

**CENTRE-PERIPHERY RELATIONS IN RUSSIA, 1991 – 2004**

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## DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled “CENTRE-PERIPHERY RELATIONS IN RUSSIA, 1991-2004” submitted by me in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University.


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## *Preface*

The present study analyzes the relations between Centre and Periphery in Russia. Centre-Periphery is a useful construct for understanding marginality. In this context we should also keep in mind that there can be a periphery within the Centre and a *centre* within the *Periphery*. This is true of the Russian Federation also. The disintegration of USSR and the formation of newly independent states on the periphery of Russia destabilized the whole region economically, politically and socially. Ethnic conflict among different groups, which were suppressed during Soviet period, resurfaced due to democratization and weak central authority immediately after the disintegration. There were outbursts of national unrest within the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), whose multinational nature posed difficult problems. After the Soviet collapse the relations between Moscow and the federal subjects has been a major issue of contention in Russian politics since the establishment of the Russian federation in 1991.

The two key documents – the Federation Treaty of 1992 and the Constitution of 1993 determined the composition and nature of the Russian Federation. It is true that the present structure of the Russian Federalism is not simply an inherited institutional form. It is also the result of an evolutionary debate and argument in Moscow and in the Republics/ Regions. The 1992 Federal Treaty was perhaps the most dynamic product of those discussions. Evaluating the true nature of the Federal Treaty and the new constitution reveals that President Yeltsin's method of playing off one group against another aggravated the conflicts within the federation. However, the newly emerging Russian Federation has been threatened by its own components because of Moscow's individual negotiations and different policies pursued from time to time. The narrowing institutional and political space for real federalism is giving rise to regional and nationality movements. Certain studies show that these kinds of movements have been increasing with every passing year. Moreover, the constitution proposed by the President was greatly truncated by the Federal Treaty. This effectively established inequality among the members of the Russian Federation but some of these privileges were diluted by the 1993 Constitution leading to dissatisfaction and opposition among many federal units which continues to grow posing a threat to the integrity of the Russian state. After Yeltsin, Putin has made the curbing of centrifugal tendencies in Centre-Periphery Relations a major objective of his Presidency.

Russia is a federation which consists of 89 subjects. During the long process of drafting the first post-Soviet Russian Constitution (1990–1993), the disputes over separation of powers deflected attention from Center-Periphery conflict over the division of powers. In the First Russian Republic, which ended on 4 October 1993 with the military assault on parliament, the country had begun to move unevenly towards an asymmetrical federal structure in which the ethnic republics enjoyed more rights than the administrative regions. This trend was formalized in the Federation Treaty of 1992, which was incorporated into the draft Constitution. However, after the destruction of parliament, President Boris Yeltsin gained full control of constitution-drafting, reversing the federalist trends. While the new Constitution of the Second Russian Republic codified this centrist orientation, the subsequent Russian-Tatar treaty of 1994 may be the harbinger of a renegotiation of Center-Periphery Relations in Russia.

The dissertation consists of five chapters.

The first chapter Introduction discusses the theoretical and conceptual framework related to Centre-Periphery Relations in general and with respect to Russia in particular.

The second chapter deals with historical background of the Centre-Periphery Relations in the Soviet Union. Besides it is also sheds light on the different aspects of Constitution regarding Centre-Periphery relations during Soviet period.

The third chapter focuses on the relationship between Centre and Periphery in the Russian Federation during the Yeltsin period (transition period) and after the enactment of the 1993 Russian Constitution.

The fourth chapter deals with the changes brought by Putin during his first Presidency and their implications for Centre-Periphery Relations in Russia.

In the last chapter, an overall assessment of Centre-Periphery relations in Russia has been made.

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**CHAPTER I**  
**INTRODUCTION**



# CHAPTER -I

## INTRODUCTION

### **Centre-Periphery: Conceptual and Theoretical Framework**

Centre and Periphery based on theories of dependence, dominance, and imperialism have been useful for understanding the dynamics of underdevelopment and regional inequalities on the global level. A critical examination of the effects of regional development policies lead us to the conclusion that a purely relational centre-periphery model is insufficient as a conceptual tool for understanding the historical dynamics of centre-periphery dominance. This particular approach to political analysis comes in three forms.

First, the commonly called modern world system analysis is a theory of the international political economy rooted in a perspective which argues that since the rise of capitalism and the nation state in the sixteenth century global market forces, not domestic ones, have determined national economic development or underdevelopment. The structural form of this process, which has persisted over time, is one in which core manufacturing states dominate, exploit, and make dependent, peripheral (and sometimes semi-peripheral) states which operate primarily as raw material producers for the core. In short, peripheral countries exist, and have always existed, to service the economies of core countries. World politics must be understood in terms of this unequal division of labour. Hence capitalism, rather than contributing to the development of the global periphery, ensures the 'development of underdevelopment'. The theory does allow for dominant centres within the core. Examples would be Britain in the nineteenth century and the United States in the twentieth century. Third world theories of development and underdevelopment are distinguishable by a dichotomy of positions, one stressing capitalism and reformism, the other socialism and revolution. It shows that capitalist development lies in the centre and underdevelopment in the periphery (Chilcote 1994: 232). In this way, we can say that the Centre-Periphery model is a spatial metaphor which describes and attempts to explain the structural relationship between the advanced or metropolitan 'centre' and a less developed

‘periphery’, either within a particular country, or more commonly as applied to the relationship between capitalist and developing societies.

Second, the theory of internal colonialism is in many ways an offshoot of the first. Here the stress is on the unequal division of labour, exploitation, and dependency within single core or peripheral countries. Internal colonialism is concerned with patterns of domestic territorial inequality and with the various ways (not just economic) a core, or centre region, controls and exploits a peripheral region or regions. Amin (1976) argues that the confrontation with imperialism must start from the periphery rather than from the centre. Dependency theory is essentially a body of social science theories predicated on the notion that resources flow from a “periphery” of poor and underdeveloped states to a “centre” of wealthy states, enriching the latter at the expense of the former. It is a central contention of dependency theory that poor states are impoverished and rich ones enriched by the way poor states are integrated into the “world system”. Dependency theory states that the poverty of the countries in the periphery is not because they are not integrated into the world system, or not 'fully' integrated as is often argued by free market economists, but because of how they are integrated into the system. Baran and others frequently spoke of the international division of labour – skilled workers in the center, unskilled in the periphery – when discussing key features of dependency. Dependency theorists hold that short-term spurts of growth notwithstanding, long-term growth in the periphery will be imbalanced and unequal, and will tend towards high negative current account balances.

Centre-Periphery is a useful construct for understanding marginality. Johan Galtung and the dependency school of development equated the Center with the wealthy industrial countries and the Periphery with the underdeveloped countries. The relationship of centre and periphery is described by Galtung as a general structural relationship between collectivities (collective units) where imperialism is seen as a form of dominance between these collectivities. The centre and periphery are defined in relations to this concept of imperialism. In this concerned the definition of centre-periphery is then threefold: first, in terms of their absolute properties example- centre is high on rank dimensions and periphery is low in their relations. Secondly, interactions relations- what is, and how it exchanged and thirdly, interaction structure- the centre is more centrally located in the interaction network than the periphery (Galtung 1971: 103).

Thirdly, the Centre-Periphery framework has been employed by some analysts as an approach to central-local relations. Here the emphasis is on the variety of mechanisms by which the political centre seeks to control, or manage, or avoid dealing with the rest of the national territory (the periphery or peripheries). This certainly opens up the study of central-local relations and inserts a much needed concern with the centre. On the other hand, it suffers from a degree of uncertainty about the precise principal actor focus in the periphery. The present study uses the last framework to analyse the relations between Russian federal centre and its constituents.

As we have already discussed there can be periphery within the Centre and a centre within the Periphery. The Russian Federation is composed of many poor and disenfranchised regions, but within the periphery there is a Center made up of the urban areas and some rural elites. The use of the centre periphery model in this context assumes the form of division of power (Federalism). Federalism has been a much debated subject. Etymologically, Federalism is derived from the Latin term *foedus*, meaning 'pact or covenant' and usually refers to legal and political structures that distribute power territorially within a state. As a political form, however, Federalism requires the existence of two distinct levels of government, neither of which is legally or politically subordinate to the other. Its central feature is therefore the notion of shared sovereignty. And, Federation is conceived as a means to protect liberty by the vertical separation of powers understood as a restraint on governmental jurisdiction according to the guiding principle of subsidiary (Gress 1998: 5). The classical federations are few in number – the USA, Switzerland, Belgium, Canada, and Australia. However, there are states which have many federal features but are not regarded as federal states in the strict sense of the term like Russia, although not following the classical federal model but should still be regarded as federal states for they have many federal features.

Each federal system is unique in the sense that the relationship between central government and state government is determined not just by constitutional rules, but also by a complex of political, historical, geographical, cultural and social circumstances. As far as federal system is concerned there are certain features that are common to most, if not all, federal systems. These features are- two relatively autonomous levels of government with clearly defined powers and functions, written constitution, rigid constitution, independent judiciary etc.

Federalism is a political concept in which a group of members are bound together with a governing representative head. Federalism is also used to describe a system of the government in which sovereignty is constitutionally divided between a central governing authority and constituent political units like states or provinces. Basic definitions of federalism assert that the different tiers of government should be vested with decision-making autonomy in at least some policy domains. Federalism as “a method through which power is divided between the central government and the authorities of regional units in a particular country” (Neumann: 1960).

Both the federal government and the governments of the member units “rule over the same territory and people and each kind have the authority to make some decisions independently of the other” (Riker 1964: 5; 1975: 101).

In general, Federalism is a ‘political organization in which the activities of government are divided between regional governments and central government in such a way that each kind of government has some activities on which it makes final decisions’ (Riker 1964). It basically emphasizes the combination of shared-rule and self-rule in the federal partnership. The concept of shared-rule refers to the distribution of power between different levels of government: they are partners that have the ability to make decisions both mutually and independently. The parties should, nevertheless, enjoy integrity and self-rule in some constitutionally specified matters (Elazar 1987). In this context, Watts (1999) emphasizes that the representatives of the lower tier of government (the constituent units) should be specially protected from the dominance of the upper tier of government (the common federal government). In a federal system, the separate levels of government are “endowed with independent legitimacy and a constitutionally guaranteed place in the overall system and possessing its own set of institutions, powers, and responsibilities” (Elazar 1987).

Thus, both the federal centre and the component units should have their own separate and autonomous political institutions, such as executive, legislative and judicial branches of power. The concept of federalism involves both structure and process of government. These two dimensions determine the actual division of power within a federal state. On one hand, the structure of federalism manifests itself in a specific type of constitutional design and institutional framework. On the other hand, the process of federalism refers to the political practices that have

evolved over time and determine the nature of the relationships both among members and between different levels of government within a federal system. The conduct of federal relations involves processes of continuous bargaining and negotiation between political elites representing the governments at the central and regional levels (Rhodes 1999; Filippov, Ordeshook and Shvetsova 2004).

Asymmetry tends to be embedded in federal systems (Ross 2002). In that case, different patterns of relationships are bound to exist. The component units differ from each other demographically, culturally, economically, geographically, politically, etc. Due to this diversity, asymmetric federations have to be adapted to meet the different needs and demands from their component units, resulting in different types of federal relations (Tarlton 1965). Asymmetry has also an effect on the nature of the relationship between the federal centre and the various federal units. Bargaining power is assumed to be a function of the political importance of each region and each regional chief executive (Treisman 1999). The different sub-national actors have different capabilities to exert influence in intergovernmental bargaining games. The outcomes of the bargaining games depend on what kind of political resources the actors representing the component units possess (Rokkan and Urwin 1983; Rhodes 1999). Regional leaders who are able to employ extensive political resources are more likely to successfully defend their interest and strike better deals with the federal centre.

Juxtaposing the two frameworks essentially offers us a different way of looking at the understanding of Centre-Periphery relations as a theoretical concept, one that enables us to broaden the centralized versus decentralized federalism axis to embrace ideas of Centre-Periphery relations that reach beyond the constitutional and institutional division of powers. In simple terms, centralization is understood as 'power concentrated within the central government'. Decentralization, on the other hand, 'suggests the shift of powers towards the provinces'. The centralization-decentralization continuum forces to see federalism in terms of who has more power and where power resides. The understanding of the spirit of Centre-Periphery relations depends on how the people of the country or nation see themselves; that is, are they one nation which includes diverse groups, or are they nations within a nation.

## **Defining Federation**

More often than not, theorists and other writers of federalism have the tendency of not distinguishing between federalism and federation. In fact, the two concepts are either used interchangeably, when in reality they are distinct. Federalism is the normative term whereas federation is the descriptive one. As a normative term, Federalism basically embodies the idea of self rule and shared rule between at least two tiers of government. It accommodates preserves and promotes distinct identities within a larger political union. In essence, it is the perpetuation of both union and non-centralization at the same time. Federation as a descriptive term refers to the institutional make-up of the federal nation. It embodies such principles as the division of powers, a written constitution, regional representation at the center, equality of both central and regional governments, and regional autonomy. Federation, therefore, is the employment of the principles of Federalism in order to achieve a balance between unity and diversity.

## **Principles of Federalism**

The principles of federalism emerging from the overarching theme of maintaining unity and balancing diversity can be understood as falling into one of three overarching heading: one, the pluralization of governance; two, the consent requirement; and three, the normative commitment to social solidarity.

### **(a) The Pluralization of Governance**

The pluralization of governance ‘implies a process of multilevel governance among a plurality of spatial and social collective actors.’ The key here is that the smaller units retain their autonomy, that is, their right of self-government; further, they are represented at the center. Under this first heading, we can include the following principles:

1. The territorial representation of citizens.
2. Security of this representation through at least two levels/orders of government.
3. Separated spheres of jurisdiction, explicit in a written Constitution, guaranteeing the autonomy of both regional and central governments.

4. Processes and institutions to facilitate intergovernmental collaboration for those areas where governmental responsibilities are shared or inevitably overlap.
5. Regional representation at the center, secured through a second Chamber or an Upper House. This fourth principle is important, as it is, in essence, the institutionalization of diversity.

### **(b) The consent requirement**

The consent requirement 'regulates the joint decision-making process among the plural collective actors.' Underpinning this idea is the implication that no one level of government is more powerful, as the units retain their right of self government. Constitutionally, this may translate into requiring the unanimous consent of the sub units when amending the original contract. In other words, what pertains to all must be approved by all.

The following principles fall under this second heading:

- (1) The equality of regional and central governments;
- (2) Regional representation can only be altered by extraordinary constitutional measures;
- (3) Powers dealing with the separate spheres of jurisdiction can only be altered by extraordinary constitutional measures;
- (4) An umpire to rule on disputes between governments.

These first two headings, essentially organizational principles, highlight the political structure of federalism as the focus of the principles is confined to the idea of 'two or three constitutionally guaranteed levels of government, and the co-operation between them, commonly confined to the framework of pluralistic society.'

### **(c) The normative commitment to social solidarity**

Under the third category, the normative commitment and principle, Althusius stresses that 'consent can only be reached if the material results of policy making are acceptable to all as fair and equitable.'

The principles include:

- (1) Regional equalization, realized through fiscal federalism where grants and transfer payments are utilized.
- (2) Respect for diversity at a social level through the recognition of regional identities extending beyond economic differences.

It is this final point, recognition of regional identities, including social diversities that separate a mono-national understanding of federalism from a multinational one. Diversity in the mono-national understanding of federalism is restricted to economic diversity. Thus in dealing with diversity in an institutional sense the issues of economic disparity, class conflict, center-periphery becomes the focal point. On the other hand, diversity under a multinational understanding of federalism is recognized to exist on many levels. Further to this, it is emphasized that federal institutions should be established to enable the expression of this diversity, in order to fully and truly embody the principle, respect for diversity. In other words, the federation ought to provide the necessary tools to enable different social and ethnic identities to be sustained and to flourish.

In fact, the constitutional and political purposes of federalism go beyond the military and expansion principle to include the notion of diversity; that is, federalism also serves as a tool for managing diversity and potential political conflict within a country. Further, federalism can and does reflect the socio-political diversity existent in a federal country. Within country, there are national communities whose interests and demands are best met with a federal form of governance. Federalism, and subsequently federations, is much more than the bringing or joining together of political units; it is holding these diverse units together, ensuring their independence and autonomy, and securing their ability to flourish and maintain their cultural, religious and linguistic differences that need to be stressed in any definition of federalism.



## **Federal choice**

Federalism is the most suitable institutional way to avoid fear of cultural domination and feeling of frustration among ethnic minorities, for it presumes the existence of both nationalism and regionalism. It provides for the co-existence of centripetal and centrifugal forces and contraries of centralization and decentralization, of desires for unity and diversity, for attachment to the nation and the region. Federalism is a method by which these countervailing forces are balanced and preserved, while political processes are allowed to operate within sub-national units of the federation. They also intermesh with the national political process. Federalism in complex societies justifies its consensual nature by providing political space to sub-national within the ambit of the nation-state (Mukherji and Banerji 1987: 4).

In this context, the federal idea works in four important ways. First, it fosters diversity within unity. Secondly, the federal idea permits and encourages creativity, imagination and innovation in meeting the needs of the people. By providing several sources of political strength and creativity, the federal system invites innovative, inventive leadership at all levels- to works towards genuine solutions to the problems of a diverse and complex society. Thirdly, this is a pluralist idea. It gives scope to much energy, beliefs, and initiatives and enlists them for the welfare of the people. It encourages diversity of thought, of culture and of values. Whereas a highly centralized system tends, by its disproportionate weight and power, to stifle diversity and creativity in both public and private sectors, a federal system provides room for both infinite variety and creativity in all sectors of national life. Fourthly, the federal idea is characterized by division of powers between the national and state governments, separation of legislative, executive and judicial authorities and the permissive encouragement to local authorities to achieve a measure of home rule.

Because of its ability to bring about political unity and ethnic reconciliation, the federal solution is becoming more and more relevant and popular. Elazar reports that out of 160 sovereign nations in 1987, 58 were organized on the basis of federal principles directly or indirectly. According to him, over 70% of the world's population lived under federal arrangements. Approximately 40% in systems that have not proclaimed themselves as federalist lived under federal arrangements to accommodate internal divisions (Elazar 1987: 27; 1991: 7).

In this way, federalism as a form of political organization has proved its great efficacy to accommodate social diversity of present day changing globe. Nearly 40% of the world's population lives within what is formally defined as federations, the other third live in polities which apply federal arrangements in a certain way. The fact that there are different models of federal arrangements which suggests that there is more than one way to apply federal principle. The world experience testifies that federalism is an efficient and very productive system. It is really successful when the system is well formed and used.

### **Centre-Periphery Relations in the Russian Federation**

The Russian Federation is the world's largest federal state. A vast country, spanning two continents and 11 time zones, it is home to approximately 145 million people. It is bordered by Norway and Finland in the northwest; Estonia, Latvia, Belarus, Ukraine, Poland, and Lithuania in the west; Georgia and Azerbaijan in the southwest; and Kazakhstan, Mongolia, China, and North Korea along the southern border. Russia has the world's largest natural gas reserves, the second largest coal reserves, and the eighth largest oil reserves. It is the world's leading natural gas exporter and the second leading oil exporter. Russia's capital Moscow is one of the largest cities in Europe. Although ethnic Russians constitute a majority (80%) of the country's population and Russian is the official state language, the Russian Federation contains over 100 distinct nationalities and ethnic groups. A number of these national groups are territorially concentrated and promote their respective cultures and languages (Wilson 2002: 253).

The disintegration of USSR and the formation of newly independent states in Russian periphery destabilized the whole region economically, politically and socially. Ethnic conflict among different groups, which were suppressed during Soviet period, resurfaced due to democratization and weak central authority immediately after the disintegration. There were outbursts of national unrest within the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), whose the multinational nature posed difficult problems. The relations between Moscow and the federal subjects has been a major issue of contention in Russian politics since the establishment of the Russian Federation in 1991.

As the Constitution plays an important role in defining the role and responsibilities of various organs of the government, discussion of the institutional aspect of political process obviously takes precedence. As far as Russian Federation is concerned, it has experienced just one and half decade of political development after the Constitution of 1993. Centre-Periphery Relations as a process of governance is not free from challenges in its functioning. After the Soviet demise, Federal Centre's (Moscow) interests in the periphery or regions plays a significant role that influences the future developments between the Centre and Periphery in the Russian Federation.

The present Russian Federation is based on a framework inherited from the Soviet period, a heritage encompassing two diametrically opposite principles. On the one hand, Lenin had supported the principle of national self-determination, granting the plethora of ethnic groups within Soviet Russia administrative autonomy. On the other hand, the Soviet legacy consists of a system permeated by the principle of democratic centralism. When the two principles came into conflict, the latter always prevailed. In spite of the fact that both the Soviet Union and the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (here after RSFSR) formally were built up as federations<sup>1</sup> (Duchacek 1987), the Soviet power structure was strictly hierarchic. Thus, in reality the Soviet Union represented a *pro forma* ethno-federal structure covering up a reality of extreme centralization.

The RSFSR was by far the largest and administratively most complex of the Soviet republics. It consisted of no less than 16 autonomous republics, 5 autonomous oblasts, 10 autonomous okrugs, 6 krais, 49 oblasts and 2 cities with federal status. While the first three of these categories belonged to the ethno-federal hierarchy, the later three were purely administrative-territorial entities within the union republic. Furthermore, in the 1989 census more than 60 ethnic groups were recorded as having their traditional core area within the borders of RSFSR<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Whether the Soviet Union and the RSFSR were truly federations is disputed. Since unity was upheld through the centre's use of coercive means, some researchers have described the two as pseudo-federations. For details see the Duchacek 1987.

<sup>2</sup> The number of ethnic groups in the RSFSR fluctuated according to political trends, on the basis of which groups were merged, split, or even banned.

With the breakup of the Soviet Union, the question of the future organization of the RSFSR became topical. Due to size, as well as historical precedence, there seems to have been a relatively widespread consensus on the need for retaining some kind of federal arrangement. As regards the number of federal subjects and the level of decentralization within a new federation, however, there were widely differing views (Sakwa 1993: 126-131).

In the end, the Russian authorities settled for a slightly modified version of the old Soviet structure. In the new Federal Treaty of March 1992, no territorial units were merged and no borders redrawn<sup>3</sup>. Furthermore, the division between ethnically and territorially defined units was preserved.

The most important formal change compared to the old Soviet structure was an upgrading in status for the former autonomous republics and four of the five autonomous oblasts<sup>4</sup>. Although Russian authorities thus on the face of it opted for a model which resembled the Soviet structure, the Federal Treaty nevertheless introduced important changes: the Federal Treaty envisaged a federation that was not only federal in form, but also in content. For the first time in Russian history, central authorities accepted a *de facto* devolution of power- to match the former *de jure* asymmetric federal structure.

With the adoption of the Federal Treaty and the Constitution, the general legal-administrative framework of the Russian Federation was in place. This did not, however imply that the debate on the federal arrangement came to an end. As a result of the inherent inconsistencies and the different visions of the federal structure in the two documents as well as the lack of basic mechanisms and traditions for devolution of power and regional self-government within the Federation, the discussion on how to fill the framework with a rational and meaningful content continues. The different approaches to Russian Centre-Periphery Relations can be divided into

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<sup>3</sup> Later, however, Chechnya-Ingushetia was divided along ethnic lines. Ingushetia separated from Chechnya in the spring of 1991, but was recognized as an independent federal subject by the Supreme Soviet only in June 1992. The border between the republics is still not demarcated.

<sup>4</sup> The Jewish Autonomous Oblast was not granted status as republic. Still, it was recognized as an independent federal subject separate from Khabarovsk, the kray it used to be subordinate to during the Soviet period.

three main categories: Strong Regions, Strong Centre, and Strong Centre-Strong Regions (Blakkisrud and Honneland 2001: 5).

### **Strong Regions**

First, there are the supporters of strong regions i.e. a further devolution of power from the federal centre. Even after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia is still the world's largest state with a total area of 17 million km square. From east to west it spans 11 time zones, and from north to south a spectrum of climatic zones – from tundra and permafrost along the reaches of the Arctic Ocean to the monsoon belt in the Far East and the steppes and semi-desert along the southern border. There is also great variation among the federal subjects both with respect to population which ranges from 20,300 in the Evenk Autonomous Okrug to 8.5 million in Moscow City and in area from 7,600 km square in Adygeya to 3.1 million km square in Sakha. Because of the vast differences in population, size, ethnic composition, wealth, climate, etc. the interests of the federal subjects could, according to this position, best be taken care of through enhanced self-government.

The champions of strong regions usually support the kind of treaty based Centre-Periphery Relations that emerged in 1994 when Tatarstan concluded a bilateral agreement with the federal centre. As Tatarstan had refused to sign the federal treaty in 1992 and to formalize the republic's relationship with Moscow, a treaty on the delimitation of power and responsibilities was negotiated. This, the supporters of strong regions have claimed, changed the Russian Federation from a top-down to a bottom-up type of federation. In their view, power and responsibilities should be understood as delegated from the regions to the centre and not vice versa. So far, 46 federal subjects have concluded this type of bilateral treaties with the federal centre. Not surprisingly, most heads of ethno-federal subjects are to be found within the group of supporters of strong regions (the most prominent being Tatarstan's minister Shaymiyev and Bashkortostan's Murtaza Rakhimov) but also a number of oblast and kray governors have taken up similar positions (Blakkisrud and Honneland 2001: 6).

## **Strong Centre**

The advocates of a strong centre wanted to prevent the Russian Federation from sharing the fate of the Soviet Union. Upon closer examination, however, the strong centre group embraces disparate ideological leanings. First, there are the traditionalists, who argue that Russia has always been a centralized state formation. To them, history has proven that Russia needs a strong centre to be a strong state.

Second, there are Russian nationalists who oppose the asymmetric, ethno-federal basis of the present state. Although more than 80 percent of the total populations are ethnic Russian, more than 50 percent of the territory is currently subject to some form of ethno-federal autonomy. According to nationalist rhetoric, ethnic Russians have always had to pay for the development and support of the other nationalities within the Russian state. The state has neglected the interests of the Russian people, they claim. The nationalists therefore want the ethnic autonomies to be abolished and the state to be Russianised.

Third, there are reformists who argue that the present structure is too fragmented to form a viable basis for an effective state. A rationalization and centralization through a merger of federal subjects is deemed necessary to streamline the federal structure. A number of central Russian politicians like Primakov, Luzhkov, and Zhirinovski have openly supported a re-centralization through reducing the number of federal subjects from the present 89 to about a dozen. Some reformists also argue in favour of a strengthening of the centre to facilitate the redistributive function of the state.

## **Strong Centre - Strong Regions**

This group consists of those who claim that without strong regions, Russia as a state cannot return to her former might. In their view, a certain degree of decentralization is not a threat to, but rather a precondition for the development of a strong, viable Russian state formation. Soviet centralism, although undoubtedly an effective model for large-scale industrialization in the 1930s, has proven incapable of addressing the problems Russia is currently facing. On the other hand, decentralization is neither a goal in its own right nor a process that should continue ad absurdum. The purpose of decentralization must be to facilitate economic recovery at the regional level.

Today, only about a dozen of the federal subjects do not receive transfers from the federal fund for support of the regions. The federal centre's scarce resources are thus spread thinly over some 75 entities, resulting in the centre not being able to fulfill its economic obligations neither at the federal, nor at the regional level. Without prospering regions, their argument goes, Russia as a whole will not be able to prosper.

'Strong centre - Strong regions' was originally a slogan formulated by Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, but has resurfaced in the debate in the 1990s. Former presidential advisor on regional affairs Leonid Smirnyagin is one example of a supporter of this position. In many respects, 'Strong Centre – Strong Regions' can be seen as a *status quo*-oriented position, an attempt to justify the course Russian Centre-Region relations have taken over the past decade in the face of harsh criticism of excessive decentralization. The Russian federal structure is a process characterized more by *ad hoc* solutions than guided by a formal legal framework (Blakkisrud and Honneland 2001: 7-8).

In this context, Russia's journey toward a constitutional and democratic country began when the RSFSR declared itself as a sovereign country on June 12, 1990. Then, after the dissolution of Soviet Union in December 1991, Post Soviet Russia needed a Constitution to construct Russia as a federation and consolidate the Russian state. A new Constitution was deemed necessary to end political uncertainty, to consolidate the transition and to bring orderly change and stability in the society. After a long drawn tussle between President Boris Yeltsin and the parliament, the text of the Constitution was finalized by a very small group in a very great hurry, during a period of direct president rule that followed on the heels of the violent dispersal of the existing legislature, the suspension of the constitutional court and the general negation of the previous constitutional structure. On December 12, 1993 the Constitution was adopted by a referendum which became Russia's first democratic Constitution (ITAR-TASS News Agencies 1993: pp-2-4).

Prior to the adoption of the 1993 Constitution, "Federation Treaty" which was a treaty on the division of subjects of jurisdiction and authority between federal bodies of state power of the Russian Federation, was signed in Moscow on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1992. It was signed by 18 out of 20 republics. Tatarstan refused to sign the treaty with the republics and Chechen-Ingushetia republic did not participate in the process at all, having declared itself entirely independent of the Russian

Federation.

Although commonly referred to in the singular, there are actually five documents that make up the “Federation Treaty”. There is one treaty concerning the division of subjects of jurisdiction and authority between the federal government and the krajs, oblasts and cities of Moscow and Saint Petersburg, and a third between the federal government and the autonomous oblasts and the autonomous okrugs (the nationality based units that are not republics). A protocol was included in the treaty, which states that the realization of the Federation Treaty requires the effective control at least 50 percent of the representatives of one of the chambers of the parliament be provided to the nationality based units of the federation. Another protocol was added that attempts to amend the argument between federal government and geographical based units to give the geographically based units/subjects a position more equal to that reflected in the agreement between the republics and the federal government.

The Federation Treaty of 1992<sup>5</sup> and the Constitution of 1993<sup>6</sup> are the two key documents that establish the composition of the Russian Federation. According to these documents, Russia is a Federation which consists of 89 subjects. These subjects have equal federal rights in the sense that they have equal representation, two delegates each in the Federation Council (upper house of the Russian parliament). However, they do differ in the degree of autonomy they enjoy. Each subject of the federation belongs to one of the following categories:

1. 21 republics (states) - nominally autonomous, each has its own constitution, president and parliament, is represented by the federal government in international affairs and is supposedly home to a specific ethnic minority.
2. 49 oblasts (provinces) - most common, regular administrative units with federally appointed governor and locally elected legislature.
3. 6 krajs (territories) - similar to oblasts but usually more peripheral and less populated.
4. 1 autonomous oblast.

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<sup>5</sup> For details see the Federal Treaty of 31 March 1992: Status and Decisions, November-December 1997, Vol. 33, No. 6, pp—23-88.

<sup>6</sup> See the text of Russian Constitution of 1993 in Current Digest of Post Soviet Press 1994, Vol. XLVI, No. 16, pp-1-14.



5. 10 autonomous districts - more autonomous than oblasts but less than republics, usually with substantial or predominant ethnic minority.
6. 2 federal cities (city states) - major cities that function as separate regions.

It is generally believed that the Federation Treaty of 1992 represents the second model while the Constitution of 1993 is more amenable to the first model (Lynn and Novikov 1997: 192-195). Thus the Federation Treaty acknowledged the special position of the republics over the regions, to which the latter objected. But the 1993 constitution declared that all the subjects of the federation republics, krajs, oblasts, cities etc. have equal rights and are equal in their relation with the federal bodies of power. It is thus not consistent with some provisions of the Federation Treaty<sup>7</sup>. The Federation Treaty would make Russia a 'treaty state'- based on a compact among the constituent units, while the Constitution of 1993 makes Russia a Constitutional Federation.

However, the new Constitution passed in 1993 did neither include the texts of the treaties directly, nor did it incorporate all of their provisions without alternation. The new Constitution of 1993 however contained a single chapter – chapter 3 on the federative structure that treats all subjects of the federation equally. But this is not consistent with the texts that formed the Federation Treaty, as these would have given the republics some powers not possessed by the other subjects and would have given all of the subjects more control and capacity to legislate in areas of joint jurisdiction. Given the difference between the text of the Constitution and that of the Federation Treaty, it is interesting to note that Article 11 of the constitution states that the division of subjects of jurisdiction and authority between the federal government and the subjects “shall be accomplished by the present Constitution and the federation and other treaties on the division of subjects of jurisdiction and authority”. In the “concluding and transitional provisions”<sup>8</sup>, it is stated that in the case of inconsistency between the Federation Treaty and the Constitution shall apply.

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<sup>7</sup> For English translation of the text of the Federation Treaty (1992) and the federal provisions of the Constitution of the Russian Federation (1993) see Statues and Decisions, 33 (6) Nov.-Dec. 1997, pp-23-56.

<sup>8</sup> Section 2 Part I of the 1993 Constitution of Russia.

## **Federal provisions in the 1993 Constitution**

In the new Constitution, the republic of the Russian Federation has been granted separate Constitution of their own, while the other subjects of the federation have statutes. The republics also have distinct flags and anthems. The status of components of the Russian Federation can be changed only through their consent<sup>9</sup>. Similarly the borders between components of federation may be changed by their mutual consent<sup>10</sup>. The components are also allowed to have international and foreign economic relations, through under the guidance of the federal government<sup>11</sup>. All have equal power vis-à-vis the central power (Article 5.1, 5.2, 5.4). Then, there are the provisions relating to distribution of powers between the federal government and the components. Article 71 contains a single list of subject of exclusive federal jurisdiction while Article 72 contains matters falling under the joint jurisdiction of the Russian Federation and the members of the Russian Federation. The residual powers are with the constituent units of the federation.

The Components of the federations have some role in the Constitutional amendment process, though not as decisive as was envisaged in the Federation Treaty. They can propose Constitutional amendment and any amendment to chapter 3 to 8 (which concerns Federative Structure, President, Federal Assembly, Government, Judicial Branch, and Local Self Government) requires the approval by the legislatures of at least two-thirds of the components. The Constitutional Court<sup>12</sup> of the Russian Federation has been given some sort of Judicial Review with power to check the Constitutional validity of the federal laws and actions of the President, as also the laws and executive decision of the components. The court also has the responsibility to resolve disputes between the federal government and the components or among the components.

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<sup>9</sup> 1993 Constitution, Article 66.5.

<sup>10</sup> 1993 Constitution, Article 67.3.

<sup>11</sup> 1993 Constitution, Article 72 (n) under the Joint Jurisdiction Clause.

<sup>12</sup> 1993 Constitution, Article 125, Chapter 7.

The main features of the federal framework under the new Constitution are enumerated as follows:

1. The status of a subject of the federation cannot be changed unilaterally.
2. The federation guarantees its entire people the right to free development.
3. The Constitution provides a guarantee for the “openness” of borders on the territory of the federation for the free movement of goods, services and financial resources.
4. With respect to matters within the purview of the Russian Federation and in case in which there is a “joint competence of the federation and of the subjects of the federation” the Constitution specifies the priority of federal laws and other normative acts by the subjects of the federation.
5. Outside the jurisdiction of the Russian Federation and its power for common competence of the federation, the subjects of the federation possess full “sovereignty and legal independence”.
6. The Constitution does not give subjects of the federation the right to unilaterally withdrawn from the federation<sup>13</sup>.
7. The Constitution confirms the equality of the foundations of the forms of state in all subject of the federation. This is important for Russia since due to lack of democratic tradition in society, regional leaders could come to power who are bent on introducing undemocratic regimes.

The true meaning and import of these provisions and features will be evident only in the course of time.

It is true that the present structure of the Centre-Periphery relations in Russian Federation is not simply an inherited institutional form. It is also the result of an evolutionary debate and argument in Moscow and in the Republics/ Regions. This debate has been going on since the events that led to the declaration of sovereignty by the RSFSR in 1990, although its intensity has waxed and waned, reaching peaks of interest immediately before and after the 1992 federation treaty and during the 1993 Constitutional Commission of the Russian Federation (Nikolaev 1993: 2). The

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<sup>13</sup> According to the 1924, 1936, 1977 Constitution, the Union Republics have the right to freely leave or secede from the Union.

debates that led to the 1992 Federal Treaty were perhaps the most dynamic product of those discussions. Evaluating the true nature of the Federal Treaty and the new Constitution reveals that President Yeltsin's method of playing off one group against another aggravated the conflicts within the federation. For the smooth functioning of any federal system, the cooperation among its units is duly required. However, the newly emerging Russian Federation has been threatened by its own components because of Moscow's (Centre) individual negotiations and different policies pursued from time to time. The narrowing institutional and political space for real federalism is giving rise to regional and nationality movements. Certain studies show that these kinds of movements have been increasing with every passing year. Moreover, the constitution proposed by the President was greatly truncated by the Federal Treaty. This effectively establishes inequality among the members of the Russian Federation. The dissatisfaction and opposition will continue to grow posing a threat to the integrity of the Russian state.

Moreover, the emerging ethnic assertiveness has become the stumbling block for the new federal system. So far, Russia's Chechen problem is concerned, it is true that the military attack by the Russian army, a coercive policy of the President Yeltsin in the Post-Soviet era, is the product of long unresolved nationality problem of the erstwhile Soviet Union, which Russia as a successor of the Soviet Union got in legacy. These kinds of developments at the regional level do not allow us to be optimistic about the federal set up. Actually, to have a unified federal structure, Russian system will and always be dependent upon the steps taken by its republics/regions which would be conducive to Moscow. At the same time, it can also be observed that centralized, authoritarian way of governance cannot carry federal structure very long. Therefore, solution for the running of the federal system does not lie in Moscow's authoritarian, centralized control. Instead, Moscow should always try to adhere to some policies based on consensus and not on the one sided policies pursued by it so far.

Thus, during the long process of drafting the first Post-Soviet Russian Constitution (1990–1993), the disputes over separation of powers deflected attention from Center-Periphery conflict over the division of powers. In the First Russian Republic, which ended on 4 October 1993 with the military assault on parliament, the country had begun to move unevenly toward an asymmetrical federal structure in which the ethnic republics enjoyed more rights than the administrative

regions. This trend was formalized in the Federation Treaty of 1992, which was incorporated into the draft Constitution. However, after the destruction of parliament, President Boris Yeltsin gained full control of constitution-drafting, reversing the federalist trends. While the new Constitution of the Second Russian Republic codified this centrist orientation, the subsequent Russian-Tatar treaty of 1994 may be the harbinger of a renegotiation of Center-Periphery relations in Russia.

During Vladimir Putin's first terms as the President, the Russian federal government focused its efforts largely on the creation of an efficient administrative 'power vertical.' The idea of consolidating Russia's unity became an important element of Putin's political program. His administration launched measures to build more rigid links than ever before between the federal centre and regions. The Centre-Periphery relation has taken a new turn after Vladimir Putin was elected the president of Russian Federation on March 27, 2000. He has been trying to reassert central control over the component units of the federation. In order to bring about greater uniformity of laws and rules, he has taken several measures.

In this context, the spring of 2000 saw the emergence of the Unitarian Institution of presidential envoys, a kind of viceroy – to each of the newly established seven federal districts, into which the whole country was divided. Simultaneously, regional legislation began to be brought into line with federal laws. The Justice Ministry, the General Prosecutor's Office, and the Supreme and Constitutional Courts of the Russian Federation worked extensively in 2000-2002 to analyze and correct legislative acts. The post of governor lost its significance in 2004. After the terrorist attack against a school in Beslan, North Ossetia, the Kremlin announced a set of security measures, which included appointing regional leaders instead of their direct election. Today, the majority of politicians in all Russian administrative entities are members of the United Russia party. The party also dominates the State Duma. The aforementioned measures, which are of an openly unitary nature, did not require amendments to the constitution, which attests to a very low legal quality of the country's main law.

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Indeed, the changes that have taken place in relations between the center and the peripheral regions since 2000 are anything but insignificant (Sukhov 2008). In a worrying scenario for the Russian Centre-Periphery Relations, Putin may well opt for policy of defederalisation and abolish the existing 89 subjects of the federation to be replaced with the seven federal districts. However, in order to carry out such a radical and potentially destabilizing reform major revisions would have to be made to the Russian constitution which is very difficult to amend. But, it remains to be seen how far the measures taken by Putin will be effective in fostering Centre-Periphery relations in the Russian Federation.

In practice, the Centre-Periphery Relations of the Russian Federation is not an ideal one. The Constitution provides for the residuary powers to the subjects of the federation but the centre seeks more influential even in the matters under the jurisdiction of the subjects of federation especially after Putin's ascendancy. The exercise of relations between the federal and regional government is not constant from the disintegration of the Soviet Union. During Yeltsin era, there was a political instability due to weak centre and federal values have largely been minimized during Putin's era in the name of consolidating powers to the centre. Centre-Periphery practice in the Russian Federation may better be understood by studying Yeltsin and Putin's presidential terms separately.

The main objectives of the present study are as under:

1. To develop a conceptual and theoretical understanding of Centre-Periphery relations.
2. To examine the institutional framework which guides the Centre-Regional relations in Russia.
3. To explain the major developments in the relationship between the Centre and Regions during the Yeltsin period.
4. To analyze the reforms in the Centre-Periphery Relations during Putin's first Presidency.

The tentative speculation explaining an observation, phenomenon or scientific problem that can be tested by additional inspection, investigation and exploration is a hypothesis. The main hypotheses of the present study are:

1. The independence of ethnicity based union republics (Soviet disintegration) aroused similar aspirations and demands from Russia's autonomous republics.
2. Electoral politics and the desire to control the economic resources of the area induced the regional elites to demand greater autonomy (more powers) from the federal centre.
3. The creation of an efficient administrative "power vertical" under Putin presidency consolidated federal centre's control over the regions.

The methodology of the study for evaluating the dynamics of present relationship between Centre and Periphery in the Russian Federation is based on descriptive and analytical approach. It tries to provide causal and descriptive inferences between several federal laws and the nature of Centre-Periphery relations, based on a historical survey of the Soviet and the Russian federal systems with the help of both primary and secondary sources.

Primary sources include various reports, official documents, government publications, constitutional texts, federation treaties / agreements, speeches, and interviews etc. The secondary sources of data including books, journals, articles, newspapers, unpublished research documents and other relevant research materials have been used in this study.

Among the chapters we want to discuss are:

1. The theoretical and conceptual framework related to Centre-Periphery Relations in general and with respect to Russia in particular.
2. Historical background of the Centre Periphery Relations in the Soviet Union. Besides it is also shed light on the different aspects of Constitution regarding Centre Periphery Relations during the Soviet period.
3. The relationship between Centre and Periphery in the Russian Federation during the Yeltsin period (transition period) and after the enactment of the 1993 Russian

Constitution.

4. The changes brought about by Putin during his first Presidency and their implications on Centre-Periphery Relations in Russia.
5. In the last chapter an overall assessment of Centre-Periphery Relations in Russia has been made.



## **CHAPTER II**

# **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: CENTRE-PERIPHERY RELATIONS DURING SOVIET PERIOD**

## **CHAPTER-II**

### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:**

#### **CENTRE-PERIPHERY RELATIONS DURING SOVIET PERIOD**

Russia has a rich and storied history. The origins of modern Russia, however, can be traced to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries when the various principalities of European Russia came under the domination of Moscow. In the centuries to follow, Russian Tsars (kings) spearheaded the eastern and southern expansion of the Russian empire. The development of the modern Russian state structure (bureaucracy, military) began in the late seventeenth century, during the reign of Peter the Great, and continued under subsequent members of the Romanov dynasty. By the early nineteenth century, Russia was considered a major European power and one of several empires that dominated the global scene.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, however, Russia experienced a series of radical political and societal transformations, and military setbacks. The cumulative pressures of modernization, industrialization and urbanization coupled with popular demands for a relaxation of the autocratic system of government and the harsh conditions of the First World War would ultimately lead to the overthrow of the Tsarist regime and the creation of the Soviet Union.

Under the leadership of Lenin, the Bolshevik group of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party seized power in October 1917 and proceeded to consolidate its hold over the vast territory that comprised the former Russian empire. Following the Civil War of 1917-1921, Bolshevik inspired Communist factions came to power in many of the regions of the former empire and joined to form the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).

The Soviet Union's Centre-Periphery status was theoretically enshrined in the 1936 Constitution of the USSR. In practice, however, the Centre-Periphery model that existed during the Soviet period was a facade that veiled the highly centralized political and economic system. Although the various republics that comprised the federation had limited autonomy over cultural and some administrative matters, the overwhelming dominance of centralized structures such as the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and the systems of economic planning and administration effectively nullified the country's Centre-Periphery character (Wilson 2002: 253-

54).

Democratic institutions have sometimes been said to depend upon a federal system of government. The Soviet leaders made much of the fact that the USSR was also a federation. They have claimed that through the federal form the various peoples of the USSR have obtained control over their own affairs and that they have more privileges than states in other federations. In their view, Soviet Centre-Periphery relations was even more democratic in context than that in a liberal democracy. In Soviet Federalism, a Union Republic had the right to secede and this unique fact made its Centre-Periphery relations truly democratic.

### **CENTRE-PERIPHERY RELATIONS DURING SOVIET UNION**

The Soviet political dictionary defines Centre-Periphery relations as “a union of states forming a new union state with a single citizenship upon entering into a federation the union states retains their legal and administrative organs, the activities of which are limited to specific groups of question. Side by sides, with the organs of the power of the different states belonging to the federation, there are established union (federal) legal, administrative and judicial organs, the acts of which are operative throughout the entire territory of the federal states” (*Politicheskyslovar* 1958: 507).

To determine the nature of federation from whatever point Socialist or Western, it is worthwhile to go through the background. Generally, two types of forces bring about a federation viz, Centrifugal and Centripetal. In the first case, a unitary state is broken into a number of units for number administrative purposes. In the second case, the independent and sovereign states unite to protect their national, economic and other interests by delegating some of its power to a central government. The forces working behind the formation of a federation have decisive impact on the nature of federation.

The Soviet concept of Centre-Periphery relations is carved out from the ideological basis of the right of nations to self-determination which provide for every nationality to determine its state political form and unite with other nations. According to Lenin, the society passes through various stages of growth and maturity. Starting with the initial dictatorship of proletariat, a Socialist society next reaches the phases of “victorious socialism”. This is followed by a phase of

building of material-technical phase of Communist society (Chkhivadze 1969: 18).

The origin and antinomies of Soviet Centre-Periphery relations can be found in the thought of Lenin and Stalin preceding their rise to power in 1917. In considering the Bolshevik motives for establishing federalism, it is important to understand the federal proposition in terms of its position as part of Bolshevik nationalities policy. The principal goals of this policy, as noted, were international equalization and “proletarianization” of the national communities. One of the most awkward problems was the central and predominant position of the Russians, in demographic and socioeconomic terms, and the resulting resentment that other nationalities felt at this. Distrust, as noted had to be overcome, but without fatally alienating the powerful Russian demos. This was in addition to the multiplicity of other problems facing the Bolsheviks, such as their administrative weakness, their initial struggle for survival in the civil war, and their commitment to build socialism as rapidly as possible in the former spaces of the Tsarist empire that remained under their control, major feature of which involved their reliance on Marxist-Leninist theory, often regardless of realities (Brazelton 2004: 36-37).

Socialism was not a conducive theoretical environment for the introduction of federalist political ideas. As Lenin stated, “Marxists will never, under any circumstances, advocate either the federal principle or decentralization. The great centralized state is a tremendous historical step forward from medieval disunity to the future socialist unity of the whole world” (Lenin 1968: 38). A Centre-Periphery relations was counter to the democratic centralism which was seen as essential to socialist progress. The division of sovereignty and power that Centre-Periphery relations implied was therefore unacceptable to Lenin initially, and generally incompatible with Marxist thought. In all of Lenin’s writings on the idea of national-self determination, all of the prescriptions that he makes are intended to be followed in a unitary capitalist state - in a socialist state, such problems were not supposed to exist.

Furthermore, federalism was often seen as merely an interim measure, designed to serve as a mediating force until socialist centralism could be arrived at. As Stalin noted, “federalism in Russia is destined to serve as a means of transition –transition to the socialist unitarism of the future” (Stalin 1955: 75). Thus, it was not without controversy, and without a consensus on the

status of federalism within the state that it was implemented. A change, however, can be found in Lenin's 1916 work *The discussion on self-determination* summed up; national territorial autonomy in and of itself could not resolve the pressing problem of ethnic stratification which propagated the existence of mutual distrust between nations (Tucker 1975: 624). By contrast, it would permit the continued preeminence of Great Russians. On the other hand, as noted, independence was hardly feasible in the circumstances as well. Federalism was a compromise solution, as it permitted the national communities to possess territorial sovereignty, a surer safeguard against Great Russian chauvinism. In this regard, one of the comments on Lenin's beliefs: "Lenin's support for a 'socialist type of federation' after 1917 flowed from his belief in the need for both international equality and local territorial autonomy" (Kaiser 1994: 100).

There was a further reason, as well. Stalin, in 1923, after the creation of the Transcaucasian federation, which was seen as a trial stage for the USSR itself, said that there were three chief reasons: the economic situation, which included a need to pool resources, recreate the historical division of labor, and reunify the communication and transportation systems; the military situation, which included the dangers of foreign intervention and economic and diplomatic boycotts; and a natural striving among the entire population for amalgamation as part of a growing socialist internationalism. The last reason can be viewed as irrelevant but the other two motivations can be seen in light of Soviet-state building in the traditional model- central consolidation of power.

Further, "In addition to this domestic reason for federation, the Soviet Union was to serve as a model for the colonies that would gain their independence from the imperialist powers now that the weakest link in the chain (Russia) had been broken. These new states as they formed must see not only that socialism offered an alternative to capitalism but also that it was in their interests to merge with the socialist fatherland – the USSR. In other words, the Soviet Union was to serve as a core area around which a new communist world would accumulate, and the federal nature of the state was a key element of this expansion." (Kaiser 1994: 100). In such a context, federalism in the USSR was not simply a short-term solution. As new territories were added,

they would also be incorporated on a federal basis, while the older territories would rapidly become socialized, and the need for federalism there would recede.

The Piedmont Principle was also a major influence- the more national autonomy that national communities with brother communities outside of the USSR had, the more attractive, in theory, the USSR would look to their brethren abroad. This had two advantages – it decreased the threat from irredentist agitation among the Soviet areas inhabited by the national community in question, and strengthened Soviet support in adjacent areas. To present a metaphor for Soviet thinking on nationalism, as we discussed, the forms of a nation were granted as a kind of vaccine, an inoculation against the disease of bourgeois or irredentist nationalist agitation, but ameliorated by the socialist content which accompanied the national forms of the vaccine. A “healthy” community, by contrast, would eventually overcome the nationalist “diseases” of its youth to mature to a socialist and communist society united around international class interests. It was the point of Soviet nationalities’ policies to bring this about (Brazelton 2004: 39).

Given that ethno-national attributes, as viewed by Leninist and Stalinist thoughts, were objective and relatively concrete phenomena i.e. language, folk dress, customs, etc. national territory was considered to be merely, in Kaiser’s terms, “an empty container within which this political socialization through indigenous national forms was to take place” (Kaiser 1994: 105; Stalin 1934: 82-85). We shall return to the consequences of this view.

One of the major questions was how territory was to be delimited- how the borders of the national communities were to be drawn. It is important to note that the process of delimitation was an ongoing one in the USSR and continued until the inter war period, with some adjustments occurring even later i.e. Khrushchev’s presentation of the Crimea to Ukraine. According to Lee Schwartz, the borders generally followed the patterns of ethno-national settlement, and were based on results of the 1926 census. However, in many cases, they did not encompass what these national communities perceived to be their natural homelands. While for the most part, identification in the territories ruled by the USSR was essentially localized, and extended

principally to localities or small communities rather than nations, nonetheless, as nationalization progressed under Soviet nationalities policies, this became an issue.

The RSFSR was a federation within a federation, with its ethnic Russian component heavily adulterated by the establishment of a substantial number of national subunits, from national Soviets for minorities, to autonomous regions (not yet republics) such as Tatarstan. The constraint of the power of the RSFSR extended beyond this. It was denied institutions given to the other union republics, i.e. its own Academy of Sciences, its own KGB, and its own Communist Party. The Union-wide institutions filled these gaps in administration. Due to this fact, the autonomous regions within the RSFSR enjoyed a status not much reduced from that of the Union republics.

To an extent, as many commentators have remarked, Soviet Federalism was something of a Pinocchio- as long as power was effectively concentrated in the hands of the party, it was largely cosmetic, however much the national groups might have wanted to become “real live boys.” Indeed, given Lenin’s regret at what he viewed as the necessity of implementing federalism, and his preference for centralism as the best means of modernization and progress for the state, this should not be surprising. Yet the importance of federalism should not be underrated, nor should its existence be dismissed as meaningless, for it was almost precisely along the borders drawn by the Soviets that the USSR dissolved, and many elements of the Soviet legacy of federalism are critical to the situation of the Russian Federation. The federal form of the USSR also had a major impact on its economic structure and integration, and was critical to its legitimacy. In addition, the federal form of the USSR and its hierarchy of nationalities were absolutely critical in the structuring of these nations.

The Soviet Constitutional legislation has shown that this process reflected the distinct phases of the socio-economic transformation. It has been argued that Socialist Constitutions must transcend the frame for the operation of political process by government, parliament and political parties (Kerning 1972: 170). The following pages examine Centre-Periphery relations in various Soviet Constitutions.

## **The Constitution of 1918**

The Constitution of 1918 is also known as the Constitution of Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR). The idea of setting up a Soviet state on a Centre-Periphery model was legally secured in the Declaration of Rights of the working and exploited people. It said, “The Russia Soviet Republic is essentially established on the principle of a free union nation as a federation of Soviet” (Carr 1964: 126).

This declaration was endorsed by the third all Russian Congress of Soviets and made a component part of the Constitution of the RSFSR. The salient features of this declaration were its differences from any other declaration of rights since 1689. Rights in such declaration have meant the rights of the individual primarily against the state resulting in from the philosophy of Laissez faire. On the other hand, the declaration have meant the rights of the working and exploited people were an enunciation of the state structure itself. It sprang from the Marxist theory that the rights of citizens are related to the specific socio-political structure. It is only when the authority of the working class is established, then the declaration has a specific meaning. Accordingly, this declaration was endorsed by Third All Russian Congress of Soviets and later made a component part of the Constitution of RSFSR adopted in 1918 (Chaube 1985: 16).

In this way, the Bolsheviks formed their own Constitution in 1918. It was mainly based on the Communist ideology. The Fifth All Russian Congress of Soviets adopted the Constitution on 10 July 1918. It was the first communist constitution of the world. The country was declared a republic of the Soviets of Workers, Soldiers, and Peasants’ Deputies and all the central and local power belonged to these Soviets<sup>1</sup>. This document seems more like a manifesto than a Constitution. It provided for the fundamental policy of the Communist government in favour of the oppressed people and nations<sup>2</sup>. The Constitution believed that the power must belong entirely

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<sup>1</sup>The text of the 1918 Constitution of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic- available at <http://www.marxists.org/history/ussr/government/constitution/1918/article.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Chapter 3.5 of the 1918 Constitution of Russia reads- “it is also to this end that the Third Congress of Soviets insists upon putting an end to the barbarous policy of the bourgeois civilization which enables the exploiters of a few chosen nations to enslave hundreds of millions of the working population of Asia, of the colonies, and of small countries generally”.



to the toiling masses and to their plenipotentiary representatives- Soviets of workers', soldiers' and peasants' Deputies.

The Constitution demands every citizen to work and provides for principle - he shall not eat who does not work. The All Russian Congress of Soviets was the supreme power of the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic (RSFSR) which was composed of representatives of urban Soviets and of representatives of the provincial congress of Soviets. The all Russian Central Executive Committee was the supreme legislative and executive body of the RSFSR. However a council of People's Commissars was entrusted with the general management of the affairs of the country. The People's Commissars looked after the affairs of the particular department (Commissariat).

On the question Centre-Periphery relations in Soviet period had been a lively debate among Russian Marxist prior to the revolution. A group comprising of Rosa Luxemburg argued that as Marxist their interests lay not in Centre-Periphery relations but in promoting the idea of proletarian internationalism. In such a situation the state could not be divided into units as it would dissipate the energy of the workers. On the other hand, Lenin believed that a certain amount of autonomy was essential in view of the fact that Tsarist Russia was a multinational empire. In the final analysis, he also believed that the interests of the workers lay in internationalism. It was only after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 that the mighty Tsarist empire was brought together on the basis of Soviet Centre-Periphery relations.

The Constitution of RSFSR recited at length the faith and political aims of the new regime. All people belonging to Non-Russian nationality in Tsarist Russia did not possess their statehood. Only the October Socialist Revolution put an end to national oppression. It also proclaimed and confirmed the right of people for free development, and assured them of full equality of rights in all spheres of state and society life. The Russian Soviet Republic began to shape itself as a federal republic from the moment of its formation. The creation of the RSFSR historically put before the party a number of serious questions relating to national state development of the RSFSR as a federation demanding theoretical formation and its practical implementation. In this manner, the RSFSR Constitution of 1918 confirmed the national-territorial principle as the basis for the construction of Soviet Centre-Periphery relations. In the first Soviet Constitution an attempt was made to demarcate to jurisdiction of the higher organs of power in the USSR.

In this way, the Constitution of RSFSR for the first time affirmed the right of the central federal organs not only to determine the content and limits of the autonomous rights of regional units but also to free exit from the soviet federation. So, the entire history of the RSFSR in a federation up to formation of the USSR testifies to its developments along two parts. Firstly, federation based on autonomy and secondly, through the conclusion of treaties and agreements about establishment of close federal ties with other independent republic. The 1918 Constitution apart from making the break with the past order was also an 'original constitution' in the sense that it advanced a new, truly creative and hence, 'original' function principle for the process of political power and the formation of the will of the state (Loewenstein 1957: 140).

Commenting on the Soviet Constitution of July 1918, Lenin observed "It was neither the creation of lawyer nor it copied from other constitution. It embodied the worker's experience of struggle and organization against the exploitation both at home and abroad" (Makhenko 1976: 50).

Though the 1918 Constitution of the RSFSR marked a serious step in the development of Soviet Centre-Periphery relations, it did not answer several questions advanced by the practical federal construction of the RSFSR. For instance, in that period there was no clarity about the ways and forms of participation of the subjects of the RSFSR in the working of the federal organs. Even the organs in which such participation was envisaged was not clearly identified. There was also no clarity about the formation of autonomous republics and national regions. This was primarily because the Tsarist empire was breaking up and the energy of Soviet leaders was directed the Civil War.

### **The Constitution of 1924**

The Civil War and the foreign intervention in the Soviet Russia made it imperative for the government to unite the Non-Russian regions under a single union in order to save its socialist existence. Although the process began immediately after the revolution, resolution of the Tenth Party Congress in 1921 specifically called for "Union of the Several Socialist Republics" as the only path of salvation from the imperialist yoke and national oppression (Fainsod 1970: 365).

Therefore, the subsequent Union of the Republics<sup>3</sup> creating a new state the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republic on November 30, 1922 necessitated the adoption of a new Constitution. On January 10, 1923, the presidium of new Central Executive Committee (CEC) elected by the First All Russian Congress of Soviet of the USSR, appointed a commission to draft the new Constitution taking the 1922 Treaty as a basis.

The declaration of the Treaty of 1922 establishing the USSR on December 30, 1922 announced to the world that the newly founded federation state would be based on the following principles:

1. Equality of rights for each subjects of the federation.
2. The principle of voluntary union.
3. Sovereignty of each of the United Republic.

Thus the main objective of introducing 1924 Constitution of Russia was to legitimize the December 1922 Union of the RSFSR, the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, the Belarussian Soviet Socialist Republic and the Transcaucasian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic to form the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic. This constitution also altered some of the structure of the central government.

Central Executive Committee (CEC) was divided into the Soviet of the Union, which would represent the constituent republics, and the Soviet of nationalities, which would represent the interests of nationality groups. The presidium of the CEC was formed to serve as the collective presidency<sup>4</sup>. Between the two sessions of the CEC of the USSR, the presidium of the CEC was the supreme organ of legislative, executive, and administrative power of the country. It had the right to suspend and abrogate the orders of the Council of People's Commissars and of the different Councils of People of the USSR as well as those of the CEC and Councils of People's Commissars of the component republics. The judiciary did not seem to be an independent branch

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<sup>3</sup> Here RSFSR, Ukraine, Belarussia, Transcaucasia are known as Union of the Republics.

<sup>4</sup> The text of the 1924 Soviet Constitution.

but a subsidiary component of the Communist mission<sup>5</sup>.

The 1924 constitution formally established a federal system. It includes clauses allocating certain powers to the federal government and reserving other power to the constitution republic and it formally recognized the right of the sovereign republics to secede from the union. At the time the Constitution of 1924 was adopted there were only four Union Republics. In the 1924 Constitution, the word 'Union' was used in place of 'Federation or Federal'. It declared the union to be "voluntary association of sovereign nations on the basis of equality, reserving to itself the right of free withdrawal from the union". But this right could not be used to promote counter revolution. In this context, Stalin had already clarified his stand on October 10, 1920 in an article in Pravada that:

"of course the border regions of Russians, the nations and the tribes which inhabit these regions.....posses the inalienable right to secede from Russia, but the demand for secession....at the present stage of the revolution has became counter revolution" (Fainsod 1970: 353).

This was interpreted from a class point of view that was considered legitimate only if exercised by the working class of the nationality, in question, or in constitutional terms, in favour of the ideal of equality of peoples of the union within a federative socialist system. It was further argued that the socialist system by doing away with social, ethnic, religion, cultural and economic inequality would *ipsa-facto* put an end to separatist trends for the obvious reasons that nationalism was largely a natural reflex to the stimulus of the great power chauvinism at the Russian. From the stand point of bringing about equality among various nationalities, it was first necessary to raise titular nationalities to the legal of more advance Russians, technically, economically, culturally and spiritually.

To sum up the changes in the Soviet structure resulting from the 1924 Constitution is a difficult task. The RSFSR had the word 'federal' in its title and was constantly referred to as such, yet it was in strict constitutional terms, a unitary state, incorporating a number of subordinate, through partially autonomous units, in the Constitution of the USSR and in official documents relating to

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<sup>5</sup> Article 43 of the USSR Constitution of 1924, reads- 'in order to maintain revolutionary legality within the territory of the USSR, a Supreme Court under the jurisdiction of the C.E.C. of the USSR is established....'

it, the words federal and federation were avoided.

Yet the USSR was in essential points, a federation, it was created by agreement between formally equally sovereign states, and the Constitution formally recognized continuing sovereign of the units of the federation, which was restricted only within limits laid down in the constitution. The Constitution provided one orthodox federal lines for a division of competence between the authorities of the USSR and those of republics and on certain matters for concurrent jurisdiction (the Unified Commissariats). It even recognized a right not normally accorded to the constituent units of a federation, the right of secession and explicitly provided that this right could not be abridged without the consent of the entire republic. The bicameral assembly (Union Council and Council of Nationalities) was a familiar device in federations to safeguard the right of member states. In all these respects a large measure of formal satisfaction was offered to the Soviet republic constituting the USSR.

In fact, the Constitution was the document of a combination of Marxist-Leninist perspective, novel western influence above all the exigencies of the traumatic revolutionary and civil era following 1917. In the period between 1924 and 1936, a number of amendments and agenda were introduced into the Constitution of the USSR and the Constitution of the Union Republics. They reflected: Firstly, the development of national and state organization of the USSR, delimitation of the jurisdiction of the USSR and that of the Union Republics, formation of autonomous republics, regions and national areas. Secondly, radical changes were carried out in the administration territorial division of the republics. And thirdly, the reorganisation of the organs of the state administration was brought about (Danisov and Kirichenko 1960: 83-91).

A number of autonomous republics and autonomous regions were formed in the RSFSR and other republics after 1920, many national areas were also created. The total number of autonomous republics within the USSR reached twenty two by the end of 1936. The constitution was amended to incorporate these changes. Other amendments were introduced to specify the jurisdiction of the USSR and the Union Republics. The amendments led to enhancement of the powers of the Union. Apart from these changes at the territorial level, Stalin had proclaimed that socialism had been achieved in the Soviet Union by 1935. These qualitative changes in Soviet society required a new Constitution. Amendments did not serve the purpose. Hence, the new Constitution of 1936.

## **The Constitution of 1936**

The most significant change came in 1936 with the adoption of the new Constitution. In his speech on the draft constitution, Stalin claimed three major accomplishments of Soviet society. The first one was the successful establishment of Socialism and for the USSR, Socialism was something already achieved and won. Second was the abolition of class struggle. Soviet society consisted of two friendly classes, the workers and peasants. And third was the transformation of the dictatorship into a system of state guidance of society (Stalin 1954: 631).

The 1936 constitution marked a notable break in the Soviet Constitution law. It was adopted as a result of important changes in the economic structure and class composition of Soviet society. Alfred G. Mayer has aptly concluded the experience of the Soviet constitutional development. He writes, "Every Soviet political system destroyed itself by its success. Each rendered itself superfluous and jeopardised its own existence by solving some major problem or problems confronting it precisely for the solution of those problems it functioned and structured itself" (Mayer 1967: 50).

In this context, the 1936 Constitution of the USSR commonly known as the Stalin constitution redesigned the government of the Soviet Union. It repealed restrictions on voting and added universal direct suffrage and the right to work. It also adopted various rights guaranteed by the previous Constitution. The Constitution also recognized collective social and economic rights including the rights to rest and leisure, health protection, care in old age and sickness, housing, education, and cultural benefits. It provided for the direct election of all government bodies as well. The Supreme Soviet of the USSR was the supreme body of the governmental authority which consisted of two chambers- the Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of Nationalities<sup>6</sup>. The joint sitting of the Supreme Soviet had right to appoint the government of the USSR, that is, Council of the People's Commissars<sup>7</sup>. Likewise, the highest organ of the federating republic was the Supreme Soviet of the Union Republic. Judges were said to be independent but the courts used to be elected by the respective committees of the Soviets, e.g. - the Supreme Court used to

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<sup>6</sup> The text of the 1936 Constitution of the USSR- Article 33.

<sup>7</sup> The 1936 Constitution of the USSR- Article 56.

be elected by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR<sup>8</sup>.

The main aim of the 1936 Constitution was to bring the fundamental law into conformity with socio-economic changes that had taken place during the preceding years. Stalin said, "The new Constitution.....proceeds from the fact that there are no longer any antagonistic and classes in society, that society consists of two friendly classes of workers and peasants that it is these classes the labouring classes that are in power" (Stalin 1953: 690).

The purpose of this Constitution was the registration and legislative embodiment of what has already been achieved and won in fact. Hence, it was possible to introduce universal suffrage without any restriction and without any disfranchised classes and to abolish the inequality between workers and peasants. One of the main highlights of the 1936 Constitution was its chapter Federalism. The chapter clearly spelt out the kind of Federalism that had been initiated in the Soviet Union. On the face it appeared highly democratic but in reality the Soviet Union was a unitary state. Importantly, the mechanism by which secession was to be achieved was not mentioned in the Constitution. Stalin pronounced the establishment of socialism with both classes and the state. The Constitution however provided for greater centralization and a large role for the Union to planning of establishment of a command economy. The single party rule in particular helped to realized the objective.

In this way, Stalin's nationalities' policies, as an implicit effect of his broader policies aimed at reshaping the Soviet Union and driving it towards socialism, substantially changed the antinomies of Soviet socialism in a plurinational society. In Stalin's time, the USSR shifted towards a primordialist definition of nationality, towards nations as an inherent element within Soviet society. Increasingly, as a result of the Soviet Union's perceived perilous international position from 1927 onwards, ethnicized xenophobia developed. The Piedmont Principle, as noted, was reversed as a result of this. This shift was largely inspired by a nationalist interpretation by Soviet officials, notably Stalin of resistance encountered by Soviet officials, both in the implementation of the Five Year Plan and Cultural Revolution. Notable in inspiring this shift was the grain requisitions crisis of 1932 and 1933.

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<sup>8</sup> The 1936 Constitution of USSR- Article 105.

One of the main goals of nationalities policy at this time was to Russify the Russian regions of the RSFSR, and assimilation accomplished this goal. The effect of all of this was to lead to the consolidation of a lesser number of nations than the flowering of the nations had produced, from about 200 peoples in the 1926 census to 59 by 1939. The era was also characterized by the promotion of an idea of socialist patriotism through individual national identification and the related paternalistic attitude of the state with regard to some nationalities; i.e. the party-state was the organ through which those national aspirations had been recognized, and therefore identification with the party-state as the cultivator and protector of the nation was expected, to be part of that nation was to be part of a nation that could, according to the party, only exist under the party-state, and would, in other circumstances, inevitably be overridden by bourgeois Great Russian chauvinism.

A new concept was accompanied the 1936 constitution-the idea of the "Friendship of the Peoples." Central to this was the equality of all the now consolidated nations, and above all the status of the Russians as *primus inter pares*. The greatest danger principle was discarded, and ethnic distrust was declared by Stalin to be at an end by December 1935. The idea was that the Russians were to serve as the central and unifying ethnic group in this new paradigm. This was to be realized and justified on three bases; the invaluable role of Russians as a nation with an affinity for socialism and as prime movers of the Revolution, as the source of the greatest culture and progress of the nations within the USSR, and Russian as the language not only of administration, but also of socialism, the language of Lenin and Stalin. At the same time, because of their strong identification with the USSR, Russian identity itself was diluted. The informal and *de facto* structural-institutional conflation of Russian and Soviet identities all were centred on neutralizing and containing nationalist sentiment within the national communities within the USSR, the most dangerous of which, in practical terms, was that of the Russians. However, it was dangerous to alienate these national communities, and thus the accommodative and placatory measures discussed previously. These antinomies and compromises were all carefully balanced in order to preserve Soviet power.



Stalin's policies were characterized by themes of national dilution and adulteration alternating with consolidation. In theoretical terms, he implemented policies of demos constraint and demos enabling implications alternately in the case of the national populations of the RSFSR, e.g. the abolition of other national Soviets. Similarly, he also strove to preserve diversity within the state (a goal of federal theory) in the national dimension, even when implementing policies of consolidation to limit the total number of groups, but constrained some groups i.e. policies of regarding the right to assimilate, the right to autonomy. The variegated structure of national hierarchies also points to a putative division of sovereignty along national-territorial lines.

In short, many of Stalin's policies possessed elements of federalism, but ran strictly counter to other concepts of federalism i.e. constitutionality and it is impossible to speak of a really-existing federalism in the USSR due to the excessive centralization of effective political power in the extra-constitutional hands of the party. In sum, it is possible to speak of the USSR under Stalin as being a federation in structure, with federal policies adopted, but of a lack of federalism as it is generally understood, and as it was discussed above, due to the nature of the party-state relationship.

The War Time situation (1934-45) was particularly used for unification and centralization. The exigencies of War Communism established the paradigm for a centralized socialist economy. It also gave Stalin a new appreciation for the emotional value of nationalism, resulting in an open glorification of the motherland and reinforcing the image of the Russian big brother. But it also brought some concessions to republics. After the Second World War, USSR witnessed as simultaneous growth of centralization and ethnic self-assertion. At that time the dynamic of Soviet foreign policy combined a drive for an extension of political influence of the USSR as a great power, with an appeal to internationalism of the working class to sell progressive focus abroad (Hazard 1980: 97-98).

With the death of Stalin in 1953, many of his postulates as well as misdeeds were secretly discussed at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of Soviet Union (CPSU). The discussion on the need to change the constitution of 1936 was started by Khrushchev at the twenty first Congress of the CPSU in 1959. Khrushchev revealed how Stalin, long accumulating immense power in the party and the government oppressed its opponents. This revelation led to the re-examination of Stalin's personality and policies as well as the principles of managements of the party and the government. The natural consequence of this revelation was a series of corrective measures introduced after the Twentieth Congress<sup>9</sup> (Izvestia November 20, 1962).

Finally, in 1961, CPSU adopted a new programme in its Twenty Second Congress. The programme set the following direction for the development of the Soviet state: "all round extension and perfection of socialist democracy, active participation of all citizens in the administration of the state, in the management of the economic and cultural development, improvement of the government apparatus, the increased control over its activity" (Khrushchev 1962: 548). It was in continuation of the spirit of the Twentieth Congress that a further exposure of the evils of the personality cult at the twenty second congress was made and assertion of faith, in the programme of the CPSU<sup>10</sup>. In October 1964, however, Khrushchev was overthrown and Brezhnev became the General Secretary of the CPSU. In the seventies, the Soviet Union scored another achievement. It was acknowledged as a super power by its rival, the USA. This meant that the scientific technical revolution had made strides. This had to be reflected in the constitution. Hence the need for a new Constitution.

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<sup>9</sup> For the details see Izvestia November 1962 cited in T.C. Tewantia, "Soviet Theory of Federalism" in the Indian Journal of Political Science, Vol. 36, No. 2, Delhi, April-June 1975, p-186.

<sup>10</sup> Khrushchev on the Programme of CPSU, 1962, p- 194

## **The 1977 Constitution**

The 1977 Constitution of the USSR grew out of the fulfilment of the programme of the CPSU that was adopted in 1961. Brezhnev claimed that his Constitution “epitomized the whole sixty years development of the Soviet state”. He called it “the law of life of developed Socialist society” (Breznev 1977: 3). The 1936 Constitution had been drafted just after the establishment of socialism. Since then the soviet state has traversed a great distance. Economic development had been accompanied by considerable levelling of the conditions of the people and the consolidation of the socialist consciousness creating an organic integrity and dynamic force of the social system, its political stability its indestructible inner unity. It reflected the stage of mature socialism an important step towards the great goal of communism (Breznev 1977: 20-21).

The new Soviet Constitution of 1977 marked the socio-economic development of the country although it incorporated the principles of the three old Constitutions of the Soviet. The new Constitution described the USSR as the state of the whole people, expressing the will and interests of the workers, peasants, intelligentsia, and the working people of the all nations and nationalities of the country (Jitendra 1978: 14). But the 1936 Constitution had defined the USSR as a Socialist state of workers and peasants. On the other hand the preamble of the 1977 Constitution said - the aims of the dictatorship of the proletariat having been fulfilled, the Soviet state has become the state of the whole people. The rights were also amplified in the new Constitution by adding right to choose one’s trade, profession, job or work in accordance with one’s ability, training, education, and one’s inclination (Jitendra 1978: 15). The Constitution had changed the name of the Council of Peoples Commissar of the USSR into Council of Ministers of the USSR.

In the new constitution adopted in 1977, the proposals regarding federal system based on Lenin’s ideals and accepted by the treaty of 1922 and repeated in the 1924 and 1936 Constitution, figured virtually intact. For the 1977 Constitution was not only a conservative but also a derivative document in many respects. It not only confirmed the sovereign rights of the union republics granted under the previous Constitutions, but also extended them further in various fields. In terms of constitutional structures all the Constitution of USSR starting from 1918 to 1977 were based on Lenin’s solution summed up in the phrase “nationalist in form and socialist in context

and allowed for recognition of the national principal, by providing the nations of the defunct empire with a federal structure” (Narang 1995: 182).

All these constitutions on paper provided for a highly decentralized federation. The fifteen republics have the right to conduct their own foreign policy and to secede at will. Soviet authorities felt that such a Centre-Periphery relations through a process of gradual rapprochement would ultimately lead to the creation of a common Soviet nation but what is found is that, while Centre-Periphery relations and nationality policies would have acted as a level for authentic decentralization and accommodation of ethnic aspirations. In practice, it became a highly centralized united state ruled by the all powerful political apparatus of the CPSU. Thus, the 1977 Constitution had fused together two seemingly contradictory tendencies- the extension of the sovereign rights in the union republics and their increased say in the all union matter. The safeguarding of their sovereign right has been made a constitutional obligation of the union of the article 81 of the New Constitution.

### **The Interregnum**

After mid-70s, the economy of the USSR began to decline. One of the reasons for this was- the military competition with the West. It resulted in more expenditure in the defense industries which further weakened the whole economy. The production of the consumer goods declined and shortages were rampant in the market and quality of the goods was also low. The agriculture sector of the country could not feed its population. Thus the food import increased. The problems began to be seen in the political field as well. The leaders of the Communist Party were unaccountable to the people and the bureaucracy had control and access to the information. This created a kind of grudge among the people.

A new leader, Gorbachev came to power in 1985 and he sought to restructure the entire economic and political sphere. The USSR under Gorbachev with his policies of ‘Glasnost and Perestroika’ opened up a ‘Pandora’s Box’ which proved harmful for the USSR to exist as an entity. The policy of the Soviet government to create republics named after titular nationalities and allotment of privileged to the titular nationalities on the territories of these republics created an environment in which nationality became the central aspect of individual identity. It also

fostered nationalism among ethnic groups who became full fledged nations, striving for political independence. The Gorbachev reforms further catalyzed these tendencies. His attempt to delegitimize the communist party and its consequent disintegration as a nation wide institution led to a rapid and uncontrolled fragmentation of power and de facto autonomy of local economic, political and military actors. His economy reforms led to an unintended process of resource redistribution. Glasnost (Openness) gave an opportunity to the ethnic nationalities to voice their long, suppressed grievances. Democratization and competitive elections started a contest for power in which nationalist ideology became an instrument of a mass mobilization in hands of the local elites.

Actually, Gorbachev hastily implemented his scheme in political and economic fields. He sacked many senior leaders from the party's top job and improved the electoral system by introducing direct franchise. By this, new faces came up who were no longer dedicated to the Soviet system. On the one hand, he brought reformist like Boris Yeltsin to the post of secretary of the Moscow Party. He introduced the new laws and institutions. But the beaureaucratic apparatus were old which invariably were not willing to implement laws that were not beneficial to them. This also made difficult the process of reform (Chenoy 2001: 21). The result of his initiatives culminated in the disintegration of the USSR.

Further, the policy of Glasnost resulted in weaking of the grip of the Communist Party on the media leading to the exposure of severe social and economic problems that Soviet government had long denied and actively concealed. Moreover, the war in Afghanistan and the mishandling of the 1986 Chernobyl disaster, which Gorbachev tried to cover up, further damaged the credibility of the Soviet government at a time when dissatisfaction was increasing<sup>11</sup>. Due to the openness in the political sphere, the union republics either began to demand secession or faced ethnic movement. On the one hand the CPSU's grip over the political system weakened and government itself lost control over the economic situation.

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<sup>11</sup> The source of the matter is History of the Soviet Union (1985-1991) available at-[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/history\\_of\\_the\\_Soviet\\_Union\\_\(1985-1991\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/history_of_the_Soviet_Union_(1985-1991)).

Gorbachev tried to keep the Union intact. He drafted a union treaty and a referendum was held on March 17, 1991. It was supported by 76.4 percent of votes although six of the republics did not take part. The treaty had removed much of the power of the union which the conservatives (traditional Communist) did not like. They plotted a coup under the leadership Yanayev on 18 August, 1991 two days before the treaty was to be executed. Gorbachev was home detained in Crimea. But the coup lasted for just three days. After the failed attempt, the Soviet Republics accelerated their process towards independence, declaring their sovereignty one by one. Finally on December 25, 1991 with the resignation of Gorbachev as President of the USSR, the Soviet Union dissolved.

By early 1991 many of the Union Republics of USSR including Russia (RSFSR), and following them a number of autonomous republics and other administrative-territorial units, had issued declarations on political and economic sovereignty in what has been appropriately described as “Parade of Sovereignties and Parade of Autonomous Constitutions” that Kahn calls a form of “legal separations” (Kahn 2000: 58-88).

## **Conclusion**

Many commentators are of the view that the distinctive character of Soviet Centre-Periphery relations is the lack of historical and practical legitimacy in the Soviet federal system. In particular, the root of the federal compromise in the Soviet Union lay in the Bolshevik’s desire to co-opt and undermine local interests rather than to accommodate them within a genuinely federal structure. Lenin and the Bolsheviks faced difficulties in imposing Soviet control over the borderland areas of the Tsarist empire during the civil war, and Soviet Centre-Periphery relations was seen as a transitory stage, eventually leading to centralization and facilitating the emergence of new social relations in the Soviet Union.

In practice, Centre-Periphery relations in the Soviet period was hierarchical and bureaucratic. Power was strictly controlled by the centre and lay in the hands of the Communist Party. Party Soviets and ministries in Moscow administered the command system and formally the economy was organised by a complex system of central planning. Soviet Centre-Periphery relations then corresponded to an authoritarian model based on the use of centralised administrative and

coercive power. Republican and local governments were little more than organs of the centre, which dominated the political-economic organization of the country.

The rights of union republics and autonomous republics were subordinate to the national interests of the USSR. This led to a tense dualism in Soviet Centre-Periphery relations which in practice denied any real autonomy to the Non-Russian minorities while providing them with the “symbolic institutions and administrative framework of autonomy” (Sakwa, 1989, p-301). Under Soviet nationalities policies, “cultural and territorial base of ethnicity were maintained and constitutionally safeguarded”, and the Soviet federation was organized on both ethnic and territorial basis.

One of the key features of Soviet Centre-Periphery relations was their national territorial principle, which recognised some national groups territorially based claims to political recognition. Although, in reality this principle was little more than rhetoric, a conception of national statehood was made the basis of federation in the Soviet Union. The emphasis on unity in the Soviet federal structure laid the very basis for Soviet disintegration. The urge of nationalities to assert themselves the eventual dissatisfaction with the construction of the Soviet in place of regional identity gave rise to new aspiration which led to the end of Soviet Centre-Periphery relations.

Finally, the breakup of the Soviet Union into 15 independent states in December 1991 did not only demolish a myth that the USSR was a multi-national state of a new kind in which ethnic problems had been settled once and for all, but also brought to the fore important of ethnicity in the modern world and difficulty of attaining the goal of amalgamation of ethnic groups even into a new historical community. Till 1988, Soviet authors and statesman stressed that the various nationalities in the Soviet Union, coexisting harmoniously with the socialist economic and political structure were becoming amalgamated into a new historical community, the ‘Soviet people’. That the experience gained in resolving ethnic or national question in the USSR was of universal historic importance but was being underestimated or misrepresented by the Western critics. Some scholars characterized socialist Federalism as a principle of free self-determination based on national-territorial foundations, voluntary association, and the equal rights of the subject of federation. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Yeltsin became the first president of Russian Federation.

The Yeltsin constitution of the Russian Federation replacing the Soviet period document of 1977 came into force on 12 December 1993. Under this constitution, the Russian Federation is a democratic, federative, multi-ethnic republic in which state power is divided among the legislature, executive and judiciary which are independent of one another. Ideological pluralism and a multi-party political system are recognized. It defines the separate roles of the authority of the Russian Federation as distinct from that of the joint authority of the Russian Federation. It also establishes the relationship between federal laws, federal constitutional laws and the laws and other normative legal acts of the subjects of the Russian Federation. The power of the federal executive bodies and executive bodies of the members of the Russian Federation are defined.

However, Russia emerged from the breakup of the USSR as an essentially unitary states despite itself description as a federation. During the long process of drafting the first Post-Soviet Russian Constitution (1990–1993), the disputes over separation of powers deflected attention from Center-Periphery conflict over the division of powers. In 1993 with the military assault on parliament, the country had begun to move unevenly toward an asymmetrical federal structure in which the ethnic republics enjoyed more rights than the administrative regions. However, after the destruction of parliament, President Boris Yeltsin gained full control of constitution-drafting, reversing the federalist trends.



## **CHAPTER III**

# **CENTRE-PERIPHERY RELATIONS DURING YELTSIN PERIOD**

### **CHAPTER-III**

#### **CENTRE-PERIPHERY RELATIONS**

#### **IN RUSSIA DURING YELTSIN PERIOD**

Boris Yeltsin's term as the first President of independent Russia neatly encompassed the last decade of the twentieth century. Throughout this decade, Western eyes were fixed on two aspects of Russia's transformation from its Soviet past: the development of a multi-party system in place of the Communist Party's monopoly of power, and the creation of a market in place of the planned economy. In both cases, generally agreed criteria and models could be found in the developed world against which to measure Russia's progress. Less attention other than by specialists was paid to the attempt to create a federal system in Russia. There was anyway less certainty about the aim of state systems, including federations, which differ widely in the developed world. Only when conflict over the Federation went to extremes, in particular the separatist war in Chechnya, did the issue capture the headlines. Chechnya was a crucial issue in the Yeltsin era and remains so under the presidency of Vladimir Putin. But it was not the determining factor in centre-periphery relations. It is hard to pinpoint how was centre-periphery relations evolved, as many conflicts and solutions that marked the emergence of the new Russia. For this reason, as good an approach as any to characterising centre-periphery relations in the Yeltsin era is to tell the story and pick up the common threads at the end.

In the RSFSR, as in the USSR as a whole, the collapse of Communist Party rule laid bare an underlying legacy of bitterness among its variegated components. A desire to seize and exploit rights that had been enjoyed only on paper fed into the current of national reassertion that accompanied the last years of the Soviet Union and came to dominate centre-periphery relations in the early years of independent Russia under Yeltsin (Lapidus 1995: 79-113; Teague 1994: 21-57; Debardeleben 1997: 35-56; Kahn 2001: 374-84). The sequence of events that came to be known as the 'parade of sovereignties' began in 1990. One by one the Union Republics began unilaterally to upgrade their status with declarations of 'sovereignty'. This loosely applied term did not mean that they claimed to be states independent of the USSR, but they did assert ownership of the natural resources on their territories and maintained that their laws took

primacy over the laws of the Soviet Union. The RSFSR declared its sovereignty on 12 June 1990. The declaration, which was supported for different reasons across the political spectrum, was intended to be and was a blow against the power and authority of the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. Boris Yeltsin, who had just been elected chairman of the RSFSR Supreme Soviet, was now able to use the whole of the huge republic as the platform for his barely concealed ambition to displace the Soviet leader. Yeltsin's desire to exact revenge over Gorbachev for the humiliation of being thrown out of the Communist Party's Politburo in 1987 should not be underestimated<sup>1</sup>.

Yeltsin's scheme was to replace the vertical ties that bound the Union Republics to the Soviet centre with horizontal ties between the republics, bypassing the centre. His mantra was that power should flow from the bottom to the top, not the other way round. He encouraged the regions of the RSFSR and particularly the Autonomous Republics to follow suit. During a tour of Russia in August 1990, in the Tatar and Bashkir ASSRs, he made a statement that has since been much quoted: 'Take as much sovereignty as you can swallow' (Aron 2000: 392–4). Taking him literally, a number of the ethnically based Autonomous Republics and even some of the smallest Autonomous Districts declared their own sovereignty, asserted the primacy of their laws over those of the RSFSR and renamed themselves simply 'republics'. There was a real basis for the action of some of the Autonomies: the Tatar ASSR, for example, had long begrudged having lower status than the smaller Union Republics (e.g. Estonia), which it outclassed in size, population and industrial capacity. So when the Tatar ASSR declared its sovereignty (and renamed itself Tatarstan) in August 1990 it was acting not against the RSFSR but against the institutions of Soviet rule (Moukharlamov 1997: 216). A worthy reason for Yeltsin to tolerate, even encourage, the rise of nationalism within the RSFSR was the influence of his advisers, including Galina Starovoytova, an expert on the struggle of the Armenian inhabitants of the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. They counselled that attempts to suppress nationalism only added to its fervour. There can be little doubt, however, that uppermost in Yeltsin's mind was the advantage his 'bottom-up' approach gave him in the power struggle with Gorbachev.

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<sup>1</sup> Yeltsin's resentment of Gorbachev pervades the first, and most ingenuous, of Yeltsin's three autobiographies (Yeltsin 1990).

Subsequently, for much of his term in office as President of independent Russia, Yeltsin was trying to claw back the ground lost by this approach and his successor is still doing so.

Gorbachev was also able to exploit Yeltsin's approach to his own advantage, if only temporarily. In July 1991 he embarked on a round of talks with leaders of the Union Republics at the Novo-Ogarevo government dacha outside Moscow in search of a new Union Treaty to replace the Treaty of 1922, under which the USSR had been formed. By this time the stronger Autonomous Republics with Tatarstan in the lead were claiming equal status with the Union Republics and a seat at the table. Gorbachev acquiesced, calculating that their presence would dilute Yeltsin's influence. The new Union Treaty was never signed: two days before the signature date a coup was mounted against Gorbachev in the name of preserving the Soviet Union as it had been. The coup, which failed, set in motion the process that ended in December with the collapse of the Soviet Union itself. But the aborted Union Treaty left a legacy that has bedevilled centre-periphery relations in independent Russia ever since. The Autonomous Republics had been poised to sign the Union Treaty in two capacities: as components of the RSFSR, but also as components of the USSR, alongside and on the same level as the RSFSR. Thus Tatarstan and, to a lesser extent, Bashkortostan (as the Bashkir ASSR renamed itself) in their own view emerged from the wreckage of the Soviet Union as states with the same degree of independence as the former Union Republics. Accordingly, when Tatarstan later adopted its own constitution in November 1992, it maintained the position that the republic was merely associated with Russia<sup>2</sup>.

### **Creating the New Russian Federation**

When the Russian Federation became a genuinely sovereign state at the beginning of 1992 it was already fragmented. The former Autonomous Republics of the RSFSR were not prepared to give up the gains they had made in the negotiation of the aborted Union Treaty. Moreover, one of the former Autonomies, Chechnya, was already in open revolt. So one of Yeltsin's most pressing tasks was to obtain agreement on the basic principles that were to underlie centre-

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<sup>2</sup> Article 61 of the Tatarstan Constitution reads: 'The Republic of Tatarstan is a sovereign state, a subject of international law, associated with the Russian Federation and Russia on the basis of an Agreement on the reciprocal delegating of plenary powers and subjects of authority.'

periphery relations in the new Russia. He managed this on 31 March 1992 by inducing all but two of Russia's republics and regions to sign a Treaty of Federation.

This was in fact three treaties, one for each of the three types of administrative unit inherited from Soviet Russia:

1. Twenty nationality-based republics (increasing to twenty-one in June 1992, when Ingushetia, part of the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Republic, became a republic in its own right);
2. Fifty-five territorially based regions (forty-nine oblasts and six larger krays) and two major cities (Moscow and St Petersburg) that were given the status of regions;
3. Ten autonomous districts (okrugs), homelands of a number of indigenous peoples, and one autonomous region, the Jewish Autonomous oblast.

In this way, after the dissolution of Soviet Union in December 1991, Russia needed a Constitution to construct Russia as a federation and consolidate the Russian state. A new Constitution was deemed necessary to end political uncertainty, to consolidate the transition and to bring orderly change and stability in the society. On December 12, 1993 the Constitution was adopted by a referendum which became Russia's first democratic Constitution. Prior to the adoption of the 1993 Constitution, "Federation Treaty" which was a treaty on the division of subjects of jurisdiction and authority between federal bodies of state power of the Russian Federation, was signed in Moscow on 31 March, 1992.

As, The Federation Treaty of 1992 and the Constitution of 1993 are the two key documents that establish the composition of the Russian Federation. According to these documents, Russia is a Federation which consists of 89 subjects- 21 republics (states), 49 oblasts (provinces), 6 kraia (territories), 1 autonomous oblast, 10 autonomous districts, 2 federal cities (city states). It is generally believed that the Federation Treaty of 1992 represents the second model while the Constitution of 1993 is more amenable to the first model (Lynn and Navikov 1997: 192-195). The Federation Treaty acknowledged the special position of the republics over the regions, to which the latter objected. But the 1993 constitution declared that all the subjects of the federation republics, kraia, oblasts, cities etc. have equal rights and are equal in their relation with the

federal bodies of power. It is thus not consistent with some provisions of the Federation Treaty. The Federation Treaty would make Russia a 'treaty state' - based on a compact among the constituent units, while the Constitution of 1993 makes Russia a Constitutional Federation.

### **Negotiated Autonomy: The Bilateral Treaty Process**

Since the past decade, relations between the government of the Russian Federation and its 89 constituent units have moved from confrontation to compromise. In part, the confrontational years of centre-periphery relations in particular from 1990 through 1993 during Yeltsin's period stemmed from divergent views regarding the appropriate distribution of power between levels of government. In the Yeltsin's era, the centre favoured a national federal system- a type of 'federalism from above'- where the central government would clearly take the lead in determining the distribution of power between itself and the federation's constituent units, where as regional leaders advocated and continue to advocate a more contractually based federal system. Contractual federalism foresees each sub-national unit entering, the federation on a negotiated basis such that the centre's power would be de-emphasized relative to that of the federation's constituent parts.

Conflicts in Centre-Periphery Relations in Russia arose early in the reform process. The legislature created through popular election in 1990 introduced the legislators were to be held responsible by constituents for the political and economic conditions of their regions, they would want more control over key policy instruments. This Yeltsin period was punctuated by the frequent practice of regional governments withholding tax revenues from federal authorities and periodic of refusals on the part of some regions to follow central policy prescriptions in areas such as privatization.

Initial step toward negotiated autonomy included the three federative agreements of 1992- which were lay on promise but short on meaningful transfer of power from centre to periphery and then initial set of bilateral treaties in 1994. These included the treaty between Moscow and the republic of Tatarstan in February 1994 and similar bilateral treaties between Moscow and six other republics by the end of the 1994. Eventually, however, the central government moved far

enough away from its initial conception of “federalism from above” to sign additional treaties with thirty three other constituent unit of the federation in 1996-1997<sup>3</sup>.

Despite this penchant for cutting bilateral deals with particular regions, apparently in an effort to maintain some control over the decentralization process, the central government authorities also intended that the constitution of 1993 of the Russian Federation to serve as the defining document for centre-periphery relations. It incorporated two articles 71 and 72 enumerating exclusive federal and shared federal and regional areas of jurisdiction, but did not include an article enumerating or exclusive reserving certain powers for the regions. In the wake of the break up the Soviet Union and the violent showdown between president and the Supreme Soviet of October 1993, in which many regional governments supported the latter, President Yeltsin was prepared to sign what he would later term ‘political’ agreements with errant regions like Tatarstan.

Tatarstan succeeded in establishing relationship with Moscow signing of the treaty of February 15, 1994 (Summary of World Broadcast SWB 1994: 1-7), only a few weeks after the adoption of the Russian constitution in 1993. The treaty united Tatarstan as a federal state to the Russian Federation. This treaty ensured that Tatarstan would have its own constitutional and legislative bodies. The treaty demarcated areas of jurisdiction between Tatarstan and Federation. Tatars were given the right to control their land resources, minerals and properties within her territory. It also created a system of state bodies for governance of Tatarstan and also a central bank. So, the key symbolic issue of the treaty was that of mutual delegation of authority. Other important issue consisted of recognition of the right to self determination, republican citizenship, the right to conduct treaty based relations with other regions of Russia, and the right to conduct international relations. Although the treaty did not recognize the sovereignty of republics, it did imply that Tatarstan- is an international actor by establishing “Plenipotentiary Representative” between the government of the Federation and Tatarstan (Gayton 1994: 1-29).

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<sup>3</sup> Full texts of the treaties and agreements signed from February 15, 1994 through June 13, 1996 are published in Michael Gubaglo, “Federalism of Power and the Power of Federalism”, Moscow 1997.

Despite the largely symbolic nature of the treaty, there are several provisions that contradict the constitution. One clause of the treaty states that the organs of state power of Tatarstan have the right to appeal against the federal law if it violates the bilateral treaty. The right to appeal is not possessed by other republics of the federation. Another area of contradiction is that of the settlement of disputes between Tatarstan and Russia. The disputes are to be resolved in accordance with the procedure agreed between them. This provision of the treaty contradicts article 125 of the Russian Constitution, which empowers the constitutional court to resolve between the centre and the region<sup>4</sup>. Also the empowerment of Tatarstan by the treaty to defend her state and territorial integrity violates article 71 and 72 of the constitution.

Even after the signing of the treaty, matters were not at rest between Tatarstan and Russia. The problem of interpreting and of understand the treaty existed. Tatar President Shyamiyev described the treaty as a guarantee of Tatarstan Statehood (Gayton 1994: 18). Shakrai stated that the treaty amounted to the republic's recognition of the Russian Federation's sovereignty, laws and constitution (Stover-Weiss 1999: 87-106). These interpretations indicated the potential for continuing conflicts between Russia and Tatarstan over the meaning of the treaty.

The problem of course was that signing such an agreement with one constituent unit opened the door to further demands for special treatment from other regions. In sum, the Tatarsan treaty set a dangerous precedent and had the effect of raising the status of one member of the federation even though the constitution explicitly states that all members are of equal status (article 5.4 of the constitution).

Naturally, other peripheral regions sought to rectify this situation and it is here that we see the centre becoming more reactive than proactive in its relations with many of the 89 regions of Russia. It is important to note that the impetus for the treaties came from the regions themselves and not from the centre. Actually, a Commission appointed by the President Yeltsin and led by Shakray (chair of the presidential commission for the preparation of treaties on division of power

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<sup>4</sup> Constitution of Russia 1993- Article 125.3 (a), the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation resolve jurisdictional disputes between the bodies of state power of the Russian Federation and bodies of state powers of members of the Russian Federation.



between centre and peripheral region) was responsible for negotiations with the regions on behalf of the federal government.

Subsequently, the federal structure was streamlined by Presidential Decree Number 370 of March 12, 1996, concerning the treaties and accompanying agreements. The treaties and agreements were-

1. Not to violate the constitution of the Russian Federation.
2. Not to change the status of a subject of the Federation.
3. Not add to or change what was enumerated in article 71 and 72 of the constitution.
4. To respect the supremacy of the Constitution.

This decree established the supremacy of the federal centre. In the view of central officials, the treaties and agreements were not intended to be extra-constitutional documents, and were supposed to merely concretize areas of joint jurisdiction specific to each subject of the Russian Federation, taking into account the specific peculiarities of each region.

Further, in a number of agreements, areas that are again to be exclusively reserved for the Russian Federal government were included in lists of authorities for subjects of the Federation. Examples include participation in international relations, the establishments of relations with foreign states and conducting agreements with them (Tatarstan, article 2.11), the establishment of national banks (Tatarstan- article 2.12 and Bashkortostan- article 3.11) and question of republican citizenship (Tatarstan- article 2.8, Kabardino-Balkariya- article 3.k, Bashkortostan- article 3.1).

Finally, areas that in the constitution are identified as sphere of joint jurisdiction between the federal government and the subjects of the federation at times appear in the treaties as the apparently exclusive authority of several of the subjects of the federation. Examples of this contradiction include the defense of the rights of citizens- article 2.1, Kabardino-Balkariya- article 3.j, Bashkortostan- article 3.1, formation and use of republican precious metals and stones fund- Yakutia- article 1.j etc.

In sum, the treaties and agreements despite central government declarations to the contrary, were not always based on the constitution and supportive of the principles of the supremacy of federal law and the establishment of a single political and economic expanse. 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. At one level or another, some treaties contradicted the constitution directly. Indeed, the treaties and agreements in general contradict the declared intention of the constitution to render all subjects of the federation equal to one another.

In this way, rather than taking the lead in defining and in so doing, limiting what regions have the right to do, the centre has simply reacted to what regions demand. The treaties and agreements themselves amount to a rather inconsistent and vague regional policy conditioned more by demands placed on the central government than any cohesive federal government strategy aimed at containing only the most rebellions regions. However, it should be borne in mind that this federal structure was evolving at a time when some of the Soviet institutions had not ceased to exist.

### **Asymmetrical Federalism and State Breakdown**

If separatists tendencies in the republics were earlier the main focus of concern, in the past it was the growing trends toward autarchy in the Russian regions that have increasingly attracted the attention, and alarm of analysts and political elites like. While a healthy dose of decentralization was initially viewed as an important element of political democratization, given a long tradition of hyper-centralization of state, power, Russia now faces an uncontrolled and seemingly uncontrollable unraveling of central power. It is above all the striking weakness of the Russian state and the adhoc quality of decision making that has been largely responsible for the growing assertiveness of regional elites, and that has encouraged the regions to act independently and often in outright defiance, of central authority. This trend has given rise to fears that, at best, Russia is being progressively transformed from a federation to a confederation and at worst that it will be thrown backward to the period of medieval chaos and conflict.

The conflict in Chechnya has been a major challenge to the Russian Federation structure. Whatever may be the genesis and factors that led to the Chechen conflict, the fact is that the republic of Chechnya has not signed the Federation Treaty of 1992 and considers itself as an independent nation. On the other hand, Russia has considered Chechnya to be an integral part of its territory. In order to protect its sovereignty Russian troops have been fighting to protect and prevent Chechnya from breaking away from the federation. Fortunately for Russia, no country has recognized the independent Chechnya. This had a beneficial impact on the federal structure. However, Russian action in Chechnya has evoked considerable criticism on ground of violation of human rights but viewed from the perspective of centre-periphery relations in Russia, the Chechen question would pose a serious challenge to its integrity.

In August 1998, the economic and political crisis that comes to a head in dramatically accelerated the trend towards greater freedom on the part of the regions. One regional leader after another announced radical measures to cope with the crisis by insulating his own region from its fallout. These trends generated two broad types of conflict between federal authorities and regional elites. The first were largely conflicts over jurisdiction and the second category of conflicts has centred on issues of resource allocation.

The economic and political crisis of August 1998 had immediate and far-reaching consequences in the regions, not only accelerating many of these trends but also forcing the regions to become even more self-sufficient. With the ruble falling precipitously in value, bank accounts frozen, the price of consumer goods soaring and their availability shrinking, and panic spreading, regional elites were compelled to find their own ways to deal with the crisis. The governors and president realising they can't expect any kind of specific guidelines from the centre, much less any assistance, are taking extraordinary measures to keep the situation under control. The crisis management experience the regional elites have acquired and the additional powers they have assumed over the past few weeks will inevitably make Russia into a confederation (Lapidus 1999: 79). While this may well be an overstatement, the remarks speak to a serious set of problems.

A measures adopted by a number of regional leaders to cope with the crisis fell into several broad categories. Prime Minister Primakov in his first address to the Russian Duma on September 12, 1998 he announced that the first priority of his new government would be the preservation of Russia's unity. In an effort to enhance the stake of regional elites in the fate of Russia as a whole, he announced that among his first initiatives would be an effort to give selected regional governors a more influential and visible role in national policy making. Indeed, the centrality of these issues has dramatically altered the entire framework of discussion about federalism and centre-periphery relations. To put it briefly, whereas much of the earlier discussions revolved around conflictual relations between the central government and the republics and the relative status of republics compared to region, in recent years as much of the distinction between republics and regions has been erode, other bases of cleavage have become more silent.

A further notable trend is the growing diversity among the country's regions. Economic inequality has been accelerated by the weakening of the central government's redistributive capacity as well as by the diverse endowments of different regions, which give then differing potential to participate in the local as well as global economy. The traditional cleavage between "donor" and "subsidized" subjects of the federation has now been overlaid by the differences among raw-materials exporting regions, agricultural regions, and those with strong concentrations of heavy and military industry. According to one estimate , in 1990 the 10 most developed regions had a per capita industrial and agricultural output 2-3 times greater than of the 10 least developed, in 1996 the gap had increased to 4.5<sup>5</sup>. The regions are also characterized by increasingly diverse leadership strategies and capacities, making the Russian federation, a virtual laboratory for testing different developmental models<sup>6</sup> (Auley 1997).

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<sup>5</sup> Robachaya Tribune, January 17, 1998, as translated in FBIS Daily Report, Central Eurasia, FBIS-SOV-98-019, January 19, 1998.

<sup>6</sup> For a study explicitly focusing on such regional variations, see Mc Auley 1997.

## **Developments in the Russian Federal System during Yeltsin Period**

After the breakup of the Soviet Union, the 'region' has become a powerful entity. Regional elites constituted important players in the struggle for power and control of the great re-division of the state property. The role of the regions as influential actors in the Russian political scene has been demonstrated during the Russian referendum and the local and national elections. The changes in the society which started even before the demise of Soviet Union and continued in the Post-Soviet era. The holding of contested elections and referendum at the national, the regional and local represented a major departure from the past. In such a brief period democratization has been proceeding with halts and lapses.

### **Role of Regions**

The consolidation of the regional elite structure has had an impact on regional politics. The regions have begun to show definite political choices. Some regions have supported Yeltsin's policies and leadership. Others have systematically opposed him. There is a trend in some region to become "oppositionist" regions. While their political choices vary, most regions have started taking independent initiatives at the local levels, such as Chechnya, Tatarstan, and Dagestan etc. (Chenoy 1994: 1648-49).

In the early 1990's, the Russian Federation encountered similar problems to those of the USSR as a whole in attempting to satisfy the aspirations of its many nationalities for self-determination. Autonomous territories within the Russian Federation adopted declarations of sovereignty and attempted to exert greater influence over local affairs. In some regions, notably Tatarstan and Chechnya, there was considerable support for secession from the Russian Federation. In March 1992, in response to the declaration of independence by Chechnya the Ingush inhabitants of the former Chechen-Ingushetia demanded the establishment of a separate Ingush republic within the Russian Federation. The formation of the new republic was formalized by the Russian Supreme Soviet in June 1992.

In late 1993, the situation in Chechnya deteriorated to the extent of armed conflict between the Russian forces and Chechniyans led by general Dudayev. Chechnya boycotted the Russian general elections and referendum of December 1993. In August 1994, an attempt by opposition forces to overthrow the Dudayev regime was widely believed to be aided by the Russian security services, but the attack was defeated by troops loyal to Dudayev. In early December 1994, Russian troops entered Chechnya from neighbouring territories with the stated aim of introducing constitutional rule in the republic.

Despite a ceasefire agreement formalized in late July 1995, skirmishes between Dudayev's troops and Russian forces continued but Chechen fighters began to surrender weapons to government authorities during August 1995. In early March 1996, Dudayev's loyal forces launched a major offensive against Grozny. In late March 1996, Yeltsin announced a peace plan for Chechnya, including an immediate cessation of military activities, a progressive withdrawal of federal troops, and democratic election. Yeltsin granted General Lebed who had already voiced his opposition to Russian military intervention in Chechnya, extensive powers to coordinate all federal operations in the republic and to conduct negotiations for a peaceful settlement.

While Russia claims Chechnya as a part of the federation, Chechnya continues to protest its full fledged independence. Chechen passports have been printed. All this Russia can tolerate so long as no other country recognized Chechnya. None so far has dared to do so. What mainly worries Russia now a days is that Chechnya's blend of secession and Islam may destabilize more of the North Caucasus. Civil order has worn dangerously thin already in Dagestan, Chechnya's earlier neighbour (The Economist 24 January 1998).

The republic of Dagestan, an autonomous division within the Russia Federation has been experiencing transitional problems like other Russian regions. Apart from tensions caused by terrorism and mafia dealings in Dagestan, there are several clashes between the main stream followers of Islam and Islamic fundamentalists, the Wahhabites, advocating liberation of the Caucasus.

New religious tensions may be related at least primarily to the economic hardships that Dagestan is going through. Many industrial enterprises have been shut down. At the same time, like elsewhere in Russia, there are signs of new private wealth, causing resentment among the less privileged. Unlike some other divisions within the Russian Federation, Dagestan is not ruled by a President but has a complex power structure which was originally intended to equitably represent the interest of all ethnic groups. Its special feature is that it is home to more than 100 ethnic groups of which 30 are considered indigenous. According to the constitution, the republic of Dagestan is to be governed by the State Council, which is elected for five years ago by the People's Assembly. The State Council consists of fourteen members- one representative from each of the largest ethnic communities and three representatives from Azerbaijan, Russia and Chechen ethnic groups of the Dagestan population. The chairman of the council is Magomed Ali Magomedov, who before the collapse of the USSR, used to hold the position of the chairperson of the Supreme Soviet of Dagestan, a *de facto* president (Shermatova 1998: 4).

Dagestan occupies a unique geopolitical position in the Caucasus, for which it is sometimes called Russia's outpost. The republic has land and sea borders with Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Iran and the Chechen republic. Some of its neighbours are potentially interested in promoting Dagestan's independence which would definitely affect the federal set up of the Russian Federation. Azerbaijan and Georgia would probably like to see its emergence as a buffer zone between their territories and Russia. Chechnya in this case would also gain access to sea, which would help it in its quest for independence.

Dagestan citizens also complain that the republic does not receive sufficient funding from the central government and that there are no programs for Dagestan's development and social protection. The Chechen war and the declaration of what Chechen claims to be a "sovereign Islamic Chechen state" has also changed the situation in the Caucasus. The outcome of the conflict significantly weakened Russia's positions in the region. The USA reacted by going so far as to declare the Caspian oil region as their "zone of interest".

On the basis of above descriptions of these autonomous republics of the Russian Federation, it can be said that the ethnic uprisings pose greatest threat to the federal system. In any federal set-up, co-operation between centre and its constituent part is not only desirable but also one of the pre-requisites for the smooth functioning of the system. Regarding Russia's experience with ethno-nationalism, it is easy to say that the regions which have been demanding for separate statehood on the basis of their ethnic identity have seriously affected the federalization process.

Moreover, the emerging ethnic assertiveness has become the stumbling block for the newly federal system. So far, Russia's Chechen problem is concerned, it is true that the military attack by the Russian army, the coercive policy of the president Yeltsin in the post Soviet era, is the product of long unresolved nationality problem of the erstwhile Soviet Union, which Russia as a successor of the Soviet Union got in legacy. These kinds of developments at the regional level do not allow us to be optimistic about the federal set up. Actually, to have a unified federal structure, Russian system will and always be depended upon the steps taken by its republics/regions which would be conducive to Moscow. At the same time, it can also be observed that centralized, authoritarian way of governance cannot carry federal structure very long. Therefore, solution for the running of the federal system does not lie in Moscow's authoritarian, centralized control. Instead, Moscow should always try to adhere to some policies based on consensus and not on the one sided policies pursued by it so far. Federalism is based on the self shared rule and definitely not on the unilateral policies imposed by the centre over its federating components (Elazar 1993: 190).

### **Role of Elites**

According to Pareto, "revolutions were above all a matter of elite change" (Pareto 1935). In Russia itself the Communist Party lost power, but it revived in early 1993. The disintegration of the socialist system and of the Soviet state, which threatened the power of the ruling stratum, made it necessary to find a new method of social domination. The solution was found by abandoning the state monopoly over property and the redistribution of the latter from above. The result was the seizure of property by monopolies under state control, which considerably slowed the development of market relations in the country.



In the transitional period in Russia, in which the institution of Soviet power had been destroyed and the new institutions and elites were being formed, the political leadership has been subject to rapid internal renewal (Lane 1996: 536). Two broad sectors of the Russian Federation's elite were identified as political and economic elite.

When Yeltsin came to power, the new elite began to consolidate itself. Yeltsin as rule, used officials who had been appointed by Gorbachev or whom he had known himself earlier. Although the flow of new people into high ranking positions continued, it was nonetheless clear that the revolutionary period of the transformation of the elite had ended. Structures of executive power had come into being with the administration of the president and the government of the Russian Federation. There was also a functioning and freely elected parliament, the State Duma. The courts alone had not developed into an independent branch of government. The focus of authority was increasingly in the hands of executive bodies. The movement of officials from party to state that had begun under Gorbachev has now shown its results. Throughout Russia, administrations were being formed from the same sources, the old nomenklatura, and a new pyramid of power arose above the former one.

Yeltsin's leadership took steps to 'close' the elite at this stage. The first stage in this process was the dissolution of the Congress of People's Deputies and Supreme Soviet, which had up to this point resisted Presidential control. The next step was the adoption of new constitution which made clear that the parliament of the future would partly consists of the heads of regional administrations whom the president had himself appointed, and in part of political leaders who also had their origins in the former nomenklatura and were represented in lower house, the State Duma. Ministers were allowed to combine their positions with seats in the Duma that was elected in 1993, strengthening the influence of the executive within the system of representative institutions.

The New Russian elite, as it had developed by the mid 1990, may be conceptualized as a three layered pie. At the top level are politicians and their allies, who compete among themselves for power. The middle layer consists of entrepreneurs, who financed the politician's electoral campaign, newspapers and television. And at the bottom level are the security services which not only maintain order but also act as a means of influence and control enforcement (Kryshtanovskaya and White No. 6: 723).

So far as economic elite is concerned, it refers to people who control the principal financial and economic structures of the country regardless of the juridical forms of property. The economic elite may be divided into two basic groups- manager of state enterprises (directors) and executives (owners or managers) of non state structures that is the business elite.

Similarly, we can say that the regional elite with control over local power structures have formed in the Russian regions. These elite are a mix between the old nomenklatura and some new radical leadership. In several instances the radical leadership includes officials who served under the old regime but have now distanced themselves from it. Apart from this, elite formations and consolidation is revealed by the 1993 elections to the Federal Council and State Duma.

### **Russian Elections and its impact**

The evident surprise at the outcome of the December 12, 1993 Russian elections is a mark of the degree to which expectations of the inexorable progress of reform had been generated after eight extraordinary years of change in Soviet and then Russian politics (Whitefield and Evans 1994: 38). An in depth analysis of 1993 elections shows that it was not merely a 'protest vote' against the incompetent management of a desired radical transition. Rather it suggests that the transition experience itself has reoriented public opinion away from the utopian expectations about the market and democracy, which were characteristics of the period when the old system was collapsing.

## **Elections to Russia's Regional Assemblies**

In the aftermath of October 1993 events in Moscow, Yeltsin issued series of decrees dissolving local representative bodies (Soviet) all over the country. He specifically ordered that the Moscow city elections be held in December 1993. Elsewhere, in various Russian regions elections were supposed to be completed by March 1994. In practice, local political dynamics determined the dates on which elections were held. Till the march 1994, elections were held 67 out of 89 regions (Rossiyskaya Gazeta 7 April 1994). By January 1995, this total reached 79. The regional elections had an impact on the political institutions and legislative activity at the national level.

The December 1995, parliamentary elections were of disproportionate significance. The fact that it was taking place itself was important. This was only second Duma to be elected in Post-Soviet Russia and first to be elected in relatively normal circumstances (Cottrell 1996).

## **1996 Presidential Elections**

The Russia has a two ballot system for the Presidential election. In the 1996 Presidential elections, President Yeltsin on the one side and his chief opponent Zyuganov on the other. The 1996 Russian presidential elections produced defeat for the Communist Party of the Russian Federation. Though the first round ballot showed that Yeltsin was capable of being defeated but only by building a broad coalition that aggregated support for him. Zyuganov was unable to make such an appeal.

Boris Yeltsin secured re-election by putting together a heterogeneous coalition (ranging from Gaidar, Chernomyrdin to Lebed). But it is very difficult to say that it was a positive endorsement of Yeltsin record or personality, which even his admirers, recognized as 'thread bare' at best and at worst showed a desire for power rather than democracy. So, Yeltsin's rise from the deputies of unpopularity to win Russia's presidential election is one of the most surprising feats of political history (Triesman 1996: 64). In any case, this election, both in its occurrence and its results gives one reason to believe that for all its problems, democracy is now entrenched in Russia. It is fact that the economic and regional elites played important role in Yeltsin's victory and consequently came to enjoy priviledges during Yeltsin's second Presidency.

## **Yeltsin's Privatization Programmes and Its Impact**

Yeltsin made drastic changes in the economic structure and introduced market system primarily through a series of presidential decrees. The speed of these decrees was so fast and their number was so many, that few people except the top most policy makers were familiar with their content. In fact several of these decrees contradicted each other, some were repetitive and others appeared very confused.

The Yeltsin-Gaidar programme of shock therapy led to major changes in the social and economic relations of Russian society. From a system based on regulated differences between people, new classes emerged. The upper section of the society comprising nomenklatura linked with the management and technocratic positions, bureaucrats, policy makers, the traders, the neo-capitalist etc. had a major stake one way or another in the new economic structures. But the economic reform led to a sharply lowered life style for the majority of the population.

Yeltsin shifted positions to maintain himself in power and to maintain his role as the arbitrator in the political and economic transformation of Russia. His inconsistency was also reflected in his change of personnel. On occasion, he was guided by his choice of a personality than a policy like his choice of Chubais. In his policy he often contradicted himself. The lack of integrity was mirrored in the Russian elite, who switched over from being part of the Brezhnev era managerial and technocratic elite to one with 'market' and 'democratic' ideology.

Thus, municipal shops, housing, restaurants etc. were sold for large sums, big industrial enterprises were sold for absurdly small sums. With the simultaneous construction of a presidential system and the completion of the first phase of privatization with vouchers, new forces and classes in Russian society formed and competed for political and economic power. A financial and political elite established itself as a group with a major interest in this new system. Having had the access to information, links with political power and seed capital, this nomenklatura benefitted from the sales of state enterprises. Having managed the Soviet monopoly enterprises, this group now wanted a share and control of these since they were being converted into private property.

As far as the impact of the privatization is concerned, it varied from region to region. Some industries have been privatized much more than others, especially urban ones. This uneven manner of privatization led to lopsided development. While this is a feature of capitalist growth, the Soviet economy had tried to develop all regions to some basic level (Chenoy No.1: 1650). The method used for privatization further exacerbated uneven development. With regional disparities rich and poor regions emerged in Russia. Geographically, there are bound to be such regions in every country. But in Russia, areas with relatively high and others with low levels of nominal income groups have developed.

The present economic system can influence the Russian centre-periphery structure, at least by two ways namely effect of privatization at the regional level and the performance of the economic reform in the whole Russian context. Since region is an important entity of the Russian Federation, its economic success and failure will determine economic future in particular and political future in general. The impact of privatization has varied from one region to another. In effect, developed regions have become more developed and the underdeveloped one has remained the same. It also divided the regions among two groups-rich and poor. In fact, this kind of effect is the product of Moscow's policies. This type of emerging trend may not be good for the Russian federal set up, because for the smooth running of the system, unified economic system is required and not the fractured one.

The present problems namely rising trends of ethno-nationalism, deepening economic crisis etc, have not emerged suddenly. These problems were present even before the disintegration of the Soviet state. It was the disintegration process which accelerated and made these problems more serious.

### **Shaping and Experience of Centre-Periphery (Federal) order under Yeltsin**

Yeltsin made Russia a 'rainbow federal state' by providing heterogeneous status to the subjects of the federation in terms of rights they got through the treaties. Yeltsin needed support from the regional leaders to consolidate his position in the centre in the initial days of his ascendancy, when he was engaged in a bitter struggle-first against the federal centre led by Gorbachev during the last years of the former Soviet Union and later against the Post-Soviet Russian parliament

dominated by his opponents. To garner support from the republican and regional elites, he promised them ‘as much sovereignty as you can swallow’ (Sakwa, 2004: 131). Yeltsin even proposed allowing virtual independence to the autonomous regions and dividing the remaining Russian regions into six or seven independent territories (Harrison 2003).

It was becoming difficult to maintain the unity of the federation. Tatarstan had already declared its independence in 1990 and other regions were following its example. In those days the centre was growing weaker and weaker. Considering this reality that if the diffusion of power from the centre to the subunits is not managed and channelized properly it may lead to ‘Federal collapse’ as described by Herd (1999: 282-300).

The federal treaty was one of the attempts to settle the issue. The document, which was not signed by Tatarstan and Chechnya, accorded the republics a significant power and autonomy including the right to conduct independent foreign policy, economic policy, fiscal power, right to structure their own government etc (Sakwa 2004: 59). The treaty was taken as the part of the constitution. However article 4 and article 8 of the constitution violates the norms of the treaty<sup>7</sup>.

With the above constitutional status of the subjects of the Russian Federation, they began to make their own constitutions and started cutting down the taxes to be given to the federal government. Yeltsin signed a treaty with Tatarstan in 1994 which affirmed Tatarstan’s right to have a constitution, tax system, foreign policy and foreign trade policy. These provisions contradict the constitutional declaration of a unified economic space. It shows that Yeltsin was unable to shape the federalism as per the provisions of the constitution. And he was compelled to make similar treaties with 46 subjects of the Russian Federation. This move further complicated the situation and added the ambiguity of the nature of the Russian Centre-periphery relations.

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<sup>7</sup> Article 4 of the Russian constitution reads- “the sovereignty of the Russian federation shall apply to its entire territory; the constitution of the Russian Federation and Federal Laws shall have supremacy throughout the entire territory of the Russian Federation; the Russian Federation shall ensure the integrity and inviolability of the its territory. And article 8.1 says- unity of economic space, free movement of goods, services and financial resources, support for competition and freedom of any economic activity shall be guaranteed in the Russian Federation”.

On the other hand Yeltsin attempted to control the regions by placing his own representatives as the executive heads in the regions but the regions challenged his right by announcing elections for the post of governors in 1994. In order to control the regions Yeltsin issued a decree which delayed the elections of the governors until 1996 (Chenoy 2001: 78). The regional heads tended to replicate Yeltsin's authoritarian style. Some heads of the republics took arbitrary and unconstitutional decisions. Yeltsin appointed his regional representatives in every subject of the federation to control the regions. They proved weak due to their dependence on the regions for financial or other supports and they even did not have any clear idea about their powers and functions. Such ambiguity regarding division of powers created multiple power centres. Many of the envoys appointed by Yeltsin had strong ties with their regions, and they soon turned 'native', by representing the interests of those whom they were supposed to be controlling (Ross 2003). The process of appointing the representatives was not congruent as well. In many regions the governors were even granted the right to appoint their own presidential representatives or to approve presidential nominees. In some cases even high ranking members of regional elites were appointed as the presidential representatives. In Stavropol Krai the presidential representative simultaneously held the post of Deputy Governor of the region as well. It created the question of protocol: what rank the presidential representatives hold? Some time Yeltsin had to bow to the will of the regional administration's demand of sacking his presidential representatives (Ross 2003).

There was confusion regarding the powers, functions and status of the presidential representatives. Taking advantages of these circumstances, the regions started demanding statehood (Chenoy 2001: 79). Chechen war of independence was to a great extent the result of this situation. Due to lack of the clear division of power between federation and the regions, the separatist tendency was seen in some other regions as well. The budgetary matters reflected the asymmetry in federal relations. Donor regions were decreasing in the later years of 1990s. There were only 13 donor subjects in 1999 but rests of all were not recipients either (Sakwa 2004: 133). This also led to political instability in the federation.

## **Expanding Spheres of Regional Autonomy**

The shift in greater autonomy from centre to the regions occurred because of the latter's inability at times to carry out its jurisdictional responsibilities. Regions in such situation were left to fill the empty, policy space as best as they could. In some cases there inability to implement central policy meant they did nothing. This is particularly event in the area of social welfare. Social welfare is of immense important in a country whose economic has all but collapsed. According to article 72 (j) of the constitution, social welfare is under the joint jurisdiction of the regions and federal government. But Tatarstan after the 1994 treaty had embarked independently on its own need based set of social assistance programs. Given the low federal funding it found the national policy to be increasingly unimplementable and therefore, it seized the initiative to over rule it.

The weakness of central government and its failure to meet expectations has thus enabled the regions to marshal greater power and resources for themselves. This tendency has also been strengthened by increasing public confidence in their own regional governments and corresponding decline in confidence in the central authorities. The legislatures created through popular elections in 1990 introduced the notion of accountability into local politics and strengthened the cause for decentralization.

Some amount of decentralizations was inevitable in the new democratic content that the Russian Federation had opted to operate. The introduction of representative government in the regions created a link of accountability between regional officials and their local constituents. The point of political reference had shifted from Moscow to the locality and the confidence of the public in their regional government had been on the increase. The disbanding of the command structure of the economy and gradual establishment of the market relations also encouraged devolution of powers. Apart from this, the region's ability to determine the pace of decentralization also stems from the weakness of potentially unifying national institutions in Russia and the overall under institutionalization of Russian Centre-Periphery relations.

In this context, lack of a stable and functioning party system at the national level has hampered the development of a well integrated Russian state. A strong party system can be a key element in maintaining a well integrated stable federal state. Parties help restrain local politicians and



make them adhere to the will of national governments. In Russia, candidates belonging to various political parties and contesting 1993 and 1995 elections to the State Duma had little institutional presence outside of Moscow. The State Duma is weak relative to the federal executive and has not succeeded in devising necessary legislation governing centre-periphery relations. Alternatively, the upper house of Russian Parliament- the Federation Council became an increasingly powerful strong holds of regional interests.

The constitutional courts entrusted with adjudicating infringements of the 1993 constitution has thus far failed to provide necessary brakes to the increasing tide of decentralization. The presidential representative appointed to every region since 1991 to ensure implementation of federal legislation and provide information about the political situation in each region did not in reality carry much influence in the local affairs.

Jack Matlock, an expert on Russian affairs, has warned against the 'seepage of power' from Moscow to the regions that undermined some of the normal powers of the central government. He felt that the process was carried out through agreements between Moscow and the republics, which during Yeltsin era enjoyed more powers than even the states in USA. He alerted that the diffusion of power does not mean that people become more honest or democratic. In fact, dictatorship is easier to maintain at provincial than central level. It also does not mean that the quality of life improves, certainly not in near future. But Matlock also sounded a positive note by said of that this seepage of power may bring chaos, crime and corruption, which was quite ugly, but perhaps there was no other way to begin to pass power downward and control is best exercised at the local level (Jack Matlock 1997: 11-14).

Apart from the weak and inconsistent institutions mentioned above various explanations have been offered for the above developments. One is that it represents the attempt of the local elites belonging to the communist period to maintain and increase their power vis-à-vis the central government. Denial Triesman believes that separation in Russia was often simply a tool to increase regional wealth at the expense of central government. He also feels that cultural autonomy was used as a smoke screen for local efforts to maintain power or increase revenue (Triesman 1996: 327). Dmitry Gorenburg takes a slightly different view but nevertheless points at the vested interest of the local elite behind such developments (Gorenburg 1991: 245-274). It

is plausible that after decades of authoritarian rule the regional leaders would like to attempt to assert their autonomy. Besides lacking experience in liberal type democracy operation such an assertion could have come naturally to the leaders.

The assertion of regional leaders to display their autonomy often verging on independence, led several analysts and commentators to conclude that perhaps Russian was on the brink of chaos and anarchy. But the several factors argue well for the unity of Russia. They are-

1. The Russian Federation is ethnically far more homogeneous than USSR with 85% being ethnic Russians.
2. Despite their separatists' rhetoric, regional leaders remain heavily dependent on the centre for funds and political support and seek international investment.
3. The Chechen War far from giving a fillip to future separatism has had a sobering effect. It has raised the question of viability of small territorial units declaring themselves independent.
4. The demands for sovereignty on the part of Tatarstan were ultimately resolved through negotiation.
5. The unwillingness of international community to offer political support for secessionists also discouraged separatist tendencies.

According to Galina V. Sdasyuk, a Russian analyst, the following steps were necessary to check the further break up of Russia (Sdasyuk 2000: 50). In her view it is essential:

1. To change the course of socio-economic policy towards one of supporting national industry and agriculture, particularly manufacturing industry.
2. To involve regions in the process of formulation and realization of the policy and programmes at the federal level rather than relying to suppress regime toward their initiatives on policy making.
3. To preserve nation-wide infrastructure systems-railways, power grid system, oil and gas pipeline network.
4. To move toward greater uniformity in division of powers between the federal centre and constituent members of the federation making it clear and transparent.

5. To harmonize budgetary relations between federal centre and regions according to accepted formulas and norms using clear cut minimum of basic social endowments.
6. To move toward larger devolution of planning and management form the federal centre to regions down to district authorities and local self-government bodies.
7. To create system of monitoring and relief programmes realization for areas of economic, social and environmental disaster, to provide special support to centres of high technology.
8. To revive planning system based on multi-level regional principles.

## **Conclusion**

If one is to look for a single word to characterize centre–periphery relations in the Yeltsin era, that word might be ‘resentment’. Yeltsin resented his treatment at the hands of Gorbachev and avenged himself by launching a Kremlin power struggle in which the prize was the Kremlin itself. To win it, Yeltsin exploited the resentment of the Union Republics against the Soviet centre and encouraged the resentment of the Autonomous Republics of the RSFSR against the Union Republics. The enhanced status won by the Autonomous Republics during the agony of the Soviet Union and carried through to their relations with the centre in independent Russia was resented by Russia’s ordinary regions, leading them to compete for similar status. The imperfect constitutional settlement and fiscal arrangements that were put in place after 1993 unleashed a new round of resentments – of poorly endowed regions against regions rich in natural resources, and of rich ‘donor’ regions against poor regions, whom they had indirectly to subsidize. All were resentful of the city of Moscow, into which foreign investment flowed, while Moscow was resentful of the federal government for parasitically feeding off its riches. The post-1993 Duma was resentful of Yeltsin’s presidential powers and sought to curtail his influence in the Federation Council by insisting that its members be elected. The centre was resentful of the powers it had unwittingly conceded to the governors by allowing them to be elected, and sought to hem them in.

It need hardly be said that resentment is a characteristic of regional policy in most countries. It is difficult for any government to take account of the needs of particular regions while remaining fair to all. The lack of any regional history in the Russian Federation to use as a starting point, however, meant that there was no generally accepted framework within which these resentments could be contained. A sense of measure was missing. The lack of political culture nurtured a climate of absolutism, in which each level of the hierarchy demanded total freedom from control from above but, irrationally, was not prepared to devolve power downwards. Finally, the apparent lack of boundaries to political or material ambition, known as *bespredel*, bred a culture of reckless acquisitiveness, in which the regional elites were every bit as culpable as the better known 'oligarchs' based at the centre.

In these circumstances tactical considerations were usually uppermost in the minds of most of the players. Action was dictated by the constant political and economic crises in which the centre-periphery relations developed. Blueprints for the rational development of federal relations in the new Russia, of which there were many, took second place. In the end this may turn out to have been no bad thing. One of the benefits of Yeltsin's approach was its elasticity. By sensing and generally accommodating the political demands of the regions he may have avoided the crises that would have emanated from a stricter policy, especially in relation to the former Autonomous Republics. Many regions were able to test the boundaries of regional independence and come to the realization that interdependence among themselves and with the centre was the common basis for their future development. Moreover, the centre-periphery relations have taken a new turn after Vladimir Putin was elected the President of Russian Federation on 27 March, 2000.

## **CHAPTER IV**

# **CENTRE-PERIPHERY RELATIONS DURING FIRST PRESIDENCY OF PUTIN**

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Vladimir Putin, when he became acting president on 31 December 1999, faced many difficulties. Centre (Moscow) was weak where peripheral regions were strong and the Russian state was unable to 'tax resources, conscript manpower, and innovate and execute policy' during the Yeltsin period. Putin's essay *Russia on the Threshold of the Millennium*, released at the end of December 1999, devoted virtually no attention to the problem of centre-periphery relations in the Russian Federation, other than to call for improving federative relations. It did, however, call for a strong efficient state that would improve its capacity to govern and enforce the existing constitution, warning that the toleration of unconstitutional laws would undermine the capabilities of the federal centre (Putin 2000: 215–16). The rebuilding of the Russian state has been a central feature of Putin's leadership, and his reforms of centre-periphery relations should be seen in that context. The rebuilding and hence strengthening of the state has raised the issue of whether this will hinder the prospects for Russia's further democratisation, or even possibly create the preconditions for a return to a more authoritarian political system. Putin's central task is to 'create a central government that is strong enough to keep the country whole, yet limited enough to prevent a return to tyranny' (Solnick 2000a: 137; Huskey 2001b: 96).

The underlying theme of Putin's first state of the nation address in July 2000 was the need to create an efficient state machine. In this address he warned that Russia was a decentralised rather than a federal state. He noted:

'One must admit that in Russia federal relations are incompletely built and undeveloped. Regional independence is frequently treated as a sanction for the disorganisation of the state. We keep talking of the federation and its strengthening. We have been talking of this for years. However, we have to admit that we do not yet have a full-blown federal state. I want to stress this. We possess, we have created, a decentralized state' (*BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, SU/3888* 10 July 2000).

It was Putin's election victories in 1999 and 2000, which paved the way for his radical reform of the federal system. Armed with a democratic mandate from his impressive victory in the 2000 presidential elections, coupled with the surprise success of his presidential party (Unity) in the December 1999 Duma elections, Putin was able to persuade a now 'tame parliament' that a radical overhaul of the federal system was essential if Russia was not to collapse in to anarchy and ethnic turmoil. Under the anarchy of the Yeltsin years the regions had almost turned into the personal fiefdoms of the regional governors and there was now a general consensus that something radical had to be done to reinstate a single legal space in Russia. One of the major powers of the governors was their control over the appointment of the heads of federal bodies situated in their territories. By controlling the appointment of such powerful officials (e.g. heads of tax inspectorate, financial oversight bodies, and custom officers, the judiciary, procuracy, central electoral commissions and others), regional executives were able to undermine the authority of the federal government and to thwart the implementation of federal policies. As Putin stated in his annual message to the federal assemble, "its scandalous thing when a fifth of the legal acts adopted in the regions contradicts the country's basic law, when republic constitutions and province charters are at odds with the Russian constitution, and when trade barriers, or even worse, border demarcation posts are set up between Russia's territories and provinces" (Putin 2000: 3).

In order to 'restore an effective vertical chain of authority' and to implement a uniform policy, Putin called for a 'dictatorship of the law'. Every citizen whether in Moscow or 'the most remote backwoods of Russia', henceforth, guaranteed the same rights, and federal legislation was to be 'understood and enforced' in a uniform manner throughout the federation (Putin 2000: 3).

Actually, Putin said very little about centre-periphery relations during the presidential election campaign in early 2000. Indeed he said relatively little about any major policy issue. However, there were indications in early 2000 that he was thinking about the need to assert the power of

the federal centre over the regions<sup>1</sup>. In early February 2000 the Federation Council and State Duma held a joint closed session at which, it was believed, Putin's desire to strengthen the control of the centre over the regions was discussed. There were claims that Putin intended to establish a 'dictatorship of law' over the peripheral regions in order to establish the demarcation of power between the centre and the periphery outlined in the 1993 Constitution. There was speculation that Putin might abolish elections for regional governors and return to the previous practice of appointing them. He stated that he opposed such a move, although he said that governors should not show so much independence (*BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, SU/3777 1 March 2000*). In the opening months of 2000 there was much debate about the future of the relationship between the federal centre and the regions. In March 2000 Sergey Pravosudov outlined six means of restricting the powers of governors in an article in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*<sup>2</sup>. He advocated the following:

1. Introducing a law to define precisely the powers of regional leaders. This law would also give the president the right to dismiss regional leaders who abuse their powers and to introduce federal rule.
2. Enhancing the powers of local government as a counterweight to regional leaders. Local government leaders should be given greater powers to distribute federal funds as a means of reducing the power of regional leaders as distributors of largesse.
3. Bringing the power structures in the regions under greater federal control. This would mean ending the rights of regional leaders to have any input in the appointment of the heads of the regional FSB (Federal Security Service) and MVD (Interior Ministry) administrations. The funding of these regional administrations should also come directly from the centre.

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<sup>1</sup> For details see Yekaterina Grigoryeva and Olga Tropkina, 'They Want to Take Back Sovereignty, Which Was Yeltsin's Gift to the Regions', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 4 February 2000; and Kirill Travin, "Dictatorship of Law" for the regions', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 11 February 2000.

<sup>2</sup> See Sergey Pravosudov, 'Six Means to Limit the Power of Governors', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 18 March 2000.



4. A party of power should be strictly controlled from the federal centre, so that regional governors who are members of this party would be beholden to the centre and act as 'party commissars' in their regions.
5. The Federation Council should be reformed so that governors are removed from it. It violates the distribution of powers to have executors of the law acting also as legislators.
6. The federal centre should offer additional funding to regions in exchange for compliance with the centre.

In early May 2000, Yuriy Danilov, of the Higher Economics School in Moscow, proposed the creation of the institution of governor-general in the Russian Federation (Danilov 2000, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*). The governor-general would be appointed by the president and be a representative of the federal authorities. He would monitor the implementation of federal laws by regional leaderships; monitor the use of state investments and other parts of the federal budget in the regions; monitor the activities of the regional branch of the federal treasury; monitor the gathering of federal taxes; implement transfers of the federal budget; implement presidential rule in subjects where this is introduced; administer the legal system in his governor-generalship; manage federal property; monitor the buying and selling of land; co-ordinate the activities of federal ministries and agencies in his governor-generalship. Danilov proposed that a governor-generalship should comprise between two and fifteen subjects of the federation and that the number of governor generalships should number anything between eight and sixteen.

Given the clear debate that was going on in the first half of 2000, it was little surprise that once he had obtained a mandate from the electorate Putin moved to limit the power of regional leaders. This implied achieving a greater system of central control over regional leaders, along with reform of the Federation Council, the upper house of the Federal Assembly in which regional leaders and the chairmen of regional legislatures sat.

## **Strengthening the Power Vertical**

From May to September 2000 Putin introduced the main features of the reform of centre-periphery relations<sup>3</sup> (Hyde 2001: 719–43). This was often referred to as strengthening the power vertical – that is, the vertical structure of administration to ensure the supremacy of the federal centre at the top of that vertical. Many of Putin’s measures embodied the proposals of Pravosudov and Danilov. These were:

1. The creation of seven federal districts in which the eighty-nine subjects of the federation were incorporated. Each district was headed by a presidential representative, whose task was to ensure that regional administrations conformed to federal law.
2. The reform of the Federation Council, changing the nature of its composition. Regional executive leaders and the chairmen of regional legislatures would no longer be able to sit in the upper chamber.
3. The president would acquire the right to dismiss regional leaders who enacted measures that contravened federal law.
4. Changes to the law on local government which would allow regional leaders to dismiss local government leaders who enacted measures that violated federal and regional law.
5. A State Council would be created in which all regional leaders would be represented.
6. A process of legal harmonization that aimed at bringing regional laws and constitutions into line with federal law and constitution.
7. Enhancing the power of the federal authorities over federal spending in the region. The creation of federal districts.

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<sup>3</sup> For a comprehensive coverage of Putin’s reforms of centre–regional relations, see also Huskey 2001a; Evangelista 2000; Petrov 2000; and Solnick 2000b.)

## **Reforms of Russian Centre-Periphery Relations by Putin**

There are five major stands to Putin's federal reforms – the establishment of seven new federal districts, a reform of the federation council, the establishment of a new state council, powers to the president to dismiss regional governors and to dissolve regional assemblies, and to bring charters and republican constitutions in line with the Russian constitution. But despite of these major stands the other reforms of centre-periphery relations by Putin, below we examine each one of these reforms in turn.

### **The Establishment of Seven Federal Districts**

On the 13 May 2000, Putin adopted what was to be the first of a package of decrees whose key aim was to rein in the power of the governors and to 'strengthen the unity of the state' (Presidential Decree, 2001). In this first major reform of the federal system, Putin divided the country into seven super-districts, each of which contained a dozen or more federal subjects, and he appointed an envoy ('plenipotentiary representative' or 'polpredy' for short) to each district. Putin deftly side stepped calls to format the new districts in conformity with the contours of Russia's eight inter-regional associations or eleven socio-economic regions. Instead, the new federal districts were drawn up to closely match Russia's military districts, thus giving the envoys (most of whom had a background in military or security organs) direct access to the command and control networks of the military garrisons situated in their districts. And in a blow to the sovereignty claims of the ethnic republics, Putin drew up the boundaries of the new federal districts in such a way that each district would include a mixture of ethnic republics and territorially defined regions. None of the capital cities of the federal districts are situated in an ethnic republic. This has led some commentators to speculate that the creation of the federal districts is but the first step in Putin's programme of leveling down the status of the republics to that of the regions.

## List of Federal Districts of Russia

Name of District	Area (km square)	Population (2002 est.)	Federal Subjects	Administrative Centre
Central Federal District	652,800	38,000,651	18	Moscow
Northwestern Federal District	1,677,900	13,974,466	11	Saint Petersburg
Southern Federal District	589,200	22,907,141	13	Rostov-on-Don
Volga Federal District	1,038,000	31,154,744	14	Nizhny Novgorod
Far Eastern Federal District	6,215,900	6,692,865	09	Khabarovsk
Siberian Federal District	5,114,800	20,062,938	12	Novosibirsk
Urals Federal District	1,788,900	12,373,926	06	Yekaterinburg

Putin's creation of the seven federal districts and the instigation of the 'polpredy' fully comply with article 83 of the Russian constitution, which simply states that the president 'appoints and removes plenipotentiary representatives of the president of the Russian federation'. As Oracheva notes, 'the constitution does not specify in what particular form this institution exists, what function presidential representatives perform and how many representatives may be appointed' (Orcheva 2001: 11). Thus Putin can argue that the changes brought about by the 13 May decree were simply changes to his presidential administration, and constitutional changes to the federation itself. However, as discussed below, Putin's federal reforms undoubtedly represent an assault on the federal idea, and they certainly violate the spirit of the constitution, if not the actual constitution itself.

According to this decree the presidential representatives are the representatives of the President in their respective districts and are appointed by and accountable to him. They are part of the presidential administration, and the operational leadership of the presidential representatives is carried out by the head of the presidential administration. In January 2001 some of the functions of the Main Territorial Directorate of the presidential administration were transferred to the federal districts. The main tasks of the presidential representatives were to ensure the realization in their federal districts of the main direction of the domestic and foreign policy of the state, as defined by the president. They were to monitor the execution of federal policy in their district and ensure the implementation of the president's personnel policy. They were to provide the president with reports on the maintenance of national security in their district and on the political, economic and social situation. Their most important functions were defined as follows:

1. To work out with the inter-regional economic associations the economic interaction of the subjects of the federation and socio-economic programmes for their subjects;
2. To co-ordinate candidates for appointment to federal posts in their districts and other posts if these appointments were to be made either by the federal president, the federal government or other federal bodies;
3. To verify the execution of federal laws and decrees and other normative acts of the federal president and federal government, and also the implementation of federal programmes;
4. To co-ordinate draft decisions of federal organs concerning the interests of their federal district or of subjects within their district;
5. To take part in the work of organs of state power of subjects in their federal district, including organs of local government;
6. To organize, by the authorization of the president, conciliation procedures to resolve disputes between federal organs of government and regional organs;
7. To make proposals to the president about halting the implementation of acts of regional executive authorities if these acts contradict the federal constitution, federal laws, the international obligations of the Russian Federation or human rights;
8. To interact with the Main Control Administration of the federal president and procuracy organs to organize checks on the execution of federal laws, decrees and normative acts of

the president and of the federal government.

In short, they would ensure that federal law and federal personnel policy were enforced in their respective federal districts. This would ensure that appointments to federal positions in the regions would be made by the federal centre and not by regional leaders, as had often been the case. Their coordinating function would also help the Kremlin to identify and avoid divergences of policy both at the centre and in the federal subjects. This decree was intended to counteract the flow of power from the centre to the regions that had taken place in the 1990s and ensure that the central authorities would be able to exercise the power over the regions accorded to them in the 1993 Constitution. Under the decree of May 2000, the presidential administration and regional governments are to work together to provide these needs, which will be paid for by the presidential administration. This will enable the federal government to control its own employees better and ensure that they enforce the will of the federal government rather than become the instrument of regional leaderships. As the vast majority of federal civil servants are located in the regions (of 381,000 federal civil servants, only 29,000 are located in Moscow) (*Nezavisimaya Gazeta* 2000), there is an obvious need to ensure that they are beholden to the federal authorities and not to regional ones.

All but two of the presidential representatives (Kiriyyenko and Drachevskiy) are from the power structures. The obvious enhancement of the role of these structures in Russian political life should therefore give the centre more levers to use in its attempts to control the regions. The boundaries of the federal districts also coincide with the boundaries of Interior Ministry districts for the Russian Federation and this may facilitate the ability of the Interior Ministry to operate in the federal districts. The idea of creating presidential representatives to oversee a group of regions did not arise out of thin air. It was a revival of an idea that had been expressed in a decree issued by Yeltsin back in July 1997<sup>4</sup>. Yeltsin had then considered replacing the system of presidential representatives, which he had set up in 1991 in all eighty-nine subjects of the

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<sup>4</sup> See the text of Yeltsin's decree of 9 July 1999 in *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 16 July 1997, and the discussion in Huskey (1999: 194–5). Nikolai Petrov argues that the measures taken by Putin in 2000 to reform centre–regional relations had long been discussed during the Yeltsin presidency (see Nikolai Petrov, 'Consolidating the Centralized State, Weakening Democracy and the Federal System', in *Russian Regional Report*, vol. 6, no. 23, 19 June 2001).

federation, with a smaller number of representatives who would oversee groupings of regions. This would reduce the likelihood of a representative being unduly influenced by an individual governor. The appointment of the presidential representatives – who became members of the Russian Federation Security Council, thus achieving representation at the apex of the political system – was a significant step in ensuring that federal policy prevailed over the regions. In addition, they can attend cabinet meetings. In August 2000 the Prime Minister, Mikhail Kasyanov, signed a decree permitting the presidential representatives to participate in government meetings and cast a consultative vote. The creation of the presidential representatives was intended to ensure that central control could be maintained without abolishing gubernatorial elections. Such a step would have been deeply damaging for Putin, as it would have undermined his claims to support democracy. This would have affected both his legitimacy within the Russian Federation and his image abroad.

### **The Administration of the Federal Districts**

Five of the seven *polpredy* or presidential representatives have a background in the army or security services. Of the two civilians, only one (Sergei Kirienko, the former Russian prime minister) has experience working in politics at the national level, and the other is a former diplomat. In terms of responsibilities, their rank is somewhere between Deputy Chief of staff of the Presidential Administration and Deputy Prime Minister (Samailov 2000: 4-6). The high status of the envoys is also reflected in their membership of the Russian Security Council, and their right to attend cabinet meetings of the federal government. In fact, the Security Council drafted the decree setting up the federal districts. The status of the envoys is also reflected in their regular meetings with the president. To prevent the *polpredy* going 'native' the presidential administration will fund them directly.

Many of the major ministries have begun to restructure their administrations bringing them into line with the new federal districts. Thus, each of the federal districts now has a Deputy Prosecutor general and each district has a department for combating organized crime under the dual subordination of the *polpredy* and the Russian Minister of internal affairs. In addition the Ministry of Justice also recently created branches in each of the seven districts. The Ministry of

Finance and the Tax Inspectorate have likewise begun to restructure their administrations in line with the reforms.

### **Power and Responsibilities of the *Polpredy***

The powers and responsibilities of the *polpredy*, at least on paper are very impressive. Their key tasks are – to monitor the regions' compliance with the Russian constitution, federal laws and presidential decrees; to oversee the selection and placement of personnel in the regional branches of the federal bureaucracy; to protect the national security interests of the regions; and to set up and coordinate within their districts inter-regional economic programmes (Teague and Sakwa 2002). They have also the power to recommend to the president that he suspend specific laws or decrees when they contradict federal laws and to call for the dismissal of governors and the dissolution of regional assemblies if they adopt decrees or laws, which violate federal laws. Putin has been at pains to stress that the primary function of the *polpredy* is not to supplant the role of the elected governors but rather to coordinate the work of the federal agencies in their districts. As Putin observed, 'the authorized representatives, needless to say will help in effectively solving the problems in their regions but they do not have the right to interfere in areas under the jurisdiction of the electoral heads of the regions' (Putin 2000: 1-3).

One of the most important and controversial powers of the envoys is that of the selection and placement of personnel. As presidential representatives to the Volga district, Kirienko notes, 'in essence, the presidential representatives will oversee personnel policy for the president and will approve all appointments and promotions. The representatives will also maintain a reserve of personnel for all federal agencies' (Kirienko 2000: 3). These powers will bring the envoys into direct conflict with the governors who can cite article 72 of the Russian constitution to defend their right to be consulted over such appointments especially with regard to the judiciary and law enforcement bodies.



There is also some confusion over that controls the envoys will be given in the economic sphere. Whilst they will not have direct control over the purse strings they are nonetheless charged with monitoring all the federal funds, which come into their districts, and overseeing the collection and transfer of taxes to the federal budget. Kirienko has stated that the districts will not have their own budgets. However, he did confirm that they would have their own socio-economic development plans, and thus the ability to exercise some influence over economic policy making in the regions. Putin has increased the amount of money transferred to the federal coffers by changing the balance of tax revenues between the centre and the regions. 'In 2000, the split was 50:50 between the federal government and regional shares. In 2001, it widened to 56:44 and in 2002 the numbers was 62:38' (Ortung 2002: 9).

Thus, Putin's unelected polpredy at least on paper have been granted considerable powers over the internal politics of federal subjects and their democratically elected representatives. It is difficult to imagine how these new federal agencies will be able to carry out their functions without infringing the constitutionally guaranteed rights of the federal subjects. Given the fact that each presidential representatives will have to take charge of a dozen or so regions (whose administrative centres may be hundreds of miles apart) and fact that every region has between forty and fifty federal agencies operating in its territories, this means that each envoy will have to coordinate and control the work of approximately 400-600 agencies. In some of the very large districts it is difficult to see how the envoys will be able to exercise control over such vast territories and populations. In some regions it has been reported that the polpredy have faced difficulties in hiring and holding on to suitably qualified staff. Moreover, the formation of the new federal districts has made the federation even more asymmetrical. Thus, for example almost half of the Russian population is situated in just two of the federal districts- the Central district and the Volga district.

Putin's reforms may simply have created seven powerful quasi-regional states. Already the envoys have begun to create the institution necessary to turn their districts into mini regional states. Thus, for example, we are beginning to see the development in the federal districts of council of the heads of regional legislative and executive bodies (mini federal councils), councils of regional governors (mini state councils), councils for local self government and expert

consultative and scientific research councils (Badovski 2001: 5). Thus, for example, Poltavchenko has created a council in his federal district (the central district), which includes all the chief executives of the eighteen regions under his jurisdiction (Slabov 2001: 2). The council will deal with all aspects of economic development. The new council would also appear to usurp the role of the Black Earth and the Central Russian Interregional Economic Associations. In Volga district Kirienko has created a coordinating council for regional legislative chairpersons. The aim of the council is to develop a united approach for drafting regional legislation and bringing regional laws into line with federal norms. These new mini-councils will soon co-exist next to a series of new district level banks and financial bodies.

Emboldened by their new powers to appoint leaders of the regional branches of the All Union Television and Radio Company the envoys have also been actively promoting the development of a 'single information space' in each of their federal districts. To this end they have also set up district wide mass media councils. Now the Press will not only come under the control of the governors but the polpredy, hardly a recipe for the creation of a vibrant and open 'civil society' in Russia.

There is also a danger that the envoys may simply build up personal fiefdoms of their own or they may at times act in concert with regional elites creating yet another layer of bureaucracy between the president and the regions. As Badovskii notes, in some regions the polpredy have acted as a powerful force limiting the powers of the regional governors. But, in many regions, "the apparatus of the polpredy is created from the governor's people, is quickly integrated and absorbed by the local elites and we see the merging or joining of federal and regional bureaucracy- eventually creating a highly effective system of regional lobbying" (Badovskii 2001: 6). The relations between governors, presidential representatives, and federal bureaucrats are still unclear and will undoubtedly vary from district to district.

## **Reform of the Federation Council**

After the establishment of the seven federal districts, the most significant moves were the reform of the Federation Council and the granting to the president of the right to dismiss regional governors. Both these moves were directed at further reducing the powers of the regional leaders in the political system. Putin outlined his views on these matters in a television address on 17 May 2000 (*BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, SU/3844 19 May 2000*).

In this address he called for the following:

1. Reform of the Federation Council. Regional leaders and the chairmen of regional legislatures would no longer have the right to sit on the Federation Council. They would be replaced by representatives of the regional executive and legislative bodies. In Putin's view this would improve the efficiency of law-making as the representatives could sit permanently on the Federation Council, leaving regional leaders and parliamentary chairmen to concentrate on their domestic tasks. It would also remove regional leaders from direct representation in the federal political system, which Putin saw as a violation of the division of power. Their removal from the Federation Council would also strip them of the legal immunity they enjoyed as members of the Federal Assembly. This would enable the federal authorities to prosecute them if they opposed federal law in their regions.
2. The president to have the right to dismiss regional leaders and parliamentary chairmen who enforced legislation that contradicted federal legislation.
3. Regional leaders to have similar rights to dismiss local leaders who undertook acts that violated federal or regional laws.

The Federation Council is the upper house of the Russian legislature<sup>5</sup>. It includes two representatives from each subject of the Russian Federation. One from the legislative and another one from the executive body of state authority. Unlike the State Duma, it cannot be dismissed by the president. The Constitution gives it exclusive rights to approve internal border changes;

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<sup>5</sup> Chapter Five of the 1993 Russian Constitution.

presidential decrees declaring martial law and states of emergency; the use of Russian armed forces outside the Russian Federation; the dates of presidential elections; impeachment of the president; the appointment of judges of the Constitutional Court, Supreme Court and Higher Arbitration Court; the appointment or dismissal of the procurator-general, and of the deputy chairman and half the auditors of the Accounting Chamber. Like the upper houses in most bicameral parliaments, it acts as a revising and amending chamber. All federal draft laws passed by the State Duma have to be sent to the Federation Council within five days. If more than half the members of the Federation Council vote for a draft law passed by the State Duma, then that draft law is considered approved by the Federation Council and passed to the president for signing. If the Federation Council does not consider a law sent to it by the State Duma within fourteen days, then the draft law is considered approved. If the Federation Council rejects a law, then both the Federation Council and State Duma may create a conciliation commission to overcome the differences. Once this has been achieved the State Duma is to recognize the draft law. If the State Duma disagrees with the Federation Council, then a federal law shall be considered adopted if during the second vote at least two-thirds of the State Duma vote for it.

The reform of the Federation Council proved controversial. This was only to be expected: the draft law had to pass through both the State Duma and the unreformed Federation Council before it could become law. Unsurprisingly, many members of the Federation Council were reluctant to pass measures that would deny them the right to sit on the Federation Council. The law passed through the State Duma quickly, but in June 2000 the Federation Council vetoed it. A State Duma–Federation Council conciliation commission was set up to suggest amendments to the law. Some changes were made and the law was adopted by the State Duma and then approved by the Federation Council at the end of July 2000. It was signed into law by Putin on 5 August 2000. This law confirmed that members of the Federation Council were no longer to be regional leaders and regional parliamentary chairmen. Each region would instead have two representatives on the Federation Council, one from the region's executive structures and one from the legislative structures. The representative from the executive structures is to be appointed by the governor/president of the subject for the period of his term in office. This appointment is to be confirmed by the legislative assembly of the subject. If more than two-thirds of deputies vote against the governor/president's nomination then the appointment is vetoed. The

representative from the legislative structures is to be chosen by the members of the subject's legislative assembly for the term of that assembly. The chairman of the parliament then nominates the successful candidate as the Federation Council representative. If other candidates receive the support of more than one-third of deputies, then they too can be considered as candidates. Existing Federation Council members (i.e. governors/presidents and chairman of legislative assemblies) were allowed to remain as members until their term expired or until no later than 1 January 2002, whichever came earlier.

The regional assemblies appoint and dismiss their representatives by secret ballot. The governors and assemblies also have the right to recall their representatives if their voting record in the Federation Council is not up to scratch.

For a number of commentators, such changes will inevitably lead to a decline in the powers of the upper chamber. On the other hand, as Putin himself has stressed, the new body will now meet full time, unlike in the past. This will give the new members far greater opportunities to scrutinize legislation coming from the Duma and presidency. And we will no longer have the spectacle of members of regional executive bodies sitting in legislative chambers there by violating the principle of the separation of executive and legislative powers. More worrying for the governors is the fact that when they are denied membership of the upper chamber they will automatically lose their right to immunity from criminal prosecution. Putin will thus be able to use the threat of prosecution to keep the chief executives in line.

As regard the appointments of new delegates, although Putin has been able to influence their selection in some federal districts, in a surely unforeseen scenario we have witnessed the selection of outgoing Governors or former Deputy Governors, as representatives. Legislative chairs have also selected former high ranking members of their assemblies as their representatives. Thus, by the end of January 2002, twenty three former Governors and fifteen Regional Speakers had been appointed to the Council and in other cases, region has chosen Moscow insiders or high ranking entrepreneurs (Ortung 2002: 11). The formation of the powerful Pro-Putin group, 'federatsiya' in the Council and the election of 5 December 2001 of Putin's choice of speaker Sergei Mironov and the Kremlin's influence over the election of the

Council' Deputy Speakers have seriously weakened the independence of the upper chamber (Ortung 2002: 12).

However, it would appear the current method of selecting members of the Federation Council is only temporary. According to a new draft law drawn by Mironov, from January 2005 members of the Federation Council will be selected by a new if rather bizarre method. The candidate who wins the post of governors will then delegate his partner to sit in the upper chamber and in a similar manner candidates for seats in regional assemblies also chose partners, and at the first session of the newly elected legislatures the deputies elect one candidate from all their doubles to sit in the federation council. As Tsvetkova notes, "it is obvious that the changes provided in the Mironov's draft are not of a principled nature- the senators are still chosen by governors and deputies and not by the electorate" (Tsvetkova 2002: 2).

In this way, this reform of the Federation Council, along with the passing, on 29 July 2000, of the law allowing the president to impeach governors significantly strengthened the power of the federal centre vis-à-vis the regional leaders without the need for the abolition of elected governors. It should be noted that, although the president now has the legal power to remove governors, he cannot do so automatically<sup>6</sup>. If a governor issues decrees or other normative acts that violate federal law a court can find the decree unconstitutional. The governor must then annul the law within two months or face a warning decree from the federal president. The president can also annul the regional decree by decree. The governor must then comply with the decree within two months or appeal to a court or face a warning. If the warning is ignored, then the federal president can remove the governor from office. The decree removing the governor has a ten-day waiting period before it is implemented. During that time the governor can appeal to the Supreme Court. The president can also remove a governor on the recommendation of the procurator-general if there is evidence that he has committed serious crimes and an indictment is planned. These measures were a significant triumph for Putin as they strengthened Russian statehood in a way that contained no overt threat to the principle of elected governors. Putin's measures represented the first major move by the federal government to reverse almost a decade of centrifugalism in the Russian Federation.

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<sup>6</sup> See the text of the law in *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 1 August 2000, and the discussion in Solnick (2000b).

## **The State Council or a New Presidential Advisory Body**

In July 2000 the Kremlin began to talk about the desirability of creating a State Council where regional leaders would be represented. This followed suggestions made earlier by some governors to set up such a body (*Nezavisimaya Gazeta 24 May 2000*) as a substitute for the Federation Council, from which regional leaders would be removed. To sweeten the pill and to partially compensate the regional elite for their loss of membership in the upper chamber, Putin on 1 September 2000 created a new presidential advisory body – The State Council (the presidential decree 2000). The new body, which consists of the chief executives from the regions, meets once every three months and is chaired by the president. There is also an inner presidium made up of seven governors one from each of the federal districts, who's membership rotates every six month.

The presidium members comprise leaders from one of the seven federal districts. The Council's task is to monitor the implementation of federal law. The president can also recommend that it consider draft laws and decrees. The State Council is also to discuss the federal budget and its implementation. It is to meet at least once every three months. Its agenda is decided by the president, although he probably consults the presidium on this matter. The State Council has a secretary from the presidential administration.

Between November 2000 and March 2001, the State Council met four times. It has discussed such matters as constitutional reform and set up a commission headed by Yuriy Luzhkov to discuss this issue. It also discussed the restoration of the old Soviet national anthem, federal relations and local self-government. The State Council asked the Tatarstan president, Mintimir Shaymiyev, to prepare a report on the demarcation of power between the centre and the subjects of the Russian Federation. However, its proposals were so at variance with the wishes of the Putin leadership that it was shelved by the presidium of the State Council at the request of the Kremlin. The State Council is a consultative body. It cannot pass legislation. The most it can do is ask the president to submit a bill to the State Duma. It does, however, provide a voice for governors at the federal level, and it also acts as an alternative source of information for the president. It is supposed to reach decisions by consensus. Putin's decree makes no mention of voting as a means of making decisions. There have been calls for the State Council to be given

the powers of the Federation Council, but it is highly unlikely that Putin will agree to such requests<sup>7</sup> (*BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, SU/4001, 18 November 2000*).

However, neither the State Council nor its presidium is likely to have real powers. The new body is purely consultative body and has no law making functions. Moreover, as it was drawn up by presidential decree, the president may similarly dissolve it if it is not to his liking. Its main aim at present is to give regional leaders a direct channel to the president and some limited input into policy making.

### **Dismissal of Governors and Dissolution of Regional Legislatures**

The third major reform strikes at the very heart of the regions' power structure- a new law giving Putin powers to dismiss popularly elected governors and to dissolve regional assemblies (*Rosssikaya Gazeta* 1999). As Putin explains such legislation now makes it possible for federal intervention 'in situations in which government bodies at the local level have flouted, the Russian constitution and federal laws, violating the uniform rights and freedoms of Russian citizens' (annual presidential message 2000). The new law gives both chambers of the legislature, the general procurator and the regional legislatures the right to recommend that a governor be removed. However, as Corwin notes, the process is so long and involved so many conditions that regional leaders would have to demonstrate 'unprecedented obstinacy, audacity, and even stupidity' before they could be fired. For a regional head to be dismissed, 'one, he must on two different occasions ignore presidential decrees; two, allow the passage of bills with provisions that violate federal laws; and three, make use on two different occasions of regional' acts previously denounced by the president or the courts. And in each of these cases, a court verdict is required ruling that these actions constitute violations of federal laws' (Corwin 2000).

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<sup>7</sup> The governor of Saratov *oblast*, Dmitry Ayatskov, has put forward such an argument see *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, SU/4001, 18 November 2000*.



The president can also temporarily remove a governor while criminal charges that have been filed against him or are being studied. If the president removes a governor from office he appoints a temporary governor to replace him. However, it is interesting to note that Putin did not use his new powers against the governor of Primorskiï Krai, Yevgenii Nazdratenko. Instead, Putin simply dismissed Nazdratenko and to keep him quiet, rewarded him with a ministerial post in Moscow. Likewise, regional heads in Ingushetia and Sakha were removed without resort to these new powers and only after being promised important posts in Moscow. Moreover, as Ortung and Reddaway note, 'even if the president does force a governor out of office, the region will hold new elections within six months and there is no guarantee that the new governor will be any more pleasing to the federal government than the old one' (Ortung and Reddaway 2001: 98)

However, in a somewhat contradictory move Putin has also promoted the passage of the so called third term law through the Duma. Under this law, the leaders of sixty nine regions of the federation will now be able to run for a third term and some for a fourth even although such extensions to their tenure violate regional charters and republican constitutions (Kostyukov 2001). Thus, for example, Kirslan Ilyumzhinov, the president of Kalmykiya, if re-elected, 'could end up holding office for a total of twenty three years....not retiring until 2016. The president of Kabardino-Balkaria, Valerii Kokov could remain in power until 2012; President Mintimer Shamiev (Tatarstan) and Stroyev (Orel) until 2011, and Potapoc and Magomedov (Dagestan) until 2010. Rakhimov (Bashkortostan) can hold office till 2013. Prusak (Novgorod) has a chance of staying in power until 2011 and Konstantin Titov (Samara) until 2010' (Kopov 2002: 2).

Putin's support for such a law reveals the weakness of his position and the stark reality that he still depends on regional elites to 'bring home the votes' that we have seen in the round of parliamentary and presidential elections which was held in 2003-04. The law also calls for the dissolution of regional assemblies if they violate federal legislation. According to this legislation, regional assemblies have three months to amend any legislation that violates federal laws or legal proceedings may be enacted against them. However, the president must gain the approval of the State Duma before an assembly can be dissolved. Whilst it is certainly the case that regional assemblies do pass legislation that infringes the constitution, it is highly questionable that Putin's right to dissolve the democratically elected assemblies is itself constitutional. Nonetheless, on 4

April 2002, the constitutional court ruled that the president does indeed have the right to fire governors and the State Duma can disband regional legislatures. However, it made the procedure for dismissing governors and dissolving legislatures even more complicated and protracted. Under this new ruling, for the removal process to begin, the law requires that the action of a governor or regional legislature must have 'caused massive and serious violations of individual and civil rights and freedoms, threatened the unity and territorial integrity or national security of the Russian federation and its ability to defend itself or the unity of the country's legal and economic space' (Mikhailova 2002: 6).

### **The Governor's power to dismiss lower level officials**

Putin also steered passage of a law through the Duma, which gives the governors the right to dismiss lower-level administrative heads with the exception of the mayors of capital cities within their regions. As Putin explained, 'if under certain conditions, the head of a region can be removed from office by the country's president, then the regional leader should have a similar right with respect to lower ranking authorities' (Putin Television Address 2002).

Again this would appear to be sop to the regional heads in order to compensate them for loss of membership of the federation council. According to Malyakin 'the reforms complete the construction of a rigid vertical of power in which regional law conforms to federal law, the president enforces federal standards on the governors through the federal districts, and the governors in turn control local government through the municipal districts' (Malyakin 2002: 4).

### **Bringing Regional Legislation into Line with Federal Laws**

As part of the process of intensifying central control, Putin began forcing regional leaderships to bring their legislation into line with federal legislation. In May 2000 he issued decrees ordering Bashkortostan to align its constitution with that of the federation, and suspending Ingush legislation which contradicted federal legislation. In June 2000 he took similar measures in relation to Adygeya.

In June 2000 the prosecutor-general, Vladimir Ustinov, identified departures from the federal constitution found in the constitutions and charters of some of the constituent parts of the Russian Federation which he considered threatened state security (*BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, SU/3856 2 June 2000*). He listed Dagestan, Ingushetia and North Ossetia as republics whose constitutions proclaimed national sovereignty. Bashkortostan, the Republic of Komi, Kabardino-Balkaria, Tatarstan, Tyva and Sakha-Yakutia had proclaimed the superiority of their legislation over the federal constitution. Adygeya, Buryatiya, Ingushetia and Kalmykia had appropriated the right to introduce a state of emergency. The Republic of Altay, North Ossetia, Krasnodar kray and Rostov Region had introduced their own labour legislation. Bashkortostan and the Republic of Komi had proclaimed the superiority of the main local ethnic group. Ustinov said there were major violations of major rights and freedoms of citizens, and that most republics of the North Caucasus, along with Bashkortostan and Tatarstan, violated the federal electoral legislation by introducing language requirements for candidates standing at local elections. He also said that Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia, North Ossetia, Stavropol kray, Volgograd Region, Moscow Region and Moscow violated the citizen's right to travel freely.

In July 2000 Yury Chayka, the Russian minister of justice, reported that 20 per cent of the laws passed in the constituent parts of the Russian Federation ran counter to the federal constitution (*BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, SU/3888, 10 July 2000*). The Prosecutor-General's Office and the Ministry of Justice played a major role in forcing regional leaderships to alter their legislation (and where necessary their constitutions and charters) to conform with federal legislation and the federal constitution. The process of legal harmonisation thus appears to have had considerable success, and those regional leaderships most opposed to Putin's measures have been able to do little to oppose this process.

In June 2001 Putin decreed the creation of a commission to draft proposals on power sharing between federal, regional and local authorities. This commission would presumably examine precisely how Article 72 of the Federal Constitution, which outlines the areas of joint competence between the federal and subject authorities, was to be applied. The commission was to review the power-sharing treaties signed by the federal centre and various regions in order to

ensure that they complied with the federal constitution. Forty-two of these treaties were in existence. This process was to be completed no later than 30 July 2002. The commission was headed by Dmitry Kozak, deputy head of the presidential administration. In July 2001 four regional leaderships (Perm, Ulyanovsk, Nizhniy Novgorod oblasts and the Mari El Republic) annulled the treaties they had with the federal centre, which indicated a further reversal of centrifugal trends (*Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 10 July 2001).

Thus, one of the main aims of Putin's reforms is to create a unified legal space in the Russian Federation. To this end therefore, the *polpredy* have been charged with overseeing the complex process of bringing republican constitutions and regional charters and other local laws and decrees into line with the federal constitution and federal laws. By 2001, the number of normative legal acts adopted by the regions and republics exceeded 300,000 and of these, just under a quarter (70,000) contradicted the federal constitution and federal laws (Vil'chek 2002: 20).

Within a matter of just a few months after his election to the Russian presidency in March 2000, Putin issued decrees demanding that the republics of Adygeya, Altai, Bashkortostan and Ingushetia in addition to Amru, Smolensk and Tver oblasts, bring their regional laws into accordance with the Russian constitution and federal legislation. Putin's decrees were backed up by two landmark decisions of the Constitutional Court (adopted on 7 June, 2000 and 27 June, 2000), which ruled that the republics' declarations of sovereignty were incompatible with the sovereignty of the Russian Federation (Baglai 2001).

In the same month Putin declared that 60 constitutions and regional charters as well as over 2000 regional laws had been brought into compliance with the constitution (*Interfax*, 11 January 2001). However, there would appear to be as many different figures about the number of laws that have been brought into line, as there are members of the presidential administration. In April 2001, the justice ministry reported that 23 regions continued to adopt laws that contradicted federal legislation (Corwin 2001). And in the same month, in his address to the Russian parliament, Putin declared that over 3,500 normative acts adopted in the regions continued to contradict the Russian constitution and federal laws (Ortung 2001).

Putin's efforts to rein in the regions have elicited a range of reactions from reluctant acquiescence to outright defiance. Many republics and regions have dragged their feet in implementing the reforms and they have steadfastly refused to renounce their sovereignty and their control over natural resources. Indeed, it is possible that the number of laws violating federal norms may actually have grown in number. For just as quickly as old legislation is being revised to conform to federal norms, regional and republican parliaments have been able to adopt new laws with new infringements. For example, more than two-dozen amendments made to the constitution of Khakasiya (in its revised edition of 21 November 2000) are in violation of federal laws (Shanarov 2001).

And it was only under considerable pressure from the presidential representative in the Siberian district and threats that federal subsidies would be cut off, did Tyva finally adopted a new version of its constitution on 6 May 2001. The previous version of the constitution gave the republic the right to secede from Russia and declared that only republican laws would be in effect during crisis. However, there have been so many legal violations in the process of writing the new constitution that its legitimacy is now being challenged in the courts (*Kommersnt Daily* 8 May 2001).

In Bashkortostan 51 of the 164 articles of the new constitution, which was adopted in November 2000, violate federal law, almost as many as violation as in the old constitution. And whilst the new version, 'places limits on the republics sovereignty, no longer declares its laws above Russian laws, removes claims that the republic is a subject of the international law, and introduces procedures for appointing judges and procurators in line with federal norms, it still includes the full text of the republic's power sharing treaty' (Rabinovich 2001). The Bashkortostan authorities have refused to recognize the rulings of the Russian constitutional court and continued to adopt new legislation that violated federal laws (Rabinovich 2001).

In April 2002, Aleksander Zvyagintsev, Russian Deputy Prosecutor General complained that the Bashkir supreme court continued to uphold the Republic's declaration of sovereignty, the right of the president to issue decrees on emergency situations and to appoint the members of the republican electoral commission and the chair of the Central Bank' (*Tatar-Bashkir Service* 3 May 2002).

In October 2002, a special constitutional commission approved further radical changes to Bashkortostan's constitution. It adopted that, the post of president will be abolished, and Bashkortostan will become a parliamentary republic. However, it could not be implemented due to intense pressure from all the ethnic republics. And also, there is unlikely to be any real shift in power until there is any major change with regard to the terms and condition for the republican president.

The Tatarstan leadership has also steadfastly refused to renounce the republic's sovereignty. Article 1 of the revised constitution, which was adopted in April 2002, continues to uphold the 1994 bilateral treaty with Moscow, even though it contradicts both the federal and republican constitution in several areas blocking the development of a cordial and effective federal relation between the centre and the republics. The constitution also reiterates the republic's citizenship rights. In November 2002 there were still as many as fifty points in the constitution, which contradicts federal legislation (*Political Weekly* 2002: 15). In reply to criticism from Moscow, president Shamiev stated, 'we realize that some will not like the mention of sovereignty in the constitution of Tatarstan. However, the Russian constitution recognizes republics as states. Consequently, it is impossible to reject the notion of sovereignty either hypothetically or in practice' (*Political Weekly* 2002: 15). Shamiev has also called for the Russian constitution to be brought into line with republican constitutions rather than vice versa.

In exchange for the few concessions that were made, such as giving up its right to an independent judicial system and the right to conclude international treaties, the federal government is reported to have transferred an additional 12.8 billion roubles for Tatarstan's socio-economic development in 2002. As Corwin notes, 'in comparison a development programme for the entire southern federal district was funded at the level of only 600 million roubles' (Corwin 2002: 5).

But now there are new problems with the new constitution. At its session on 5-6 September 2002, the Tatarstan legislature adopted a resolution refusing to bring its 2002 constitution into line with the federal Constitution, and later in the same month the Republican Supreme Court defended the actions of the legislature against a number of complaints made by the Russian Deputy Prosecutor general. As Midkhat Farukshin notes, 'these actions make clear that the republican

leadership is determined to defend the inviolability of the new Tatarstan Constitution and is willing to risk the disbandment of the republican legislature by the State Duma to defend it...Tatarstan's leaders are clearly employing delaying tactics in their battle to retain as much sovereignty as possible' (Farukhshin 2002: 4).

Likewise in Sakha there has been strong opposition to Putin's reforms. Thus, for example, on 16 January 2001 the Sakha republican legislature rejected a law proposed by the republican procurator that would have renounced the republic's sovereignty. Nineteen of the thirty-two legislators voted against it. And in March 2001, the legislature refused to make amendments to article 5 of the republic's constitution, which gives it ownership over its land and natural resources. The Sakha government had signed a 25 year agreement with the Alrosa diamond company on January 2001, and it was in no mood to give up its control over such a lucrative source of income. Diamond production in the republic makes up 77% of the government's revenue (Yemelyanov 2002: 3). Nonetheless, the legislators did agree to remove from the republic's constitution ten of the most serious violations of federal law, including a provision that allowed the republic to have its own army (Ortung 2001: 6). However, no sooner on 4 March 2002, had legislators finally approved a law amending a further eleven articles of the republican constitution, when it came to light that a further five laws which had been adopted over the period 2001-2002 had created new violations (Corwin 2002: 3). In 2002, Putin was able to persuade the president of Sakha, Mikhail Nikolaev, to withdraw from presidential elections and take up post of deputy chair of the federation council.

In other cases, threats to dissolve recalcitrant legislatures have met with success. Thus, on April 2002 Buryatiya's republican parliament under threat of dissolution adopted a resolution renouncing the republic's declaration of sovereignty. However, it is not only in the republics that such infringements of federal legislation have taken place. Thus, Latyshev, the presidential representative to the Urals federal district, in an examination of 1544 regional laws found that 306 violated the Russian constitution and federal legislation. The study also revealed that 92 percent of municipal charters and 48 of the 67 agreements signed between federal agencies in the federal district also violated federal laws (Pushkarev 2001: 4-5). In the summer of 2001, Putin realizing that his reforms were being bogged down announced a new initiative- the formation of

a commission chaired by the deputy head of the presidential administration, Dmitry Kozak. The commission was charged with re-examining the powers and authority of federal, regional and local bodies of power. We still await the full details of the Kozak commission's report which was still not finalized. However, one of the first actions of the commission was to call for the abolition of the 46 bilateral treaties, which had been signed between the federal government and the regions during Yeltsin's presidency. By granting special privileges and powers to a select group of regions the treaties undermined article 6 of the Russian constitution, which proclaims that all subjects of the federation are equal. Yeltsin often signed secret agreements with powerful regions in order to secure political support, and in many cases the treaties violated the Russian constitution (Ross 2003).

Putin to his credit has spoken out against the lack of transparency in the treaties, and he has called for any future treaties to be ratified by the federation council. In his annual state of the nation address to parliament in April 2002, Putin stated that 28 of the treaties had been annulled (Putin's address 2002).

### **Putin's Centre-Periphery Reforms and Democracy**

Bringing regional legislation into line with the Russian constitution is absolutely essential for the consolidation of democracy, particularly in those ethnic republics, which have deprived their citizens of universal democratic norms and human rights. Indeed, as Hahn reports, according to Vladimir Lysenko, 'a third of Russia's region's are authoritarian, with constitutions and laws that violates the Russian constitution and its provision on democracy and civil rights' (Hahn 2001: 498). By reasserting the rule of law and due process, Putin's reforms are positive steps in creating equal rights for all citizens across the federation. However, there are worries that Putin's quest for law and order will be brought at the expense of civil liberties and the consolidation of democracy. Putin's reorganization of the federation council, his usurpation of unilateral powers to dismiss regional assemblies and chief executives and his creation of seven unelected super governors have been major setback for Russia's transition to democracy.



The system of representation of the heads of the regional executives and legislatures in the Federal Council adopted in 1994 has been changed by Putin. Now, two representatives are to be sent to the Federal Council, one nominated by the regional executive branch and one by the legislature. However, the right of the Councilary Commission to recall the members of the Federation Council has left them no better than puppets (Sakwa 2004: 147). Regional head of the executive can recall representative nominated by the executive and his decision can only be overridden by the two thirds of the members of the regional legislature. The State Council, of which members are regional leaders made Federation Council somewhat less influential. Through this system of the State Commission, the regional leaders can have direct access to the president. This has added a unitary feature to the state in practice. In these various ways, the upper chamber which represents the interests of the regions has been rendered less effective.

Putin also assumed the right to dismiss the regional executives and dissolve the legislature which is an open violation of the federal norms. The regional leaders have felt threatened by this power of the president. The regional executive, who violates federal laws or constitution more than once, can be subject to dismissal by the president. As compensation the regional leaders were also granted a similar right with respect to lower-ranking authorities. The new law gives both chambers of the Federal Assembly, the general procurator and the regional legislatures the right to recommend that a Governor be removed. The formation of the seven administrative districts is another intervention in the regional autonomy. However the administrators themselves are not clear about their rights.

Putin's structure of federal districts is based on the existing military administrative districts. It is interesting to note that five of the seven presidential representatives have military or security services in the affairs of the state. Yeltsin had appointed them from the democratic movement of 1991. It may result in instability if the power seeker administrator and regional leaders work together to this direction. The shift of the centre of political gravity from the level of the regions to the level of the districts means reduced public control over authorities, a return to the old system of appointments instead of direct elections, an almost total severing of connections between the civil society and the state and an end to the elements of federalism in Russia (Petrove 2002). A nominated presidential representative over the elected head of the executive is

itself an anti-federal norm and increased political economic resources available to enlarged territorial units may also increase the risk of separation. Administrative districts are becoming quasi republics. Only a competitive democratic environment could decrease such risk. If Russian politicians want to preserve the territorial integrity in the long run, they would have to find ways to move toward a truly democratic federal model, with competitive democratic process in all political spheres (Fillippov and Dolga Shvetsova 2005) which might lead to uneasy competitive atmosphere and thereby to instability.

In the area of fiscal relations, the centre has the upper hand. More than 80 percent of the tax revenues of the Russian regions come from taxes that must be divided between the centre and the region, and the tax split tends to vary each year. Fiscal relations between the centre and the regions also continue to lack transparency and remain based on informal financing channels and individual agreements (Tekoniemi 2001).

Putin's federal reforms also put into doubt his adherence to the principles of centre-periphery relations as enshrined in the Russian constitution. Putin states that, 'from the very beginning Russia was created as a super centralized state. That's practically laid down in its genetic code, its traditions, and the mentality of its people' (Fitzpatrick 2000: 182-183). In a worrying scenario for the Russian federalism, Putin may well opt for policy of defederalisation and abolish the existing 89 subjects of the federation to be replaced with the seven federal districts. However, in order to carry out such a radical and potentially destabilizing reform major revisions would have to be made to the Russian constitution which is very difficult to amend.

## **Conclusion**

Putin, after becoming the President of the Russian Federation in the new millennium felt the need for a strong centre. He initiated several steps to recentralize power – the creation of seven federal super districts, reforms of the federation council, the creation of new state council, the granting of new powers to the president to dismiss regional governors and dissolve regional assemblies, new rights for regional governor to dismiss municipal officials, and a major campaign to bring regional charters and republican constitutions in line with the Russian constitution (Ross 2003). He attempted to stop tendency of violating the federal constitution. He got support from the regional leaders for it. For instance the opposition group in Tatarstan wrote to Putin mentioning that the Tatar constitution violated the federal constitution and laws (Sakwa 2004: 137). Putin appointed chief prosecutor in 2000 and gave the regions one month to synchronize their laws with the federal laws. The laws in as many as 60 regions were found to be contradicting federal laws (Martinez- Vazquez 2002).

Putin has made the curbing of centrifugal tendencies in centre-periphery relations a major objective of his presidency. The measures introduced since May 2000 have set about enhancing the power of the federal centre over the regions in order to ensure the primacy of federal law over the laws of republics and regions. This aims at the creation of a single legal space within the Russian Federation. The federal leadership feels that effective economic reform can only be implemented if such a legal space is created. The measures implemented by Putin have downgraded the powers of the regional leaders. The creation of the seven federal districts and the appointment of presidential representatives accountable only to the federal president were meant to ensure that federal policy would be carried out in the regions and that regional leaders would not hinder its implementation. The reforms of the Federation Council and the passing of a law empowering the president to dismiss governors further enhanced the power of the federal centre.

However, it is not clear that these reforms have succeeded in creating a single legal space throughout the Russian Federation. It is debatable whether regional leaders are any more submissive towards the centre than they were before May 2000. It is difficult to imagine a regional leader with strong local support, such as Mintimir Shaymiyev in Tatarstan or Murtaza Rakhimov in Bashkortostan, ever submitting to the federal centre on issues they considered vital

for their republics. The regional elections of 2000–2001 appear to signify a strengthening of gubernatorial regimes, and Putin will have to deal with governors by the usual process of bargaining that existed under his predecessor. It is unlikely that there will be any change to the status quo.

The removal of governors from the Federation Council is a major plus for Putin, in that it deprives them of representation at the federal level and so deprives them of a platform. This will make it more difficult for governors to develop a national profile, and thus it will be more difficult for any governor with ambitions to run in a federal presidential election and challenge Putin. It may be to Putin's advantage to have a lower-profile and possibly more pliable Federation Council, but it undermines the development of the Federal Assembly as an effective check on the executive. It has been suggested that the Federation Council should have directly elected members like the US Senate. This should in theory ensure a democratically elected upper chamber with regional representatives. Putin is likely to oppose this for the reason that he obviously desires a low-profile lower chamber that is unlikely to be a forum for opposition. An elected chamber would not be low profile, and elected members with a popular mandate would be able to use the Federation Council as a platform for self-promotion. Such an upper chamber would be less submissive to the president. Some members would probably use their position on the Federation Council to run for the presidency.

It is true that Putin does have to contend with a directly elected State Duma, and this chamber enables opposition politicians to develop a national profile. Previous presidential contenders Gennadiy Zyuganov, Grigoriy Yavlinskiy and Vladimir Zhirinovskiy are all Duma deputies. Yeltsin often had a stormy relationship with the State Duma, which was then dominated by opposition forces. It would probably be politically impossible for Putin to introduce constitutional reform that would create a non-elected State Duma. It would seem he has no choice other than to live with a directly elected State Duma, and with the possibility that deputies could emerge with the stature to challenge him for the presidency. As the State Duma elected in December 1999 contains a substantial number of pro-Kremlin deputies, this is so far only a theoretical problem for Putin. Since then changes have been introduced in the method of Duma

elections also, with direct election of 225 deputies from territorial constituencies giving way to election of all 450 deputies through list system.

The problems of developing a more harmonious centre-periphery relationship where a single legal space can be created and exist in fact as well as in theory may be partly due to the fact that the Russian Federation has so many subjects within its federation. Eighty-nine is an extremely large number of federal units. The USA, which has a bigger population than the Russian Federation, comprises only fifty states. Canada, whose population is admittedly much smaller (31.28 million) but whose area is almost two-thirds that of the Russian Federation, has only thirteen federal units (ten provinces and three territories). Brazil, with a population of almost 173 million and an area just under half that of the Russian Federation, has twenty-six states and one federal district. It would therefore make sense to reduce the number of subjects. The Kemerovo governor, Aman Tuleyev, has proposed that the number be reduced to thirty-five, and the leader of the Narodnyy Deputat faction in the State Duma, Gennadiy Raykov, to twelve or fifteen. There are eleven officially designated economic regions in the Russian Federation, and logically one could perhaps use either these regions or the seven federal districts created in May 2000 as the constituent units of a federal system. While this may be logical in theory it would require the merging of various subjects of the Russian Federation, and hence require democratically elected politicians to give up their power voluntarily. It is thus difficult to see such a change happening, and the most likely prognosis is for the continuation of the status quo in centre-periphery relations, with the president engaged in a constant bargaining game with regional leaderships, even though this bargaining process is now mediated through the presidential representatives.

## **CHAPTER V**

## **CONCLUSION**

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Centre-Periphery is basically territorial notions of political groupings whose concerns may also be cultural or economic where Centre has privileged position within the territory and it is holder of key political, economic and cultural resources. Centre is decision-making body. On the other hand Periphery is distant location from the centre and generally poorly developed or dependent economy. It has culturally distinctive in some sense of separate identity, (language or religion). In the Periphery, minimal resources to defend its distinctiveness. It often a conquered or annexed territory. The Centre-Periphery framework has been employed by some analysts as an approach to central-local relations. In this way, there can be periphery within the Centre and a centre within the Periphery. The Russian Federation is composed of many poor and disenfranchised regions, but within the periphery there is a Center made up of the urban areas and some rural elites. The use of the Centre Periphery model in this context assumes the form of division of power – Federalism.

Centre-Periphery relations in the Soviet period was hierarchical and bureaucratic. Power was strictly controlled by the centre and lay in the hands of the Communist Party. As far as Russian Federation is concerned, after the Soviet demise, Federal Centre's (Moscow) interests in the periphery or regions plays a significant role that influences the future developments between the Centre and Periphery in the Russian Federation. The relations between Moscow and the federal subjects has been a major issue of contention in Russian politics since the establishment of the Russian Federation in 1991. The two key documents – the Federation Treaty of 1992 and the Constitution of 1993 established the composition of the Russian Federation.

However, the newly emerging Russian Federation has been threatened by its own components because of Moscow's (Centre) individual negotiations and different policies pursued from time to time. The narrowing institutional and political space for real federalism is giving rise to regional and nationality movements. Certain studies show that these kinds of movements have been increasing with every passing year. Moreover, the constitution proposed by the President

was greatly truncated by the Federal Treaty. This effectively establishes inequality among the members of the Russian Federation. The dissatisfaction and opposition will continue to grow posing a threat to the integrity of the Russian state. In fact, during the long process of drafting the first post-Soviet Russian Constitution (1990–1993), the disputes over separation of powers deflected attention from Center-Periphery conflict over the division of powers and Russian-Tatar treaty of 1994 under Yeltsin Presidency may be the harbinger of a renegotiation of Center-Periphery Relations in Russia.

The Russian Federation, despite its name remains more a unitary state, albeit one in transition to a democratic federal structure. It has been struggling to come to terms with the ethno-federal structure it inherited from the former Soviet Union. There are elements of continuity in the Russian federal traditions despite the dramatic break from the past. The national territorial principle based on ethnic considerations that the Russian Federation inherited continues to impose institutional limits in the process of establishing a new federal relation within a democratic liberal framework. The manner in which this legacy is dealt will would the future of federation in Russia.

In order to survive, Russia has strengthened its federal structure. History and economics has also determined that Russia remain a federal entity. Keeping this in view, a process of federalization in a new perspective has been taking place in Russian since 1991. The regions, the republics, and the central authorities have tried to establish a system of intergovernmental relations characterised by a degree of cooperation, balance and comprise. This involves a shift away from the so-called federation of the Soviet era and comprises a fundamental aspect of Russia's more general democratic transition from authoritarian rule. To a certain extent, the difference parties appear to have been successful in giving centre-periphery relations a meaningful orientation. The process of and regional disintegration, which continued after the 1990 – parade of sovereignty, has largely diminished. The bitter disputes between regional legislature and governor that dominated Boris Yeltsin's first term as Russian president also appear to have diminished. If a genuine federal system is to develop it would do so under the penumbra of the Yeltsin's constitution of 1993.



Partial asymmetric federalism has had important stabilizing effects in the management of federal relations with key ethnic republics. First, by decentralizing power over a wide range of policy domains the treaties have been important institutional counterweights to the powerful residues of a centralizing unitarist state tradition in Russia, which has historically practiced ethnic control, assimilation and oppression against its national minorities.

Second, the treaties have engineered a new institutional structure for accommodation of Russia's multi-ethnic society. The process by which these new institutional arrangements were crafted is as important as their functional operation. The negotiation, bargaining and compromise that accompanied the institutional engineering of a treaty framework were a critical element in the construction of the federal process in politics itself. The process has by its very nature helped to regularize federalism as a political, if not constitutional, process of institutional bargaining. Evaluating the impact of the treaties, once adopted on federal relations is a more complicated task given the non-transparency of the cooperation agreements covering key policy domains and the secrecy surrounding the reconciliation of differences. The fact that process of negotiation has continued under Putin, however, is indicative of the enduring significance of the treaties and their power-sharing provisions. Consequently, asymmetric federalism performs the crucial functions of promoting political stability and institutionalizing elite bargaining, factors that were so damaging for democratic consolidation by their very absence in central politics.

Third, a lack of transparency, leading to an information deficit, is an intrinsic part of the bilateral power-sharing treaty process. Secrecy may lead to bidding games, but it also gives the centre the flexibility to negotiate on a case by case basis and is a useful instrument for breaking up potential regional and republican coalitions. Secrecy also serves the interests of those key republics and regions (like Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Sakha and Sverdlovsk) that have the most leverage and can extract the most concessions.

Fourth, the successful management of separatist and regionalist challenges by Russia's asymmetric federalism is an attractive alternative conflict resolution mechanism to the 'Bosnian' model of segregation in 'ethnic' enclaves. The Russian experience of federal transition may even have had a beneficial contagion effect as, for example, the Tatarstan model influenced the

institutionalization of Crimea autonomy in the Ukrainian Constitution of 1996. In recent, the debate in Georgia over Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and in Moldova over Transdnistria, has shifted in support of asymmetric federal type solutions.

However, the Republics' hope of retaining back its special treaty with the federal centre was further boosted by the signing of the treaty between the Russian Federation and the republic of Tatarstan, it now seems not far that the centre will do the same in other ethnic republic taking in to consideration the importance of preserving the federal character in a multi-ethnic state. Bashkortostan though has been criticized for the violation of the Russian Constitution the introduction of new laws in the Russian Federation has in fact brought back the balance of relationship 'back to square'. In fact the healthy competition from both the sides has been the main factor in the development Russian federalism vis-à-vis the centre-periphery relations.

The formation of political elite after the disintegration of Soviet Union and the continuity in the establishment of the political elite in the regions as well as in the centre made us very clear that it is still controlling the Duma as well as influencing the policy formation for the regions. It has also given the various elite group relationship within the party and as well as within the regions vis-à-vis the centre. Most of the role of the government agencies has been on the basis of its relationship with the legislature and the executive. Here too, the role of political elite as an influencing factor in determining a favorable response from the federal centre and the peripheral regions is beyond doubt i.e. the mechanism of government agencies if not all, mostly are in the control of these elites.

Within the Russian Federation the break-up of the command – administrative system and the control of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) over the political system at the beginning of the 1990s saw a significant haemorrhaging of power from the central political authorities in both the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation. This process began before the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1991. In August 1990, when in Tatarstan, Boris Yeltsin, who was then chairman of the presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR), told the local authorities to 'take as much independence as you can'. In Bashkortostan he uttered his now famous statement to take as much sovereignty 'as you can swallow'.

Both republics and other subjects of the Russian Federation took Yeltsin at his word, and the 1990s saw the development of centrifugalism in the Russian Federation as power flowed from the centre to the subjects (regions) of the Russian Federation. In many cases this made it extremely difficult for the centre to assert its authority over the regions and ensure the supremacy of Russian federal law over laws passed locally. The federal authorities were unable to exercise full control over the constituent units of the federation, and it was impossible for them to achieve an agreed and stable demarcation of power and responsibilities with the regions of the federation. In addition, the disparities in rights between the republics and other regions of the federation meant that the federation was at best asymmetric. At certain periods of the Yeltsin presidency concern was raised as to whether the Russian Federation would emulate the fate of the USSR and fall apart. This concern was particularly acute following the financial crisis of August 1998.

The flowing of power from the centre to the regions was part of a broader disintegration of the Russian state. The break-up of the communist system in the Soviet Union had seriously undermined the capacity of the state machine to perform its basic functions. The Yeltsin presidency did little, if anything, to remedy this state of affairs. Although the 1993 Constitution gave the president enormous power, Yeltsin did not use this power to create a state that would integrate social, institutional and political institutions within a framework based on the rule of law. Instead an undisciplined pluralism emerged in which regional and financial elites were able to ignore the attempts of the centre to enforce law. Yeltsin's toleration of corruption exacerbated the situation, and many of these elites were able to 'privatise' the state – that is, buy off parts of it – so it would be beholden to their will rather than that of the central government. The state was thus unable to 'tax resources, conscript manpower, and innovate and execute policy'. This was the legacy that faced Vladimir Putin when he became acting president on 31 December 1999.

Moreover, the centre-periphery relations have taken a new turn after Vladimir Putin was elected the President of Russian Federation on 27<sup>th</sup> March, 2000. He has been trying to reassert central control over the component units of the federation. In order to bring about greater uniformity of laws and rules, he has taken several measures. First, he issued decree to group Russia's 89 regions into seven mega regions or federal districts directly under the charge of President's envoys with broad power to central regional executives. A few days later on 17 May 2000 in an

address broadcast by the Russian television, he expressed his resolve to consolidate and strengthen Russia's statehood and establish 'dictatorship of law' while promising an open, responsible government. In this connection, he proposed that the heads of regional administration should not sit in Federation Council, the upper house of Russian Parliament and the President should have the right of dismiss heads of regions and dissolve regional legislative assemblies if their legislative acts were in contravention of federal laws. Since then he has achieved both these objectives. Earlier President Putin suspended by Ingush President and Amur region Governor because they were at variance with federal legislation. He also wrote to the speaker of the Bashkortostan legislature proposing that the republics constitution be brought in line with the constitution of the Russian Federation and that the republican laws should not violate federal legislation in the sphere of currency and customs and in questions of use of property and taxation. It remains to be seen how far the measures taken by Putin will be effective in fostering centre-periphery relations in the Russian Federation.

Thus, The new federal reform introduced by President Putin of Russia, has in fact, harmed the principle of Federalism, but at the same time, we cannot deny the fact that Russia is a newly independent country, comprising of multi-ethnic people, where the practice of real federalism can only take place in due course of time, as we know federalism itself evolved through a dynamic process. So, Putin's federal reform will lead to more unitary tendencies at the moment considering the utmost importance of the territorial integrity and for the development of a uniform and genuine federalism in modern Russia. The federal reform though was criticized by the ethnic republics for the autocratic way in which it was formalized by the President of Russia, it was welcomed by most of the regions in Russia.

As the reform was necessary considering the violation of the Russian Constitution by most of the ethnic republics, the jurisdiction for this does not mean that Russia can be at peace only when there is a strong centre. It was necessary considering the prevailing situation in Russia, as it will have major implications not only within Russia but the outside world too. Russian Federation is in the process of developing a centre-periphery relations that is based on democratic and uniform law. Though many western writers have questioned the role of democracy in Russia there is no doubt that real democracy can be found nowhere in this part of the world. There have been so

many instances where manipulations and violation of human rights have taken place, the status of democracy itself has been questioned by some staunch human rights activist. Therefore, we cannot single out Russia as an undemocratic and unfederal in character as has been said by many political scientists. At the same time it is highly acceptable that in most parts of the Russian Federation the norms of democracy is weak and it needs more time to develop a genuine democracy which will be based on the basis of root level participation.

Thus, we can say that the relationship between centre and periphery in the Russian Federation has been quite peaceful. It would be quite right therefore to say that centre-periphery model has in fact played as a method of conflict resolution between Russia and its ethnic republics/regions.

Unitary versus Federalism is expressed in three ways by the federal structure. Chapter 3 of the Constitution and other relevant constitutional clause. First, the Constitution asserts the power of the central state over its sub-national units. Second, there is the assertion of an exclusive federal citizenship. Finally, the Constitution text promoted a unified common economic market within Russia in the sense of the unity of the economic space, the free movements of goods and services and a common set of economic policies.

The experience of Chechen separatism tells us that the ethnic uprisings pose a threat to the federal system. In any federal set-up, cooperation between centre and its constituent parts is not only desirable but also one of the pre-requisite for the smooth functioning of the system. Regarding Russia's experience with ethno-nationalism, it is easy to say that the regions which have been demanding for separate statehood on the basis of their ethnic identity has acted as a constraint on building the federal process. In this context it must be borne in mind that the liberal political framework came to Russia suddenly and from above instead of gradually evolving from below. The sudden change has affected the federal structure in its development process as it has affected other institutions.

As far as the Chechen problem is concerned, the coercive policy of President Yeltsin is the product of partly long unresolved nationality problem of the erstwhile Soviet Union, which Russia as a successor of the Soviet Union inherited. It can be said that to a certain extent the unresolved nationality problem of the Soviet Union is in a way responsible for the problem faced by the nascent Russian federal structure.

In addition, various developments in the Post-Soviet Russian political system have led us often to question the very existence of the system. On many occasions, it has been seen that the independent initiatives taken by its federating units do not coincide with the policies adopted by the central authority. Interestingly, much power has been taken by them simply de facto, neither negotiated nor delegated by Moscow de jure. Hence, to have a unified federal structure, Russian system will and always is dependent upon the steps taken by its republics/regions, which would be conducive to Moscow.

At the same time, it can also be observed that the centralized, authoritarian way of governance cannot build a normal federal structure. Federalism is based on the self and shared rule and definitely not on the unilateral policies imposed by the centre over its federative components.

Therefore, solution for the running of the federal system does not lie in authoritarian, centralized control, instead Russia should always try to adhere to some policies based on consensus and not on the one sided policies pursued by it so far.

Russian society has undergone too many irreversible changes in the past decade for a return to past practice. Though representative of republics and provinces participated in the drafting, the Constitution was not a collective effort based on Constituent Assembly. The new Constitution is thus not a document that represents consensus in a highly divided society. Although the federal treaty and the constitution have their weaknesses, they have created the necessary preconditions for a fairly clear division of power among the centre, region and republics. But the federal government's inconsistent policies have limited their positive effect. Also, the idea of centre-periphery model has to be seen in a broad perspective and not just in strategic terms, as a mechanism for maintain privileges and special arguments among central government, regional and republican elites. Negotiating and legislating loose centre-periphery relation, implementing the results, and ultimately for giving durable relationship will not be easy.

In conclusion, it can be said that Russian leadership should realize that the diffusion of power from centre to periphery is inevitable in a democratic set up. The need is to channelize and institutionalize it so, that it reaches the lowest level of the political system. This could be done through strengthening the local-self government. It will promote popular participation and also curb the power and ambitions of the regional elites. This would require at least a generational

change. A new regional elite should imbibe the spirit of democracy. For this the political culture should develop. Besides, the issues of centre-periphery relations is closely linked to the wider issue of democracy, individual rights, civil society and a more open, pluralist political culture, which are in fact the pre-requisites for a viable and genuine federal system in a democratic set up.

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