also reported by Strana.ru, 18 June 2002.
[107] *Buriatiia*, 18 June 2002.
[108] Potapov also argued somewhat disingenuously that there had been insufficient time to realize the plans begun during his first two terms for Buriatiia's development. *Moskovskii Komsomolets v Buriatii*, 30 May – 6 June 2002.
[109] *Buriatiia*, 7 June 2002.

his "sustainable development" program in a widely circulated article by Aleksandr Ushakov, head of the department of regional economics in the Russian Ministry of Economic Development and Trade.[110]

Perhaps most significant, however, was Potapov's show of loyalty to the Kremlin in defeating the nomination of Iurii Skuratov to the Federation Council. Skuratov had been seen as a potential candidate for the republican presidency, but the defeat of his senatorial bid left the republican parliament in disarray and incapable of uniting around an opposition candidate.[111] In the aftermath, Potapov's only significant competition came from State Duma Deputy Bato Semenov.[112] The remaining contenders for the presidency had little political experience.[113] Three candidates effectively served as *dublery* for Potapov, floated to soak up votes from Semenov's campaign. While Potapov refrained from directly attacking Semenov in his campaign, the other candidates took out articles in the local press to do the job for him. Vladimir Antonov was particularly active in this regard, printing a full page article on 6 June 2002 comparing the campaigns of "the main candidates for President of Buriatiia" – four paragraphs of which supported Potapov's program and the rest a scathing critique of Semenov's campaign.[114] Two days prior to the election (and the last day that candidates were allowed by law to issue pre-election campaign ads), Antonov's campaign fund took out two ads, the first of which was a half-page ad in support of Antonov and the second a full-page ad supporting Potapov.[115]

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[110] *Rossiiskaia Gazeta*, 18 June 2002; reprinted in *Buriatiia*, 21 June 2002.
[111] *Kommersant-Vlast'*, 18 June 2002. For discussion of Skuratov's nomination for Federation Council senator, see Chapter Three.
[112] Semenov's political career started as head of the Zakamenskii sovkhoz (1986-1990) and later head of the Zakamenskii municipal administration (1991-4). He served two terms as a deputy in the Narodnyi Khural, becoming the republic's Minister of Agriculture and deputy chairman of the republican government in his second term. He was elected to the State Duma in 1999.
[113] They were: Vladimir Antonov, Director of the National-Humanities Institute at Buriat State University; Innokentii Dagbaev, head of Bauntovskii Evenkiskii Raion; and Georgievich Gromov, industrialist and executive director of the nongovernmental pension fund "Buriatiia." A sixth candidate throughout most of the pre-election race was *Narodnyi Khural* Deputy Aleksandr Kardash.
[114] *Pravda Buriatii*, 6 June 2002.
[115] *Argumenty i Fakty v Buriatii*, 25 June 2002.

Semenov's challenge to Potapov was rooted in his appeal to ethnic Buriats, his leadership of the local branch of United Russia, and his ability to reach the republic's rural raions. Buriatiia's ethnic composition was almost 70% Russian and 24% Buriat (according to the 1989 census). In the 2002 election, Potapov was supported almost completely by the ethnic Russian population. Support for Semenov was greater among Buriats, though it did not constitute as large a portion of the population and was far from unified behind Semenov.[116] Semenov also had the support of Buddhist leader Damba Aiushiev. In general, the ethnic issue remained low-level and most sides refrained from attempting to publicly politicize ethnicity, emphasizing instead the republic's heritage of stable ethnic relations. Nevertheless, the ethnic issue remained salient even if it was not public.[117] Two of the *dublery* candidates were clearly intended to draw the ethnic vote from Semenov.[118] Regarding relations with the neighboring Buriat regions (Ust'-Ordynskii Buriatskii and Agin Buriatskii autonomous okrugs, located within Irkutsk and Chita oblasts, respectively), Potapov supported ongoing cultural and economic integration but categorically rejected suggestions of politically joining okrugs to republic.[119] As the election date approached, rumors began to emanate from the local chapter of the Communist Party that a victory by Semenov would turn Buriatiia into "a second Chechnia." This position was denounced on all sides as ludicrous.

As leader of the local chapter of United Russia, it was expected that Semenov would benefit from the party's support on both central and local levels. His campaign highlighted his experience in central politics and ability to lobby the republic's

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[116] Strana.ru (24 May 2002) reported that Semenov was primarily supported by local Buriat businesses and Buriat diaspora in Moscow.
[117] In a visit to Semenov's campaign headquarters, this author observed that Semenov's staff actively tracked projected votes based on ethnicity in each of the republic's raions.
[118] Potapov was ethnically Russian, while Antonov was western Buriat and Dagbaev was eastern Buriat.
[119] When pressed on the issue at an appearance at Buriat State University on 3 June 2002, Potapov rejected out of hand the possibility of merging with the two Buriat regions and refused to discuss the matter.

interests on the federal level. Ties to Moscow were particularly important for Buriatiia since the region's economy was highly dependent on federal budgetary transfers. On 30 May 2002, the local chapter of United Russia voted to support Semenov in a closed session, though only 26 of 35 members were present (and of those, only sixteen voted in support of Semenov).[120] Shortly thereafter, eighteen members split with the earlier decision to support Semenov and voiced their support instead for Potapov on 4 June 2002.[121] In the ensuing confusion, the party's central executive committee issued a statement confirming its support for Potapov and called upon the local party organization to join ranks behind his candidacy.[122] On the same day, Aleksandr Veshniakov conducted meetings in Ulan-Ude with candidates, the republican *siloviki*, and the republican branch of United Russia. After the meeting, Main Federal Inspector Boris Danilov announced that he would seek the reorganization of the local branch of United Russia in Moscow and remove Semenov from its leadership.[123]

Almost all of Buriatiia's regional media were controlled by, or linked to, the republican administration, meaning that Semenov mostly had to rely on campaigning in Buriatiia's raions outside of Ulan-Ude. Editors and journalists from virtually all local newspapers criticized Semenov in an open letter, insinuating that his promise of a "unified Buriatiia" would mean the end of free press in the republic.[124] Generally speaking, Semenov did not receive any positive press coverage in any of Buriatiia's main newspapers. Many "analytical" articles in support of Potapov were re-printed across several newspapers with increasing frequency as the date of the election approached. One member of Buriatiia's electoral commission reported handling

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[120] *Kommersant-Daily*, 4 June 2002.
[121] *Buriatiia*, 5 June 2002.
[122] *Buriatiia*, 21 June 2002.
[123] *Kommersant-Daily*, 24 June 2002.
[124] *Pravda Buriatii*, 16 May 2002. The editor of the one newspaper which did not sign the letter (and from which Semenov's comments were taken), "Inform-Polis," was a relative of Semenov's. Reported by Strana.ru, 24 May 2002.

some 130 citizens complaints of electoral law violations, the majority of which were related to the press.[125]

The largest media sensation in Buriatiia's election campaign, however, was the sound of silence. Since only seven of Buriatiia's 23 raions received television broadcasts, radio was crucial for reaching voters outside of the central regions – even more so for Semenov, whose campaign hinged on mobilizing voters in the raions. Nine days before the election, three of the republic's four FM radio stations (Pul's-radio, Evropy plius, Avtoradio-Buriatiia) were shut down when inspections by a newly-appointed federal regulator found the stations to be lacking certain necessary documents. Pul's-radio's station manager stated that once the documents were produced and the station resumed broadcasting, its power was shut off. When the power was restored the following day, another station was already broadcasting on its wavelength.[126] A journalist from Evropy-plyus claimed that the station was warned by the regional administration in advance not to air election advertisements, but that it was shut down "just in case." Avtoradio-Buriatiia was closed under similar conditions. Following a protest to Buriatiia's procurator, all three stations were allowed to resume broadcasting just three days before the election. Semenov's camp suggested that the three stations were shut down specifically because they signed agreements to air his campaign ads.[127]

Semenov's campaign was outmaneuvered on virtually all fronts and was left to complain that Potapov was in fact running for a fifth term, counting his service as *obkom* secretary in 1990 and chairman of Buriatiia's Supreme Soviet in 1991. Semenov's camp instead targeted the issue of Potapov's age (he turned 67 in July

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[125] Author's interview with Boris Petrovich Krianov, Buriat State University, Ulan-Ude, 14 June 2002.
[126] *Inform-Polis* (Ulan-Ude), 19 June 2002.
[127] *Kur'er* (Ulan-Ude), 17 June 2002. The fourth radio station, "Russkii Radio," was to be closed, as well, but managed to produce the necessary documents at the last second. It was also the only radio station to sign the open letter to Semenov mentioned above.

2002) in drawing comparisons with Boris El'tsin's infirmity, even suggesting in his campaign literature that Potapov no longer ran the republic.

Despite Potapov's clear advantage, there were multiple allegations of use of "administrative resources" and disinformation. According to head of the republican electoral commission, Vladimir Larionov, bogus sociological surveys proved to be a large problem in past elections.[128] In the 2002 presidential election, an early survey by the "Center for Political Innovation" appeared in Semenov's campaign materials giving the impression of a neck-and-neck contest. The week running up to the elections saw the appearance of another survey commissioned by the survey group "Eidos," which gave Potapov a commanding lead.[129] The Eidos survey was printed in almost every major newspaper in Buriatiia.

Two days prior to the election, Potapov's camp announced that several thousand campaign leaflets were stolen from their typographer's and claimed that "one of the opposition candidates" planned to release them the day before the election, thus making Potapov appear guilty of illegal campaign agitation. It was also suggested that Potapov would be framed for other violations of electoral law, as well.[130] It was a shrewd tactic: though clearly implicating Semenov's camp, Potapov avoided fingering him directly. Moreover, the timing of the announcement effectively precluded any response from Semenov.

When the election took place on 23 June 2002, Potapov won his third term with a commanding lead of 68.79%, while Semenov managed only 23.5% (voter turnout was 53.77%). The third closest vote was "against all" with 2%, while all other candidates received less than 1%. Semenov won only a single electoral district and

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[128] Author's interview, Ulan-Ude, 11 June 2002. The only legitimate (that is, reasonably objective and financially independent) sociological survey group in Buriatiia was based at the Russian Academy of Science's Institute for the Study of Mongolia, Buddhism, and Tibet.
[129] *Buriatiia*, 11 June 2002.
[130] *Buriatiia*, 21 June 2002.

came within 1000 votes in five others. As a result, Potapov will have run Buriatiia for 17 years by the time his current term ends in 2007.

Comparing Elections

The four regional elections above suggest that electoral democracy in Russia's regions was weakly institutionalized, at best. Each election was marked by pressure on the local media and use of administrative resources. In Perm and Tiumen, the hand of the Kremlin was keenly felt, even though the Presidential Administration appeared to back both incumbent and challenger at different times. The two oblast elections also involved participants from outside their territories – in the multiple public relations and political consulting firms that were hired by all sides in Perm, and more clearly in the open attempt of Tiumen's autonomous okrugs to occupy the oblast administration by floating their own candidate.[131] The oblasts also featured more balanced political contests (however vicious) in which the incumbents faced legitimate challengers.

In Kareliia and Buriatiia, the Kremlin extended tacit (though noticeable) support to the incumbents. Outsiders were kept at arms length throughout both campaigns: Avdeev's brief candidacy foundered in Kareliia, while all of Buriatiia's candidates were natives of the region. The heads of republican administrations in both cases dominated the election contests from the beginning and, though never seriously challenged, did not shirk from using manipulative techniques to ensure a first round victory.

A common thread running through all four contests was that they took place in the midst of, or immediately following, revisions to the oblast charters and republican

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[131] One could add to this list the unsuccessful attempt of the Sverdlovsk-based organization "Mai" to win the governorship in Komi-Permiatskii autonomous okrug. One could further add Igumnov's successful attempt to remove the regions' incumbent, Poluianov, by backing Gennadii Savel'ev, though it is doubtful that Poluianov would have won regardless after failing to improve the country's poorest regional economy (second only to Chechnia).

constitutions. In addition, the candidates in all four contests kept close watch for signals from Moscow. No candidate dared to suggest that the centralization processes underway on the federal level were illegitimate, nor did they employ the sort of anti-Moscow campaign rhetoric that characterized gubernatorial contests in the 1990s. These common features are not insignificant. If one of the vexing questions facing analysts of regional politics in Russia is accounting for the "regional effect," a major part of the issue concerns how local political conditions are linked to federal politics through the conduct of regional elections.

Gubernatorial Power and Political Space

How and why governors won or lost elections were tactical matters that remained highly dependent on such capricious factors as timing and political acumen. A deeper issue here concerns how and why Russia's governors remained the most powerful office-holders in regional politics regardless of a region's federal status, particularly in the midst of Putin's centralization. The salience of the issue becomes clear when one considers that the four regions presented above are ranked by Petrov at very different points of the spectrum in terms of regional democratization (See **Table 5.1**).[132] In other words, gubernatorial power does not necessarily depend upon the type of regional regime, either.

[132] Moreover, the democratization index employed by Marsh does not even include Kareliia or Perm in the top five. Marsh, "Measuring and Explaining Variations in Russian Regional Democratisation," 182.

Table 5.1: Rankings of Regional Democratization

Ranking	Region
3	Republic of Kareliia
4	Perm oblast
19	Khanty-Mansiiskii autonomous okrug
22	Republic of Buriatiia
26	Tiumen oblast
43	Iamalo-Nenetskii autonomous okrug
56	Komi-Permiatskii autonomous okrug

Source: Petrov, Nikolai. "Regional Models of Democratic Development." In *Between Dictatorship and Democracy: Russian Post-Communist Political Reform*, edited by Michael McFaul, Nikolai Petrov and Andrei Ryabov, 239-67. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2004.

Hale has argued convincingly that the combination of Soviet institutional legacies and transitional dynamics "translated into political forces, and left in place concentrations of power and resources that were *fungible* vis-à-vis elections."[133] The point is important in underlining the range of tools available to Russia's governors. As Hale goes on to note, the governors significantly influenced the arrangement of regional economies, especially via control over the privatization process in the 1990s, and exercised informal control over the courts and law enforcement agencies.[134] To extend his argument further, one of the key factors that separated the governor from, and elevated him above, other political actors on the regional level was his ability to convert one form of power into another – a capability that was unavailable to chiefly economic actors (which pursued interests within a given economic sector), mayors (who were dependent upon funding from regional budgets) or local assembly deputies (who were trumped by the greater magnitude of the governor's constituency). Indeed, it was unavailable to El'tsin's appointed governors, as well. In center-regional relations as well as center-local relations, the elected governor represented the whole

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[133] Hale, "Explaining Machine Politics in Russia's Regions," 240. My emphasis.
[134] "When one combines these administrative powers with the aforementioned control over more directly "economic" levers (tax rates, flows of subsidies, price regulations, banking policies, and so on), savvy governors can often mobilize a dazzlingly powerful array of forces against wayward subjects, even those that seemingly have independent sources of influence and resources." Ibid.: 243.

range of interests based on the region's territory, and was therefore capable of bargaining and negotiating to a greater extent than any other political actor. The governors' extensive informal powers likewise served to reinforce this gateway position.[135] This supports the argument that the 1996-7 gubernatorial elections depended more on the relative cohesion of regional elites than the public's concern over the concentration of power in the governors' hands.

This is not to say, of course, that governors came to be invincible. Rather, it is to draw attention to the manner in which the centralization of power on the regional level was facilitated by regional political geography. It stands to reason that the effective use of power by regional governors affected state capacity in a variety of ways. In general terms, the governor stood astride the various forms of state power identified by Mann in its ideological, economic, military, and political dimensions. To cite a few concrete examples, these dimensions may be reflected in regional contributions to GDP (economic power), informal control over courts and law enforcement agents in the territories (military power[136]), the cultivation of anti-Moscow sentiment or the production of large pro-Kremlin turnouts on election day (ideological power), and in pursuing courses of regional integration or isolation (political power).

The relationship between political space and gubernatorial power is further revealed in the issue of legitimacy and relations with the federal center. When Russia's governors became elected officials in the mid-1990s, they became much more difficult for the Kremlin to replace. Yet this may have been less a function of

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[135] "Interested in denying power, elites of power favor exactly the forms most difficult for recipients or third persons...to identify with confidence." William E. Connolly, *The Terms of Political Discourse*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 98.

[136] What Mann terms military power is the organizational wing of the state which provides disciplined, routinized coercion. Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power: The Rise of Classes and Nation-States, 1760-1914*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), 8-9. In Russia, the concept of the "power ministries" tends to blur the divide between the armed forces and regular law enforcement.

electoral legitimacy than the center's default on its jurisdictional obligations.[137] In this regard, it is worth recalling Lipset's observation that, "legitimacy involves the capacity of the system to engender *and maintain* the belief that the existing political institutions are the most appropriate ones for the society."[138] During the 1990s, it was easier for authoritarian governors to retain control while the central state was nowhere to be found. Early surveys of popular trust in governing institutions revealed markedly higher trust in regional institutions during the early- to mid-1990s, reflecting the relative weakness of central institutions in responding to local concerns.[139] The advantages of incumbency and administrative resources may have sufficed to support governors lacking popular legitimacy, but their prospects diminished when the central state became focused on forcing them to play by the rules (or even on removing them from power).

In the second decade of Russia's post-Soviet existence, governors had to contend with a resurgent federal government intent upon bringing the regions into line. The Kremlin increasingly contested the control and authority of the governors within their own territories. Orttung and Reddaway point in particular to the creation of the Federal Districts at the start of Putin's rule as providing additional points to appeal (and oppose) the governors' authority:

> By establishing an alternative power center in the office of his envoy, Putin's reform opened up a wider space for differing viewpoints than existed before. His intention was to establish strong federal control to replace strong gubernatorial control. In reality, however, he weakened the governors by introducing a rival. Thus independent-minded politicians, businessmen, and journalists can now maneuver between the federal and regional authorities to pursue their various goals. Such freedom did not exist when the governors held almost exclusive authority.[140]

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[137] Kathryn Stoner-Weiss, "Central Weakness and Provincial Autonomy: Observations on the Devolution Process in Russia," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 15, no. 1 (1999): 94.
[138] Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics*, 2nd ed. (London: Heinemann, 1983), 64. My emphasis.
[139] Josephine Andrews and Kathryn Stoner-Weiss, "Regionalism and Reform in Provincial Russia," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 11, no. 4 (1995).
[140] Robert Orttung and Peter Reddaway, "What Do the Okrug Reforms Add Up To? Some Conclusions," in *The Dynamics of Russian Politics: Putin's Reform of Federal-Regional Relations*, ed. Peter Reddaway and Robert Orttung (Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 285-6.

The governors thus appeared to be caught in a potential double-bind between maintaining legitimacy among the electorate as well as the elite situated along the "power vertical" (that is, Weber's "administrative staffs").[141]

In the most recent and comprehensive study of variations in political pluralism among Russian regions, Petrov documents that wide disparities still exist, most strikingly among regions that are "of geographical and socioeconomic proximity."[142] The most obvious pair of inferences that may be drawn from this observation is that the center's willingness or capacity to intervene in regional politics to ensure free and fair electoral competition remained limited, while the political spaces demarcated by regional boundaries continued to be dominated by Russia's governors. State centralization may thus have negative effects in the long run by encumbering the system and limiting its ability to respond.[143] Insofar as the legislative branch was weakened in the course of strengthening the executive, Petrov comes the startling conclusion that governors in Putin's Russia could become "the last bastion of democracy."[144] Yet when one examines the conduct of gubernatorial elections in post-Soviet Russia, the achievements of, and prospects for, democratization on the regional level appear worrisome.

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[141] If one adopts the perspective that the governors were more concerned to respond to signals and directives from the Kremlin than from the ballot box (particularly the more authoritarian of the lot), then one is faced with the rather counter-intuitive hypothesis that Putin's centralizing initiatives may have *increased* the degree of pluralism in regional politics. In positivist terms, the null hypothesis would be that governors would not permit an increase in pluralism if the federal center did not intervene.

[142] Petrov, "Regional Models of Democratic Development," 266. Another study which assesses an earlier version of Petrov's rankings finds similarly that "...levels of socio-economic development cannot explain the observed variation in the levels of democratization," despite arriving at a ranking that was almost exactly opposite. See: Marsh, "Measuring and Explaining Variations in Russian Regional Democratisation," 187. For Petrov's earlier ranking of regional democratization, see: McMann and Petrov, "A Survey of Democracy in Russia's Regions."

[143] "Like a dinosaur, it takes too long for any signal to reach the brain, and thus for feedback to produce a reaction." Nikolai Petrov, "Federalism," in *Between Dictatorship and Democracy: Russian Post-Communist Political Reform*, ed. Michael McFaul, Nikolai Petrov, and Andrei Ryabov (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2004), 236.

[144] Ibid., 237.

In order to test the hypothesis that Putin's centralization may have increased the degree of pluralism in regional politics, it is helpful to turn to the argument that the "ethnic" regions (republics and autonomous okrugs) tended to be less democratic than the oblasts and krais. As Stepan demonstrated, republican elections in particular were overwhelmingly less competitive than other regional elections in the 1990s. This difference was linked to the power resources uniquely possessed by the republics: elected republican leaders were unsackable, republican constitutions had been adopted early without federal interference, and asymmetrical privilege was enshrined in the series of bilateral power-sharing treaties.[145] Putin's regime systematically eliminated each of these power resources, however, such that any governor could be removed from office, republican constitutions and charters were brought into compliance with federal law, and the bilateral treaties were under review. If Putin's centralization increased pluralism in regional politics, then, there should be a narrowing of differences between elections in the "ethnic" regions and elections in the oblasts and krais.[146]

If one takes levels of voter turnout as an indicator of participation, an examination of the average voter turnout in gubernatorial (and presidential) elections from 1991 through the first half of 2004 provides some support for this hypothesis. As shown in **Figure 5.1**, the average voter turnout among republics and autonomous okrugs is consistently higher than in the oblasts and krais. At the same time, it should be observed that there is a steady and noticeable increase in voter turnout since 2001 among the oblasts and krais while the numbers level out for the republics and autonomous okrugs. It is possible that the greater number of oblasts and krais (56) versus republics and autonomous okrugs (31) means that the more extreme cases

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[145] Alfred Stepan, "Russian Federalism in Comparative Perspective," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 16, no. 2 (2000).

[146] I have grouped the autonomous okrugs with the republics since they were usually seen as among the least democratic of Russia's regions.

among the former diminished when averaged together. If all gubernatorial elections where turnout was 70 percent or greater are considered together (**see Table 5.2**), however, the oblasts and krais are only represented in eight cases while republics and autonomous okrugs comprise the remaining 20 cases. It is worth noting further that the regions with the most implausibly high turnouts (particularly Kabardino-Balkariia with 97.72% in 1997) are predominantly republics.

If one examines the number of candidates in gubernatorial elections as indicative of electoral competitiveness, an interesting pattern emerges when averages are segregated by federal status. As depicted in **Figure 5.2**, the average number of candidates is consistently greater in the oblasts and krais than in the republics and autonomous okrugs until 2002, at which point their positions reverse. The averages are somewhat misleading, however, as elections took place in only six republics and autonomous

Table 5.2: Gubernatorial Elections with Highest Voter Turnout, 1991-2004

Year	Region	Federal status	Turnout
1997	Kabardino-Balkariia	Republic	97.72%
2003	Chechnia	Republic	87.7%
2003	Mordoviia	Republic	83.18%
2002	Kabardino-Balkariia	Republic	82.52%
1995	Belgorod	Oblast	80.48%
1999	Novosibirsk	Oblast	80%
1997	Chechnia	Republic	80%
2001	Tatarstan	Republic	79.37%
1998	Bashkortostan	Republic	78.8%
1996	Tatarstan	Republic	77.76%
2003	Bashkortostan	Republic	77.66%
1995	Kalmykiia	Republic	77.33%
1998	Mordoviia	Republic	75.6%
2002	Sakha	Republic	75.54%
1991	Sakha	Republic	74.9%
2000	Saratov	Oblast	74.64%
1992	Tyva	Republic	74.6%
2001	Nenets	AO	73.74%
1994	Ingushetiia	Republic	73%
1991	Chechnia	Republic	72%
2004	Koriak AO	AO	71.71%
1993	Smolensk	Oblast	71.4%
2000	Kirov	Oblast	71.23%
2000	Altai	Krai	71.23%
1995	Tver	Oblast	71.22%
1997	Orel	Oblast	71%
1997	Tyva	Republic	70.95%
1997	Altai	Republic	70.1%

Figure 5.1: Average Voter Turnout, 1991-2004

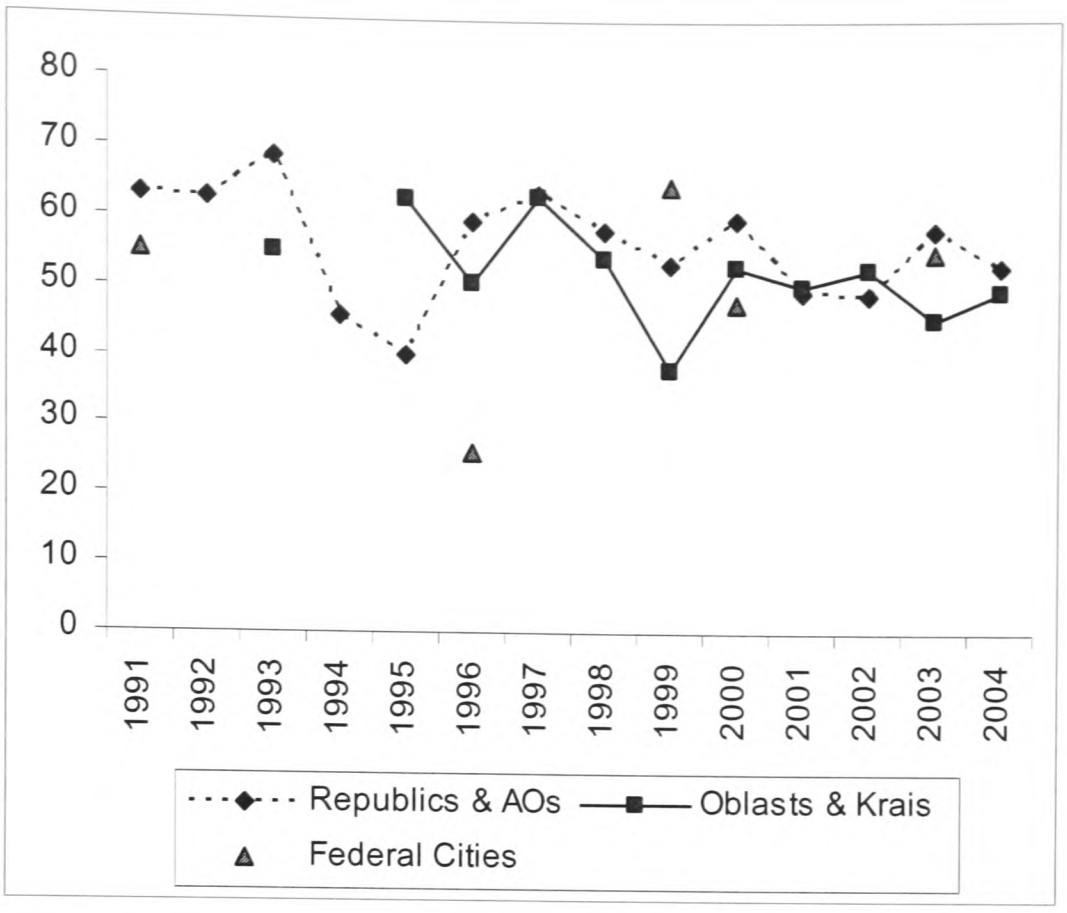
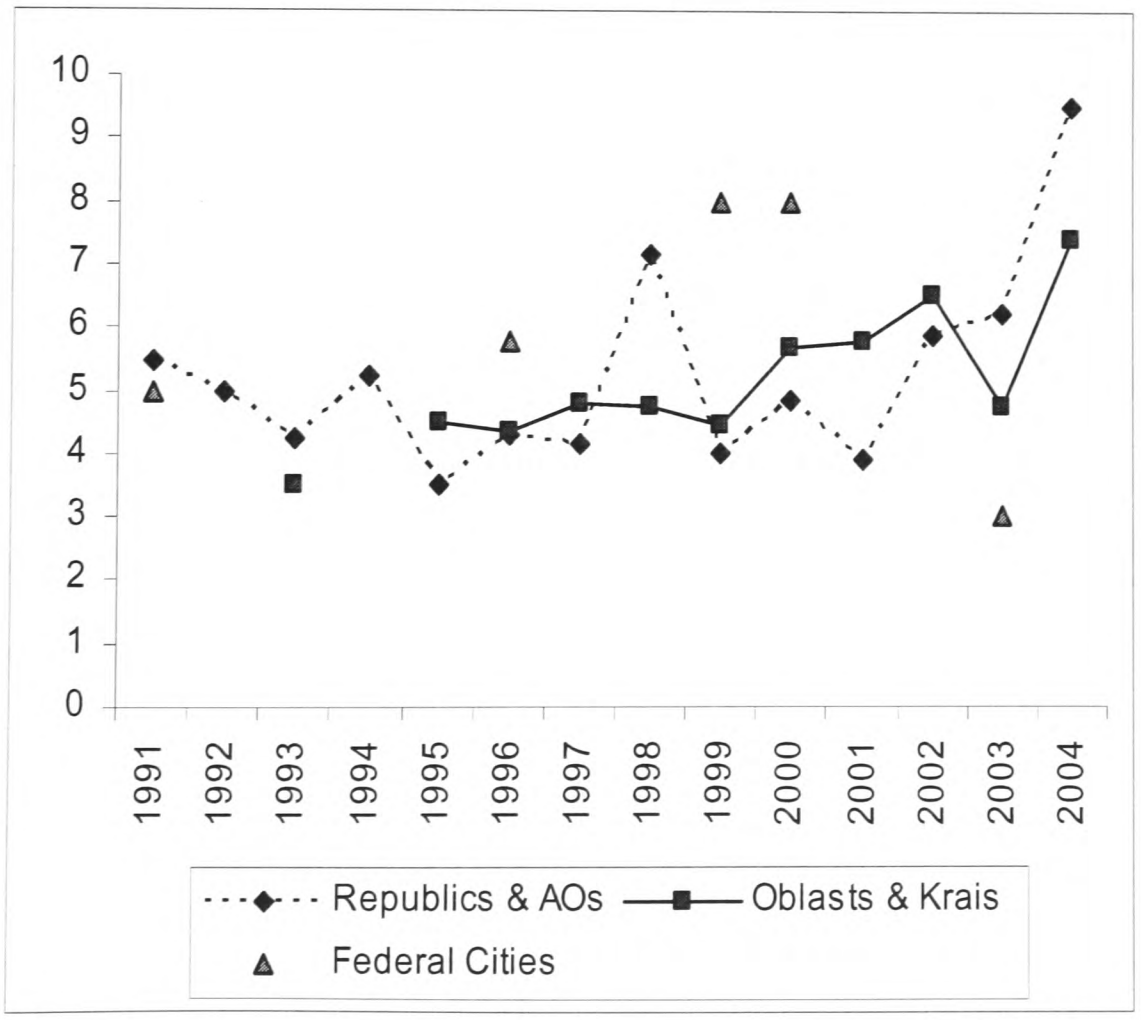


Figure 5.2: Average Number of Gubernatorial Candidates, 1991-2004



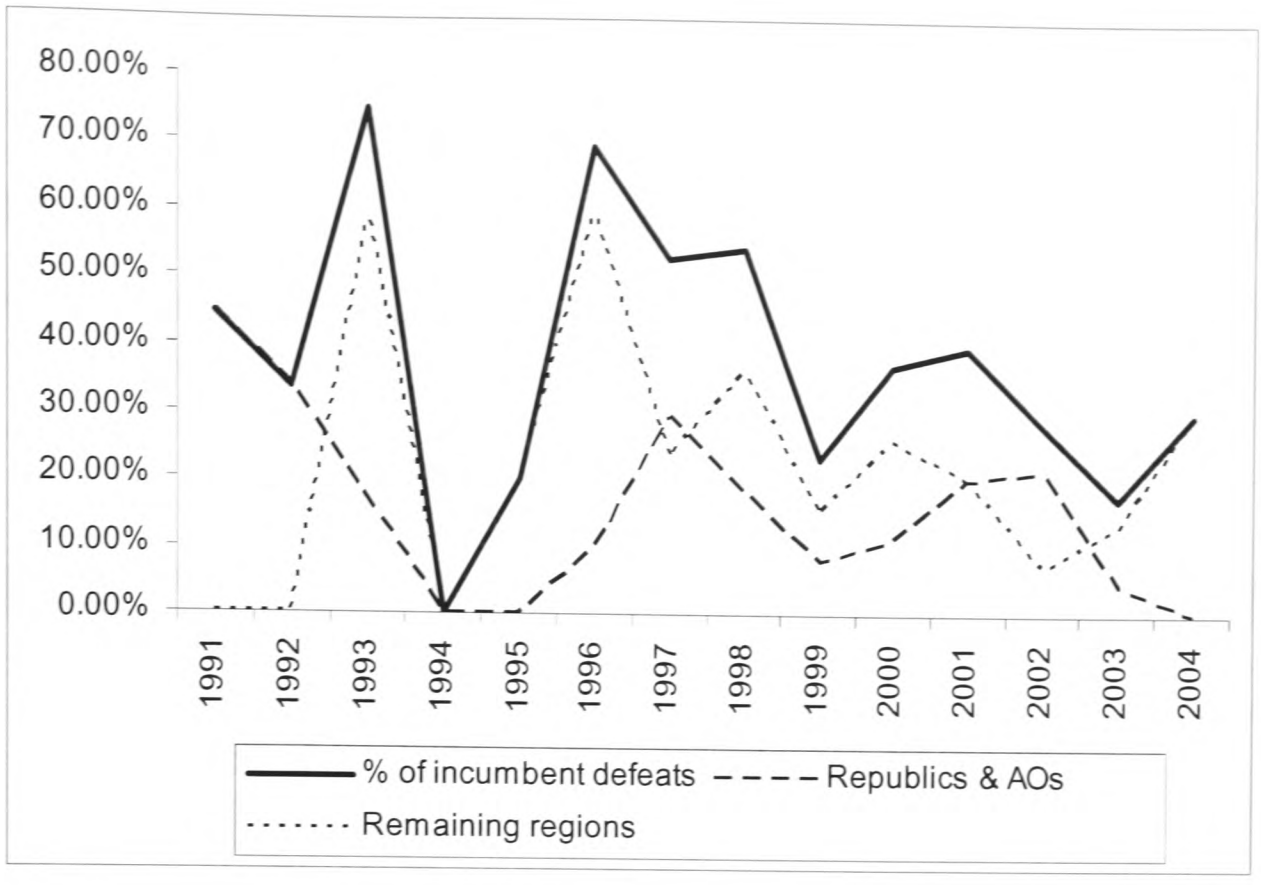
okrugs in 2003, while gubernatorial contests took place in sixteen oblasts and krais in which four cases had more than ten candidates.[147] In the first half of 2004, there were only two contests in the republics and autonomous okrugs (Republic of Udmurtiia with nine candidates, and Koriak autonomous okrug with ten candidates) as opposed to eight gubernatorial contests among oblasts and krais of which four races involved eight candidates or more.[148] More significant, perhaps, is the general upwards drift in the number of candidates across *all* levels since 1999.[149] When taken together with the upwards trends in voter turnout, one would be tempted to agree that centralization has encouraged greater pluralism in gubernatorial politics.

There is room for doubt, however, as **Figure 5.3** shows an overall trend in declining rates in the replacement of incumbents since 1996. More voters, more candidates, and less change in power is more suggestive of electoral diversion than democracy. Indeed, the four case studies provide more contextualized evidence that regional democracy is increasingly stage-managed. At a minimum, such evidence suggests that the differences in gubernatorial campaigns among different federal levels narrowed since Putin came to power in 2000. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the Kremlin played an increasingly activist role in gubernatorial elections, though it was sometimes difficult to observe its various roles in any given contest. Governors sometimes claimed to have Putin's support without any supporting evidence, while different individuals within the Presidential Administration may back opposing candidates in the same race.

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[147] The regions were: Kirov oblast' (12 candidates), Tver oblast' (11), Magadan oblast' (12), and Sakhalin oblast' (14).
[148] The regions were: Krasnodar krai (8 candidates), Riazan oblast' (10), Arkhangel'sk oblast' (13), and Murmansk oblast' (8).
[149] The obvious exception here is St. Petersburg's gubernatorial election in 2003, though the case was exceptional for the early withdraw of Governor Vladimir Iakovlev and the high profile support of the Kremlin for Valentina Matvienko.

Figure 5.3: Incumbent Replacement in Gubernatorial Elections, 1991-2004



In a rough attempt to evaluate the minimum influence of Kremlin support, **Table 5.3** compares the number of campaigns in which the Presidential Administration expressed clear support for incumbents or challengers in gubernatorial campaigns since 2001.[150] The Kremlin's "success rate," or cases where candidates favored by the Presidential Administration were elected or re-elected, increased dramatically from 60% in 2001 to 88% in 2003. The equally dramatic fall in the first half of 2004 to 33% was the subject of much discussion in the central and regional press. Among the most popular explanations were that the Kremlin was more focused on the March 2004 presidential elections, that the regions in question were of little significance for the center, and even that the Presidential Administration was "experimenting" with

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[150] Data was drawn from an analysis of central press reports prior to each election, accessed through the Eastview database, as well as English-language reports by *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* and regional correspondents of the *Russian Regional Report*. Cases where incumbent and challenger were both supported by different individuals of the Presidential Administration were coded as support for each. Incumbents who failed to secure a first-round victory despite the Kremlin's support were coded as losses.

allowing voters to make their own decisions.[151] Perhaps more compelling was that the overall effect of state centralization had so diminished the governors' power on the *federal* level that gubernatorial campaigns became less of a priority for the Kremlin on the whole – a conclusion supported by Putin's proposal in September 2004 to eliminate direct elections for governors altogether.

Table 5.3: Kremlin Support in Gubernatorial Elections, 2001-2004*

Year	Total Elections	Incumbent supported	Challenger supported	Wins	Losses	Success rate
2001	22	12	3	9	6	60%
2002	17	10	5	11	4	73.3%
2003	30	17	8	22	3	88%
2004	14	8	1	3	5	33.3%

* First half of 2004 only.

A more telling indicator of the influence of the Presidential Administration is found in elections where the main challenger was an "outsider" – that is, a candidate who was not a native of the region. This is a particularly salient indicator given the pressure placed on regional assemblies to remove the restrictions on candidacy for the governorship to residents of the region.[152] From 2001 to 2004, the Kremlin supported the winning candidate in eight out of ten cases (**see Table 5.4**). In Kalmykiia's 2002 election, the Presidential Administration split over whether to support for entrenched leader Kirsan Iliumzhinov, resulting in a scandal involving an abortive attempt to replace the republic's chief of police and strike Iliumzhinov from the ballot.[153] In Altai krai's 2004 election, there was weak Kremlin support for incumbent Aleksandr Surikov's bid for a third term. Surikov was deprived of a first round victory by only

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[151] *Kommersant-Vlast'*, 12 April 2004.
[152] For general discussion, see Chapter Four.
[153] *Kommersant-Vlast'*, 14 October 2002.

2%.[154] In the second round, he was left to his own devices and narrowly lost to comedian Mikhail Evdokimov.

Table 5.4: Kremlin Support and Outsider Candidates, 2001-2004

Year	Region	Federal status	Incumbent supported	Outsider supported	Winner	Result for Kremlin
2001	Tiumen	Oblast	Yes	Yes	Outsider	Win
2001	Evenk	AO	No	Yes	Outsider	Win
2002	Penza	Oblast	Yes	No	Incumbent	Win
2002	Ingushetiia	Republic	No	Yes	Outsider	Win
2002	Kalmykiia	Republic	No	Yes	Incumbent	Loss
2003	St. Petersburg	Federal city	No	Yes	Outsider	Win
2003	Chechnia	Republic	Yes	No	Incumbent	Win
2003	Bashkortostan	Republic	Yes (2^{nd} round)	Yes (1^{st} round)	Incumbent	Win
2003	Tver	Oblast	No	Yes	Outsider	Win
2004	Altai	Krai	Yes	No	Outsider	Loss

Conclusion

The analysis above suggests that the commonalities among the cases studies here are indeed greater than the sum of their differences. Differences in political pluralism among Russia's regions do appear to have narrowed over time, and particularly since Putin came to power in 2000. In particular, these differences diminished among the various levels in Russia's federal hierarchy such that the republics were no longer the outliers. The Kremlin could be effective in influencing the outcome of elections, though it is important to bear in mind that the Presidential Administration is an organizational actor that is limited in its organizational reach and political will. This means that it is sometimes forced to pick those battles it stands a chance of winning.

The upshot is that Russia's governors have been weakened by the process of centralization on the federal level, though one hesitates to support the claim that it is inducing greater pluralism on the regional level. What is one to make, then, of Stepan's (2000) claim that, "evidence suggests that the incentives to play a "defection

[154] Surikov's "missing" two percent were claimed by a *dvoinik* candidate with the same surname.

game" have decreased and that the incentives to begin to play a low-level "cooperation game" have increased" among Russia's governors under Putin?[155] The evidence in this chapter indicates that they have taken the opportunity offered by centralization on the federal level to pursue centralization within their territories. The distinction may be stylistically captured by comparing governors' incentives and strategies on both the federal and regional levels under El'tsin and Putin. The 1990s were characterized by an extraordinary degree of political decentralization. This was partly a function of the weakness of the central state, but also a response to El'tsin's style of rule. Governors had greater incentives to oppose the Kremlin on the federal level in order to maximize regional autonomy and take advantage of El'tsin's personalist approach to center-regional relations, best exemplified by the bilateral treaty process. Correspondingly, governors had greater incentives to cooperate with provincial elites on the regional level in cultivating anti-Moscow sentiment and co-opting federal agencies on their territories. This is not to say that governors did not come into conflict with other regional or local actors, but rather that regional elites shared a preference for keeping Moscow at arms length.

These incentives were turned upside down when Putin came to power. Under conditions of state centralization, governors shifted to cooperate on the federal level. This may have been a logical reaction to mitigate the effects of centralization, though it was also conditioned by the unassailably legitimate objective of strengthening the central state, not to mention the uncertainty over just how far Putin was willing to go in pursuing this goal. Yet the ratchet-down effect of centralization on the federal level meant that regional elites now had incentives to go it alone on the regional level. Governors who supported Putin's federal reforms expected some degree of latitude in conducting their own affairs within the regions, potentially becoming even more

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[155] Stepan, "Russian Federalism in Comparative Perspective," 170.

dominant in regional politics than during the 1990s. At the same time, the strengthening of the central state meant that regional elites opposed to the governors had additional points of appeal. Rather than cooperating with the governor, opposition elites could pin their hopes on securing his removal by making common cause with the Kremlin.

Table 5.5 Governor's Strategies in Federal and Regional Politics

	El'tsin/ decentralization	Putin/ centralization
Federal level	Defect	Cooperate
Regional level	Cooperate	Defect

This is obviously a simplified take on the complex linkages between federal and regional politics. It does, however, point to fundamental shifts in perceptions of the legitimacy of state centralization and the role of regional borders in demarcating political space. Insofar as the change from the El'tsin regime to the Putin regime transformed the perception of centralization from threat to opportunity on the federal level, regional borders were transformed from vehicles for sovereignty (or autonomy) into tools for political integration – or in some cases, coercive assimilation – on the regional level. As discussed in the next chapter, the reduction in the number of regions by enlargement (*ukrupnenie sub"ektov*) was considered the next logical step in the process.

Chapter Six: The Push for Regional Enlargement

Introduction

While the study of post-Soviet Russia has focused significant effort on understanding the causes of regional separatism, relatively little scholarly work has dealt with forms of regional integration. This tendency was understandable during the El'tsin era when the central state appeared in retreat while regional autonomy grew unhindered. These trends came to a virtual halt under Putin and even began to reverse in spectacular fashion with the announced merging of Perm oblast and Komi-Permiatskii autonomous okrug towards the end of Putin's first term. Observers now regard the enlargement of Russian regions (*ukrupnenie sub"ektov*) and reduction in the number of federal subjects as a foregone conclusion – the only relevant question appears to be, "who's next?"[1]

For a federation that appeared fragile and structured towards "power deflation"[2], the central state seemed to have become unusually strong in a short time and with few resources at its disposal. The previous chapters have demonstrated various means by which the central state under Putin managed to reassert control and enlist allies on the regional level through the imposition of the seven Federal Districts, the revision of regional charters, and the conduct of regional elections. The reduction in the number of federal subjects and realignment of Russia's internal borders represents the culmination of these trends. Moreover, the issue of regional enlargement sheds light on the fundamental questions raised in the introduction

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[1] For instance, see: "Kto sleduiushchii v ocheredi na ob"edinenie?" *Rossiiskaia Gazeta*, 26 March 2004.
[2] Alfred Stepan, "Russian Federalism in Comparative Perspective," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 16, no. 2 (2000).

regarding the relationship among internal borders, state capacity, and regional identity.

This chapter begins with an analysis of the background debates on regional enlargement in the 1990s and the development of the center's legal strategy. It then examines the role of regional leaders in the process of enlargement, including the range of justifications and sources of political support. The chapter concludes with narrative examinations of the four regional case studies – the two republics whose borders were left untouched, and two oblasts whose borders were on the brink of change.

The Road to Regional Enlargement

Discussion of merging Russia's regions began early in the El'tsin era and continued sporadically throughout. The discussion coincided with major developments in federal politics: the signing of the Federal Treaty in 1992, the adoption of the 1993 constitution, and more recently with the onset of federal reform and state centralization since 2000. In the early 1990s, this took the form of "republicanization" among oblasts and krais.[3] Eduard Rossel''s attempt to establish a "Urals Republic" was the best known (or, at least, most notorious) case[4], though there were also proposals to form Far Eastern, Siberian, and Southern Russian republics (among others). Another tactic was to demand the promotion of status within the regions' existing borders. In 1993, most oblasts and krais demanded rights and privileges that would put them on equal footing with the republics in what was known as the "ultimatum of the 32."[5] With the adoption of the 1993 constitution, however, the question of regional borders was diverted to questions of regional status, in

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[3] Milena Gligich-Zolotareva, "Ukrupnenie sub"ektov federatsii: pro et contra," *Federalizm*, no. 1 (2002): 94.
[4] Gerald M. Easter, "Redefining Centre-Regional Relations in the Russian Federation: Sverdlovsk Oblast'," *Europe-Asia Studies* 49, no. 4 (1997).
[5] *Rossiiskaia Gazeta*, 26 August 1993.

particular through the competition to conclude bilateral treaties with the federal center. Some viewed the eight inter-regional economic associations as possibly laying the groundwork for combining regions or, alternatively, for cultivating secession. Tomsk governor Viktor Kress, then head of the inter-regional association "Siberian Accord" (*Sibirskoe Soglashenie*) proposed in January 1999 that the inter-regional associations could be legislatively strengthened in order to reduce the number of federal subjects.[6] The adoption of the federal law formally regulating the activities of the associations in December 1999 effectively ended any such possibility, however, in holding that the associations could not receive part of the state's functions, form supplementary financial resources for resolving problems, or otherwise become prototype future subjects of the Russian Federation.[7]

If the question of the federal status of Russia's regions was frozen from 1993 to 1999, the issue of regional borders persisted in the background throughout. In the 1990s there were over 30 territorial disputes among Russian regions that evaded resolution.[8] Partly these disputes were a function of historical legacy insofar as the centralized Soviet system made the clear delimitation of sub-national borders less of a priority. The proximate cause of the disputes, however, lay in the circumstances of Russia's political and economic transition. As territory acquired market value, it became the object of competition among regions – the best known case being Moscow city's struggle with Moscow oblast over the rights to the Sheremet'evo airport. The economic incentive led two raions in Kemerovo oblast to seek relocation

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[6] *Parlamentskaia Gazeta*, 23 August 2002.
[7] Vladimir Klimanov, "Regional'noe Sotrudnichestvo," in *Regiony Rossii v 1999 g.: Ezhegodnoe prilozhenie k "Politicheskomu al'manakhu Rossii"*, ed. N. Petrov (Moscow: Moskovskii Tsentr Karnegi, 2001), 126-7. Interestingly, the law initially provided for the possibility that the federal center and regions could voluntarily transfer powers and financial resources to the interregional associations. The regions were "categorically opposed" to this and, as a result, the revised law was significantly weakened in its final draft. M.V. Zolotareva and T.Ia. Khabrieva, "Pravovye osnovy izmeneniia sostava sub"ektov Rossiiskoi Federatsii," *Gosudarstvo i Pravo*, 1 January 2001, 93.
[8] Author's interview with Taliia Khabrieva, Deputy Minister for Federal Affairs, Nationalities and Immigration Policy, Moscow, April 2001.

within richer Sverdlovsk oblast's borders.[9] Moreover, elections to local and regional governments activated the issue of regional attachment. According to Valerii Kirpichnikov, First Deputy Minister for Federal Affairs, Nationalities and Immigration Policy in 2001, "before each election in St. Petersburg, discussion arises regarding merging (*ob"edinenie*) with Leningrad oblast. As soon as the elections are over, the issue is forgotten."[10] The populist appeal of regional borders sometimes leads candidates for local and regional posts to make claims in excess of their legal competencies. In the course of elections for mayor of Balakovo in Saratov, a key campaign issue became relocating to Samara oblast. In the Republic of Karachai-Cherkesiia, the 2000 elections even produced a proposal to turn Cherkesiia into an autonomous okrug within Stavropol krai.[11]

Soviet-era territorial legacies and Russia's political and economic transitions thus conspired to create a situation unique by comparison with other federal states: whereas the borders of federal units (states, länder, cantons) typically were established prior to the establishment of the federal state, it was the establishment of the federal state along Russia's prior administrative-territorial divisions that induced inter-regional territorial disputes.[12] The ambiguity of the Russian Constitution did not facilitate resolution of Russia's internal borders, and to some degree exacerbated the problem. Formally, the federal status of a region and its territorial borders were separated.[13] All the same, no procedure for changes to either territory or status was stipulated in the constitution, aside from the general principle of mutual consent. Consequently, territorial borders and federal status were never fully disentangled.

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[9] *Moskovskii Komsomolets*, 24 April 2001.
[10] *Izvestiia*, 14 April 2001.
[11] *Moskovskii Komsomolets*, 24 April 2001.
[12] T.Ia. Khabrieva, "Granitsy sub"ektov Rossiiskoi Federatsii i ikh izmenenie," *Gosudarstvo i Pravo*, 1 February 2002, 110.
[13] Article 66.5 states that, "The status of a subject of the Russian Federation may be changed upon mutual agreement of the Russian Federation and the subject of the Russian Federation and according to the federal constitutional law." Article 67.3 states that, "The borders between the subjects of the Russian Federation may be changed upon their mutual consent."

The most troublesome cases involved nine of Russia's ten autonomous okrugs which had the status of equal federal subjects that simultaneously were parts of neighboring oblasts or krais.[14] This arrangement served to generate tensions between the oblasts (or krais) and constituent autonomous okrugs throughout the 1990s. In the 1993 constitution, the autonomous okrugs obtained the status of equal federal subjects with their own governors, legislative assemblies, budgets, and territorial branches of federal agencies. Yet since they were also constituent parts of neighboring regions, they participated in elections for governor of the "parent" oblast or krai and obtained representation to varying degrees in their assemblies. In other words, the border between oblast or krai and autonomous okrug effectively established a non-reciprocal relationship in which the oblast could not contest power within the autonomous okrug, but the autonomous okrug could contest power within the oblast or krai.

Even more contentious was the economic dimension of relations within these "mini-federations." Some of the autonomous okrugs ranked among Russia's poorest regions and inevitably were tied to oblasts or krais with significantly stronger economies. In some cases, the border between the regions sustained differences in economic development. For instance, the primary source of revenue in Komi-Permiatskii autonomous okrug came from logging. All lumber processing was concentrated in neighboring Perm oblast during the Soviet era, however, which left the okrug in a difficult position under post-Soviet market conditions. According to Andrei Klimov, State Duma deputy from Komi-Permiatskii autonomous okrug, the ten-fold difference in price between raw and processed timber meant that Perm oblast's budget benefited from the increased tax revenue at the expense of the autonomous okrug.[15]

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[14] Only the Chukotskii autonomous okrug did not have this dual status.
[15] Quoted in: *Ekspert*, 29 March 2004.

Just the opposite situation prevailed in Tiumen oblast, where the economies of Iamalo-Nenetskii and Khanty-Mansiiskii autonomous okrugs, rich in oil and natural gas, far outstripped the oblast's agricultural economy. The division between oblast and okrugs benefited large resource companies like Gazprom, Lukoil, Sibneft, and Yukos, which were reluctant to encourage closer relations among the regions.[16] Generally, economically successful autonomous okrugs were largely considered to be dominated by large corporations that shared profits with the regional administration in exchange for a share of representation in the State Duma, the Federation Council, as well as local government.[17] Vladimir Lysenko, deputy chairman of the State Duma's Committee for Federal Affairs and Regional Policy, further elaborated that the separate status of the autonomous okrug amounted to about 500 jobs in territorial branches of federal agencies (such as customs and tax services), "a significant number of which are occupied by relatives and close friends of the regional leaders."[18] If obtaining representation at the central level meant that the federal government would have to reach a compromise with regional elites, however, the autonomous okrugs were not required by law to compromise with the oblast or krai. The federal constitution instead left matters to be sorted out by the regions concerned – meaning, in most cases, that there was no resolution to the problem throughout the 1990s.[19]

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[16] Gary N. Wilson, ""Matryoshka Federalism" and the Case of the Khanty Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 17, no. 2 (2001): 190-1.

[17] Suggestive of this relationship in Tiumen oblast' was the joking reference to the mayor of Kogalym as the "office of public relations for Surgutneftgaz."

[18] *Politbiuro*, 17 February 2003.

[19] Article 66.3 states, "Upon the proposal of the legislative and executive bodies of the autonomous region or autonomous area a federal law on autonomous region or autonomous area may be adopted." Article 66.4 adds that, "The relations between the autonomous area within a territory or region may be regulated by the federal law or a treaty between the bodies of state authority of the autonomous area and, accordingly, the bodies of state authority of the territory or region." Until the adoption of Kozak's reforms in 2003 (FZ-95), no federal law regulated relations among oblast (or krai) and autonomous okrug.

The Kremlin's Legal Strategy

Towards the end of the 1990s, the Presidential Administration began drafting a federal law to regulate the resolution of territorial disputes among federal subjects but the law faced stiff opposition, and also suffered from the never-ending re-shuffling of the nationalities ministry.[20] The law was intended to be purely procedural, but as Kirpichnikov put it, "the question of territory is a question of war and peace."[21] The State Duma rejected the draft law in its first reading in September 2003 with only 49 deputies voting in favor.[22] The law failed in part because deputies were unwilling to raise the issue of territorial change immediately prior to the December 2003 elections.[23] It was also suggested that the law failed due to opposition by the President and the Russian Government, as the absence of a law would permit the Kremlin a freer hand in manipulating Russia's internal borders. As expressed by State Duma deputy Viktor Iliukhin (KPRF), "If we do not find a solution for the problem, the executive branch will."[24]

Striking by comparison was the Kremlin's success in managing the adoption of a federal law that would permit the merging of regions to create a new federal subject.[25] As the law was being drafted, Aleksandr Blokhin, Minister for Federal Affairs, Nationalities and Immigration Policy, stated that it was intended merely to

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[20] Author's interview with Taliia Khabrieva, Deputy Minister for Federal Affairs, Nationalities and Immigration Policy, Moscow, April 2001. In its various incarnations, the nationalities ministry was reshuffled ten times in as many years.
[21] *Izvestiia*, 14 April 2001.
[22] Reported by Strana.ru, 9 September 2003.
[23] *Novye Izvestiia*, 10 September 2003.
[24] Quoted in: Tsentr razvitie demokratii i prav chelovek, Analitika, Obzor zokonov, Vypusk 62, "O rabote Gosudarstvennoi Dumy v sentiabre 2003 g. (9-17 sentiabria)." (located at www.demokratia.ru)
[25] Federal'nyi konstitutsionnyi zakon ot 17 dekabria 2001 g. N 6-FKZ "O poriadke priniatiia v Rossiiskuiu Federatsiiu i obrazovaniia v ee sostave novogo sub"ekta." Printed in *Rossiiskaia Gazeta*, 20 December 2001. The procedure for merging regions required that: the interested regions notify the President and provide accompanying documentation regarding the status of the common border and the likely consequences for socio-economic development and government structures; a referendum be held in each interested region on merging; if approved by referenda, the President would introduce a federal constitutional law to the State Duma, the approval of which (in accordance with Article 108 of the Russian Constitution) requires ⅔ of the State Duma and ¾ of the Federation Council. Note that the law also allowed for foreign states of parts of foreign states to become subjects with the Russian Federation in accordance with international treaties.

establish the procedure for federal subjects to initiate changes in their status, as well as clarify the extent of participation of other interested regions.[26] Following the law's adoption at the end of 2001, however, it had become clear that legislators viewed the law as something more. The chairman of the Federation Council's Constitutional Committee, Iurii Sharandin, viewed it as a catalyst for the process of regional enlargement.[27] The law was initially rejected by the Federation Council and recommended for conciliation precisely because senators were concerned that it could facilitate the creation of new regions via subtraction rather than addition. As explained by the co-chairman of the conciliation commission, Vitalii Vishniakov, the senators wanted to ease the process of regional enlargement "and complicate the opposite process."[28] The law's final draft was silent on the division of regions to create new federal subjects, neither prohibiting it in principle nor establishing a legal procedure.[29]

In examining the divergent fates of these two laws – one concerning merely territory, the other approving the merging of regions into a new federal subject – the question arises as to why the first would generate more opposition than the second? In the first place, no regional leader would consider territorial change to be a neutral process. The transfer of a *raion* ("county") from one region to another, put simply, would mean a loss of resources, voters, and *apparat*. It would also mean denial of access to social or medical services within that raion to other residents of the region once transferred to another federal subject. Worse still, the success of any raion in bolting for greener pastures within a richer neighbor's borders could provoke a rush of other raions to follow suit. Given such scenarios, it is understandable why regional

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[26] *Rossiiskaia Gazeta*, 20 January 2001.
[27] *Vremia MN*, 16 April 2002.
[28] *Vremia MN*, 24 July 2001.
[29] Some senators in the upper house did suggest that the law should include provision for splitting a region and merging its pieces with neighboring regions, but the proposal was roundly opposed in both chambers. *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 5 December 2001.

leaders would find little ground for agreement. Moreover, it becomes clearer why the constitutional requirement of mutual consent could prove an insurmountable barrier as long as territorial changes were perceived in terms of zero sum relationships.

If this reasoning explains the failure of the first law, it also goes some way to explaining the success of the second. The creation of a new federal subject as a result of merging establishes incentives for the political and economic elite in the regions concerned. The result of a merger would be, theoretically speaking, a positive sum resulting from the pooling of resources and personnel.[30] It would also mean that territorial disputes among regions could be resolved essentially by re-locating them within a sub-national government. As a result, changes to raion boundaries would be transformed from inter-regional disputes subject to federal and constitutional law – and therefore requiring federal intervention – to intra-regional procedures regulated by regional charters and legislation.

This explanation is too tidy, however, as it pays too little attention to the reigning ideological context and the inevitability of intervention by the federal center. As suggested by Vishniakov's observation above, regions were expected to merge in Putin's Russia almost as certainly as the Soviet empire was expected to break apart at the end of the Gorbachev era.[31] While there is some dispute over whether the law on territorial changes was opposed by the Kremlin or whether the timing of the law's introduction was merely unfortunate, the ongoing absence of such a law meant that the sole legal procedure for resolving territorial conflicts remained for regions to pursue enlargement. Moreover, the law on creating new subjects placed the President at the center of the process as the addressee of the regions' request to merge (and

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[30] As Sharandin explains, "the main thing is not the [new region's] name, but the unification of the existing *nomenklatura*." *Vremia MN*, 16 April 2002.
[31] Mark R. Beissinger, "Demise of an Empire-State: Identity, Legitimacy, and the Deconstruction of Soviet Politics," in *The Rising Tide of Cultural Pluralism: The Nation-State at Bay?* ed. Crawford Young (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993).

therefore in possession of an informal veto over the process[32]) and initiator of the federal constitutional law in the State Duma. By contrast, the draft law on territorial changes largely bypassed the President in focusing the process on the approval by the Federal Assembly.[33] In this sense, the Kremlin's legal strategy for territorial reform was bound up with the process of state centralization.

A similar tendency prevailed in the legislative resolution to the problematic relations among oblasts or krais and the autonomous okrugs. The reforms proposed by deputy head of the Presidential Administration, Dmitrii Kozak, devoted substantial attention to the demarcation of powers among oblasts, krais, and autonomous okrugs.[34] The law designated 41 powers from the list of joint competencies that regional governments were to fund from their own budgets (that is, without subventions from the federal budget). Of these, 24 powers were to be transferred from the autonomous okrugs to their "parent" oblast or krai when the law came into force in 2005. While the autonomous okrugs managed to maintain, for instance, the right to set local taxes and to fund local cultural archives, the oblasts and krais gained powers for implementing transport, education, and health programs across the region including the autonomous okrugs. These powers could be re-delegated to the autonomous okrugs, but only by way of a federal law regulating relations among the oblast or krai and autonomous okrugs concerned. Kozak's reforms were fiercely opposed by the economically successful autonomous okrugs. A telling exchange occurred during Putin's visit to Tiumen oblast in March 2003. In the President's meeting with governors of the Urals Federal District, Khanty-Mansiiskii autonomous

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[32] This point was confirmed by the author's interviews with members of Perm oblast's administration (in October-November 2001), who indicated that the absence of a juridical precedent for merging regions meant that all parties would wait for the go ahead from the President.

[33] See text of: Proekt federal'nogo zakona "Ob izmenenii administrativnykh granits sub"ektov Rossiiskoi Federatsii" № 208899-3.

[34] Federal'nyi zakon RF ot 04.07.2003 N 95-FZ "O vnesenii izmenenii i dopolnenii v federal'nyi zakon "Ob obshchikh printsipakh organizatsii zakonodatel'nykh (predstavitel'nykh) i ispolnitel'nykh organov gosudarstvennoi vlasti sub"ektov Rossiiskoi Federatsii."

okrug Governor Aleksandr Filipenko complained to Putin that, "when you take away half of a region's powers, what you get is half a region." In response, Putin quipped: "then half the regions need to be reduced (*sokratit'*), unified, divided, or merged."[35]

Regional Enlargement: Central and Regional Perspectives

The legal mechanisms enabling regional enlargement were established in the midst of a rising tide of central interest in reducing the number of federal subjects and general speculation that Putin intended to redraw Russia's internal borders. Immediately following the creation of the Federal Districts in May 2000, the new districts' ambiguous status and powers permitted many observers to see them as new "super-regions" that would supplant the existing set of regions. Throughout Putin's first term (and into his second), however, the Presidential Administration maintained that the process of regional enlargement must begin "from below," on the regions' own initiative, and only when approved by referendum. This is not to say that the Presidential Administration did not encourage regional mergers. In July 2000, Kozak took specific aim at the autonomous okrugs, stating that it would be "wise" to satisfy their desire to merge with oblasts and krais. Kozak added that, "if citizens think that it would be easier to live and work [in an enlarged region], it is their legal right."[36]

To some extent, the presidential envoys to the Federal Districts (*polpredy*) attempted to facilitate (or at least not to impede) the process of regional enlargement within their respective domains. In the North-West Federal District, presidential envoy Viktor Cherkesov was particularly vocal. By the end of 2001, Cherkesov stated that the merging of regions was unavoidable – the main question was not whether to merge, but the scale and which part of the country.[37] The necessity of

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[35] *Gazeta*, 28 May 2003. Filipenko and Putin both used the term *sub"ekt*. For the purposes of clarity, it has been translated here as "region."
[36] *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 25 July 2000.
[37] *Argumenty i Fakty*, 26 December 2001.

regional enlargement stemmed from the "artificial" division of Russia, which required reducing the number of regions by about half.[38] The envoy argued that it made sense to merge weaker "debtor" regions with "donor" regions, specifically suggesting the merging of Arkhangel'sk oblast with Nenetskii autonomous okrug and Pskov oblast with Novgorod oblast. Cherkesov later indicated that regional enlargement was discussed in conjunction with the Federal District's strategy for socio-economic development through 2015, noting that the number of regions in Russia interfered with the realization of large-scale federal programs.[39]

In her brief tenure as presidential envoy, Valentina Matvienko kept the issue on the agenda, stating in March 2003 that the merging of St. Petersburg and Leningrad oblast was possible as long as it made sense economically.[40] In April 2003 she indicated that the federal center supported the merging of Arkhangel'sk oblast with Nenetskii autonomous okrug, however she was careful to point out that the Kremlin would not demand the merger and that the process should start "from within."[41] Matvienko's successor as polpred, Il'ia Klebanov, followed suit in stating that he was in favor of regional mergers and once again singled out Arkhangel'sk oblast and Nenetskii autonomous okrug. This time, however, it was Nenets Governor Vladimir Butov who provided the qualification that, "under no circumstances should [regional mergers] proceed from the top down by administrative measures." Butov reminded Klebanov that, "it is the right of the people to decide in which region to live, and the issue of their merging may only be decided by referendum."[42]

More cautious was Sergei Kirienko, most likely because Tatarsan and Bashkortostan were sensitive about the issue, and perhaps owing to his early

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[38] *SeverInform*, 24 May 2002.
[39] *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 17 June 2002.
[40] Reported by Strana.ru, 21 March 2003.
[41] *Gazeta*, 28 May 2003.
[42] Reported by Strana.ru, 15 January 2004.

experience in dealing with the question of the Volga Federal District's boundaries.[43] In late 2001, Kirienko characterized the issue of altering administrative boundaries as the weapon of the political provocateur.[44] Later he said that discussion of regional enlargement in the media was "utter gibberish," denying that any such plans or projects existed on the national level.[45] He remained cautious about holding the referendum on merging Perm oblast and Komi-Permiatskii autonomous okrug (see discussion below) simultaneous with the State Duma elections in December 2003.[46] Yet there was a significant nuance to Kirienko's position throughout, insofar as he was not so much opposed to the idea of regional enlargement as he was opposed to the issue becoming a subject of public politics. Kirienko's Main Federal Inspector to Perm oblast indicated that the Volga polpred supported the merger of Perm oblast and Komi-Permiatskii autonomous okrug. And in spite of his caution, Kirienko earned the distinction of chaperoning post-Soviet Russia's first regional merger with the successful referendum on the creation of a new region, Permskii krai, in December 2003.[47]

Siberian polpred Leonid Drachevskii was particularly active in pursuing the merger of Irkutsk oblast with Ust'-Ordynskii Buriatskii autonomous okrug. Repeating the Kremlin's mantra that 89 regions was far too many, Drachevskii emphasized that merging the two Siberian regions made sense given the extent to which they were already integrated.[48] Like Cherkesov, Drachevskii emphasized that the process should proceed first along the lines of merging donor regions with weaker neighbors. And similar to Kirienko, the Siberian polpred was wary of exposing the question of

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[43] See Chapter Three for discussion with respect to Perm's inclusion in the Volga Federal District.
[44] *Vek*, 5 November 2001.
[45] As reported in Regnum.ru, 16 June 2003.
[46] *Parlamentskaia Gazeta*, 23 September 2003.
[47] An alternative take from the perspective of Kirienko's sense of political survival is that the direct role played by Putin and prominent central political figures in encouraging the merger relieved of Kirienko having to play an open role in the process (or, for that matter, taking responsibility for any negative repercussions).
[48] *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 17 June 2002.

regional enlargement to public politics: "The problem should not be politicized through the prism of electoral campaigning. The possibility of merging, which is fully logical, needs to be thought out peacefully and fundamentally."[49] In successive visits to Irkutsk, Drachevskii managed to cajole the two regions into establishing working groups on enlargement, then merging them into a joint working group under the direction of deputy polpred Valerii Khalanov.[50] Nevertheless, it took the direct intervention of deputy head of the Presidential Administration, Vladislav Surkov, to get the two regions to speed the process towards referendum in 2004.[51]

Among the four Federal Districts examined here, only Urals polpred Petr Latyshev stood to the side of the debates over regional mergers. When rumors began to circulate regarding the possible splitting up of Kurgan oblast and the joining of its "pieces" to surrounding regions, Latyshev was nowhere to be found in the local press. Though the Urals polpred often stated his pleasure at the new-found cooperation among Tiumen oblast and its northern autonomous okrugs from 2001 to 2003, he pointedly refused to take a stand in the renewed hostilities[52] (see discussion below) following the passage of the Kozak reforms in 2003.

If the Kremlin insisted that the process of regional enlargement should proceed "from below," many governors were more than willing to oblige. Throughout Putin's first term there was a deluge of proposals made by governors for merging with their neighbors. Novgorod oblast Governor Mikhail Prusak stated in early 2001 that his region would have no problems merging with Pskov oblast, to some extent preempting the suggestion of North-West polpred Cherkesov. But Prusak went even further in arguing that the number of regions should be no more than 50, and that

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[49] *Parlamentskaia Gazeta*, 23 August 2002.
[50] *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 27 February 2003.
[51] *Kommersant*, 26 February 2004.
[52] Reported by Uralpolit.ru, 26 April 2004. Latyshev's comment was that he preferred not to interfere in the process underway between oblast' and autonomous okrugs as long as it was unnecessary, suggesting that he might take an active role in the future should relations among the regions continue to degenerate.

these should be directly subordinated to "governor-generals" whom the Russian president would appoint.[53] The former governor of Chukotka autonomous okrug (and chairman of the Federation Council Committee for Northern Affairs and Indigenous Peoples), Aleksandr Nazarov, stated in a meeting with governors of the Far Eastern Federal District that Chukotka should be merged with Magadan oblast. Nazarov added that the process should continue with the merging of all regions within the Federal District.[54] Siberian leaders were even more vocal. The speaker of Altai krai's assembly, Aleksandr Nazarchuk, caused a stir in spring 2001 by stating that he would raise the possibility of merging with the Altai Republic. Nazarchuk's proposal was poorly received in the republic.[55] That did not stop Altai krai Governor Aleksandr Surikov from repeatedly raising the issue over the next two years until his electoral defeat in April 2004.[56] In Krasnoiarsk krai, Governor Aleksandr Lebed' claimed in March 2001 that he had been ordered by Putin to prepare a scheme for merging the krai with the Evenk and Taimyr autonomous okrugs, to be presented to the president by the end of April 2002. The Presidential Administration later clarified that Putin merely *did not exclude* the possibility of merging the regions over the long term in talks with both Lebed' and Taimyr's Governor Aleksandr Khloponin.[57] In April 2001, the governor of Ust'-Ordynskii Buriatskii autonomous okrug, Valerii Maleev, stated that, "we are for merging [Irkutsk] oblast and okrug, but it should proceed in the event that residents of the okrug know the benefits of unification and the national interests of the titular people are taken into account."[58]

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[53] *RFE/RL Russian Federation Report*, 7 March 2001.
[54] *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 6 November 2002.
[55] *RFE/RL Russian Federation Report*, 18 April 2001; *Russian Regional Report*, 30 May 2001.
[56] Politcom.ru, 8 May 2003; Strana.ru, 29 March 2004; *Rossiiskaia Gazeta*, 30 March 2004.
[57] *Vremia Novostei*, 29 March 2002. Lebed' previously claimed that the Presidential Administration was preparing decrees to reduce the number of regions and, in particular, that a decree eliminating the autonomous okrugs would be introduced by January or February 2001. See: *RFE/RL Russian Federation Report*, 3 January 2001; *RFE/RL Russian Federation Report*, 11 April 2001.
[58] *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 24 April 2001.

A number of governors supported the idea of regional enlargement, but only insofar as it was economically rational. Iaroslavl oblast Governor Anatolii Lisitsyn suggested that the process begin with experiments conducted in either the North-West or Central Federal Districts by merging donor and debtor regions. Lisitsyn explained the economic rationale for regional enlargement in that debtor regions had little interest in developing the income basis for their budgets – the better they work, the less they receive.[59] He proposed that Kostroma and Ivanovo oblasts be joined to Iaroslavl oblast, but opposition was so intense that he further proposed that the governor of the new region be appointed by the president.[60] Another outspoken proponent of regional enlargement as a means to address the problem of debtor regions was Kemerovo oblast Governor Aman Tuleev. Tuleev proposed that the national republics be left alone, while the remaining regions be merged in groups of three or four and accorded the same constitutional status as the republics.[61] Irkutsk oblast Governor Boris Govorin stressed that Russia's administrative-territorial divisions did not meet the realities of the current economic system. In Govorin's opinion, a "proper" (*gramotnoe*) regional merger should lead to the strengthening of economic ties, growth in internal trade and general competitiveness, and facilitate the movement of capital.[62] After Aleksandr Khloponin left Taimyr autonomous okrug to become Krasnoiarsk krai's governor, he abandoned his previous opposition to regional enlargement. Khloponin suggested that the federal center should select strong regions that would serve as the basis for regional mergers.[63] While noting that the process of regional enlargement should not be pursued indiscriminately, he pointed out that many regions were artificially divided from the perspective of

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[59] *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 24 June 2002.
[60] *Itogi*, 3 December 2002.
[61] *Parlamentskaia Gazeta*, 23 August 2002; *Parlamentskaia Gazeta*, 23 September 2003; *Rossiiskaia Gazeta*, 23 March 2004.
[62] *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 14 March 2003.
[63] Politcom.ru, 29 December 2003.

production chains as a result of their inherited borders. Khloponin cited the example of a hydroelectric plant located on the border between Khakasiia and Krasnoiarsk, which provided 50% of the krai's energy but charged tariffs several times higher than those in the krai because it was registered in Khakasiia.[64]

Some initiatives came from outside of regional government, occasionally being raised in academia or local government. In the North-West, a group of scholars from Arkhangel'sk oblast attempted to push the local elite towards enlargement in a letter sent to polpred Matvienko and the governors of Arkhangel'sk oblast, Murmansk oblast and Nenetskii autonomous okrug. The scholars drew attention to the regions' "common historical fate, similar natural climatic conditions, Russian (*russkie*) populations, economic structures, and identical socio-economic problems." They further pointed out that, "establishing a unified development strategy for northern territories, introduction of scientific regional policy, and unified rules of the game in economics are best decided with the establishment of a unified political and economic space."[65] The head of one of the raions in Kurgan oblast warned in 2001 that the region could be broken up and divided among its neighbors, with two raions being transferred to each of Sverdlovsk, Cheliabinsk, and Tiumen oblasts.[66] The mayor's office in Voronezh stated in May 2003 that the oblast could lose its status and become a raion within Lipetsk oblast, allegedly proposed by deputy head of the Presidential Administration Dmitrii Kozak. The new region would combine Voronezh oblast, Tambov oblast, and Lipetsk oblast with the regional center in Lipetsk. The Kremlin denied any such plans, once more asserting that any regional mergers would take place only upon the regions' own initiative.[67]

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[64] *Profil'*, 8 March 2004.
[65] *Gazeta*, 28 May 2003.
[66] *RFE/RL Russian Federation Report*, 18 April 2001; *Tiumenskaia Pravda*, 5 May 2001.
[67] *Kommersant*, 31 May 2003. It is highly unlikely that Kozak, a legal scholar, would have made such a suggestion in the absence of a legal framework to achieve such a result.

As regional and local leaders lined up with their proposals for regional enlargement, a broader discussion unfolded on the central level of the goals and political mechanisms for achieving enlargement. While almost any Russian politician at any level of government could be quoted to the effect that 89 regions was far too many, there was no clear idea of how many regions would be ideal for Russia, what status they should have, or upon what principles the new regions should be formed.[68] Sergei Mironov, chairman of the Federation Council, proposed that the number of federal subjects ought to be reduced to 40. Tuleev also suggested that the optimal number would be 40 or 50 at most. The most radical proposal came, characteristically, from Vladimir Zhirinovskii, who held that the number of regions should be reduced to ten or fifteen.[69] One of the most interesting aspects of the discussions on regional mergers was that it united political actors of all stripes. For the Communist Party, regional enlargement would mean a return to Soviet economic-geographical principles in which the administrative unit should also be an economic district linked with the territorial-production complex. For United Russia, regional enlargement was seen as a means to increase the efficiency of administration and reduce the number of debtor regions. For the Union of Right Forces, regional mergers meant the removal of internal administrative and trade barriers which would facilitate the conduct of business.[70] For the ultra-nationalist Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, the reduction in the number of regions would be a midway point *en route* to a unitary state system.[71]

The question of *which* regions to merge provoked a variety of proposals. Some observers were concerned that attempts to merge regions would spark ethno-

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[68] Gligich-Zolotareva, "Ukrupnenie sub"ektov federatsii: pro et contra," 99.
[69] *Parlamentskaia Gazeta*, 23 September 2003. The 2003 electoral program for Zhirinovskii's party, the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR), envisioned 15-20 *guberniia* with 7-10 million people each. *Kommersant-Vlast'*, 14 July 2003.
[70] *Ekspert*, 29 March 2004.
[71] *Parlamentskaia Gazeta*, 23 September 2003.

national mobilization, particularly among the republics.[72] Alternatively, the process could serve to strengthen republican ethnocracies. Tatarstan's Mintimer Shaimiev implied as much in stating that there was no need for his republic to join to another region, but that he was not opposed to *other* regions being joined to Tatarstan.[73] The idea that donor regions should form the cornerstones for mergers with weaker regions quickly became a popular (if not dogmatic) rationale. As explained by Aleksandr Kazakov, chairman of the Federation Council Committee on Federal Affairs and Regional Policy,

> regions within federal states ought to be self-sufficient in the sense that they possess the economic, financial, and social potential necessary for the fulfillment the functions accorded to them by the constitution and law, and their obligations before the people. Today there are many regions that are self-sufficient only in the juridical sense but not socially or economically.[74]

The reasoning held that social problems in depressed territories could be resolved more easily by joining them with richer areas. At the same time, the gap between rich and poor regions would diminish.[75] As an added incentive, the Ministry of Finance introduced changes to the Budget Code in line with Kozak's reforms that allowed for the introduction of external (central) administration of regions that fall behind in their debt payments. According to the deputy chairman of the Federation Council's Budget Committee, Il'ia Lomankina-Rumiantsev, the measure fulfilled the need to provide direction and rationale for regional enlargement by answering the questions, "who, why, and to what ends?"[76] In this sense, a region's financial insolvency could serve as a convenient justification for pursuing regional enlargement while maintaining an implied threat that governors who refused to comply could be faced with external administration.

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[72] *Ekspert*, 17 August 2001.
[73] *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 17 June 2002.
[74] *Rossiiskaia Gazeta*, 1 April 2004.
[75] *Parlamentskaia Gazeta*, 1 July 2003.
[76] *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 20 May 2003.

Most were unanimous in holding that the first order of business would be to eliminate the weaker autonomous okrugs in the "complexly-constructed" (*slozhnosostavnye*) regions.[77] More difficult and time consuming would be merging the richer autonomous okrugs (such as Khanty-Mansiiskii and Iamalo-Nenetskii autonomous okrugs in Tiumen oblast), although the demarcation of financial powers in Kozak's reform may have resolved the issue.[78] In line with Tuleev's and Prusak's suggestions, there was also discussion of merging regions of equal status (including Sakhalin with Kamchatka, or Novgorod with Pskov). The merging of Moscow city with Moscow oblast, as well as St. Petersburg with Leningrad oblast, continued to lurk in the background as well, though few regarded these options with enthusiasm since the regions in both pairings were already considered to be sufficiently successful.[79] With particular regard to the latter, a survey of elites in St. Petersburg and Leningrad oblast indicated that most were satisfied with the degree of economic integration, but feared that formal political unification of the two regions would adversely affect administration.[80]

Another publicly claimed goal of regional enlargement was to optimize administration, primarily through reducing the size of the apparat.[81] Arguably, this reduction would involve decreased expenses, such as through the simplification of licensing procedures for economic activities.[82] Yet it was not clear that enlargement was the solution. In part the problem had to do with the rent-seeking interests of the apparat and the simultaneous lack of skilled administrators, or what was often referred to as "cadre hunger" (*kadrovyi golod*). In theory, it would be better to replace two

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[77] For example, see comments in: *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 25 July 2000; *Itogi*, 3 December 2002; *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 9 June 2003; *Profil'*, 16 June 2003; *Parlamentskaia Gazeta*, 23 September 2003.
[78] *Rossiiskaia Gazeta*, 1 April 2004.
[79] *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 9 June 2003.
[80] A.V. Duka, ed., *Regional'nye elity severo-zapada Rossii: politicheskie i ekonomicheskie orientatsii* (Sankt-Peterburg: Aleteiia, 2001), 280-5.
[81] *Profil'*, 16 June 2003.
[82] *Parlamentskaia Gazeta*, 1 July 2003.

sets of structures with a single set of highly-qualified administrators or managers. Once the weaker region was joined to a stronger region, however, it did not necessarily follow that the latter's *apparat* (presumably the more effective and professional of the two) would be sufficient to administer the larger regional entity. As a result, there might be little actual change in daily administration.[83] Additionally, there was some disagreement over whether local and national oligarchs would oppose regional enlargement. On the one hand, the merging of regions was seen as a possible means for the oligarchs to increase and consolidate monopoly holdings.[84] On the other, corporations were likely to perceive enlargement as a threat to the regional lobbying structure and access to representation in central structures.[85]

Given these potential obstacles, the juridical requirement of organizing a referendum on regional enlargement was perceived as less problematic than gaining the agreement of local elites.[86] Without question, the largest political payoff of regional enlargement would be for governors serving their last terms in office. The creation of a new federal subject would mean new administrative posts, titles, and powers. This in turn meant that governors already in their second terms (or perhaps their third) would be able to continue to contest regional elections for another eight to ten years. It would further provide a chance to re-write regional charters and possibly redress the balance of power within the region.[87] By 2007 there would be 70 governors serving their last terms – a sizeable constituency that would stand to gain from regional enlargement.[88] Alternatively, the successful staging or regional enlargement could prove the key to upward mobility for governors seeking to get involved in national politics, as suggested by the elevation of Perm oblast's Governor

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[83] *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 17 June 2002.
[84] *Politbiuro*, 17 February 2003.
[85] *Profil'*, 8 March 2004.
[86] *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 20 February 2003.
[87] *Profil'*, 8 March 2004.
[88] *Gazeta*, 8 April 2004.

Iurii Trutnev to Minister of Natural Resources in March 2004 following the successful referendum on enlargement.

Nevertheless, debate on regional enlargement did not ignore the Kremlin's clear interest in reducing the number of federal subjects. Despite the insistence by the Presidential Administration that the process would not be forced, most observers continued to believe that it was induced (if not dictated) from above. Moreover, the central and regional press appeared to be engaged in a virtual planning debate over which cases for enlargement would be easiest and most appropriate. In effect, the discussion of regional mergers served an important function in clarifying the center's priorities towards the regions, and in establishing the official range of public justifications for enlargement: the debate not only identified the range of available targets for enlargement, but also helped to distinguish the desirable from the feasible. The distinction was crucial for determining when central tactics amounted to mere intimidation or a credible threat. Additionally, the distinction helped to interpret the choice and evolution of regional strategies of resistance, capitulation, or accommodation.

In terms of the dynamics of state centralization, the Kremlin's potential to conduct regional elections and obtain a greater number of loyal governors would be significantly augmented if the number of regions was cut in half.[89] Perhaps more fundamentally, some observers pointed out that the ability to assert control over Russia's internal borders had signified the strength of Russia's political leaders since the tsarist era.[90] This point is supported by the historical analysis presented in Chapter Two, and provides a parsimonious and contextualized explanation for why any hint of changes to Russia's internal borders provoked a firestorm of press coverage (and the Kremlin's pointedly ambiguous denials). In general terms, the

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[89] *Profil'*, 16 June 2003.
[90] *Moskovskii Komsomolets*, 24 April 2001.

reconfiguration of internal borders has pragmatic political implications for state capacity, both on the regional level and in terms of center-regional relations. But it is important to recognize that the symbolic implications for a leader's political legitimacy are just as crucial, and Russian politics were hardly an exception.[91]

The Dynamics of Regional Enlargement: Case Studies

The four cases under examination here vividly illustrated the various means by which internal borders became salient for the politics of state centralization under Putin. The borders of the two republics were not directly threatened, yet the question of altering internal borders (in terms of location and status) had a ripple effect on republican politics. The two oblasts are presented in more detail owing to the greater immediacy of the issue. Perm oblast became the first region to successfully achieve enlargement in post-Soviet Russia, while Tiumen oblast appeared to be ready to follow suit by spring 2004.

Buriatiia

In Buriatiia, the question of regional mergers had perhaps the greatest potential of the four case studies to generate political disturbance. The division of Buriat-Mongol ASSR in 1937 continued to weigh heavily on the Buriat elite, though there was a palpable awareness of the pragmatic and legal constraints on reunifying with the two Buriat autonomous okrugs – Aginskii Buriatskii autonomous okrug and Ust'-Ordynskii Buriatskii autonomous okrug. The republic's efforts at increasing the level of regional integration and coordinating policy with the other Buriat territories occurred against the backdrop of Putin's centralizing policies. The creation of the seven Federal Districts posed an unambiguous threat via the strengthening of the

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[91] In this regard, one should not confuse the *salience* with the *visibility* of the issue of changes to internal borders.

executive branch at all levels of government.[92] During the campaign to bring republican legislation in line with federal law, the deputy chair of the assembly's Committee for State Building, Local Self-Government and Legality, S. B. Alekseeva, stated that centralization "facilitated the strengthening of the role of the Federal Districts" and warned that merging the regions within the Siberian Federal District would be a huge mistake if the process was initiated "from above" (*sverkhu*).[93] At the same time, members of the republican government accepted the rationale that regional mergers were appropriate if approved by the population, and if the regions stood to gain economically.

Starting in 1999, the republic began to actively pursue cultural and economic integration with the neighboring Buriat territories. The legislative assemblies of the three Buriat territories established an inter-parliamentary association to coordinate social and cultural legislation among the regions in early 1999.[94] While the association established its own publication (*Eblel*) and information service (*Buriatinform*), these were chiefly funded by the republic.[95] In October 2001, the inter-parliamentary association changed to the Baikal Association of Parliaments and grew to include Irkutsk oblast and Chita oblast.[96] The decision to expand the inter-parliamentary association to include the oblasts (and especially Irkutsk, the most

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[92] The designation of Valerii Khalanov, former head of the FSB in Buriatiia, as deputy Siberian *polpred* with responsibility for Irkutsk oblast, Ust'-Ordynskii autonomous okrug, Chita oblast, Aginskii Buriatskii autonomous okrug, and the Republic of Buriatiia, probably did not go far to assuage the concerns of the regional elite.

[93] *Buriatiia*, 15 September 2001.

[94] Sbornik dokumentov, priniatykh na pervom zasedanii Assotsiatsiia parlamentov Aginskogo Buriatskogo avtonomnogo okruga, Respubliki Buriatiia i Ust'-Ordynskogo Buriatskogo avtonomnogo okruga. g. Ulan-Ude, 10 marta 1999.

[95] *Buriatiia*, 13 September 2000.

[96] Reported by news.buryatia.ru, 22 October 2001. The Baikal Association of Parliaments was formally established following approval by all five legislative assemblies in spring 2002. *Buriatiia*, 13 March 2002. While formally the inter-parliamentary association continued to exist, the extent to which the Baikal Association was an extension of the prior association was suggested by hand-written edits to the association's charter (given to the author by a member of Buriatiia's Committee for International and Regional Ties, Nationalities Issues, Social Organizations and Religious Groups), in which references to "autonomous okrugs" were replaced with "oblasts," the stipulation that sessions would be conducted in Buriat as well as Russian was removed, and references to "all-Buriat issues" were replaced with "inter-regional issues."

economically developed region in the group) was a pragmatic move intended to facilitate regional integration.[97] In addition, the republican authorities hoped that the five regions could form a united lobbying front in the Federation Council, particularly regarding the federal government's lack of attention to the Baikal region.[98]

Yet it was clear that the association's early efforts would be mostly declaratory and that regional integration would be a long and arduous process. So much was suggested by the divergence of opinions regarding the very purpose of the association. For instance, Mikhail Semenov, speaker of Buriatiia's assembly, stated that, "We are going beyond the boundaries of unification on the basis of the national unity of the three Buriat territories in creating a genuine regional association." By contrast, the speaker of Irkutsk oblast's assembly, V. Borovskii, explained support for the association by way of the region's interest in energy tariffs and regulation, as well as strengthening the area's hand in the inter-regional association Siberian Accord, "where Western Siberia plays first violin." Borovskii's observation was ironic insofar as Siberian Accord (as well as the Siberian Federal District) was seen in Buriatiia as a necessary partner in resolving problems with Irkutsk over energy tariffs.[99] The only comments that revealed agreement among the other three assembly speakers present were those asserting each region's right to choose its own model of local self-government.[100]

If the pursuit of regional integration through inter-regional diplomacy was meant to stave the hand of the Kremlin, it clearly failed. The process of merging Ust'-Ordynskii Buriatskii autonomous okrug with Irkutsk oblast may have been actively

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[97] Author's interview with Tsydenzhap Bimbaevich Batuev, Chairman of the Narodnyi Khural's Committee for State Building, Local Self-Government and Legality, Ulan-Ude, 6 June 2002.
[98] Author's interview with Mikhail Aleksandrovich Kharitonov, Deputy Chairman of the Committee for Nationalities Affairs and Religious Groups, Presidential Administration of the Republic of Buriatiia, Ulan-Ude, 5 June 2002.
[99] Author's interview with Aleksei Tsyrendorzhievich Idamzhapov, Chairman of the Committee for International and Regional Ties, Nationalities Issues, Social Organizations and Religious Groups, Ulan-Ude, 10 June 2002.
[100] Statements by all five assembly speakers were printed in: *Buriatiia*, 27 October 2001.

covered in Buriatiia's media, but the republic itself had few levers of influence to halt or reverse the process. When the issue was raised before the inter-parliamentary association, the only result was a statement regarding the need "to establish a normative legal basis, to examine and adopt on the federal level a law regulating all legal, political, and social aspects of the autonomous okrugs" prior to unification.[101] The republic's ethno-national intelligentsia offered moral and ideological support to their counterparts in the autonomous okrug. The All-Buriat Association for the Development of Culture (VARK) lobbied against the merger if it would mean the loss of cultural autonomy for the okrug. The president of VARK, Dandar Sanditov, expressed further concern that the Kremlin was interested in eliminating all national-territorial entities, not just the autonomous okrugs. In this regard, Sanditov warned that Irkutsk, Chita, and Buriatiia could eventually be merged into a single *guberniia*.[102] Members of the national elite reportedly proposed, as an alternative, merging the three Buriat territories together.[103]

The Kremlin and the oblast administration kept the process focused solely on relations between oblast and autonomous okrug, however, to the exclusion of the republic. Siberian polpred Drachevskii played an active role as facilitator, spurring both oblast and okrug to form working groups on unification and later merging the groups together under the direction of deputy polpred Valerii Khalanov.[104] In early 2004, deputy head of the Presidential Administration, Vladislav Surkov, intervened directly to persuade both governors to hold a referendum on merging by the end of the year.[105] Irkutsk's Governor Boris Govorin worked to calm the concerns of the

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[101] As reported by Regnum.ru, 18 February 2003.
[102] *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 17 June 2003.
[103] *Russian Regional Report*, 8 April 2003. Calls for reunifying the Buriat territories were not uncommon, though none of the proposals suggested how to confront the problem that they lacked contiguous borders.
[104] *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 11 December 2002; *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 27 February 2003; *Gazeta*, 28 May 2003.
[105] *Kommersant*, 26 February 2004.

autonomous okrug's ethno-national elite in stressing that any regional merger should strengthen economic ties, as well as facilitate growth in internal trade, general competitiveness, and the movement of capital. Govorin also framed the issue in such a way as to capture a more broadly-defined community, arguing that the people of the two regions saw the Baikal area (*Pribaikal'e*) as "a unified territory where residents have close familial and economic ties."[106] In doing so, Govorin capitalized on a growing sense of pragmatism among the okrug's national elite.[107] Ust'-Orda Governor Valerii Maleev played his own role in stating the autonomous okrug's price for sacrificing its status as federal subject: financial support for agriculture, completion of projects already started in social sphere, assistance in development of rural infrastructure, and maintenance of budgetary support the okrug's citizens (which was almost double that in the oblast) – altogether, about eight billion rubles (or over $275 million).[108]

Within Buriatiia, the republican government stayed largely aloof of the process. While VARK attempted to mobilize opinion against changes to the borders of Buriatiia's neighbors, the republican administration kept a tight lid on any such discussions. The republican president, Leonid Potapov, and most of the political elite characteristically sought to keep ethno-national identity from becoming politicized, particularly as related to the contentious issue of the republic's borders and unification with the Buriat autonomous okrugs.[109] Potapov emphasized in 2002 that the republic was pursuing integration with its Buriat neighbors, but not in the sense of altering administrative-territorial boundaries. He approved the existing mechanisms for

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[106] *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 14 March 2003.

[107] For instance, a deputy from Ust'-Ordynskii Buriatskii autonomous okrug to the Irkutsk assembly, Mikhail Matkhanov, stated in 2001 that the autonomous okrug was too small to be economically viable: "I am a realist. It is better to live in Irkutsk than in Ulan-Ude." *Russian Regional Report*, 23 July 2001.

[108] *Kommersant*, 27 March 2004.

[109] Perhaps emblematic was a meeting between Potapov and students of Buriat State University on 3 June 2002, just prior to the republican elections. When asked if Buriatiia would pursue unification with the Buriat autonomous okrugs, Potapov boomed, "No, we will not!" (*Ne budem!*) with no further commentary.

integration – the inter-regional association and the work of VARK – though remained silent on disagreement within those organizations over the desirability of regional mergers.[110] This is not to say that members of the republican government necessarily supported regional enlargement along Buriatiia's borders. Rather, their public opinions were subject to self-censorship in upholding the Kremlin's formula that enlargement could only proceed if approved by referendum and given the appropriate economic conditions.[111]

Kareliia

In the North-West Federal District, discussions of regional enlargement rarely touched upon the Republic of Kareliia. Most attention was riveted on merging Nenetskii autonomous okrug with Arkhangel'sk oblast, or various plans for merging several northern territories together.[112] Kareliia's governor, Sergei Katanandov, indicated early on that he was not opposed to regional mergers in principle, but he considered it to be a question for a later date. Otherwise, examining the issue would be damaging for "the very idea of federalism in the country, insofar far as there are not any preconditions (*predposylok*) for changing the number of regions, nor for internal borders."[113]

The issue of changes to regional borders became the object of active discussion in mid-2001, when the Center for Strategic Projects "North-West" (TsSR-SZ) in St. Petersburg began working on a doctrine for development within the North-West Federal District.[114] Early discussions and seminars received detailed coverage

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[110] As reported by news.buryatia.ru, 30 March 2002.
[111] Several interviewees in the republican government were careful to distinguish between their personal opinions and their "official" opinions on this matter.
[112] For example, see: *Gazeta*, 28 May 2003; *Ekspert Severo-Zapad*, 23 June 2003.
[113] *Kareliia*, 13 January 2001.
[114] The Tsentr Strategicheskikh Razrabotok – Severo-Zapad (TsSR-SZ) was an extension of German Gref's Center for Strategic Initiatives in Moscow, and its offices were housed within the headquarters of the NW Federal District's presidential envoy. The doctrine for socio-economic development was commissioned directly by Cherkesov. *Guberniia* (Petrozavodsk), 12 July 2001.

in Kareliia's official press, particularly as regarded existing administrative-territorial divisions. The Center's group of analysts (or ideologues), led by Petr Shchedrovitskii, emphasized that the concentration of political power and property rights in the regions was a primary source of the inefficiency of the administrative-territorial system and a barrier to finding other resources for development: "in defending the integrity of administrative borders, [regions] were caught unprepared when the market's borders ceased to coincide with the borders of state-administrative units, when social-economic development came to depend on the degree of a region's openness to the global world."[115] As a result, the centers of decision-making passed from the regions to integrated business groups with vaguely-defined territorial borders, more closely resembling an "archipelago Lukoil or archipelago Gazprom." From the perspective of the doctrine's authors, the area's key challenges were posed by globalization and the European Union, for which Kareliia's agreements with other regions and attempts to increase internal integration appeared to be futile. Katanandov reacted strongly, stating that he was unwilling to let the republic turn into an "island" or "archipelago": "If you would rather not have some outsider with a sack of money behind his back in place of an elected head of the republic, then there's no reason to place Kareliia under the influence of such investors."[116]

As discussion of the doctrine for development moved into regional working groups, interesting differences of opinion appeared regarding the ongoing salience of regional borders and administration.[117] The doctrine's authors suggested the North-West Federal District as the best means for establishing a macroregion characterized by "state-society unity" (*gosudarstvenno-obshchestvennoe edinstvo*) and a "unified cultural-economic space." They recommended extending the powers of the

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[115] *Kareliia*, 17 May 2001.
[116] *Kareliia*, 17 May 2001.
[117] Kareliia was the first region in the North-West to sign a cooperation agreement with TsSR-NW. *Severnyi Kur'er* (Petrozavodsk), 5 June 2001.

presidential envoy to "synchronize" local development projects, though how much say the regions would retain in such a process was left unspecified. Kareliia's Minister of Foreign Relations, Valerii Shliamin, countered that joining globalization did not contradict the republican administration's "ideology" of self-sufficiency.[118]

When the first public seminar on the doctrine was conducted in Petrozavodsk, representatives from the Center posed the question abruptly: "which path will Kareliia choose – autonomization or integration?"[119] As public discussion continued, however, the question was reframed as whether Kareliia would choose domination by Finland or St. Petersburg.[120] Apparently such discussions were not limited to Kareliia within the North-West as the Center was relieved of the duty to develop a "concept" to follow the "doctrine" by the polpred's office. When the doctrine was presented months later at a forum on regional development in Samara, the defensive claims regarding the challenges posed by the EU were softened, most likely a result of regional discussions of the doctrine. Nikolai Mezhevich of the Institute for Problems of Regional Economics expressed the issue pithily: "It's not Katanandov's fault that it's easier to deal with Finland than Arkhangel'sk."[121]

The debate over the doctrine was revealing of central and local perceptions regarding the role and salience of regional borders, as well as their future prospects. The TsSR-SZ envisioned administrative-territorial borders as painful legacies of a prior era that only served the mercantilist interests of regional government. The onset of globalization called for increased centralization and corporatist-style planning, for which the gradual elimination of existing regional borders was inevitable.[122] By contrast, the republican leadership presented the region's internal borders as both a moral obligation to uphold as well as economic opportunity: as soon as the republic

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[118] *Kareliia*, 7 June 2001.
[119] *Kareliia*, 28 June 2001.
[120] *Kareliia*, 5 July 2001.
[121] *Kareliia*, 27 October 2001.
[122] P. Shchedrovitskii, ed., *Doktrina Razvitiia Severo-Zapada Rossii* (Sankt-Peterburg: Corvus, 2001).

ceded responsibility (say, to St. Petersburg) for the development of cross-border relations, it would lose its ability to reap the political and economic benefits stemming from Russia's longest border with the EU. Shliamin characterized the republic's unique position in terms of filling a crucial "niche" (which might otherwise be called a gatekeeper role). The republican government could be a partner for cross-border cooperation projects initiated at the raion or enterprise levels. At some point those projects would have to reckon with the territorial branches of federal agencies in the republic (customs, border guards, and so forth). As a partner for cross-border projects, the republican government could smooth relations with the federal agencies by vouching for the projects and coordinating their activities. As a legal entity, the republic would also be eligible to receive funding from the federal government or from external organizations or programs (such as TACIS) to devote to such projects.[123]

In this vein, perhaps, the head of the Karelian Scientific Center (Karel'skii Nauchnyi Tsentr), Aleksandr Titov, supported Shliamin's position in arguing that globalization and regionalization processes occur simultaneously and do not contradict one another.[124] The fact that the first regional seminar discussion of the doctrine was held in Petrozavodsk was partly explained by personal connections among the republican government and members of TsSR, but also by the republic's interest in utilizing the new structure in search of models for cooperation, including promotion of its own projects and potential for participation in inter-regional "megaprojects."[125] When the doctrine was shelved, however, it is likely that the republican administration heaved a sigh of relief. The centralization of relations with Europe in St. Petersburg potentially threatened the republic's own attempts to become

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[123] Author's interview with Valerii Aleksandrovich Shliamin, Minister of Foreign Relations, Republic of Kareliia, Petrozavodsk, 14 December 2001.
[124] *Kareliia*, 7 June 2001.
[125] *Severnyi Kur'er* (Petrozavodsk), 13 July 2001.

Russia's bridge to Europe, most prominently through the promotion of the "Euroregion-Kareliia" project.[126]

Insofar as the republican administration saw the external border with Finland as a crucial economic and political resource for stimulating development within the republic, it was also crucially related to the question of the status of the republic's internal borders. Shliamin pointed out that the elimination of asymmetry in Russia's federal structure should be a goal, particularly with regard to the dual status of the autonomous okrugs. More importantly, he indicated that the reduction in the number of regions was not a goal in itself (*samotsel'*), but should follow from a strategy for development of the North-West to determine whether it would be economically rationale and to avoid wasting resources. In this sense, analysis should indicate the optimal number of regions.[127] The absence of such a strategy would mean that the republic retained its gatekeeper position at Russia's border with Finland, while the indeterminate goals of federal reform would mean that it also retained its existing borders with other Russian regions.

This does not mean, of course, that the threat of changes to internal borders was unavailable to republican politics.[128] The occasional suggestion that Kareliia might be merged with one or more of its neighbors never failed to provoke a thoughtful riposte from governor Katanandov.[129] Yet the republican government was not averse to adopting the center's justifications for centralization to pressure local

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[126] All the same, the republican authorities were careful not to appear to be conducting an independent foreign policy. The representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs RF in Petrozavodsk, Andrei Spiridonov, was a former deputy Minister of Foreign Relations for Kareliia. In his role as representative of the MFA, the bulk of his work (70-80%) already consisted of consular activities and phone calls to St. Petersburg. Author's interview, Petrozavodsk, 10 December 2001.

[127] Author's interview with Valerii Aleksandrovich Shliamin, Minister of Foreign Relations for the Republic of Kareliia, Petrozavodsk, 14 December 2001.

[128] It is worth recalling here the warning deployed during the course of revising Kareliia's constitution that the absence of a second state language would lead to the republic's transformation into "the Petrozavodsk raion of Leningrad oblast'." (see Chapter Four)

[129] Most recently, Katanandov characterized the suggestion that Kareliia might be merged with Arkhangel'sk, Murmansk, and Vologda oblasts to create a 'Karelo-Belomorskii krai' as a "strategic mistake." Reported in Regnum.ru, 13 April 2004.

government, as exemplified by the brief attempt to establish economic districts to oversee the republic's municipalities in 2001.[130] While the initiative brought short-term political dividends, it was not strictly necessary as the republic had already established the "ruling vertical" in the raions.[131] It is worth noting, however, that the proposal was never officially dropped, but was added to the republic's program for socio-economic development through 2010.

Perm

The issue of unification had been actively discussed in Perm oblast and featured prominently in Governor Iurii Trutnev's election campaign in 2000.[132] A series of agreements between Perm and Komi-Permiatskii autonomous okrug (KPAO, or in local parlance, "Komi okrug") were signed during the 1990s[133] and the two regions conducted regular consultative meetings for the realization of joint projects. Though relations tended to be marred by ongoing differences over project priorities, funding, and leadership, the regional press reported in early 2001 that as much as 85% of the public favored merging.[134] It was even suggested that KPAO would not drag down Perm's economy, even if the salaries of all *biudzhetniki* were raised to Perm's level, since the okrug was so sparsely populated.[135]

The situation was a bit more complicated within the regional administrations, however, judging by the positions adopted in the oblast and okrug governments.

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[130] See discussion in Chapter Four.
[131] Author's interview with Nikolai Ivanovich Levin, Speaker of the Chamber of Representatives, Republic of Kareliia, Petrozavodsk, 5 December 2001.
[132] See Chapter Five.
[133] For example, see: Dogovor "O razgranichenii polnomochii mezhdu organami vlasti i upravleniia Permskoi oblasti i Komi-Permiatskogo avtonomnogo okruga" (1992); Dogovor "O razgranichenii predmetov vedeniia i polnomochii mezhdu organami gosudarstvennoi vlasti Rossiiskoi Federatsii i organami gosudarstvennoi vlasti Permskoi oblast i organami gosudarstvennoi vlasti Komi-Permiatskogo avtonomnogo okruga" (1996); Dogovor "Ob otnosheniiakh mezhdu organami gosudarstvennoi vlasti Permsoi oblasti i organami gosudarstvennoi vlasti Komi-Permiatskogo avtonomnogo okruga" (1997); Soglashenie "O vzaimnom sotrudnichestve Zakonodatel'nogo Sobraniia Permsoi oblasti i Zakonodatel'nogo Sobraniia Komi-Permiatskogo avtonomnogo okruga" (1999).
[134] *Mestnoe Vremia* (Perm'), 31 January 2001.
[135] *Novyi Kompan'on* (Perm'), 13 February 2001.

Governor Iurii Trutnev considered the main obstacles to merging to be "chiefly technical" in nature, though the issues were broad in scope – the ambiguity of Russia's budget legislation on such matters, the lack of a juridical precedent for merging, the need for a mechanism to amend the Russian constitution, and the necessity of "explaining to the people" the reasons for the merger.[136] Deputy Governor Nikolai Iashin further argued that the oblast already provided all social and infrastructural work in the okrug, that the only parts of the okrug economy that functioned effectively were branches of oblast enterprises, and that unification was inevitable.[137] Meanwhile the okrug administration in Kudymkar had a different perspective. Deputy Governor Viktor Rychkov held that the economic structure of the okrug's raions presented little interest to the oblast, concluding that "in the final count, how we live depends on ourselves."[138] The okrug's assembly speaker, Ivan Chetin, argued from a very different perspective that the oblast was dependent upon the okrug for timber and food products. For Chetin, the two regions' legislation, people, and histories were already entwined such that relations between the regions were a model for others to follow.[139]

The enlargement process gained momentum as Perm's governor, Iurii Trutnev, became increasingly active in engaging the federal center. Along with KPAO's governor, Gennadii Savel'ev, Trutnev decided to cancel the region's power-sharing treaty with the Kremlin in July 2001. Trutnev justified the move by arguing that such treaties violated the constitutional provision of the equality of federal subjects, and that the treaty had not afforded any particular privileges to the oblast

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[136] Author's interview with Iurii Petrovich Trutnev, Governor of Perm Oblast', Perm', 9 November 2001.
[137] Author's interview with Nikolai Arsen'evich Iashin, Deputy Governor of Perm Oblast', Perm', 15 November 2001.
[138] Author's interview with Viktor Vasil'evich Rychkov, Deputy Head of Administration of Komi-Permiatskii Autonomous Okrug, Kudymkar, 2 November 2001.
[139] Author's interview with Ivan Vasil'evich Chetin, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Komi-Permiatskii Autonomous Okrug, Kudymkar, 2 November 2001.

regardless. More crucially, the *timing* of the declaration was explained by the oblast's desire to be involved in the process of reforming the demarcation of powers at the level of the Presidential Administration.[140] In particular, Trutnev linked the willingness to end the treaty to the necessity of contributing to the work of the Kozak commission.[141] His efforts were successful insofar as the Perm administration's senator in the Federation Council, Oleg Chirkunov, was named to the Kozak commission in May 2002.[142]

While Trutnev was becoming more popular in the Kremlin, Savel'ev was not. The Main Federal Inspector for Perm oblast and KPAO, Vladimir Solomonov, was directed to increase focus on KPAO after the region's administration selected businessman Oganes Oganian as Federation Council senator against the center's wishes. In December 2001, Solomonov was called to Moscow on urgent business, during which time Savel'ev was reportedly "informed" that Solomonov would be chosen by KPAO's legislative assembly as its Federation Council senator.[143] Shortly thereafter, Solomonov reported that Kirienko spoke in favor of the merging of regions at a meeting of Federation Council senators from the Volga Federal District. Solomonov's personal opinion was that, "small regions like KPAO should be merged with others since they do not play any significant role in the government."[144] Within two months, Oganian's position was almost indistinguishable from Solomonov's.[145]

With the start of 2002, then, the question of unification became an active topic of discussion. Trutnev emphasized the extent to which the regions were breaking new ground politically and legally, but also showed concern about the center's response:

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[140] *Novyi Kompan'on* (Perm'), 17 July 2001.
[141] *Mestnoe Vremia* (Perm'), 18 July 2001.
[142] *Novyi Kompan'on* (Perm'), 21 May 2002.
[143] *Novyi Kompan'on* (Perm'), 27 December 2001.
[144] *Parma Novosti* (Kudymkar), 4 April 2002.
[145] Oganian stated that, "the process of joining our okrug with Perm oblast is unavoidable... Any negative statements regarding the process are due exclusively to the personal relations between the heads of KPAO and *Prikam'e*." *Parma Novosti* (Kudymkar), 18 April 2002.

> The merging of regions has not yet occurred. We do not know the rules of the game. Let's say that we carry out a referendum and write a letter to the president requesting that our regions be merged. The president correspondingly makes requests to the government, Ministry of Finance, and so forth. MinFin [*sic*] works out a budget for the new region. We look at the budget and cry. [146]

Reportedly a group of specialists from Perm started serious negotiations with the Ministry of Finance regarding funding for KPAO after merging with Perm. Meanwhile, the KPAO administration campaigned to discredit the idea of merging regions.[147] Savel'ev caused a minor sensation in claiming that Trutnev was making preparations for unification in Moscow without consulting KPAO's administration.[148] He also complained that KPAO remained the target of exploitation by Perm, as large companies (specifically Lukoil and a timber works factory in Solikamsk) continually promised to invest in the social sphere and reneged.[149]

While Trutnev admitted to consultations with the Presidential Administration and the Russian Government, he argued that it would have been improper to discuss the matter publicly before it was known if the "technology" for unification existed. Perm's governor added that "the integration train is moving forward" and it would be best for the regions to be sitting "in the locomotive" if they hoped to benefit from being the first to merge. [150] Andrei Klimov, the State Duma deputy for KPAO, issued a statement together with Trutnev clarifying that the process of unification would require full agreement of both regions' legislative assemblies and administrations, consultations with the Presidential Administration, Government, and the Federal Assembly, followed by a referendum on unification in both regions. Only after the

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[146] *Parma Novosti* (Kudymkar), 7 March 2002.
[147] *Novyi Kompan'on* (Perm'), 16 April 2002; *Parma Novosti* (Kudymkar), 18 April 2002.
[148] *Permskie Novosti* (Perm'), 26 April 2002.
[149] *Zvezda* (Perm'), 23 April 2002.
[150] *Zvezda* (Perm'), 30 April 2002.

successful passage of the referendum would the president initiate the legal process with a draft federal constitutional law.[151]

The issue dominated public politics in KPAO by the end of April 2002. A special session of the okrug's assembly to discuss social-economic development (and specifically Savel'ev's program for the okrug's development from 2002 to 2006) quickly turned towards adopting a request addressed to Putin, the Government and the Federal Assembly regarding KPAO's merging with Perm oblast.[152] In June 2002, Trutnev made his first official visit to KPAO, traveling to the capital city Kudymkar as well as to a couple of raions in the company of Savel'ev.[153] In meetings with citizens the issue of unification with Perm became the key topic.[154]

The official purpose of the visit was the signing of an agreement on "the realization of priority projects" between oblast and okrug. Unofficially, Trutnev also brought a draft letter from the oblast assembly to be sent to the federal Government regarding the process of unification with KPAO. The letter lay untouched for a month until a joint visit by Federation Council Chairman Sergei Mironov, Kirienko and Trutnev to Kudymkar. Mironov succeeded in convincing Savel'ev to start negotiations with Trutnev for unification by promising that the process would be overseen by the federal center and regulated by the Federal Assembly. Savel'ev later stated that the federal center's support would be the key factor in assuring the development of projects beneficial for the region's economy, including gas pipeline construction, the Belkomur railroad, and geological survey work, "even if the okrug becomes part of the oblast."[155]

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[151] *Profsoiuznyi Kur'er* (Perm'), 8 May 2002.
[152] *Parma Novosti* (Kudymkar), 2 May 2002.
[153] *Parma Novosti* (Kudymkar), 6 June 2002.
[154] *Parma Novosti* (Kudymkar), 14 June 2002. In Maikor, residents were indignant at Savel'ev's claim that he had "15,000 signatures against unification on my desk." One replied, "we've seen this list! It didn't say anything about unification!" Savel'ev's response was furtive: "I didn't collect the signatures personally."
[155] *Parma Novosti* (Kudymkar), 11 July 2002. Perm oblast's deputy governor Nikolai Iashchin echoed the point later on, indicating that, "today we can receive the support of the federal center [for the]

The process was fully underway by September 2002 when both governors established working groups on unification.[156] By February 2003, the KPAO legislative assembly agreed to submit a formal request to Putin for unification, issued jointly with Perm's legislative assembly and signed by both Savel'ev and Trutnev.[157] Despite vocal opposition from a contingent of academics in Komi okrug, the region's deputies remained silent throughout the session and voted unanimously for unification.[158] The agreement was signed in Kudymkar on 17 February 2003. In March 2003, both governors met with Putin in Novo-Ogareva, where (according to Savel'ev) the president guaranteed that work would speed up on the construction of a gas pipeline, geological survey work, and investments in the development of all-year (as opposed to seasonal) roads.[159]

Despite the agreement of Komi okrug's governor, some sources of opposition to the merger remained (or at least, were alleged) in public debates. Klimov suggested that forces in Ekaterinburg tied to the *Uralmash* organization were opposed to unification.[160] The KPAO branch of Liberal Russia actively opposed the merger, claiming that "many of the indigenous people [in the region] don't even speak Russian and consequently do not understand what is happening." The party's representative also took aim at the regional government for constraining media access for those opposed to merging, and further claimed that Klimov's assistant had offered her a $10,000 bribe to withdraw from the region's politics.[161] Somewhat more pragmatically, former okrug assembly speaker Ivan Chetin led the "Coordinating Council for the Future of Komi Okrug" (which included Liberal Russia) and

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socio-economic development of Komi okrug. The infrastructure projects that could affect the economy of Komi okrug are supported politically by the federal center." *Novyi Kompan'on* (Perm'), 18 February 2003.

[156] *Permskii Obozrevatel'* (Perm'), 1 July 203.

[157] *Parma Novosti* (Kudymkar), 16 January – 6 February 2003.

[158] *Novyi Kompan'on* (Perm'), 18 February 2003.

[159] *Gazeta*, 28 May 2003.

[160] *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 28 April 2003.

[161] *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 20 May 2003.

demanded to see the draft charter for the new region prior to the referendum on merging. In particular, Chetin sought a fixed quota for representation in the new regional assembly (six to eight seats out of sixty) and a veto over the new assembly's decisions if they ran contrary to the socio-economic interests of the okrug.[162] Perm's Deputy Governor Nikolai Iashin quickly declared the oblast administration's willingness to consider these terms.[163]

In September 2003 the wording of the referendum question was approved by the oblast assembly as follows: "Are you agreed that Perm oblast and Komi-Permiatskii autonomous okrug merge into a new subject of the Russian Federation – Permskii krai, in which Komi-Permiatskii autonomous okrug will be an administrative-territorial unit with special status in the krai's charter in accordance with the legislation of the Russian Federation?" It soon appeared that opposition had emerged from within the Russian Government. During a visit to Kudymkar, Liberal Russia's Ivan Rybkin claimed that the Ministry of Finance was opposed to granting the okrug special status within the enlarged regions.[164] The document to which Rybkin referred was in fact authored by the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, and opposed the granting of "special status" on the grounds that it would violate the federal law on the structure of regional governments.[165] The leaked document was quickly disowned and did not particularly damage the campaign for merging the regions, but its aftermath did reveal much about the ground that had been covered in the negotiations over the okrug's future status within the new region. Iashin stated that representatives from KPAO in the working group on unification suggested making Komi okrug a municipal unit in the new federal subject. It would have a reserved quota of seats in the new assembly, while it was uncertain whether it

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[162] As reported by Novosti.perm.ru, 1 July 2003.
[163] As reported by Novosti.perm.ru, 17 July 2003.
[164] As reported by Novosti.perm.ru, 5 September 2003.
[165] As reported by Novosti.perm.ru, 12 September 2003.

would receive a special veto since there was no such legal standard in other regions. The "special status" of Komi okrug would be written into the new charter, not the Russian Constitution, and would involve budget issues, the okrug's economy, and the transfer of government functions.[166]

Approximately two months prior to the referendum, the central press concluded that the opposition to the merger lacked the power, finances, and media access necessary to halt the process.[167] In the run up to the referendum, there were 49 initiative groups registered as officially supporting the merger and only one group registered in opposition.[168] Partly this was due to the oblast's use of "administrative resource." In particular, the oblast's Deputy Governor Iashin set up a foundation called "Permskii krai" that distributed a free newspaper supporting enlargement. Iashin lobbied regional business leaders to "use all of your authority and administrative resources" to convince their co-workers of the necessity of participating in the upcoming referendum, and offered them the chance to buy advertising space in the newspaper.[169]

But unquestionably more decisive was the intervention of central politicians, and especially Putin. A veritable parade of political celebrities provided outspoken support for the merger, including Prime Minister Mikhail Kas'ianov,[170] Minister for Nationalities Affairs Vladimir Zorin,[171] and State Duma Speaker Gennadii Seleznev.[172] When Putin himself visited Kudymkar to express his support for the merger on 31 October 2003, he became the first Russian head of state to visit the region in 100 years.[173] Putin stated that raising the region's economy while

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[166] As reported by Novosti.perm.ru, 18 September 2003.
[167] *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 10 October 2003.
[168] *Permskii Obozrevatel'* (Perm'), 12 November 2003.
[169] *Kommersant*, 14 October 2003.
[170] *RIA Novosti*, 27 August 2003.
[171] As reported at Krai.perm.ru, 28 October 2003.
[172] *IA Novyi Region*, 13 November 2003.
[173] *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 30 October 2003; *Rosbalt*, 3 November 2003.

maintaining the language and culture of indigenous peoples would prove an important example for other regions that are "formally independent," but incapable of attending to needs of indigenous peoples.

Immediately following his trip, Putin signed a decree "On the measures for social-economic development of Komi-Permiatskii Autonomous Okrug and Perm Oblast," detailing the full extent of federal support for the region through 2006. The decree called for federal investment of three billion rubles (more than $103 million) over the next three years, primarily intended for the okrug's infrastructural development but also to allow oblast businesses to participate in the realization of large projects. Federal funds were to be used for construction of the Ocher-Kudymkar-Kupros gas pipeline, completion of a 70 km stretch of highway along the Kudymkar-Syktyvkar route (to the border with Komi Republic) as well as a secondary bridge over the Kama River in the oblast capital. Federal funds would continue to subsidize the okrug through 2009, after which it would independently participate in the budget process of Permskii krai.[174] Trutnev and Savel'ev resolved the question of the okrug's status within the new region by mid-November, announcing that it would become a unified municipal unit. The head of this municipality would be elected simultaneously with the governor of the new region in 2005 and the municipal assembly would consist of twenty deputies. After 2005, federal funding for the okrug would be distributed through the enlarged region's budget.[175]

The referendum passed the support of both regions' populations by overwhelming margins: 89.69% in Komi-Permiatskii autonomous okrug and 84.89% in Perm oblast, with an overall turnout of 62.67%.[176] Putin quickly introduced a

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[174] *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 3 November 2003.
[175] *IA Novyi Region*, 12 November 2003.
[176] *Rossiiskaia Gazeta*, 8 December 2003; *Rossiiskaia Gazeta*, 9 December 2003. Note that a 50% turnout was necessary in both regions for the referendum to be declared valid. The results for Perm oblast have been reported differently by various sources, though all accounts have the result as being around 84%.

constitutional federal law for the creation of the new region, Permskii krai. The law was approved in three readings on a single day by the State Duma and confirmed by the Federation Council within the week.[177] The law established that Permskii krai would officially come into existence on 1 December 2005 and provided for a transitional period for the formation of its governing structures to end no later than 31 January 2007. The krai's governor would be elected on 4 December 2005 and the krai assembly following the end of the current terms of the oblast and okrug assemblies in December 2006. The regions' current State Duma deputies and Federation Council senators would finish out their terms. Afterwards, Komi okrug's seat in the State Duma would be effectively retained in the maintenance of a single mandate district within the okrug's boundaries. One of the more interesting passages in the law limits the activities of the two regions' assemblies during the transitional period. During the period prior to the election of the krai assembly, the two existing parliaments were prohibited from signing treaties or agreements with other federal subjects, signing international or foreign economic treaties or agreements, adopting any laws (including the initiation of referendum) to halt the process of creation of the krai, or demanding the resignation of the governors or their appointees. For their own part, the governors were merely prohibited from dissolving the current assemblies.

Perm oblast's governor Trutnev was duly rewarded for his efforts, becoming the only governor to be appointed to Putin's new government as Minister of Natural Resources on 9 March 2004. In accordance with the federal constitutional law establishing Permskii krai, elections would not be held for an interim governor. Putin

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[177] Federal'nyi konstitutsionnyi zakon Rossiiskoi Federatsii ot 25 marta 2004 g. N 1-FKZ "Ob obrazovanii v sostave Rossiiskoi Federatsii novogo sub"ekta Rossiiskoi Federatsii v rezul'tate ob"edineniia Permskoi oblasti i Komi-Permiatskogo avtonomnogo okruga." Printed in *Rossiiskaia Gazeta*, 26 March 2004.

appointed Trutnev's close ally and Federation Council senator, Oleg Chirkunov, as acting governor until the election of the new krai's governor in 2005.[178]

Tiumen

If the "easy" case for regional enlargement was represented by Perm oblast and Komi-Permiatskii autonomous okrug, the "hard" case clearly was represented by Tiumen oblast, Khanty-Mansiiskii autonomous okrug (KhMAO, or "Iugra"), and Iamalo-Nenetskii autonomous okrug (IaNAO, or "Iamal"). During the mid- to late-1990s, the relations among these three Western Siberian regions were confrontational, at best. By 2000, the governor of Tiumen oblast, Leonid Roketskii, complained "as a patriot of our krai" that the region was losing the last elements of its unity. In particular he noted that the oblast flag and crest were no longer displayed at official events in the autonomous okrugs.[179] The oblast's administration's conflict with the autonomous okrugs culminated in Roketskii's defeat by the "candidate of the north," Sergei Sobianin, in January 2001.[180] While Sobianin's victory was expected to ease relations among the three regions, no one predicted at the time that the oblast would continue to pursue Roketskii's goal of subordinating the okrugs to the oblast. Within a few years, however, the process appeared to be underway.

There were several key differences from the situation in the 1990s. Foremost among them was the activation of intra-regional investment by the north into the oblast and revived policy coordination through inter-regional consultative institutions. Second, Sobianin quickly and effectively consolidated political control within the oblast via a spectacular reduction of local government from 295 municipalities to 22

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[178] *Rossiiskaia Gazeta*, 26 March 2004.
[179] *Tiumenskaia Pravda Segodnia*, 27 April 2000.
[180] See Chapter Five for discussion of the election. Sobianin was former speaker of the Khanty-Mansiiskii legislative assembly and first deputy polpred in the Urals Federal District. He was endorsed by the governors of both autonomous okrugs.

raions. Lastly, the center played an important role in reforming the distribution of powers among the *matreshka* regions and in the centralization of budgetary relations.

Sobianin's victory in the January 2001 gubernatorial race was largely bought on credit as the northern okrugs promised to invest substantially in the oblast economy and infrastructure. In mid-December 2000, Khanty-Mansiisk promised to invest 1.5 billion rubles for the construction of three suburban complexes (*mikroraion*), including apartments, schools, trade centers, service enterprises, roads, and engineering networks, as well as investing about 70 million rubles directly into the city's budget.[181] This impressive display was followed by Sobianin's proposal for the coordination of socio-economic policy among the three regions.[182] With the signing of the agreement in February 2001, the governors of the northern okrugs promised to invest 15 billion rubles annually into the oblast economy.[183] In return, Sobianin vowed to maintain political stability and not to pursue regional enlargement, pledging that "no experiments will be conducted on Tiumen oblast's territory."[184]

It is significant that the latter agreement was concluded within the framework of the Council of Governors (*Sovet gubernatorov*). The Council was the organizational evolution of the administrative council established in 1991 by Tiumen oblast's first (appointed) governor, Iurii Shafranik. While the Council initially facilitated the regulation of relations among the regions on a treaty basis, it became increasingly a decorative body from 1996-7 as relations declined.[185] After Sobianin replaced Roketskii as oblast governor, the Council was revived and gradually acquired structures for regional development. With the conclusion of the agreement on socio-economic cooperation, the Council's structure was enlarged with the

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[181] *Tiumenskie Izvestiia*, 15 December 2000. Text of the agreement published in: *Tiumenskie Izvestiia*, 19 December 2000.
[182] *Tiumenskaia Pravda*, 23 December 2000. Text of the draft agreement published in: *Tiumenskaia Pravda*, 30 December 2000.
[183] *Tiumenskaia Pravda*, 16 February 2001; *Tiumenskaia Izvestiia*, 16 February 2001.
[184] *Tiumenskaia Pravda*, 16 February 2001.
[185] *Tiumenskaia Pravda*, 28 November 2001; *Tiumenskie Izvestiia*, 29 November 2001.

forming of an economic council and inter-regional coordinating councils on regulating consumer markets, social policy, transport, and communications.[186] In the economic sphere, the Council became the basis for coordinating the regions' policies in diverse areas, including establishing a common tax policy and reinforcing the border with Kazakhstan.[187] The Council also became a focal point for informal political coordination. The date, order, and conditions for the December 2001 elections to the oblast Duma were established by the Council *prior* to approval by the regional assemblies.[188] The Council also provided a forum for the governors to agree on their preferred candidates in the oblast Duma elections.[189] Moreover, proposals from the oblast Duma to reform the assembly's structure were postponed when Sobianin claimed that the Council did not have enough time to conduct the necessary legal analysis of changes to the oblast charter.[190]

The Council of Governors thus went from being a declaratory institution with merely latent potential to an active forum for informal negotiation and policy coordination. In the sphere of political coordination, one could even say that the Council provided an extra-legal mechanism for the governors to take on powers granted by law to the legislative assemblies. In this fashion, the process of political and economic "integration" among the three regions contributed to the domination of the executive branch in relations with the regional assembly. If the balance among

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[186] Author's interview with Liudmila Il'inichna Ivanova, Administration of Affairs for the Council of Governors, Tiumen', 7 May 2002.
[187] *Sibirskii Posad* (Surgut), 15 May 2001; *Tiumenskaia Pravda*, 18 September 2001. For example, the March 2002 session of the Council examined proposals for programs to fight AIDS, providing educational support, development of the fishing industry, passenger transport, energy conservation, and renovation of Tobolsk as a center for culture and tourism. *Tiumenskaia Pravda*, 26 March 2002.
[188] *Tiumenskie Izvestiia*, 23 June 2001. Note that federal law required that the regional assemblies determine the dates of elections, meaning that the Council of Governors provided an informal mechanism for the governors to steer the process as long as they were united.
[189] *Tiumenskaia Pravda*, 18 September 2001.
[190] Two projects to reform the oblast' charter were proposed at the time. The first would have introduced a bicameral assembly with the lower chamber elected exclusively from the oblast' and the upper chamber from all three regions. The second project sought to double the size of the oblast' assembly with half of the deputies elected by party list. *Tiumenskii Kur'er*, 26 June 2001. The party list reform was later mandated by federal law and some variant was expected to be introduced prior to the next oblast' Duma elections in 2006.

the regions would then be decided on the level of inter-personal relations among the governors, Sobianin was likely to remain dependent upon his northern patrons until establishing himself with an independent power base. To do this meant that the oblast's new governor, elected primarily from the autonomous okrugs, had to gain control *within* the oblast's borders.

Sobianin's plan for gaining control within the oblast's borders was, literally, to change the oblast's internal borders. In Tiumen oblast, the regional administration oversaw the work of 22 raions that were directly subordinate to the governor. At the same time, the oblast had 295 municipal entities, the mayors and assemblies of which were elected independently of Sobianin's administration and largely supported Leonid Roketskii in the January 2001 election. The new governor's task therefore was to liquidate the "political inheritance" of Roketskii.[191] Sobianin began by replacing the heads of thirteen raion administrations.[192] At the same time, the viability of the oblast's model of local government became the subject of intense scrutiny by the regional assembly. On the eve of a roundtable discussion on local government, the speaker of the oblast assembly, Sergei Korepanov, argued that Tiumen's model was inappropriate to the requirements of local government in contemporary Russia. In particular, he pointed out that the oblast administration could not monitor and verify the implementation of laws in 300 municipalities. The oblast administration could not even expect to accord one day apiece to each mayor, which would negatively affect the formation of the region's budget. By contrast, he claimed that such problems did not arise in the autonomous okrugs, where local government was exercised at the

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[191] *Tiumenskii Kur'er*, 11 August 2001.

[192] The rest were allowed to stay following individual meetings with Sobianin. The governor commented that, "The main thing is that [the heads of raion administration] are up to the tasks set before them." *Tiumenskaia Pravda*, 18 April 2001.

level of the raion. Korepanov even recalled the operation of the Soviet era *raikom* as further evidence of the superiority of the model.[193]

Within two months, referenda were planned in fourteen raions on whether to transfer local government to the raion level. If successful, elections for the heads of raion administrations and deputies for local assemblies would be held simultaneously with the December 2001 elections to the oblast Duma. The newly elected "mayors" would then appoint their own representatives (*polpredy*) to oversee the former municipal bodies.[194] During the transitional period in the change-over to the raion model, elections for the new raion assemblies would be set by the new heads of raion administration following the December 2001 elections.[195] The oblast administration's press began a virtual campaign in support of the referenda, drawing readers' attention to the senselessness of maintaining an "army of bureaucrats" at the local level that drained the oblast budget, as well as the superior economic rationale for changing over to the raion model. The chairman of the oblast administration's Committee for Local Self-Government, Vladimir Iakovlev, argued that the bulk of municipal bodies were incapable of fulfilling their duties and should either transfer their powers to raion administrations or "form some kind of unified structure."[196]

While the oblast administration continued to emphasize throughout that the initiative to merge with surrounding municipalities must come "from below," some heads of local government complained that the oblast was pressuring local assemblies to initiate the referenda.[197] When pressed on the question, the deputy chair of the administration's Committee for Local Self-Government, Anatolii Mayshikin, sidestepped the question, stating instead that the present system of local government

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[193] *Tiumenskie Izvestiia*, 24 April 2001.
[194] *Tiumenskaia Pravda Segodnia*, 15 June 2001.
[195] *Tiumenskaia Pravda*, 17 October 2001.
[196] *Tiumenskaia Pravda Segodnia*, 26 June 2001.
[197] The initiators of the referenda could be either a group of citizens or the local assembly. *Tiumenskii Kur'er*, 30 June 2001.

was forced upon the oblast by Roketskii and that a similar movement towards reducing the number of municipal entities was underway in Kurgan oblast.[198] Meanwhile, the oblast administration's official press featured a steady tide of testimonials prior to the referenda in nineteen raions: a unanimous show of support at a roundtable on merging in Ishim[199] ; a similar roundtable discussion in Nizhnetavdinsk[200]; a report on the dire situation in Berdiuzhskii raion, where people were weary of weak local government[201]; an editorial from the Aromashevskii raion veterans' council in support of the upcoming referendum[202]; and so forth. By the end of August 2001, referenda on merging local government at the raion level successfully passed in all but two raions. The regional press criticized the "passivity" (*passivnost'*) of the heads of local government in almost all raion centers where votes in favor were lower than the over-all vote within the raion ("only" 55% in the raion centers, as opposed to the average support of 70%).[203] In the December 2001 elections, *all* of Sobianin's appointees were elected to head the "new" raion administrations.[204]

The evolution of Tiumen's governor as an independent actor with a consolidated base of support within the oblast was further augmented by central initiatives in budgetary centralization and the division of powers among oblast and autonomous okrugs. Under Roketskii, the oblast had long been dependent upon the royalties paid to the autonomous okrugs on the use of natural resources. The issue was sufficiently contentious insofar as Roketskii felt that the oblast did not receive nearly enough of the funds, while the okrugs felt that the royalty payments merely

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[198] *Tiumenskaia Pravda Segodnia*, 10 July 2001. Malyshkin also stated, somewhat disingenuously, that the administration itself was surprised by the force of the movement for merging municipalities.
[199] *Tiumenskaia Pravda Segodnia*, 7 July 2001.
[200] *Tiumenskaia Pravda Segodnia*, 10 July 2001.
[201] *Tiumenskaia Pravda Segodnia*, 13 July 2001.
[202] *Tiumenskaia Pravda Segodnia*, 14 July 2001.
[203] *Tiumenskaia Pravda Segodnia*, 7 August 2001; *Tiumenskaia Pravda*, 8 August 2001. Iarkovskii raion planned to hold a referendum on merging its municipalities in December 2001, while the heads of local government in Tiumenskii raion resolutely opposed holding a referendum.
[204] *Tiumenskaia Pravda*, 25 December 2001; *Tiumenskie Izvestiia*, 29 December 2001.

served to cover "gigantic holes" in the oblast's economy.[205] The initial agreements among the regions following Sobianin's election appeared to minimize the issue's salience by compensating the oblast with direct investment in the regional economy and infrastructure.

In late April 2001, Sobianin sounded the alarm in the oblast Duma. The governor announced that the draft federal law "On natural resources" (*O nedrakh*) and the second part of the Tax Code discussed in the State Duma would first count all payments on the use of natural resources into the federal budget and only then divide them among regions. The assembly's speaker, Sergei Korepanov, elaborated that under the existing system about 60% of the payments stayed in the okrugs and 40% went to the center, of which about half (18%) was returned to Tiumen oblast. Under the planned changes, the oblast budget would lose more than six billion rubles.[206] Sobianin lobbied the regions' interests in Moscow throughout May and June, reportedly achieving a promise from Putin to help in resolving the matter.[207] The State Duma's decision followed intense negotiations and compromise. Instead of losing all payments and becoming wholly dependent upon federal transfers, the oblast succeeded in getting 5.5% of the taxes on resource extraction paid directly into the oblast budget (20% went to the autonomous okrugs and the remaining 74.5% to the federal budget).[208] Sobianin called the compromise the "greatest joy" of his first year in office, while his "greatest disappointment" was that the oblast did not get 7%.[209] For the oblast, that 5.5% meant the preservation of some budgetary independence of the center (taxes on hydrocarbons accounted for 59.6% of the oblast's 2002

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[205] *Tiumenskie Izvestiia*, 21 September 2000.
[206] *Tiumenskie Izvestiia*, 25 April 2001.
[207] *Tiumenskie Izvestiia*, 19 May 2001; *Tiumenskie Izvestiia*, 14 June 2001.
[208] *Tiumenskaia Pravda Segodnia*, 10 July 2001.
[209] Andrei Fateev, "Sergei Sobianin: Razgovory o likvidatsii okrugov i popytkakh zakhvata vlasti v Tiumenskoi oblasti - prosto domysly," *Direktor*, March 2002, 46.

budget).[210] The moment was further notable for the display of solidarity among the regions' governors and assemblies. Sobianin denied rumors of a growing rift with the governors of the autonomous okrugs, stating that they no longer discussed the "apartment issue" (*kvartirnyi vopros*) – a euphemism for the complex relations among the regions – but that "everyone lives in isolated 'rooms' with all the conveniences."[211] The regions' cooperation continued through 2002 in facing down the attempt by the Ministry of Natural Resources to terminate the "two key" system for granting licenses for natural resource extraction.[212]

The situation appeared to have changed by 2003, however, as discussion of the Kozak reforms accelerated. Initially the oblast assembly resolved to support the amendments proposed by their counterparts in the assemblies of the autonomous okrugs. The amendments effectively sought to up-end Kozak's formula for regulating relations among *matreshki* regions: rather than transferring the majority of powers to the krais and oblasts by default (that is, in the absence of an agreement or treaty to the contrary), they proposed that the autonomous okrugs retain full powers by default. The oblast Duma predictably supported the okrugs, yet the reasoning bordered on the pragmatic (or even fatalist). As explained by Korepanov, there was no point in risking political confrontation with the autonomous okrugs over the matter, particularly since "our decision…[will not] affect the law's adoption."[213] Iugra's Governor Aleksandr Filipenko quickly adopted a defensive position, stating in an interview that the reduction in the number of federal subjects probably was inevitable and necessary, but that the process should proceed "from the perspective of the state's economic and societal security to determine the goals and criteria of regional

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[210] Andrei Fateev, "Tiumenskaia oblast': Slabost' Severa i sila Iuga," *Direktor*, February 2002, 71.
[211] Fateev, "Sergei Sobianin: Razgovory o likvidatsii okrugov.," 46-7.
[212] As reported by Strana.ru, 15 November 2001 and 19 April 2002.
[213] *Tiumenskie Izvestiia*, 26 February 2003.

mergers."[214] The speaker of Iamal's assembly, Sergei Khariuchi, warned that the okrug would seek to fully separate from the oblast if the reform went through.[215] In contrast to his northern colleagues, Sobianin adopted a calmer tone in stating that he personally had nothing against the substance of the Kozak reforms and that any law was subject to compromise.[216]

As rumors began to circulate about the impending liquidation of the autonomous okrugs, the oblast administration was stunned by an unexpected provocation. The Tiumen Youth League (*Tiumenskii soiuz molodezhi*) attempted to initiate a referendum over whether the three regions should become fully separate federal subjects. The move was immediately suspected of having been instigated on behalf of the northern okrugs.[217] The group's organizer, Aleksei Deev, explained that after the passing of Kozak reforms, the situation in oblast was expected to get worse unless all three regions were merged or made fully independent.[218] The referendum did not occur, but the media stir was sufficient that the governors of the three regions issued a joint statement denying the rumors of the demise of the autonomous okrugs, expressing support for the work of the Kozak commission, and stressing that the status quo among the three regions would not change as long as the law remained the same.[219]

Once the law was passed, an uneasy silence covered relations among the three regions for the latter half of 2003. While the okrugs attempted to form working

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[214] *Tiumenskie Izvestiia*, 27 February 2003. For an elaboration of this defense, see the article by the okrug's deputy governor: N.M. Dobrynin, "Rossiiskii federalizm: problemy i perspectivy," *Gosudarstvo i Pravo*, 30 November 2003.
[215] *Gazeta*, 28 May 2003.
[216] As reported by Uralpolit.ru, 18 February 2003.
[217] As reported by Uralpolit.ru, 26 February 2003.
[218] *Tiumenskie Izvestiia*, 28 February 2003; *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 6 March 2003. The proposed regions would be Tiumenskaia oblast', Iugorskaia oblast', and Iamal'skaia oblast'. Deev later explained in an interview with this author that the referendum was never expected to happen, but rather that he specifically intended to push the issue of the regions' territorial status onto the agenda in order to achieve just the opposite effect – to bring about the unification of the three regions. Deev also suggested that his consulting group had been hired by the Presidential Administration to draft a plan for reducing the number of federal subjects, though there was no way to verify this claim. Author's interview, Tiumen', July 2003.
[219] "Obrashchenie Gubernatorov," 4 March 2003, published at: http://adm.tyumen.ru

groups to establish a new treaty to delegate powers in accordance with the federal law "On the general principles...," Tiumen oblast's administration dragged its feet while continuing to express its readiness to cooperate.[220] In the meantime, the first regional merger in post-Soviet Russia between Perm oblast and Komi-Permiatskii autonomous okrug riveted national attention on the question of which regions would be next. The head of Russia's Accounting Chamber, Sergei Stepashin, stated in November 2003 that Tiumen oblast and its autonomous okrugs should merge following Perm.[221] The legislative assemblies of Perm and Tiumen oblasts signed an agreement on cooperation in priority areas, including regional mergers, on 25 November 2003.[222] Commenting immediately after the successful referendum on enlargement in Perm, Korepanov expressed skepticism about applying Perm's experience to Tiumen. He argued that the process would take longer than in Perm, pointing out that the three regions could not even agree over the purpose of the regions' working groups: while the autonomous okrugs perceived the commission as actually intended to divide powers, the oblast saw it merely as establishing the mechanism for dividing powers.[223]

It seemed clear that the Kozak reforms gave Tiumen's governor Sobianin the opportunity to re-think his relations with Khanty-Mansiisk's Filipenko and Salekhard's Neelov. Whereas Sobianin was elected governor in January 2001 primarily by the autonomous okrugs, he had acquired an independent power base in the south of the oblast and strong central support by the start of 2004. After the implementation of the Kozak reforms, the only means for preventing the bulk of the okrugs' powers from being transferred to the oblast would be the adoption of a federal law regulating relations among the regions – meaning in effect that the oblast

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[220] *Russian Regional Report*, 3 February 2004.
[221] *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 20 November 2003.
[222] Reported by Uralpolit.ru, 18 March 2004. The speakers of both assemblies were careful to point out that the situations in the two *oblasti* were too different to compare (and then proceeded to do so).
[223] Reported by Regnum.ru, 11 December 2003.

administration needed merely to wait to acquire more power. In anticipation of the Kozak reforms coming into force in 2005, the regions' bureaucrats and corporations were already re-orienting towards the south of the oblast in early 2004.[224]

As of the writing of this chapter, events in Tiumen began to develop quickly. On 24 February 2004, Sobianin and Neelov issued a joint resolution on strengthening integration processes between Tiumen oblast and Iamalo-Nenetskii autonomous okrug.[225] The governors issued a statement alongside the resolution regarding its timeliness, stating that "Today the full (*kompleksnaia*) integration of the region is on the agenda, possibly not excluding the administrative-political aspects connected with changes to the status of [the federal] subjects...comprising Tiumen oblast." The two regions established a working group to draft a program for integration to be presented to the federal and regional authorities by the end of 2004, and invited Khanty-Mansiiskii autonomous okrug to participate.[226] Iugra's administration was clearly out of the loop. Filipenko's press secretary, Anatolii Korneev, stated that the okrug was not invited to the event, nor was it even informed of the proceedings.[227] By the end of March, Sobianin and Neelov had signed a protocol announcing that agreement on economic and political unification of the two regions had been achieved in principle. Both governors stated that the Kozak reforms would be implemented in the form in which it was adopted. Sobianin added that maintaining three separate budgets only created additional expenses, concluding that "there is no sense in leaving the okrugs their powers."[228]

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[224] Author's interview with Sergei Kondrat'ev, Tiumen State University, Tiumen', 16 April 2004.
[225] "Usilienie integratsionnykh protsessov v Tiumenskoi oblasti," *Tiumenskaia Liniia* (t-l.ru), 24 February 2004.
[226] Zaiavlenie "Ob osnovnykh napravleniiakh uglubleniia integratsii Tiumenskoi oblasti i Iamalo-Nenetskogo avtonomnogo okruga," printed by Uralpolit.ru, 25 February 2004; *Kommersant*, 25 February 2004.
[227] As reported by Uralpolit.ru, 25 February 2004.
[228] *Kommersant*, 24 March 2004.

Once again, Filipenko's press secretary expressed Iugra's distress: "Any statement of our governor regarding the protection of social and constitutional rights of the okrug's residents will be considered an attempt to interfere with the unification of the brotherly peoples of Tiumen and Iamal."[229] Filipenko responded by offering to contribute 20 billion rubles to Tiumen and Salekhard in exchange for retaining the okrug's powers in the social sphere.[230] A few days later, a social group in Khanty-Mansiisk sent a letter to Putin requesting the preservation of the region's constitutional status in order to safeguard its indigenous people.[231] Sobianin's press secretary, Aleksandr Romanov, retorted that the letter had nothing to do with society, but had been written by "okrug bureaucrats who were against the transfer of powers to Tiumen oblast from the start."[232] While the regions continued to trade blows in the public relations arena, it appeared that there was little that Khanty-Mansiisk could do to dissuade Tiumen's governor or even its assembly that unification was inevitable. Even the oblast assembly speaker Korepanov, who many considered a 'man of the north' during the assembly's standoff with former governor Roketskii, showed an increasing resignation. On the ten-year anniversary of the establishment of the oblast Duma, Korepanov was asked if his take on relations between north and south had changed since he had become assembly speaker. Korepanov replied that he had not changed, but *federal law* had changed and, "as a law-abiding person, I should implement the law, doing everything possible so that the people of the oblast do not lose anything and start to live better in the process of realization of new laws."[233]

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[229] *Kommersant*, 24 March 2004.
[230] *Kommersant*, 27 March 2004.
[231] *Russian Regional Report*, 6 April 2004.
[232] *Kommersant-Ural*, 1 April 2004.
[233] *Tiumenskie Izvestiia*, 6 April 2004.

Conclusion

Taken together, the four regions examined above illustrate different aspects of how internal borders were implicated in the politics of state centralization during Putin's first term. While the republics were not directly threatened with the revision of their borders, the affect on neighboring regions influenced republican elite's strategies and tactics for engaging the federal center. Among the oblasts and krais of the *matreshka* regions, regional enlargement was seized upon by ambitious regional elites who were tacitly supported by the federal center. Perhaps most striking was that the issue of regional enlargement went from being a latent possibility at the start of Putin's first term to a virtual inevitability by the start of his second term.

Chapter Seven: Institutions, Territory, Identity

This chapter returns to the questions posed in the introductory chapter concerning internal borders as institutions: how strong are regional borders as institutions? How do they shape or constrain political behavior? Are they a source of stability or instability? What is the nature of their relationship to the development of state capacity, and do they vary with regard to regional identity or regime type?

The institutionalist approach to borders adopted in this study stands astride the rationalist and sociological approaches discussed in the introduction. In rationalist approaches, common interests among political actors are defined by relative administrative levels or position in the federal hierarchy.[1] The territorial shape of each administrative level determines the distribution of political and economic resources available to each group. Where the distribution of resources favors local administration, territorial reform is less likely since the stronger group has a *de facto* right of veto. The preservation of territorial structures (or the maintenance of the status quo) signifies the strength of local elites in national politics. Conversely, constant reforms of administrative-territorial divisions signify domination by central elites. Achieving cooperation among central and local elites requires "an identifiable level of politics focused on the territory, participation of territorial politicians in national political life, together with a willingness to engage in territorial and bargaining and compromise."[2] Internal borders effectively are portrayed as resource containers that confer autonomy upon the actors who possess or control them.

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[1] D.A. Tikhonov, "Problemy administrativno-territorial'nogo ustroistva sub"ektov Rossiiskoi Federatsii," *Vestnik Moskovskogo Universiteta. Seriia 12: Politichaskaia Nauka*, no. 2 (2002): 15-16.
[2] Michael Keating, *State and Regional Nationalism: Territorial Politics and the European State* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1988), 244.

By contrast, sociological approaches suggest that the image of borders as mere "resource containers" is deceptive insofar as it treats the concepts of interest and exchange as independent of identity and perceptions of what counts as a resource. Far from being passive objects of political trade, borders are repositories of identity that are constitutive of regional autonomy and state sovereignty. Insofar as the state is a structure of power that relies on the assumed correspondence between identity and territory, "boundary making and breaking within and between states is a political act which can be seen to support or oppose that structure."[3]

From an institutionalist perspective, the border is "the basic political institution," the juridical line necessary for organizing rule-bound economic, social or political life. Internal borders are instruments of state policy as governments attempt to change the location and function of borders to their advantage. But the degree of the state's control over internal borders also constrains its policies and practices, in part because borders serve as markers of identity and terms of discourse.[4] In a sense, one's calculation of interest and preferences for structuring relations with other actors depends on which side of the border you are standing, and where you stand in relation to the border. The difference is subtle yet salient. When borders are stable, they reinforce and stabilize the political relationship between identity and territory.[5] Conversely, it is rare to find a case of destabilized borders that is not accompanied by

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[3] Hastings Donnan and Thomas M. Wilson, *Borders: Frontiers of Identity, Nation and State* (New York: Berg, 1999), 10.

[4] This approach to internal borders is adapted from Malcolm Anderson's work on frontiers. Malcolm Anderson, *Frontiers: Territory and State Formation in the Modern World* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 1-3.

[5] "Accordingly, from the internal perspective of the state, stable borders are reflections of presumptive beliefs which remove potentially intractable questions of the composition of the political community from the political arena. ...unless the border of the state is accepted as an immutable given, we can expect that different groups within the state will align their own perceptions of the proper border in light of the implications different borders, or different principles of inclusion and exclusion, may have for their chances to achieve and/or maintain political power." Ian S. Lustick, *Unsettled States, Disputed Lands: Britain and Ireland, France and Algeria, Israel and the West Bank-Gaza* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993), 38-9.

conflicts over identity and territory. Borders both constitute the formal organizations of the state and the procedures that structure political conduct. They shape how political actors define their interests and structure actors' relations of power with other groups.[6]

From an institutionalist perspective, then, the question of changes to internal borders is not merely one of determining the distribution of resources, nor is it a referendum on the status quo. Its advantage over the rationalist perspective is the ability to unpack concepts like "interest" by examining the processes and mechanisms that sustain (or create) definitions of interest. At the same time, the advantage over sociological approaches lies in the acknowledgement that real world politicians do not perceive themselves as inhabiting worlds of discursive structures. Political actors *do* perceive material and political advantage, and they explain political decisions by way of economic necessity or political compulsion. The advantage of the institutionalist approach relative to constructivist approaches is in contextualizing analysis such that the evaluation of power in the abstract does not supplant concrete evaluations of how power is exercised.

More importantly, the institutionalist perspective proposed here gains theoretically by combining insights of both rationalist and sociological approaches. While there is theoretical recognition that borders may foster separatism or integration, the question of when and how borders become divisive or integrative is elided by the alternative approaches to the study of borders. **The key insight is that changing borders means changing their *valence* – not just identity or territory, but the directional linkage between the two.** In the case of post-Soviet Russia,

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[6] Paraphrasing Thelen's definition of institutions, in: Kathleen Thelen and Sven Steinmo, "Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics," in *Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Analysis*, ed. Sven Steinmo, Kathleen Thelen, and Frank Longsreth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 2.

regional borders were activated during the "parade of sovereignties" in the name of regional identity. Those borders came to demarcate regional political institutions and regimes by the mid-1990s and regional economic orientations by the late 1990s. Changes to those borders necessarily entailed changes in the valence of internal borders, such that regional identity became the product of regional institutions and economic orientations rather than the root.[7]

The examination of the regional enlargement processes in the previous chapter illustrates the change in the valence of Russia's internal borders, and its consequence for the trajectory of center-regional relations. Most obvious is the change in direction from decentralization and the activation of regional boundaries as institutions for demarcating power, to centralization and the activation of inter-regional boundaries for merging regions. The "parade of sovereignties" was sped along by El'tsin's infamous exhortation that the republics take as much sovereignty as possible, but he did so in the midst of the struggle with Mikhail Gorbachev for control of the RSFSR. The unanticipated consequence was that the "parade" shifted parameters as regions vied for improved position within the new state's federal hierarchy. Regional leaders had a different understanding of the process. Whereas El'tsin encouraged the regional autonomy movements to wrest control of the RSFSR from Gorbachev, many regional leaders mostly saw the sovereignty declarations as necessary steps towards improving their position in a new federal structure regardless of whether El'tsin or Gorbachev prevailed.[8] With the center destabilized and established channels of communication disrupted, the sovereignty declarations were blunt tools for signaling the intensity of regional preferences for a more decentralized state system. While regional leaders

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[7] Note that this does not mean that identity loses salience, nor does it necessarily require imputation of intentional action. What is being proposed here is that an institutional perspective on borders can account for their transformation from intervening variables into independent variables.

[8] Nicholas J. Lynn and Alexei V. Novikov, "Refederalizing Russia: Debates on the Idea of Federalism in Russia," *Publius* 27, no. 2 (1997).

might have preferred to engage the center in bargaining and negotiation over their future status, these options were precluded by the chaotic institutional environment.[9] The condition that enabled the mutually reinforcing pattern of behavior that became the "parade of sovereignties" was *dvoevlastie* ("dual power") and *bezvlastie* ("no power") at the top and the lack of institutional channels for negotiating federal status until the 1992 federal treaties.

Three further differences between the "parade of sovereignties" and the contemporary phenomenon of regional enlargement emerge from this depiction. First is the center's will and capacity to regulate the process. El'tsin was willing to encourage the regional sovereignty movements insofar as they served his interests, but he clearly did not anticipate that the movements could not easily be brought back under control. Putin was much more pragmatic and risk-averse than his predecessor and seems intent upon ensuring that the enlargement process moves steadily and predictably in the center's favor. The significance of the "Perm precedent" is that it made credible the Kremlin's commitment to sponsoring enlargement. Regional sovereignization under El'tsin was accompanied by the financial retreat of the central state, while enlargement so far has involved substantial central investment. Likewise, regional sovereignization was accompanied by the legal retreat of the central state and proliferation of sub-national regime types, while enlargement was preceded by the re-assertion of constitutional and federal authority and the revision of regional charters and constitutions. Regional elites may have been wary about accepting the center's promises of financial support during the 1990s, but the range of political and financial incentives offered by enlargement translates into a sort of "centralization by invitation."

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[9] The fact that El'tsin still managed to misinterpret these signals perhaps says more about his own perceptions as a leader and the general breakdown of center-regional linkages.

The second key difference concerns the matter of time compression. The "parade of sovereignties" occurred within a short period owing to the combined pressures of separatism at multiple levels of the Soviet Union's structure. The struggle for power in the center enabled regional actors to push further, while the sense that the struggle could not go on indefinitely provided short time horizons: applying pressure "from below" could make the decentralization of power irreversible, and that pressure had to be applied quickly to avoid an authoritarian reversal. With Putin, there were few illusions among the regional leadership about the goals and methods behind regional enlargement. Some regional leaders already had come to view enlargement as a means for enhancing regional (and personal) standing in Russia's increasingly unitary federal system. The fact that there has been a surge of proposals for enlargement from Russia's governors suggests that there was a decided interest in reducing the number of regions, and that the crucial factor that impels and regulates the process is the pivotal role of the Presidential Administration. As a result, the time compression that characterized the "parade of sovereignties" was reversed with the enlargement process. The Kremlin will no doubt seek to move most of the autonomous okrugs and their "parent" oblasts or krais towards enlargement by the end of Putin's second term in 2008, but this likely will be the initial stage of a decade-long process.

A third difference between the processes of regional sovereignization and enlargement is the ideological context: the keyword for enlargement is not sovereignty, but solvency. Given the lack of consensus over the goals and rationale for enlargement among regional leaders, the Kremlin's focus on economic rationality and increasing regional self-sufficiency proved effective. In activating a fundamental cleavage among "donor" and "debtor" regions, the center managed inter-regional

relations so as to prevent coordinated regional action against the center. It has also rendered invalid the ethno-national (and, for that matter, confessional) claims to sovereignty that characterized the early 1990s. Quite the opposite, the enlargement process began by merging the national autonomies with ethnically Russian regions. Even if the national republics were not directly targeted for enlargement, this threatened to disrupt the intimate link between territory and ethno-national identity. Indigenous groups would cease to be "titular" peoples, while the material advantages of claiming national autonomy would become less compelling (and possibly hazardous for one's career) on the central level.

For instance, Russian internal passports ceased to indicate nationality in 1997, though they continue to indicate place of birth and bear residency stamps. If the regions created through enlargement ceased to reflect ethno-national origin, the political and constitutional underpinnings of Russia's asymmetrical federal structure would start to dissolve. Proponents of enlargement tended to downplay ethno-national attachments and emphasize broader territorial affiliations: in Perm, it was the broader sense of belonging to *Prikam'ye*, while Irkutsk Governor Boris Govorin stressed the region's ties to the Baikal area as unifying Russian and Buriat peoples. During the revision of Kareliia's constitution in late 2000, it was just this possibility that motivated the concern that "Kareliia" would be transformed into the "Petrozavodsk raion of Leningrad oblast, or Murmansk, or Arkhangel'sk."[10]

Despite these rather significant differences between the processes of regional sovereignization and enlargement, there are a few crucial similarities. First, the processes came to appear inevitable once they were underway: another referendum on enlargement was slated for December 2004 in Irkutsk oblast and Ust'-Ordynskii

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[10] *Kareliia*, 16 December 2000.

Buriatskii autonomous okrug, while Krasnoiarsk has moved ahead of Tiumen in scheduling a referendum for February 2005 on enlargement with its autonomous okrugs. Second, the convergence of central and regional interests could only be temporary since central and regional elites appeared to have very different ideas about what enlargement signified and what was at stake. A prime example of this was the proposal by Eduard Rossel′ in 2004 that Sverdlovsk be merged with Kurgan and Cheliabinsk oblasts. The idea's chilly reception prompted Rossel′ to disown the idea and even deny that he'd ever mentioned it.[11] Third, power and autonomy devolves to those who regulate and determine the status of internal borders. In this sense, the process of enlargement was bound up with both the reform of federal relations as well as the reform of local government. In both cases, enlargement benefited the executive agency at the higher level of administration – the center benefited from the reform of regional boundaries, while regional administration benefited from the reform of local boundaries. Territorial reform involves the redistribution of political resources among elite groupings, and ongoing reform of administrative-territorial divisions potentially constituted evidence of domination by central interests.[12]

This "ratcheting down" of centralization at the regional and local levels illustrates the direction of the new Russian federalism. Putin revived the organizational integrity of the state, though its functioning principles straddle the divide between bureaucratic and patrimonial forms of authority, where accountability resides in relations among elites rather than the electorate, best exemplified by the notion of the "ruling vertical." At the same time, the insistence of the Presidential Administration that the process of enlargement must begin at the regions' initiative and only by way of referendum should not be dismissed as a mere public relations

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[11] As reported by Uralpolit.ru, 27 April 2004.
[12] Tikhonov, "Problemy administrativno-territorial'nogo ustroistva sub"ektov Rossiiskoi Federatsii," 15-16.

exercise. Just as Putin's obvious popularity has been a source of his political autonomy, the popular approval of enlargement may eventually serve to enhance the autonomy of regional administrations vis-à-vis business and ethno-national interests. With regard to business interests in particular, the eventual elimination of the *matreshka* regions would shut down significant channels for regional and central lobbying efforts.

The extent to which enlargement continues to be successful is further suggestive of the relationship between Russia's internal borders and Putin's attempt to build central state capacity. Building state capacity involves compliance, first and foremost. During the El'tsin presidency, compliance with central directives was often achieved through a combination of bribery and blackmail. Federal relations appeared to be a function of the president's patronage powers, yet the weakened condition of the central state meant that central directives often were implemented at the governor's discretion once they reached a region's borders. Putin succeeded in achieving compliance in center-regional relations by different means. Material or economic power is but one means of building capacity, though potentially the easiest to observe and measure. Somewhat less tangible but potentially more compelling is the issue of legitimacy.

For observers of Russian politics, the reason why regional elites surrendered to Putin so quickly after he came to power remains a vexing issue. The answer lies partly in the common experiences of regional elites during the El'tsin years. Most regions did not benefit from Russia's market transition and became heavily dependent upon federal transfers. These transfers often served the rent-seeking interests of regional elites, but the center could just as quickly turn off the spigot, refuse to pay federal employees, or otherwise cause significant trouble for the administrations of

"debtor" regions. Elites in "donor" and "debtor" regions alike came to share a desire for stability and predictability in the center's regional policy[13], and it was in this regard that many welcomed the centralizing movement. The Kremlin has also succeeded in focusing blame for ongoing friction in center-regional relations on those regions that benefited the most from country's asymmetrical constitutional system and the selective distribution of benefits via bilateral power-sharing treaties: the republics. The oblast and krai administrations were vocal throughout the 1990s about the republics' disproportionate share of the national wealth and constitutional privilege. After 2000, the republican pace-setters of regional separatism in the 1990s became the outliers in regional integration.

In short, there is an argument to be made that the regional elite desired stable and predictable rules of the game all along, and Putin's style of rule offered this in a way that El'tsin never could. As a result, the Kremlin's constitutional right and duty to intervene in regional politics gained recognition and acceptance (even begrudgingly) on the regional level. This reversal in regional orientations towards the federal center reveals the brittleness of regional autonomy in the 1990s. Stoner-Weiss was correct in identifying regional autonomy as "*de facto* autonomy," easily claimed when the center defaulted on its jurisdictional responsibilities in the provinces.[14] The reverse side of this is that *de facto* autonomy was easily re-claimed by the center once it acquired the political will to do so.

Equally significant is the extent to which Putin effectively drew upon organizational sources of legitimacy that are legacies of Soviet rule. These legacies include the political repertoires of managing internal borders detailed in Chapter Two,

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[13] Alla Chirikova and Natalya Lapina, "Political Power and Political Stability in the Russian Regions," in *Contemporary Russian Politics: A Reader*, ed. Archie Brown (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001).
[14] Kathryn Stoner-Weiss, "Central Weakness and Provincial Autonomy: Observations on the Devolution Process in Russia," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 15, no. 1 (1999).

and exemplified in Putin's first months in office by the creation of the Federal Districts as discussed in Chapter Three. In the Soviet regime, such measures were undertaken by what T.H. Rigby termed "task-achieving bureaucracies" within a "goal-rational" system.[15] Writing about the organization of power and legitimacy in communist systems, Rigby explained that such regimes are concerned with directing activities, not merely regulating them through rule application. The supreme legitimating value (in the Soviet case, communism) constitutes, "a concept whose contours are sufficiently vague, like those of justice, order, democracy...but which differs from these in that it is not seen as an existing quality of the socio-political order but as something to be worked and fought for in the future."[16] Rational action in such a system is that which is deemed appropriate to achieving the tasks contributing to the overall goal. The distribution of power is dominated by those responsible for coordinating the activities of lower-order bureaucracies and vetting their performance. In this manner, legitimacy inheres not in state-society relations, but in the relations among command-administrative staffs – in other words, legitimacy is a function of relationships among political elites.

In Putin's Russia, the concepts of democracy, justice, and order remain as vaguely-defined as the ideological predecessor of communism. In the aftermath of the Beslan tragedy in September 2004, Putin proposed replacing the system of elected governors with a process of appointing them with the consent of regional legislative assemblies. Both his initiatives and the rationale behind them of strengthening Russia's internal security were accepted with little complaint. Perhaps most

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[15] T. H. Rigby, "A Conceptual Approach to Authority, Power and Policy in the Soviet Union," in *Authority, Power and Policy in the USSR: Essays dedicated to Leonard Schapiro*, ed. T. H. Rigby, Archie Brown, and Peter Reddaway (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1980), T. H. Rigby, "Introduction: Political Legitimacy, Weber and Communist Mono-organisational Systems," in *Political Legitimation in Communist States*, ed. T. H. Rigby and Ferenc Feher (London: Macmillan, 1982).
[16] Rigby, "A Conceptual Approach to Authority, Power and Policy in the Soviet Union," 19.

noticeable by its absence was the concern that each region would have to revise its charter or constitution once more. Rather, the mechanisms for monitoring and changing regional charters established during Putin's first term remained in place and are being re-deployed for another tour of duty. Insofar as it is often claimed that Russia's Presidential Administration supplanted the organizational role played by the CPSU, the analysis offered by Rigby suggests that this was an institutional continuity with the Soviet past that affected the distribution of power and the status attributed to organizations designed to achieve the tasks set by the President. In creating the Federal Districts, Putin activated an institutional legacy of communism to achieve the compliance of regional elites and central agencies based in the regions. As regards regional enlargement, the feeling in today's Russia that it is necessary (even imperative) to reduce the number of regions without a clear underlying rationale, ideology, or end point falls squarely within this ruling tradition. Should the movement for regional enlargement gain momentum as regional leaders internalize the Kremlin's preferences and the procedures become institutionalized, Russia's regions might one day complement the "parade of sovereignties" with a "parade of enlargements." But it would be a "parade" of a different sort, as would be the Russia emerging from it.

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RFE/RL Russian Federation Report
RFE/RL Russian Political Weekly