

Power Sharing in the Russian Federation: the View from the Center and from the Republics*

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* Preventing of Deadly Conflict. Strategies and Institutions. Proceedings of a Conference in Moscow, Russian Federation //Ed. By Gail W. Lapidus with Svetlana Tsalik. April 1998. A Report to the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict. Carnegie Corporation of New York. P. 80–96.

In the past ten years, the states of the former Soviet Union have produced a diverse array of ethno-political conflicts. After examining the conflicts that arose in the Russian Federation, this report will seek to compare Russian academics' explanations of ethnic conflict with models developed in other countries', to examine methods of conflict management in other countries with the view of applying this experience to the Soviet successor states (including considering whether there is anything peculiar to the requirements of conflict management in Russia); to consider the views of ethnic groups, the central administration, and the public on power sharing; to discuss what models of power sharing can ensure a balance of interests between the center and the republics while maintaining interethnic cooperation; to examine what lessons Russia could offer to conflict management elsewhere: and to consider the role that international organizations can play in mediating conflicts.

ZONES OF CONFLICT AND INTERETHNIC TENSION IN THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

Six wars already have occurred on the territory of the former Soviet Union: in Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, Trans-Dniester, South Ossetia, Tajikistan, and Chechnya. Close to 20 short-term armed clashes have taken place; the conflicts in Fergana (Uzbekistan) and Osh (Kyrgyzstan), the pogroms in Baku and Sumgait in Azerbaijan, and the Ossetian-Ingush conflicts are among the better known. In addition, there have been more than 100 non-violent interstate, interethnic, interreligious, or interclan confrontations, most occurring in Central Asia, the Transcaucasus, and the North Caucasus (1)

Currently, war is being fought or unstable cease-fires are in place in Tajikistan, Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh, and the adjoining territories of

western Azerbaijan which were captured by Karabakh troops. Sharp ethno-political strife continues in areas where military appeasement was achieved yet the initial causes of conflict were not resolved, as for example in Trans-Dniester, South Ossetia, the Prigorod region of North Ossetia, and Ingushetia. Strained ethnic relations which may yet turn violent exist in Kazakhstan, Ukraine, South Siberia, and the Baltic states. In Russia, the most conflict-prone area is the North Caucasus, where more than three dozen ethnic groups reside. Military action has been under way in Chechnya since 1994, and tension remains in Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachaevo-Cherkessia, Ingushetia, and North Ossetia (the first region in Russia to burst into warfare, in 1991). Indeed, the possibility of ethnic conflict exists in all the Soviet successor states as they struggle over the redistribution of power in this new political space. Conflicts over power sharing have broken out throughout Russia, though only Chechnya has demanded outright secession.

CAUSES OF CONFLICT: INTERPRETATIONS OF THE CENTER AND OF THE PERIPHERY

Soviet explanations for ethnic conflict differed from contemporary Russian interpretations of these events. Communists considered ethnic conflict a result of «distortions of Lenin's nationality policy» and of deprivation caused by the «period of stagnation.» The last Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU, which was devoted to resolving the country's nationality problems, viewed them from this perspective. Opposition politicians and academics of democratic orientation viewed these conflicts as a product of the Soviet regime's discriminatory, totalitarian policies, and of deficiencies in its nationality policy and state structures. (2)

Explanations of ethnic conflict shifted once Russia became an independent state. Sergei Shakhrai, then minister of nationalities and regional policy, stressed that neither ethnicity nor the «tragic errors of the past» were the causes of conflict. The real driving force behind conflicts, according to Shakhrai, is the struggle over «redistribution of property,» «redistribution of power» and organized crime. (3) Valery Tishkov, an academic specialist in the study of conflicts and in 1992- the head of the State Committee on Nationalities, concluded that ethnic nationalism and conflict in Russia «is an issue of power – of the hedonistic desire of elite elements in society to possess it, of its relation to material gratification in terms of access to resources and privileges.» Tishkov did not consider other sources of conflict, such as competition for work, as important explanations. The next best explanation, Tishkov claimed, comes from theories of collective action, which relate the behavior of large groups to psychological factors such as the loss of dignity. (4)

Meanwhile, politicians and analysts in the ethnic republics of the Russian Federation placed the causes of conflict elsewhere. They stressed the real «Jack of rights of subjects of the Federation,» and the «neglect of elementary political, legal, and moral norms.» (5) As Rafael Khakimov, advisor to Tatarstan president Mintimer Shaimiev, put it, «the center cannot understand that democracy for the people is meaningless without the guarantee of ethnic rights, which allows them to pursue progress in decolonization. Democracy cannot be based on force as the source of law, in which case democracy loses its legitimacy.» (6) Elites of Russia's ethnic republics, like the elites of the USSR's Union Republics, recall their repression under the totalitarian regime as a «colonial past.»

Ethnic conflict in Russia and in the other republics of the former Soviet Union had several causes, and is the product of more than one historical epoch. Some conflicts are a result of Stalin's policy of deporting «un-

trustworthy» peoples. When these peoples return to their homelands (Ingush in the North Caucasus, Balkar in Kabardino-Balkaria, Crimean Tatars in Crimea), tension with new settlers is typical. Other conflicts resulted from the arbitrary redrawing of borders by the Soviet regime. Some ethnic territories were split apart, while others were arbitrarily joined together. A third cause of conflict is the uneven transition to a market economy. The growing economic inequality which has resulted from increased competition has launched searches for scapegoats – often a different ethnic group. Such was the case in Tuva in/or Sakha-Yakutia.

Ethno-sociologists, including this author, instead attribute conflict to changes in the social structure of ethnic groups that began long before perestroika (7). By the end of the 1970s, more than half the professional cadre in half of the Union Republics and in half of the autonomous republics in Russia was composed of the titular ethnic group. The social mobility of ethnic groups was higher than for Russians. Two-thirds of the population of titular ethnic groups experienced social advancement in their own lifetime. Among the population of titular ethnic groups, value orientations were changing and expectations of social mobility were mounting. Meanwhile, Russians and Ukrainians began to fear the loss of their dominant position. The situation resembled that of the Quebecois in Canada, or of the Flemish and Walloons in Belgium in the 1970s. Tension lay not just in competition for employment, but in a growing divergence of expectations and mutual evaluations. As soon as the hegemony of the Soviet state was broken, ethno-national claims were openly declared in the political sphere and masses mobilized around them. This explanation was subsequently accepted by Tishkov. (8)

Any explanation of ethnic conflict that looks only at ruling elites, without taking into consideration the mood of their constituents, oversimplifies the situation and produces misleading prognoses for conflict resolu-

tion. This is not to deny the responsibility of leaders. We have seen numerous instances of leaders in the Soviet successor states attempting to inflame ethnic feelings when they were unable to cope with their region's economic degradation and felt their authority slipping under the criticism from opposition movements. In North Ossetia, for example, A. Galazov's once shaky authority was restored after he incited an armed struggle against the Ingush.

While leaders aim primarily at a redistribution of power, the conflicts that result differ in their scale, character, and primarily in their aims and content. In the Russian Federation, three types of conflict can be identified:

- ◆ Ethno-political conflict: The struggle of ethnic republics for sovereignty, statehood, and greater power.

- ◆ Territorial conflict: Reaction to the arbitrary drawing of borders under Soviet rule, which dismembered some ethnic territories while throwing together others. For example, Stalin's deportation of the Ingush was followed by their recent expulsion from the Prigorodny region of North Ossetia, which resulted in armed conflict between Ingush and Ossetians.

- ◆ Intergroup ethnic conflict: Conflict produced by competition in the labor and housing markets or in perceived obstacles in access to power for certain groups. In this category fall the clashes between Yakuts and Russians in 1986 in Sakha-Yakutia and Tuvinians and Russians in Tuva in 1990.

It is primarily in situations of ethnic conflict that power sharing becomes an important issue.

MAIN CONFLICT ZONES

The most acute ethno-political conflicts in Russia broke out between 1991 and 1993, when the republics of Chechnya and Tatarstan declared their in-

dependence. In 1990, Tatarstan became the trailblazer among Russia's ethnic republics that were striving for sovereignty. Tatarstan's quest to upgrade its administrative status began even before perestroika. In 1994 Tatarstan first petitioned the Central Committee of the CPSU to elevate its status to that of a Union Republic. The Committee eventually was to concede to Tatarstan's demands as part of the new Union Treaty, scheduled to be signed on August 19, 1991. The putsch on that date, however, meant that the treaty was never signed, and once Russia itself became independent following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the issue of Tatarstan's status lost its urgency.

Tatarstan continued to demand special status, however. This prompted similar claims by other republics, and throughout 1991–1994 this chain reaction threatened Russia with disintegration. Tatarstan boycotted the 1991 Russian presidential elections, the signing of the Federation Treaty in 1996 and the parliamentary elections and constitutional referendum of 1993 in order to demonstrate its independence from the Russian Federation. Tatarstan's constitution identifies the republic as a «sovereign state, a subject of international law in voluntary association with the Russian Federation.»

The conflicts over the status of members of the Federation occurred against the backdrop of a severe struggle at the national level between the president and the parliament. When in May 1993 meetings of republic heads resulted in ultimatums to President Yeltsin, his parliamentary opponents used these to accuse Yeltsin of impotence in preventing the disintegration of the state. In response, Yeltsin announced to republic heads that in accordance with the Federation Treaty, relations between republics and the federal government could be governed by bilateral agreements. At the time, it was most urgent to reach such agreements with those republics that had not signed the Federation Treaty: Chechnya, Tatarstan, and Bashkortostan (which had signed the Treaty but with reservations). The subsequent

constitution permitted the signing of such bilateral agreements, thus granting the process official legitimacy.

Aside from the above republics, constitutional conflicts also broke out in Sakha-Yakutia and in Tuva. Both republics have external borders. While Sakha is rich in natural resources, Tuva is poor and dependent on subsidies from the federal budget. Nevertheless, Tuva has geostrategic importance. Until 1944 Tuva was an independent state. It is the only republic within the Russian Federation that contains the right to secession in its constitution, in sharp contradiction of the federal constitution.

Chechnya is an acute zone of conflict. Its constitution states that the republic is a sovereign independent state, an equal member of the world community of nations, and not a subject of the Russian Federation. Military action has been under way in Chechnya since December 1994; hence the republic constitutes not only a case of institutional conflict over power sharing, but also an armed struggle. The Russian government is trying to turn it back into an institutional conflict through a return to peaceful negotiations.

Only in Chechnya is secession the main point of contention. Elsewhere, the issue is redistribution of power. The constitutions of Tatarstan, Sakha-Yakutia, and Tuva proclaim the dominance of republic laws over the laws of the Russian Federation, the right of these republics to ownership of the natural resources on their territory, and their right to design and implement their own internal and foreign policy. Ingushetia's constitution also grants it the right to design its own foreign policy (Article 70). Bashkortostan's constitution states that its relations with the Russian federal government are governed solely by bilateral agreements (Article 70), which contradicts the federal constitution, and that self-governance for the republic includes legal proceedings, the office of the public prosecutor, and the judicial power in its entirety. The constitutions of Sakha and Bashkortostan

vest their legislative assemblies with determining the share of taxes they will turn over to the federal budget. The federal constitution, however, stipulates that the federal budget and taxation are the jurisdiction of the Federation as a whole.

President Yeltsin and his administration faced the challenge of finding institutional means of solving internal conflicts, of creating rules and norms of behavior that would be acceptable to all sides. Yeltsin's achievement was the creation of a «conception of consensus,» proclaimed in 1993 and manifested since then in the form of bilateral treaties with subjects of the Federation. Yeltsin's failure, however, was his deviation from this principle in the case of Chechnya.

BILATERAL TREATIES AS A TOOL FOR CONFLICT REGULATION

Bilateral treaties between the federal government and the republics were possible because they benefited both sides. Neither was interested in conflict escalation. Yeltsin wanted to normalize relations with the republics, and to demonstrate his ability to put down the threat of secession.

Tatarstan was the pioneer in concluding such a treaty. The republic is situated in the heart of the country. Hence, possible sanctions against it included a withdrawal of export quotas on oil and isolation from the transport, pipeline, engineering, and financial systems of the country. As Tatarstan's presidential adviser Rafael Khakimov wrote, «Moscow has become a financial empire. It can swallow Tatarstan's entire banking system within 24 hours.» (9) Or, as the former prime minister of Tatarstan, Mukhamad Sabirov, said, «We could demonstrate our pride and proclaim ourselves independent, but in two to three days, events might take an unpredictable path, and people would never pardon us for that.» (10)

In agreeing to the bilateral treaty (signed in February 1994). President, Shaimiev, made a responsible and prudent decision. Many interpret this step within the framework of a patron-client relationship. Kazan received low-interest loans to restore its industrial giant, KAMAZ; a considerable amount of money for agricultural needs; stable financing for its military-industrial complex; construction of a bridge over its Kama River; and funds for reconstruction of the Kazan Kremlin. In addition, Tatarstan was forgiven its debt to the federal treasury. In return, Tatarstan declared itself a member of the Russian Federation and began paying its taxes to the federal budget. The primary gain for both sides, however, was a political one. Tatarstan's leadership could save face by claiming it was freely entering into negotiations with the federal authorities. As Shaimiev wrote on the first anniversary of the treaty, «Sovereignty for us means the possibility of defining for ourselves which authority we leave for ourselves, and which we delegate to the Russian Federation.» (11)

Shaimiev's decision to enter into treaty relations with Russia disarmed the extremist nationalist movement in Tatarstan, which was among the most radical and influential in the country. In the republic parliamentary elections, F. Bairamova, the leader of the nationalist movement, lost in the first round. Boris Yeltsin also emerged from this conflict a victor. Not only did he demonstrate his willingness to solve conflict peacefully, but he also erased the image of the federal government as an «imperial enemy.»

Tatarstan's treaty was followed by similar treaties with eight other republics, and later with a number oblasts (regions). We can delineate several stages in the development of Russia's treaty-based federal relations. The process began with the division of powers in the Federation Treaty of 1991. The Treaty confirmed the status of republics as sovereign states (in accord with the 1977 Soviet constitution). However, in contrast to the Soviet federal constitution, which recognized republics only as full members of the

Federation, the Federation Treaty was signed by all of its members: republics, oblasts, krais, okrugs, and federal cities. This difference created the basis for believing that what was being created was not Soviet-style federalism. The second stage began with the adoption of the new constitution in 1993 which guaranteed equal rights (but not equality) for all subjects of the Federation, and permitted the signing of bilateral treaties and agreements (Article 78). This article was intended for those ethnic republics that had not yet concluded such a treaty.

The signing of the initial treaties with Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, and Sakha-Yakutia was a means of using power sharing to resolve tension with the most confrontational republics of the Federation. The final stage – signing treaties with oblasts such as Sverdlovsk, Orenburg, Kaliningrad, and with Krasnodar krai – extended the possibility of treaty-based relations to all subjects of the Federation, hence confirming their equal rights.

The treaties have different motivations and nuances. Tatarstan's was pursued primarily for political aims. Hence, it contains some points absent from other treaties. For instance, it grants Tatarstan the right to decide issues of republic citizenship (Article 2, part 8), to develop alternative forms of civil service for those who prefer it to military service (Article 2, part 9), to independently engage in foreign affairs in accordance with a separate agreement (Article 2, part 13), and to set up a national bank (Article 2, part 12). There is no provision in Tatarstan's treaty requiring the republic's laws and other normative acts to be in accordance with the Russian constitution and federal laws. The fact that this treaty had elements of an intrastate treaty in combination with elements of an international one, as well as a combination of federal and confederal arrangements, played a significant role in the political stabilization of Russia.

The treaty signed with Sakha-Yakutia and, to a certain extent, the treaty with Bashkortostan were primarily economic. These treaties declare

the republics constituent parts of the Russian Federation. Sakha was granted the right to establish republic and local taxes and duties (as well as exemptions from such) (Article 1, part 1), and to create and use a fund for precious metals and stones (Article 1, part 1). Like Tatarstan, Sakha has the right to engage in external economic activity. The Sakha treaty is unique in that it establishes joint federal and republic jurisdiction in developing budgetary federalism, creating special (budget and off-budget) programs and funds (Article 2, part 2), coordinating the creation of federal state reserves, agreeing on export quotas of precious metals and other strategic raw materials, and developing and jointly using the resources of the continental shelf.

The conclusion of other treaties was motivated by the center's desire to support certain regional authorities who were facing strong internal opposition. In this category we can place the treaty with Kabardino-Balkaria, and, to a certain extent, that with North Ossetia-Alania. The emphasis in the North Ossetian treaty was on defense and geostrategic interests. Protection of the territorial integrity of the republic, responsibility for guarding the border with Georgia, and management of migration flows were put under the joint jurisdiction of federal and republic authorities. The treaties signed with oblasts and kraia have been largely concerned with equalizing their rights and opportunities.

BALANCING POWER: NEW CONSIDERATIONS

The first treaty, signed between Tatarstan and the federal government, received an ambivalent reception both in the republic and in Moscow. Radical Tatar nationalists condemned the republic leadership for surrendering and turning Tatarstan into a «semi-state.» (12) Nevertheless, a majority of Tatarstan's population approved the treaty.

As part of a project on post-Communist nationalism, ethnic identity, and conflict management in the Russian Federation, we conducted a survey in Tatarstan shortly after the conclusion of the treaty. (13) We found that almost 60 percent of tatars and nearly 70 percent of Russians approved of the treaty. About 30 percent of Russians and slightly over 30 percent of Tatars could not answer, and only 10 percent of Tatars and 2 percent of Russians disapproved.

In the center, the main criticism of bilateral treaties came from the Duma Subcommittee on the Development of Federal Relations, which demanded the right to ratify any such treaties. Many deputies predicted that the signing of bilateral treaties would lead to a chain reaction that would «end with the disintegration of Russia» In assessing the Tatarstan treaty, the subcommittee's chairman, Vladimir Lysenko, called it «a considerable step forward in comparison with the situation a few years back,» but one which, on the other hand, constituted a «transfer by the federal center of considerably wider competencies and rights to Tatarstan than to other subjects of the Federation.» (14)

What would have been the consequences of giving legislative organs the right to ratify such treaties? The State Duma, consisting predominantly of ethnic Russians and representatives of oblasts and krais, would most likely not have approved the treaties for ethnic republics. The republic legislatures, which tend to be more radically nationalistic because they are dominated by members of the titular group, would most likely also refuse to ratify the treaty.

The governments of the center and republics evaded these obstacles by making the treaties specifically between the executive organs of each side. This was a bigger win for the center because, in the absence of legislative approval, the treaties could only be considered internal agreements, and not treaties between two independent states. Within the republics, however, officials prefer to describe the treaties as agreements

however, officials prefer to describe the treaties as agreements between independent states.

Experts from the president's team and deputies of the State Duma see the treaties as a «form of regulation of relations between the federal center and its subjects, and a useful tool for peaceful settlement of constitutional disputes.» (15)

In 1996 believing that the constitutional crisis was over in Russia, the State Duma Subcommittee on the Development of Federal Relations proposed the creation of a legal framework for the signing of power-sharing treaties with subjects of the Federation. In April 1996, Duma hearings were held to discuss this issue. At the hearings it became evident that the majority of deputies did not perceive the treaties as a step toward creating a vertical division of power, but rather as an attempt by subjects of the Federation to upgrade their status, and win subsidies and other privileges. Most deputies evaluated the treaties very negatively. The authors of the proposed legislation argued that the treaty process should be aimed at realization of concrete projects undertaken between the center and the individual subject of the Federation, and that legislation should be adopted on each sphere of authority. The deputies representing republics which had signed such treaties, one of the most vehement of which was Tatarstan's M. Sabirov, forcefully opposed such legislation, arguing that it would slow or even stop the fulfillment of already signed agreements.

In contrast, the opinion of the federal center, personified by the chairman of the Subcommittee on the Development of Federal Relations, Vladimir Lysenko, criticized the regional elites of a wide range of Federation subjects for «taking an economic offensive out of fear of openly fighting for an Improvement in their political status and using the treaty process to resolve the problems which they could not solve earlier.» Pointing to inconsistencies in the distribution of federal funds, he noted that republics

«spend the bulk of sums on themselves, thus providing a higher standard of living for their population, and consequently greater loyalty to the regional leaders.» (16) Deputies hoped to create a legal basis for the development of federal relations, which would prevent «treaty fever» from becoming a ubiquitous phenomenon and transforming Russia from a constitutional to a treaty-based state.

In the fall and winter of 1996, the State Duma continued preparing the law on the principles and framework for delimitation of the spheres of authority between the federal organs of state power and those of the subjects of the Federation. In the draft law the main role in supervising fulfillment of the agreements is assigned to the Federation Council, rather than the Duma, which is too politicized. The principal significance of the legislation is the requirement that all the legal acts of subjects of the Federation correspond to the Constitution of the Russian Federation and the observance of equal rights.

However, the law will come into complete effect only after the adoption of laws concerning the delimitation of property and of the ownership of natural resources between the central government and the subjects of the Federation, laws which have not yet been adopted. It is assumed that each agreement will pass through several levels of discussion, including in the Special Commission of the President of the RF, and the subjects of the Federation whose interests are affected by the law. One may assume that this will be a complicated process.

We will not discuss in detail the problem of designing a state system, which is the subject of heated discussions in Russia over how to build a modern civic state. The founding feature of such a state is a territorial and civic community rather than ethno-territorial formations such as «national republics.» Debate over the principles of the state system continues in the press and in various meetings. Some, including a recent candidate for the

presidency of the Russian Federation, M. Shakkum, suggest a transition from the Russia of the «krais, oblasts and republics» to the model of «Russia of the regions» (17) Others consider such actions untimely.(18) However, with regard to the issue of power sharing, it is worth noting that in several republics, ideologues have adopted Valery Tishkov's ideas. In Tatarstan, for example, the formation of a Tatarstan nation, as a civic rather than an ethnic community, is under discussion. (19) The majority of politicians and academics dislike the idea of creating a civic state because they associate it with the «gubernization» proposals: to transform all ethnic republics into *guberniya*, the administrative unit of prerevolutionary Russia. They believe that gubernization would deprive titular nationalities of the opportunity to use their position of power to preserve their ethnic group.

Moreover, the view that access to power is an essential tool for the development of ethnic culture is widespread. As a scholar conducting field research in the republics, I believe that the threat of gubernization emanating from leaders of the center, who claim to represent the democratization process, coupled with the use of force in Chechnya to settle conflict, had a very negative effect on Boris Yeltsin's reelection campaign. In contrast, the treaty-signing process raised the level of mutual trust between republics and the center. Now, while negotiations with the Chechen leadership are under way and the conclusion of a treaty with the republic is possible, we can only guess how the Chechens will react to even the nonbinding suggestions made by the center about its relations with other republics. In my judgment, the treaty-signing process plays a positive role by allowing centrists in the republics and the center to come to a peaceful agreement, while marginalizing extremists at both ends. What a number of the State Duma deputies are proposing – controlling the treaty-signing process by requiring it to be directed at concrete programs – represents one very specific goal-

oriented approach. But a structural approach involving partnership on a wider range of issues would have a more profound effect.

POWER SHARING: THE AMBITIONS OF LEADERS AND THE WISHES OF THE MASSES

Since 1993, nationalist separatist movements throughout Russia have been dying out. In my view, this is not only a result of Yeltsin's «policy of consensus,» but also because centrist-oriented leaders have come to power on the republic level. However, the disproportionate representation of titular groups in the administrations of the ethnic republics may become a source of tension with the local Russian populations. In Tatarstan, for example, while Tatars constitute 51 percent of the population, they account for 92 percent of ministry heads and up to 76 percent of regional administrators (20) In Sakha, where members of the titular nationality constitute 37 percent of the population, they held 69 percent of ministry positions in 1996. This movement into power-holding positions by the titular ethnic group occurred on the wave of the national movements and the rise in ethnic identification.

In the course of our survey research in four ethnic republics, we presented the following question: «What conditions are most needed now for the revival of your people?» Together with the most frequent response – «revival and development of our national culture» – more than 40 percent of urban-dwelling Tatars and 57 percent of urban Yakuts claimed they needed «more independence, greater sovereignty for the republic, and control over the exploitation of natural resources.» (This response was less frequently given by rural respondents, with the exception of Tuvinians, where rural respondents were more in favor of greater independence.)

In response to the question «Who should control the right over use of natural resources?» more than 60 percent of Tatars, 70 percent of Yakuts and Tuvinians, and 60 percent of Ossetians replied that «the republics should possess the exclusive right to use their natural resources.» More than 60 percent of respondents said that security forces on the republics territory should be subjugated to the republic leadership. Over 40 percent of Tatar and Yakut and over 60 percent of Ossetian respondents said that republics should be sovereign states within the Russian Federation and should retain the right of secession.

These results suggest that republic leaders were not acting solely on the basis of their own preferences when they pushed for greater sovereignty. These demands were supported by large shares of the regional population. By entering into negotiations, the republic leaders were able to convince their population of the necessity for compromise.

It is interesting to note that Russians, in response to the question of which problems currently demand the most attention, most often replied, «ensuring the interests of my people in the power structures of the republic.» This shows that at issue is not only the division of power between center and republic, but within the republic as well.

On many occasions we have pointed to the wide diversity of ethnopolitical, historical, ethno-social, and ethno-demographic conditions in the republics of the USSR and now in Russia. Events which might provoke only slight tension in one area instigate mass national movements and conflict in another. Hence, it is crucial to continually seek examples of compromise and even transitional decisions. After all, even in such established democracies as the United States, Canada, or Germany, there are variations in how power is distributed between regions and the center.

THE SEARCH FOR A NEW MODEL OF COOPERATION IN POWER SHARING

The democratization process in Russia has convinced the population that through elections it is able to influence the composition of the legislative organs of power. The competition for seats in federal and local legislatures is becoming more intense. However, the issue of fair representation of ethnic groups in governing institutions and in the media remains a vital issue in Russia's multiethnic society.

Even if the Parliament accurately reflected the country's population, which is 82 percent Russian, representatives of ethnic groups would be in a clear minority and hence unable to influence decision making. The upper chamber of Parliament, the Federation Council, represents the members of the Federation. But even if every delegate from the ethnic republics were a member of the titular nationality, they would still control only one-fifth of the chamber's vote. Russian nationalists often talk about the existence of a «non-Russian government,» while the non-Russian population decries its domination by Russians. The more that representatives of the republics feel marginalized from power at the federal level, the more they insist on dominating the power positions in their regions. Ethnic discrimination leads to many conflicts. The Kumyk, Lezgin and Nogai, feeling underrepresented in the government of Dagestan, raised the issue of creating their own State structures, as did the Balkars in Kabardino-Balkaria. The Ingush broke off from Chechnya-Ingushetia to form their own republic, which to this day is a republic without clear borders because its borders with North Ossetia-Alania and with Chechnya are conflict zones.

Another complicated question is how to represent the eight million non-Russian members of ethnic groups either living outside their titular republic or lacking a designated homeland. How, without violating the idea

that ethnicity is a private matter, is it possible to represent these people in the organs of power so as to defend their interests?

Another issue concerns the alienation from power that Russians living in ethnic republics feel. We have already cited data above showing the low representation of Russians in the administration of ethnic republics. The relief of Russians when V. Likhachev was elected speaker of the Tatarstan Parliament when the number of Russian deputies in the legislature was falling is well known. But few similar cases exist.

The «one person, one vote» electoral system, often considered the most democratic, does not ensure the representation of ethnic minorities in legislatures. For several years, there has been discussion of the possibility of convening a congress of the peoples of Russia and the establishment of a new body (*obshchestvennaya palata*) that would serve as an advisory board to the Federal Assembly. (This has been mentioned by Abdulatipov, Lebed, Mikhailov, and Tishkov.) On the initiative level, specifically in Tatarstan, there has been discussion of how to organize fair elections in such a case. Back in 1993, speaking at a session of the presidium of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Valery Tishkov proposed the idea of consociational democracy. (22) As is well known, this is a system of government advocated by Arend Lijphart for multiethnic states. It guarantees minority groups' participation in government, and even gives them a veto on matters of cultural autonomy as well as on other issues of direct concern to them.

Another electoral system is described by Timothy Sisk. The integrative system requires not simply a majority of votes to be elected president, but a majority of votes in a majority of territories (in Russia, in the republics). Such a system would give greater weight to republics, if the majority were counted differently in oblasts and republics.

It would be important to represent members of the larger ethnic groups, and in turn of smaller groups, in the higher echelons of the admini-

stration on the level of prime minister, ministers, the diplomatic corps, and high-ranking officers. Academic specialists in ethnic relations have frequently called also for better representation of non-Russian ethnic groups on television and radio, as well as programming in languages other than Russian. The barrier to such changes is not only the lack of informed interest among parliamentarians and state officials about interethnic relations, but also a resentment among Russians of ethnic issues following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the sovereignty drives of the republics. Suffice it to say that the law on «small indigenous peoples,» which was stalled for five years and finally approved by the Duma in June 1996, was rejected by the Federation Council. It was only in June 1996 that the law on national-cultural autonomy, which had also been discussed for five years, was finally passed. This law may encourage ethnic groups that it is worthwhile to participate in the system of majoritarian representative democracy. Given the current mood and composition of the State Duma, it is unrealistic to expect that the Federation Council might support the idea of a consociational or integrative democracy.

There is greater hope, however, that Russian politicians will reflect more sensitivity in promoting non-Russian representatives to the highest organs of power. U.S. President Bill Clinton offers a good example in his intention to have his administration reflect the ethnic composition of the country. This example is instructive not only for the leadership of the Russian Federation, but for the leadership of its republics as well. It is more likely that the president and prime minister, rather than the legislative organs, will move toward a policy of cooperation and accord. The president has demonstrated his willingness by initiating discussions with the Chechen opposition leader Yandarbiyev, by repeatedly soliciting the input of presidents of republics on major decisions, and by guaranteeing the treaty process with republic administrations. Moreover, shortly before the first round

of the presidential elections, Yeltsin Issued a decree titled «A Conception of State Nationality Policy in the Russian Federation.» It confirmed the commitment to federal relations and explicitly stated that their development would not require the «gubernization» of republics, nor, in turn, the «republicanization» of oblasts and krajs.

This conception to a great extent fulfills the principles to which Russia committed itself in joining the Council of Europe and the OSCE. Membership in these organizations may encourage Russia to make other positive steps, such as forming permanent commissions with representatives of state power and of minority groups to guarantee their interests. Examples of such commissions exist in other countries.

In addition, the support of international organizations, the adoption of laws on property rights, the development of market relations, and the strengthening of a free press will create the basis for common interests among people and cooperation on nonethnic grounds. Associations which transcend ethnic borders already operate in Russia. These Interregional associations are composed of oblasts and republics (for example, Siberian Agreement, Volga-Urals Association) (23). Our interviews with leaders of republics suggest that they regard these associations as tools with which to realize their common interests.

Russia's membership in the Council of Europe opened the possibility for international mediators to have greater influence on the negotiation process with the Chechen opposition. In the resolution of this conflict and other tensions in the Russian Federation, it is essential that the world community understands the particular features of our history and supports a variety of forms of power sharing in Russia.

The development of democracy and consensus in Russia, requires that the legitimacy of power-sharing agreements that have already been concluded not be undermined; that republic leaders be given incentives in ac-

cordance with their internal political situations to clarify constitutional contradictions: that more power be devolved to local institutions that can be more flexible and responsive to the cultural needs of diverse groups; and that public opinion be gradually acclimatized to the possibility of improving the electoral system to give minority groups more access to the institutions of power.

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21. The research findings presented here are based upon the project «Post-Communist Nationalism, Ethnic Identity, and Conflict Resolution in the Russian Federation» carried out by the Department of the Sociology of Inter-Ethnic Relations of the

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