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Separatism or Federalism? Ethnic Conflict and Resolution in Russia and Georgia

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Separatism or Federalism? Ethnic Conflict and Resolution in Russia and Georgia

by

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Dedication

To my father, Paul Richard George, and

my mothers, Jean S. George and Patricia Aulbach

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Separatism or Federalism? Ethnic Conflict and Resolution in Russia and Georgia

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Ethnic conflicts have accounted for most of the world's wars in recent decades. My dissertation, based on research on ethno-federal regions in Russia and Georgia, analyzes the factors that cause some ethnic mobilization movements to become violent while others find negotiated settlements or never become politically conflictual. Contrary to recent ethnicity literature, which emphasizes the role of ethnic group wealth, intergroup political dynamics, and historical oppression, my findings indicate that although such factors are important, central-regional elite networks and state capacity are the crucial factors that affect violent or non-violent regional strategies. Elite networks open pathways for negotiation and patronage politics. Failed states enhance the likelihood for conflict: they not only provide incentives for ethnic mobilization by enterprising regional ethnic elites, but are often unable to offer credible negotiation deals to regional groups.

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Introduction

Violent conflicts related to ethnicity, religion, and culture are among the most prevalent forms of war today. Since the Cold War era, wars within states have become more common than wars between states. In his prescient 1994 article in the *Atlantic Monthly*, Robert Kaplan predicted the growing influence of tribal and ethnic ties, arguing that, "future wars will be those of communal survival…. These are will be subnational, meaning that it will be hard for states and local governments to protect their own citizens physically. This is how many states will ultimately die."[1] In an article published in the *American Political Science Review*, James Fearon and David Laitin noted that from 1945-1999, civil wars, of which ethnic wars make up a substantial number, have involved over a third of the international community. Only twenty-five states (one-sixth of the world's states) in the same period have participated in interstate wars. Not only are intrastate wars more common in recent years, but they also claim more lives and are more intractable. Intrastate wars of the same period claimed the lives of 16.2 million in the battlefield, far outnumbering interstate war casualties, numbering 3.3 million. The duration of intrastate wars, 6 years, overwhelms the interstate war duration of three months.[2]

A troubling facet of ethnic or religious wars is that they seem impenetrable and their causes appear primordial. With ethnic wars, a common interpretation is that the roots lie in deep-seated ethnic or religious animosities, endemic to a cultural personality, and therefore unsolvable. How can one resolve a conflict based on static characteristics such as religious identity or genetic make-up? Few remedies exist to offer troubled

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[1] Robert D. Kaplan, "The Coming Anarchy," *The Atlantic Monthly* 273, no. 2 (1994): 74.
[2] James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 1 (2003)., measured by comparing median durations.

communities that lack the possibility of addressing the factors that precondition ethnic strife. When the roots of conflict can be met with policy prescriptions, for example, identifying economic scarcity, balance of power concerns, or regime type, there seems that hope for conflict resolution lies within modifying the changeable. Many scholars reject ethnic identities as being the sole sources of conflict as too deterministic, instead pointing to factors that exacerbate differences between ethnic groups, for example economic disparity in societal development, environmental scarcity, and repression by authoritarian regimes. While these factors provide insight into ethnic mobilization, there is little consensus regarding which of these factors is the most useful in which cases.

My dissertation explains the variation of regional ethnic conflict in two countries with protracted ethnic struggles, the Russian Federation and Georgia. At the time of their independence, from both Georgia and Russia contained ethnically designated federal regions. In the early 1990s, both countries experienced violent secessionist movements from certain ethnic regions, the Chechen conflict in Russia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia. However, not all ethnic politics in Russia and Georgia have been violent – regions in both countries have vied for greater levels of regional autonomy peacefully; other regions have not sought autonomy at all. My dissertation explains these differences in regional strategy – violent separatism, non-violent political maneuvering, and quiescence – through an examination of causal economic factors, inter-elite bargaining and cooptation, and central state capacity.

Recent scholarly analyses on ethnic separatism in Russia argue that wealthy regions are the most likely to seek autonomy and independence from central governments. My data indicate that while economic wealth shapes regional strategies, its actual effect can only be determined through its interaction with other factors. In Georgia, for example, the regions that attempted violent secession had vastly different economic

circumstances – Abkhazia was relatively wealthy, South Ossetia extremely poor. My research shows that regional elites consider economic wealth as a powerful tool if they can combine it with strong personal elite ties with the central government. Building on this economic argument by examining an elite component, I indicate where we can expect violent, as opposed to nonviolent, separatist strategies. Without elite ties, regional leaders regard negotiation as a wasted effort and consider violent separatist strategies. In every instance of separatism discussed in this dissertation, the central factor contradistinguishing violent from non-violent strategies depended on the existence of strong elite ties between center and region, in most cases personal patronage ties that directly rewarded actors on both sides.

Ethnic separatism, while a response to politics of an individual ethnic group, does not occur in a political vacuum. Rather, ethnic leaders respond to cues and incentives provided by central states. State capacity acts as a conditioning element within the bargaining context. Weak central governments provide incentives for ethnic mobilization by enterprising regional ethnic elites. Weaker governments lose their ability to offer credible negotiation settlements. Without effective enforcement mechanisms and reliable common resources, regional actors have few incentives for cooperation. When elite ties between weak states and regional governments exist, the bargaining depends on entrenched clientelistic relationships and short-term personal gains. When central-regional relationships are already weak and acrimonious and lack ties, regional ethnic separatist strategies are more likely to become violent and protracted secessionist struggles.

This dissertation examines the role of varying state strength in the Russian Federation and Georgia over time, finding that the early periods of Yeltsin's Russia were the most conducive to peaceful separatist bargaining. In contrast, as Putin's Russia has

grown in strength, less separatist rhetoric emerges as part of the political landscape. In Georgia under Eduard Shevardnadze, where intense state weakness provided a backdrop for protracted ethnic strife, political stability depended on corruption and patronage politics that provided incentives for peaceful autonomies (Ajara) to remain loyal, as well to deter violence from regions with whom the Georgian government was technically at war (South Ossetia and Abkhazia). This stability, however, materialized as a byproduct of patronage. Shevardnadze's ouster by anti-corruption forces led by now President Mikhail Saakashvili has exchanged stability for reform in Georgia.

The former Soviet Union provides an excellent case for a scientific study of ethnic separatism. With the USSR's strict regional institutional arrangement, historical experience, and rich variety of regional separatism, it is possible to hold certain variables constant and investigate differences in separatist outcome. The successor states have emerged from similar ethnic and national institutional frameworks, share the communist legacy, have embarked on processes of state-building, but nonetheless have different experiences with ethnic tension and conflict. Moreover, Russia and Georgia are uniquely suited for studying ethnic separatism, peaceful and violence. First, as mentioned above, they have both experienced varying levels of separatism from their constituent territories. Regions in both countries have experienced variation in both independent variables. Georgian and Russian regions vary in how political elites understand the bargaining power of their economic wealth. Likewise, some regional leaders have better ties with the central governments than others. This allows effective comparison of selected cases, with substantial variation to assess causal links.

This project takes advantage of the decade or so of state transformation that these countries have experienced since 1991. I follow the politics of separatism throughout that time, noting the impact of state capacity changes over time, as well as the impact of

changing leadership patterns. Changing personnel in regional leadership positions promotes clearer examination of how elite ties and clientelism facilitated certain kinds of bargaining in some regional contexts that could not spill over into politics once regional leadership changed.

OUTLINE OF THE PROJECT

In chapter one of this project, I examine conceptions of ethnicity and nationalism, particularly how they relate to ethnic politics in the former Soviet Union and its successor states. For this examination, I extend my analysis to consider ethnic contexts outside of Russia and Georgia. I examine common explanations for ethnic mobilization and separatism within relevant scholarship, teasing out the factors that most accurately reflect political events within the region. I conclude that the most relevant literatures are those that emphasize the role of economic wealth in ethnic mobilization, examine how institutional arrangements help direct and constrain political conflict, as well as how elites actors structure their demands to benefit their own position within society.

Chapter two explores the theoretical implications of the conclusions of Chapter one. It outlines the theoretical model that drives the case-study analyses and argues that variation in degree of ethnic separatism is due to the integration of key factors: center-regional elite relationships and regional wealth (enhancing the economic mobilization possibilities). This integration is conditioned by levels of state strength – weakness providing both an incentive for ethnic mobilization, but also an obstacle for resolving ethnic separatism as a regional bargaining strategy. Weak states are less able to offer political and economic deals to aggressive regions. Perverse incentives might also exist to deter center elites from finding a bargain, because open borders and illicit trade

corridors emerge in areas that lack proper border controls.[3] Close elite relationships in weak states might emerge not in the form of closer political ties, but in behind the scenes personal bargains that enrich private interests.

Chapter three traces the development of the ethno-federal structure in the Soviet Union, and follows its changes in Russia and Georgia since independence. The chapter provides historical background for the Soviet institutional structure upon which the ethnic politics of Russia and Georgia have been based. In particular, it examines how the Bolsheviks manipulated ethnic identity in order to consolidate and maintain their own power. Most important for my dissertation's arguments, this chapter emphasizes the central role of patronage and clientelistic politics as Soviet leaders sought and maintained allies within the regions. This chapter also illuminates the incentives for regional leaders to seek out and maintain such relationships. Soviet oppression in the later Stalin years, as well as changes after his death, taught regional leaders that their prosperity and even survival could depend on such ties.

Chapters four and five present seven critical case studies of regions that have differed in their separatist strategies vis-à-vis the central governments. Chapter four examines the use of violent means in secessionary efforts. It offers in-depth analysis of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Chechnya. The analysis includes not only the instances of separatism by the regions, but also investigates circumstances that led to non-violent strategies: as regional leaders and central government leaders changed positions, both in Chechnya and in the Georgian central government, interelite structures changed, leading to different separatist strategies. Chapter four concludes that the lack of elite ties has been the critical factor in the occurrence of ethnic violence in Russia and Georgia.

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[3] See, for example, Charles King, "The Benefits of Ethnic War: Understanding Eurasia's Unrecognized States," *World Politics* 53, no. 4 (2001).

In chapter five, I consider those regions that did not use violent strategies. It examines three regions that used their significant wealth and ties with the central government to put leverage on the central government and exact promising autonomy deals. Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, and Ajara all emerged as success stories for regional autonomy in the mid-1990s. In return for their favored status, they rewarded central government leaders with favorable electoral outcomes, as well as (in some cases) financial incentives. In addition to these three "dealers," chapter 5 takes up the case of Ingushetia, which separated from Chechnya as the latter embarked on more radical rhetoric and separatist tactics against Moscow. Ingushetia differed from Chechnya in two key ways: it was one of the poorest region in the Russian Federation, and its President was personally selected and placed into power by Yeltsin's administration. With little economic leverage and proven elite ties, Ingushetia's autonomy struggles were virtually non-existent.

Chapter 6 takes up the question of state capacity and how it conditions regional and central state incentives for bargaining over autonomy. Regional elites have incentives to negotiate for separatism if a favorable outcome is likely. In very strong states, a central government is more likely to withstand regional pressures, as well as to exact punitive measures on those using aggressive rhetoric. Likewise, within very weak, or "struggling," states, regional leaders might realize that the central government has little to offer them, eschewing bargaining altogether, abandoning negotiations after initial interest. State capacity also affects central government responses to regional interests – weak states that need regional support but nevertheless have something of value to offer at the bargaining table might welcome negotiations. Very weak states, such as Georgia, have trouble not only offering credible bargains, but also in maintaining control of central-regional conversation, both in terms of exogenous actors (such as Russia) or elite actors within the

state that capitalize on the unique opportunities of protracted conflict. This chapter draws conclusions about the role of central state capacity, its impact on regional and central bargaining strategies, and the implications for the duration and possible settlements of separatist wars.

In the concluding chapter, I offer conclusions on implications of this study on the causes of ethnic war, in particular the elements that increase its likelihood and hamper its resolution. Throughout the study, the importance of center-regional elite ties, often through the creation of patronage bonds and cooptation, stands out as crucial elements for avoiding violence. Chapter seven examines some implications of the research presented throughout the project. First, I examine how the theoretical structure outlined within this project might engage other states who experience or might experience ethnic separatism in the future. I briefly examine what knowledge my dissertation might bring to policymakers in Iraq and Afghanistan, where ethnic and religious conflict appears imminent.

Second, this chapter examines how regime type changes have interacted with ethnic separatism in both Russia and Georgia, as Russia becomes more authoritarian under Vladimir Putin and Georgia arguably more pluralistic under Mikhail Saakashvili. Contradicting some that argue that democratization, particularly federalization, will bring stability to multi-ethnic regimes, my analysis indicates that restrictions on political competition can bring stability and still provide arenas for minority elites to engage the system. A third implication of the study is that the corruption of weak states offers some stability for enduring conflicts. Corrupt officials who benefited from contraband crossing separatist borders, particularly in South Ossetia, were hesitant to use force to change the status quo, even if that would bring territorial stability to the country. Moreover, in Georgian central government relations with Ajara, where violence never occurred,

corruption helped maintain cooperation between region and center, and put off any formal political institutionalization of the relationship. Such an arrangement, however, is only as stable as the elite structure upon which it rests. While the system might achieve stability, it falters once power changes hands.

Chapter 1

The ethnicity and nationalism literatures offer myriad explanations for ethnic mobilization and separatism. Primordialist scholars concentrate on cultural factors, arguing that the mere existence of cultural difference can bring about ethnic mobilization, for example Chechens living next to Russians.[4] Other scholars focus on disadvantaged groups and their greater likelihood to mobilize, stressing the role of economic disparity between groups[5] or pervasive historical oppression by a dominant group over another.[6] Still others examine factors that enhance the effectiveness of ethnic mobilization: institutional frameworks such as federalism can encourage increased ethnic awareness and political activity;[7] economic wealth can spur political efforts and strengthen ethnic bargaining power vis-à-vis a dominant group;[8] a weakened state can inspire elite mobilization strategies as ethnic political entrepreneurs seek greater status within the

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[4] Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1969), Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures; Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

[5] See, for example, Benedict R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991), Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

[6] John B. Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya: Roots of a Separatist Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), Misha Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia: The Third Balkan War* (London: Penguin, 1992).

[7] Valerie Bunce, *Subversive Institutions: The Design and the Destruction of Socialism and the State* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), Svante E. Cornell, "Autonomy as a Source of Conflict: Caucasian Conflicts in Theoretical Perspective," *World Politics* 54, no. 2 (2002), Juan J. Linz and Alfred C. Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), Alfred Stepan, "Russian Federalism in Comparative Perspective," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 16, no. 2 (2000), Daniel Treisman, "Russia's 'Ethnic Revival': The Separatist Activism of Regional Leaders in a Postcommunist Order," *World Politics* 49, no. 2 (1997).

[8] Jack L. Snyder, *From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Nationalist Conflict* (New York: Norton, 2000), Daniel Treisman, *After the Deluge: Regional Crises and Political Consolidation in Russia* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), Treisman, "Russia's 'Ethnic Revival': The Separatist Activism of Regional Leaders in a Postcommunist Order."

system.[9] While these theories provide insight into ethnic mobilization and nationalism, there is little consensus regarding which of these factors best explains separatist ethnic mobilization and if there are contextual factors that condition how these causes operate.

This chapter examines the prominent ethnicity and nationalism literatures and assesses their application in the Soviet and post-Soviet contexts. In particular, it considers the experiences of all ethnically designated federal regions of the former Soviet Union.[10] In doing so, this chapter narrows the analytical focus of ethnic separatism in the former Soviet Union, contending that non-ethnic factors that enhance group mobilization and bargaining are the most relevant approaches to explain the ethnic separatism in the region in the last fifteen years.

ETHNIC SEPARATISM: ASSESSING MAJOR THEORIES IN THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

At the heart of this analysis is the *degree* of separatism expressed by ethnically designated federal units, and the manner by which that separatism was expressed, i.e., violent or non-violent mechanisms. As the Soviet Union weakened, and as the successor states became independent, political leaders of ethnic regions were the most active in demanding immediate political, cultural, and economic autonomy from the central government. These negotiations often proceeded in a cycle of escalating demands for increasing levels of autonomy. The experiences of Crimea and Abkhazia, summarized below, offer some context for the manner in which ethnic separatism emerged.

Crimea, a region in southern Ukraine, provides a telling example. Once home to the Crimean Tatars, a group deported into Central Asia during Stalin's purges, Crimea

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[9] Paul R. Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1991), Snyder, *From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Nationalist Conflict*.

[10] These federal designations were kept, with one exception, by the successor states. The exception is South Ossetia, whose federal status was dissolved by Georgia in 1990; South Ossetia subsequently fought a war of secession with Georgia, and now maintains *de facto* independent status.

had not been designated an autonomous region, an ethnic designation, as late as 1989. As the Soviet Union embarked on its steady pace of dissolution, the Crimean region began its autonomy mission. In 1989, the State Commission of Crimean Tatars began its efforts to repatriate the Crimean Tatars to the region. In January 1991, the region's population voted to increase their status from oblast level to an autonomous republic, an ethnic designation that carried with it increased political power. In July, they adopted their own constitution. In February 1992, the region voted to upgrade its status again, from Crimean ASSR (autonomous republic) to the Republic of Crimea. By May 1992, the Crimean parliament voted for independence from Ukraine, and scheduled a referendum for August for popular confirmation. The Ukrainian government rejected the effort, however, annulling the Crimean Republic's vote, demanding that Crimea back down from its aspirations of statehood. Seven days after this demand, Crimea complied, repealing its declaration of independence and calling off the scheduled referendum. Despite this, by 1993 over 250,000 Crimean Tatars had returned to Crimea. Crimea remains an Autonomous Republic within Ukraine to date.

A similar story unfolded in the Abkhazian republic in Georgia. In the 1921 Soviet constitution, Abkhazia enjoyed Union Republic status (the highest level, on par with Ukraine or Lithuania), but Moscow revoked this status in favor of Autonomous Republic status, a subject of the Georgian Supreme Soviet in 1931. In 1989, the Abkhazians began collecting signatures to petition the Soviet government to restore their Union Republic designation. In August 1990, the Abkhazian Supreme Soviet declared its independence from Georgia; in the Georgian capital Tbilisi, the Georgian Supreme Soviet annulled this decision. In 1991, the Georgian and Abkhazian governments laid out increased autonomy for Abkhazia, establishing ethnic quotas in the region's parliament. This agreement crumbled once the president of Georgia, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, was ousted by

paramilitary groups. In January 1992, a state of emergency was declared in Abkhazia as its parliament considered secession from Georgia. By July, Abkhazia declared its intention to live according to the 1925 Soviet constitution, which established it as a separate entity from Georgia; two days later, the Georgian State Council in Tbilisi declared the Abkhazian decision invalid. Unlike the Crimean leaders, the Abkhazians did not revoke their announcement. In August 1992, the Georgian National Guard entered Abkhazian capital Sukhum(i),[11] sparking the Abkhazian war. In June 1993, the Abkhazians and Georgians signed a ceasefire, although sporadic violence has persisted. No political settlement has ever been made; Abkhazia is *de facto* independent, although it is *de jure* part of Georgia.

The Crimean and Abkhazian experiences demonstrate the puzzle that drives this project. Most ethnic regions in the former Soviet Union have asserted some kind of autonomy since the Soviet dissolution began. This process of separatism did not end with the demise of the USSR, but instead continued within the framework of state-building within the successor states. The autonomous drives we observe are strategic processes. Ethnic regions have steadily increased demands on their central governments; some have escalated these strategies into violent separatism; others have ceased their strategies at lower levels of separatism, settling for political or economic autonomy in varying degrees. So while the processes of ethnic separatism are similar, the degree of separatism has varied from region to region.

Ethnicity and Nationalism

Theories of the political behavior of ethnic groups derive in large part from how ethnic groups come to identify themselves as distinct from other groups. My project is

[11] The Abkhaz spell their capital city Sukhum; the Georgians prefer Sukhumi. Given that either spelling of the name might be construed as a political preference, this text will refer to the city as Sukhum(i).

interested in manifestations of political ethnic mobilization. Some understanding of the various scholarly approaches to ethnicity and ethnic identity is critical to identify the forces that spur ethnic separatism. What follows is an assessment of the many approaches to ethnic identity and mobilization, in particular linking the causes of identity with patterns of negotiation. I organize these theories based on their emphasis: primordial approaches that stress differences in identity and population characteristics (demographic questions), instrumental-oppression approaches that explain ethnic identification and behavior affected by group experiences of oppression, and instrumental-mobilization explanations that cast the behavior of ethnic groups within the structures of bargaining. I argue that the instrumental-mobilization approaches best capture the circumstances in the former Soviet Union.

Ethnicity is a difficult concept to define, primarily because scholars approach the concept in various ways.[12] Some understand ethnicity as an objective category – for example, identifying ethnic groups by their adherence to a certain religion or use of a certain language. Others reject this approach, noting that a group's religious or linguistic status is not a static component of their identity, and therefore strict adherence to objective classification lacks accuracy.[13] One factor upon which both sets of scholars agree is that ethnic groups define themselves by what they are not. By identifying an "other," groups emphasize those aspects of their culture that distinguish them from other groups. What distinguishes ethnic groups from other group identification mechanisms (for example, class) is an emphasis on cultural heritage. I follow de Vos, who defines ethnicity as a cultural identity "consisting of the 'subjective, symbolic or emblematic use'

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[12] See, for example, Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison* 18-19.
[13] For examples, see Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives* (Boulder: Pluto Press, 1993).

by 'a group of people of any aspect of culture in order to differentiate themselves from other groups.'"[14]

An ethnic group may or may not develop into a political entity; the process by which it does so is ethnic mobilization. Ethnic mobilization entails ethnic groups' development of social and political agendas in order to further the rights of the group or its members. Paul Brass links this political aspect of ethnic mobilization with nationalism and nationhood. Ethnic mobilization is the movement of an ethnic group beyond mere cultural group distinctions to some level of political activity. Nationalism is the aspiration of that ethnic group (or nation) to create a political unit.[15]

Nationalist ethnic mobilization, or ethnic separatism, does not necessarily occur in all multi-ethnic societies. However, when it does, it holds great potential power. But what *causes* this separatism, and how do we predict the *degree* of separatism to expect from which groups? The relevant literature offers numerous theories, encompassing primordial and instrumental approaches. Most of these theories implicitly or explicitly assume that the causes of ethnic mobilization are the same as those that cause ethnic separatism: the degree of any individual factor being directly linked to the subsequent level of political outcome. As such, the path to ethnic separatism, either in the form of political autonomy or violent secession, is a part of an ethnic mobilization process.

Primordial Causes of Ethnic Mobilization and Conflict

A popular explanation for ethnic conflict, often found in journalistic sources, points to "ancient animosities" between given groups: ancient hatreds between the Jewish and Muslim communities, historical rivalries between the Serbs and the Croats, age-old

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[14]George de Vos, "Ethnic Pluralism," in *Ethnic Identity: Cultural Continuities and Change*, ed. George de Vos and Lola Romanucci-Ross (Palo Alto, California: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1975). Quoted in Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison* 19.

[15] Paraphrased from Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* 1.

tensions between the Sunni and Shiite Muslims in the Middle East. But this explanation just begs the question of what the underlying causes might be. *Why* is it the case that these groups seem to be in constant battle?

Scholars such as Clifford Geertz and Fredrik Barth emphasize the politics of differentiation. Ethnic mobilization and conflicts occur because cultural differences exist. Ethnic identification does seem to exist mostly because of the one group's identification of another group as different from themselves – the other. This could lead one to conclude that the most diverse societies will necessarily be the most conflictual.

Observations of the world, however, cast some doubt on the veracity of this conclusion. Many multicultural states, the United States prominent among them, have managed to avoid nationalist movements of secession, despite their considerable diversity. Moreover, this approach does not help us isolate the groups that will attempt violent secession as a strategy, rather than less violent expressions of ethnic mobilization. In Russia, only Chechnya, one out of twenty-one ethnically designated regions, has militarily sought independence from the central government. Pure ethnic differentiation alone cannot account for the variation in ethnic mobilization strategies.

Demographic Theories

One might hone the primordialist argument to account for demographic considerations. Perhaps violent mobilization is more likely among communities that are concentrated demographically: the greater the demographic number of one group in a geographical area, the greater of solidarity and propensity for dire action. Thus we might expect those minorities who enjoy a demographic advantage in their titular republics, particularly those who maintain a majority, to follow more separatist strategies than those who make up smaller percentages within their republics. Within the post-Soviet context,

however, this has not always been the case. In the regions that seceded violently, Chechnya, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Nagorno-Karabakh, the titular ethnic groups made up 57.8 percent, 66.2 percent, 17.8 percent, and 76.9 percent, respectively. Although it could be that Abkhazia is an outlier among this group, if we examine the demographic data from the most separatist, but also non-violent regions in Russia, Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, we find that Tatars make up a plurality of both regions' population, at 48.5 percent. The Bashkir are the third most populous group in Bashkortostan, with 21.9 percent. Although there may be a relationship between demographic population and level of secession, we need further inquiry to see what other factors might explain why population proportions affect certain outcomes in some cases, but not in others.

Monica Duffy Toft argues that an important demographic standard to consider is the density of a distinct ethnic population in one geographic area, rather than throughout the rest of the country.[16] A group whose members are not dispersed across the country but condensed into a smaller area might be better able to politicize their identity differences.[17] For example, the more Chechens who live *inside* Chechnya as opposed to *outside* it, therefore, the more likely we are to witness ethnic mobilization. A casual observer might note that these factors do not fully describe the post-Soviet experience: while the Abkhazians certainly are densely populated (97 percent of the Abkhazians in the former USSR live in Abkhazia), the South Ossetians are not (only 39 percent of Soviet Ossetians live in South Ossetia). Although 64.2 percent of all Soviet Bashkir lived

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[16] Monica Duffy Toft, *The Geography of Ethnic Violence: Identity, Interests, and the Indivisibility of Territory* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003). Others make similar arguments. See, for example, Stephen Van Evera, "Hypotheses on Nationalism and War," *International Security* 18, no. 4 (1994): 17-20.

[17] Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action; Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965).

in Bashkortostan, only 32 percent of Tatars lived in Tatarstan.[18] As the case studies of this project will indicate, demographic concentration certainly affected how regional leaders marshaled their arguments vis-à-vis the central government, but it did not *determine* their actions.

Cultural Differentiation Theories

Primordial explanations also point us to different levels of cultural differentiation. Some have argued that the ethnic identity differentiation is more powerful between groups that are more culturally distinct – that share fewer cultural similarities or patterns. Huntington, for example, has argued that religious differences are crucial to identifying the locations of ethnic violence.[19] Christian groups, therefore, are more likely to engage in conflict with non-Christians. Although we might not expect to find Orthodox Christians battling Catholics, we might expect to find Orthodox or Catholic groups fighting Muslims.

Daniel Treisman finds in his quantitative examination of ethnic separatism in Russia that Muslim regions are slightly more likely to follow separatist strategies than non-Muslim regions. While his analysis and conclusions focus on other factors, there are difficulties linking cultural factors with separatism, however. One reason for this is that the Soviet context makes religious differentiation challenging. The Soviet federal system distinguished its ethno-federal regions according to historical classifications of peoples who had inhabited certain areas, not according to religion, which they hoped to eradicate through communist ideology.[20] One consequence of this kind of classification is that it

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[18] *Itogi Vserossiiskoi Perepisi Naselenia 1989 Goda*, (Minneapolis, MN: East View Publications, 1996).
[19] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).
[20] There are two exceptions – Ajara, in Georgia, whose population converted to Islam when part of the Ottoman Empire, and the Jewish Autonomous Oblast.

does not account for difference within a religion in groups. For example, the Muslims in Dagestan are Sufist, whereas the Tatars and Bashkir adhere to Jadidism. Moreover, the criminalization of religion in the Soviet period has affected the identities of Muslim followers within regions differently. The Abkhazians, for example, who are often characterized as Islamic in Western literature, protest that they are multi-religious and do not base their identity on religious structures. Likewise, the Ajarans, commonly referred to as Muslim Georgians, identify themselves variously as Muslims or Christians, often framing their religious identity as at odds with their primary Georgian (and in their understanding, therefore, Christian), identity.[21]

Finally, religious distinctions help to draw conclusions about motivations that may not accurately portray the circumstances of separatism. For example, the crisis in Chechnya is often interpreted in western media as an expression of Islamic extremist interests, influenced by the threat of Wahabbism or Sufism in the area. While there is some truth to this, it does not explain early Chechen separatist strategies, which emerged before Wahabbism entered the area. In fact, the radicalization of Chechnya occurred *after* the initial conflict in 1992.

The religious explanation, although popular in recent years, does not provide a comprehensive account of events surrounding separatism in Russia. Even if there were a clear link between Islamic radicalism and violent secession, the region that harbors the most radical of Islamic movements, Dagestan, has firmly signaled its intentions to remain within Russia (although certainly some Dagestanis actively support the Chechen cause). Moreover, Islamic beliefs do not explain the Georgian context, where the two regions

[21] Mathijs Pelkmans, "Religion, Nation and State in Georgia: Christian Expansion in Muslim Ajara," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 22, no. 2 (2002). Chapter 4 deals with this dual identity in depth.

that engaged in violent separatism, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, were either ambivalent religiously (Abkhazia), or predominantly Christian (South Ossetia).

Instrumental Causes of Ethnic Mobilization and Conflict

Instrumental arguments emphasize the political use of ethnic identity to achieve group goals. Rather than conceiving of ethnic identity and mobilization as static and unchanging, scholars of instrumental persuasion focus on the causes of heightened or diminished ethnic identification and ethnic mobilization.[22] Theorists disagree, however, on the most salient factors that might cause groups to attach political significance to their cultural identities. I organize instrumental approaches into two key categories: theories of oppression and theories of mobilization. I conclude that the mobilization approaches promote better accounts of ethnic separatism in the post-Soviet successor states.

Institutional Oppression (Regime Type)

In *People versus States*, Ted Robert Gurr argues that multicultural democratic states are much less likely to experience divisive ethnic mobilization or conflict. Part of the reason for this, he argues, is that democratic countries are unlikely to carry out coercive and repressive anti-minority policies that one might find in regimes not held accountable to an active citizenry. Gurr argues that ethnic conflict occurs because of a lack of outlets for political participation. Groups that might desire greater autonomy, or more equal participation in the political system, can be stymied by oppressive regimes.[23]

This broad institutional contextualization of ethnic separatism, however, does not account for the evolution of ethnic rights within the Soviet Union, admittedly a repressive

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[22] Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison,* Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
[23] Ted R. Gurr, *Peoples Versus States: Minorities at Risk in the New Century* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 2000).

and coercive regime. For many ethnic minorities within Russia in 1917, the Soviets offered greater benefits for their culture, language, and history than the minorities had ever experienced under the Tsars. The Bolsheviks actively sought alliances with the ethnic minorities, co-opting them to fight for the Red Army in the Russian Civil War. As part of the application of Communism to ethnic territories, the Bolsheviks established structures that promoted both native and Russian literacy, constructed printing houses that published native language newspapers and books, built native language schools, and created written alphabets for languages that had until that time only been spoken.[24]

The Soviets also brought less inviting practices, ones that involved systematic deportations and cleansing of ethnic groups deemed traitorous. As the Soviet government consolidated and entrenched its power, its centralized system involved vast changes in the "affirmative action" policies that were common in the early years. Even so, contrary to Gurr's expectations, many separatist regions within the successor states (particularly in Russia, Georgia, and Moldova) actively decried the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and called for its reinstatement. Dzhokar Dudayev, the President of Chechnya, remarked in an interview that he seriously considered suing the Russian government for the demise of the Soviet Union.[25] Likewise, Abkhazia and South Ossetia sought to break away from Georgia as a mechanism to remain within the Soviet Union.

The democratic oppression argument continues into the current period of democratic transition and state building. Echoing Gurr's sentiments, popular policy strategies for ethnic conflict avoidance and resolution promote democratic decentralization or federalism. A key assumption of such solutions is that unitary

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[24] Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).
[25] Tatyana Gantimirova, "Dzhokhar Dudayev: 'I Will Not Leave of My Own Accord'," *Moscow News*, August 5, 1994.

governments can ignore the interests of ethnic minorities and thus inhibit those minorities' ability to maintain their cultural and political identity. By creating institutions by which ethnic groups are guaranteed greater inclusion into a system, tyranny by the majority group is avoided, and ethnic minorities will have fewer incentives to use violence to attain political autonomy. This perspective emphasizes the avoidance of violence by mitigating ethnic complaints before they appear. Democracy scholars such as Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan concur with Gurr that groups need an outlet for their political aspirations.[26] If federal democratic institutions are in place, conflicts that do occur, such as those between Québec and Canada, can be resolved practically through institutional mechanisms.[27]

The Soviet experience of federalism, being non-democratic, did not provide outlets for free participation. When democratization reforms emerged in the Soviet Union under Gorbachev, however, the federal structure began to offer means for greater minority group participation. In the case of the Union Republics, this culminated in peaceful and successful secessionary efforts. However, within the successor states, the experience was more mixed, with some regions engaging in violent separatism, others engaging in high-level, but non-violent, separatism, and others not demanding much at all. After the Soviet Union collapsed and successor states began building their new institutions, usually retaining the national territorial structure that had existed under Soviet rule, separatism grew out of the politics of establishing the rules behind those federal structures. Some argue that within the post-Soviet context, institutions associated with diminishing ethnic strife – democratization and federalism – actually promoted

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[26] Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*.

[27] In the Canadian case, Quebec held a referendum to determine the interest for separatism in 1995.

strife.[28] This observation, as discussed later in assessing the mobilization theories, is not new, and endemic to the explanation of ethnic separatism in the former Soviet Union.

Historical Oppression

Gurr also emphasizes historical oppression when analyzing incentives for minority groups to follow secessionary strategies.[29] Groups that have been systematically oppressed by a regime, he argues, are more likely to attempt to leave that regime. John Dunlop, in his assessment of the historical roots of the Chechen conflict in Russia, argues that continued and malicious oppression of the Chechen people since the tsarist period sowed the seeds of the Chechen wars.[30]

The emphasis on historical oppression as a rationale for separatism pervades the international law of self-determination. While the United Nations Charter rhetorically supports nations' rights of self-determination, it does not do so for all groups evenly; international law favors groups that have experienced oppression from a repressive regime.[31] The line drawn by the UN is nebulous. Its Charter observes that "all peoples have the right to self-determination; by virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development."[32] But, in a later resolution, the General Assembly cautioned that, "[n]othing in the foregoing

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[28] Bunce, *Subversive Institutions: The Design and the Destruction of Socialism and the State,* Philip G. Roeder, "Soviet Federalism and Ethnic Mobilization," *World Politics* 43, no. 2 (1991), Snyder, *From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Nationalist Conflict*.

[29] See also Allen E. Buchanan, *Secession : The Morality of Political Divorce from Fort Sumter to Lithuania and Quebec* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991).

[30] Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya: Roots of a Separatist Conflict*.

[31] See UN Charter on self-determination; for the standard of oppression, "Report of the International Committee of Jurists Entrusted by the Council of the League of Nations with the Task of Giving an Advisory Opinion upon the Legal Aspects of the Åaland Islands Question," *League of Nations Official Journal, Special Supp., No. 3, 1920, 5-10*. The UN standard for oppression also includes colonization –although the colonial factor has not been applied in post-Communist cases, see "Conference on Yugoslavia Arbitration Commission Opinion No. 1," 31 I.L.M. 1494 (1992).

[32] UN Charter, 1945

paragraphs [which restate the Charter's self-determination stance] shall be construed as authoritatively encouraging any action which would dismember or impair, totally or in part, territorial integrity or political unity of sovereign and independent states conducting themselves in compliance with the principle of equal rights and self-determinations of peoples…."[33] The crux of the matter for the UN is that national self-determination movements are permissible only in cases where democratic institutions do not protect the interests of culturally distinct populations.[34]

Gurr's arguments indicate the likelihood of secession by historically oppressed groups; the UN highlights its understandings of the *rights* of such groups (which might affect group strategies). In both cases, the underlying assumption is that experiences of historical oppression catalyze group separatism.

A history of repression has affected separatist movements in the former Soviet Union. Regional leaders used the Soviet Union's history of repression to mobilize their citizenry, as well as to exact concessions from the newly forming national governments, which sought to distance themselves from the illegitimate Soviet regime. It is difficult to assess the impact of oppression in the Soviet case itself, because the Stalinist period targeted many ethnic groups, including Russians. However, the most extreme case of oppression against ethnic groups was the cleansing of the "punished peoples," in forced mass deportations during and after World War II. Although several groups were singled out for punishment, only one of those groups subsequently sought secession from the Soviet Union. In 1944, the Soviets deported the entire nation of Chechnya to Central Asia in cattle cars. At the same time, the Soviets similarly deported the Ingush, the Balkars,

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[33] "Declaration on Principles of International Law Concerning Friendly Relations and Co-Operation among States in Accordance with the Charter of the United Nations," (1970).
[34] Ibid.

and the Kalmyks.[35] The reverse is also the case in some circumstances: not every region that engaged in violent secessionist behavior experienced such punishment as the Chechens, for example South Ossetia and Abkhazia. As will become clear in the case studies introduced in later chapters, all regions referred to their historical experiences as they sought autonomy or independence from the center. However, the extent of that oppression itself did not *determine* the demands they made.

Economic Oppression

Economic oppression theories explain ethnic mobilization by pointing to inequalities that emerge between ethnic groups during modernization and industrialization processes.[36] As industrialization and modernization occurred, groups moved into cities and found common identities through communication in the same language, class differentiation according to group, or economic mobilization according to group. For example, Benedict Anderson argues that ethnic differentiation materializes when groups who do not speak the majority language are economically marginalized because they cannot move into the workforce as easily as those groups who do speak the language.[37] Ethnic groups then find mechanisms to contend with their economic disadvantage. According to Donald Horowitz, ethnic mobilization emerges when ethnic divisions correspond with class divisions in society.[38] Ernest Gellner contends that economically disadvantaged minorities turn to ethnic mobilization as a way to achieve economic prosperity.[39]

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[35] This refers to the groups deported who had autonomous status at the time of the Soviet dissolution. Others without such status were also deported, for example, the Koreans and the Germans.
[36] See, for example Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism,* Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*.
[37] Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*.
[38] Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*.
[39] Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*.

These explanations are useful only when the modernization and industrialization processes differentiated ethnic groups along economic or class lines. Stalin's forced industrialization program targeted all groups with the goal of negating classes within Russia. The Soviet system of industrialization combined with the Bolshevik's efforts to promote the interests of ethnic minorities in certain contexts created conditions limiting the applicability of the modernization argument. The Bolshevik system organized ethnic territories to promote the interests of national minorities, seeking to bring them up to the level of the industrialized ethnic groups, such as the Russians. Modernizing policies such as urbanization and increased education were mandated from above. Consequently, the Soviet industrialization policy advantaged the perceived "backward" populations.

Even so, by the fall of the Soviet Union, some disparity existed among the regional populations. The Soviet census of 1989 presents data on differentiation in urbanization and education – two common figures associated with levels of modernization – for ethnic groups according to region. Figure 1.1 indicates variation in the levels of disparity for among selected regions, based on the differences between the titular ethnic group and the most populous ethnic minority in the Union Republic within which it was located. The regions selected for examination include the five most separatist regions within Georgia and Russia, although only three (Chechnya, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia) used violent means. Ingushetia is included as an ideal type of a quiescent region, whose experiences of oppression are comparable to those of Chechnya. (Table 1.1 notes these separatism levels.)

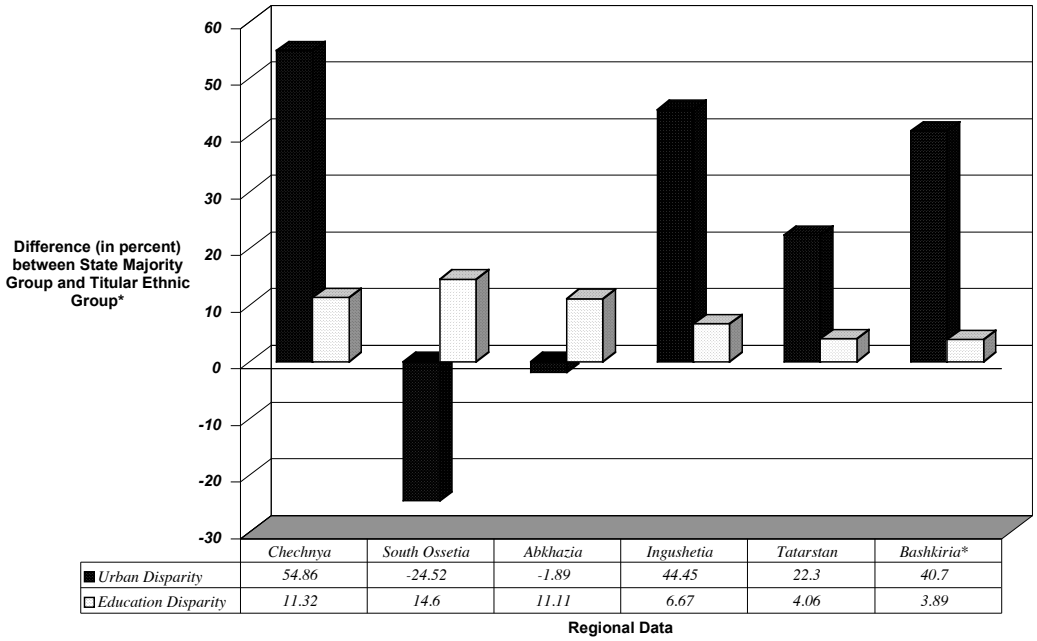
Table 1.1 Levels of Separatism in Selected Regions

Region	Level of Separatism
Chechnya	Violent Separatism
Abkhazia	Violent Separatism
South Ossetia	Violent Separatism
Ingushetia	Low Separatism, Non-Violent
Tatarstan	High Separatism, Non-Violent
Bashkortostan	High Separatism, Non-Violent

The analysis measures urban disparity by taking the urban percentage of the titular nationality within its region and subtracting it from the urban percentage of the country's majority group within that region.[40] Thus, the urban disparity for Tatarstan subtracts the percentage of urbanized Tatars in Tatarstan from the percentage of urban Russians in Tatarstan. Likewise, Abkhazian urban disparity refers to percentage of urban Abkhazians within Abkhazia subtracted from the percentage of urban Georgians in Abkhazia. Education disparity is similarly measured.[41] Positive numbers indicate greater disparity. Negative numbers indicate that the titular minority was better off than the majority group within their region.

[40] Source data are drawn from the 1989 Soviet census. *Itogi Vserossiiskoi Perepisi Naselenia 1989 Goda*.
[41] Measures of education refer to the percentage of the population over 15 that has had secondary education.

Figure 1.1 Urban and Education Disparity Among Separatist Regions[42]



	Chechnya	South Ossetia	Abkhazia	Ingushetia	Tatarstan	Bashkiria*
Urban Disparity	54.86	-24.52	-1.89	44.45	22.3	40.7
Education Disparity	11.32	14.6	11.11	6.67	4.06	3.89

*Bashkiria refers to Bashkortostan. It is shortened to fit the table dimensions.

The data indicate an unclear relationship between education and urbanization disparity within each region – these indicators are vastly different, contrary to the expectations of the economic oppression argument. Moreover, education disparity is not a substantial factor for any region, with most ethnic groups lagging behind the majority nation by less than 10 percent. Urban disparity measures are unclear, with one secessionist region, South Ossetia, significantly more urbanized than Georgians on the same territory, indicating little economic oppression by Georgians. Abkhazians also had a slight urban advantage over the Georgians. However, Chechnya, the third case of violent separatism, experienced considerable urban disparity vis-à-vis the Russians, as did Ingushetia, which followed a vastly different separatist strategy. Like with many other

[42] *Itogi Vserossiiskoi Perepisi Naselenia 1989 Goda.*

factors outlined above, although the economic oppression argument makes logical sense, its applicability to separatist strategies in the post-Soviet context leaves much variation unexplained.

Mobilization Theories

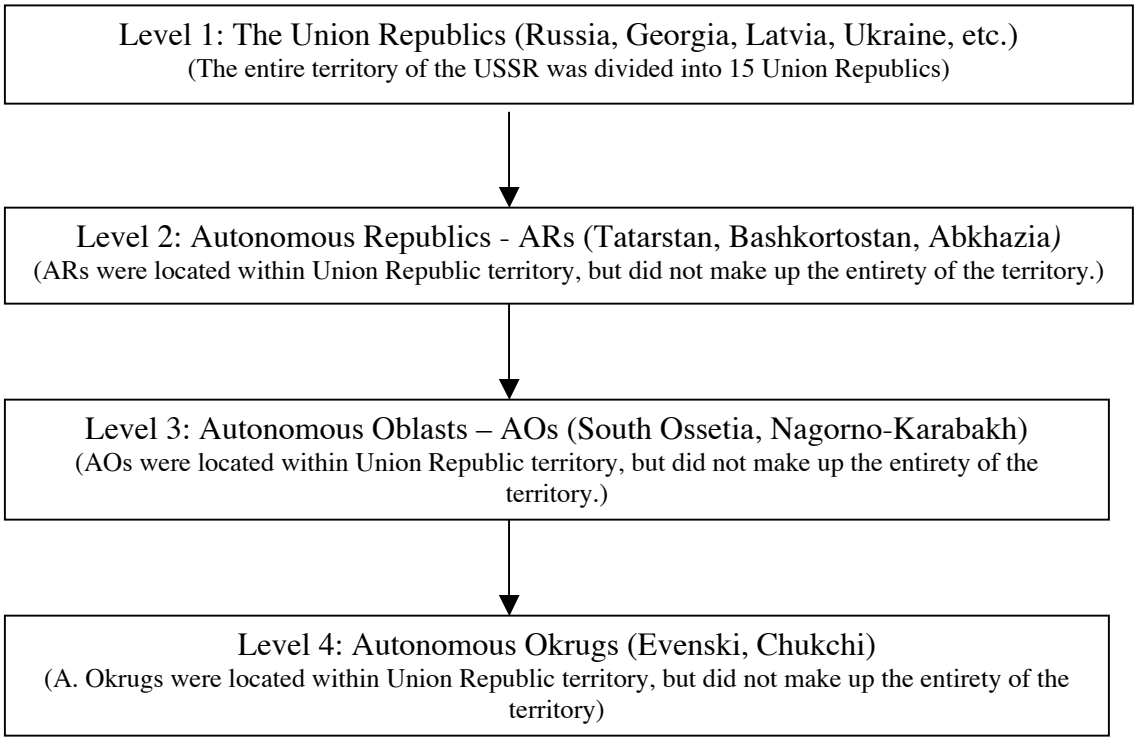
Within the framework of the former Soviet Union, the mobilization arguments that follow below emerge as the best explanatory factors for ethnic separatism in the former Soviet Union. Mobilization arguments fall into two chief categories: structural factors that enhance the likelihood for ethnic mobilization and bargaining (for example, a weakened state that allows more players to participate in the system), and factors that affect an ethnic groups agency, or ability to make demands vis-à-vis the central government (such as economic wealth). Four theoretical analyses follow here. Two address institutional and structural conditions that enhance the incentives for both regional and central government leaders to bargain: the Soviet ethnic federal structure and the weakened state capacity of the successor states following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The final two theoretical approaches examine the factors that enhance a region's bargaining capacity vis-à-vis the central government, economic wealth and elite interests in furthering ethnic separatism among regional leaders.

Institutional Mobilization

The institutional mobilization approach emphasizes how institutions promote greater ethnic mobilization and separatism. Philip Roeder and Valerie Bunce, from studies of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, respectively, note that in non-democratic societies, federal structures are not mechanisms of inclusion, but political tools manipulated by elites to enhance their own power. Ethnically designated, these territories are already ethnically mobilized and administrated.

The Soviet federal structure contained within it a hierarchical structure of autonomy, with those ethnic groups deemed more important (or politically useful) given higher levels of autonomous status. Groups like the Georgians or the Ukrainians received Union Republic status, while groups like the Chechens or the Abkhazians received Autonomous Republic status, when smaller groups might share an Okrug level territory. (See Figure 1.2) The higher levels of autonomy received greater power to determine local policies and politics, and thus theoretically greater power to mobilize. Within the Soviet Union, the first regions to secede were the Union Republics, all of which achieved independence by December 1991.

Figure 1.2 Federal Structure of ethnic regions of the Soviet Union



One way to examine the role of institutions in ethnic mobilization is to investigate whether the mere fact of some institutionalization affects ethnic separatism. Several studies have concluded that the existence of an administrative designation correlates positively with the existence of ethnic separatism.[43] The root of the institutional argument is that institutionalized ethnic autonomy helps promote mobilization. Ethnic groups have their own cultural projects – newspapers, language-oriented schools. Ethno-federal units have a political administration based on their own ethnic identity and interests. These structures enhance the level of ethnic political mobilization of the region. Throughout the post-Soviet successor states, there has been only one instance of ethnic separatism among groups not previously endowed with administrative status: the Transnistria region in Moldova. However, among those groups associated with autonomous territories, only four of twenty-nine eschewed some kind of separatism. All the others made some kind of demands of the central government, although with variation on the kind of demand and level of risk associated with the demand.

In Chapter 3, I examine how the institutional framework of the Soviet period helped frame the politics of state-building in the successor states. Specifically, I examine the development of the Soviet federal structure and its impact on the politics of the successor states. This project refers to the institutional system inherited from the Soviets as national territorialization, although it has been dubbed Soviet federalism or ethno-federalism in other contexts.[44] I make this distinction for two key reasons. The first is that scholars of comparative politics and democratization often link federalism to democracy. Federalism is a decentralization of power that endows administrative units with unique

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[43] Cornell, "Autonomy as a Source of Conflict: Caucasian Conflicts in Theoretical Perspective.", Roeder, "Soviet Federalism and Ethnic Mobilization."

[44] See, for example, Bunce, *Subversive Institutions: The Design and the Destruction of Socialism and the State,* Roeder, "Soviet Federalism and Ethnic Mobilization."

sovereignty over constitutionally determined governing arenas. As such, it is rarely actualized in non-democratic states. Although the Soviet Union termed its system federal, in practice the centralization of the Soviet polity ensured that the administrative territories had little actual political power discernable from the central state. Although certainly territorial power changes as the central leadership in Moscow changed, and thus regions were able at times to assert greater or lesser degrees of influence on the center, the system was not truly federal in the sense of dual sovereignty.

Second, the term national territorialization more accurately describes the current political environment of the successor states that are not federal but nevertheless contain federal units. Several of the post-Soviet states are unitary states but nevertheless have maintained the federal status for national territories under the Soviet Union.[45] As democratization programs developed, national regions were able to obtain greater autonomy in a more meaningful way than that they knew under the Soviets.

This study examines the national territories because, in the Soviet context, it has been they who dominate ethnic politics in the former Soviet Union. When the Soviet Union dissolved neatly and peacefully into fifteen parts, it did so by Union Republic, and for the most part into the Soviet established territorial boundaries.[46] The Soviets structured ethnic politics such that those with regional status were more able to interact with the political and economic system and affect policy, albeit not democratically.

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[45] For example, Georgia retained two of its administrative units, notably dissolving the status of South Ossetia. This will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

[46] There were some boundary disputes, for example between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. For a discussion of the border question, see Rustam Burnashev, "Regional Security in Central Asia: Military Aspects," in *Central Asia: A Gathering Storm?*, ed. Boris Rumer (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2002).

State Capacity and Mobilization

Many scholars argue that ethnic groups respond to perceived state weaknesses in their attempts for greater political recognition. Gurr points out ethnic groups that perceive a deterioration in central state power as an opportunity for achieving greater political power, spurring separatist strategies. Misha Glenny, in his analysis of Yugoslavia and its subsequent dissolution, points to the diminished capacity and willingness of the state to assert control over its territory as a crucial factor in regional independence movements.[47] Central state weakness provides a backdrop for enhanced ethnic mobilization.

The state capacity factor aids this study in that it provides an arena for bargaining. Daniel Treisman and Kathryn Stoner-Weiss have found that the weakness of Yeltsin's regime invited regional separatism as regional leaders realized that they could exploit the central government to obtain favorable economic and political circumstances within the growing state.[48] Moreover, during his efforts to wrest Russia from Gorbachev, Yeltsin sought to consolidate power by making promises to regional governors and presidents, enhancing their incentives for driving hard bargains.[49]

As will be demonstrated in Chapter 6, the diminished state capacity of central states have had considerable effect not only on the initial decision-making on ethnic separatism, but also on changing conditions within separatist regions, for example the entrenched conflicts in Chechnya, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia. However, like institutional structure, while state capacity conditions created incentives for separatist

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[47] Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia: The Third Balkan War*.

[48] Kathryn Stoner-Weiss, *Local Heroes: The Political Economy of Russian Regional Governance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), Treisman, *After the Deluge: Regional Crises and Political Consolidation in Russia,* Treisman, "Russia's 'Ethnic Revival': The Separatist Activism of Regional Leaders in a Postcommunist Order."

[49] Michael McFaul, *Russia's Unfinished Revolution: Political Change from Gorbachev to Putin* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2001), Lilia Fedorovna Shevtsova, *Yeltsin's Russia: Myths and Reality* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1998).

behavior, it did not determine that outcome. Although state capacity offers conditions for enhanced or diminished instances of separatism, it cannot explain the variation of cases within states. Two factors that interact with the institutional and structural factors outlined here are economic mobilization and elite ties.

Economic Mobilization

Offering a counter to the economic oppression argument, theorists such as Stephen Solnick and Daniel Treisman argue that economic factors do apply, but that it is the wealthier groups that will seek greater levels of separatism and autonomy. Economic development offers bargaining power to elites seeking to change their political circumstances in relationship to the center, or power to those seeking outright independence. Industrial wealth, particularly that of use to the central government, can be effective as a bargaining lever. As Treisman points out, wealthier regions are less dependent on central governments, and therefore might be immune to punitive central responses that might deter poorer regions.[50] In the context of the former Soviet Union, the central state relies on the industries and resources of the wealthy regions for badly needed economic growth. Treisman, Henry Hale, and Stoner-Weiss have found that economic bargaining was a strong factor in explaining separatism in the region. However, they do not investigate how wealth might affect violent versus non-violent strategies.[51]

Moreover, positive elements of the modernization and urbanization process affect the likelihood of ethnic conflict. Jack Snyder has linked high levels of literacy and

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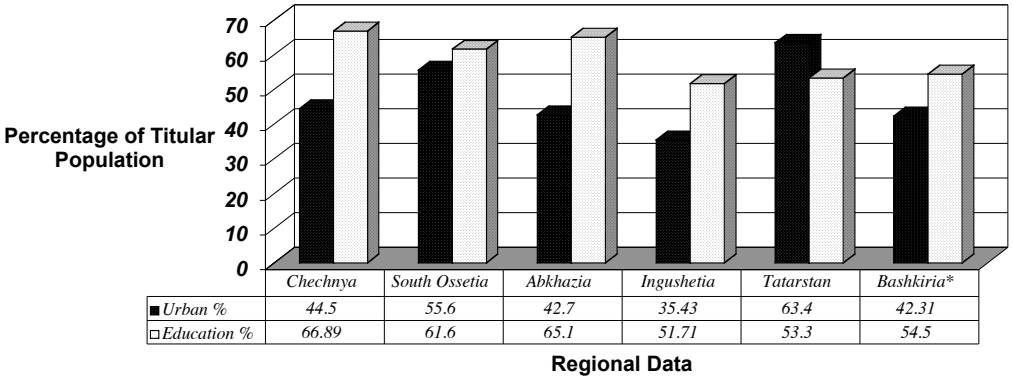
[50] Treisman, "Russia's 'Ethnic Revival': The Separatist Activism of Regional Leaders in a Postcommunist Order," 221-22. Treisman applies this logic to non-ethnic regions in Russia as well, in Treisman, *After the Deluge: Regional Crises and Political Consolidation in Russia.*

[51] Henry E. Hale, "The Parade of Sovereignties: Testing Theories of Secession in the Soviet Setting," *British Journal of Political Science* 30 (2000), Stoner-Weiss, *Local Heroes: The Political Economy of Russian Regional Governance,* Treisman, "Russia's 'Ethnic Revival': The Separatist Activism of Regional Leaders in a Postcommunist Order."

urbanization with high levels of ethnic separatism, arguing that groups more equipped with wealth and education will have the wherewithal to outmaneuver the central government.[52] Figure 1.2 shows the urbanization and education levels of selected regions in Russia and Georgia, the same regions selected for previous analysis. In this figure, the most telling number is the level of education and the region's level of separatism. The violently separatist regions, Chechnya, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia, all have education levels (percentage of population over age 15 with some secondary education) of 60 percent or higher, where the non-violent regions hover around 50 percent. There is less similarity in the urbanization data. Even so, the relationship between such structural factors and degree and type of separatism does not appear definitive. Ingushetia and Tatarstan followed vastly different separatist strategies, albeit both non-violent, but have similar percentages of education within the population. Likewise, Bashkortostan (Bashkiria) and Tatarstan followed similar high-separatist strategies, but differ in levels of urbanization. Chapter 2 posits a framework that combines economic factors with elite structures to explain ethnic separatist strategies.

[52] Snyder, *From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Nationalist Conflict*.

Figure 1.2 Urbanization and Education Levels Among Separatist Regions[53]



	Chechnya	South Ossetia	Abkhazia	Ingushetia	Tatarstan	Bashkiria*
Urban %	44.5	55.6	42.7	35.43	63.4	42.31
Education %	66.89	61.6	65.1	51.71	53.3	54.5

*Bashkiria refers to Bashkortostan. It is shortened to fit the table dimensions.

Elite Mobilization

The final factor considered for the post-Soviet cases is the role of elite actors in ethnic group behavior. Paul Brass is a major proponent of this approach, arguing that elite incentives can structure group activities. Regional elites may find that they can increase their own power through mobilizing ethnic movements and making separatist demands.[54] Snyder finds similarly, arguing that democratic reforms in a non-democratic state actually enhance elite power-seeking by opening up the political playing field. Aided by enhanced mobilization capabilities in the form of free press and free speech, ethnic nationalism will increase as ethnic elites ensure their own position in the new political system.[55]

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[53] *Itogi Vserossiiskoi Perepisi Naselenia 1989 Goda*.
[54] Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison*. For an analysis of how Indian religious elites have acted in party organization, see Kanchan Chandra, "Elite Incorporation in Multiethnic Societies," *Asian Survey* 40, no. 5 (2000).
[55] Snyder, *From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Nationalist Conflict*.

Other elite mobilization studies examine the extent to which regional elites are tied to political leaders in the central governments, and the extent to which this affects the bargaining strategies of the regional elites. John Willerton argues that patronage networks were central to the political intrigues of the Politburo, and crucial for advancement in the Soviet system.[56] The structure of the centralized economic and political system enhanced the role of personal ties between the central government and regional elite actors. By the end of the Soviet period, this system determined how regions could obtain key industrial complexes and agricultural technologies. This arrangement most certainly affected the early bids for autonomy and independence when the Soviet Union still existed, as well as the politics of separatism in Russia and the successor states.

To get at the elite interaction, Treisman conducts a test that examines the level of separatism of those regions whose leaders are appointed by Yeltsin, but has difficulty finding the direct effect, because only a certain kind of region had appointed leaders (the autonomous okrugs – which might be less separatist for other reasons).[57] Others have measured previously established relationships between regional and central elites is to link former members of the *nomenklatura*.[58] However, this might not provide the most accurate reckoning of post-Soviet elite relations. There is no *a priori* reason to assume that former Communist members necessarily had close relationships that would affect their post-Communist political lives. In Chapter 2, I offer a more nuanced analysis of

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[56] John P. Willerton, *Patronage and Politics in the USSR* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
[57] Treisman, "Russia's 'Ethnic Revival': The Separatist Activism of Regional Leaders in a Postcommunist Order."
[58] Such as in non-ethnic studies of Russian politics and elites: Gerald Easter, *Reconstructing the State: Personal Networks and Elite Identity in Soviet Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), David Stuart Lane and Cameron Ross, *The Transition from Communism to Capitalism: Ruling Elites from Gorbachev to Yeltsin*, 1st ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), Evan Mawdsley and Stephen White, *The Soviet Elite from Lenin to Gorbachev: The Central Committee and Its Members, 1917-1991* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

interactions between regional and central government elites and how these relationships affected the separatist bargaining by regional leaders vis-à-vis the central government.

Conclusion

In application to the post-Soviet experience, the most salient theories of ethnic mobilization and conflict are those that examine the factors that enhance the ability of ethnic groups to bargain with the central governments. This is not to say that other ethnic theories are not applicable to the post-Soviet ethnic experience. However, when examining the levels and degree of separatism, the extent to which autonomy is demanded and the manner by which the region chooses to assert its bargaining power, is best explained by an intersection of structural conditions (state capacity and institutional structure) that condition regional bargaining traits, economic wealth and patronage or elite ties with the center.

Chapter 2: An Explanation of Ethnic Separatism

INTRODUCTION

Regional leaders in former Soviet States viewed their interactions with central governments strategically, and used their ethnic identity and mobilization as tools to maintain and extend their autonomy and power. Regional leaders took practical stock of their ability to bargain with central government actors in order to make institutional demands regarding autonomy within a system, or secession from that system altogether. Although the demands for autonomy or secession were often couched, and understood, in ethnic terms, the extent of regional demands was filtered through these factors.

Ethnic separatism, even violent secession, is best understood as a process by which political actors convey their interests to one another and work to achieve them, often at the expense of the other actor. Ethnic separatism is a kind of diplomacy. To paraphrase Clausewitz, wars of secession are diplomacy through other means. In this chapter, I lay out a framework to understand that bargaining process. National territory leaders used ethnic separatism to negotiate favorable political and economic autonomy. However, some regions did not have the same bargaining strength to bring to the table. Wealthy regions and regions whose leaders had strong central government ties could bring more pressure to the central government without taking the same risks as those without such characteristics.

Bargaining occurs when both parties find the conditions right. Central state governments must be sufficiently weak to be penetrated by the interests of the regional governments. Regional governments must gain something through the bargaining process. The theoretical framework outlined below relies on certain external conditions that provide an environment for bargaining to develop. A second component of this

project is an explanation that takes into account the changes in bargaining over time in changing state conditions, finding that separatism is more likely in weakened states, but that central state governments can cross a threshold of weakness that compromises bargaining payoff structures, and enhancing the probability of entrenched conflicts.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Regional separatist strategies vary both in degree and kind. In terms of degree, ethnic regional demands ranged from relatively quiescent, for example asking for greater status within the federal hierarchy, to more risk-acceptant strategies, holding a referendum on independence, or declaring independence outright. Regional strategies also differed in kind, for example the use of violent or non-violent means. This study focuses on how regional leaders determined the degree of autonomy they would demand and the kind of activity, political and military, they deemed acceptable to achieve it.

It is hardly surprising that regional elites in the former Soviet Union would turn to ethnic claims for political and economic sovereignty during the Soviet collapse and as the successor states began creating new political institutions for governance. Jack Snyder argues that precisely during state change ethnic leaders are uniquely suited for success, particularly during periods when transitioning states attempt democratization campaigns. New elite recruitment policies during new regimes opens up the political environment for new actors, and ethnic leaders can use new media outlets for mobilization purposes. The nationalist message, has a powerful ability to consolidate groups around a common cause.[59] Ethnic leaders understand and use this power, both to enhance their own standing, but also that of their group.[60] In the former Communist states, leaders of the national territories combined this ethnic mobilization with demands within the structure

[59] Snyder, *From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Nationalist Conflict*.
[60] Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison*.

of the former Soviet institutional structure. The negotiation processes themselves emerged as bi-lateral negotiations between region and central government.[61]

The institutional framework of the Soviet Union undoubtedly contributed to the how ethnic separatism emerged both during its dissolution and in the politics of the emerging independent states. The system of granting ethnic groups specific territorial boundaries and endowing them with some kind of cultural, political, and economic autonomy endowed the titular ethnic groups with prospects for greater ethnic mobilization, both vis-à-vis the hegemonic ethnic group (the Russians) and the minority groups that dwelt within their boundaries. This project examines ethnic separatism through the framework of this institution, concentrating on ethnic politics that emerge from these institutional structures. Throughout Soviet history, most ethnic politics emerged through this institutional framework. Moreover, as is demonstrated in Chapter 3, the development of this structure depended on two factors, center-regional elite ties and economic wealth.

Recognizing levels and degree of ethnic separatism

This study characterizes ethnic separatism according to two measures. First, it examines the level of autonomy requested or demanded by the government of a national territory. Second, it examines the degree of ethnic separatism, assessing the strategies a separatist region utilizes, focusing in particular on the use of violence. Within the former Soviet context, such demands occurred in three facets: political, economic, and cultural separatism. Certain kinds of political and economic separatism were the most threatening

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[61] Steven Solnick and Daniel Treisman have investigated the lack of a collective bargaining strategy between regional governments and the central state in Russia. See Steven L. Solnick, "Big Deals: Territorial Bargaining and the Fate of Post-Colonial and Post-Soviet States," (2000), Steven L. Solnick, "Hanging Separately? Cooperation, Cooptation and Cheating in Developing Federations," (2001), Treisman, *After the Deluge: Regional Crises and Political Consolidation in Russia.*

to the central government. High-level political separatist strategies might include demands for extreme changes in administrative status, for example to Union republic status within the Soviet period, for independence, for the ability unilaterally to delegate certain authorities to the central government. Very separatist economic strategies might include the unilateral nationalization of all property in the region, establishing trade alliances with foreign actors, the establishment of a central bank, and categorical refusal to pay all taxes to the central government.

Lower level separatism included vague declarations of sovereignty, decisions of joint administration of territory by both the region and federal center, demands for border changes, and the holding of referenda on lass drastic regional political status. Within the context of the Soviet demise and post-Soviet state building, demands for sovereignty or changes in administrative status, unthinkable during the Soviet period, became low-risk strategies for national territories. Low-level economic separatism might be requesting new examination on property ownership of regional industries and natural resource complexes, or requesting a new accounting for how regional revenues would be shared between center and the region. (During the Soviet period, almost 100 per cent of regional revenues went to central government coffers.) The third form of separatism, least threatening to the federal center, involved cultural demands. Some regions established strenuous language regulations for regional office holders. Tatarstan has fought with Moscow over its bid to Latinize the Tatar alphabet, which currently is written in Cyrillic.

I categorize these acts of separatism according the contexts in which they are declared. For example, in by 1994 32 of 42 of post-Soviet national territories had issued a declaration of sovereignty. Because 76 percent of regions made such declarations with little concern of central government backlash, I classify these as low levels of separatism. Referenda on independence, or rhetoric that referred to Russia as a "neighboring

country," incurred a harsher response from the central government, and therefore I categorize these as high levels of separatism. I also distinguish the degree of separatism violent and non-violent strategies. Violent separatism is the conscious mobilization by regional political leadership to incite violent means to establish a desired level of autonomy, and engages forces to do so. These forces do not necessarily emerge from standing armies, but are more likely drawn from paramilitary groups or ad hoc militias. Violent separatism exists if the number of dead is equal or greater than 1000.

From the Bottom Up: Explaining Regional Bargaining Strategies

The latter years of the Soviet Union, although not envisioned as such by Mikhail Gorbachev, were years of radical political change. Although the Soviet Union could not withstand the pressures of this change, state building processes currently frame the politics of the successor states. The Soviet dissolution brought in a new era of center-periphery relationships as political groups in the center sought to find allies in the periphery and thus obtain or maintain power. Gorbachev reached out to the Union Republics, calling for a referendum on the status of the Union, conducted in March 1991. Soon after, Boris Yeltsin, the President of the Russian Republic, reached out to governors within Russia for support, even while he worked with the leaders of Belorussia and Ukraine to end the Soviet Union altogether. Although Gorbachev considered the referendum a success, 76.4% of those participating voted for Union continuation, his appeal to the regions ultimately failed as a ploy to maintain power. [62]

Yeltsin used similar strategies to consolidate power within Russia. Given that the Union Republics obtained statehood, political officials and observers worried that the

[62] Many republics, including the Baltics and Georgia boycotted the referendum (although Abkhazia and South Ossetia voted). See McFaul, *Russia's Unfinished Revolution: Political Change from Gorbachev to Putin*. Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras, eds., *New States, New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

autonomous regions would make the same, or similar demands.[63] In particular, regional leaders understood that, with the weakened state, they had bargaining position within the system to obtain their preferred political position. The successful processes of ethnic separatism by the Union Republics demonstrated that ethnic demands garnered promising results, although not without risk. While the Soviet Union's dissolution was remarkable because of its nonviolence, the politics of bargaining among the successor states carried increasing risk: violent conflict had marked the demands and central government responses for South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh even before 1991.

This project examines ethnic conflict within the former Soviet context in terms of bargaining. In particularly, it posits that as Russia and Georgia built new political institutions, ethnic regions attempted to maximize their power within a developing system. In the cases of Russia and Georgia, this process has been fraught with considerable conflict. This in itself is not so surprising: Jack Knight has predicted that institution building is inherently conflictual: "If institutions affect the distribution of benefits in social life, then we should expect strategic actors to seek those institutional rules that give them the greatest share of those benefits. Thus, the conflict over the substantive benefits of social life extends to the development of the institutional arrangements that structure it."[64]

Perception of Economic Strength

Economic wealth enhances regional bargaining vis-à-vis central governments. Regional leaders take stock of their economic potential and leverage this power to obtain greater power from the center. This is not altogether a new idea, and has been a popular

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[63] For a discussion (and rejection) of such alarmist predictions, see Matthew Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars: Will Russia Go the Way of the Soviet Union?* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2002) 4-5.

[64] Jack Knight, *Institutions and Social Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 123.

approach in explaining how federal relationships have unfolded within Russia. Most of these examinations, however, do not emphasize the privileged role of ethnic regions within the system. In *After the Deluge: Regional Crises and Political Consolidation in Russia*, Daniel Treisman explains the asymmetrical federal arrangements in Russia, through an analysis of the power of wealthy regions over a dependent center. Wealthy regions obtained generous fiscal incentives in return for political loyalty. Moscow responded to regional demands by limiting its demands for tax revenue and offering budget credits.[65] Kathryn Stoner-Weiss finds similarly, arguing further that those regions that had better economic leverage in the first place were able to exact better deals from the central Russian government.[66] Wealth affects bargaining positions, she argues, because regional leaders understand that the weakened center depends on the political and economic support. In an article in *World Politics*, Treisman links this economic approach to Russia's national territories, finding that great wealth among ethnic regions enhanced the likelihood of any region gaining greater levels of autonomy within the Russian state.[67]

However, when applying this conclusion, economic wealth bringing greater levels of separatist mobilization, to the ethnic regional cases in Georgia and Russia, current events indicate some variation in outcome. If wealth boosts separatism, it is difficult to explain the continuation of the Chechen war (or outbreak of the second Chechen War) amidsta a devastated economy. South Ossetia, hardly an economic powerhouse, was the first region in Georgia to declare its independence from Georgia. This distinction is best

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[65] Treisman, *After the Deluge: Regional Crises and Political Consolidation in Russia.*
[66] Stoner-Weiss, *Local Heroes: The Political Economy of Russian Regional Governance.*
[67] Treisman, "Russia's 'Ethnic Revival': The Separatist Activism of Regional Leaders in a Postcommunist Order."

explained by examining how wealth (or a regional leaders' perception of regional wealth) might affect separatist strategies in differing ways.

Economic wealth has a dual effect on bargaining strategies for regions within weakened states. A wealthy region will have an enhanced bargaining position with the central government because it is able to use its wealth to its advantage. It is not as dependent on the state for monetary support. Moreover, it can use its wealth to hold the state hostage, particularly given the weakness of the state. One possible implication, supported by Treisman and Stoner-Weiss, for wealth's effect on regional ethnic separatism is that regions with greater wealth will engage in greater levels of ethnic separatism, since ethnic separatism is a tool to enhance their autonomous position within the new political system. This economic wealth also lessens the risk of punitive state rehabilizatoin. A central state is not likely to lash out against a region that enhances its wealth and generates revenue. Rather, the state will be more likely to offer valuable concessions in order to forestall outright secession and rebellion. A crucial component of this regional strategy is that the region does not resort to violent mechanisms – aggressive separatism will likely undermine their strategic economic position. So one possible regional strategy is a Highly Separatist/Non-Violent effort (HS/NV).

One might imagine a second course of action for economically wealthy regions. It could be that a risk averse region will maintain a strategy of very low separatism, concerned for any possible backlash against its economic position in the system. A risk-averse wealthy region might not seek any outcome besides the status quo.[68] Consequently, we might expect a region to act in a way antithetical to the possibility outlined above: a Low Separatism/Non-Violent strategy (LS/NV). (See Figure 2.1)

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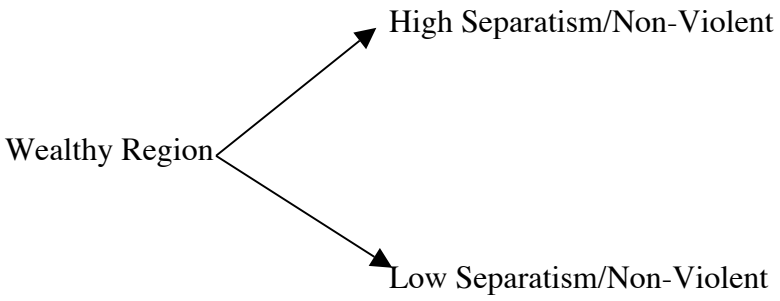
[68] Matthew Evangelista notes this same dual effect of economic wealth. See Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars: Will Russia Go the Way of the Soviet Union?* 92.

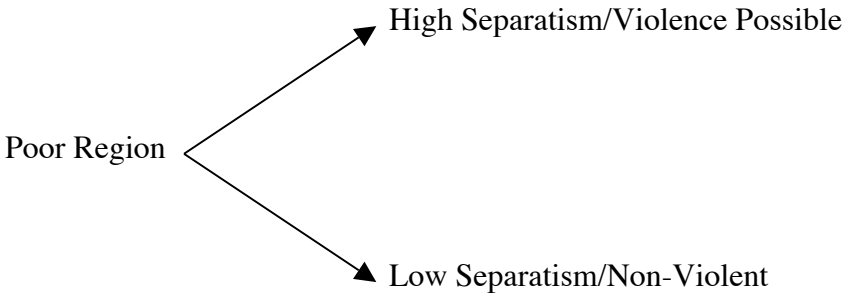
Figure 2.1 Possible Strategies of Wealthy Regions



Similarly, two possible (and mutually exclusive) strategies are possible for those regions without the bargaining position of economic prosperity. A poor region might find that its only option within a changing institutional environment is a very high level of separatism. Without wealth as bargaining power, a poor region might engage in high-level separatism, perhaps even violent separatism, in hopes of a quick and generous settlement for a weak state that has no interest in protracted conflict. Moreover, a poorer state might sense that it has little to lose from risk acceptant strategies, unlike a wealthy region, which could lose its economic edge. Thus from such regions we might see a Highly Separatist/Possibly Violent strategy (HS/V).

Likewise, a poor region might follow a highly risk-averse strategy, accepting a system that might institutionalize its poverty as a better outcome than the risk of a central state backlash, leading to a Low Separatism/Non-Violent strategy (LS/NV). (See Figure 2.2)

Figure 2.2 Possible Strategies for Poorer Regions



The economic variable by itself does little to explain when separatism is likely among wealthy and non-wealthy regions. However, it does provide a sense of how regions might perceive their bargaining position vis-à-vis a weakened central government. Even so, the economic variable alone does not explain all the variation. In the next sections, I argue that elite ties, in particular between regional and central government elites, also affect bargaining strategies, and then offer hypotheses regarding how these factors interact.

Elite Interactions and Patronage

Strong patronage ties with the center help regional actors raise separatist demands with less risk than those without similar relationships. Regional leaders exploit these relationships, maximizing their own and their regions power vis-à-vis the central government. In periods of state building, this interaction, like that between wealthy regions and the central governments, regional separatism.

By patronage, I mean the reciprocal relationship between a patron and a subordinate. Scholarship on patronage identifies three characteristics that consistently indicate the presence of patronage: 1.) The relationship must be unequal, between superior and inferior actors; 2.) The arrangement relies on reciprocity, be it of goods,

political favor, wealth, or votes; 3.) The emergence of patronage depends on close personal interaction between the actors.[69] For the purposes of this study, I examine the role of patronage in the interactions between central government elites and elites that govern nationally territorialized regions, observing in particular how patronage affects elite strategies of ethnic separatism.

There are many indications that patronage politics and elite interactions are key explanatory factors in regional separatism during the state development of the former Soviet successor states. First, as will be discussed at length in Chapter 3, the ethnic regions emerged from the patronage politics that accompanied the Soviet consolidation efforts in the early 20th century. From Stalin to Yeltsin, Soviet leaders built clientelistic networks with ethnic regional elites, promising promotion, privileges, and power in exchange for loyalty and ensuring regional stability and support. A second indication is the relationship between state development and patronage politics, in particular for weak states attempting to consolidate power. Alex Weingrod argues, "patron-client ties can be seen to arise within a state structure in which authority is dispersed and state activity limited in scope, and in which considerable separation exists between the levels of village, city, and state."[70] States in transition without extensive institutional or political reach over their territory are more vulnerable to state collapse and therefore will be more likely to use patronage as a power consolidation strategy.

This study focuses on the role of regional and central government leaders, and therefore privileges the role of elites in ethnic separatism over that of society. By elites, I

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[69] S.N. Eisenstadt and Louis Roniger, "Patron-Client Relations as a Model of Structuring Social Exchange," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22 (1980), Rene Lemarchand and Keith Legg, "Political Clientelism and Development," *Comparative Politics* 4 (1972), John Duncan Powell, "Peasant Society and Clientelist Politics," *American Political Science Review* 64, no. 2 (1970), Alex Weingrod, "Patrons, Patronage and Political Parties," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 10 (1968), Willerton, *Patronage and Politics in the USSR*.

[70] Weingrod, "Patrons, Patronage and Political Parties," 381.

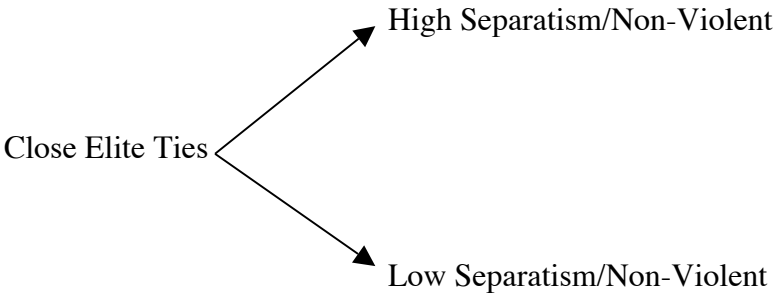
refer to those people who occupy strategic positions in government and non-government institutions such that they consistently affect politics. For the purposes of this study, I examine those elites that drive regional politics as well as national politics.[71]

Similar to the economic wealth factor, elite ties have dual effects on possible regional strategy outcomes. In this section, I examine how elite ties/patronage relations themselves might affect ethnic separatism. Next, I will demonstrate the interactions between elite ties and economic factors, developing hypotheses regarding how these interactions drive particular separatist strategies.

Like economic wealth, close elite ties enhance bargaining positions of regional elites, allowing them to pursue more risk acceptant strategies than they might otherwise because they are confident of an open dialogue with central government elites. Close ties diminish uncertainty concerns. A region with close relationships with the center therefore might engage in greater levels of ethnic separatism with the knowledge that central government elites will understand that violence will not be an outcome: High Separatism/Non-Violent strategies (HS/NV). However, an opposite strategy might also be possible: closely linked elite groups might have no need for ethnic separatism at all, relying instead on close patronage relations to enhance their position within the new institutional structure. Thus an opposite strategy emerges: Low Separatism/Non-Violent (LS/NV). (See Figure 2.3)

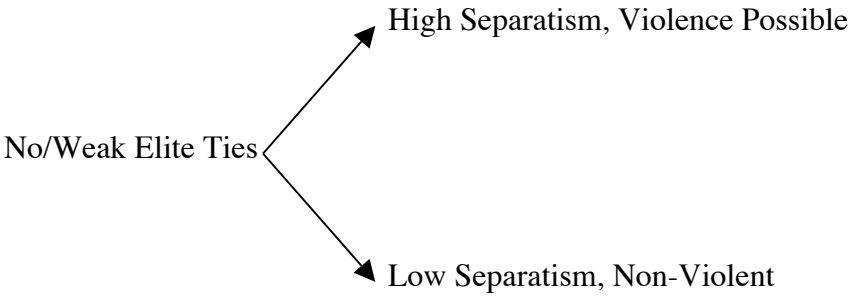
[71] My definition is derived from G. Lowell Field, John Higley, and Michael G. Burton, "A New Elite Framework for Political Sociology," *Revue europeene des sciences sociales* 28, no. 88 (1990): 152.

Figure 2.3 Close Elite Ties and Regional Strategies



The lack of patronage or elite ties likewise has a dual effect on regional strategies. Without the bargaining position of nepotism, and unable to create outlets to lobby the central government for a better position in the new system, a region might use a highly aggressive, even violent, strategy in order to achieve central state acceptance of autonomy demands. We might then expect a strategy of High Separatism and perhaps Violence (NS/V). However, like with the economic variable, we might also expect that the absence of elite ties will lead regions to follow less separatist strategies, for fear that central elites might misunderstand ethnic separatism strategies not as bargaining attempts and bring about a backlash. Thus, the risk averse strategy among regions with low elite ties might be Low Separatism and Non-Violent (LS/NV). (See Figure 2.4)

Figure 2.4 Regional Strategies and Absence of Elite Ties



This study assesses elite ties and patronage in three key ways. If a regional leader is placed in power by a central government authority, I consider elite ties to be favorable.

I consider elite ties to be favorable if informal patronage agreements are in place between regional and central government leaders, such as agreements that establish monetary or electoral payoffs to either central or regional leadership. Finally, in-depth interviews with participating high-placed elite actors provide further context to assess elite relationships.

Linking the patronage and economic power variables

These two factors are the most crucial in determining how regional governments assess their bargaining power and structure their demands vis-à-vis the central government. Ethnic separatism, particularly within the post Soviet context, became a tool for expressing these bargaining positions. While the sections above uncover how these factors affect bargaining positions individually, the theoretical framework demonstrates how regional leaders structure their demands based on the combination of these factors. The interaction of these variables provides a more structured explanation that is able to explain the variation of strategies among ethnic regions in Russia and Georgia.

By combining the different possible strategic outcomes of the dual effects for each factor, I find sixteen permutations of possible outcomes. Table 2.1 reports these permutations, disregarding permutations that are contradictory (for example, outcomes that might lead to a Highly Separatist and Low Separatist outcome). Even so, it narrows to eight possible combinations. However, I argue that a close examination of these possibilities lead to four probable outcomes.

Table 2.1 Possible Separatist Strategy Combinations

Wealthy Region/Strong Elite Ties	**HS/NV: HS/NV**
	LS/NV: LS/NV
Wealthy Region/Weak Elite Ties	**HS/NV: HS/V**
	LS/NV: LS/NV
Poor Region/Strong Elite Ties	**HS/V: HS, NV**
	LS, NV: LS, NV
Poor Region/Weak Elite Ties	**HS, V: HS, V**
	LS, NV: LS, NV

HS=High Separatism LS=Low Separatism V=Violent NV=Non-Violent

A wealthy region with strong elites ties has two strategic possibilities, both of them non-violent. It will either act to maximize its position within the system using separatism as a mechanism, or it will not. I argue that such a region will follow a highly separatist strategy. Within the post-Soviet context, this is particularly poignant. Regions in the USSR made demands for political and economic autonomy on the basis of ethnic identity since even before the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. Moreover, the experience of the Union Republics in successful and non-violent bargaining to achieve independent statehood during the Gorbachev period offered a precedent for separatist behavior. Within this context in particular, separatism was not a risky strategy, particularly for those with close elite ties and economic bargaining power.

Hypothesis 1: Wealthy regions with strong elite ties will engage in highly separatist yet non-violent strategies.

Wealthy regions with poor elites ties will engage in lower levels of separatism, although they will not be completely quiescent. The permutations outlined above indicate a possibility for highly separatist, perhaps violent, strategies. Wealthy regions will not risk their economic position through cost-acceptant behavior that might cause a central state backlash unchecked by patronage relations. Rather, they will follow precedents cast

by other wealthy regions in better bargaining positions, quickly accepting that position within the institutional structure.

Hypothesis 2: Wealthy regions without elite ties will follow a strategy of low separatism, without violence (or threatening violence).

Poor regions with strong elite ties have similar possibilities as the combination outlined above: high separatism with possibility of violence, or low, non-violent activity. I argue that these regions, too, will follow a course of low level separatism, relying on patronage relations to look out for their interests. Without a strong economic bargaining position, they are less likely to get a better institutional deal without nepotistic structure, which they will not jeopardize spoil by shrill ethnic demands.

Hypothesis 3: Poor regions with strong ties will follow the least separatist strategies.

The final regional designation, poor regions with low level ties, are those most likely to pursue highly separatist, violent strategies, perhaps with a goal for secession. These regions fall at the lowest economic level in the system, and without close elites ties have little mechanisms to bargain themselves into a favorable outcome though peaceful means. Thus, they might use violent means to enhance their bargaining position or to withdraw from the system altogether. It is important to remember, however, that violent means or demands for independence do not mean that the only goal of the region is outright independence. It could be that there is a negotiation point at which they would remain in the system. Without elite ties from the outset, or if the central state does not act to create such ties, this negotiation point might never be realized.

Hypothesis 4: Poor regions with weak ties are the most likely to pursue violent secessionist strategies.

These hypotheses outline a model of ethnic separatism (see Figure 2.5) and bargaining during a period where a central state government is weak and in the process of

power consolidation. The theoretical framework relies on two key factors: that the central state is sufficiently weak that its leaders feel a need to consolidate power though bargaining (not merely through coercion) but that the state is strong enough to offer credible bargains with the regions such that they accept the bargain.

Figure 2.5 Regional Separatism in a Weak State

		Wealth	
		High	Low
Elite Ties	Strong	High Separatism, Non-Violent	Low Separatism, Non-Violent
	Weak	Low Separatism, Non-Violent	Highest likelihood for Violent and Highly Separatist strategies

From the Top Down: Understanding the Effects of State Capacity

Regional strategies reflect not only internal factors, but also reflect the central state environment. Regional leaders anticipate central government preferences, respond to new or changing circumstances, and gauge the ability of the state to follow through on the bargains it offers. Likewise, central governments assess regional demands, make their own negotiation strategies, and thus creating processes of continued central-regional interactions. The bargaining strength of the central state and the preferences of central state actors affect both the strategies of regional leaders and the overall outcomes of regional autonomy.

This study examines the role of central political actors in how they establish preferences for creating policies that interact with regional governments, in particular

examining how state capacity affects their ability to establish bargaining positions vis-à-vis regional governments, and also to maintain policy unity among sometimes disparate interests of subordinate central government actors.[72] A state is an organizational structure acting to control the governance and administration of a specific territory. The classic Weberian definition includes the monopoly of the use of force on that specific territory. In assessing how state characteristics interact with separatism, I examine the effects of state capacity, combining this classic definition with an assessment of the state's capacity. State capacity refers to a state's ability to "*penetrate* society, *regulate* social relationships, *extract* resources, and *appropriate* or use resources in determined ways."[73]

Strong states are better able to maintain the monopoly of force, as well as extract from society as they wish. Weak states falter in enacting their desired policies, as well as in regulating security and collecting revenues. I evaluate state capacity using the World Bank governance indicator database, focusing on their measures of governance effectiveness and regulatory quality. Government effectiveness refers to a state's ability to administer its policies over the state territory, the efficiency of the government bureaucracy, and to contribute to the state infrastructure. Regulatory quality refers to a

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[72] Many studies examine the role of the state as an independent actor and its separation from societal interests. See, for example, Easter, *Reconstructing the State: Personal Networks and Elite Identity in Soviet Russia,* Stephen D. Krasner, *Defending the National Interest: Raw Materials Investments and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), Joel S. Migdal, Atul Kohli, and Vivienne Shue, *State Power and Social Forces: Domination and Transformation in the Third World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), Theda Skocpol, "Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research," in *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). Appropriately for this analysis, Barbara Geddes offers some insight into how state interests might derive from those of the political elite. Barbara Geddes, *Politician's Dilemma: Building State Capacity in Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

[73] Joel S. Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988) 4-5. Emphasis in original.

state's ability to regulate commerce, for example trade flows and customs collections, assess and collect taxes, as well as control over the national bank.[74]

Chapter 6 discusses how states and regions within them respond to state capacity circumstances over time. State capacity conditions the bargaining context within which federal relationships are established. A central state's strength affects not only regional behavior, but also the interests of central government actors. Varying levels of state capacity create conditions that affect how separatist bargaining occures in different state structures. This analysis best captures how ethnic separatism interacts with politics over time, for example how entrenched ethnic conflicts remain entrenched, or what conditions might lead to conflict resolution. Moreover, state capacity changes help explain separatist strategies over time, for example, how Russian regions might respond to changing leadership styles from Yeltsin to Putin. Likewise, it provides context to the lack of political resolution of separatist issues in very weak states where violence has occurred, such as in Georgia.

Regional Bargaining Effects

Regions are better able to bargain autonomy in weak states, where state power is uncertain and government structures are open to negotiation. In the Soviet system, the economic and political weakness exposed through Gorbachev's reforms sparked extensive demands, both political and economic, by regions and central government leaders alike. Ethnic demands emerged as the strongest, as Union Republics, particularly in the Baltics, took advantage of the central weakness, demanding and obtaining independence.[75] The Soviet state weakness led to its eventual demise; the weakness of the

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[74] Daniel Kaufmann, Aart Kraay, and Massimo Mastruzzi, "Governance Matters Iv: Governance Indicators for 1996-2004," (The World Bank, 2005).

[75] Many scholars have written on the linkages between state weakness and regional demands. See in particular Stoner-Weiss, *Local Heroes: The Political Economy of Russian Regional Governance*. For a

successor states permitted the negotiation playing field accompanied institutionalization of the inherited autonomies. Yeltsin's Russia, a relatively strong state in the post-Soviet context, was sufficiently weak that it bargained autonomy deals in order to consolidate state power into the regions.[76] Regional leaders took this weakness into account to optimize their outcomes.

In strong states, the central government has little need to negotiate with regional governments, and thus regions are less likely to engage in risk-acceptant separatist strategies. Very weak states, or struggling states, lack the bargaining power to offer credible incentives to remain within the state. Even if central state actors sought to bargain and offer concessions in exchange for acceptance of central state sovereignty, bargains offered might lack credibility. Thus, in struggling states, we are likely to find an increase of risk-acceptant separatism. Without credible economic deals, the central government relies on patronage structures to deter violent separatism.

Proposition: Regions are more likely to use separatist strategies in weak states. Economic bargaining occurs less in very weak or struggling states; instead, patronage structures dominate.

Central Bargaining Effects

Theda Skocpol and others have argued that states have their own interest, distinct from those of society.[77] Barbara Geddes has argued that state interests can be narrowed to the aggregation of the personal interests of the ruling elite.[78] This section divides these

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discussion of ethnic demands amidst state weakness, see Barnett R. Rubin and Jack Snyder, eds., *Post-Soviet Political Order: Conflict and State Building* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

[76] Solnick, "Big Deals: Territorial Bargaining and the Fate of Post-Colonial and Post-Soviet States.", Solnick, "Hanging Separately? Cooperation, Cooptation and Cheating in Developing Federations.", Treisman, *After the Deluge: Regional Crises and Political Consolidation in Russia.*

[77] Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

[78] Geddes, *Politician's Dilemma: Building State Capacity in Latin America.*

approaches to the state into two arenas where central state interests affect regional separatism. In strengthening states, central governments have few incentives to establish bargaining agreements to appease regional governments. In weak states, central government incentives for bargaining increase, since such agreements solidify the unity of the state. Within the processes of state consolidation, when the political environment is open to more political actors and contestation, central government leaders can strengthen their own power by coopting regional actors to support their cause.

Even in such conditions of state weakness, ethnic separatist strategies by regional leaders test central government mettle. Since few institutional structures remain to manage debate, central state leaders might choose to "punish" a separatist region it views is overstating its bargaining position. For example, within Russia during the 1990s, some political leaders considered Yeltsin's bargaining with regional governments to be a sign of weakness. Although the central government may not be able to use punitive measures against all the regions, it could single out one for example.

These dual impulses, bargaining or punishment bring, about different outcomes: a weak state might invite certain levels of separatism based on the regional factors outlined above, or might act to forestall or eliminate the bargaining option altogether. I argue that similar factors that affect regional separatism help determine central government punititve responses to aggressive separatism. In particular, patronage ties help create mechanisms any individual region can avoid punitive measures in response to separatist strategies. Central governments are less likely to use military force against regions whose leaders share clientelistic bonds with the central government, particularly if they benefit personally.

Proposition: Regional – Central government patronage ties lessen central government sponsored violence.

Weak states are also less likely to make permanent and lasting bargains that would institutionalize their feeble position vis-à-vis the regions. Thus weak states that create institutional mechanisms for regional-central relationships might try to limit them temporally or institutionally. For example, the central government might place restrictions on certain bargaining agreements (such as time limits), or even eschew institutional mechanism altogether, instead relying on informal mechanisms to determine federal relationships. In this way, a central state can avoid cementing its weakened status through formal institutional structures.

Proposition: Weak states are less likely than srong states to create permanent formal institutions codifying bargains with separatist regions. In such conditions, patronage ties help ensure the stability of bargains.

Finally, very weak or struggling states are less able to control disparate interests of various actors, for example external actors whose interests might lie in promoting or limiting regional separatism. Moreover, such states have difficulties controlling central leaders from using regional separatist bargaining to their own advantage. One symptom of a weak state, for example, is the prevalence of extensive and systemic government corruption.[79] In very corrupt regimes, central government leaders might find that secessionist regions provide unique opportunities for self-enrichment, for example regional government bribes for certain political favors, or taking advantage of regional instability for personal profit, such as trafficking in contraband materials.[80] Like with the lack of institutionalizing of regional-central government bargains, in such circumstances

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[79] See, for example, Mark R. Beissinger and Crawford Young, *Beyond State Crisis? Postcolonial Africa and Post-Soviet Eurasia in Comparative Perspective* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2002), Christoph Stefes, *Understanding Post-Soviet Transitions: Corruption, Collusion, and Clientelism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005 (forthcoming)).

[80] King, "The Benefits of Ethnic War: Understanding Eurasia's Unrecognized States."

patronage ties not only perpetuate a separatist status quo over time, but also create circumstances for stability.

Proposition: Weak or struggling states are more open to actions by disparate actors, by both external states and central government leaders.

In conditions where state capacity is very low, formal institutions cannot function, and economic bargaining is improbable, the chance for violent separatism increases. One mechanism for stability, however, is patronage agreements between central and regional leaders. Because clientelistic frameworks do not rely on formal institutions, they are safe havens for both the regional leaders, who benefit from strategic mobilization without violent measures or institutionalized bargains, and the central leadership, which can avoid formalizing the reciprocal agreement during a period of unacceptable weakness, all the while maintaining state unity. Chapter 6 compares the changing circumstances of Russia and Georgia, examining how ethnic separatist struggles that emerged during periods of state weakness (the early 1990s) evolved as the respective states developed, the Russian becoming a more effective governance tool, and the Georgian state diminishing under the weight of government corruption until virtual collapse, and consequently revolution, in 2003.

METHODS: CASE SELECTION, DATA COLLECTION, AND MEASUREMENT

Case selection

To examine how these factors interact to cause separatist or autonomy based regional strategies, as well as to determine violent or non-violent strategies, this study employs a case study methodology based on John Stuart Mill's indirect method of indifference. Although the best scientific study would use random sampling to determine the case studies, in small-*n* analyses, random sampling can be more debilitating than

useful, particularly if a random sample does not provide adequate variation in the dependent variable.[81] Moreover, this study examines a relatively large number of cases, seven regions over different time points, in order to guard against possible selection bias and maximize generalizability. I have chosen these cases such that they provide the strongest test of the theoretical framework, as well as providing significant enough findings to draw conclusions that will apply to other cases of separatism, both within the former Soviet Union and in regions.

To determine the level of separatism, I examine seven regions in the former Soviet Union that vary in the level of separatism they demanded, as well as the manner in which they sought to realize their goals: through violent or non-violent means. These regional variations in strategy closely resemble the separatism index outlined in Chapter 1. Moreover, I have selected regions that vary according to regional economic wealth. Although perceived wealth is important for the case studies, available data helped narrow to the regions that have different levels of separatism but nevertheless similar levels of wealth, to control for variation in the other variables. Third, I selected cases that are the most challenging and significant for questions of secessionist violence in the former Soviet Union: I include Chechnya, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia, all of which have fought secessionist wars with the central governments inherited from the Soviet system, as well as four cases that chose non-violent strategies.[82] I also separate each case into temporal distinctions based on changes in leadership within the regions during the initial periods of separatism. For the case studies, I examine the initial forms of separatism, assessing

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[81] See, for example, Gary King, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994) 126.

[82] Choosing along variation in the dependent variable and at least one independent variable conforms to Mill's Method of Indifference. See Charles Ragin, *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987) 39-42.

separatist strategies within Georgia and Russia during the 1990s. In chapter six, I broaden my examination to include how regions act in new state circumstances, for example how regional politics have fared under Vladimir Putin, as well as assessing differences in regional and central government incentives for Georgia and Russia over time.

I narrowed the focus of study on Russia and Georgia for several reasons. First, both countries include variation in the levels of separatism sought by the inherited national territories. They are the only two countries in the former Soviet Union to have this shared experience. Second, they have experienced different levels of state capacity during the past decade: Russia has moved from a fairly weak state under Boris Yeltsin into Putin's stronger state. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, Georgia's state capacity diminished further, becoming a state unable to combat the corrupt interests of its governing elite.[83] by examining these cases over time, I can analyzes the process of separatism in depth. Not only does this dissertation explore the intitial stages of separatism, when regional leaders outline their separatist strategies, but explains the duration of the region-center interaction, as the central government responds to separatist demands, and as the contexts that allowed separatist bargaining change. To get at these processes, I assess regions over time, in different state circumstances. This project examines separatism in seven regions. In Georgia, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Ajara; in Russia: Chechnya, Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, and Ingushetia. (See Table 2.2)

Data Collection and Measurement

This project examines regional ethnic strategies as based on perceptions of regional leaders. To measure separatism demands, I examine legal documents and press

[83] Ghia Nodia, "Putting the State Back Together in Post-Soviet Georgia," in *Beyond State Crisis? Postcolonial Africa and Post-Soviet Eurasia in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Mark R. Beissinger and Crawford Young (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2002), Stefes, *Understanding Post-Soviet Transitions: Corruption, Collusion, and Clientelism.*

reports of regional demands. To gauge regional strategy, I rely on published memoirs, newspaper accounts, and in-depth interviews with regional elites. These interviews with regional leaders also provide insight into patronage politics between region and center, how regional leaders understand their demands' interaction with state capacity.

This project measures the economic factor in terms of how regional leaders understand their wealth as it impacts bargaining. Consequently, the measurement of the variable depends on subjective elite assessments. This project examines data indicated the actual wealth of the region, for example, regional gross domestic product data, where available, natural resource production (oil barrels per day), customs revenue, and major industrial infrastructure. In some cases, it is difficult to get time specific data for all of these indicators (particularly in 1992 Russia and Georgia), so I must use later data, or assess comparative wealth by examining trade flows in one case and gross regional product in others. Ideally, standardized data would be available in all cases, but particularly in cases where there has been violent secession, conditions do not permit systematic data collection. I examine perceived wealth through individual assessments, from in-depth interviews conducted as part of field research, through memoirs of regional elites engaged in the financial sector, as well as through newspaper coverage.

I assess the existence of patronage relationships not only through interviews, but also through examining central government intervention into regional politics (for example, altering election results or allowing election fraud) and extra-legal budgetary payments or credits between center and regions. To examine wealth, I look not only at the standard indicators of economic prosperity (level of economic growth, gross regional product), but also at the perceived wealth by regional leaders, trade in- and outflows, reported customs revenues, as well as the elite perceptions of potential wealth.

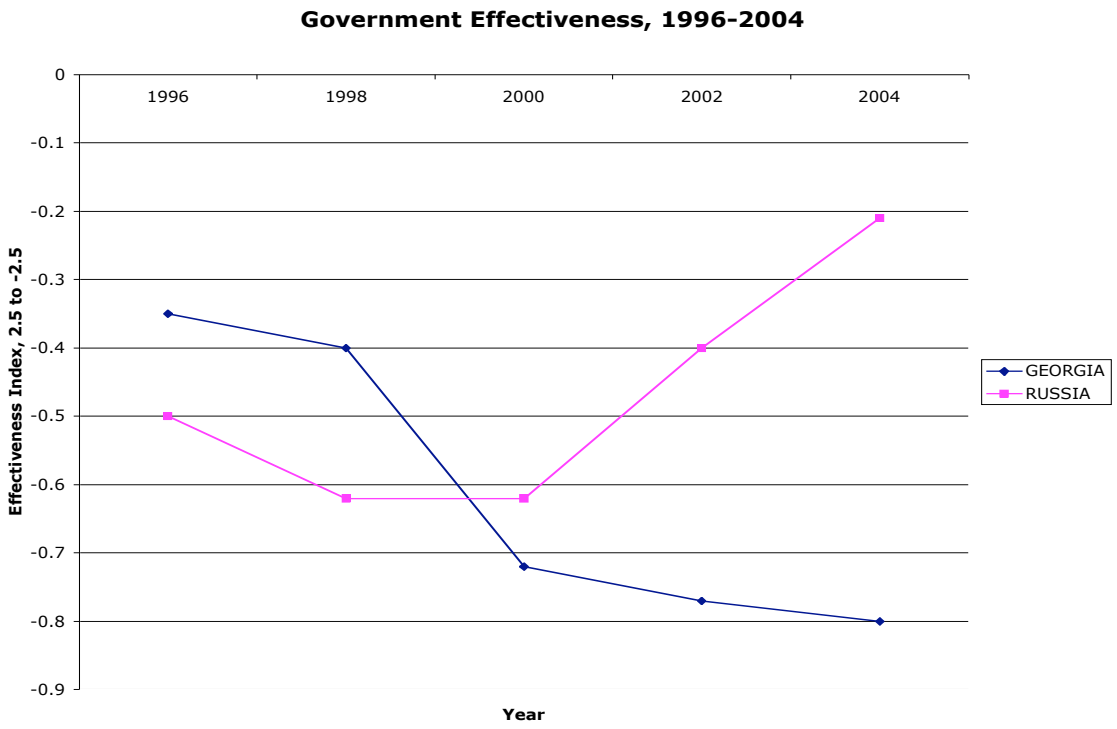
Table 2.2 Case Selection: Key Factors and Expected Separatism Over Time

Region	Regional Perception of Wealth	Regional Perception of Elite Ties	Expected Outcome
Chechnya$_1$ 1989-1990 (Zavgaev)	Low	High/Moderate	Low Separatism
Chechnya$_2$ 1991-1992 (Dudayev)	High	High	High Separatism
Chechnya$_3$ 1993-1994 (Dudayev)	High	Low	Low Separatism
Tatarstan 1989-1997	High	High	High Separatism, Non-Violent
Bashkortostan 1989-1997	High	High	High Separatism, Non-Violent
Ingushetia (1993-1998)	Low	High	Low Separatism
South Ossetia 1989-1992	Low	Low	High Separatism, Violence Likely
Abkhazia$_1$ 1989-1991 (Gamsakhurdia)	High	High	High Separatism, Non-Violent
Abkhazia$_2$ 1992-	High	Low	Low Separatism
Ajara$_1$ (1989-1991) Gamsakhurdia	High	High	High Separatism, Non-Violent
Ajara$_2$ (1992-2003) Shevardnadze	High	High	High Separatism, Non-Violent
Ajara$_3$ (2003-2004) Saakashvili	High	Low	Low Separatism

To examine how state capacity changes affect ethnic separatism processes, I separate Russia and Georgia into three ideal types. Russia's is a temporal distinction, best located between presidential regimes: Boris Yeltsin, 1991-2000, and Vladimir Putin, 2000-2005. Russian politics during the Yeltsin period can be best characterized by a

weak central government acting to consolidate its power. When Putin took over power in 2000, political conditions were such in Russia that it had much more regulatory control and greater policy effectiveness.[84] In Georgia, the state has been unable to extract revenue from the population and enact policy changes. Preliminary data from the World Bank indicate considerable differences in Georgia and Russia over time. (See Figures 2.6 and 2.7)

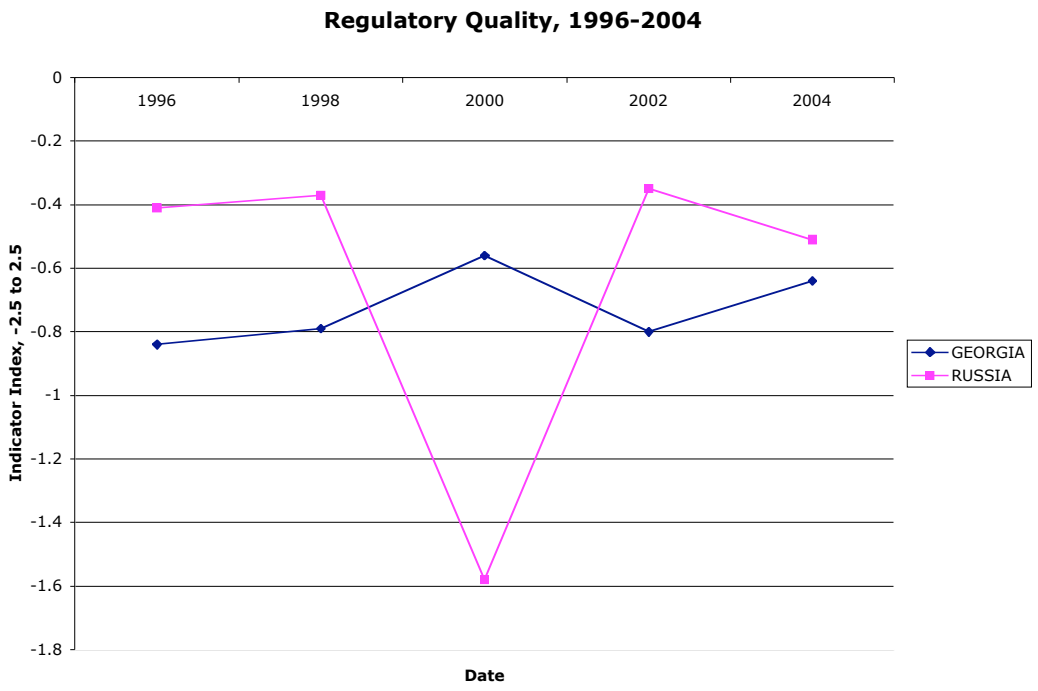
Figure 2.6 Government Effectiveness Over Time, Russia and Georgia[85]



[84] These distinctions are notable in Lilia Shevtsova's accounts of both administrations. Lilia Fedorovna Shevtsova, *Putin's Russia* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003), Shevtsova, *Yeltsin's Russia: Myths and Reality*.

[85]

Figure 2.7 Regulatory Quality Over Time, Russia and Georgia



In the governance effectiveness measure, the World Bank data indicate rough parity between Russia and Georgia in 1996 and 1998, but demonstrate substantial differences after 2000, when Vladimir Putin took office. In terms of regulatory quality, Georgia lags behind Russia for all years except 2000, where the data for Russia indicate a massive change. The World Bank data leave this disparity unexplained; given that the subsequent years conform with the trend of 1996 and 1998, I conclude that Russia has maintained a regulatory quality significantly higher than Georgia for the past decade. A third important aspect of state capacity as it affects bargaining is the wealth of the state itself. Russia, with its size, industrial infrastructure, and natural resource potential, had much more in material terms than did Georgia, whose industrial base faltered and lacked significant natural resource wealth. This project assesses three levels of state capacity as

it applies to the initiation and continuation of ethnic regional separatism: a relatively strong state under Vladimir Putin (2000-present), a weak state under Boris Yeltsin (1991-2000), and a struggling state in Georgia from Zviad Gamsakhurdia to the end of Eduard Shevardnadze's regime (1990-2003).

CONCLUSION

This study posits a framework by which to understand ethnic separatism in transitioning states. In particular, it examines the strategies of regional leaders as they take advantage of central state weakness in order to maximize their levels of power and autonomy. Ethnic separatism is a risky venture, however, and regional leaders temper their demands by assessing their bargaining power vis-à-vis the central government. Wealthy regions with a great deal to lose will be careful not to lose their economic capability, but will use their wealth to exact concessions from a dependent and weak central state. Even more important than economic wealth are patronage relationships that often condition politics in weak states. Without favorable elite ties with the central government, even wealthy regions will temper their demands and follow a less aggressive demand strategy.

A key focus of this study is the prevalence of violent versus non-violent strategies among ethnic regions. Although both wealthy and poor regions have utilized violent strategies, I argue that patronage ties inhibit violent strategies and its absence enhances their likelihood. Particularly with the prevalence of informal ties between regional and central government elites in transitioning states, a surprising outcome emerges where corruption and patronage might actually enhance state stability and promote cooperation, where the absence of such ties further violence.

Chapter 3: National Territorialization in the Soviet Union

The federal structure inherited from the Soviet Union has framed the politics of separatism in the successor states. This structure affected the ability and interest of national minorities to use separatist strategies furthering their political, economic, and cultural interests. As a result, with one exception, only the national territories within the Soviet system utilized separatist strategies. Indeed, every single national territory in the former Soviet Union declared some kind of sovereignty and followed some kind of separatist strategy during and after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Institutional scholars have argued that post-Soviet separatism relates directly to this federal structure.[86] They contend that institutions help frame incentives for political actors within a polity, by providing precedents through previous political encounters, as well as creating processes through which to channel demands.[87] This chapter examines the roots of Soviet national institutions, their emphasis on territory and autonomy as mechanisms guaranteeing the legitimacy and status of ethnic groups, and the growth of patronage politics within the system. It concludes that although the institutional structure of the USSR did not determine certain separatist outcomes, the Soviet federal system provided structures through which national separatist politics would occur in successor states. Moreover, it argues that Soviet policies actually enhanced national mobilization, kept in check by centralizing patronage politics created by the Moscow leadership.

Three crucial issues dominated Soviet ethnic politics since 1917. First, the Soviet system acted to promote the interests of ethnic minorities. This counters common

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[86] Bunce, *Subversive Institutions: The Design and the Destruction of Socialism and the State,* Roeder, "Soviet Federalism and Ethnic Mobilization."

[87] See, for example, Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China,* Sven Steinmo, Kathleen Ann Thelen, and Frank Longstreth, *Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

oppression theories of national self-determination as applicable to the Soviet context. Ironically, the Soviet experience brought positive outcomes for many ethnic minorities, increasing the opportunities for national mobilization, as well as increased literacy and modernization for most ethnic groups. Although the Soviets also repressed several national groups, many flourished, particularly in the early years of Bolshevism. Second, efforts for political change for ethnic groups occurred through demands of regional national elites. These individuals stressed that, because of their ethnic makeup, the national republics required greater political, cultural, and economic control over their territory. In all cases, each region shared an understanding that ethnic politics in the Soviet federal system was one of central government expediency. Thirdly, the success of center-regional relationships, particularly for the national territories, depended at every stage on patronage and personalistic politics. The degree varied depending on the leadership style of the Communist Party General Secretary. However, in all cases, national regional leaders understood that their personal and regional power depended on central government politics. Thus, the Soviets manipulated the hierarchical federal status to reward and punish nationalities, particularly to create national patrons who could maintain national loyalty.

The Bolshevik Revolution, Civil War, and Power Consolidation

As the Bolsheviks began the process of creating the Soviet empire, they grappled with how to consolidate a state in the midst of minority ethno-nationalist mobilization. After the fall of the Tsarist regime and the rise of the Russian Provisional Government, many ethnic territories of the Russian Empire had begun their own movements for independence and sovereignty. Leading up to and following the Bolshevik revolution in October 1917, Bolshevik leaders sought to establish power over the territory that had

been the Russian Empire, a particularly difficult task given the unexpected rise of separatist movements by ethnic minority groups. In this regard, as in many instances in the early years of the Soviet experiment, political practicality and Marxist ideals did not intersect, and the Soviets constructed ideological mechanisms by which to grapple with any inconsistencies.

Marxist thought emphasized internationalism over nationalism, arguing that class equality would be a unifying force for varying national groups. For Lenin, inequality among ethnic groups was a symptom of the overall inequalities inherent in a capitalist system. He identified the nationalist urge with the proletarian urge to throw off the bourgeoisie: "*every* nation also processes a bourgeois culture…in the form, not merely of 'elements,' but of the *dominant* culture. Therefore, the general 'national culture' *is* the culture of landlords, the clergy and the bourgeoisie."[88] Lenin sympathized with ethnic minorities, precisely because he perceived their goals to be identical to those of his own Communist movement. Since national oppression was the work of the bourgeoisie, national minority grievances were inherently tied to the grievances of the proletariat.

In order to build his new state, Lenin needed to lure national minorities into the internationalist socialist ideal, a difficult task to do during that period of heightened ethnic mobilization and the Civil War. In practice, Lenin's approach to national minorities was to court them in an attempt to create an atmosphere of trust between the Soviets and the non-Russian nations. A key ingredient of Lenin's nationalities policy was the right of self-determination offered to non-Russians joining the Soviet realm. Although the general emphasis of Communism was to internationalize – not nationalize – the proletariat, and hence led to calls to abandon all national identification, Lenin stressed

[88] Vladimir Lenin, "Critical Remarks on the National Question," (1913).

that nationalism was part of society's evolution into socialism, arguing, "mankind can proceed towards the inevitable fusion of nations only through a transitional period of the complete freedom of all oppressed nations."[89] As such, destroying national tendencies would destroy part of this evolutionary process. Lenin proposed a more nuanced strategy: attract national groups and build trust through promises of national protection and rights of self-determination. This policy was not merely an unconventional interpretation of Marxist doctrine, but also a ploy to bring non-Russian nations into the Communist fold and expand the Soviet territories into areas lost during the early period of the Provisional Government.[90]

Lenin's self-determination policy experienced mixed success. In some cases, for example in the Caucasus, it failed to lure many non-Russian territories into the fold. Instead, as Richard Pipes has recounted, Soviet expansion in the Caucasus had much more to do with brute force than gentle persuasion. Bolshevik troops invaded territories such as the Georgia and Azerbaijan, in a strategy Richard Pipes deemed "a complete violation of the principle of national self-determination."[91] Even so, members of national organizations also saw in the Bolshevik nationality policy opportunities for their own advancement. For example, in early 1917, Josef Stalin, then the Commissar of Nationalities, used strategies of patronage and cooptation to attract non-Russians to support the Bolshevik movement during the Civil War. To do so, he placed allies to his cause into high positions in Soviet governance. In a key example, Stalin elevated the status of Tatar national leader Mulla Nur Vakhitov, previously sympathetic to the

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[89] Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* 5.
[90] Terry Martin has noted that the Soviet system was a unique colonial power, working to increase the quality of life of the colonized over that of the majority group (the Russians). Ibid. 20.
[91] Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917-1923*, Rev. ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997) 108.

Menshevik position to the Chairmanship of the Commissariat of Moslem Affairs of the Bolshevik party. Pipes notes that, despite his Menshevik loyalty, Vakhitov "abandoned his previous associates and went over to the Bolsheviks."[92] The Soviet consolidation was a process of working both inside and outside of the territory: attracting members through cooptation, manipulating internal crises, and then using external force to achieve territorial annexation.

Early Stalin Years: Nationalities Policy before World War II

Stalin's created the current system of understanding how to consolidate national minorities within in a multi-ethnic state within the successor states. Stalin's early policies brought two innovations that affect post-Soviet ethnic politics today. First, he established the hierarchical system of national territories, which gave political legitimacy to "major" ethnic groups. Second, his policy of *korenizatsiia* (indigenization) promoted, rather than diminished, ethnic differentiation and national mobilization among national minorities. Stalin envisioned both of these policies to be mechanisms by which the Soviets might co-opt the national minorities, thus consolidating Soviet power over the entirety of the former Russian empire.

Stalin extended Lenin's policy of self-determination into a system of autonomous territories for national groups. Stalin's personal philosophies of nationalism left a handprint on the development of the Soviet ethno-federal system. Stalin maintained a primordial understanding of nationalism. The Soviets adopted his definition of the nation, "a historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture."[93] Lenin worried that

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[92] Ibid. 158.

[93] Josef Vissarionovich Stalin, "Marxism and the National Question," in *The Essential Stalin*, ed. Bruce Franklin (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1919), 12.

creating a system of national autonomies would perpetuate national identities and thus stymie "the interests of proletarian class solidarity."[94] However, Stalin disagreed, contending that as long the state emphasized territory as a crucial component of autonomy, that it would preserve the interests of the nation. He argued that the territories would not be ethnically homogenous, but would include other groups, thus not erecting barriers between groups. Moreover, he argued, the regional leaders could exploit the resources of the territory itself and enhancing regional economic development, thus creating greater equality among ethnic and national groups. Thus, he concludes, "*regional autonomy is an essential element* in the solution of the national question."[95] For Stalin, territory and national identity could not be separated.

Stalin's efforts to create regional territories and enhance the influence of non-Russian nationalities were exhaustive. The hierarchy included not only regional territories, but also included villages, even soviets (socialist council groups). At that time, the hierarchy was more elaborate than the one in place in 1991. The early Stalinist configuration indicated the relative level of power each autonomy expected to hold within a unified Soviet Union. For example, Russia and Ukraine under this first arrangement received equal status of Federal Republic, the highest designation in the hierarchy. The autonomy level designated depended on the leaderships' assessment of an ethnic group's "level of indigenous national consciousness."[96] It also reflected the political processes involved in political consolidation, for example co-optation between center and region joining the Bolsheviks during the Civil War.[97] As will be demonstrated

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[94] Vladimir Illych Lenin, "The Question of Nationalities or 'Autonomisation'," in *The Lenin Anthology*, ed. Robert Tucker (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1922), 722.
[95] Stalin, "Marxism and the National Question," 81. Emphasis in the original.
[96] Robert J. Kaiser, *The Geography of Nationalism in Russia and the USSR* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994).
[97] Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917-1923*.

in the case studies in subsequent chapters, the strategy of patronage and political cooptation in exchange for entering the Soviet state often exacerbated already intense rivalries between mobilized ethnic groups.

The purpose of this effort was to reassure national minorities that they would experience no Russian imperialism or assimilation efforts on the part of the Bolshevik government, thus eradicating "the potential for defensive nationalism and the resulting ethnic conflict."[98] However, scholars have noted that the result was the opposite, in fact, led to greater mobilizatoin as Lenin had warned. Terry Martin argued,

> drawing tens of thousands of national borders forced every village and every individual to declare a national loyalty. It mobilized ethnic groups to forestall the possibility to becoming a national minority after those borders had been drawn. For these and other reasons, national soviets in fact called forth an enormous increase in ethnic mobilization, as well as a considerable growth in ethnic conflict.[99]

With their nationalities policy, the Soviets created a tension that exists in current ethnic politics in the successor states: national regional autonomy and territory are considered necessary to create a welcoming and non-imperialistic environment for national minorities. However, this designation left complexities: few of the new territories were ethnically homogenous. Plus, the hierarchical system meant that the Soviets decided that some groups "deserved" more political and economic advantages than other groups. The process of boundary drawing was fraught not only with the political issues involved with the process, but with the practical problems as well. The Soviets sought to integrate cultures that did not respond readily to territorialization: the nomadic Central Asian nationalities relied on seasonal migrations for subsistence, and had tribal identities that did not correspond well to Stalin's national theory. Although the

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[98] Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* 33.
[99] Ibid.

groups had some historical and ethnic linkages to one another, they spoke numerous related dialects. Without territoral nor strict cultural divisions, they were not easily organized into autonomies. Even so, "the Bolsheviks were keen to foster national identities and loyalty among all the peoples of the Soviet republics, and the logical conclusion of this approach was the division of Central Asia into separate groups, each of which would have its own language, territory, and culture."[100]

By systematizing the process to include all national minorities, the Soviets fostered ethnic mobilization and ethnic separatism. Crafting governing institutions based on national identity, the Soviets created a mechanism whereby national status legitimized a groups' political ties to that territory, and diminished the role for any other national minorities existing in that territory. Terry Martin argued the consequent growth of national mobilization for the new territories: "Once even the small number of villages composing a village soviet were granted a formal ethnic status, minorities were almost inevitably viewed as a foreign presence. This could and did lead to demands for expulsion."[101]

Stalin's efforts extended into regional and village policies. Stalin's nationalities policy of *korenizatsiia*, or indigenization, created systems of dual language literacy, establishing native language schools that included a Russian language component. This allowed non-Russians to maintain (or in most cases, enhance) their own native language literacy without losing the economic and political benefit of learning Russian. *Korenizatsiia* enhanced a sense among national groups that their territorial homeland was fixed, and at the same time improved socioeconomic development by raising levels of

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[100] Jeremy Smith, *The Bolsheviks and the National Question, 1917-23*, *Studies in Russia and East Europe* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999) 83.
[101] Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* 42.

education, economy, and political sophistication. The Soviets extended *korenizatsiia* into policies that helped perpetuate national identity, for example, creating written languages where none existed before.[102] Native language publications within the territories expanded drastically. (See Table 3.1). Not only did the Soviets expand their support for non-Russian publications, they prioritized education within the system, arguing that this would bring the peasantry and those from "backward" territories equal to those who had experienced more advanced economic development. Consequently, much attention was paid to creating literacy for the ethnic territories, both in their native language and Russian. Literacy rates for all nationalities rose dramatically after the installation of the Soviet education system.[103] The combination of *korenizatsiia* and national territorialization, with enhanced modernization linked with cultural identity, gave national groups more incentives for national political activity and continued ethnic mobilization.

Table 3.1 Book Publication in the USSR, 1913-1937*[104]

	Number of Titles			Number of Copies		
Language	1913	1928-1932	1933-1937	1913	1928-1932	1933-1937
Russian	90.9	65.2	70.2	91.9	77.2	76.6
Non-Russian	6.0	32.0	26.9	4.9	21.8	22.1
Foreign	3.1	2.8	2.9	1.7	1.0	1.3

*Percent by language of publication

Stalin's economic policies of industrialization and collectivization greatly impacted the ethnic minorities. These policies, ruthlessly pursued by the Bolsheviks, aimed at eradicating class differences within the state and propelling the Soviet economy into an industrial powerhouse capable not only of spurring international communism by

[102] Kaiser, *The Geography of Nationalism in Russia and the USSR* 126.
[103] Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939.*
[104] Kaiser, *The Geography of Nationalism in Russia and the USSR* 128.

example, but also competing with capitalist states. Urbanization was thrust upon the national territories, modernizing the non-Russian populations as well as the Russians. The urbanization process did not occur for all nationalities equally, however. Central Asian populations tended to remain more agrarian than their Slavic and Caucasian brethren. (See Table 3.2)

The multi-pronged *korenizatsiia* had many goals, one of which was to create national elite cadres to govern "their own home republics according to the tenants of Marxism-Leninism and the wishes of the central authorities."[105] As with *korenizatsiia* in the processes of industrialization, the political form of *korenizatsiia* extended party membership of non-Russian minorities. Not only did party membership rise, but Moscow ensured that titular minorities would get the top leadership positions within the regional republics. However, titular national leaders were often paired with Russian deputies.[106]

Table 3.3 indicates the distribution of ethnic elite structure among the autonomous republic secretariats, 1954-1976. The Soviet rule of thumb for republican national leadership gave the top post to a Party member from the titular nation. The second in command generally was Russian. This political aspect of *korenizatsiia*, according to Kaiser, was "a method of coopting potential nationalist leaders." Kaiser noted further that by creating an institutional mechanism for bringing national elites into the system, this cooptation was "probably crucial to the survival of the USSR."[107]

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[105] Ibid. 132.
[106] Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, *Decline of an Empire: The Soviet Socialist Republics in Revolt* (New York: Newsweek Books, 1980) 125-27.
[107] Kaiser, *The Geography of Nationalism in Russia and the USSR* 132.

Table 3.2 Urban Population of the USSR, by Nation and Republic, 1926-1959*[108]

	Home Republic			Nation		
Nation/Home Republic	1926	1959	Percentage Point Change	1926	1959	Percentage Point Change
Russian	14.0	44.8	40.8	15.7	46.5	30.8
Ukrainian	13.0	33.5	20.5	6.8	28.8	22.0
Belorussian	8.6	21.1	12.5	5.3	23.1	17.8
Uzbek	17.2	28.5	11.3	13.8	17.5	3.7
Kazakh	5.6	34.3	28.7	1.3	17.7	16.4
Georgian	15.5	34.4	18.9	7.1	28.8	21.7
Azerbaijan	23.1	40.4	17.3	12.0	28.8	16.8
Lithuanian	11.8	24.4	12.6	7.6	21.6	14.0
Moldavian	8.5	15.2	6.7	5.8	8.0	2.2
Latvian	25.8	38.3	12.5	23.0	32.2	9.2
Kirgiz	8.3	24.1	15.8	1.1	6.5	5.4
Tadzhik	7.4	20.5	13.1	11.5	13.7	2.2
Armenian	12.1	41.0	28.9	23.8	46.3	22.5
Turkmen	7.3	29.7	22.4	0.4	16.2	15.8
Estonian	23.2	39.0	15.8	21.1	32.5	11.4
Karelian	6.5	34.3	27.8	1.5	16.8	15.3
Komi	0.0	41.0	41.0	1.3	18.7	17.4
Mari	0.0	18.9	18.9	0.3	6.4	6.1
Mordvin	1.4	11.6	10.2	1.6	21.2	19.6
Chuvash	2.6	18.6	16.0	1.0	14.1	13.1
Tatar	7.6	34.6	27.0	10.1	38.7	286
Dagestan	7.3	26.8	19.5	2.7	15.0	12.3
Kabardin-Balkar	0.0	27.7	27.7	0.4	9.0	8.6
Kalmuk	0.0	12.5	12.5	0.7	11.5	10.8
North Ossetian	29.8	49.8	20.0	6.0	29.3	23.3
Chechen-Ingush	16.9	36.8	19.9	1.0	7.8	6.8
Bashkir	5.8	32.7	26.9	1.3	14.6	13.3
Udmurt	10.5	37.6	27.1	0.6	15.8	15.2
Buryat	11.6	26.0	14.4	0.6	10.4	9.8
Tuvin	---	20.0	-	--	5.4	--
Yakut	0.0	15.3	15.3	0.0	5.2	5.2
Abkhaz	10.7	27.1	14.4	2.6	20.0	17.4
Karakalpak	0.0	14.8	14.8	0.0	10.7	10.7
Russian	14.0	44.8	30.8	15.7	46.5	30.8
Non-Russian	11.8	31.1	19.3	9.8	26.9	17.1
Total USSR	13.3	38.2	24.9			

* Data presented as percentage.

[108] Ibid. 201-02.

Table 3.3 National Composition of the Secretariats, 1954-1976[109]

Posts	Russians		Nationals		Total
	Absolute Figure	%	Absolute Figure	%	Absolute Figure
Union Republic 1st Secretary	6	4.8	38	28.4	44
Union Republic 2nd Secretary	48	38.4	25	18.6	73
Auton. Republic 1st Secretary	28	22.4	38	28.4	66
Auton. Republic 2nd Secretary	43	34.4	33	24.6	76
Total	125	100	134	100	259

Ethnic territories, once created, were not necessarily stable or protected from changes initiated by Moscow. Such changes generally included some change along the hierarchy of levels of territorial autonomy (for example, a downgrade from union republic to autonomous republic status), or a border change. In 1934 Stalin unified the formerly separate Chechen and Ingush Autonomous Regions into one region, a downgrade for each of the ethnic groups, since a designation of territory signified political legitimacy for that group. In 1936, he promoted Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan (then autonomous republics) into full Union Republic status. In the 1936 Soviet constitution he downgraded the Abkhazian Union Republic into an Autonomous Region, under the jurisdiction of Georgia. As a result of these somewhat arbitrary changes, the regional leaders came to understand that the whims of the Party leaders in Moscow could drastically affect their political and economic position. This enhanced incentives to

[109] Carrère d'Encausse, *Decline of an Empire: The Soviet Socialist Republics in Revolt* 143.

develop and maintain patronage relationships with the central government – a process begun by Stalin himself.

The early establishment of the Soviet institutional system provided early precedents for current politics. The politics of Soviet power consolidation led the Soviets to set aside ideological dogmatism in favor of political expediency – instead of affirming the international aspects of socialism, the Lenin and Stalin settled for a project of enhanced nationalism, an anti-colonialism designed to attract non-Russians into the Soviet state. Stalin used patronage and personal rewards as incentives for national leaders to entice local populations to accede to Soviet power. The institutional structure and *korenizatsiia* policy led to the marriage of ethnic identity with territory socioeconomic development, enhancing national mobilization.

Stalin's Drive for Unification: The Purges and Nationalities policy

Despite the stated commitment to diversity and enhanced ethnic awareness of the *korenizatsiia* policy, the Soviet Union under Stalin also engaged in extensive programs of ethnic cleansing, and, in the late 1930s and after World War II, Russification efforts that dismantled parts of the *korenizatsiia* program. These two programs demonstrate the power of the Soviet ethnic territorialization and the vulnerability of the national territories during the purges.

The ethnic cleansing policies stemmed in part from a fundamental disconnect in Soviet philosophy regarding ethnic minorities. In the early years of the country, the leadership concentrated on power consolidation and an anti-imperial message; although this had the effect of heightening ethnic mobilization, it also dove-tailed nicely with the international message of socialism. However, by promoting the *korenizatsiia* policy through the national territories, the Soviets institutionalized national mobilization. Not

only did they permanently construct ethnic differentiation, but they also armed the ethnic minorities with education and greater affluence with which to advance their regional interests. This policy contradicted the Soviet ideal of creating a collective identity that would one day dissolve national and class distinctions in favor of the proletarian state.

Second, the nationalization policies created consequences that preyed on Stalin's distrust of foreigners. The *korenizatsiia* policy attracted immigration by ethnic minorities from neighboring countries, in particular Koreans from neighboring Japan.[110] Stalin deeply distrusted external forces he perceived to be influencing Soviet policy. This distrust and the policies it engendered departed from the spirit of *korenizatsiia*. The first policies of ethnic cleansing targeted diasporic ethnic groups: the Koreans (1937), the Finns (1941), and the Germans (1941). As with most ethnic cleansing efforts in the Soviet Union, the emphasis was on deportation into less territorially strategic areas of the country, in particular Central Asia.

The deportations of diaspora groups coincided with the invasion of Russia by Hitler and Russia's subsequent involvement in World War II. The deportation of the Germans occured as a direct result of the emergence of Hitler's Germany as an enemy power. Stalin considered the Soviet Union's sizeable German population to be a threat to state security, viewing German dominated territories as "areas of potential spies and diversionists."[111] As the war continued, Stalin continued to deport ethnic groups deemed to be traitorous, forcibly moving over 3 million national minorities. In addition to the diasporic communities, targeted ethnic minorities included the Chechens, Ingush, Kalmyks, Karachays, Balkars, and Crimean Tatars. With these deportation efforts, the

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[110] Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* 316-17.
[111] J. Otto Pohl, *Ethnic Cleansing in the USSR, 1937-1949* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999) 27.

Soviets argued that these groups had collaborated with German troops. Although in isolated cases, members of these declared "enemy nations" had in fact fought alongside German soldiers against Soviet troops, such efforts were not part of an active and consolidated national political message by any of the targeted groups.

Ironically, the policies of *korenizatsiia* helped the Soviets mobilize their deportation efforts. The systematic and comprehensive census records, as well as the territorialization of ethnic minorities, helped the Soviets locate members of targeted groups for punishment. In addition to the deportations of entire national groups, the Soviet regime also revoked these groups' national status, in essence revoking any claims to ethnic legitimacy within the Soviet system. When regional status was removed, the resulting land was given to other territories, in the case of Chechno-Ingushetia, split between Dagestan, North Ossetia, Georgia, and parts of the Stavropol region in Russia. Deportees' homes were granted to new families, often as a mechanism to reward the loyalty and support of the other regional group.

Even before World War II, more extensively afterward, the Soviets began removing some of the special programs of the *korenizatsiia* program. These changes manifested themselves in particular with Russification programs. Soviet policy no longer favored the anti-imperial approach that favored the national minorities; rather, Stalin proclaimed the Russians to be the "older brother" of the smaller national groups. Russification first took place in the Russian Republic, in particular with regard to educational and cultural teaching for diasporic and other non-Russian groups without territorial status.[112] At the same time, Stalin condensed the administrative system of 1932 (with nine categories of ethnic territorialization, down to village identities) into one with

[112] Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* 410.

four categories of ethnic autonomy, adopted in 1938. This system closely resembled that in place when the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991. Moreover, as Martin notes, the Soviets eliminated regional administrative positions defining nationality policy, including the national departments for krais, oblasts, and republics, as well as the special representatives for autonomous oblasts and republics.[113]

Stalin's legacy for the minority nations contained several contradictions. On one hand, his policies promoted ethnic mobilization and individual prestige for favored leaders, offering legitimization in the form of territorial status. On the other hand, however, Stalin's xenophobia and the structure of the system brought devastation to many groups that were targeted as enemy nations during the period of the Terror. The state-building years of the Soviet Union created a system where ethnic identity and territory legitimacy were linked, but not impervious to politics. As the political reach of groups waned, they became vulnerable to the arbitrary machinations of those at the top of the system. Ethnic territories understood their own survival in terms of central politics.

Khrushchev and Brezhnev: Seeking Policy Stability, Finding Clients

Although Khrushchev and Brezhnev departed from Stalin's totalitarian policies, they did not substantially change the Soviet nationality system. Both preserved the linkage between territory and ethnic legitimacy. Both extended the political nature of relations of ethnic regions and Moscow. In particular, Brezhnev created a system of entrenched clientelistic networks that perpetuated corruption and stagnation within the system. These networks extended into ethnic autonomies and dominated policies in these regions. Consequently, the post-Stalin arrangement of national territories as the legitimate

[113] Ibid. 412.

actors in ethnic politics and patronage being the currency of center-regional exchanges remained intact.

Khrushchev initiated a change in nationalities policy in his secret speech to the 20th Party Congress. This speech, notable for its repudiation of Stalin and his "vile" policies, mentioned by name many of those nationalities deported en masse by the Stalinist regime in 1942, and linking the deportations with Stalin's "sickly suspicious" character.[114] Khrushchev's revision of Soviet nationality policy followed this rhetoric. He rehabilitated the punished nations and reestablished their autonomous status, thus recreating Chechno-Ingushetia, adding the Balkar name once again to Kabardino-Balkaria. These changes, while welcome to the nations involved, became problematic in practice. Families who were given the deportees' abandoned homes protected the changes. Some deportees left their exile ahead of their scheduled time, expecting to move into their previous homes, and finding themselves homeless upon their return home. Such events forced a faster transition into the regions than anticipated by the authorities. Some of those who received the dissolved territory of the deported groups protested the change, in some cases calling for a return to the Stalinist policies.[115] With the exception of the Crimean Tatars, only those groups that had autonomous status prior to the deportations were rehabilitated by Khrushchev; two groups without territorial autonomy, the Germans and the Meskhetian Turks, remained in exile.

The initial years of the Khrushchev regime saw renewed Soviet efforts solidifying the policies of *korenizatsiia*. The policies of Russification popular in the latter Stalin years were relaxed, and the autonomies began to appeal for more aggressive native

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[114] Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev, "Special Report to the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union," (1956).
[115] Bohdan Nahaylo and Victor Swoboda, *Soviet Disunion: A History of the Nationalities Problem in the USSR*, 1st American ed. (New York: Free Press, 1990) 125-26.

language policies. For example, in 1956, Azerbaijan added an amendment to the republic's constitution establishing Azeri as its official language. In Kirghizia, a new policy created a requirement for Kirghiz language training in all Russian language schools.[116] Policy changes under Khrushchev gave national autonomies greater control over cultural and economic programs within their titular regions. The promotion of national elites into high-level republic positions accompanied these changes. Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone notes that, "greater local control over personnel policies within the republics resulted in a relative increase in the ratio of local functionaries in key party and government bodies…"[117]

Two Khrushchevian policies presaged Gorbachev's later reforms, and provide insight into the role of nationality in Soviet reform processes. Both Khrushchev and Gorbachev utilized de-Stalinization campaigns in order to procure reform in the system. By criminalizing those who perpetrated the worst of Stalin's crimes, Khrushchev could purge those who did not support his platform and fill the empty elite slots with his partisans. Moreover, post-Stalin reforms, both political and economic, had impact on how ethnic politics would work in the new era. Khrushchev's policy of *Ottepel'* (the Thaw) opened up society to respond to Stalin's crimes, creating a sense of greater openness, though it was largely state controlled. Khrushchev also embarked in an extensive overhaul of the elites, both Russian and non-Russian. This extended elite competition enhanced the ability of national elites to act within the system, particularly with regard to economic reforms, creating new kinds of ties between center and region.

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[116] Ibid. 123.

[117] Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone, "The Study of Ethnic Politics in the USSR," in *Nationalism in the USSR and Eastern Europe in the Era of Brezhnev and Kosygin*, ed. George W. Simmonds (Detroit: University of Detroit Press, 1977), 31.

Khrushchev's political reforms were matched with an economic reform, *sovnarkhozy*, designed to de-centralize and streamline the inefficient and highly centralized economic system. *Sovnarkhozy* created a new economic administration, located in regional territories. Kaiser notes that new system heightened economic autarky for the individual regional leaders, because "elites in each *sovnarkhoz* attempted to use the resources at their command to satisfy the needs of their own industries and population."[118] Kaiser argues that the linkage of economic reform with regional territories enhanced the indigenization of economic, as well as political, structures. In Georgia and Estonia, for example, the economic bureaucracies during the *sovnarkhozy* reform became staffed almost exclusively with members of the titular national groups.[119] This heightened the role of regional elites in determining local economic allocations. In particular, it strengthened the linkage between economic administration and ethnic identity, with national leaders interpreting their extended role in the economic and political affairs of their region as a primordial right, and seeking further influence in the Khrushchevian decentralized system. This enhanced national identity and gave national mobilization local flavor: instead of national identity located in top down politics, the territories experienced bottom-up politics, at least as local cadres maneuvered for more rights from the center.

The political change, however, was not democratic nor was it permanent. After the 20th party congress and the initiation of the de-Stalinization campaign, in 1956, Khrushchev began to direct policy toward greater cultural unification. In particular, he extended efforts to assimilate national populations through processes of Russification,

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[118] Kaiser, *The Geography of Nationalism in Russia and the USSR* 331.
[119] Ibid. 330-32.

particularly through language reforms. [120] In addition to continued Russification policies, Khrushchev sped up the realization of communism in the Soviet Union, calling for Soviet citizens to work toward this final achievement by 1980. The finalization of communism in the Soviet Union meant, among other things, that Lenin's initial plan of creating internationalism through enhanced nationalism must be completed. That is, to achieve the erasure of "bourgeois" national identity into a purely Bolshevik identity. In the Party Platform of the 22nd Party Congress, Khrushchev announced: "The solution of the national question is one of the greatest achievements of socialism….Socialist society has not only ensured the political equality of nations but has also abolished the economic and cultural backwardness inherited from the old system." He then noted, "Relying on mutual fraternal aid, and above all aid from the great Russian people, all the Soviet national republics have created their own modern industry, trained their own national cadres of the working class and intelligentsia, and developed cultures that are national in form and socialist in content."[121] Thus, the Communist Party announced success in terms of creating a regime where international goals, i.e., the goals of socialism, overwhelming the interests of individual nations. In terms of policy, this meant that the Party would support the realization of "an international culture common to all the Soviet nations."[122]

Khrushchev's reform policies provide an interesting parallel to the later Gorbachev reforms, because they were so similar and had similar (albeit milder) results, for the politics in the national territories. Khrushchev's reforms on the political, elite, and economic level created an atmosphere where national leaders had greater agency within

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[120] Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin, *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) 16.
[121] "The Draft of the Party Program- 1," *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, Vol. XIII, No. 28, 6. (Originally in *Pravda* and *Izvestia*, July 30, 1-9)
[122] Nahaylo and Swoboda, *Soviet Disunion: A History of the Nationalities Problem in the USSR*.

the system. Moreover, his economic policies extended throughout his tenure in office, even though the early opening of cultural politics waned in favor of the more assimilationist approach during the Russification campaign of the late 1950s and early 1960s. These changes marked the beginning of a period where national politics were no longer imposed from the top, as under Stalin and Lenin, but rather from the national cadres below.[123]

Brezhnev's ouster of Khrushchev in 1964 signified a new generation of elites moving into Soviet power. Brezhnev's popularity, particularly in the early years, was due to his efforts to stabilize the Soviet system and end the often adventurous and risky reforms of the Khrushchev regime. As such, Brezhnev emphasized stability in the elite cadres, both with Russian and non-Russian leaders, and signaled to the Soviet elite that they would be rewarded for adhering to the party line.

In order to maintain "stability in the cadres," as well as to avoid the loss of prestige that brought about Khrushchev's ouster, Brezhnev quickly to consolidated power within the party and government. He did so through the construction of an elite cadre made up of his own protégés. According to John Willerton, this style of recruitment "began almost immediately upon Brezhnev's selection as party leader, and it continued throughout his tenure."[124] A result of this emphasis, note Evan Mawdsley and Stephen White, was increased nepotism and a new cult of personality surrounding Brezhnev and his family, particularly outside of Moscow: "Abuse of office, within as well as outside the Brezhnev family, became increasingly frequent; and in the outlying and non-Russian

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[123] Michael Martin and eds. Lee C. McIntyre, *Readings in the Philosophies of Social Science* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994).
[124] Willerton, *Patronage and Politics in the USSR* 54.

areas entire networks of 'family circles' developed around long-serving first secretaries."[125]

For national leaders, Brezhnev's support meant greater possibilities of advancement through the *nomenklatura* system. A party member could only advance into higher positions in the Party and government by achieving leadership positions designated for advancement. First Secretaries of Republican Communist Party cadres could be promoted into central positions in the Central Committee, for example, and then up into the ranks of the Secretariat or Politburo. Thus former Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze entered into high-level politics, moving into the Central Committee from his position as First Secretary of the Georgian Communist Party. In his assessment of patronage politics in the Brezhnev era, Willerton observes that while few of the autonomous republics' elite cadres moved into high-level central government positions, Brezhnev clients in the national territories maintained their own "entourage of protégés," heavily influential "within their own regional settings." Even so, he argues, during the Brezhnev years, only patronage could provide advancement for non-Russian (or non-Slavic) leaders: "only the non-Russians directly working with Brezhnev – those who were his protégés – had any real opportunity to advance into top national positions."[126]

For non-Slavs, particularly those with a nationally designated territory, the Soviet experience until Gorbachev's tenure had three main lessons. The first was that their legitimacy as ethnic and national groups was expressed through territory. The policy of autonomization, despite the arbitrary nature of the hierarchical administrative assignment, had a lasting influence on how titular groups within the national territories understood

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[125] Mawdsley and White, *The Soviet Elite from Lenin to Gorbachev: The Central Committee and Its Members, 1917-1991* 168-69.
[126] Willerton, *Patronage and Politics in the USSR* 60.

their political and cultural standing, both vis-à-vis the imperial power (the Russians) as well as national minorities within the territories. With the former, the role of modernization and *korenizatsiia* expanded ethnic identity and awareness to such an extent that "proved a recipe for the subjective perception of empire."[127]

Second, leaders in national republics also understood that the status of their republic lay in Moscow politics. The process of Soviet power consolidation was contingent on political expediency, on Lenin and Stalin's ability to attract national groups into the Bolshevik ideal. The national territorial legitimation above, therefore, was determined politically by central government leaders and could be revoked or altered in response to either perceived group behavior or even central government power politics. Thus while Stalin deported the Chechens and Ingush and, as part of a de-Stalinization campaign, Khrushchev rehabilitated them and returned their territorial legitimacy.

The final lesson, one present throughout the Soviet system but enhanced during Brezhnev, was that particularly for the non-Russian leadership, patronage became the only way to advance within the Soviet *nomenklatura* system. Brezhnev's attempt to maintain the stability of the Soviet state through patronage and clientelistic politics would be mimicked later by Boris Yeltsin, providing national elites with a familiar environment for center-periphery interaction.

"Freeing" the nationalities: Gorbachev's reforms and elite competition

Many studies have unpacked and repacked the politics of the Soviet dissolution, looking variously at the role of Communist ideology,[128] interelite central politics, [129] and

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[127] Suny and Martin, *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin* 82.
[128] Martin E. Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia, 1917-1991* (New York: Free Press, 1994).
[129] Lane and Ross, *The Transition from Communism to Capitalism: Ruling Elites from Gorbachev to Yeltsin.*

national separatism.[130] Rather than surveying this literature, this project examines the changing politics of center-periphery relations with regard to Gorbachev's policies, and the political dynamics that framed both the process of Soviet state collapse and the initiation of state-building among the successor states. This section examines how Gorbachev's reforms, characterized by economic decentralization and expansion of elite cadres, affected national politics. These reforms broke the patronage connections created by years of the Soviet national territorial system. They allowed new national elites into the system, offereing them mechanisms to take advantage of the weakening Soviet state. The leaders of the national territories found that Gorbachev was not as willing as his predecessors to repress escalating autonomy demands, and took advantage of this "weakness."

Given the scope of Gorbachev's reforms, the increasing ability of national elites to penetrate the widening and more competitive elite cadres, and the seventy-year history of practicing ethnic politics through the structure of national territorialization, many scholars point to this construction as crucial to the demise of the post-Communist federal states. In her analysis of state dissolution in Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and the Soviet Union, Valerie Bunce argues that the states' institutional structure helped define the interests of elite actors within a weakened state system. Federal structures based on nationality, she argues "put into place the necessary conditions for the rise of nations and nationalist movements in the peripheral units."[131] In her view, it is not surprising that only those states that had some kind of federal institutional structure experienced actual

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[130] Mark R. Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
[131] Bunce, *Subversive Institutions: The Design and the Destruction of Socialism and the State* 39.

state dismemberment – Yugoslavia into five countries, the Soviet Union into fifteen successor states, and Czechoslovakia's velvet divorce in 1993.

Like Khrushchev before him, Gorbachev inherited a country he believed was in massive need of reform. Also like Khrushchev, Gorbachev's initial efforts involved changing the elite structure of the system. One key factor for elite turnover was the aging state of the Brezhnev elite. Famously octogenarian, the Politburo from Brezhnev to Gorbachev had been stable and relatively unchanging. Gorbachev's *glasnost'* and democratization reforms enlarged the pool of elites from the clientelistic Brezhnev era, as well as did the economic decentralization program, *khozraschet*, that accompanied the *perestroika* reforms. Death and illness created gaps in the once static elite core, providing Gorbachev with a mechanism to construct a supportive Politburo. From 1985-1990, Gorbachev brought in twenty-one new Politburo members, appointing three to four new members per year. By 1988, he had eradicated all of the Brezhnevites from the Politburo.[132]

The changing face of the Soviet elite created avenues for new elite power structures to develop. David Lane and Cameron Ross argue that changes in the Politburo's composition and political role helped bring about the collapse of the Communist Party as the leader of governance in the Soviet Union. The Soviet elite had traditionally been split into to two ruling arenas: the Communist Party, the leader of policy, and the government itself, which enacted Party decisions. Throughout Soviet history, the Party ruled the government, and although an individual Party member could hold party and government positions concurrently, the Party position carried greater power and prestige. Thus the leader of the Soviet Union was both the General Secretary

[132] Lane and Ross, *The Transition from Communism to Capitalism: Ruling Elites from Gorbachev to Yeltsin,* Mawdsley and White, *The Soviet Elite from Lenin to Gorbachev: The Central Committee and Its Members, 1917-1991.*

of the Communist Party, its highest position, but also the Premier of the Soviet Union, the highest in the Soviet government.

Gorbachev's political reforms created two processes of elite change. First, he undermined the Party power, lessening the impact of the Politburo by diluting its membership, moving those who held significant government power into the newly created governing body, the Presidential Council. Gorbachev split the Politburo into two groups, moving the most senior members into the Presidential Council, leaving the Politburo entirely made up of Secretaries of the autonomies and regions. Thus, the Politburo "was no longer a site in which the major interests in Soviet society were represented." Because of the move to a drastically diverse body, the Politburo became a forum for national disagreements of the day. Lane and Ross contend that because of the new membership of the Politburo, their inexperience, lack of power, and lack of commitment to state-level questions, the Politburo became a body interested in disparate local politics, over which they had little control. Consequently, when the national crises emerged during the period of *glasnost*, for example greater autonomy demands, "the Politburo could no longer be seen to be a unifying or consensus-building body, and now was reduced to a highly disparate and conflict-ridden body."[133] Gorbachev's revocation of Article 6 of the Soviet Constitution, which had proclaimed the Communist Party as the only legitimate party in the Soviet Union, further undermined the power not only of the Politburo, but also of other central Party leaders.

Concomitant with the changes within the Communist Party and the composition of its ruling bodies, Gorbachev expanded the once narrow elite pool, enlarging the elite bodies at the top and creating the quasi-legislative Congress of Peoples Deputies, an

[133] Ibid., 34-36.

elected body for which Party membership was not required. The opening of new leadership positions, unencumbered by Party requirements and aided by the policies of *glasnost'*, enticed a new generation of elites to seek power in the system. As Jack Snyder has argued, such change, without democratic institutions and media norms that structure and temper radicalism, increases nationalist rhetoric, as new elites (or old elites re-establishing themselves in the new system) attempt to attract new constituencies:

> All nationalist elites have some incentive to propound ideas that exaggerate the threat emanating from rival nations and also the benefits that will flow from rallying the nation to contain that threat. Such ideas, if they can be made persuasively, facilitate collective action by members of the community.[134]

Regional leaders varied in their response to the opening of new political arenas. In the Union Republics, particularly in the Caucasus and the Baltics, the Republican Party Secretaries stepped down amidst elections. In Georgia, Jumbar Patiashvili resigned in favor of a governing council. The head of the Council, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, became the popularly elected leader of Georgia, even before the country became independent. In the Baltics, leaders began rejecting the structure of Soviet institutions. For example, the Lithuanian delegation in the Congress of Peoples deputies staged a walk-out during a discussion recreating Soviet unity.[135]

In addition to the political reforms, the decentralizing politics of *perestroika* helped frame political debate, particularly for the national territories. Paralleling Khrushchev's *sovnarkhozy* reforms, Gorbachev's *khozraschet* (economic-self-management) reform decentralized the economic bureaucracy by endowing managers and regional leaders with economic authority. National leaders eagerly accepted this new authority, interpreting this new reform as a crucial component to extending their national

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[134] Snyder, 49-50

[135] Nahaylo and Swoboda, *Soviet Disunion: A History of the Nationalities Problem in the USSR* 323.

autonomy. Kaiser observes that in "the Baltic republics in particular, regional *khozraschet* was interpreted by nationalist elites to mean indigenous control over all economic production in the republic."[136] Soviet scholars of the time worried that *khozraschet* would become a tool for separatism, bemoaning "the linkage of the solution of the nationalities problems with the principles of the economic division of the territory of the country."[137] As the politics of reform continued, *khozraschet*, although not intended as such, became indelibly linked with national autonomy.

The Soviet collapse was a dynamic process that caused considerable confusion regarding power roles among political units, institutions and elites. The weakening of the state, particularly the lack of its ability and interest in repressing national movements, demonstrated to the newly emerging elites, particularly in the national territories, that they could utilize nationalist demands to their advantage. Responding to a survey conducted by Lane and Ross, Soviet elites reported that regional leaders played the most significant role in the rise of nationalist and separatist politics in the Soviet Union, ranking regional leaders higher than regional movements, and Western influence.[138] In expanding the elite base, Gorbachev had compromised the patronage structures that arguably had kept the government's constituent parts consolidated.

Ethnic regions, armed with high levels of political mobilization, territory, and administrative institutionalization, succeeded much more in their efforts to increase regional status and power than their non-ethnic counterparts. Ethno-federal elites were much better able to act collectively to exact concessions from central governments. This is evident not only in the character of the Soviet collapse itself – in part a mass secession

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[136] Kaiser, *The Geography of Nationalism in Russia and the USSR.*
[137] B.S. Khorev, "Economic Decentralization and Regionalism," *Soviet Geography* 31 (1990): 511.
[138] Lane and Ross, *The Transition from Communism to Capitalism: Ruling Elites from Gorbachev to Yeltsin* 98.

by ethnic units, but also in Russia's post-communist center-periphery relations. Ethnic regions were more likely than non-ethnic units to mobilize mass populations and elite interests to overcome any collective action problems.[139]

NATIONAL TERRITORIES AND THE SUCCESSOR STATES

Russia and Georgia: Re-Consolidation of National Territories

When the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991, ethnic regions emerged as power players. Russian President Boris Yeltsin led the Russian secession movement against the USSR and triumphed. Like Lenin and Stalin in the early years, Yeltsin sought to re-create the former empire by coopting the regional leaders, famously announcing in Kazan, the capital of Tatarstan, that the regions should "take all that you can swallow," from the Soviet system. His immediate strategy for power maintenance was to co-opt regional governors. Rather than creating a static system of center-peripheral relations, Yeltsin engaged in bi-lateral bargaining with separate regions, creating asymmetrical power arrangements, allowing varying levels of autonomy.

The regions in turn made various political and economic demands from the central government. Many regions exacted powerful concessions from the central government, but the ethnic regions had the most success. Both Bashkortostan and Tatarstan received extensive federal credits, as well as taxation freedom for key natural resource extraction and production industries and alcohol revenue. Other regions fared poorly in their efforts. Chechnya, using stronger rhetoric than Tatarstan, declared independence but also engaged in some negotiation with the central government

[139] Roeder, "Soviet Federalism and Ethnic Mobilization.", Treisman, "Russia's 'Ethnic Revival': The Separatist Activism of Regional Leaders in a Postcommunist Order."

regarding revenue from oil production. These negotiations dissolved, replaced by continuous and ruthless violent conflict.

Georgia's experience also betrays the continuing impact of the Soviet institutional structure. The Georgian central government at first sought to consolidate power by ending the Soviet federal legacy. The Georgians preferred the unitary system in part because they viewed the national territories, particularly South Ossetia, as part of a Soviet imperial pattern, and partly as a method to mobilize the population into to concurrent independence movement. In 1990, even before their independence, the Georgian parliament dissolved the South Ossetian territory; South Ossetian regional leaders appealed to the Soviets, sparking a Georgian incursion in the territory and subsequent fighting. Soviet, and later, Russian, troops intervened, and a ceasefire was established in the region. Regional and central leaders reached no political settlement.

The experience in South Ossetia forced the Georgian government to reconsider its anti-federalization platform with regard to the remaining national territories, Ajara and Abkhazia. Yeltsin-style negotiations evolved between the regional leaders and the Georgian government, at first under Gamsakhurdia, and after his ouster, President Eduard Shevardnadze. Like the Chechen experience, the Abkhazian situation degenerated into open war. However, Ajaran leaders managed to extract generous conditions for political and economic autonomy, eventually creating a political system openly defiant of the Georgian constitution, and hoarding lucrative border revenue. In both countries, the Soviet institutional structure affected the rhetoric and strategies of the national regional leaders.

CONCLUSION: THE POWER AND LIMITS OF THE INSTITUTIONAL EXPLANATION

The Soviet national territorial structure powerfully directed ethnic politics throughout the existence of the Soviet Union, and continues to affect ethnic politics in the successor states. However, its power falters when attempting to explain why some regions chose violence over acquiescence to state power, or the conditions of the negotiation strategies. In her examination of post-Communist ethnic politics in Czechoslovakia and the former Yugoslavia, Valerie Bunce cautions against scholars assuming institutional determinism, the concept that merely the existence of national federal institutions created necessary and sufficient conditions for separatism. The institutionally inspired break-up created circumstances where each region negotiated separately with the central government, with different demands and vastly different outcomes. Although the institutions helped determine how these bargains might be reached (between regional and central government leaders), they cannot explain the different outcomes. Noting the variation in institutional political climate and elite interests, Bunce argues that close examination of the institutional context is necessary, given that the Soviet institutional structure held within it both the power to consolidate the national territories and to provide for eventual state destruction: "to argue that institutions define interests and that actors are interest-driven is to explain in fact very little. It can only be the point of departure for studies that, by necessity, must collect a lot of data elsewhere."[140]

Even so, the institutional history of the Soviet Union provides clues for further examination of how regional leaders understood their agency in the system, as well as their constraints. Regional politics in the Soviet Union from Lenin to Gorbachev depended largely on patronage politics combined with ethnic ties to political territorial

[140] Bunce, *Subversive Institutions: The Design and the Destruction of Socialism and the State* 145.

units. The next two chapters examine key regions, assessing the interaction between ethnic demands, elite clientelism, and economic wealth as they factor into regional elite strategies for power maximization.

Chapter 4: Violent Secession from Russia and Georgia

"Every self-respecting Chechen feels he needs a machine gun."
--Anatoly Belyasov[141]

"*He will not fire the gun if he is sane. He cannot aim properly if he is insane.*"
Chechen saying[142]

Three national territories in Russia and Georgia have fought secessionist wars. In the early 1990s, Chechnya, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia fought wars with the central governments that claimed their territories. This chapter examines the processes of separatism in these three regions. I examine how patronage and economic bargaining altered the types of separatism espoused by the leaders of the national territories, indicating in particular where changes of political leadership affected bargaining strategies.

Chapter 2 offered a framework by which to understand the processes of violent ethnic separatism, as well as providing a mechanism to recognize those regions that might be more likely than others to use violent means in wars of secession. This chapter uses this framework to examine the processes through which the secessionist national territories declared and realized their autonomy interests. Table 4.1 lays out this chapter's expected values for regional separatism, based on levels of economic wealth and elite ties. Moreover, it locates different strategies over time, identifying new time points based on changes in elite structures.

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[141] Anatoly Belyasov, "The Irrepressible Joe," *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, December 12, 1992.
[142] Vladimir Yemelyanenko, "Don't Divide and Rule," *Moscow News*, October 11, 1992.

Table 4.1 Separator Expectations

	Regional Perception of Wealth	Regional Perception of Elite Ties	Expected Outcome
Chechnya$_1$ 1989-1990 (Zavgaev)	Low	High/Moderate	Low Separatism
Chechnya$_2$ 1991-1992 (Dudayev)	High	High	High Separatism
Chechnya$_3$ 1993-1994 (Dudayev)	High	Low	Low Separatism
South Ossetia 1989-1992	Low	Low	High Separatism, Violence Likely
Abkhazia$_1$ 1989-1991 (Gamsakhurdia)	High	High	High Separatism, Non-Violent
Abkhazia$_2$ 1992-	High	Low	Low Separatism

This chart lays out the theoretical expectations based on the framework introduced in chapter 2. Regions with both high levels of economic wealth and favorable elite ties with the center have the best bargaining position and thus will be more likely to follow a strategy of high level separatism, although without resorting to violence. Regions with extensive wealth but poor ties will be risk averse, seeking to protect their economic position, and will be more likely to follow low level separatist strategies, following the precedents once established, and eschewing violent measures. Likewise, regions with favorable ties but with little economic wealth will rely on nepotism, not separatism, to get ahead, and not follow risky policies that might jeopardize their favorable ties with the center. The most dangerous circumstance for violent separatism

occurs when regions lack both wealth and elite ties, a situation within which they are most likely to feel they have nothing to lose should they use violent, highly separatist strategies. This is a probabilistic condition, however, not a deterministic one.

Chechnya's strategy of separatism chiefly reflects a series of changes in patronage structure. Chechnya under Doku Zavgaev, with low expectations of economic wealth and close ties with Gorbachev, is expected to follow a low separatist strategy. Dudayev, placed in power by the Yeltsin administration and overly confident in Chechnya's waning oil resources, would be expected to follow a more aggressively separatist strategy. South Ossetia and Abkhazia, both in Georgia, fought wars with the central government, the first by South Ossetia in 1990-1991, the second by Abkhazia in 1994. South Ossetia's secession movement emerged just as the Soviet Union began to cede power to the Union Republics. The framework expects that South Ossetia, without elite ties and little economic wealth, will be the most likely to use violent means for separatist intentions. Abkhazia, separatist under the first Georgian president Zviad Gamsakhurdia, used violent means only after Eduard Shevardnadze ousted Gamsakhurdia and took power.

BETRAYING PATRONS AND PUNISHING UPSTARTS: THE CHECHEN WARS

Of the seven cases discussed in this project, Chechnya has received the most attention from scholars, journalists, and policy makers. The Chechen case dominates in part because of the extent of the bloodshed associated with the two periods of war within the last decade: at least 18,500 military deaths, tens of thousands of civilian deaths.[143] Neighboring regions and countries accepted over 100,000 Chechen refugees or internally displaced people (IDPs). In addition to the sheer human cost of the Chechen conflicts of

[143] Stephen Mulvey, *Russia's Suicide Bomb Nightmare* (BBC Online, 2004 [cited 2005]); available from news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/3020231.stm, Brian Glyn Williams, "Russo-Chechen War: A Threat to Stability in the Middle East and Eurasia?," *Middle East Policy Council Journal* 8, no. 1 (2001).

the last decade, the Chechen story itself is an entrancing one of centuries long suffering by a noble and militant people, as chronicled by Russian writers Leo Tolstoy and Mikhail Lermontov. Particularly before the outbreak of the second Chechen war in 1999 and the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, many Western scholars and journalists linked Chechen separatism to the long-standing enmity between the Chechens and Russians, brought on by Russian imperial expansion and arbitrary rule in Chechnya, beginning with the expansion of Peter the Great's army into the North Caucasus, and exacerbated by the forced deportations of the Chechens into Central Asia by Stalin after World War II.[144]

Sympathetic Western and Russian assessments of the Chechen separatist effort wavered after Chechen rebel groups moved into neighboring region Dagestan with the intent to foment rebellion and create an Islamic state that stretched to the Caspian Sea. The Chechen position suffered further when two Moscow apartment buildings collapsed due to planted bombs. Moscow authorities blamed Chechen terrorists, and soon afterward the Kremlin resurrected its military offensive against Chechnya. Some observers suspected that the apartment bombings were actually the work of the Russian security services, seeking to create motivation for a new war.[145] Even so, popular sympathy for the Chechen position faded after a Chechen hostage-taking in a Moscow theatre left at least 118 civilians dead in October 2002, and particularly after the 2004 massacre in an

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[144] See, for example, Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya: Roots of a Separatist Conflict,* Anatol Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

[145] See, for example, Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars: Will Russia Go the Way of the Soviet Union,* Shireen Hunter, Jeffrey L. Thomas, and Alexander Melikishvili, *Islam in Russia: The Politics of Identity and Security* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2004), Alexander Litvinenko and Urii Felshtinskiii, *Blowing up Russia: Terror from Within. Acts of Terror, Abductions, and Contract Killings Organized by the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation*, 1st ed. (New York: S.P.I. Books, 2002).

elementary school in Beslan, North Ossetia, where 338 people died, at least one-half of them children.[146] In both cases, Chechen rebel groups took responsibility for the events.

This study contributes to the extensive scholarship that explains the outbreak of the Chechen war. Much of this scholarship conveys a political message, emphasizing the historical tragedies visited upon the Chechen people, or vilifying the methods by which the Russian troops conducted the war.[147] However, even in the many memoirs written by journalists in the field, a crucial question emerges: was the Chechen war inevitable? Did the history and culture of the Chechen people, as well as the blatant xenophobia of the Russians, mean that the Chechen independence movement would occur, no matter the political and economic context? Was violence unavoidable?

I argue that the wars between Chechnya and Russia were not inevitable, although I concede that the particular history of Russian expansion into Chechen territory was certainly provocative. I provide a framework by which to understand Chechen regional strategies over time: the Communist leadership of Doku Zavgaev, the emergence and fall of Dzhokar Dudayev, and the Maskhadov presidency leading up to the second invasion of 1999. By dividing the analysis of regional strategy into different time periods, I can better explain the process of regional strategy and Chechen elite responses to changing circumstances and new events. Throughout this analysis, I demonstrate that two factors, perceptions of economic welath and patronage relationships (or the lack thereof) were the most important for the strategy of Chechen leaders in establishing their power relationship vis-à-vis the Russian central state, as well as the Russian response.

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[146] Andrew Jack, "Russia Wins One Bloody Battle but the War Goes On," *Financial Times*, October 28, 2002, Steven Lee Meyers, "Besieged Russians Must Unite, Putin Says," *New York Times*, September 6, 2004.

[147] Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya: Roots of a Separatist Conflict,* Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars: Will Russia Go the Way of the Soviet Union,* Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power,* Valery Aleksandrovich Tishkov, *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in and after the Soviet Union: The Mind Aflame* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1997).

Who are the Chechens?

Chechnya[148] rests north of the Caucasus Mountains, bordering Georgia. A small region, 15.7 thousand square kilometers, Chechnya is landlocked. Dagestan, which borders the Caspian Sea, lies to its east, Ingushetia to its west, Stavropol Krai to its north. Ancestors of the Chechens lived in the area at least since the eighth century, according to Arabic chronicles. The Chechens refer to themselves as Nokhchuo, and have close ties with other Northern Caucasian nationalities, in particular the Ingush, with whom they share an ethnic designation, the Vainakh.[149] According to John Dunlop, the Chechens have lived in or near the Caucasus Mountains for around 6,000 years.[150]

The Russians expanded into the Caucasus, and hence into Chechen dominated areas, beginning with Peter the Great's campaign in 1722. Before the Russian expansion, the Chechens had experienced conversion to Sunni Islam by the Arabs in the 8th century and again by the Mongol Horde that swept the Russian territory in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The Muslims in Dagestan and Chechnya prefer the "mystical" Sufi movement, rather than Jadidism that predominates in other Muslim enclaves of the former Soviet Union.[151]

The Russian expansion into the North Caucasus encountered resistance from the indigenous populations. Chechen groups joined with other tribes in the region against Peter the Great's incursion in 1722. Under Catherine the Great, Russian authorities changed the religious demographic by moving Russians (Orthodox) and Armenian

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[148] The separatist Chechen government refers to its state as Ichkeria. I will use the term Chechnya throughout my text because of its more common usage.

[149] Comprehensive descriptions of the Chechen ancient history include: Y. Z. Akhmadov et al., "Chechentsy," in *Narody Rossii: Entsiklopedia*, ed. Valeri Aleksandrovich Tishkov (Moskva: Nauchnoe Uzdatelstvo, Bolshaya Rossiiskaya Entsiklopedia, 1994), 399-403, Amjad M. Jaimoukha, *The Chechens: A Handbook* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005), Timur Muzaev, *Chechenskaya Respublika: Organy Vlasti i Politicheskie Sily* (Moscow: Panorama, 1995) 6.

[150] Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya: Roots of a Separatist Conflict* 2.

[151] Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars: Will Russia Go the Way of the Soviet Union?* 91.

(Monophysite Christian) into urban zones. This angered some Islmic leaders, who sought to cast off what they perceived to be negative influences. Chechen religious leader Imam Mansur Ushurma decried the influx of Russians, as well as his perception of growing corruption amonst Muslims, declaring a holy war, asserting the law of the *sharia*, and attempting to unify the Islamic population of the region. Catherine II retaliated by sending the aggressively repressive General Alexei Yermelov to pacify Chechnya. According to Dunlop, "since Yermelov was convinced that the Chechens were implacable enemies of Russia, he advocated the harshest policies toward them. According to his program, they were to be 'contained within the mountains' and were also to lose the 'agricultural land and pastures in which they shelter their flocks in the winter from the sever cold in the mountains.'"[152] Starvation and deprivation would push the Chechens into the Russian Empire.

As recently as the nineteenth century the Chechen identity was not consolidated around being Chechen. Rather, "they had a sense of being Caucasian, based on a geographical concept of their home region, and on a culture, religion, and way of life which they shared with the other Muslim peoples of the North Caucasus."[153] The abuses conducted by General Yermelov helped consolidate the Caucasian identity, in particular unifying the tribes and clans of Chechnya and Dagestan. Islamic leader Shamil' defied Russian expansion and led his followers into military action against the Russian tsars in 1817. Although the Russians defeated Shamil' in 1859, the Circassians fought on until their defeat in 1864. Residents of Chechnya and Dagestan participated in Islamic uprisings in 1877 and 1878, both suppressed by the tsarist administration.

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[152] Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya: Roots of a Separatist Conflict* 15.
[153] Ibid. 20-21.

Although the Caucasus Wars ended in victory for the Russian Empire, the Islamic peoples of the north Caucasus enjoyed some extent of religious and ethnic freedom; the tsars permitted national and religious schools, forbidding Orthodox proselytization in Dagestan and Chechnya.[154] In 1890s, after oil was discovered in Chechnya, the region experienced a spate of modernization. Literacy rates improved, and a small group of Chechen intelligentsia developed.[155]

Chechen Experiences During the Soviet Period

Non-Russian peoples asserted a great deal of pressure on the Bolsheviks during the processes of Soviet state consolidation, exacting favorable political arrangements in exchange for supporting the Red Army during the Russian Civil War. In 1921 Stalin, then Commissar of Nationalities, established the Soviet Mountain Republic, which encompassed Chechnya, Ingushetia, (North) Ossetia, Kabarda, Balkaria, and Karachai. The republic received extensive autonomy, and officially accepted the legal tenets of the *sharia* within the republic, surprising in an atheist Communist state. Most importantly, Stalin declared that the land taken from the mountain peoples under the Tsars should be returned. Most of this land had been taken from the Chechen and Ingush territories and given to nearby Cossack settlements. The Soviet Mountain republic lasted almost two years before the Bolsheviks divided it. Chechnya became an Autonomous Oblast in 1922, and the remaining territories became part of one North Caucasian *krai*.[156] Chechnya and Ingushetia were paired into a shared oblast in 1934, and into a shared Autonomous Republic in 1936.

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[154] Ibid. 32-33.
[155] Ibid.
[156] Ibid. 42-44.

After World War II, Stalin slated the Chechens for deportation. Ostensibly to punish "traitors" during the war, the Soviets expelled at least thirteen entire ethnic groups from their homes into Central Asia and Siberia, several from the North Caucasus: Chechens, Ingush, Balkars, and Karachays. The Checheno-Ingush republic was abolished altogether, the land split among neighboring territories, Ossetia, Dagestan, and the Stavropol *krai*. In 1956, during the de-Stalinization campaign, Khrushchev once again designated the territory of Chechno-Ingushetia, allowing refugees to return home, often to houses occupied by other families. Predictably, Khrushchev's efforts to reestablish the territory during the de-Stalinization campaign were fraught with tension, particularly when discrepancies persisted between the territories revoked and regained. The Ingush and the Ossetians clashed over the Prigorodny region of Ossetia, which had been part of the Ingush territory prior to the deportation, but settled by the Ossetians. The Ossetian capital city, Vladikavkaz, lies in the disputed territory. This piece of land would be a source of conflict in the 1990s when ethnic regional autonomy demands were at their height. Matthew Evangelista observes that the Khrushchevian attempt to redress the Stalinist crimes against the Ingush and Chechens failed to restore all sacrificed during the deportations, leading to "a dilution of the Chechen population within the autonomous republic – 41 percent, compared with 58.4 percent in 1939."[157]

Chechen Separatism: Escalation and Bargaining

The processes of Chechen separatism closely relates to changes in power within the Chechen republic. In his book accounting the Chechen wars, Valery Tishkov argues, "the Chechen war was a highly personalized conflict. Each region of conflict in the

[157] Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars: Will Russia Go the Way of the Soviet Union?* 15.

former USSR in fact produced its own warrior-politician."[158] The escalation of separatism in Chechnya, from a desire for autonomy, quite common in post-Soviet Russia, moved into threats of and subsequent acts of violence. This section examines changes in Chechen separatism over time, noting areas where regional leaders indicated an eagerness to remain within Russia, and times when they did not.

The initial stages of Chechen separatism appeared to be nothing out of the ordinary. In November 1990, the Chechen-Ingush Republic's Congress of People's Deputies declared the region's sovereignty, stating that the republic was no longer part of either the Russian Federation of the Soviet Union, but could "enter into treaty relations with other states and with a union of states."[159] According to Tishkov, the declaration of sovereignty had three key characteristics. First, it occurred at the behest of Doku Zavgaev, who had been appointed the first Secretary of the Chechen-Ingush ASSR Communist Party in 1988. Second, its key purpose was to ensure that the Chechens could control how they signed onto the Union treaty under Gorbachev. Third, that by signing the treaty as a sovereign entity, the republic could assure that Ingushetia would regain the disputed Prigorodny *raion* from the North Ossetian region.[160]

Although Tishkov refers to the Declaration of Sovereignty as the beginning of a "dangerous game of challenging the status quo," the act itself was not so dangerous. There was little risk of retribution from Moscow. Tishkov himself notes that liberals within the Moscow establishment approved of such declarations by ethnic republics, interpreting them as signs of improved democratization within the system.[161] Second,

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[158] Valery Aleksandrovich Tishkov, *Chechnya: Life in a War-Torn Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).
[159] Sharip Asuyev, "Chechen-Ingush Republic Proclaimed," *TASS*, November 27, 1990.
[160] Tishkov, *Chechnya: Life in a War-Torn Society* 58.
[161] Quote from Ibid. Make sure you have that Moscow establishment thing right, and find page number. Payin and Popov make a similar observation, Emil Payin and Arkady Popov, "Chechnya," in *U.S. And*

declarations of sovereignty in the Russian Federation during that time period were commonplace. Of the thirty-one national territories in the Russian Federation, nineteen declared sovereignty by that November. Twenty-three, or 74 percent, declared sovereignty by the following May.[162] Chechno-Ingushetia followed the precedent set by Tatarstan, which had declared sovereignty in late August 1990.[163] Finally, the key declared emphasis of Chechnya's declaration of sovereignty was a consideration over Ingushetia's border with North Ossetia, not a response to historical Russian repression.

The separatist movement in Checheno-Ingushetia grew with regard to the politics of creating and signing the Union Treaty. Gorbachev and Yeltsin included the autonomous republics in the crafting of the treaty. Zavgaev joined thirteen other national territory leaders in Moscow to advise in the process of preparation, and also to help set out guidelines for its ratification.[164] According to newspaper accounts, the participants "confirmed that the republics they represent will sign the Union Treaty, though duly empowered delegations, as members of the USSR and the RSFSR." Only Tatarstan indicated a special circumstance, "[Tatar Communist Party Head Mintimer] Shaimiyev said that Tatarstan intends to sign the treaty only as a member of the USSR, with the subsequent conclusion of a treaty with the RSFSR."[165] By August, however, Zavgaev joined Shaimiyev in his hesitance to sign the Union Treaty. Unlike Tatarstan, which wanted to negotiate as an equal to Moscow and sought ever-increasing autonomy in the system, Zavgaev's concern was the ongoing dispute between the North Ossetians and

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Russian Policymaking with Respect to the Use of Force, ed. Jeremy Azrael and Emil Payin (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 1996), 5. Get correct page number.

[162] For dates of sovereignty declarations, see Table 1 in Treisman, "Russia's 'Ethnic Revival': The Separatist Activism of Regional Leaders in a Postcommunist Order," 226-28.; Payin and Popov make a similar observation, Payin and Popov, "Chechnya," 12.

[163] Alyans Sabirov, "Independent Tatarstan Proclaimed," *Russian Press Digest*, August 31, 1990.

[164] "Gorbachev, Yeltsin Met Leaders of Autonomous Republics," *TASS*, May 12, 1991.

[165] "Russia's Autonomous Republics Speak Out," *Current Digest of Post-Soviet Press* XLIII, no. 19 (1991).

Ingushetia. [166] At the time, the official Russian news service TASS reported that negotiations would begin in mid-August, and that "there is hope that a mutually acceptable solution will be achieved within six weeks, and then the Chechen-Ingush republic will sign the Union Treaty."[167] Thus, the initial strategy of Chechno-Ingushetia was low separatism, with little demand for political or economic autonomy.

Zavgaev resigned in September 1991, pushed out of office by Dzhokar Dudayev, a former Soviet Air Force general and the head of the nationalist movement the Chechen Congress. A marked increase in Chechen separatism accompanied the placement of Dudayev in the executive. Observers of Chechen politics have noted this difference, arguing that had Zavgaev remained in power in Chechnya, separatism likely would not have increased into any declarations of independence, nor resulted in violence.[168]

Soon upon coming to power, Dudayev extended Chechen sovereignty into new arenas. He took control of the economic assets of the region, as well as established Chechen authority over the regions' security institutions.[169] He liquidated the Provisional Council, a body established in September 1991 under the approval of Moscow, establishing instead a Provisional Revolutionary Committee.[170] Moreover, Dudayev announced Presidential and Parliamentary elections, to take place without Russian supervision. Emil Payin, once head of Yeltsin's Presidential Council Group on Nationalities Policy, and Arkady Popov argue that the elections were not legitimate. The

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[166] This section on Chechnya will hereafter refer to the North Ossetians as Ossetians, although I am referring to the peoples whose territory lies within Russia, in the North Caucasus. (Distinct from the territory of South Ossetia, a separatist region of the Georgian republic.

[167] Sharip Asuyev, "Chechen-Ingush Republic Puts Off Signing Treaty," *TASS*, August 15, 1991.

[168] Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya: Roots of a Separatist Conflict,* Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars: Will Russia Go the Way of the Soviet Union,* Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*.

[169] Payin and Popov, "Chechnya," 14.

[170] Sharip Asuyev, "Situation in Chechen-Ingush Republic," *TASS*, September 16, 1991, Sharip Asuyev, "Situation Revolutionary in Chechen-Ingush Republic," *TASS*, October 6, 1991.

elections took place during periods of great political tension. The established schedule allowed only two weeks of campaigning. Finally, they were held according to vague territorial rules (even Dudayev didn't know the boundaries of Chechnya). Payin and Popov point out that "the population of six (out of fourteen) regions of the Chechno-Ingush Republic that disagreed with this scheme were, in effect, excluded from the election process."[171]

In addition to the establishment of internal structures that represented state institutions, Dudayev set about establishing boundaries (although vague) and removing Russian troop presence from the region. In late 1991, Chechnya announced a formal split from Ingushetia, calling itself the Republic of Chechnya. The Russian Federation did not recognize this change until December 10, 1992, when it formally approved the status of Ingushetia as an Autonomous Republic within Russia.[172] Dudayev rejected any attempts by Russia to establish formal boundaries dividing the two territories, preferring instead to keep the boundaries unfixed and therefore malleable.[173] Dudayev used this to his advantage when Russian troops moved into Ingushetia to maintain order between the Ingush and Ossetians. In what was the first of many calls to violence Dudayev, decried the Russian "invasion" of Chechen territory, even though the Russians were 12 kilometers from the Ingush capital and no one, including Dudayev, knew the precise boundaries of the Chechen Republic.[174] Thus Dudayev used the specter of invading imperial Russians to mobilize and unite a militia.

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[171] Payin and Popov, "Chechnya," 14.
[172] Vera Kuznetsova, "The News of the Week," *Current Digest of Post-Soviet Press* XLIV, no. 50 (1992).
[173] Vladimir Yemelyanenko, "Russia-Chechnya: A Forced Love Affair," *Moscow News*, November 22, 1992.
[174] On Russian-Chechen troop stand off, see Roman Zadunaisky, "Heavily Armed Chechen Units Advance to Russian Troops," *TASS*, November 13, 1992.

Dudayev also demanded a total withdrawal of Russian troops from Chechnya.[175] In an act that some observers consider evidence of collaboration between Dudayev and the Kremlin (or at least the Russian military forces), the commander of the North Caucasian Military District instructed his troops to leave the territory. Their weapons, however, remained in Grozny, and were requisitioned by Dudayev's security forces.[176]

Although Dudayev's initial separatist platform seems aggressive, his actual stance on independence from Russia is unclear. His rhetoric, although bombastic and bellicose, also indicated areas for negotiation and conciliation. While he repeatedly referred to Chechnya as an independent state and free of Russian repression, he also explicitly stated that his goal was to share competencies with Russia, particularly economic and military powers. Iles Arsanukayev, member of the governing Chechen Congress Executive Committee announced in November 1991 that his republic "will break neither economic nor military ties with Russia," moreover, he stated, the republic is "willing to sign an agreement on joint defense against external enemies."[177]

The Chechen rhetoric to a large extent matched the rhetoric espoused by Tatarstan: the Chechens wished to negotiated with Moscow as equals, but valued close ties with Moscow, particularly with regard to economic and banking matters. Even as Chechen national guardsmen died in skirmishes with vaguely described "provocateurs" (as Dudayev called some unidentified combatants), TASS reported partial success in Russian-Chechen negotiations held March 12-14, 1992. According to statements by

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[175] A. Viktorov, "Jokhar Dudayev Told Servicemen to Vacate Their Quarters and Leave the Republic," *Krasnaya Zvezda*, June 2, 1992.

[176] Valery Stepanov, "Ethnic Tensions and Separatism in Russia," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 26, no. 2 (2000). For arguments that troop withdrawal was indication of collaboration between Dudayev and Russian forces, see Alexander Shinkin, "Chechnya Split into Military Camps. One Step to Fratricide," *Russian Press Digest*, June 26, 1993.

[177] "Chechen Republic Ready to Compromise with Russia," *TASS*, November 6, 1991.

Viktor Zhigulin, the deputy speaker of the Russian Duma and head of the Russian negotiation team, "as far as economic problems are concerned, the Chechen experts agreed to preserve a single economic space and the ruble zone and accepted practically all provisions of the initialed federative treaty."[178]

Despite this, Evangelista indicates areas where Dudayev's eagerness to negotiate on economic matters received little welcome in Moscow. According to the memoirs of high-placed officials under Yeltsin, Dudayev sent a letter in July 1992 suggesting "that Moscow grant Chechnya control of its oil exports in return for Chechen payment of transit fees to the Russian government for use of its pipelines." The Kremlin did not vigorously pursue the plan, which Russian officials called the "Buy Chechnya plan."[179] But the Chechens seemed to welcome settlements that captured this spirit. In December 1992, Yaragi Mamodayev, the vice premier of the Chechen Republic announced that "We are ready to share with the Russian colleagues the responsibilities for the construction of the armed forces, defense, scientific and technological research, the preservation of economic ties and of the banking system."[180] Even Dudayev, at a meeting of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization in June 1993, got excited about the economic potential for Chechnya and dramatically stated at a dinner party that, "he was ready to consider himself a citizen of Russia."[181] This indicates that as late as

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[178] Alexei Tabachnikov, "Experts Suggest Russia Negotiate Recognition of Chechnya," *TASS*, March 18, 1992.

[179] Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars: Will Russia Go the Way of the Soviet Union?* 27.

[180] Oleg Velichoko, "'Reasonable Confederation' of Chechnya and Russia," *TASS*, December 16, 1992. Mamodayev was one of four key allies of Dudayev at the beginning of the Chechen revolution, using his oil wealth to supply financial support. Soon after this announcement, he fell out of favor with Dudayev and became a opposition leader. However, this announcement of conciliation did not spur the fall out between the Chechen officials. According to Carlotta Gall and Thomas de Waal, the real explanation for the split was that Yaragi Mamodayev and others "were helping themselves to a large slice of the oil revenues." Carlotta Gall and Thomas De Waal, *Chechnya: Calamity in the Caucasus* (New York: New York University Press, 1998) 126.

[181] Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars: Will Russia Go the Way of the Soviet Union?* 27.

1993, Dudayev indicated a readiness to negotiate, particularly economically, with the Russian government.

Throughout 1994, Dudayev's hold on power became increasingly tenuous as opposition to his presidency grew and as his ability to keep the region stable waned. Armed criminals moved about the countryside, abducting civilians for profit, participating in contraband trade, and stealing oil from the pipelines. Although previously this behavior had stayed within Chechen boundaries, criminal groups launched their programs into neighboring regions, expanding the chaos formerly limited to the borders of Chechnya. Moscow began funding opposition groups to Dudayev, deciding in late 1994 to "intervene actively on the side of Dudayev's opponents."[182] Lieven stresses that the rash of hijackings of Russian civilians also catalyzed Moscow's decision to invade.[183] On November 26, 1994, Russian troops, bent on ousting the truculent dictator, briefly took Grozny but were soon expelled by Dudayev's troops. The Chechen war had begun.

Taking into account the many acts and declarations of Chechen separatism, as well as the appeals for negotiations, we can draw several conclusions about Chechen separatism under Dudayev. Throughout the years of separatist rhetoric, Dudayev made clear that he hoped for the kind of state that existed under the Soviet Union, although with real autonomy for the Chechen Republic. It is not a far stretch to think that Dudayev actually never wanted complete independence from Russia, but rather wanted a confederal state where he could benefit from the economic and military support of the Russian system without having internal Chechen affairs controlled by Moscow. Although Dudayev repeatedly appealed for a face-to-face meeting with Yeltsin, the Russian forces moved into Chechnya to oust Dudayev and promote the opposition. Two ways to

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[182] Ibid. 31.
[183] Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*.

examine the changes in Chechen separatism from Zavgaev to Dudayev are to examine how economic bargaining, particularly the perceptions of oil wealth, interacted with the campaigns by Moscow to place a docile client in Chechnya.

Economic Leverage and Chechen Separatism

Chechnya's economic resources and potential greatly affected how that region's officials understood their bargaining position vis-à-vis the Russian central government. Both Zavgaev and Dudayev viewed their separatist strategies as bargaining interactions with the central government. Their understanding of Chechen resources and potential affected how they went about making demands of and concessions to the central government.

At the end of the 19th century, the Tsarist empire discovered oil in Chechnya, leading to a rise in investment and industry. Not only was Chechnya a site of a petroleum basin that also reached into the Caspian, the Russians established an oil refining center in the Chechen capital, Grozny, which produced oil for shipment throughout the North Caucasus and other regions of Russia.[184] Grozny's position as a resource rich and industrial center lasted throughout the Soviet era. About 90 percent of all aviation lubricants used in the Soviet Union came from Chechnya; most oil mined in the North Caucasus was refined in Chechnya and piped throughout the region. Under the Soviets, Chechnya did not enjoy much of this wealth. Due to the system's command economy, the wealth generated in the area found its way into Kremlin coffers. Moreover, the employees of the major petroleum factors were largely Russian. Chechens and Ingush were traditionally employed in the agricultural sector. Tishkov notes that "in the late

[184] Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya: Roots of a Separatist Conflict* 34-35.

1980s, the largest petrochemical companies, Grozneft and Orgsynthez, employed 50,000 workers and engineers, only a few hundred of whom were Chechen and Ingush."[185]

The Soviet industrialization brought other problems to the indigenous populations. According to Dzhabrail Gakayev, a Chechen historian and political scientist, the petrochemical industry left massive ecological destruction, inequality among the ethnic populations in the area, and little else of use to the indigenous populations: "many of their settlements had no hospitals, schools, roads, or other social services. Unemployment resulted in increases in migrant labor and profiteering and a rise in criminality."[186] Not only were the indigenous populations passed over for work, by the 1980s, the oil reserves in the region had begun to falter. According to Dunlop, "during the years 1985-1991, the extractable resources of oil in Chechnya decreased from 87 million to 58 million tons."[187] In 1980, the Chechen-Ingush republic produced only 7.4 million tons of oil per year. However, the refining continued, with three quarters of the oil transported from West Siberia and other republics of the North Caucasus.[188]

By the fall of the Soviet Union, the Chechen-Ingush republic lagged behind other regions in the Soviet system in terms of education, health care, housing, and wages. The monthly salaries were lower for agricultural work (the sector most populated by indigenous groups) in Checheno-Ingushetia than in other regions. Dunlop notes that in 1991, the average wage for such works as 74.8 percent of Russian average; in neighboring Russian regions Stavropol' *krai*, Krasnodar *krai*, and the Rostov *oblast*,

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[185] Tishkov, *Chechnya: Life in a War-Torn Society* 41.
[186] Dzhabrail Gakayev, *Ocherki Politicheskoi Istorii Chechni (XX Vek)* (Moscow: Chechen Cultural Center, 1997) 109. Cited in Tishkov, *Chechnya: Life in a War-Torn Society* 42.
[187] Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya: Roots of a Separatist Conflict* 87.
[188] Gall and De Waal, *Chechnya: Calamity in the Caucasus* 127.

agricultural workers earned 140.5 percent, 140.5 percent, and 118.6 percent of the Russian state average, respectively.[189]

Thus, the economic situation inherited by the Chechen regional leadership was a stark one. Although there was oil left within the region, it was fading; pipelines carrying oil from outside Chechnya for refining were the strongest sources of continued potential income. Taimaz Abubakarov, a professor at Grozny State University before becoming Dudayev's Minister of Economics and Finances, noted in his memoirs that, "the financial crisis was obvious already by 1990."[190]

The first secretary of the Chechen-Ingush republic, Doku Zavgaev, appreciated his republic's poverty. Within the structures of *glasnost*, Zavgaev administered Chechnya as residents "mobilized to support the goals of decentralization, economic change, and political activity."[191] However, the demands initiated by Zavgaev were minimal and mimicked other republics' demands for sovereignty. There are few indications that Chechnya under Zavagev was bent on independence. Abubakarov reveals that far from using wealth to bargain with the Kremlin, Zavgaev still operated under the belief that the economy would continue to be centralized, eschewing strong economic bargaining of the kind Dudayev later utilized, along with Tatarstan and Bashkortostan. According to Abubakarov, "Zavgaev decided that the budget was not succeeding by itself, not the budget nor any other financial structures would succeed even if everyone pitched in. He was forced to go to Moscow and find money in the ministries."[192]

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[189] Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya: Roots of a Separatist Conflict* 88.
[190] Taimaz Abubakarov, *Rezhim Dzhokhara Dudaeva: Pravda i Vymysel. Zapiski Dudaevskogo Ministra Ekonomiki i Finansov* (Moskva: Insan, 1998) 111
[191] Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars: Will Russia Go the Way of the Soviet Union?* 16.
[192] Abubakarov, *Rezhim Dzhokhara Dudaeva: Pravda i Vymysel. Zapiski Dudaevskogo Ministra Ekonomiki i Finansov*.

Abubakarov dismisses the financial acumen of the communist government in Chechnya, noting that any problem with money was considered an expected component of the centralized economic system, a "planned deficit" or a "planned loss." This approach, he notes, led to very little discussion of economic issues at the highest level: "In the leading circles of the Republic it was not proper to talk about the economic and financial crisis. Conversation on that theme was assiduously avoided."[193] While there is an explicit criticism regarding the handling of crises in Abubakarov's comments, his observation indicates how Zavgaev's administration understood their economic bargaining potential: instead of capitalizing on economic wealth to make bargains, the Checheno-Ingush republic settled for the kind of sovereignty that 75 percent of the other republics requested; moreover, the bargaining that did occur dealt with border questions between Ingushetia and North Ossetia, not bettering the economic lot or even practical political autonomy of the republic vis-à-vis the state, or in relation to other republics in the region.

Dudayev interpreted Chechnya's economic potential differently. Instead of focusing on the social-economic malaise of the region and lack of working infrastructure, Dudayev and his retinue overestimated the economic potential of the Chechen republic. Tishkov quotes a Dudayev administration official describing how Dudayev understood Chechnya's economic potential: "Dzhokhar thought that the oil fields in Chechnya had not yet been fully prospected, that our land holds untold riches. Kuwait, he would stay, can't stand comparison with Chechnya."[194] Chechen finance minister Abubakarov admits that Dudayev did not have a clear understanding of the economic situation in the

[193] Ibid. 111.
[194] Tishkov, *Chechnya: Life in a War-Torn Society* 85.

republic.[195] This caused Dudayev's overestimation of his bargaining power vis-à-vis the central government, leading to increasingly aggressive and insulting rhetoric. Dudayev felt the untapped oil potential of Chechnya would force Moscow to negotiate with Chechnya the way it did with Bashkortostan and Tatarstan. Moscow instead reorganized the pipeline infrastructure to skirt the Chechen border and got busy finding a more agreeable client to install in Chechnya.

Moscow seeks a client: the placement and destruction of Zhokar Dudayev

The economic factor interacted strongly with the patronage factor in determining the existence of and the timing of the Chechen war. In particular, the Chechen separatist strategy was furthered by the attempts of the Moscow leadership to establish an ally in Grozny.

By the time the Soviet Union fell and Yeltsin took control of the Kremlin, Doku Zavgaev was slated for removal. He was a remnant of the Communist party, accustomed to frequent trips to Moscow to hammer out agreements to improve the economic and political lot of his region. His nationalist efforts indicate a tentativeness regarding his economic position and relationship with the elites in Moscow. His strategy was not geared toward extensive bargaining regarding autonomy or economic power. Moreover, there were initial signs of elite ties with the center, at least with Gorbachev. Chechen specialists Carlotta Gall and Thomas de Waal report in their detailed account of the events leading to the first Chechen war that Gorbachev singled out Zavgaev and Tatar boss Mintimer Shaimiyev for an active role in talks regarding the Union treaty. Yeltsin traveled to Grozny seeking to bolster turnout for the Presidential elections in March 1991. Notes a member of his entourage: "Zavgaev behaved exactly like an Oriental party boss.

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[195] Abubakarov, *Rezhim Dzhokhara Dudaeva: Pravda i Vymysel. Zapiski Dudaevskogo Ministra Ekonomiki i Finansov* 20.

…They put us up in the best palaces outside of town, there was a huge guard, plentiful food, a lot to drink, they tried to stop us from encountering ordinary people and speaking at rallies. They were like normal Soviet functionaries."[196]

However, Zavgaev supported the Union Treaty and the maintenance of the USSR, a fact that did not endear him to Boris Yeltsin. Moreover, two Chechens in Yeltsin's entourage, Ruslan Khasbulatov and Aslanbek Aslakhanov, viewed the Chechen leader as a competitor and actively encouraged Zavgaev's ouster. Gall and Waal argue that Khasbulatov and Dudayev collaborated to bring about Zavgaev's removal, with Khasbulatov assuring Dudayev there would be no retaliation from the Kremlin:

> On 26 August Dudayev rang Khasbulatov's office and asked hysterically if the tanks of the Grozny garrison would be brought out if the Supreme Soviet was dissolved. And Dudayev received serious assurances that there would be no tanks. And a second time Aslakhanov, who was at the time a member of the presidium of the Supreme Soviet of Russia, assured Dudayev that force would not be used and that he could act boldly and decisively.[197]

Evangelista argues similarly, noting that "Yeltsin's circle" had decided that "Zavgaev and the Soviet-era authorities had to go." Zavgaev, upon Dudayev's forcible seizure of government installations, requested that Yeltsin approve the Grozny garrison to come to his aid, but Yeltsin demurred. A few weeks later, Khasbulatov traveled to Grozny, and convinced "Zavgaev and the members of the Chechen-Ingush Supreme Soviet to abolish that body, to resign their positions, and to establish a temporary council that would rule until new parliamentary elections could be held."[198] Several years later, Aslakhanov, still a member of the Parliament, averred in an interview with *Rossiiskaya gazeta* that the Kremlin sought to promote Dudayev as a patron who would act according

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[196] Gall and De Waal, *Chechnya: Calamity in the Caucasus* 90.
[197] Ibid. 94. Gall and De Waal are quoting Magomed Zaugayev, head of the KGB's Organized Crime Department.
[198] Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars: Will Russia Go the Way of the Soviet Union?* 17-18.

to Yeltsin's interests, stating, "from the outset, Dudayev was programmed to be a figurehead in the labyrinth of politics."[199]

Once Dudayev was in power, he followed a high-risk separatist policy, utilizing his established patrons in Moscow and his perception of Chechnya's economic wealth to seek the greatest level of autonomy for Chechnya. Evangelista notes that Dudayev's strategy certainly jeopardized his relationship with Moscow. His rhetoric was shrill and paranoid and often personally insulting. Dudayev lacked diplomatic tact, comparing the Russians to fascists, referring to Boris Yeltsin as "the leader of a gang of murderers" and a "totalitarian monster."[200] Anatol Lieven considered Dudayev's flamboyant personality disingenuous, a caricature of what Dudayev thought he should be:

> Another thing that struck me from the first was that this was a play-actor. His speech was exaggeratedly clipped, emphatic, martial and authoritarian… What part exactly he thought he was playing I've never quite been able to work out, but it wax probably a fairly hackneyed one of national hero/wise ruler/visionary prophet.[201]

Both Evangelista and Lieven argue that had Dudayev and Yeltsin been able to sit down at a meeting together, war could have been avoided. By the time Dudayev began backing away from his more bombastic rhetoric, however, the damage was done. Dudayev had convinced the Yeltsin and his staff that they had made a mistake placing the general into Chechnya's presidency. As Dudayev pled for negotiations, the Kremlin found replacement candidates in the Chechen opposition movement. Consequently, the Russians were resistant to meet one-on-one with Dudayev, particularly after withstanding the barrage of insults and accusations.

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[199] Shinkin, "Chechnya Split into Military Camps. One Step to Fratricide."
[200] Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power* 68.
[201] Ibid. 66.

Moreover, Tishkov points out another factor in the Kremlin break with Dudayev were broken agreements regarding split oil revenues between Dudayev and members of Yeltsin's government. According to Gakayev, Dudayev and Khasbulatov had established "an undisclosed agreement with Russian oil industry barons and top leaders to transfer to Moscow only 80 percent of the money from Grozny oil and keep the remaining 20 percent. The real conflict became unavoidable when Dudayev violated the rule and established a 50-50 split between Moscow and Grozny."[202] One of Dudayev's colleagues alludes to this agreement, noting that "maybe there was something between Dudayev and Yeltsin. But still, Dzhokhar was tops – he swindled Yeltsin. One man told me that they had quarreled over oil, that Russia was charging Dudayev too high a percentage."[203]

The Russians began actively seeking for replacements for Dudayev. In 1993 and 1994, Russian newspapers report many instances where Dudayev offered to make concessions to Yeltsin and requested personal meetings with the Russian president. However, by early 1994 the Chechen opposition to Dudayev had grown and appealed to Moscow for support. Both former Dudayev crony Yaragi Mamodayev and Duma chairman Ruslan Khasbulatov emerged as possible alternatives, although the Kremlin still harbored ill will toward Khasbulatov after his participation in the October 1993 coup. Still, by that time, the Kremlin had trouble imagining a worse person in Chechnya than Dudayev. Yeltsin was eager to exploit Dudayev's weakness in order to install a new client in Chechnya. Lyudmila Leontyeva of the *Moscow News* noted several times that the Kremlin was attempting "to find a leader with whom it will be possible to negotiate because the Center has given up on Dzhokhar Dudayev."[204] In August 1994, the

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[202] Tishkov, *Chechnya: Life in a War-Torn Society* 89.
[203] Ibid. 85.
[204] Lyudmila Leontyeva, "Too Many Negotiators," *Moscow News*, April 8, 1994.

predictions became dire. Aslakhanov predicted that the Kremlin would remove Dudayev the way it did Zavgaev in order to install someone more palatable. However, he noted that this would likely lead to war: "Dudayev will never quit of his own will even if all Chechen people beg him to on their knees. A violent way of removing Dudayev from power is inevitable."[205]

According to Gall and De Waal, Dudayev realized that the Kremlin had decided that he would no longer be the President of Chechnya.[206] His efforts to negotiate became efforts to maintain his own position of power. In March 1994, *Obshchaya gazeta* reported that "people in the know in Grozny believe Dudayev is prepared to make some concessions if he is allowed to retain his post and the shared of revenue from the export of Chechen petroleum products."[207] Dudayev's struggle by this time was no longer about separatism from Russia so much as a struggle for his personal survival and position. He craved a renewal of the patronage ties

At the same time as the drama between Moscow and Grozny unfolded, the internal situation of Chechnya was disintegrating. Dudayev faced three arenas of opposition as Khasbulatov, Mamodayev, and Umar Avturkhanov, a popular figure in a northern district, competed to become the next President of Chechnya. Armed militias roamed the countryside, siphoning oil from unguarded pipelines, taking hostages for sport and income. This crime spilled over into "Russian" territory, the final straw coming in July 1994 when a bus was hijacked in the Krasnodar region. Lieven argues that Yeltsin's government used this as an opportunity to crush Dudayev and replace him with someone more docile. However, that August Yeltsin announced that military solutions

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[205] Igor Rotar, "Dudayev Won't Quit of His Own Free Will," *Russian Press Digest*, August 6, 1994.
[206] Gall and De Waal, *Chechnya: Calamity in the Caucasus.*
[207] Yakov Nikolayev, "'Chechen Party': Playing on Two Tables," *Obshaya gazeta*, March 18, 1994.

were not even in question: "armed intervention is impermissible."[208] Two months later, the Russian Security Council decided to intervene, acting to remove Dudayev from power and place new leadership in Grozny. Pavel Grachev, the defense minister, met with Dudayev one time before the actual invasion, threatened him, saying, "Do you really think you're going to fight against us? In any case, I'll crush you."[209] By the time the Russian army moved in, Dudayev had little mechanism or possibility to negotiate with the Kremlin. Moreover, he correctly understood that Yeltsin had no intention of allowing him to remain in power (or even alive). The Chechen move to war, consequently, embodies the efforts of one man to protect himself and maintain his own position, not necessarily to extend the autonomy of his state.

Putin and the Destruction of Aslan Maskhadov

The outbreak of the second war occurred at the end of September 1999, when Russian troops invaded Chechen borders. In doing so, the Russian Federation violated the terms of the treaty ending the first war, which allowed Chechnya to take on the burdens of independent statehood (the permanant political situation to be decided after five years in a public referendum). Several factors contributed to the Russian military action, in particular the extension of Russian state power under then Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. However, the new Chechen economic circumstances, as well as Putin's rejection of Chechen war hero turned President Aslan Maskhadov, greatly affected the course of Chechen-Russian relations leading up to 1999.

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[208] Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars: Will Russia Go the Way of the Soviet Union?* 31.
[209] Ibid. 32.

Separatism under Maskhadov

There are few parallels between Dudayev's separatist movement and the Presidential regime of Aslan Maskhadov. For one, Maskhadov inherited essentially an independent state. There was no need for him to make any demands of autonomy from the Russian central government before the end of the five-year grace period provided by the peace agreement. Even so, he began initiating contact with the Russian government regarding establishing agreements on economic questions, in particular the transit of oil through Chechen pipelines. However, Maskhadov's widespread opposition actively worked to destabilize any economic agreements with Moscow.[210] Moreover, members of opposition groups, including the most successful Chechen militia leader Shamil' Basayev, desired an extension of the Chechen state, in particular an expansion of borders to the Caspian Sea, encapsulating neighboring Dagestan.

Maskhadov, like Dudayev, had trouble containing criminal activity throughout Chechnya. Kidnapping for ransom was widespread, as was participation in the drug and weapons contraband trade. Several kidnappings went horrifically wrong, ending in the beheadings of several prominent foreign captives. Moreover, according to Evangelista, there were powerful groups in Moscow who promoted the Chechen opposition, in particular Basayev. In an interview with German newspaper *Der Spiegel*, Maskhadov charged that Boris Berezovski, the media oligarch who was deputy secretary of the Russian Security Council, "is hatching plots and linking up with opposition officials such as Basaev and Udugov. He pays for their television, internet access, and their satellite telephones."[211]

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[210] Ibid.
[211] Quoted in Ibid. 50.

The lawlessness and ruthless economic ambition of the period combined with a surge in Islamic fundamentalism, due in part to the development of the Wahhabi movement Dagestan and Chechnya. In particular, a dangerous combination emerged when Basayev teamed with an Arab guerilla fighter whose nom de guerre was Khattab. In August 1999, in an attempt to unite Dagestan and Chechnya into a greater Islamic state, Basayev and Khattab led a paramilitary group made up of Chechens, Dagestanis, and representatives of various other national groups in an armed incursion into Dagestan. Russian troops, joined by Dagestani militias, expelled the group from Dagestan. In September, the Chechen fundamentalist rebellion seemed to touch civilian Moscow when planted bombs leveled two apartment buildings there. Putin blamed Chechen militants, although brought no evidence to bear to prove his theory. Despite Maskhadov's repeated insistence that he was not involved in any such plots and pleas for help in quelling the rampant criminal element in Chechnya, Putin denounced Maskhadov and initiated the 1999 war against Chechnya.

Economic Considerations

Maskhadov inherited a country whose infrastructure was devastated by war, whose people had been unemployed and without social benefits for years. In the early years of Chechen independence, the bargaining that took place between Chechnya and Russia concerned economic questions. In October 1998, Russian Premier Evgeny Primakov reported a "breakthrough" in negotiations after establishing an "agreement to cooperate on the reconstruction of several unnamed Chechen enterprises." Moreover, Russia promised "to supply funds for unpaid wages and pensions."[212]

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[212] Elizabeth Fuller, "Primakov Claims 'Breakthrough' in Relations with Chechnya," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newsline: Russia*, 30 October 1998.

Moscow and Chechnya also cooperated in maintaining oil transit through Chechnya, in particular collaborating with British Petroleum in transporting Azerbaijani oil from the Caspian through Chechnya. Evangelista notes that in July 1997 Azeri president Aliev "signed an agreement in Moscow endorsing the shipment of Caspian oil through Chechnya."[213] This agreement quickly broke down, however, over disagreements between Chechnya and Russia regarding the transit fees, which Russia termed "impossible." Eventually, Russia took bargaining power away from Chechnya altogether by constructing an alternative pipeline through Dagestan and North Ossetia, bypassing Chechnya entirely.[214]

Moscow's Unwillingness to Work with Maskhadov

A crucial component to the Russian invasion of Chechnya in September 1999 was Putin's absolute unwillingness to negotiate with Maskhadov. Part of this had to do with Putin's desire to use Chechnya to secure his own power and destroy the era of a weak Russia controlled by its constitutent parts. Alexander Lebed, who had negotiated the peace of 1996, condemned Moscow's unwillingness to support Maskhadov in the face of his burgeoning opposition, noting that anti-Maskhadov forces were "ready to start an armed insurgency at any moment."[215] During the spring of 1999, Maskhadov made several overtures to Moscow, decrying the aggression of Basayev, and contending that he was doing his best to prevent war.[216]

At the end of September 1999, Putin announced conditions for negotiations with Maskhadov, including that he condemn terrorism and that he "rid the Chechen territory of

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[213] Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars: Will Russia Go the Way of the Soviet Union?* 52.
[214] Ibid. 53.
[215] Elizabeth Fuller, "....Warns of New North Caucasus Conflict," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newsline*, January 14, 1999.
[216] Elizabeth Fuller, "Chechen President Wants to Meet with Yeltsin," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newsline*, March 10, 1999.

armed bandits."[217] Even as he announced the possibility of negotiations, however, the Russian military continued bombing Chechen towns and farms.[218] The ground invasion occurred soon after. Evangelista points out that despite the Putin's slight conciliatory rhetoric in September, the Russians had decided in March to initiate conflict with Chechnya.[219] The official explanation for the beginning of conflict had been the Moscow apartment bombings and Basayev's incursion into Dagestan. However, according to the Russian press, Russian Premier Stepashin admitted in January 2000 that "[war] planning had begun in March and the incursion into Chechnya would have taken place even if the terrorist bombings in Moscow and other Russian cities had not occurred."[220] Putin had rejected Maskhadov as a negotiating partner very early on.

Conclusion

The Chechen experiences with secession and separatism are complex and multifaceted. This study has been an examination of how economic bargaining and patronage politics affected the timing and manner in which violence broke out in the Chechen republic, between Chechen leadership and the Russian government. The tragedy of the Chechen case is that every Chechen leader, from Zavgaev to Maskhadov, sought to negotiate with the Moscow government, particularly when violence seemed increasingly likely. Crucial to their bargaining effort was their sense of their economic position; Zavgaev, coming from the leaner years of the late Communist period, acted the role of the obsequious apparatchik, seeking the low-stakes option of sovereignty, spending his

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[217] Elizabeth Fuller, "Putin Spells out Terms for Talks with Chechnya," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newsline*, September 30, 1999.
[218] Elizabeth Fuller, "Air Raids on Chechen Targets Continue," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newsline*, September 30, 1999.
[219] Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars: Will Russia Go the Way of the Soviet Union?* 61.
[220] Elizabeth Fuller, "Stepashin Says Chechen War Was Response to Shpigun Abduction," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newsline*, January 28, 2000.

separatist political capital on establishing appropriate territorial boundaries. Dudayev's interpretation of his economic position was broader, and thus he used the oil transit potential to attract the support of Kremlin officials, who stood to benefit personally from the profits. Maskhadov, inheriting a devastated country reeling from war also capitalized on the oil pipelines crisscrossing Chechnya, selling transit space overseas and negotiating with Moscow over tariffs.

These strategies ultimately failed due to the vulnerability of every Chechen leader to the desires of Moscow to place a client in Grozny. Responding to Zavgaev's support for Gorbachev as well as the advice of the Chechens in his inner circle, Yeltsin withdrew support for Zavgaev, allowing Dudayev's accession to power. Once Dudayev had broken with this patrons in Moscow, both by swindling their private interests in the Chechen oil and through his blatant insults, Moscow moved to replace him as well. Secessionist war became Dudayev's only option to maintain power. On April 21, 1996, he was killed in a Russian air attack. His elected successor, Aslan Maskhadov, attempted to negotiate with Putin, particularly before the outbreak of the 1999 war. Maskhadov's political power was destroyed by the Russians, whose invasion left him without any credibility to deal with Shamil' Basayev, his and Russia's strongest opposition. In March 2005, the Russian Army executed Maskhadov. Since the invasion of 1999, Moscow has placed a puppet in power in Grozny twice. The first, Akhmad Kadyrov, died May 2004 in an explosion from a bomb placed in a stadium in Grozny. His successor, Alu Alkhanov was elected in October 2004, in what some considered sham elections. Chapter 6 will discuss sources of Putin's strategy in Chechnya.

GEORGIA: SOUTH OSSETIA AND ABKHAZIA

The Georgian wars of secession emerged amidst two periods of contentious politics. South Ossetia initiated its secessionist demands even before the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the independence of Georgia in 1991. The Abkhazian secession emerged at the same time as the Georgian civil war, when paramilitary groups in Georgia ousted the elected president Zviad Gamsakhurdia and invited former Soviet foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze (an ethnic Georgian) to lead Georgia. The war began as Georgian paramilitary groups entered the Abkhazian capital Sukhum(i) under disputed circumstances.

Although the wars in Georgia occurred in through a series of events about which the parties still disagree, this study isolates certain patterns of behavior based on the interactions of elite actors as power changes altered fragile agreements between the leaders of the national territories and the central government. It identifies the negotiation strategies and bargaining goals of both regions and central government in ongoing negotiation efforts from 1990 and 1994 for South Ossetia and Abkhazia, respectively.

SOUTH OSSETIA: AUTONOMY DENIED, INDEPENDENCE SEIZED

The secession of South Ossetia occurred soon after Zviad Gamsakhurdia emerged as the Chairman of the governing Georgian Round Table on October 28, 1990. Gamsakhurdia favored a unitary state policy and announced his intention to dismantle the Soviet system of national territorial autonomy. Although Gamsakhurdia understood this policy would take some time to implement, his first effrots came early. In December 1990, he led the Georgian parliament to revoke autonomy of South Ossetia. The South Ossetian government protested and formed militia groups to respond to anticipated Georgian aggression. Now, over a decade later, South Ossetia remains a territory in limbo: it acts like an independent state but Georgia maintains that it is not.

Who are the Ossetians?

South Ossetia lies in north-central Georgia south of the Caucasus Mountains separating the region from its cousin North Ossetia, which lies within the Russian Federation. The Ossetians are an Indo-European people, related to the Sarmatian tribes that moved into the Caucasus region around the first century AD. The Alan tribes, part of the larger Sarmatian group, united with tribes in the north Caucasus in the 6th century.[221] Descended from the Alans, the Ossetians speak a Persian based language related to that of the Pathans in Afghanistan.[222] The Ossetians began moving across the Caucasus Mountains into Georgia in the 13th and 14th centuries, driven there by Mongol invaders and Tamerlane's armies. They moved from settlements in the mountains into the lowlands in the 17th and 19th centuries.[223] The Ossetians are predominantly Christian, although some in North Ossetia are Sunni Muslim.

The Soviet experience of South Ossetia

Unlike the Chechens and the Abkhazians, the South Ossetian experience under the Soviets was relatively stable, at least until the emergence of the Georgian National Front in the late 1980s and the Georgian movement to secede from the Soviet Union. The South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast was established in 1922. A key component of South Ossetian history, at least from the perspective of the Georgians, is the collaboration of some South Ossetians with the Bolsheviks as they acted to take Georgia from the popular

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[221] Julian Birch, "The Georgian/South Ossetian Territorial and Boundary Dispute," in *Transcaucasian Boundaries*, ed. John F. R. Wright, Suzanne Goldenberg, and Richard Schofield (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 152.There is some discussion of the ancient heritage of the Ossetians. George Hewitt, a specialist in Caucasian languages and literatures, offers a history that bring the Ossetes to the North Caucasus in the 6th century B.C., citing the Ossetian claim to be related to the Iranian Scythians: George Hewitt, "Conflict in the Caucasus," *Asian Affairs* 32, no. 2 (2001): 196-97. Kaufman finds the Ossetian claim of relations to the Sarmatians to be more compelling. Stuart J. Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2001) 97.

[222] Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* 87. *Person* told me stories of the Alan and the Roman Legions, *interview citation here*.

[223] Birch, "The Georgian/South Ossetian Territorial and Boundary Dispute."

and entrenched Mensheviks. Julian Birch indicates that the subsequent establishement of South Ossetian autonomy demonstrated that the Soviets "may have been trying to protect the Ossetians."[224] During the Soviet period, however, the South Ossetian population endured collectivization and industrialization much like the rest of the Soviet territories. Collectivization exacted a heavy toll during weak harvest years. Despite this, Suny notes, South Ossetia "overfulfilled" their grain requirement, as did Abkhazia, Ajara, and most of western Georgia. Collectivization occurred quickly in South Ossetia, with 92 percent collectivization in less than a year.[225] In the mid-1930s, the South Ossetians experienced a purge of their local political structure after the Georgian Central Committee found that the South Ossetians were not eradicating *kulaks* ("wealthy" farmers) with sufficient diligence.[226] After Stalin's death and the initiation of the de-Stalinization campaign and the Thaw, the renewed *korenizatsiia* initiated by Khrushchev brought new structure to South Ossetian schools.[227]

South Ossetian Secession

Of all the separators, South Ossetia moved the most quickly to establish autonomy and demand independence. The theoretical structure outlined in Chapter 2 indicated that those regions without the benefits of economic wealth and patronage (or good relationships with central elites) fall into a category of increased probability of violent secession. South Ossetia's experience with secession from Georgia fits within this category. The region's leaders established their separatist stance and willingness to use violence even before Georgia became an independent state.

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[224] Ibid., 158.
[225] Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994) 245.
[226] Ibid. 267.
[227] Ibid. 302.

The beginning of the Ossetian national movement coincided with the many popular movements that emerged during the politics of reform in the Soviet Union and the processes associated with the secession of Georgia. Spearheading the South Ossetian movement was the South Ossetian National Front, *Ademon Nykhaz*, led by Alan Chochiev. The organization's goal was increased sovereignty for South Ossetia. In November 1989, the South Ossetian Congress of People's Deputies requested sovereignty from the Georgian Communist Party, addressing its request also to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). The increased sovereignty was an increase in status, from Autonomous Oblast to Autonomous Republic.[228] The Georgian Supreme Soviet, six days after the passage of the South Ossetian request, annulled it, citing in particular the role of the informal group *Ademon Nykhaz*. It also noted that the request itself was illegal and took place outside of the appropriate channels.[229]

The Ossetian plea for greater autonomy was motivated in part by a Georgian law passed in August 1989 establishing a program to make the Georgian language the official language of the government, for all administrative, party, and policy organs.[230] The Georgian response to the South Ossetian declaration in addition to the annulment was to plan a public rally in South Ossetian capital, Tskhinval(i).[231] The Georgian effort was spearheaded in part by Jaba Ioseliani, a paramilitary leader who had taken it upon himself to provide Georgia with "a defensive force, to protect its independence."[232] Ioseliani's militia, the *Mkhedrioni* (the Horsemen), joined by other paramilitary groups, decided to

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[228] *Reshenie Chrezvychainoi XII Sessii Soveta Narodnykh Deputatov Yugo-Osetinskoi Avtonomnoi Oblasti Dvadtsatova Sozyba o Povyshenii Statusa Yugo-Osetinskoi Avtonomnoi Oblasti*, (10 November 1989).
[229] *Postanovlenie Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta Gruzinskoi SSR o Resheniyakh Dvenadtsatoi Sessii Soveta Narodnykh Deputatov Yugo-Osetinskoi Avtonomnoi Oblasti Dvadtsatogo Sozyva*, (16 November 1989.).
[230] *Postanovlenie o Gosydarstvennoi Programme Gruzinskogo Yazyka*, (15 August 1989).
[231] The Ossetians spell the capital Tskhinval, the Georgians add a final vowel for Tskhinvali.
[232] Personal Interview. Jaba Ioseliani, Founder of the Mkhedrioni Paramilitary Group, April 24, 2002.

go to Tskhinval(i) "to fix the situation."[233] The paramilitary effort, according to Ioseliani, was supported by Zviad Gamsakhurdia. However, the *Mkhedrioni* arrived to meet not only armed Ossetians, but also Russian tanks. Despite what Ioseliani and others described as a "peaceful" rally to negotiate with the Ossetians, according to Human Rights Watch researchers, the rally ended in violence that lasted for two days. Six people died, 140 hospitalized, and both sides took hostages.[234]

A year later, on September 20, 1990, the South Ossetian government passed a new declaration, this time seceding from Georgia altogether and joining the Soviet Union as the South Ossetian Soviet Democratic Republic.[235] The next day, the Georgian Supreme Soviet issued a resolution revoking the Ossetian declaration of independence from Georgia.[236] In December, after Georgian elections propelled Zviad Gamsakhurdia into power as the head of the Round Table coalition and South Ossetia had held its technically illegal elections for their Supreme Soviet, the Georgian government revoked South Ossetia's autonomous status altogether. In the law, the Georgian government cited the "separatist powers" of the South Ossetians against the constitutions of both the Soviet Union and the Georgian republic. Moreover, the document contained assertions that the South Ossetian oblast was illegally established on Georgian soil, and was a product of Soviet imperialism on the territory of Georgia.[237]

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[233] Personal Interview. Ibid.
[234] *Bloodshed in the Caucasus: Violations of Humanitarian Law and Human Rights in the Georgia-South Ossetia Conflict*, (New York, NY: Human Rights Watch/Helsinki Watch, 1992).
[235] *Deklaratsiya o Gosydarstvennom Cuverenitete Yugo-Osetinskoi Sovetskoi Demokraticheskoi Respubliki*, (20 September 1990).
[236] *Postanovlenie Prezidiuma Verkhovkogo Soveta Gruzinskoi SSR o Reshenii Soveta Narodnykh Depytatov Yugo-Osetinskoi Avtonomoi Oblasti Ot 20 Sentyabrya 1990 Goda*, (21 September 1990).
[237] *Zakon Respubliki Gruziya ob Uprazdenenii Yugo-Osetinskoi Avtonomnoi Oblasti*, (11 December 1990). This point was also made to me by Gogi Khoshtaria: Personal Interview. Gogi Khoshtaria, Minister of Foreign Affairs under Zviad Gamsakhurdia, November 10, 2002.

The next day, the Georgians declared a state of emergency in the region. Soviet troops soon arrived, although the Georgian government insisted the Soviets were meddling into sovereign Georgian territory, demanding that the Soviet troops withdraw. President Gorbachev dismissed the South Ossetia declaration of sovereignty as unconstitutional, as well as the Georgian declaration of a state of emergency. Gorbachev further demanded that Georgian paramilitary groups leave the republic. The Ossetians responded to Georgian militias with armed resistance. The war itself took place in villages and cities, causing both Georgian and Ossetians refugees to flee the area. In addition, violence against Ossetians living in Georgia (but not in South Ossetia) caused many to flee to Vladikavkaz, the capital of North Ossetia. Although official statistics were not kept, TASS reported that by March 1992, a month before the ceasefire agreement between Georgia and South Ossetia, over 100,000 refugees had registered in Vladikavkaz, the capital of North Ossetia.[238] Due to the lack of organization and discipline, the role of paramilitaries complicated the negotiation of the war. Ceasefire agreements intermittently developed during 1991, but only informal ones. In January 1992, Russia, Georgia, and North Ossetia signed a Joint Control Commission, establishing a formal ceasefire, and agreed that South Ossetia would not join North Ossetia and thus, the Russian Federation.

Since 1992, the leaderships of both Georgia and South Ossetia have made little effort to resolve the conflict and establish a political settlement. Even after Zviad Gamsakhurdia was ousted from power by paramilitary groups and replaced by Eduard Shevardnadze, the South Ossetians were offered cultural autonomy, not territorial. According to Georgian officials, this “functional autonomy” would be offered to the

[238] Valery Shanayev, "Caucasians Discuss Ways to Stabilize Situation in Ossetia," *TASS*, March 21, 1992.

Ossetians because they had no need of territorial autonomy, already having a homeland for their people in North Ossetia.[239] The reasons were also punititve. Tengiz Sigua, the Georgian Prime Minister, argued that the South Ossetian deserved no favors, having squandered the "reward" of political autonomy through attempting secession.[240]

The South Ossetian separatism traveled quickly from an effort to increase its autonomous status, an act that would have been relatively cost-free in Yeltsin's Russia but was provocative in the heady days of Gamsakhurdia's national movement in Georgia. The South Ossetian separatism swiftly moved to violence, without much effort to negotiate with the Georgian government (or vice versa). The lack of economic resource material for barrgaining in both South Ossetia and Georgia itself, as well as the lack of patronage or established elite ties helped create extreme strategies on both sides, eventually leading to violence.

Nothing to lose: Of Resources and Russia

During the Soviet period, South Ossetia had little by way of industry or exportable agricultural products. The region, while self-sufficient agriculturally, relied on other parts of Georgia and the Soviet Union for its electricity and gas, as well as communications and transportation infrastructure. During the war, according to Human Rights Watch, the Georgian government intermittently turned off gas and power to the region throughout 1991.[241] Moreover, the main road leading into Tskhinval(i) from North Ossetia, the Dzhava-Tskhinvali road, was often blocked by Georgian paramilitary

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[239] Personal Interview. Nodar Natadze, Head of the Popular Front and Member of the 1995 Georgian Constitutional Commission, November 22, 2002.

[240] Tengiz Sigua in an interview with Human Rights Watch: *Bloodshed in the Caucasus: Violations of Humanitarian Law and Human Rights in the Georgia-South Ossetia Conflict*.

[241] Ibid. Some Georgian officials claimed a strike in the electrical factory was to blame; Georgian villagers living in South Ossetia (also without gas and electricity) attributed the lack of gas to lines destroyed by Ossetian militants.

groups.[242] In the absence of infrastructural support from the Georgians, South Ossetia turned to Russia for aid, finally establishing electrical and gas lines with North Ossetia in February 1991.[243]

As this indicates, the South Ossetians had very little with which to bargain greater autonomy from the Georgian central government. Nor were there any natural resource potential or geopolitical advantages for the region. Eldar Shengelaia, the Chair of the Commission on Tskhinval(i) in the Georgian parliament remarked in an interview that "from a strategic point of view, South Ossetia is nothing special."[244]

Ironically, South Ossetia's economic potential has risen in recent years precisely because of the war with Georgia. South Ossetia's *de facto* independent status but *de jure* status within Georgia creates a duty-free zone along the border with Russia. The North Ossetians and the South Ossetians maintained an open border between them, a non-visa regime permitted by the Russians.[245] The result of this is an active and lucrative contraband market peddling everything from benzene, weapons, and drugs, to vodka, beer, and foodstuffs from Russia.[246]

Absence of Patronage

The South Ossetian secession moved quickly from an attempt to raise its autonomous status to a declaration of independence from Georgia. The South Ossetian government quickly indicated its willingness to use military means in order to maintain

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[242] Ibid, "Tensions Strong in Ossetia," *TASS*, February 9, 1991.
[243] "Situation in South Ossetia," *TASS*, February 27, 1991.
[244] Personal Interview. Eldar Shengelaia, Member of Parliament, Head of Parliamentary Interim Commission on Solving the Problem in the Tskhinvali Region, Georgia, November 7, 2002.
[245] Personal Interview. Alan Pliev, Deputy Foreign Minister, South Ossetia, 26 November 2002.
[246] See, for example, King, "The Benefits of Ethnic War: Understanding Eurasia's Unrecognized States.", Alexandre Kukhianidze, Alexandre Kupatadze, and Roman Gotsiridze, *Smuggling through Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region of Georgia* (Tbilisi: Transnational Crime and Corruption Center (TraCCC) Georgia Office, 2004). The Russians gave the South Ossetians and the Abkhaz Russian Visas in 2003, providing an even easier path for contraband material.

its position. Notable in these events was the lack of any attempt on the part of either side to negotiate or discuss their military decisions. The Georgians and the South Ossetian leadership communicated through parliamentary declarations, not diplomacy. This is particularly telling when compared to the constant conversation between Russians and Chechens, even after the Russians had rejected Dudayev as a negotiation partner.

Negotiations were hampered by the lack of history between the leaders of both steadily nationalist regions. In the past, Union Republic leadership approved the Communist party heads of the autonomous regions that lay within their region. However, Gamsakhurdia, the new leader of Georgia in 1990, had not done so for the leadership in South Ossetia. Moreover, the balance of power in South Ossetia itself was shifting toward the head of the National Front, Alan Chochiev. Georgia's swift removal of South Ossetia's autonomous position also hampered the growth of any elite ties, as Gamsakhurdia could not take part in the appointment of a South Ossetian Supreme Soviet chairman Torez Kulumbegov (as he did in Abkhazia and Ajara).

According to David Darchiashvili, a historian and Head of the Georgian Parliament Research Office, one reason that negotiations never took place was the inexperience of Gamsakhurdia's and Kulumbegov's leadership: both groups "had no experience in diplomacy; only the Russians were good at that."[247] As a result, no real efforts were made to prevent violence. Gamsakhurdia appealed to paramilitary leaders like Jaba Ioseliani to quell the rebellion, rather than to find a formal political arena for a conversation to take place.[248] The conversation outside of parliamentary declarations occurred when the Georgian leadership mobilized a rally in the capital of South Ossetia.

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[247] Personal Interview. David Darchiashvili, Head of the Parliament Research Office, Tbilisi, Georgia, 30 July 2002.
[248] Personal Interview. Jaba Ioseliani, Founder of the Mkhedrioni Paramilitary Group.

In January 29, 1991, during Russian sponsored negotiations between the two leaders, Gamsakhurdia had Kulumbegov arrested and jailed.[249] Khoshtaria, who helped craft the plan for South Ossetia, admits that the Gamsakhurdia government might have handled the situation better. For one, he observes, the quick escalation to violence was due to the lack of any kind of political negotiation. The movement into Tskhinvali, he notes "wasn't necessary. The time would come when peaceful forces could build peace there."[250]

The Georgians and South Ossetians signed a ceasefire in June 22, 1992, but did little to resolve political differences linked to the separation. In 1994, at the behest of the OSCE, Russians and Georgians created the Joint Control Commission (JCC) to oversee the administration of the disputed area, as well as to work on political solutions. The membership included representatives from the four interested parties, Russia, Georgia, North Ossetia, and South Ossetia. In 1993, power had changed in South Ossetia, when Ludwig Chibirov, a man with close ties to the North Ossetian government, was elected to be the President of South Ossetia. For several years, Chibirov negotiated closely with the Shevardnadze government over the terms of political settlement to no avail. Although South Ossetian negotiatirs contentd that they signalled that they would join Georgia if offered regional political autonomy, the Georgian government refused to concede its position that the Ossetians deserved no special status.[251] Russian born Eduard Kokoity replaced Chibirov as president in 2001. Unlike Chibirov, Kokoity adamantly refuses to discuss political settlements with Tbilisi.

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[249] Alexei Zverev, "Ethnic Conflicts in the Caucasus 1988-1994," in *Contested Borders in the Caucasus*, ed. Bruno Coppieters (Brussels: VOB Press, 1996), 76.
[250] Personal Interview. Gogi Khoshtaria, Minister of Foreign Affairs under Zviad Gamsakhurdia.
[251] "Konstantin Zugaev, South Ossetian Minister of Information and Press, 1998-2002, Former Member of Parliament, Tskhinval(i), South Ossetia."

Ethnic politics within Georgia were highly personalized, a great deal dependent on the individuals in power. This fact hindered any possibility of a negotiated settlement between Georgia and South Ossetia. Gamsakhurdia had little experience in negotiation, indeed did not seek out any kinds of political dialogue with the South Ossetian leadership. Moreover, because of the nature of his assumption to power, and the immediacy with which he dissolved the South Ossetian autonomy, he could not have established any kind of formalized political arrangement through which to negotiate a political agreement, or even a cease fire. These measures were taken by Soviet interior ministry forces and by Gorbachev's administration. This situation was highly different in Abkhazia, where mechanisms existed for these kinds of negotiations to take place.

LOSING THE PROMISED LAND: ABKHAZIA AND INDEPENDENCE

Who are the Abkhazians?

The Abkhazians, who refer to themselves as Apsny and their territory as Apswa, speak a West Circassian language of the North Caucasian family. This is distinct from the South Caucasian language family, of which Georgian is a part.[252] The current Abkhazian territory lies just south of the Russian border, along the Black Sea, north of the Inguri River. The Abkhazians are associated with both Sunni Islam and Orthodox Christianity.

The Abkhazians have lived in the territory of Abkhazia for centuries and are closely related to ethnic groups living in the North Caucasus, especially the Adygei. The Abkhazians trace their lineage linguistically back to the Hittites, a tribe that ruled over Anatolia in the 2nd and 3rd century B.C. Analysts are unsure whether the Hittite tribes originated in the West Caucasus before moving on to Anatolia, or if they traveled to the Caucasus after settling in Anatolia, which would extend the Abkhazian indigenous claim

[252] B. G. Hewitt, *The Abkhazians: A Handbook* (Richmond: Curzon, 1999) 13.

to the territory.[253] The disparate Abkhazian kingdoms consolidated into one in the 8th century, under King Leon II.[254] In the tenth century, the Abkhazian king unified several kingdoms throughout what is now western and central Georgia, forming the "Kingdom of Abkhazians and Kartvelians." This kingdom was threatened and eventually split by Byzantine expansion into the region.[255]

The history of the Transcaucasus is one of overlapping expansion of major powers and the efforts of small kingdoms within the territory either to resist these new powers or to ally strategically with one or the other. In the early 19th century, the Abkhazian prince Keleshbey Chachba (the Georgian variant: Safar Bey Sharvashidze) allied himself with the Russian tsars as a foil to the encroaching Ottoman Empire.[256] In western Georgia in the same period, many principalities preferred the Persian shahs. By 1810, the tsars annexed the entirety of the Georgian kingdoms, for the most part with the blessing of the Georgian nobility. The Russians revoked Abkhazian autonomy in 1864.

Georgia became independent from Russia in 1918, following the February and October 1917 revolutions. A Menshevik group dominiated the Georigan power structure until the Bolsheviks invaded in 1921. Throughout this period, the status of Abkhazia was in constant flux. At first, the Abkhazians cooperated with the Georgians to maintain independence from the expanding Bolsheviks, agreeing in June 1918 that Abkhazia

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[253] Vjacheslav Chirikba, "The Origin of the Abkhazian People," in *The Abkhazians: A Handbook*, ed. George Hewitt (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).
[254] Yu. D. Anchabadze, "Abkhazy," in *Narody Rossii: Entsiklopediya*, ed. V. A. Tishkov (Moscow: Nauchnoye Izdatel'stvo, 1994).
[255] In any dispute over territory associated with national identity, there are efforts on both sides to maximize indigenous claims over a piece of land. Georgian historians claim that the Abkhaz unifiers in the 10th century were ethnically Georgian. This work does not make any argument toward this purpose, but attempts to use broad sources for historical context, in this case: Ibid, Hewitt, *The Abkhazians: A Handbook,* Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*. For an insightful analysis of the overlapping historical claims for both groups, see Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* 86-96.
[256] Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation* 64.

would have autonomy within a Menshevik Georgian state. This union, however, was short-lived due to local politics. Georgian repression ensued in Abkhazia after the "Abkhaz People's council proved disloyal to Georgia."[257] The Menshevik government, lead by Noe Zhordania (from Mingrelia, the Georgian region just south of Abkhazia) dissolved the Abkhazian autonomy and engaged in "punitive operations" against the Abkhazians.[258]

Abkhazian Experiences in the Soviet Era

Following the Bolshevik invasion of Georgia in 1921, the Abkhazians (like the Ossetians) received autonomous status. For ten years, from 1921 to 1931, the Abkhazians received autonomy separate from (not subordinate to) the Georgian SSR. In December 1921, Abkhazia and Georgia signed a "special treaty delegating some of its 'sovereign' powers to Georgia."[259] At the time, both Abkhazia and Georgia were part of a larger Transcaucasian republic that answered to Moscow. In 1931, Abkhazia was official subordinated to Georgia within the Soviet constitution, an act that Abkhazian view as an example of Georgian aggression, given that Stalin and then head of the Georgian Political Dirctorate, Lavrinti Beria (both Georgians), enacted the political changes.[260]

During the processes of industrialization and collectivization, the Abkhazians faced demographic challenges when non-Abkhazians were moved into the area, among them Russians, Greeks, Armenians, and Georgians (mostly from Mingrelia), diluting the

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[257] Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* 88.
[258] Stanislav Lakoba, *Abkhazia - De-Facto ili Gruziya De-Jure?* (Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University, 2001) 10.
[259] Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* 88-89. Kaufman's presentation implies that this relationship was voluntary, or at least not entirely against Abkhazian interests. The Abkhazians in 1990 characterized this agreement as "under pressure from the Stalinist Soviet Socialist Republic." See *Postanovleniye Verkhovnogo Soveta Abkhazskoi ASSR Pravobykh Garantiyakh Zashchity Gocydarstvennocti Abkhazii*, (25 August 1990).
[260] Lakoba, *Abkhazia - De-Facto ili Gruziya De-Jure?*. Stuart Kaufman also notes this interpretation of events, Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* 96.

Abkhazian demographic majority. Even so, there are indications that the Abkhazians suffered much less than other minorities during the collectivization and industrialization campaigns. Abkhazian private farms were permitted to flourish until 1936, well after the bulk of even Georgian farms were collectivized.[261] Even so, the later Stalinist years were difficult for the Abkhazians, who experienced the Georgianization of their written alphabet, and the closure of many Abkhazian presses and schools.[262]

Throughout the Soviet period, the Abkhazians appealed several times for separation from the Georgian Union Republic. Kaufman notes that the Abkhazians stretched Soviet patience with mass demonstrations after the passage of the Stalin constitution, organizing rallies in 1931, 1957, 1965, 1967, 1978. In 1978, the Abkhazians requested formal changes in their administrative status to Union Republic; the Soviets responded by making a series of concessions that increased the Abkhazian cultural autonomy with the region: economic credits and investments to create better infrastructure, an Abkhazian State University established in Sukhum(i), Abkhazian language television.[263] Svante Cornell records a rise in the percentages of Abkhazians within leadership positions of the Abkhazian *raikoms*, or administrative districts, from 42.9 percent of 1st secretaries to 50 percent by 1975, with the number of Georgian 1st secretaries diminishing to 37.5 percent. (See Table 4.2) This kind of affirmative action also extended to other areas of government, as Darrell Slider notes. In the 1980s, the

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[261] Georgi M. Derluguian, "The Tale of Two Resorts: Abkhazia and Ajara before and since the Soviet Collapse," in *The Myth of "Ethnic Conflict": Politics, Economics, and "Cultural" Violence*, ed. Beverly Crawford and Ronnie D. Lipschutz (University of California Press/University of California International and Area Studies Digital Collection, 1998), 266.
[262] Stephen F. Jones, "Georgia: The Trauma of Statehood," in *New States, New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations*, ed. Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 509.
[263] Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* 88-89.

Abkhazians dominated 67 percent of the government minister positions, and made up 71 percent of the Obkom (Oblast committee, or *Oblastnoi komitet*) department heads.[264]

Table 4.2 Ethnic Affiliation of *raikom* Secretaries in the Abkhaz ASSR[265]

	1965	1975	1985
1st Secretaries, Abkhazian %	42.9	50	50
1st Secretaries, Georgian %	57.1	50	37.5
2nd Secretaries, Abkhazian %	28.6	12.5	12.5
2nd Secretaries, Georgian %	57.1	62.5	15
Secretaries, Abkhazian %	28.6	12.5	50
Secretaries, Georgian %	42.9	50	12.5

These data indicate that Abkhazians were favored in high level administrative system proportionally higher than their demographic percentage, which by 1989 was 17.9 percent of the region's population. The Abkhazians are quick to point out that this redressed valid concerns of forced Abkhazian assimilation to Georgian culture. This led to the persistant dilution of the Abkhazian demographic majority in the regon. For example, Liana Kvarchalia indicates a "resettling process" that occurred throughout the early Soviet years. She notes that in 1886, the Georgian population in Abkhazia made up six percent of the total, whereas by 1926, Georgians made up 31.8 percent.[266] Moreover, the policies of *korenizatsiia*, although helpful to the Abkhazians, were applied capriciously and certainly revoked during the latter Stalin years.

The Abkhazian story is one of vast changes in autonomy and favor, particularly during the Soviet period. Many point to the aggressive behavior of the Abkhazians since 1917 as indicative of things to come, a predetermination of the secessionist movement

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[264] Darrel Slider, "Democratization in Georgia," in *Conflict, Cleavage and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus*, ed. Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 170.
[265] Svante E. Cornell, "Separatist Autonomies: Ethnoterritoriality and Conflict in the South Caucasus -- Cases in Georgia," (Uppsala University: Peace and Conflict Research Monograph Series No. 61: 2002), 206.
[266] Liana Kvarchelia, "Georgia-Abkhazia Conflict: View from Abkhazia," *Demokratizatsiya* 6, no. 1 (1998): 19.

from Georgia. This perception also stems from the Georgian nationalist rhetoric from 1988 that made non-Georgians feel uncomfortable and unwelcome. Even so, the Abkhazians were much slower than the Ossetians in declarations of independence, only after the war ended in 1994, and appealed for autonomy negotiations during the "separatist era" from 1989-1994. The key factors in the changes of Abkhazian separation over time, as we will see, was the role of regional-central elite relationships that affected the strategies of the regional leaders, as well as the interactions they had with central government leaders in Tbilisi, most particularly Zviad Gamsakhurdia and Eduard Shevardnadze.

Late Secession: Escalation of Separatism

Like with South Ossetia, the Abkhazian separatist trajectory started within the politics of nationalism common to the Gorbachev period among the national territories. Also like South Ossetia, the Abkhazian movement responded to the growing Georgian nationalist movement of secession from the Soviet Union. The Georgian movement, particularly its leadership, used highly inflammatory nationalist rhetoric to further the cause of independence from the Soviet Union, as well as to create a mandate of political change once independence was established.

The Abkhazian separatist movement began with appeals much like those of the South Ossetians: requests to the Soviet Union for membership in a manner by which they would no longer be subordinate to Georgia. In the case of Abkhazia, the republic's leadership sought to regain the status they had before 1931, Union Republic status. The initial declaration of sovereignty, announced in August 25, 1990, cited Georgian violations of the agreements signed in 1918. However, there were signs that the Abkhazians were not seeking a total break. For example, the declaration explicitly stated

that Abkhazia was "ready to begin negotiations with Georgia on further state-legal relations between them."[267] Six days later, the Abkhazian Supreme Soviet rescinded the order, citing the illegality of procedure of the earlier declaration, establishing a committee to discuss the procedural questions.[268] Given that the decision for sovereignty was only considered by just over half of the Abkhazian parliament, thus ignoring the interests of the Georgian members, the national committee would include representatives "of all regions of Abkhazia."[269]

One of the key concerns for the Abkhazian leadership was the *perestroika* reform of the Soviet Union, in particular efforts to privatize the economy and move from a command to capitalist economy. Vladislav Ardzinba, an Abkhazian and at the time a member of the Soviet Congress of Peoples Deputies and Chairman of the Subcommittee on State and Legal Status of Autonomous Entities argued that such reforms "disregarded the new Soviet laws extending the rights of all autonomous entities," which should all "be recognized as legal subjects of state regulation of the economy and put in an equal position with regard to the union."[270] Ardzinba returned to Abkhazia, becoming the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet, a position that required the approval of the leadership of Georgia, who at the time was Zviad Gamsakhurdia.

In March 1991, the Abkhaz (and the South Ossetians) participated in the Union referendum to decide whether the Soviet Union should continue to exist, the Georgians chose to boycott it. Upon hearing of Abkhazian plans to participate in the referendum, Gamsakhurdia excoriated the Abkhazian leadership, stating that, "Ardzinba and similar

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[267] *Postanovlenie Verkhogo Soveta Abkhazskoi ASSR o Pravovykh Garantiyakh Zashchity Gosydarstvennosti Abkhazii*, (25 August 1990).
[268] *Postanovlenie Verkhogo Soveta Abkhazskoi ASSR o Desyatoi Sessii Verkhogo Soveta Abkhazskoi ASSR Odinnadtsatogo Cozyva*, (August 31, 1990).
[269] Igor Gvritishvili, "Political Set-up in Georgia -- Weekly Round-Up," *TASS*, September 1, 1990.
[270] "Deputy to Soviet Parliament Criticises Market Plans," *TASS*, September 19, 1990.

figures will be viewed as traitors to their own peoples."[271] With 52 percent of the republic voting, the Abkhazian vote tally added up to 99 percent in favor of maintaining the Union.[272]

Despite Gamsakhurdia's rhetoric, the Abkhazians continued to negotiate with the Georgians, in particular regarding a settlement that would establish a mechanism for the Abkhazians, a minority in their own region, to maintain some kind of influence over the republics administration, thus addressing the demographic problem. In what Stanislav Lakoba, the 1st Deputy Speaker of the Abkhazian Supreme Soviet from 1993-1994, referred to as "the Thaw," the Abkhazians and the Georgians established a quota system within the parliament that would designate 28 seats (of 65) for Abkhazian representatives, 26 for Georgians, and 11 for other ethnic groups in the region.[273] According to the agreement, the major issues were to be established by a two-thirds majority, the Chairman of the Abkhazian parliament was to be an Abkhazian, the Prime Minister, a Georgian.[274] While some observers noted that the initial meetings of the Parliament often ended in deadlock and speculate that the arrangement was doomed to fail,[275] Lakoba reports that Gamsakhurdia himself began to initiate autonomous arrangements for Abkhazia, beginning "talking about the creation of an Abkhazian-Georgian federation, where Abkhazia might enter into a legal autonomous subject, comparable to Czechoslovakia."[276]

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[271] A. Kochetkov, "Georgian Leader Lambasts His Abkhaz Counterpart," *TASS*, March 12, 1991.
[272] Jones, "Georgia: The Trauma of Statehood," 537.
[273] Lakoba, *Abkhazia - De-Facto ili Gruziya De-Jure?* 13-14.
[274] Personal Interview. Levan Alexidze, Personal Representative to Eduard Shevardnadze on International Law, and Member of Parliament During the Gamsakhurdia Administration, Negotiator with Abkhazian Representatives, November 5, 2002.
[275] Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* 117.
[276] Lakoba, *Abkhazia - De-Facto ili Gruziya De-Jure?*

In January 1992, Georgian internal politics soon complicated the Abkhazian autonomy negotiations efforts, as opponents of Zviad Gamsakhurdia sought to depose and replace him. Civil war broke out in Georgia as the head of the National Guard, Tengiz Kitovani, allied himself with Jaba Ioseliani, the head of the *Mkhedrioni*, and fired upon the parliament building in downtown Tbilisi. Gamsakhurdia's supporters, the Zviadists, thronged to his aid. Gamsakhurdia's home region Mingrelia (just south of Abkhazia) rose to protect its native son. Gamsakhurdia was chased by Kitovani's militas through Mingrelia, taking refuge for a while in Sukhum(i) before moving on into Chechnya, where Dzhokar Dudayev offered him a place to stay in exile. At the same time, the Military Council, as Kitovani and Ioseliani dubbed their governing body, invited Eduard Shevardnadze back to govern Georgia.

The civil war front's movement into Sukhum(i) exacerbated the dynamics of autonomy negotiations between Ardzinba and the Tbilisi government, which was in turmoil as a result of Gamsakhurdia's ouster. As the war moved up western Georgia into Abkhazia, Ardzinba declared a state of emergency, and the Parliament began to discuss secession. In July 1992, the Abkhazian Parliament declared the "discontinuation" of the 1978 constitution, which established it as an Autonomous Republic within Georgia, instead taking up the 1925 constitution, in which Abkhazia had Union Republic status equal to that of Georgia.[277] A companion declaration announced the intention to establish a negotiation project on "the foundation of cooperation between the Republic of Abkhazia and the Republic of Georgia.[278] This represented a more separatist strategy, but still not one bent on absolute independence. This effort parallels strategies in Chechnya

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[277] *Postanovlenie Verkhogo Soveta Abkhazii o Prekrashchenii Deustviya Konstitutsii Abkhazskoi ASSR 1978 Goda*, (23 July 1992).
[278] *Postanovlenie Verkhovnogo Soveta Respubliki Abkhaziya o Proekte Dogobora Mezhdy Respublikoi Abkhaziya i Respublika Gruziya*, (23 July 1992).

and Tatarstan, where the regions sought to create favorable negotiation stances through positions of equality with the central government. The language of this declaration indicates the willingness for a kind of federal or confederal relationship with Georgia.

War broke out in Abkhazia when Georgian paramilitary groups entered Abkhazia in order to free the Georgian interior minister, who had been kidnapped by Zviadist militia groups. Kaufman reports that the kidnapping excuse was "nonsense," noting that "instead of searching for hostages, the bulk of the Georgian troops – accompanied by armored vehicles – stayed on the main road, arrested the head of administration of the city of Ochamchira, skirmished with the Abkhazians outside the city, and drove straight for Sukhum(i)."[279] Darrell Slider offers a different interpretation, reporting that after the National Guard entered Abkhazia the "Abkhazian authorities reacted violently to this transgression of their self-proclaimed sovereignty. After being fired upon by Abkhazian militias, Georgian forces led by Tengiz Kitovani seized the Abkhazian capital of Sukhum(i) and the parliament building."[280] Thus the war for Abkhazia began. It would end in stalemate, with Georgian troops vanquished by Abkhazian troops aided by Russians, as well as by militias from the Caucausian Mountain Peoples, an alliance that united the Abkhazian with related groups of the North Caucasus.

Tourism and Tea: The Abkhazian Wealth

Abkhazia's economic position, while important, seems not to have impacted their negotiations with the central government. The Georgian government responded strongly to Abkhazian appeals for autonomy, at least under Gamsakhurdia, but this response was due to a sense of Abkhazia's position as a long-standing indigenous claim to the

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[279] Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* 119-20.
[280] Slider, "Democratization in Georgia," 172.

territory.[281] Even so, the Abkhazian economic position was one of relative wealth and prestige.

Abkhazia commands a significant Black Sea coastline that Georgia values as part of its geostrategic advantage, particularly as it advertises itself to potential investors as a transit zone for East/West and North/South traffic.[282] Moreover, the extensive shoreline provided Abkhazia with several potentially vibrant port cities, in particular the capital. During the Soviet period, Sukhum(i) was a major port city with thriving trade. Moreover, Abkhazia was the popular tourist destination for Soviets, in particular for the ruling elite. (Stalin's former dacha in Sukhum(i) is still used to house visitors.) Bordering on Russia, Abkhazia could count on trade revenues with the large Russian market. 20 percent of the tea drank by Soviet citizens was produced in Abkhazia. In 1988, the GDP of Abkhazia was $692.5 million.[283]

Despite this, there is little evidence that the Abkhazians capitalized on this position in order to advance their position in Georgian central government circles. This could be due to Ardzinba's rejection of privatization measure and capitalist reform within the system.

Zviad the Peacemaker? Surprising Outcomes

Abkhazia's secessionary strategy, unlike that of Chechnya, did not involve heavy reliance on economic resource wealth. Part of the explanation for this lies with the utter inability of the Georgian state to negotiate on economic terms, as will be discussed in Chapter 6. Abkhazian separatist strategies, particularly as developed by Vladislav

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[281] Personal Interview. Gogi Khoshtaria, Minister of Foreign Affairs under Zviad Gamsakhurdia.
[282] John F. R. Wright, "The Geopolitics of Georgia," in *Transcaucasian Boundaries*, ed. John F. R. Wright, Suzanne Goldenberg, and Richard Schofield (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 137-38.
[283] Tebrone Gomelauri, *The Role of Economic Factors in Conflict Resolution in Georgia and the Caucasus* (Budapest: Open Society Institute, 2001)., 7.

Ardzinba, changed as the central politics in Tbilisi changed, particularly with the fall of Zviad Gamsakhurdia and the rise of Eduard Shevardnadze. Gamsakhurdia, admittedly outspoken regarding his nationalist beliefs, approved Ardzinba's position as Chairman of the Supreme Soviet. Moreover, Gamsakhurdia applied his anti-federal policies selectively, negotiating instead of making unilateral decisions. Ardzinba also tapered his strategies of separatism, settling for quota systems in parliament and working toward federal agreements of competencies. Many observers of Georgian politics have understandably emphasized Gamsakhurdia's vitriolic nationalist rhetoric when examining the nationalist conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia.[284] However, under Gamsakhurdia, negotiation with Abkhazia was the norm, not the exception. The political conversation occurred not merely through dueling parliamentary declarations, as in South Ossetia, but rather through face-to-face political dialogue. Political participants and observers on both sides note that Ardzinba and Gamsakhurdia interacted well together. According to Darchiashvili, despite Gamsakhurdia's lack of experience in negotiation, Ardzinba's personality made it easier for the two to get along: they had much in common, both academics with liberal arts backgrounds, both charismatic leaders. When asked about links between Ardzinba and Gamsakhurdia, Khoshtaria admits that Gamsakhurdia had "an ability to deal with Ardzinba."[285] In his history of the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict, Abkhazian historian Stanislav Lakoba writes that after the negotiations that established the quota system for the Abkhazian parliament, Gamsakhurdia's "relationship with Abkhazia became more warmer." Like with Chechnya, the circumstances in Abkhazia depended on the ties between leaders: Gamsakhurdia and Ardzinba began their interactions when Gamsakhurdia approved Ardzinba's position in the Supreme Soviet.

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[284] Hewitt, *The Abkhazians: A Handbook,* Hewitt, "Conflict in the Caucasus."
[285] Personal Interview. Gogi Khoshtaria, Minister of Foreign Affairs under Zviad Gamsakhurdia.

This allowed further interactions of negotiations, which became increasingly cooperative. Despite Gamsakhurdia's initial intense and sometimes threatening nationalist rhetoric, the Georgian government made no efforts to dissolve Abkhazian autonomy. Emboldened by the cushion provided by cooperative elites, Abkhazia engaged in high level, non-violent separatism.

This elite structure broke down once Gamsakhurdia lost power and fled Tbilisi. Interestingly, Gamsakhurdia fled through Abkhazia, and then took refuge in Chechnya, whose militia groups helped the Abkhazians fight against the Georgians under Shevardnadze. Unlike Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze made no attempts to negotiate with Ardzinba or even discuss a possible political settlement to avoid violent measures. According to Hamlet Chipashvili, a member of parliament representing Ajara, Shevardnadze had no intention of solving the problems with Abkhazia before the invasion.[286] Darchiashvili draws parallels between Shevardnadze's actions regarding Abkhazia and Gamsakhurdia's efforts in South Ossetia: "Shevardnadze's rhetoric was more pragmatic, but his deeds were no less terrible or nationalistic."[287]

ASSESSING THE SEPARATORS: KEY IMPLICATIONS

The theoretical structure introduced in Chapter 2 argues that national territories will seek autonomy using a bargaining arsenal that relies on economic resource potential and patronage/ties with central government elites. Regions with high levels of both will follow a high separatism strategy, because their resource wealth and elite ties will provide mechanisms to minimize the risk of what would otherwise be a risky strategy. Regions that perceived themselves either rich or closely connected with the central government,

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[286] Personal Interview. Hamlet Chipashvili, Head of the Ajara Representation in Tbilisi, Former Foreign Minister of Ajara, Tbilisi, Georgia, April 17, 2002.
[287] Personal Interview. David Darchiashvili, Head of the Parliament Research Office, Tbilisi, Georgia.

but not both, will engage in relatively low level separatism, because they have less bargaining power. Regions with neither are the most likely to attempt violent separatist measures, feeling that without close elite ties or economic potential, they have little to gain from the center.

In Chechnya, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia, regional leaders varied over time in the separatist strategies they followed. Their perceptions of how they understood their economic bargaining position, as well as elite connections with the central government varied. Table 4.3 indicates the periods in which leadership changes or contributing factor changes altered on time points throughout the period leading up to conflict outbreak. It categorizes what has been introduced in the case studies above, the time period, economic wealth and elite ties, noting what the framework would predict regarding level of separatism. It then notes the actual separatist strategy employed by the regional elite at the time.

Table 4.2 The Separator Strategies over Time

	Regional Perception of Wealth	Regional Perception of Elite Ties	Expected Outcome	Observed Outcome
Chechnya$_1$ 1989-1990 (Zavgaev)	Low	High/Moderate	Low Separatism, Non-Violent	Moderate Separatism Non-Violent
Chechnya$_2$ 1991-1992 (Dudayev)	High	High	High Separatism Non-Violent	High, Non-Violent
Chechnya$_3$ 1993-1994 (Dudayev)	High	Low	Low Separatism Non-Violent	High Separatism, Violent
South Ossetia 1989-1992	Low	Low	High Separatism, Violence Likely	High Separatism, Violent
Abkhazia$_1$ 1989-1991 (Gamsakhurdia)	High	High	High Separatism, Non-Violent	High Separatism, Non-Violent
Abkhazia$_2$ 1992-	High	Low	Low Separatism Non-Violent	High Separatism, Violent

The Chechen conflict is separated into three periods according to changes in patronage. Zavgaev, as noted above, did not consider Chechnya to have economic bargaining position, but did have good elite connections with Gorbachev. His demands in terms of autonomy vis-à-vis the central government were very much similar to other demands made by other regions in Russia – asking for sovereignty and greater bargaining position. The Zavgaev position is coded moderate here because of the stronger position he took in the bargaining for the Union Treaty due to the border question between Ingushetia and Ossetia, an issue that did not actually affect the level of Chechen autonomy.

The Dudayev years are split into two periods, noting the changes in elite ties between when he established power in Chechnya with the help of the Kremlin (indicating a clientelistic relationship) and when he broke the terms of that agreement, through aggressive and insulting rhetoric toward Yeltsin and the violations of his informal agreements with regard to oil revenues. The Kremlin broke ties with Dudayev, and sought actively to replace him, leading to the second Dudayev period of 1993-1994. Although the first iteration of the Dudayev period conforms to the expectations of the framework introduced in Chapter 2, the second Dudayev period does not. Without the strong ties, but with economic potential, the region should have acted to preserve its economic position within the system, but not risk war that would compromise that wealth. Dudayev's strategy clearly does not conform to that expectation, making it quite similar to the Georgia case in Abkhazia, discussed below.

The South Ossetian strategy conforms to that predicted by the framework. Without close ties and economic wealth, South Ossetian leaders had little ability to bargain with the central government. These conditions, especially with regard to a central government that had little interest in negotiation, left them two choices – to concede to the new policy that revoked their autonomy, or to go to war. With little to lose, they chose the latter. In Abkhazia, like with Chechnya, there are several iterations of periods where negotiation was possible. Abkhazia, a relatively wealthy region, did not use its economic advantage, although it did use ties with the Georgian government to exact concessions. Especially after the success of the first iteration of sovereignty demands, the level of separatism increased. Notably, at no time did either side initiate violence as a mechanism to obtain a political goal. Once Gamsakhurdia lost power to Shevardnadze, when close elite ties were nonexistent, Ardzinba engaged once again in highly separatist strategies (changing to the 1925 constitution, for example). When the Georgians entered

Sukhum(i) with military force, Ardzinba could have conceded but chose force instead, much like Dudayev's decision in Chechnya.

Three particular issues emerged from these results. First, the unexpected outcomes in Abkhazia after 1992 and Chechnya in 1993 indicate that there are spillover effects from previous interactions with central governments. This is not all that surprising – strategies determined based on some assessments of risk and bargaining potential cannot change immediately once those assessments become less accurate. Dudayev understood that he had lost his patrons in Moscow, but knew that with active support of the opposition by Moscow (and several assassination attempts), he had few options besides military action to maintain power in Chechnya. Likewise, Ardzinba had little time to alter his strategy before Georgian militias entered Sukhum(i). Moreover, he would have had a difficult time backing away from the stance he took in negotiations with Gamsakhurdia.

Second, the presentation here has noted factors that affected the strategies of regional leaders, where clearly the central state played a large role in the decision for violence. Indeed, in every instance where the outcome was violence, the central state entered the region either with intent to violently remove the leadership, violently suppress opposition, or, in the case of Abkhazia, with highly armed militias whose intent, in the most generous of interpretations, was unclear. This issue will be taken up in Chapter 6, which examines the role of state capacity and state building on the strategies taken by central governments.

Third, from this analysis, it is clear that in every case, there were points at which negotiations were possible, where regions seemed willing to offer concessions that would forestall violence. In particular, the lack of center-regional connections at particular time periods made these points difficult (and in the end, impossible) to negotiate.

Chapter 5: Staying within the State

"We intend to build a common economic space, not to destroy it."[288]
-Tatarstan Prime Minister Muhammat Savirov

"The division of Russia is tantamount to death not only for us but for humanity. It will mean death to the whole world."[289]
-Russian Vice President Alexsander Rutskoi

Three national territories in Georgia and the Russian Federation emerged as sure winners in the autonomy politics of the early 1990s: Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, and Ajara. These three "dealer" regions shared several commonalities. All three regions had tremendous economic wealth (at least relative to other regions within the state), and were situated in strategic locations, such as in major transit zones, or over vast natural resource deposits. In part because of their locations, these regions dominated the economic arena. Second, the leadership of all three regions established significant relationships with central government leaders, relationships that over time turned into clientelistic arrangements for the delivery of votes, electoral legitimacy, and for the leaders of the regions, significant personal and family wealth.

A second path this chapter follows is that of Ingushetia, a region without significant economic wealth, which followed extremely low separatist strategies without much unilateral action. In Ingushetia, ties between the Moscow government and the Kremlin appointed president ensured cooperation between the region and center.

The theoretical structure outlined in Chapter 2 provides certain expectations for regions that share the dealers' characteristics. For regions with high levels of economic wealth and close elite ties, as the dealers enjoy, one expects high levels of non-violent

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[288] Nikolai Sorokin, "Tatarstan Premier Favours a Common Economic Space," *TASS*, December 17, 1991.
[289] "Rutskoi Appeals to Russian Citizens on Events in Tatarstan," *TASS*, March 11, 1992.

separatism. Likewise, with the Ingushetia case, with low levels of economic wealth but close elite ties, the framework predicts low levels of separatism, and non-violent means. This chapter outlines the precise nature of these factors, examining the levels of separation along several time points within in region. These time points parse the effects of different leadership combinations to better account for patronage after regime changes. (See Table 5.1)

Table 5.1 Dealer and Accepter Expectations

	Regional Perception of Wealth	Regional Perception of Elite Ties	Expected Outcome
Tatarstan 1989-1997	High	High	High Separatism, Non-Violent
Bashkortostan 1989-1997	High	High	High Separatism, Non-Violent
$Ajara_1$ (1989-1991) Gamsakhurdia	High	High	High Separatism, Non-Violent
$Ajara_2$ (1992-2003) Shevardnadze	High	High	High Separatism, Non-Violent
$Ajara_3$ (2003-2004) Saakashvili	High	Low	Low Separatism
Ingushetia (1993-1998)	Low	High	Low Separatism

In Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, Russian President Boris Yeltsin identified the leadership as allies within the political turmoil of consolidating the Russian Federation, much like the Bolsheviks did in 1917. Regional leaders Mintimer Shaimiyev of Tatarstan and Murtaza Rakhimov of Bashkortostan responded to Yeltsin's vulnerability with aggressive autonomy demands. The president of Ajara, Aslan Abashidze, unilaterally turned the region in to his own fiefdom, where tax revenues owed to the central

government were routinely withheld, and central government election law ignored. Abashidze enjoyed protection from Presidents Gamsakhurdia and Shevardnadze, until new Georgian president Mikhail Saakashvili drove him out of the country for corruption in 2004. Soon after, the Georgian parliament began serious discussions of nullification of Ajaran autonomy. In all cases, the "dealer" regions used their economic wealth and elite ties to establish significant autonomy, particularly economic, from the central government. In all cases, these strategies did not include violent means, but did entail high levels of separatist behavior. Ingushetia's President Aushev, placed in power by the Kremlin, inherited a territory split by the Chechen war and with disputed boundaries. Ingush separatism reached a peak during the Ingush-Ossetian border conflict. Once the Kremlin settled terms for the cessation of violence, Ingushetia followed a path of quiescence, in stark contrast to its neighbor, Chechnya.

THE DEALERS: OIL PIPELINES AND PATRONS

Tatarstan: Of Oil and Autonomy

Of all the dealers, Tatarstan obtained the most favorable autonomy deals with the central government. Tatarstan's separatist strategy was the most risk acceptant: Tatarstan led the way for all regional leaders by being the first to declare sovereignty and demand a status based on bi-lateral treaties with Moscow. Tatarstan President Mintimer Shaimiyev took advantage of his region's favorable economic conditions, particularly national resource wealth, as well as Yeltsin's need for support from regional elites to maneuver a long-standing autonomy vis-à-vis the central government.

Who are the Tatars?

Tatarstan, 26,250 square miles with a population of 3,779,000, lies in the eastern European plains of Russia, west of the Ural Mountains. Kazan, the capital, rests where the Volga and Kama rivers come together. The Volga Tatars constitute 48.5 percent of the region's population, with Russians making up the largest minority at 43.2 percent.[290]

The Tatar historical identity affected the ways in which the Tatar leadership framed its appeal for autonomy within the Russian Federation, in particular the longstanding indigenous roots of the Tatars in the area, their extensive history of statehood, and the manner in which they were incorporated into the Moscovy kingdom. The Tatars trace their ancestry to three cultural groups, who in turn had assimilated other groups as they moved into the area. The Volga Bulgars, who arrived in the Volga region no later than the 10th century, and perhaps as early as the 7th century, are the earliest precursors to the Tatars. The Bulgars dominated the region, establishing a kingdom that extended not only the current area of Tatarstan, but into other neighboring republics as well. They adopted Islam as their state religion in 922. Their dominance faded in 1236, however, as the Golden Horde, led by Batu Khan, took the area, establishing what would become the Kazan Khanate. In addition to the Bulgars and the Horde, the Tatars derive their language from a third group, the Kypchak Turks, who co-existed with the Bulgars and were not assimilated until the Golden Horde arrived.[291] The Kazan Khanate fell to Ivan the Terrible in 1552.

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[290] The Volga Tatars are related to two other Tatar groups in the former Soviet Union, the Crimean Tatars and the Siberian Tatars. Although they have similar heritage, these groups have important differences, at least in terms of self-identification.

[291] This historical survey is derived from several sources: Allen Frank and Ronald Wixman, "The Middle Volga: Exploring the Limits of Sovereignty," in *New States, New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations*, ed. Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), Katherine Graney, "Projecting Sovereignty: Statehood and Nationness in Post-Soviet Russia (Tatarstan, Bashkortostan)" (Dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1999), D. M. Iskhakov et al., "Tatary," in

Within the Tatar community in Tatarstan, there exists some debate over the precise lineage of the Tatars, with significant political impact. One interpretation of Tatar history contends that current Tatars derive purely from the Bulgar tribes, without assimilation or genetic links to the Mongols. Another interpretation emphasizes the linkages between the Tatars and the Kypchak Turks, eschewing both the Bulgar and Mongol influences. The third interpretation, however, emphasizes the Tatar linkages to all three kingdoms. This interpretation is popular with Tatar public officials, who use it to emphasize the Tatar experience with statehood, going back to the Volga Bulgars and the 10th century.[292] Consequently, when making a case for possible Tatar statehood, Tatar leaders referred to the long history of Tatarstan, and the manner in which they were brought into Russia – through invasion.[293] For example, Ildus Tagirov, the head of the Commission on Culture and Nation in the Tatar State Assembly, cited as a key factor for Tatar autonomy or even independence was the experience of the Tatars with statehood under the Khanate, and referred to the taking of Kazan by Ivan the Terrible as "a terrible tragedy."[294] This interpretation and linkage with historical statehood and the illegality of Ivan's acts emerged as an official justification for Tatarstan's separatist movement in post-communist Russia.

Narody Rossii: Entsiklopediya, ed. V. A. Tishkov (Moskva: Naychnoe Izdatelstvo: Bolshaya Rossiiskaya Entsiklopediya, 1994).

[292] In her dissertation, Kate Graney offers a fascinating discussion of the details of this historiographical ethnography: Graney, "Projecting Sovereignty: Statehood and Nationness in Post-Soviet Russia (Tatarstan, Bashkortostan)" 51-60.

[293] See, for example, Ravil Bukharaev, *The Model of Tatarstan under President Mintimer Shaimiev* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999) 44-51.

[294] Personal Interview. Ildus Tagirov, Tatarstan Gossoviet Member, Commission of Culture and Nation, Kazan, July 16, 2003.

Tatarstan and the Soviet Union

The Tatar incorporation into the Soviet state occurred in mixed circumstances. As they did with many of the national territories, the Bolsheviks wooed Tatarstan through promises of autonomy, only to revoke the region's political power through later processes of government and economic centralization. Unlike the Bashkir, who adamantly demanded inclusion on the basis of territory, the Tatars lobbied for cultural autonomy, not dependent on territory. One reason for this distinction was the widespread Tatar population throughout the Volga region; the Tatars hoped to establish a Volga-Ural region, including the territory of the Bashkir, Mari, Chuvash, and Udmurt, some of whom share Turkic roots with the Tatars. The demographics of such a republic would endow the Tatars with hegemony.[295]

The Soviets rejected this plan, in part because of the already promised autonomy to the Bashkir, whose agreement preceded that of the Tatars. Instead, in 1920, the Soviets established the Tatar ASSR in addition to separate autonomies for the Bashkir, the Chuvash (1920), the Mari (1920) and the Votiak (1921). Moreover, the borders of the Tatar republic were drawn such that it would include a minority of the Tatar population of the Soviet Union. Consequently, substantial Tatar minorities lived in regions across eastern European Russia, including the Bashkir and Udmurt Republics, and Orenburg, Perm, Sverdlovsk, and Chelyabinsk.[296] In 1989, 31.9 percent of all Tatars living in the USSR lived within their titular republic.[297]

Problems immediately began between the Tatars and the Soviets regarding the role of Islam in now Soviet Tatar society. In her comprehensive examination of Islam in

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[295] Frank and Wixman, "The Middle Volga: Exploring the Limits of Sovereignty," 147-48, Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917-1923* 166-72.
[296] Graney, "Projecting Sovereignty: Statehood and Nationness in Post-Soviet Russia (Tatarstan, Bashkortostan)" 75-76.
[297] *Itogi Vserossiiskoi Perepisi Naselenia 1989 Goda.*

Russia, Shireen Hunter stresses the importance of Islam and the Tatar identity, remarking, "at the time of the Bolsheviks, Islam formed the core of the individual and collective self-identity of the overwhelming majority of Muslims."[298] During the early days of the Soviet period, the Bolsheviks tried to honor "freedom of conscience," allowing religious worship and schooling. However, as Stalin promoted the swift transition into the Communist sphere, anti-religious programs became widespread. These programs specifically sought out Islamic practices, because the Soviets distrusted the encompassing influence of Islamic teachings over legal and moral questions.[299] Tatar publication houses were closed, Tatar religious leaders were arrested, exiled, or deported.[300] The Tatar language itself received adjustment by the Soviets, its alphabet switched from Arabic to Latin, and then to Cyrillic.[301]

Unlike the Chechens or the Ingush, however, the Tatars did not experience deportation or ethnic cleansing at the hands of the Soviets. In the context of the Soviet system, they fared better than many of the other ethnic autonomies. Frank and Wixman observe that Tatarstan and Bashkortostan were unique among the autonomous republics of the Volga region in that they had native language education through to the 10th grade level. The Tatar also benefited economically, due to the discovery of its natural resource material and the movement of strategic industries into the territory during World War II. Thus, not only did Tatarstan benefit from the growth of petro-chemical industries on its soil, but also from the influx of major transportation industries, including the largest transportation complex in the Soviet Union, the Kamaz plant."[302]

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[298] Hunter, Thomas, and Melikishvili, *Islam in Russia: The Politics of Identity and Security* 26.
[299] Ibid. 28-29.
[300] Ibid.
[301] Graney, "Projecting Sovereignty: Statehood and Nationness in Post-Soviet Russia (Tatarstan, Bashkortostan)" 79.
[302] Frank and Wixman, "The Middle Volga: Exploring the Limits of Sovereignty," 156.

Like with Chechnya, the bulk of this wealth went directly into the Soviet central coffers. Writing in the late 1990s, Ravil Bukharaev notes the Tatar perspective of the economic inequalities of the Soviet period:

> Mr. Insaf Rahimov, deputy director of Tatneft, the republic's state oil company, complained bitterly that at present he can only sell 5m tones of oil for the benefit of Tatarstan. The rest of his annual output of 30m tons is handed over to Russian authorities for export or distribution of the country.[303]

Certainly a great deal of efficiency was lost (and inequality perpetuated) through the Soviet command economy system. However, compared to the Chechen case, where the entirety of the oil was sent on to Moscow, the Tatar circumstance was certainly more favorable. The economic build-up of the latter Soviet period would have direct results over the manner and demands of the Tatar political separatism in the early 1990s.

Toying with Independence: The Tatar Separatism Movement

Tatarstan's political battle for autonomy lasted three years, a marathon that ended after the Russian Federation and Tatarstan signed a bi-lateral treaty and twelve formal agreements establishing legal competencies between the two territories. In terms of the rhetoric and demands, Tatarstan's separatist efforts were comparable to Chechnya's early efforts, although Mintimer Shaimiyev avoided the starkly nationalist and bluntly rude style of Dzhokhar Dudayev. Tatarstan's political separatism peaked when it held a republic-wide referendum on whether Tatarstan should be a distinct state from Russia. Further events in Russia, such as Yeltsin's October 1993 dissolution of parliament, the politics of establishing a Russian constitution, and the escalation of the Chechen crisis hampered a quick resolution to the Tatarstan question. Throughout the entire process of center-regional negotiations and stand-offs, Tatarstan president Mintimer Shaimiyev

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[303] Bukharaev, *The Model of Tatarstan under President Mintimer Shaimiev*.

repeatedly insisted that his goal was not a split with Russia. What Shaimiyev left ambiguous, and became subject to various interpretation by both Tatar national groups and Russian public officials, were Tatarstan's specific goals.

Tatarstan was the first of the autonomous republics (not including the Union Republics) to declare sovereignty, leading the Russian regions' autonomy drive in August 31, 1990. However, far from indicating intent for secession, Tatarstan's sovereignty declaration states its desire for negotiation with the Russian Federation. Although Tatarstan declared its laws and constitution the primary laws of the land, the document also noted that this sovereignty declaration was instrumental to establishing future arrangements between Tatarstan and the Russian Federation by treaty, and "during the period of transition, Federative and Union legislation is to remain in force."[304] In addition to the political rhetoric of the sovereignty declaration, Tatarstan was also pursuing economic relationships outside of the Russian purview. In December 1990, Tatarstan signed a trade agreement with Poland, establishing a barter agreement to trade crude oil for Polish consumer goods.[305]

As Gorbachev and Yeltsin competed for alliances with regional leaders, Tatarstan's president Shaimiyev followed a path that would ensure an exalted position for Tatarstan no matter the outcome of the political chaos. In May 1991, Tatarstan indicated that it planned to sign the Union Treaty to maintain the Soviet Union, but only under the condition that it be treated as a Union Republic, equal to Russia. A few days after this announcement, Tatarstan declared that it would not sign the Federation Treaty, an act that would place it within the political jurisdiction of Russia.[306] Tatarstan was the only region

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[304] Sabirov, "Independent Tatarstan Proclaimed."
[305] "Soviet Union's Tatarstan, Poland Sign Trade Agreement," *TASS*, December 3, 1990.
[306] Yuri Kozmin and Andrei Surzhansky, "Russian Parliamentarian on Signing a Treaty of Union," *TASS,* Z. Zakirov, "Parliaments Make Compromise," *Russian Press Digest*.

to declare outright that it would refuse to sign the treaty in any circumstance. Checheno-Ingushetia also declined to sign it, postponing the signature due to border issues with North Ossetia. Also similar to Chechnya, the Tatar government left its participation in the June 12, 1991 Russian residential election ambiguous, stating that its people would be permitted to vote for the Russian President (in addition to Tatarstan's own Presidential election), but that "Tatarstan does not participate in a Russian Presidential election officially."[307]

The most contentious bid for autonomy came with Tatarstan's referendum on its status, held March 22, 1992. The question brought to decision was: "Do you agree that Tatarstan is a sovereign state, a subject of international law, which develops its relations with Russia and other states on the basis of equal treaties?"[308] Russian central government officials, including Yeltsin, rejected the referendum vociferously, brought the question to the Constitutional Court, and pled with the republic's population, both Russian and Tatar, to refuse to participate. Part of the problem was the wording of the question itself, which was intentionally opaque. No one, including the Tatarstan government, could really explain what a yes or no vote would actually mean in terms of implementation or enforcement. In the months after the announcement of the question, officials from the Russian government and representatives from Tatarstan verbally sparred about the question's meaning and possible political outcomes. The Russian parliament released a statement that rejected the referendum wording, arguing that it "may distort the real will of the people of Tatarstan." Moreover, it argued the referendum itself indicated "an act of disrespect for the multi-ethnic people of Tatarstan and the statehood of the Russian Federation, and it aimed at the republic's secession from the

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[307] "Elections in Tatarstan," *TASS*, June 12, 1991.
[308] Nikolai Sorokin, "Tatarstan to Hold Referendum on Status on March 21," *TASS*.

Russian Federation."[309] Alexander Rutskoi, the Russian Vice President at that time, rejected the referendum and denounced national autonomy movements altogether arguing, "the division of Russia is tantamount to death not only for us but for humanity. It will mean death to the whole world."[310] The Russian Parliament referred the question to the Russian Constitutional Court, which decided that the referendum did not preserve the spirit of the Russian constitution, but nonetheless was technically legal to hold. The Court found it could not ban the referendum, but warned that the referendum "wording can be connected with an unilateral change of the national and state system of the Russian Federation and mean the Republic of Tatarstan is not within the Russian Federation."[311] In a television address given the day before the referendum, Boris Yeltsin outlined what he considered to be the dangers of the referendum and the motivations of Tatarstan's leadership:

> At present the Tatar leadership is trying to convince everyone that Tatarstan is no longer part of the Russian Federation. All this means that the main and the only goal of the forthcoming referendum is not to raise the republic's status or strengthen its sovereignty but to get the people's approval of Tatarstan's secession from Russia. Otherwise, the referendum simply loses sense.[312]

Tatarstan officials repeated their practiced response to the Russian onslaught: they did not seek to secede, but rather establish an "equal alliance of sovereign state of Tatarstan with Russia." Shaimiyev argued publicly that the Russian government misunderstood his goal, which was to establish Tatarstan as "a sovereign state which is associated with Russia on the basis of agreements."[313] Tatarstan officials argued that the

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[309] Georgy Ivano-Smolensky, "Question in Tatarstan Referendum Incorrect," *Russian Press Digest*, March 7, 1992.
[310] "Rutskoi Appeals to Russian Citizens on Events in Tatarstan."
[311] Sergei Posyampolsky, "Court Considers Referendum in Tatarstan Illegitimate," *TASS*, March 13, 1992.
[312] "Boris Yeltsin's Address to the Citizens of Tatarstan," *TASS*.
[313] "Tatarstan to Be an Associated State of Russia -- Shaimiyev," *TASS*, April 23, 1991.

referendum itself did not mention secession from Russia. They did not, however, specify what they envisioned by "association" with Russia, nor how the referendum might be enforced, except to say that a yes vote would "not lead to violating Russia's integrity."[314] One member of the Russian Constitutional Court pointed out that the vote result could not require the Russian Federation to act, although any result would "hardly comfort either Russia or Tatarstan."[315]

The republic of Tatarstan voted decisively yes on the question, supporting Tatarstan as "a sovereign state and subject of international law." Turnout was 81.6 percent, with 61.4 voting yes and 37.2 percent voting no. The yes vote represents not only votes of ethnic Tatars, but also of Russians, who make up 43.3 percent of the population. Even so, there is evidence that the referendum was more popular among the Tatars than the Russians. The strongest division of voters was split along urban, which included more Russians, and rural, which was predominately Tatars, lines, with 75.3 percent rural voters voting yes, and the majority of urban voters saying no. Even so, the voters did not have a clear sense of what the vote meant. Viktor Radziyevsky, a reporter for *Moscow News*, questioned voters as they left their precinct:

> I stationed myself outside Electoral Precinct No. 2 where packs of yeast, a hard-to-find commodity, were selling briskly for a fiver a piece. I turned to three 18-year-old Tatar girls who just voted. Only one of them voted "for sovereignty because Tatarstan is being robbed". The other two said they didn't vote because they couldn't understand the questions. A young woman teacher thought it was a loaded question and said: "I am against pulling out from Russia." A retiree who earns on the side as a watchman: "Shaimiyev is a clever guy. I like him, he gave a great speech last night. So I supported him." The watchman said he was against Tatarstan's secession from Russia: "I would vote against it, it asked." An elderly Russian couple: "We have voted against the pullout, but that wasn't part of the question."[316]

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[314] Alexei Tabachnikov, "Tatarstan Does Not Plan Secession, Parliament Says," *TASS*, March 16, 1992.
[315] L. Nikitinsky, "Answer Matches Question," *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, March 17, 1992.
[316] Viktor Radziyevsky, "Tatarstan Votes Out," *Moscow News*.

In an interview in May 1992 with the Moscow News, Mintimer Shaimiyev explained that the wording of the referendum was deliberately unclear, and that a vote on a direct question could lead to undesired outcomes for both Tatarstan and the Russian central government: "Indeed, it was suggested that we ask point blank: 'Are you for or against secession from Russia?' I was against such a categorical enquiry. First, because we did act and will not part with Russia. Second, in the troubled times we are experiencing now no one could guarantee the outcome of the voting."[317]

The best way to interpret the ambiguity of the referendum wording is to assess how the Tatar government then used the outcome for leverage in the bi-lateral treaty negotiations. Almost immediately upon the posting of the referendum results, Tatarstan refused to sign the Russian Federation treaty, but still delegations began traveling to Moscow to discuss the delimitation of political and economic powers. The results of the referendum gave the Tatar delegation a mandate by which to establish strong positions vis-à-vis the Russian negotiators. It also gave them an opportunity to restate that their intentions were never to secede or change the territorial integrity of Russia, which in light of the referendum results could be spun as a concession. Valery Tishkov, then the Chairman of the Russian State Committee for National Policy, interpreted the referendum similarly, contending that the referendum "cannot be viewed as the absolutely accurate reflection of the sentiments of the republic's population." Rather, he argued, the referendum would give the Tatar government greater opportunity to pressure on Moscow to "assert the republic's fuller independence and their personal positions."[318]

After the referendum, Tatarstan passed a constitution that announced it was "a sovereign state and subject of international law that is associated with the Russian

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[317] Lev Ovrutsky, "Mintimer Shaimiyev," *Moscow News*.
[318] Lyudmila Yermakova, "Russian Official Comments on Referendum in Tatarstan," *TASS*.

Federation." The question of citizenship established that Tatarstan citizens would hold Russian Federation citizenship, but did not explain how that would work in practice, given Tatarstan's sovereign status. Like with the referendum, Shaimiyev obfuscated the direct meaning of the passage. Ildus Sultanov, a deputy of Tatarstan's republic legislative body, the GosSoviet, noted that the constitution "is not a document that can be used as a guideline in the future, but a stick to be used in having things out with Russia." [319]

The referendum and constitution, both significant and aggressive separatist acts, were mechanisms to ensure serious and rewarding negotiations with the Russian government over the status of Tatarstan. As the Russian constitutional referendum loomed, Russian and Tatar negotiators struggled to hammer out agreements delegating powers between the region and center. Most of these agreements dwelt on how Tatarstan and Russia would divvy up revenue from the oil resources in Tatarstan, as well as how to divide property during the processes of privatization. Interestingly, after the brinkmanship of referendum and constitutional politics, the Tatar demands did not escalate. Rather, they established formal arrangements to cement their status as "a sovereign state associated with Russia," the goal they had declared since their sovereignty declaration in 1990. These agreements, twelve in total, plus a more general bi-lateral treaty, established the arenas in which Tatarstan and Russia shared jurisdictions, in particular dealing with questions of oil and petrochemical products, the budget, and foreign trade capabilities. The budgetary agreement was one of the most specific, and established Tatarstan as the sole beneficiary of tax revenue on sales of alcohol, oil and gas, as well as the income on privatization of property. The agreements were designed to

[319] Dmitry Mikhailin, "Has Tatarstan Chosen War of Constitutions?," *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, November 11, 1992.

force bi-lateral arrangements regarding policy and its implementation, and were up for reassessment or cancellation every five years.[320]

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Tatarstan emerged as one of the most separatist regions within the Russian Federation. Unlike Chechnya, however, Tatarstan never engaged in violent mechanisms in its dealing with the center, nor threatened violence as a possibility. Indeed, the only concern was violence sparked by the central government, the mention of which was minimal. In November 1992, *Kommersant* reported that Oleg Rumyantsev, the Secretary of the Russian Constitutional Commission, suggested to Yeltsin the movement of Interior Ministry troops into Tatarstan in order to quell the region's separatist impulses.[321] Tatarstan GosSoviet member Ildus Tagirov recalls a brief concern about center-sponsored violence during the referendum debate: "During the referendum, Khasbulatov came and said to journalists that he was read to take Shaimiyev to Moscow in a cage. Some other people tried to whisper to Yeltsin to invade Tatarstan."[322] Even so, there is little evidence that Yeltsin took the option seriously, as the entirety of the official rhetoric coming from the Kremlin indicated close and continuing negotiations with Tatarstan on the question of autonomy.

Economic Bargaining

Tatarstan's wealth and natural resources increased its bargaining power with the Russian central government. The economic component emerged as part of the bargaining and settlement of Tatarstan's status in three major ways. First, Yeltsin made clear that the

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[320] "Respublika Tatarstan: Soglasheniya Mezhdu Organami Gosydarstvennoi Vlasti Rossiiskoi Federatsii i Gosydarstvennoi Vlasti Subektov Rossiiskoi Federatsii o Razgranichenii Predmetov Vedeniya i Polnomochii," in *Federalizm Vlasti i Vlast' Federalizma*, ed. Mikhail Nikolaevich Guboglo (Moskva: IntelTekh, 1997), 416-42.
[321] Alexander Kabetsky, "Oleg Rumyantsev Proposes Troops to Be Moved to Tatarstan," *Kommersant*, November 25, 1992.
[322] Personal Interview. Ildus Tagirov, Tatarstan Gossoviet Member, Commission of Culture and Nation, Kazan.

flagging Russian economy depended on Tatar tax revenues and resources, particularly the oil reserves and the pipelines that crisscrossed the Tatar landscape. Second, Shaimiyev worried about the processes of privatization and how that would alter Tatarstan's economic and political landscape. During the Soviet period, 97.4 percent from Tatar industries went either to Soviet or Russian republic coffers, the rest, 2.6 percent, remained in Tatarstan.[323] Shaimiyev wanted to redress this issue, and used the Tatar autonomy bid to his advantage in ensuring Tatarstan's future wealth. Third, the settlement process brought about an economic windfall for the Tatars, even as they became one of the donor states in the Russian Federation budget. This status of donor state continued into Putin's Russia, where the bi-lateral treaty had less impact on budgetary relationships between the center and Tatarstan.

Upon the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Tatarstan emerged as one of the wealthiest regions within Russia. In the final decades of the Soviet Period, Tatarstan extracted approximately thirty million tons of oil per year. Tatarstan provided a home for the Kamaz industrial compound, Russia's largest transportation company. After the Soviet period, Tatarstan contained over 1,000 industrial, transport, and agricultural industries.[324] As a result, in 1992 Tatarstan's economic capacity exceeded that of many of the former Soviet republics, then independent states.[325] In 1995, the gross regional product (GRP) of Tatarstan was $8.3 billion, or tenth overall in the Russian Federation. Tatarstan ranked 23rd in GRP per capita, with $2215 per person. Tatarstan's overall GRP was second only to Bashkortostan for the national republics. Although Tatarstan lagged behind other national republics in per capita income, fifth among the national republics,

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[323] Alexander Bogomolov, "The Island of Tatarstan?," *Delovoi Mir*, April 3, 1993.
[324] Nikolai Morozov, "Not Separately, but Together," *Russian Press Digest*, June 6, 1992.
[325] Eleonora Sutotskaya, "Referendum on Future of Tatarstan to Be Held Today," *TASS*, March 21, 1992.

the republics that overwhelmed Tatarstan's per capita income, for example Yakutia (Sakha) and Chukotchii Autonomous Okrug, were dwarfed by Tatarstan's overall GRP, due to Tatarstan's greater population and their own sparsely populated Siberian territories. In 1995 Tatarstan's GRP exceeded the national average of $2.9 billion.[326]

Tatar officials cite the economic strength of Tatarstan when explaining how and why they sought autonomy for their region. Marat Galeev, a member of Tatarstan's GosSoviet's Commission for Economic Development, cited the economic factor as crucial to its movement, arguing that Tatarstan deserved autonomy because "Tatarstan was a developed country many years ago." Galeev further noted the relatively wealthy position of Tatarstan in the early 1990s vis-à-vis other former Soviet entities, arguing that the economic situation in Tatarstan was "better than that in the Baltics."[327] Rashit Akhmetov, the editor of Tatarstan newspaper *Zvezda Povolzhia*, argued that Tatarstan's oil resources played an important role in the negotiations. He pointed out that Tatarstan had produced 2 billion tons of oil in its history, and that Tatar officials knew that "the development of Russia depends on Tatar oil."[328] Former Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, then the Russian Fuel Minister, added credence to this interpretation of events when he visited Tatarstan in 1992 to encourage oil production within Tatarstan. The Fuel Ministry had established a Russian oil body to "coordinate and supervise" the country's oil industry. The oil question superceded the property question, he argued: "We

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[326] "Valovoi Regional'nyi Produkt," in *Regiony Rossii: Sotsial'no-Ekonomichskiye Pokazateli* (Moskva: Gosudarstvennyi Komitet Rossiiskoi Federatsii po Statistike, 2002), 297-98.
[327] Personal Interview. Marat Galeev, Gossoviet Member, on Commission on Economic Development, Kazan, Tatarstan, 14 July 2003.
[328] Personal Interview. Rashit Akhmetov, Chief Editor, *Zvezda Povolzhia*, Kazan, Tatarstan, 24 July 2003.

should not mix up the running of property with the property itself. Property should be managed properly without any encroachments upon it."[329]

Like with Abkhazia, privatization became a critical component of the separatist movement in Tatarstan. With an eye on the region's vast oil reserves and industry, Shaimiyev concentrated on establishing enough autonomy in order to keep the wealth within Tatarstan. This meant that not only would Tatarstan have to control the processes of privatization of the regional property, but also to establish taxation rights over the region. Using its ethnic autonomous status to extend economic rights over the territory, Tatarstan established immediate foreign trade relationships with other countries, seeking to sell its oil on the world market. Even before Russia became independent, Shaimiyev indicated his privatization concerns in an interview with Russian journalist I. Zakirov

> [Shaimiyev] acknowledged the fact that the status under which Tatarstan signed the new Treaty of Union would "determine the size of the property which Tatarstan would be entitled to keep under its control, the level at which it would be represented in national government structures, and the division of the functions…" With 80% of industrial facilities on Tatarstan's territory subordinate to ministries in Moscow today, the republic will continue pressing for the bulk of its industry to be shifted to Tatarstan's, rather than Russia's, jurisdiction.[330]

In the confusing arena of Russian economic policy of the early 1990s, Tatarstan began making its own policies without Moscow's input. In 1992, Tatarstan announced that it would keep the revenues from half of all the petroleum extracted that year; in 1993 it would keep 100 percent. However, Shaimiyev also would pay the Russian finance ministry a percentage of the oil revenues, to be determined by the Tatar government.[331] In May 1992, this policy was made into law by the Tatarstan GosSoviet, which created a

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[329] Nikolai Sorokin, "Russian Fuel Minister Visits Kazan to Discuss Oil Problems," *TASS*, October 13, 1992.
[330] I. Zakirov, "Equal among Equals," *Pravitelstvenny Vestnik*, June 12, 1991.
[331] Alyans Sabirov and Konstantin Eggert, "Tatarstan Referendum Backs Sovereignty," *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, April 22, 1992.

"mono-channel" budget that established the Tatarstan's government hegemony over all taxation within the region, as well as authority regarding how much of that percentage to send to the federal center for the federal budget.[332] In November 1992, Russia and Tatarstan signed an agreement that would allow Tatarstan to keep 50 percent of its oil revenue, although there were indications that Tatarstan would be extending its share in the future.[333]

Tatarstan also created its own Ministry of Foreign Economic Ties, which was tasked with establishing international trade ties. By 1990, Tatarstan had established a trade agreement with Poland to barter oil for consumer goods.[334] Tatarstan later signed agreements with Lithuania and Hungary. In the end, the agreements signed between Tatarstan and the Russian Central government legitimized many of the powers that Tatarstan unilaterally took for itself. Tatarstan's economic wealth not only was a crucial factor in how the center dealt with the autonomous region, it also framed the demands made by Tatarstan itself. Later, Boris Yeltsin specifically mentioned the role of Tatar separatism as a positive influence on Tatarstan's regional development, concluding, "Tatarstan outstrips the main part of Russian regions in many indicators of social and economic development."[335]

The Courtship of Mintimer Shaimiyev

The elite politics that shaped the initial years of Russian state-building enhanced Tatarstan's dealer opportunities. Shaimiyev exploited Yeltsin's political vulnerability to increase Tatar sovereignty. Several factors furthered Shaimiyev's ability to pursue this

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[332] Nikolai Sorokin, "Tatarstan: One-Channel Budget Approved," *TASS*, May 21, 1992.
[333] Sabirov and Eggert, "Tatarstan Referendum Backs Sovereignty."
[334] "Soviet Union's Tatarstan, Poland Sign Trade Agreement."
[335] Andrei Shtorkh and Nikolai Sorokin, "Tataria Understood 'Sovereignty' as Responsibility -- Yeltsin," *TASS*, June 9, 1996.

strategy. First, Shaimiyev's long history in the Communist party provided a mechanism for the manner of negotiations, as well as dictated a tenor for the discussions. Moreover, before separatism developed as a regional strategy for Tatarstan, Shaimiyev and Yeltsin established ties that allowed Shaimiyev to be more aggressive with his separatist rhetoric. Second, Shaimiyev signaled to Yeltsin's administration that permanant loyalty could be bought only for the price of autonomy. Third, as the process of negotiations unfolded, the mechanisms of patronage grew, so that by the time of the signing of the bi-lateral treaty in 1994, Yeltsin and Shaimiyev had created a system of favors between region and center that exists in the current period.

Yeltsin encouraged the regional separatist movement in Russia in his bid to usurp Mikhail Gorbachev from his position of power. As the days of the USSR waned, the future of the Soviet system was decided in part by the stand-off between Gorbachev and Yeltsin. In his attempt to obtain allies for this conflict, Yeltsin sought out regional clients. Chief among these was Mintimer Shaimiyev, at that time the 1st Secretary of the Communist Party of the Tatar ASSR. In August 1990, Yeltsin visited Kazan and, as he stood at Shaimiyev's side, invited the Russian regions to "take as much power as you can swallow," saying further to the Tatar public that he would "welcome the form of independence the people of Tataria wish to have."[336] Tatarstan declared its sovereignty 22 days after Yeltsin's comment. The regional governments within Russia had ample opportunity to take advantage of Yeltsin's political vulnerability, not only in the early 1990s in his fight against Gorbachev, but also in 1993 in his October battle against the Russian parliament, in December 1993 with new Duma elections and the referendum on the Russian constitution, and in his presidential reelection bid in 1996.[337]

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[336] "News/Current Events," *Official Kremlin International News Broadcast*, August 9, 1990.
[337] Shevtsova, *Yeltsin's Russia: Myths and Reality*.

Shaimiyev's history as a Communist Party member and member of the *nomenklatura* served the negotiations well. Members of the Tatar negotiation team noted that the good relations between Shaimiyev and Yeltsin "were the most important factor [in the negotiations]. They believed each other and Yeltsin kept his promises."[338] Rafael Khakimov, Shaimiyev's chief aide and assistant on federal affairs observed that such relations were crucial to the negotiation process, and that "Yeltsin could talk to Shaimiyev like a man, could explain circumstances. He was not a hypocrite."[339] Certainly Shaimiyev's personality contributed much to the lack of serious conflict between Kazan and Moscow regarding Tatarstan's status. According to close observers, Shaimiyev is "a self-restrained coordinator" whose approach to politics was "circumspect, pragmatic, compromise-oriented, and…. immune from excessive self-adoration."[340] In the Russian press, Shaimiyev was characterized in the early stages of separatism as "a sort of islet of stability." In his article assessing the dangers of Tatar separatism, journalist Vitaly Portnikov observed that "it is probably with just such politicians as Shaimiyev that the Russian Republic leadership could still reach a compromise."[341] Yeltsin had identified Shaimiyev as an ally early on, traveling to Kazan in 1990 to shore up support from the regional leaders. Only after Yeltsin's famous speech telling the leader to "take as much as you can swallow," did the Tatar leadership begin making and extending their separatist claims.[342]

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[338] Personal Interview. Marat Galeev, Gossoviet Member, on Commission on Economic Development, Kazan, Tatarstan.
[339] Personal Interview. Rafael Khakimov, Personal Assistant to the President of the Republic of Tatarstan on Federal Issues, Kazan, Tatarstan, June 16, 2003.
[340] Kimitaka Matsuzato, "From Ethno-Bonapartism to Centralized *Cacipuismo*: Characteristics and Origins of the Tatarstan Political Regime, 1990-2000," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 17, no. 4 (2001): 50.
[341] Vitaly Portnikov, "Tataria: The Kremlin under the Crescent -- Will It Become the Center of a New Independent State?," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, November 26, 1991.
[342] "News/Current Events."

Even as the press and Russian center became critical of Shaimiyev during the difficult politics surrounding Tatarstan's "independence" referendum, the Moscow leadership admitted that they were more worried about legal conditions that might emerge under different leadership. Valeri Zorkin, the chairman of the Russian Constitutional Court, reported to the Russian parliament that he "trust[ed] the leaders of Tatarstan that they are not willing to secede form Russia," but worried about a referendum nonetheless, "in case a differently-minded leadership comes to power in Tatarstan in the near future it will have all legal grounds to secede from the Russian Federation."[343]

Certainly personalities helped create favorable environments for negotiations. However, the negotiations Moscow and Kazan were part of lengthy process of creating stable and fairly permanent patronage relations between the center and region. The main currency of this relationship in the case of Tatarstan became electoral outcomes desired by the central government. In his analysis of this process emergent in Tatarstan, Japanese political scientist Kimitaka Matsuzato argues that the oligarchic nature of Tatarstan (as well as other regions and countries), where Shaimiyev's group controls the regions' political transactions, makes an arrangement guaranteeing preferred electoral outcomes possible: "Governors and local executives in Ukraine and Tatarstan are responsible not only for various administrative functions, but also for the results of elections in their regions and localities…."[344]

Matsuzato characterizes the negotiations surrounding the bi-lateral treaty and corresponding agreements an exercise in electoral signaling, with Shaimiyev strategically

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[343] Alexei Tabachnikov, "Russian Parliament to Discuss Tatar Referendum Plans," *TASS*, March 18, 1992.
[344] Matsuzato, "From Ethno-Bonapartism to Centralized *Cacipuismo*: Characteristics and Origins of the Tatarstan Political Regime, 1990-2000," 55. Alyans Sabirov, "Shaimieyv Is President of Tatarstan," *Izvestia*, June 13, 1991.

offering and withholding electoral participation and support. Tatarstan voted overwhelmingly for the 1991 Union Treaty (87.5 percent in support of preserving the Union). In June 1991, only 36.6 percent of eligible voters voted in Russian Presidential election, although Shaimiyev's election was held the same day with two-thirds of the voters turning out to vote, winning 71 percent of the votes.[345] In negotiations with Moscow, Shaimiyev explicitly linked his republic's participation in the December 1993 parliament elections and referendum on the Russian constitution with the successful completion of negotiations of the bi-lateral treaty.[346] Matsuzato argues that because of the lack of an agreement by the imposed deadline, "the Tatarstan leadership again sabotaged the referendum" with a turnout of only 22.6 percent (the Russian average was 64.1 percent turnout).[347]

Tatarstan's reticence changed drastically once the bi-lateral treaty was signed in 1994. In the March 1994 parliamentary by-elections, turnout was 58.5 percent, a stark contrast to the December 1993 Duma elections, where Tatarstan's turnout was 13.4 percent. According to Matsuzato, in two districts that had particularly abysmal turnout in December, over 90 percent of eligible voters participated in the second vote. Matsuzato concludes: "Such a phenomenon attests to the fact that in rural Tataria votes are little more than obedient sheep who vote or do not vote precisely as local bosses dictate."[348] In an interview I conducted with the director of a major Moscow–based NGO specializing

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[345] Matsuzato, "From Ethno-Bonapartism to Centralized *Cacipuismo*: Characteristics and Origins of the Tatarstan Political Regime, 1990-2000."
[346] Nikolai Sorokin, "Tatarstan Wants Treaty with Russia before April Referendum," *TASS*, January 27, 1993.
[347] Matsuzato, "From Ethno-Bonapartism to Centralized *Cacipuismo*: Characteristics and Origins of the Tatarstan Political Regime, 1990-2000," 60.
[348] Ibid.

in elections, he echoed the same observation, noting that the "Muslim regions tend to vote in blocks."[349]

Since the 1994 turning point of the bi-lateral treaty, Tatarstan has tended to vote with the party of power. Tatarstan voted overwhelmingly for Yeltsin in the 1996 presidential election (61.5 percent in the run-off between Yeltsin and Zyuganov). Shaimiyev has used the electoral promise as a strategy for maintaining close ties with Putin, delivering in the March 2000 Presidential election with 58.7 percent turnout and 67.6 percent of the voters supporting Putin, and then becoming affiliated with Unified Russia, Putin's supporting party. 75 percent of the rural electorate, primarily ethnic Tatar, turned out to vote.[350] This effort, according to Khakimov, is part of Shaimiyev's strategy to maintain close ties with Putin.[351] Such efforts paid off in 2000 when Putin initiated legislation allowing Shaimiyev to run for a third term as President of Tatarstan, formerly forbidden by the Russian Constitution.[352]

Center-regional patronage ties enhanced Tatarstan's bargaining position for greater autonomy. The strength of the Tatar economic bargaining position, matched with Yeltsin's need for patrons and Shaimiyev's manipulation of electoral policy, cemented the manner in which Tatarstan's autonomy politics would play out. While certainly the level of separatist behavior was high, there was never any real fear that Tatarstan or the central government would use violent measures to resolve the issue.

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[349] Off the record interview with a specialist on Russian elections, Moscow, Russia.

[350] Executives in the Russian Federation are forbidden by law to belong to a political party. Thus, they established "affiliations." Thus Shaimiyev became the co-Chairman of Unified Russia without technically being a member. "58.3% Show up for Elections in Tatarstan," *RosBusiness Consulting Database*, March 26, 2000. I am grateful to Rob Moser for providing election results for the 2000 Russian Presidential Election.

[351] Personal Interview. Rafael Khakimov, Personal Assistant to the President of the Republic of Tatarstan on Federal Issues, Kazan, Tatarstan.

[352] "Paper Says Draft Law on Regional Leaders Written for Tatar President," *BBC Summary of World News*, October 16, 2000.

Bashkortostan: The Importance of Economics

The Bashkir experience with separatism parallels that of Tatarstan, although the Bashkortostan's strategy was more muted and tentative. The Bashkir, a minority in their own region, initially cast their autonomy bid in economic rather than particularly ethnic terms. However as negotiations with the federal center ensued, the Bashkir rhetoric took on an ethnic cast; the Bashkir also escalated their demands of the central government as their autonomy campaign continued. The high level of Bashkir separatism strongly relates to its economic wealth and pursuit of even greater clientelistic relations with the central government, evident in the center-regional relations today.

Who are the Bashkir?

Bashkortostan lies in the foothills of the Ural Mountains, in eastern European Russia. Bashkortostan is a large region, 55,400 square miles, with a population of 4,104,330. In 1989, only 23 percent of the population claimed to be ethnically Bashkir, with 29 percent Tatar, and 39 percent Russian.

The Bashkir framed their autonomy demand in terms of economic responsibility, although in their constitution they stressed historical importance of the Bashkir people and their history of negotiating autonomy with the Soviets.[353] This frame is important in order to distinguish the Bashkir from the Tatars, close cousins who outnumber the Bashkir in the region, as well as to legitimize Bashkir demands for bi-lateral treaties with the building Russian state. The Bashkir lived in the southern Ural Mountains from the end of the 9th to the beginning of the 10th centuries. The precise ancestral heritage of the Bashkir is multifaceted. They are associated with Mongol and Tunguz tribes, although they speak a language inherited from the Kypchak Turks that lived in the Volga-Ural

[353] Personal Interview. Amir Murzageleevich Yuldashbaev, Head of the Directorate on Questions of Socio-Political Development, Administration of the President of Bashkortostan, Ufa, Bashkortostan, 8 June 2004.

region during the same period. In the process of migrating to their current territory, the Bashkir assimilated various groups, including Finno-Ugric and Alan populations.[354] Although the Bashkir and Tatars speak a similar and mutually intelligible language (making some believe they have almost identical ancestral backgrounds), the Bashkir history indicates a more complex relationship.

Prior to the Soviet expansion into Bashkortostan, the Bashkir engaged in a nomadic lifestyle, distinct from their neighbors the Tatars, who established cities and towns. In his work on Bashkir-Tatar history, Daniel Schafer argues that a defining difference between the Bashkir and Tatars concerned varied ways of life, framing the political structure of the groups: "from the earliest times distinctions between sedentary peasants and pastoral nomads conditioned political and social life in the region, as each of these social systems developed its own patterns of organization."[355] Schafer notes further that the Bashkir existence at the period was predominantly tribal. The Bashkir emerged as vassals among several kingdoms or khanates – giving them an existence neither predominately sedentary nor nomadic. Some Bashkir tribes lived under the political control of the Volga Bulgars from the 10th to 13th centuries, paying tribute, but for the most part keeping autonomy. In 1236, the Bulgars fell to the Golden Horde, some Bashkir tribes becoming vassals of the Khanate but preserving a separate identity and autonomy. Other Bashkir tribes came under the power of the Siberian khanate in the East, and the Nogai Horde in the north. In the 14th century, the Bashkir established Islam as

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[354] N. V. Bukbulatovu, "Vstuplenie," in *Bashkiry*, ed. Fardaus Gilmitdinovna Khisamitdinova and Zinnur Gazizovich Uraksin (Moskva: Golos-Press, 2003), 4-5, Ronald Wixman, *The Peoples of the USSR: An Ethnographic Handbook* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1988) 23.

[355] Daniel E. Schafer, "Building Nations and Building States: The Tatar-Bashkir Question in Revolutionary Russia" (Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1995) 23.

their state religion, although some Bashkir had practiced Islam as early as the 10th century.[356]

Many of the Bashkir tribes established an alliance with the Moscovy kingdom as Ivan the Terrible destroyed the Kazan Khanate in 1552. The Russian policy over the Bashkir, unlike that over the Tatars, was fairly permissive. Schafer notes that although the Tatars experienced extensive and repressive Christianization after the fall of Kazan, the Bashkir were spared this policy, at least at first. Moreover, the Bashkir received their land for perpetuity, although "with the restriction that they were not to sell or otherwise alienate their land."[357] Such generous terms, however, existed only as long as the Russians did not feel the need expand physically into the territory. As the mining industry began to emerge in the Urals in the 17th century, the Russian presence became stronger and more repressive, limiting established Bashkir autonomy and provoking several Bashkir rebellions.[358] By 1860, the Bashkir and their territory were fully incorporated into Tsarist Russia, without the autonomy they had enjoyed for centuries.

Bashkortostan and Soviet Power

The Bashkir incorporation into the Soviet Union occurred through a series of bi-lateral negotiations between the Bashkir and the Bolsheviks. Bashkortostan was the first region to receive autonomous status, becoming the Bashkir Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic on March 20, 1919. At the outset of the Bolshevik revolution, the Soviets had hoped to combine the Tatars and the Bashkir into one autonomous region, but this plan faltered after the death of Mulla Nur Vakhitov, a Tatar who Stalin courted and promoted to ensure his cooperation with the Bolsheviks. Vakhitov's death deprived Stalin of his

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[356] Bukbulatovu, "Vstuplenie," 5.
[357] Schafer, "Building Nations and Building States: The Tatar-Bashkir Question in Revolutionary Russia" 24.
[358] Ibid.

inside track into Bashkir support, and the Bashkir, now following Zeki Validov, began supporting the White army. The Bolsheviks adjusted to this change, however, and soon enticed the Bashkir back into the fold by promising the Bashkir their own autonomous region, one not attached to the Tatar republic. Historian Richard Pipes observes that the Soviets never intended the kind of autonomy the Bashkir initially took for themselves. Once the Soviets established the Bashkir Obkom (oblast committee), whose constitution was mostly Russian and Tatar, the Soviets could better control Bashkir political power.[359]

The centripetal effects of the Soviet system soon brought the Bashkir into the centralized framework of the Soviet Union. The Bashkir alphabet was transferred from the Arabic to the Latin alphabet in 1929, and from Latin to Cyrillic in 1939.[360] A predominantly agrarian people, the Bashkir also suffered greatly during the periods of agricultural collectivization. Probably the most challenging to the Bashkir national identity was the drawing of Bashkir boundaries to include significant Tatar populations and the assimilation of Bashkir populations by the Tatars.[361]

Bashkir Separatism: Emphasizing Economic Responsibility

Bashkortostan's separatist strategy paralleled that of Tatarstan, although it differed on timing and emphasis. Murtaza Rakhimov, the Chairman of the Bashkir Supreme Soviet and later the republic's President, timed his autonomy demands to lag behind Tatarstan's, having a model for what kind of demands to make and thus avoiding

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[359] N. V. Bukbulatovu, "Bashkiry," in *Narody Rossii: Entsiklopedia*, ed. V. A. Tishkov (Moskva: Nauchnoe Uzdatel'stvo, Bolshaya Rossiiskaya Entsiklopedia, 1994), 106. For the discussion of Stalin and Vakhitov, see Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917-1923* 158-61.
[360] Bukbulatovu, "Bashkiry," 106. Graney, "Projecting Sovereignty: Statehood and Nationness in Post-Soviet Russia (Tatarstan, Bashkortostan)" 75.
[361] Wixman, *The Peoples of the USSR: An Ethnographic Handbook* 23.

high risk behavior.[362] Tatarstan's autonomy movement emphasized the Tatar history of statehood while proposing chiefly economic changes that would favor the property and taxation independence of Tatarstan. Bashkortostan avoided a purely ethnic stance and emphasized Bashkortostan's economic uniqueness within the Russian system. As the political relationship between the Bashkortostan government and the Russian central government unfolded, within Bashkortostan political leaders strengthened the ethnic status of Bashkir within the republic, often to the detriment of larger groups within the region, the Tatars and the Russians.

Bashkortostan declared sovereignty on October 11, 1990, almost two months after Tatarstan's declaration. Unlike Tatarstan, Bashkortostan's terms established that it would remain both part of the USSR and of a new Russian Federation. The Bashkir declaration emphasized its economic demands: Bashkortostan would take exclusive ownership over all natural, mineral and land resources, as well as "its entire economic, scientific and technological potential."[363] A second difference in the declaration was its tone. The Tatar sovereignty declaration and politics emphasized the role of the Tatar history, in particular the historical statehood of the Great Bulgars and the Kazan Khanate. Bashkortostan had no such history to cite in their favor; moreover, the demographic challenges the Bashkir faced meant that the Bashkir needed to emphasize different factors. Consequently, the sovereignty declaration was made in the interest of "all the republic's citizens irrespective of their ethnic or social background, political convictions, religious beliefs or other differences."[364]

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[362] According to a member of the negotiation committee, this was intentional. Personal Interview. Rinat Gataullin, Former Director of the Ministry of Economics, Co-Author of Russian-Bashkortostan Bilateral Treaty, Ufa, Bashkortostan, June 7, 2004.
[363] Alexander Zinoviev, "Bashkiria's New Status," *Izvestia*, October 13, 1990.
[364] Ibid.

In the four years following its declaration of sovereignty, Bashkortostan's leadership increased their demands from the central government, partly aping those of Tatarstan. In March 1992, Bashkortostan, despite its earlier stated willingness to remain part of the Russian federation, balked at signing the Federation Treaty, demanding amendments to sections on property, budget payments, foreign trade, and natural resource ownership.[365] Although Bashkortostan was an official signatory to the treaty, the Bashkir parliament passed a law suspending its enforcement on the republic's territory. They were placated by a special amendment attached to the treaty allocating powers to Bashkortostan, in particular noting the republic's ownership of land and natural resources, its right to engage in foreign trade, and the independence of its legal system.[366]

Bashkortostan prompted some protest from Moscow in the drafting of its constitution in 1992 and its passage in 1993. These actions, much like the Tatarstan referendum, provided some momentum for Bashkortostan in its discussions with the Russian central government. The constitution included passages that differed from the earlier language of the sovereignty agreement, in particular Article 5, which established a legal basis for the secession from Russia, as well as a clause that established a hierarchy of ethnic groups within the region, with only the Bashkir receiving a right of self-determination. The constitution also created independent judicial and legal branches of government. Throughout the fall on 1992, talks between Bashkir and Russian officials continued, the most significant sticking points being the precise terms of ownership for air and rail lines, oil pipelines, and power generators.[367] Even so, Bashkortostan was reticent to part with its income, refusing for much of 1993 to pay federal taxes. It only

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[365] Ivan Novikov, "Bashkortostan Conditions Signing Federative Treaty," *TASS*, March 30, 1992.
[366] Viktor Radziyevsky, "Bashkortostan: Domino Principle," *Moscow News*, April 19, 1992.
[367] Sergei Podyapolsky, "Talks between Russia and Bashkortostan," *TASS*, October 9, 1992.

agreed to do so in October 1993 after bi-lateral agreements were reached with Chernomyrdin.[368]

Five months after Tatarstan signed its bi-lateral treaty with Moscow, Bashkortostan followed suit. Kate Graney notes that the language of the two treaties differs in significant ways. For one, the Tatarstan's treaty established Tatarstan as "a state united with the Russian Federation" while Bashkortostan's treaty labeled it a "sovereign state within the composition of the Russian Federation."[369] Bashkortostan is also more limited than Tatarstan in arenas established by the Treaty to be the purview of the Bashkir government: in legal, foreign trade, and economic competencies, Bashkortostan is free to do as it wishes so long as it conforms with the Russian Federation or as established by bi-lateral treaties. A final key difference between the Tatar and Bashkir agreements was the budgetary statement: both Tatarstan and Bashkortostan received tax-exempt status on oil products and transport, as well as on the sales of alcohol. Tatarstan received this status for the duration of all the bi-lateral agreements, five years, whereas Bashkortostan received it for only one year, for the 1994 and 1995 federal budgets.[370]

With its declaration of sovereignty and unilateral decisions to ignore the federal tax code and the Russian Federation constitution, Bashkortostan falls into the category of high level separatism, but certainly non-violent. Bashkortostan followed closely behind Tatarstan, the most aggressively non-violent autonomy, in making political and economic demands from the central government. Bashkortostan's competencies established in bi-

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[368] Raul Tukhvatullin, "Bashkortostan Begins Paying Federal Taxes Again," *TASS*, October 1, 1993.
[369] Graney, "Projecting Sovereignty: Statehood and Nationness in Post-Soviet Russia (Tatarstan, Bashkortostan)" 141
[370] "Respublika Bashkortostan: Soglasheniya Mezhdu Organami Gosydarstvennoi Vlasti Rossiiskoi Federatsii i Gosydarstvennoi Vlasti Subektov Rossiiskoi Federatsii o Razgranichenii Predmetov Vedeniya i Polnomochii," in *Federalizm Vlasti i Vlast' Federalizma*, ed. Mikhail Nikolaevich Guboglo (Moskva: IntelTekh, 1997), 468-69, "Respublika Tatarstan: Soglasheniya Mezhdu Organami Gosydarstvennoi Vlasti Rossiiskoi Federatsii i Gosydarstvennoi Vlasti Subektov Rossiiskoi Federatsii o Razgranichenii Predmetov Vedeniya i Polnomochii," 435-36.

lateral treaties and agreements also established significant economic and political liberties, at least in the short term. Two factors impacted the success of the Bashkir leadership in this process: the economic wealth of the territory, and the efforts by the Kremlin to co-opt the leadership of Bashkortostan to support Yeltsin during periods of political vulnerability, his rivalry with Mikhail Gorbachev and his showdown in October 1993 with the parliament.

Economic Bargaining

Of all the ethnic republics, Bashkortostan emerged in 1989 as the wealthiest and with the greatest potential in natural and mineral resources. Chairman Rakhimov understood what this could mean for Bashkortostan's development, and set about to establish autonomy over the potential wealth. He also appreciated the bargaining leverage of Bashkortostan as a donor republic, one that could contribute to the overall wealth of the Russian Federation, compensating for the many impoverished regions that were expenditure burdens. In doing so, Rakhimov secured for himself and his region significant economic autonomy. He also created the mechanisms by which to establish unfettered authoritarian power for his presidential apparatus.

Bashkortostan's wealth stood out even compared to Tatarstan. Unlike Tatarstan, which in the early 1990s mainly extracted oil, Bashkortostan had both extraction and refining capabilities, its refineries producing 1,113,000 barrels per day in 1999.[371] Bashkortostan's refining capabilities dwarfs those of every other region on the former Soviet Union, and is at least twice that of its closest competitor, the Samara *oblast*.[372] In 1999, Bashkortostan's industry and production accounted for 2.6 percent of the Russian

[371] "Fsu Refineries, an Overview," *Alexander's Gas and Oil Connections, News and Trends: CIS/Russia* 5, no. 4 (2000).This figure post-dates much of the separatist movement. This number, however, effectively approximates in relative terms the Bashkir refining capabilities vis-à-vis other regions.
[372] Ibid.

GNP. Moreover, the Soviets had established considerable industry in the territory, creating infrastructure for chemical, energy, and machine-building industries. At the period of Soviet dissolution, Bashkortostan ranked tenth among all former Soviet republics in industrial output, third in agricultural output.[373] In 1995, Bashkortostan's GRP exceeded that of Tatarstan at $8.7 billion, well above the national average. The GRP per capita was $2122.[374]

Much like Tatarstan, Bashkortostan used its wealth in two ways. First, the Bashkir leaders used their real and potential oil wealth to establish bargaining leverage with the central government. One mechanism for doing so was to withhold tax revenues from the cash-strapped Finance Ministry in order to spur a new round of negotiations. The Bashkir government also used its wealth to make a case for more autonomy for the region's continued development and increasing enrichment. Thus, in addition to receiving political autonomy, which Bashkir government officials notes themselves was a minimal concern, Bashkortostan's officials increased their economic independence, and thus the income that remained within the region.[375]

The Bashkir officials look upon their autonomy bid as a success. Throughout the process, they provided the Russian central government with economic *faits accomplis*, for example, the unilateral efforts to create trade alliances with independent countries.[376] Although in 1994 both sides signed agreements that allowed such powers, these were mere formalizations of competencies that the Bashkir had seized through unilateral actions. Moreover, the treaties and the agreements of the mid-1990s seem to have sated

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[373] Raul Tukhvatullin, "Boris Yeltsin Begins Tour of Bashkiria," *TASS*, August 10, 1990.
[374] *Regiony Rossii: Sotsial'no-Ekonomichskiye Pokazateli*, (Moskva: Gosudarstvennyi Komitet Rossiiskoi Federatsii po Statistike, 2002).
[375] Personal Interview. Ilshat Azamatovich Tazhitinov, Head of the Directorate on Economic Development and Social Policy, Administration of the President of Bashkortostan, Ufa, Bashkortostan, 11 June 2004.
[376] Ali Shakirov, "Bashkortostan Forges Independent Economic Relations," *TASS*, September 9, 1993.

the Bashkir need for increasing levels of economic autonomy. For example, while the Bashkir negotiation team initially pushed a proposal to create their own national bank and the 1994 negotiations left this question for further discussion (Moscow seemingly indicated this might be a possibility), Bashkir officials have taken no action to realize that option.[377]

Also like Tatarstan, Bashkortostan has been the recipient of increased federal government investment and credits in recent years. They have received central government rewards, even as Putin's government explores the possibilities of a new federal policy of "verticalization of power," centralizing the regional taxation inputs into the federal budget. In 2000, Bashkortostan (and Tatarstan) were promised a generous series of federal grants and credits for "development programs." Such credits, as will be discussed in Chapter 6, did not go to the poorer regions, arguably the most deserving of development programs.

Economic reforms that extended into other parts of Russia likewise did not enter Bashkortostan. Even before Bashkortostan obtained ownership of major agricultural and industrial facilities, governing officials opted to keep them either government owned or within the Rakhimov family.[378] Ural Rakhimov, the President's son, owns the largest capital firm in Bashkortostan, itself the owner of the bulk of the petrochemical industry within the region.[379] Thus, Bashkortostan is one of the few areas in Russia one might find a collective farm, where peasants are blocked from ownership of the land. Additionally,

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[377] Personal Interview. Rinat Gataullin, Former Director of the Ministry of Economics, Co-Author of Russian-Bashkortostan Bilateral Treaty, Ufa, Bashkortostan.
[378] Raul Tukhvatullin, "Privatisation of Fuel and Energy Sector Plants Suspended," *TASS*, December 7, 1992. According to members of Rakhimov's apparatus, state-ownership is a unique selling point of Bashkortostan's economy. Personal Interview. Amir Murzageleevich Yuldashbaev, Head of the Directorate on Questions of Socio-Political Development, Administration of the President of Bashkortostan, Ufa, Bashkortostan.
[379] Iosef Galperin Sovershenno, "Election Chemistry," *Moscow News*, December 24, 2003.

the ownership conditions provide incentives for Soviet-style patronage politics between center and region, when economic payoffs might be traded for political favors.

Patronage/Elite Ties

Much like Tatarstan, Bashkortostan's president Rakhimov benefited from the patronage seeking policies of Moscow, as well as a history within the Communist Party *nomenklatura*. Also like Shaimiyev, Rakhimov manipulated the electoral outcomes within his region to create either successes or failures for key Russian Federation referenda and elections. Once he signed the bi-lateral treaty, Rakhimov has enjoyed significant support from the central government, in particular allowances for Rakhimov's blatant violation of Russian election laws, including removing opposition candidates from the ballots and declaring falsified elections returns as legitimate.

Murtaza Rakhimov distinguished himself in the Soviet era as the director of the Ufa oil refinery. Rakhimov's expertise lay in the oil industry, although he was elected to the Soviet Congress of Peoples Deputies in 1989. He was a Communist Party member, and became the head of the Bashkir Supreme Soviet in 1990. Like with Shaimiyev, this Communist Party membership aided Rakhimov in his approach to negotiations with Yeltsin. According to Zufar Enikeev, a member of the Bashkir legislature, the Kurultai, and representative of Bashkortostan for the Union and Federal Treaty negotiations with Moscow, Yeltsin and Rakhimov's shared history as members of the Congress of Peoples Deputies created a favorable character of elite relations. He notes that Yeltsin and Rakhimov treated each other very well, in particular because of their shared experienced in regional government, Yeltsin's in Sverdlovsk and Rakhimov's new position in Bashkortostan.[380] Notably, Yeltsin traveled to Ufa after visiting Tatarstan in August

[380] Personal Interview. Zufar Irgalievich Enikeev, Deputy of the Kurultai, Bashkir Representative for the Union and Federal Treaties, Ufa, Bashkortostan, June 6, 2004.

1990, repeating his message to the Bashkir that they, too, should assert power for greater autonomy.[381]

Like with Tatarstan, Bashkortostan's leaders responded to Yeltsin's message with autonomy declarations. With numerous bargaining iterations, the elite connections grew stronger. According to Lilia Shevtsova, Yeltsin's management style meant maintaining patronage ties.[382] Thus throughout the negotiation period Rakhimov nurtured the relationship, mixing autonomy demands with electoral outcomes.[383] Such rewards could only be possible if Bashkortostan's leadership had established a restricted regime within the area. Rakhimov's first actions were to concentrate power under his own authority, in the words of Khamid Gizatullin, the director of the Institute of Economics and Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences' Ural Division: "Rakhimov has mastered the most important rule of personal power – that at any cost, one must concentrate in one's own hands all four braches: legislative, executive, judicial, and informational."[384] Like Tatarstan, Bashkir officials symbolically withheld support for regional voting on the Russian Constitutional Referendum in December 1993, with only 36.6 percent of eligible voters going to the polls, voting 59.3 percent against. Rakhimov announced that he had no official policy on voting, given that it would be odd if it participated in the elections of a "neighboring country."[385] Voting participation improved in the 1995 parliamentary

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[381] "Yeltsin's Tour of Bashkiria, Vorkuta and Sverdlovsk," *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, August 15, 1990.
[382] Shevtsova, *Yeltsin's Russia: Myths and Reality* 16.
[383] Nikolai Petrov and Aleksandr Sobyanin, "Russia's Presidential Elections," (Moscow: Carnegie Moscow Center, 1996), 8-9.
[384] Khamid Gizatullin, "When There's a Party Nomenklartura in the Soviet," *Rossiiskiye vesti*, December 9, 1992.
[385] Rajiv Tiwari, "Russia-Politics: Rebel Republics Warned by Kremlin over Statements," *Interpress Service*, December 8, 1993.

elections and the 1996 presidential elections, with 73.81 percent and 80.49 percent turn out respectively.[386]

Particularly during the 1995 Duma elections, the emergence of solid electoral support for Yeltsin and his party faltered in Bashkortostan. The Our Home is Russia party, the party associated with Yeltsin's administration, garnered the third highest party standings in Bashkortostan with 15.3 percent of the vote; the Communist Party of Russia received 25.5 percent of the vote, and the Agrarian Party of Russia received 15.4 percent. Yeltsin barely squeaked by in Bashkortostan in his by-elections with Zyuganov with 51 percent of the vote.

There are indications, however, of an increasingly tighter pattern of patronage between the central government and Rakhimov under Putin. Rakhimov, like Shaimiyev, has pledged his support to Putin's Unified Russia party. Rakhimov's last two election campaigns for Bashkir president have been rife with irregularities. In 1998, Rakhimov removed his opposition candidates, citing election violations. Although the Russian Election Commission judged his actions to be illegal, they did not mandate a second election. In 2003, according to the *Moscow Times*, Rakhimov resorted to phone taps and intimidation of the media to undermine his opponents' campaigns. The Central Election Commission noted at least 50 incidents of electoral violation during the actual voting.[387] Despite these reports, Putin offered conspicuous support to the struggling dictator, calling upon the Central Election Commission to accept the election results. According to the *Moscow News*, this intervention coincided with the transfer of two major chemical industries within Bashkortostan to Gazprom, the state gas company. The newspaper

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[386] The 80.49 percent figure refers to the turnout for the second round of the Presidential elections. The Russian countrywide turnout averages were 64.37 percent for the parliamentary elections, and 68.79 percent for the second round of the 1996 presidential elections.
[387] Alex Fak, "All-out Battle for President in Ufa," *Moscow Times*, December 5, 2005.

reports that "Murtaza Rakhimov, the newly re-elected president of Bashkiria, may have paid the federal center for his victory with two chemical plants."[388]

The patronage story in Bashkortostan is not as strong as that in Tatarstan, although events of recent years indicate a clientelistic pattern of relations between Bashkortostan and the Russian central government. Indeed, Bashkortostan's greatest bargaining chip has been its incredible wealth, both in potential and in actual contributions to the Russian central government coffers. The combination of these two factors ensured that Bashkortostan's separatist movement, while strong, would not entail violent measures.

Ajara: The Last Jewel of Georgia

Like Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, Ajara emerged as the dealer among the Georgian ethnic regions. Part of this was due to Ajara's wealth and ability to use that to co-opt the corrupt leadership in Tbilisi through economic deals and political favors. An interesting complexity of the Ajaran case is the strategic ethnic mobilization Ajaran leader Aslan Abashidze used to promote his separatist politics. Once he had established his desired political relationship with the central government, Abashidze intentionally began understating the role of ethnic identity as a factor for that region's autonomy.

Who are the Ajars? Do they exist?

Ajara lies on the Black Sea, bordering Turkey to the north. Ajara is tiny, its population 376,000. The Ajars are ethnically Georgians, related to the Gurians of western Georgia, and were part of the 10th century unification of the Georgian kingdom. The Ajars experienced considerable instability in affiliation, however, as various imperial

[388] Sovershenno, "Election Chemistry.". This story was corroborated by off the record interviews with former government officials and political observers within Ufa.

groups occupied the area, the Seljuks (11th century), Mongols (13th century), Timurids (14th century), and the Ottomans (15th century).[389]

In the 16th and 17th centuries, Ajara became Islamicized due to Ottoman rule. At this early stage of incorporation into Russia, the Ajarans identified with their Turkic neighbors rather than their ethnic forebears.[390] As the Soviets moved into Georgia during the Russian Civil War, they annexed Ajara from the flailing Ottoman empire. As part of substantial concessions in the Treaty of Kars, the Soviets agreed that Ajara would have "administrative autonomy and the right to develop its own culture, its own religion, and its own agrarian regime."[391] The Ajaran identity differentiation rests particularly upon this religious distinction.

Ajara and the Soviet System

During the Soviet period Ajara was one of two autonomous units organized not according to language, but religion.[392] This difference altered cultural politics for Ajara. The Soviet anti-religious ideology dampened religious practice in the region, diminishing the Ajaran legitimation for autonomy within the Soviet system. In the 1920s, the Ajars rebelled against the Soviet anti-Islamic activities, as well as against the collectivization reforms.[393] However, soon the Ajaran population began to identify with the Georgians, whose language they spoke. Although the Ajarans were organized separately in the 1926 Soviet census, in 1937, there was no separate Ajaran category, leaving them to identify themselves as Georgians. In 1926, according to the census, the Ajars numbered 71,426.[394]

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[389] James S. Olson, ed., *An Ethnohistorical Dictionary of the Russian and Soviet Empires* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1994) 14.
[390] Derluguian, "The Tale of Two Resorts: Abkhazia and Ajara before and since the Soviet Collapse." 276.
[391] "Treaty of Kars," *The New York Times Current History* (1921). Article 1
[392] The other was the Jewish Autonomous District, located in Siberia.
[393] Olson, ed., *An Ethnohistorical Dictionary of the Russian and Soviet Empires* 14.
[394] Wixman, *The Peoples of the USSR: An Ethnographic Handbook* 6.

Alexander Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush estimated that the 1979 Ajar population was between 130,000 and 150,000.[395]

Ajara's Brief Muslim Renaissance

Aslan Abashidze followed three main strategies in his non-violent attainment of autonomy from Georgia. First, he utilized a resurgence of the Ajaran religious identity to further his political goals, organizing Muslim rallies the capital, Batumi, demanding political, economic and cultural autonomy for the Ajar region. Second, instead of following an institutionalized pattern of division of powers, Abashidze took advantage of the political turmoil of the wars with Abkhazia and South Ossetia, unilaterally taking regional power without formal agreement, and regularly withholding tax revenue owed to the central government. Third, once Abashidze had established his place within the Georgian system, he worked actively to demobilize the Muslim movement within Ajara, erecting churches throughout his region and promoting conversions to Christianity. In doing so, he deflected criticism from central government leaders that Ajara was separatist and willing to fight for independence, like South Ossetia and Abkhazia had been.

The Ajaran religious identity resurfaced during the dissolution of the USSR and the subsequent independence of Georgia. In Ajara, as in many post-Soviet Muslim areas, religious practice once again became part of the cultural norm. In northern Ajara, Muslims began to express their religion once again. The call to prayer sounded from mosques; madrassahs opened; Ajaran Muslim religious figures established relationships with Muslim leaders in Turkey and other Muslim countries. In 1992, 50 Ajaran Muslims participated in the Hajj.[396] Once Georgia initiated its independence movement,

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[395] Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Muslims of the Soviet Empire: A Guide* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1986) 207.
[396] Pelkmans, "Religion, Nation and State in Georgia: Christian Expansion in Muslim Ajara." 261-262.

Gamsakhurdia's regime stated explicitly that neither Ajara nor South Ossetia deserved their autonomous status. According to Gamsakhurdia's Foreign Minister Gogi Khoshtaria, Gamsakhurdia targeted South Ossetia because it was created by the Bolsheviks and was a fictional autonomy, Ajara because it was populated by Georgians were actually Christians who had been tainted by years of Ottoman rule. [397]

Abashidze received intense support from Muslim leaders of Ajara. Ajaran autonomy (and thus Abashidze's power) was certainly threatened by Gamsakhurdia's unitary and nationalistic political rhetoric. Muslim protestors thronged downtown Batumi, the capital of Ajara, opposing Gamsakhurdia's threats to remove Ajara's autonomous status. According to Valerie Gelbekhiani, Deputy Chairman of Abashidze's political party, Revival, Gamsakhurdia responded to these with strategic retreat, officially approving Abashidze's status as Chairman of the Ajar Supreme Soviet and affirming Ajara's status as an autonomous unit within Georgia.[398] Gogi Khoshtaria, Gamsakhurdia's Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time, concurs with this assessment of Gamsakhurdia's thinking, noting that Ajara, being composed of ethnic Georgians, had "no legal right to autonomy." However, Gamsakhurdia was willing to compromise with Abkhazian and Ajaran elites to avoid ethnic separation.[399]

After the mobilization campaign for autonomy, Abashidze, like the leaders of Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, took pains to declare his intentions to remain within the Georgian state. In an interview with Russian newspaper *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, Abashidze declared several times that Ajara "have never had, and never can have, any territorial

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[397] Personal Interview. Gogi Khoshtaria, Minister of Foreign Affairs under Zviad Gamsakhurdia.
[398] Personal Interview. Valerie Gelbekhiani, Member of Parliament, Deputy Chairman of Revival Party, Ajara, April, 2002.
[399] Personal Interview. Gogi Khoshtaria, Minister of Foreign Affairs under Zviad Gamsakhurdia.

claims against Georgia."[400] As he declared his intention to remain part of Georgia, however, he also began to take on political and economic powers legally held by the central government, noting that although Ajara had no desire for separation from Georgia, the Ajarans "wish only to resolutely dissociate ourselves from those decisions and actions of Georgia which are leading it to its breakdown and chaos."[401] Once the civil war ended between Gamsakhurdia and Shevardnadze, Abashidze strengthened his play for autonomy. In 1995, he renewed his suggestion of a plan to make Batumi a free economic zone (he first made the suggestion in 1992). Although his initial suggestion had met with some concern that a free trade zone in Batumi would "serve as a basis for separatist sentiments in the autonomous republic," the Georgian government under Shevardnadze received the suggestion favorably.[402]

Abashidze also began to withhold tax payments from revenues collected in the region, in particular that from customs collections at the border crossing with Turkey. According to David Abashidze, the Ajaran Finance Minister from 2001-2002, by the late 1990s, this lost income amounted to 3 million lari per month (or approximately $1.5 million).[403] According to Hamlet Chipashvili, the Head of the Ajaran representation in Tbilisi, this money was withheld to pay the salaries of the Ministry of Interior, the police, border guards, and college professors, all salaries that fall under the realm of the central government but are not paid regularly within the region.[404] Despite these problems and a willingness on both sides to negotiate, Ajara never engaged in serious autonomy

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[400] Natella Zulfikarova, "Adzharia: I Can Be Thrown out of the Supreme Soviet Only," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, June 27, 1992.
[401] "Adzharia Does Not Wish to Be Separated from Georgia," *TASS*, March 18, 1993.
[402] Sergei Strokan, "Batumi to Become Free Trade Zone," *Moscow News*, March 3, 1995.
[403] Personal Interview. David Abashidze, Ajaran Finance Minister, Batumi, Ajara, April 2002.
[404] Personal Interview. Hamlet Chipashvili, Head of the Ajara Representation in Tbilisi, Former Foreign Minister of Ajara, Tbilisi, Georgia.

negotiations with the Georgian central government. Unlike Bashkortostan and Tatarstan's interactions with the Russian central government, the Georgian center did little to codify the financial relationship and division of economic powers between the region and center.

The Georgian government has been reluctant to establish formal political divisions of powers between the regional and central governments. Abashidze took advantage of the ambiguity of Ajara's political status, and began to defy central government rules by appointing officials who by law must be selected in Tbilisi, particularly law enforcement officials and judges. Some articles of the Ajaran constitution, particularly regarding electoral procedures, differed from the Georgian legal code. Even so, according to Gelbekhiani, no legal precedent existed for separating the powers, and no system existed to offer concrete mechanisms for the separation of power.[405] In 2002, the Georgian parliament voted to amend the Georgian constitution to include Ajara as an "autonomous region" within the country, but made no specific reference to the legal terms of this arrangement and how this would be enforced.

As he maneuvered his region into *de facto* autonomy, Abashidze embarked on a Christianization campaign of Ajara. Mass conversions occurred in both Batumi and in highly Muslimized areas in rural Ajara. Part of this process was due in part to a pervasive belief that Orthodox Christianity was a critical component of the Georgian identity. This occurred in Ajara as well as throughout all parts of Georgia. Georgian elites questioned whether one could be a Georgian and a non-Christian at the same time. In Batumi, the call to prayer ceased, and many churches emerged. In 1989, Muslims accounted for 11 percent of the population. Ajaran Muslims accounted for a substantial proportion of this figure. However, a recent Washington Times publication, essentially an advertisement

[405] Personal Interview. Valerie Gelbekhiani, Member of Parliament, Deputy Chairman of Revival Party, Ajara.

purchased by the region of Ajara, reported that 98 percent of Ajara was Orthodox Christian.[406] This is surely an exaggeration (and there has been no census in Georgia since 1989), but it conveys the picture of a society whose leader seeks to alter religious differences. According to Georgi M. Derluguian, the autonomy of Ajara has changed from that based on religion to one "[stressing] Russia's historical obligations and [Ajaran] 'vital interests.'"[407]

The Ajaran separatist strategy, while somewhat unorthodox when compared to Bashkortostan and Tatarstan, followed a path of high-level separatism. Abashidze mustered a Muslim political rally in 1992, as Gamsakhurdia fought with separatists in South Ossetia. Once this high-risk strategy paid political dividends, however, Abashidze began to erase the cultural characteristics that made Ajara different – a crucial component to signal an intent to remain within Georgia within the context of two almost simultaneous ethnic wars in South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

Merging Wealth and Patronage: Elite ties and a customs free zone

Relative to other regions in the former Soviet Union, Ajara had considerable real and potential wealth. Both sit on the Black Sea and contain major port cities. Batumi has been a hub geo-strategic and economic interest. In 1919, at British behest, it was declared a free-trade zone, a status it enjoyed until the Soviets entered the city in 1921. Oil pipelines that crisscross Georgia from the Caspian Sea find their outlets in two ports, Batumi being one of them. At the time, Ajara was a major tourist destination within the Soviet Union (although second to Abkhazia). Moreover, Ajara's economic potential at the time was significant. Bordering Turkey, it stood to profit considerably from trade

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[406] "Adjara, Georgia," *International Reports, Washington Times*.
[407] Derluguian, "The Tale of Two Resorts: Abkhazia and Ajara before and since the Soviet Collapse." 284

with Turkey. Durluguian estimates that $60-70 million per month currently changes hands just on the road border with Turkey.[408]

Personal relations at the top enhanced Ajaran relations with the central government. Aslan Abashidze's position as Chairman of the Supreme Soviet required and received Gamsakhurdia's stamp of approval. Political observers note that early on, Gamsakhurdia and Abashidze united to pursue mutual interests of power.[409] Like Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, Ajara negotiated its status through the promise of well placed political, particularly electoral, favors. In the presidential election of April 2000 for example, Shevardnadze's chief rival, Jumber Patiashvili, was favored in Ajara and a personal friend of Abashidze. However, Patiashvili lost overwhelmingly to Shevardnadze in Ajara, Shevardnadze garnering 80 percent of the vote. Moreover, Georgian political observers argue that when Shevardnadze was politically weak, Abashidze acted the role of the loyal compatriot. In November 2001, Shevardnadze faced accusations of government corruption, weakness in Abkhazia and public protests thronging downtown Tbilisi; he flew to Batumi, and appealed for Abashidze support as mediator in the Abkhazian conflict. Levan Berdzenishvili, Director of the Georgian parliamentary library and co-founder of the Republican Party of Georgia asserted in an interview that although Shevardnadze often criticized Abashidze publicly, such criticism waned at periods when he needed public support.[410]

This observation, made in 2002, was starkly confirmed in the politics following the Georgian elections of 2003, when President Shevardnadze came under public

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[408] Ibid. 67

[409] Judith Hin, "Ajaria: The interest of the local potentate in keeping violent conflict at bay," Paper presented at the ASN conference, 13-15 April 2000

[410] Personal Interview, Levan Berdzenishvili, Republican Party co-founder, head of the National Library, Georgia, 2002

opposition from suspicions that Parliamentary elections held in November were fixed. As Georgia swelled in its "Rose Revolution," few took Shevardnadze's side; most agreed he needed to leave. The most outspoken ally of Shevardnadze was Aslan Abashidze, who castigated the opposition movement and its leaders as anti-democratic.[411]

Once Saakashvili came to power, he denounced the Abashidze regime in Ajara as undemocratic and unconstitutional, a remnant of the corrupt politics of the Shevardnadze administration. Two months after his election to the Georgian presidency, Saakashvili pushed the Ajaran leader from power, exiling him to Russia under threat of prosecution for corruption and theft.[412] Almost immediately upon Abashidze's ouster, members of the Georgian parliament began calling for the dissolution of the autonomous status of Ajara, arguing that no ethnic reason remained to support continued autonomy.[413] Although Saakashvili has resisted such measures, the mere suggestion of the dissolution of Ajara as an autonomy in Georgia indicates that the power of patronage in establishing and maintaining center-regional ties in Georgia has been profound.

Conclusion: Summing up the Dealers

Despite some differences within the contexts of identity politics and autonomy movements, Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, and Ajara shared several characteristics that enabled them to obtain considerable autonomous power from their central governments. First, all three used wealth as a bargaining chip vis-à-vis the central government. For Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, this meant wielding the considerable promise of their oil resources and becoming donor regions within Russia even despite their generous tax breaks from the central government. For Ajara, this meant taking on economic

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[411] Natalia Slavina, "Georgian Politician Says Change of Power Was a State Coop," *TASS*, November 26, 2003.
[412] "Ajarian Leader's Resignation Confirmed," *BBC Monitoring International Reports*, May 6, 2004.
[413] Tengiz Pachkoria, "Calls to Scrap Adzharia's Autonomy Irresponsible - Zhvania," *TASS*, May 7, 2004.

responsibilities from the central government while witholding tax payments due to the center.

In all three cases, favorable elite ties, the weakness of the central government, and the growing bonds of patronage permitted risk acceptant strategies and cemented ties between regional and central elites. In Russia, these ties still exist as Shaimiyev and Rakhimov ally themselves closely with Putin and the Unified Russia party. In Georgia, these ties ruptured dramatically once the Shevardnadze regime fell in the Rose Revolution.

THE ACCEPTOR: INGUSHETIA

Unlike the dealer regions detailed above, Ingushetia did not have the economic power with which to bargain for greater autonomy. Unlike Chechnya, Ingushetia did not have significant oil industry on its territory. Instead, Ingushetia's chief form of bargaining power came from its president, appointed by the head of the Russian state national policy committee to be the temporary head of Ingushetia in November 1992. Without economic bargaining power, Ingushetia pursued a strategy of low separatism from the central government. Only once, in 1993, did Ingushetia briefly stray from this policy, in response to perceived Russian support of the North Ossetian militants during the North Ossetian/Ingush conflict over the disputed Prigorodny region.

Ingushetia: Quiet Brethren of the Chechens

Ingushetia lies to the west of Chechnya, bordering the Caucasus Mountains from the North. Its eastern neighbor is the North Ossetian republic, with which it fought over a border dispute throughout the early 1990s. Ingushetia covers approximately 1,500 square miles, a territory roughly the size of Rhode Island. According the 1989 census, there were 163,762 Ingush within the Checheno-Ingush republic; the more recent 2002 Russian

census reports 361,057 Ingush in Ingushetia, 77 percent of the total population of the republic.[414]

The Ingush, like the Chechens, refer to themselves as Nakhchuo, part of the Vainakh tribes indigenous to the area for at least 6,000 years. In his ethnography of the former Soviet peoples, Ronald Wixman reports that little ethnic distinction exists between the Chechen and Ingush, given that the split between the two occurred as recently as 1860 in response to the Russian incursions into the area. According to Wixman, the Russians themselves created the distinction between the two groups, based on the responses of the tribes to Russian expansion. The Russians distrusted the eastern Vainakh tribes, who used military means to fight off the Russians, and the western tribes, clan federations Galgai and Feappi, which did not engage in battle. Wixman observes that "the eastern tribes were designated Chechen (after the village Chechen) and the western tribes … Ingush (after the village Ongusht)." [415] The Ingush language is closely related to the Chechen language, indeed so much so that some linguists categorize the two as two dialects of one language.

Like the Chechens, the Ingush initially received individual autonomous status under the Soiviets. In 1924, the Soviets established the Ingush Autonomous Oblast, with the city of Vladikavkaz as its administrative and cultural center. The Chechen and Ingush oblasts were combined in 1934, and in 1936 were upgraded to Autonomous Republic status.[416] Because of their territorial linkage and similar ethnic make up, the Chechens

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[414] *Itogi Vserossiiskoi Perepisi Naselenia 1989 Goda, Itogi Vserossiiskoi Perepisi Naselenia 2002 Goda*, (Moskva: Gosudarstvennyi Komitet Rossiiskoi Federatsii po Statistike (Goskomstat), 2004).

[415] Wixman, *The Peoples of the USSR: An Ethnographic Handbook* 82-83. Wixman indicates another separation of the Western tribes, the Kists, some of whom have settled in the Pankisi Gorge in Georgia.

[416] M. Yu. Keligov, M. B. Muzhukhoev, and E. D. Muzhukhoeva, "Ingushy," in *Narody Rossii: Entsiklopedia*, ed. Valeri Aleksandrovich Tishkov (Moskva: Nauchnoe Uzdatelstvo, Bolshaya Rossiiskaya Entsiklopedia, 1994), 164.

and Ingush experienced many of the same obstacles during the Soviet period. The Ingush language, originally written in the Latin script, was Cyrillicized in 1938.[417] The Ingush were deported in 1944, resettled in Central Asia, and their autonomous territory dissolved. Although the Checheno-Ingush republic was reestablished in 1956, some territory that had once been Ingush was left in North Ossetia, including Vladikavkaz. After the reestablishment of the Checheno-Ingush republic, the economic and political circumstances of the Ingush paralleled those of the Chechens, facing similar discriminations in employment and education within the centralized Soviet system.

Ingush Separatism

Once it officially became the Republic of Ingushetia, separated from the Chechen Republic in 1992, Ingushetia followed a vastly different separatist strategy than its cousin. Ingush president Ruslan Aushev announced almost immediately upon taking power that Ingushetia had every intention of being part of Russia, based on the federal treaty.[418] A month later, Aushev declared that Ingushetia was ready to sign the federal treaty.[419] Three months later, on May 15, 1993, Ingushetia announced its declaration of sovereignty, indicating its interest in establishing a federal relationship with the center "on the basis of treaties."[420] Despite this announcement, no serious efforts were taken right away to begin negotiations with the central government. In fact, no bi-lateral treaty such as that signed by Bashkortostan and Tatarstan was ever drafted for Ingushetia.

Two issues complicated Ingushetia's movement into Russian federal space. The most serious was the growing conflict between Ingushetia and North Ossetia over the

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[417] Wixman, *The Peoples of the USSR: An Ethnographic Handbook* 83.
[418] Vitaly Gordienko, "The Ingush Republic Will Remain a Part of Russia," *TASS*, February 19, 1993.
[419] "Itar-Tass News Digest of March 9," *TASS*, March 9, 1993.
[420] "Ingush Congress Ends with Declaration of Sovereignty," *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, May 18, 1993.

Prigorodny region and the Ingush refugees who desired to return. The conflict between the two regions became violent, and the Ingush perceived Moscow's intervention as support for the Ossetians.[421] As violence peaked in 1993, Aushev announced that the Russian prejudiced involvement; he was contemplating a referendum on the declaration of independence from Russia and joining Chechnya once again.[422] This ultimatum sparked some in Moscow, in July prompting a phone call to Aushev from Yeltsin.[423]

The second issue challenging federal arrangements between Russia and Ingushetia stemmed from discrepancies between Ingush and federal laws, in particular laws on the legal and judicial appointments and laws on cultural questions such as the legalization of polygamy. The judicial appointments issue was the most divisive and complex: Aushev signed a decree establishing a referendum on the question of whether the Ingush President should appoint judicial and other legal appointees, an activity that fell within the Russian federal purview. The Russian government objected, annulling the referendum and asking Aushev to discuss the matter.[424] In February 1999, the parties came to an agreement and established a system of dual oversight into judicial appointments.[425] This agreement was the closest Ingushetia ever came to establishing a treaty on separation of powers with the Russian central government. Unlike Bashkortostan, Tatarstan, and Ajara, Ingushetia never maintained a long-lasting and autonomy directed separatist movement.

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[421] "Russia's Regions: Congress of Peoples of Ingushetia Blames Russia for Conflict with Ossetia," *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, August 3, 1993.
[422] Igor Gvritishvili, "Ingushetia May Withdraw from Russia," *TASS*, June 28, 1993.
[423] Alexander Yevtushenko, "If the General Is Bluffing, He Is Doing It Well," *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, July 31, 1993.
[424] Ruslan Maisigov, "Ingushetia President Cancels Planned Referendum," *TASS*, February 21, 1999.
[425] Ibid.

Economic Resources and Patronage

Two factors drove the quiescent nature of the Ingush separatism movement. Neither of these relate to the hostilities in Chechnya, which began in 1994, after Aushev flirted with declaring independence. One factor was the lack of an economic bargaining position. Unlike Chechnya, Ingushetia had little to bargain with or to even imagine as economic potential. The oil refinery remained on Chechen territory, as did any oil extraction wells. Moreover, the pipelines that crisscrossed the former territory of Checheno-Ingushetia lay mainly in Chechnya. Ingushetia maintained only 18 kilometers of pipeline on its territory. The aftermath of the Soviet socio-economic troubles hampered Ingush development, as did the emergence of Ingushetia into Russian federal space with no established administrative bureaucracy and infrastructure. In 1995, Ingushetia's per capita Gross Regional Product was $426, a far cry from the over $2000 that both Tatarstan and Bashkortostan enjoyed.[426]

Ingushetia also differed from Chechnya because of the establishment by both Yeltsin and Putin of clients in power in the region. An ethnic Ingush and Soviet Army General, President Aushev shared many similarities with Dudayev. He did have more governance experience, however, having been a member of the Soviet Congress of Peoples Deputies as a member of the Military Affairs Committee. In 1992, Yeltsin's administration appointed him head of the provisional administration in Ingushetia. Although his relationship with Yeltsin often became strained over the continuing conflict with North Ossetia, Aushev managed to do what his counterpart in Chechnya never could: have face to face meetings with Yeltsin.

Aushev also received economic support from the Kremlin without having to use separatist rhetoric to achieve it. Yeltsin's administration arranged for Trasneft, the

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[426] *Regiony Rossii: Sotsial'no-Ekonomichskiye Pokazateli.*

company whose oil passes through Ingush pipelines, to pay dividends to the region's budget. In the mid-1990s, Ingushetia was the ultimate recipient region – one that accepts more from the center than it pays. In 1994, 91 percent of Ingushetia's total income came from federal transfers. In 1996, this number had fallen to 80 percent, maintaining its position as one of the most federally supported regions in the Federation.[427]

Under Putin, Aushev did not enjoy such privileged status. His republic gave home to over a hundred thousand refugees, and he remained critical of the Kremlin's new war in Chechnya. Aushev stepped down in March 2001, two years before his term was due to expire. He was responding in part to a Kremlin induced term limit that would force him to resign the territory. According to media reports, he stepped down early to influence the upcoming March 2003 parliamentary elections, and "Aushev said he wanted to allow his success time to be able to 'influence' the composition of the new parliament."[428] Putin successfully replaced Aushev with a more compliant ally in the former KGB and FSB officer Murat Magometovich Zyazikov, who won the Presidency on April 28, 2002 in what observers considered a fixed election.[429]

CONCLUSION: ASSESSING THE DEALERS AND ACCEPTER

The theoretical framework in Chapter 2 posited that ethnic regions within Russia and Georgia would frame their quest for autonomy on two factors. First, wealthy regions would use their economic strength as a lever to enhance autonomous power, taking advantage of the financial weakness of their central governments during the tumultuous periods of economic reform and transformation from a command economy. Certainly this

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[427] Cameron Ross, "Federalism and Democratization in Russia," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 33, no. 4 (2000): 83.
[428] "Ingushetian President to Resign after Eight Years," *Agence France Presse*, December 27, 2001.
[429] Arbi Arbiyev, "Kremlin's Candidate Wins Controversial Victory in Ingush Vote," *Agence France Presse*, April 29, 2002.

occured in Bashkortostan and Tatarstan, which exacted powerful concessions from the Kremlin, particularly in terms of tax allowances, all the while maintaining their roles as donor regions. Ajara, whose arrangement was never codified into law, unilaterally kept revenues from the lucrative border with Turkey. Regional leaders also took advantage of positive elite ties and growing clientelistic relationships, engaging in higher risk strategies, and relying on the central governments need for regional patrons to protect them from severe repercussions. All three regional leaders responded to central government favoritism with with desired electoral results. Bashkortostan also reportedly offered financial incentives for continued central government support, in the form of chemical companies.

Table 5.2 Dealer and Accepter Strategies

	Regional Perception of Wealth	Regional Perception of Elite Ties	Expected Outcome	Observed Outcome
Tatarstan 1989-1997	High	High	High Separatism, Non-Violent	High Separatism, Non-Violent
Bashkortostan 1989-1997	High	High	High Separatism, Non-Violent	High Separatism, Non-Violent
$Ajara_1$ (1989-1991) Gamsakhurdia	High	High	High Separatism, Non-Violent	High Separatism, Non-Violent
$Ajara_2$ (1992-2003) Shevardnadze	High	High	High Separatism, Non-Violent	High Separatism, Non-Violent
$Ajara_3$ (2003-2004) Saakashvili	High	Low	Low Separatism	Low Separatism
Ingushetia (1993-1998)	Low	High	Low Separatism	Low Separatism

Regions such as Ingushetia that lacked either of these characteristics followed a relatively quiescent path, not willing to squander either economic wealth or clientelistic ties through high risk separatist strategies

The previous two chapters examined how regional leaders led their separatist movements. Chapter 6 will examine how characteristics of the central state affected how central government leaders responded to separatist strategies. Moreover, it will offer a system for understanding how regional governments take into account central characteristics in framing their autonomy movements.

Chapter 6: The Role of State Capacity

"I will welcome the form of independence the people of Tataria wish to have."[430]
Russian President Boris Yeltsin in an address to the people of Tatarstan, August 1990

"There is no resolution possible without Georgia having more to offer Abkhazia, especially economically."[431]
Mikhail Saakashvili, then National Movement leader, now President of Georgia, on Abkhazian-Georgian conflict

INTRODUCTION: THEORETICAL APPROACH AND EXPECTATIONS

Central state capacity creates conditions that affect how regional governments assess the utility in making separatist demands, as well as how the central government responds to such demands. Linking state capacity to the theoretical framework explored in the previous analysis, this chapter investigates the state contexts in which separatist behavior might occur, noting the circumstances that make separatism more likely. This chapter also explains the factors that affect the duration of ethnic separatist strategies and actions. Both Russia and Georgia have experienced enduring ethnic conflicts. Chechnya, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia still endure as conflict zones. Abkhazia and South Ossetia function as independent states. Russia's second war against Chechnya and the persistence of the Chechen rebellion indicate that Russia has been unable thus far to establish its authority in the region.

According to Max Weber's definition, a modern state is "a human community that [successfully] claims the *monopoly over the legitimate use of physical force* within a

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430 "News/Current Events."
431 Personal Interview. Mikhail Saakashvili, Then Head of the National Movement Organization and Chairman of the Tbilisi Sakrebulo, Tbilisi, Georgia, November 2, 2002.

given territory."[432] State capacity refers to a state's ability to " *penetrate* society, *regulate* social relationships, *extract* resources, and *appropriate* or use resources in determined ways."[433] To examine the effects of the variation of state capacity on ethnic separatism in Russia and Georgia, I measure central state capacity on a continuum, from collapsed state, to weak state, to strengthening state.[434]

This chapter examines the regional and central government structures that contribute to the duration of separatism. I find that certain weak states, of which Yeltsin's Russia is emblematic, are best suited to bargaining separatist strategies, permitting the use of economic bargaining and patronage links outlined in Chapters 4 and 5. In collapsed states, of which Georgia is an ideal type, there are barriers to certain types of bargaining. For example, economic bargaining might be less useful for regions when the central government is unable to offer acceptable and credible bargains. Finally, strengthening states deter aggressive separatism. Vladimir Putin has followed an explicit and effective policy of streamlining the Russian Federal system, extending central control over the regions, and reigning in separatist strategies of the national territories.

A collapsed state is one that has experienced persistent and enduring inability in establishing a monopoly over the use of force in its territory. Collapsed states cannot ensure government effectiveness, defined as the ability to administer state policies and provide working infrastructure over the territory. Collapsed states have difficulty establishing a regulated economy, one in which trade flows are monitored, customs

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[432] Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946). Quoted in Mark R. Beissinger and Crawford Young, "Introduction: Comparing State Crises across Two Continents," in *Beyond State Crisis? Postcolonial Africa and Post-Soviet Eurasia in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Mark R. Beissinger and Crawford Young (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2002), 10.

[433] Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World* 4-5. Emphasis in original.

[434] This three pronged assessment borrows from Ghia Nodia's introduction of the concept. See Nodia, "Putting the State Back Together in Post-Soviet Georgia," 415.

controls are in place, and the taxation system works effectively to collect revenue. Within the context of this study, I classify Georgia as a collapsed state. Georgia's struggle to create a monopoly over the use of force on its territory continues into the current period, a fourteen year effort. Georgia's infrastructure, its ability to build and maintain roads, and its ability to offer working electrical, gas, and water systems to its population, has been dismal, particularly throughout the 1990s. Only in recent years, after the Rose Revolution, has Georgia begun to control the customs collections at the borders. One should note however, that Georgia in the mid-1990s effectively established a tax code, eliminating many problems with corruption in tax collection. Georgia has also carefully monitored its trade and monetary policies, providing a stable currency in the mid-1990s that has remained such. However, since this project deals specifically with the question of territory and separatism, that the criterion of territorial control remains the most important for classification. Moreover, relative context matters. While Georgia might be better off than many of the post-Soviet states, in this project, I am comparing it with Russia, arguably the strongest state of the successors, and certainly the regional hegemon.[435] Compared to Russia, Georgia's state is palpably weaker.

A weak state shares many of these same characteristics with the collapsed state, but to a significantly lesser degree. They, too, have difficulty providing effective infrastructure and economic stability. They may not be able to provide an absolute monopoly over the use of force. However, these limitations are not as comprehensive as those within a collapsed state, nor are they as long-lasting. Georgian political analyst Ghia Nodia aptly describes the weak state: "Although a weak state may be deficient in many ways, it provides to its citizens an important level of basic security and economic

[435] Ghia Nodia notably disagrees with such a classifications. See Ibid., 420. In his analysis, however, he does concede that the territorial issue in Georgia represents a "fundamental challenge" to Georgia's state development.

opportunity."[436] This describes Russia under Boris Yeltsin, whose attempts to consolidate power in post-Soviet Russia met with some resistance, not only from the national territories, but also from members of the government.

A strengthening state is one that is successful in establishing its control over the territory, in terms of government effectiveness, ability to regulate the economy and trade, and control over the use of force on the territory. Russia under Vladimir Putin fits these criteria, having experienced steady increase in economic growth, the initiation of the "verticalization of power" policy, and the crackdown on militia forces in the North Caucasus. This last component is the only arena in which Putin has been relatively unsuccessful, as Chechen rebel groups still exact punishment on Russian cities. However, in recent years, terrorist acts against established strong states – for example the U.S. on September 11, 1999 and London in July 7, 2005 – indicate that even the strongest states are vulnerable to such attacks.

In Chapter 2, I developed four propositions that linked state capacity to regional separatism. These propositions are listed in Table 6.1, along with a list of expected outcomes for the different cases, based on the variation in state capacity. This chapter examines each of these propositions in the three state strength contexts found in Georgia (Collapsed) and Russia (Weak and Strengthening). This analysis leads to several conclusions. First, there is an ideal type of state for separatist bargaining to occur. The theoretical framework outlined in the previous chapters best applies to weak states, when the central government relies on the strength of its constituent parts for unification. Second, in a collapsed state, while we can expect regional separatism, the incentives for bargaining are different than for weak states. Without economic bargaining options,

[436] Ibid., 415.

regions rely on patronage politics to obtain favorable outcomes. This creates a great deal of instability, particularly in states where changes in central government power is commonplace. Third, in collapsed states, where state weakness creates incentives for central leaders to avoid conflict resolution (for example personal enrichment from contraband trade over uncontrolled borders), the ironic outcome is that some of the tendencies that have weakened the state (corruption) keep unresolved conflicts peaceful.

This chapter offers a comprehensive comparison of the different contexts for separatism in two very different states, Georgia and Russia. By examining processes over time, it draws conclusions about the interactions between state strength, ethnic separatism, and bargaining. Three important conclusions emerge from this analysis. One, the central state strength affects incentive structure for bargaining for actors on both sides – both regional and central government officials. Second, the level of state capacity affects how patronage structures work within the system. Patronage links are more prevalent in weak and collapsed states, before institutional structures provide formal mechanisms for interaction. Third, in collapsed states, there may be more incentives for actors to remain in political limbo (or in technical states of war) than resolving conflicts and finding political solutions to separatist demands.

Table 6.1 State Capacity Propositions and Expectations on Actor Bargaining

		Proposition	Expectations
Regional Incentives	P_1	Strategic bargaining depends on state strength.	Regions in collapsed states will have fewer incentives to bargain.
			Regions are more likely to use bargaining in weak states.
			Regions in strengthening states will be less likely to use separatist strategies.
Central Incentives	P_2	Central government patronage ties lessen central government sponsored violence.	Collapsed states have more trouble establishing lasting patronage ties.
			Weak states will seek to establish and maintain patronage ties.
			Strengthening states need patronage less.
	P_3	A states' level of institutionalization varies according to state capacity.	Collapsed states will avoid creating formal institutions to appease separatist states.
			Weak states will avoid permanent institutions that formalize their weakness.
			Strengthening states will seek to institutionalize their formal authority.
	P_4	Outside actor interests are more pervasive in states with lower state capacity	Collapsed states will have less ability to deter outside actors from involvement in separatist regions.
			Weak states will experience some outside actor activity, but much less than struggling, and more temporary.
			Strengthening states will experience few pervasive problems from outside actors.

CORRUPTION, GREAT POWERS, AND FALSE PROMISES: GEORGIA'S PARALYSIS

The previous case study chapters explored the separatist strategies of the national territories. For Abkhazia and South Ossetia, that analysis was confined to the events leading up to the outbreak of violence in each region. Since the cessation of violence, which occurred soon after the outbreak of conflict, those conflicts became stagnant, with little by way of political resolution. The most active proponents of conflict resolution, at least until Saakashvili came to power in 2003, have been international organizations. These organizations, such as the OSCE, the UN, and the European Commission have drafted compromise resolutions, called multi-lateral meetings, hosted conferences, supplied peacekeepers, and provided aid to the many victims of the crisis. Enjoying essentially independent status, South Ossetia and Abkhazia have had few incentives to engage in compromises and bargaining. Georgian officials, particularly under Shevardnadze, seemed peculiarly satisfied with the status quo – at least enough so that there was little activity in engagement and political negotiations.

On the surface, the situation in Georgia seemed to worsen because of the wars. The country still claimed Abkhazia and South Ossetia as territory, but lacked control over their governance. This meant, for the Abkhazian situation, that the Georgians were powerless to return the over hundred thousand internally displaced peoples (IDPs) that fled Abkhazia during the war. In Ajara, millions of dollars in tax revenues went uncollected by the central government, as Aslan Abashidze protected his authoritarian control over the regions. The analysis that follows examines why both regional and central government officials followed strategies eschewing active negotiation and bargaining to resolve this status quo, seemingly costly particularly for the Georgian central government.

Regional Incentives for Bargaining in Georgia

Proposition$_1$	*Strategic bargaining depends on state strength.*
Expectation	*Regions will have fewer incentives to bargain economically.*

Unlike the regions in Russia, who could foresee some economic gain in remaining part of Russia, the regions in Georgia had little to gain from making concessions. The Georgian central government had few economic bargaining chips with which to entice regional leaders. Georgia's economic capability was not so much a matter of concern in the early years of the separatist movements, when the economic prospects of Georgia and the regions were unclear. However, as Georgia embarked on its path of economic transition, the regions became increasingly aware that the country had little to offer them economically. This certainly slowed down their efforts toward conflict resolution, strengthening their interest in remaining independent despite lack of official recognition.

Georgia throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s epitomized a corrupt and failing state. Under Shevardnadze's government, corruption in Georgia expanded, dominated the processes of tax collection, privatization, legal affairs, political power, and law enforcement. Graft pervaded every aspect of life. Citizens refused to pay their electricity and gas bills, instead offering smaller bribes to bill collectors or attaching their own wiring to electrical sources. Electrical shortages ensued as revenues could not be collected to pay for production. Likewise, theft by tax collectors and tax evasion by major industrial managers meant that the state had a dearth of revenue to pay salaries and pensions, not to mention social programs such as education or health care. Georgian political analyst Ghia Nodia, writing for the *Journal of Democracy*, provides a damning indictment of Georgian state capacity at the time:

> Georgia found itself plunged into a modern version of Hobbes' state of nature, with no effective state institutions, paramilitary clans-cum-mafias fighting for power, gun-toting brigands collecting their own "taxes" on the roads, and

> merchants wishing only for more orderly and predictable racketeers. The average salary, which failed to reach even the equivalent of one dollar per month, was paid in worthless scrip. With no consistent economic policy to speak of, Georgia underwent involuntary shock therapy (with the shock being more apparent than the therapy). The state lost almost all influence over the economy (formally "state-owned" enterprises included), and the people lost their ability to depend on the state to meet all their economic needs.[437]

Quite simply, Abkhazia and South Ossetia observed the socio-political circumstances within Georgia, and found they had little to gain by rejoining Georgia. Even for the impoverished South Ossetia, Georgia's economic position did not invite negotiation. Gennadi Kokiev, the South Ossetian Finance Minister, noted the lack of economic interaction between South Ossetia and Georgia, noting that such relations "were not very beneficial, [bringing] not much profit."[438] Before he became the president of Georgia, Mikhail Saakashvili and his National Movement staff identified precisely these factors in problems for conflict resolution. Vano Merabishvili explained that the Abkhazians considered themselves much better off than their Georgian neighbors.[439] Abkhazia, which produces its electricity in a hydro-electric plant in the Inguri region, did not have the kind of electrical shortages that crippled most cities in Georgia, including the capital.[440] The Georgian problem was one both of difficulty of obtaining supply, but also controlling the graft and corruption that rendered the electrical industry unprofitable. Saakashvili argued that Georgia's economic weakness was a major stumbling block to

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[437] Ghia Nodia, "Georgia's Identity Crisis," *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 1 (1995).
[438] Personal Interview. Gennadi Kokiev, South Ossetian Minister of Finance, Tskhinval(i), South Ossetia, November 27, 2002.
[439] Personal Interview. Vano Merabishvili, Then General Secretary of the National Movement Organization, Tbilisi, Georgia, November 2, 2002.
[440] Personal Interview. Konstantin Andreevich Tuzhba, Abkhazian Minister of Economics and Foreign Economic Relations, Sukhum(i), Abkhazia, September 18, 2002.

conflict resolution, noting that Abkhazia will not have any independent interest in returning to Georgia until these problems are resolved.[441]

Georgia's inability to offer economic stability was matched with an influx of economic support for the territories from other arenas. In an effort to starve the regions into submission, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) declared an economic blockade against the two regions. This blockade, however, has been violated in two key ways. One is continued economic support by the Russian government, discussed in greater length below. The second is that both regions benefited from significant contraband trade over their uncontrolled borders. Particularly for South Ossetia, which has little economic wealth, the contraband trade has become crucial for everyday products.[442] South Ossetian officials note that their economic situation is not ideal. They lack effective road and utility infrastructure. They acknowledge that employment is low and that wages are inadequate for living standards. However, they point out that Georgia can do little to help them. [443] State budget allocations note that the Georgian government offered no central budget money to the Georgian villages in the region until 2000.[444] Meanwhile, roads are crumbling; electricity and gas are scarce. South Ossetian leaders, seeing the scant services Georgia provides for next-door villages, have rejected recent Georgian offers of money (offered once Saakashvili took power).[445] After all, the income

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[441] Personal Interview, Mikhail Saakashvili, Head of the National Front Organization and Chairman of the Tbilisi Sakrebulo; former Minster of Justice, November 2, 2002

[442] Kukhianidze, Kupatadze, and Gotsiridze, *Smuggling through Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region of Georgia*.

[443] Personal Interview. Gennadi Kokiev, South Ossetian Minister of Finance, Tskhinval(i), South Ossetia.

[444] *Aftonomiur Respublikebze Da Sakartelos Skhva Teritoriul Erteulebze Gadaczemi Transpertebis Dinamika 1996-2002 Tslebshi*, (Tbilisi: 2002).

[445] "President's Adviser Rules out Use of Force against Former Georgian Autonomies," *RIA Novosti*, October 1, 2004.

from their contraband markets vastly outnumbers what they would receive from the Georgian government if part of the state.

In Ajara, prior to Saakashvili's ouster of Abashidze, there was a modicum of economic bargaining, in the sense that Abashidze kept what he wanted and the central government did little to stop him. But there was no official bargaining like there was between Yeltsin and the leaders of Tatarstan and Bashkortostan. Some Georgian officials argue that the presence of elite ties between Abashidze government and the center, particularly with Shevardnadze, established a framework for Abashidze to follow his policy of economic unilateralism.[446] One interesting question that arises is why Ajara followed such a strategy when the even more wealthy Abkhazia did not. First, the economic agreement relied on clientelistic ties – something that Shevardnadze made impossible by using violent means against the region in 1992. Second, even after Georgia indicated significant autonomy for Abkhazia after the ceasefire was signed, the Georgians could not provide enough to make it profitable. Central government coffers were sparse and compromised by corruption. Although Abkhazia could arguably have created similar circumstances for wealth attainment as Ajara – located on a border, keeping customs duties from port and road traffic, the economic devastation of the Abkhazian war made this a far less reliable source for enrichment than it did for Abashidze.

Central Disincentives for Bargaining with the Regions

Proposition$_2$	*Central government patronage ties lessen central government sponsored violence.*
Expectation	*Struggling state have more trouble establishing lasting patronage ties.*

[446] Personal Interview. Levan Berdzinishvili, Head of Georgian National Library, Tbilisi, Georgia, November 13, 2002.

Although Abkhazia and Ajara both had relatively high levels of economic wealth, only Ajara could follow an aggressive autonomous strategy without inviting government intervention. As detailed in Chapter 5, Abashidze capitalized on his favorable relationship with Shevardnadze, obtaining autonomy over the territory, retaining customs revenue, and withholding other revenues owed to the central government. Abashidze ran his own elections, controlled the media, and ensured his family members top positions in government. This favored position lasted until 2004, when newly elected President Saakashvili took measures to expel the dictator. Although Abashidze ultimately left peacefully, Russian press reports indicate concern for violence in the region, when citizens loyal to Abashidze destroyed the bridge on the Choloki River, which linked Ajara to Georgia proper.[447] These events indicate the power of patronage in defining stability over time: Shevardnadze's ouster from government meant that Abashidze was no longer protected. Saakashvili's first target upon winning the presidency was Abashidze, under the banner of ending corruption.

A key factor that governed Georgia's weakness in establishing patronage ties was its economic weakness. Without a working infrastructure and guarantees that industrial development or budgetary credits would be effective or lasting, Georgian leaders were limited in their ability to establish lasting patronage ties.

Proposition$_3$	*A states' level of institutionalization varies according to state capacity.*
Expectation	*Collapsed states will avoid creating permanent institutions that formalize their weakness.*

Both the central government and the regions in Georgia made little effort to find permanent solutions to resolve their territorial and political disputes. There are some

[447] "Russian Tv Reports on Rising Tension between Ajaria, Georgia," *BBC Monitoring International Reports*, March 15, 2004.

exceptions. After the ceasefire, in 1994, both the Georgian and Abkhazian signed the "Declaration on Measures for a Political Settlement of the Georgian/Abkhaz Conflict," where the parties agreed to investigate the possible return of the IDPs, the need for a ceasefire, and to affirm that Abkhazia would have "its own Constitution and legislation and appropriate State symbols, such as an anthem, emblem and flag."[448] The Georgians and the Abkhazians agreed that they would share competencies in several policy areas, the most significant of which are foreign policy and foreign economic ties, border guard details and customs. This political agreement was to be the first of a series of comprehensive agreements that would hammer out a political agreement satisfactory to both parties.[449]

These talks never got far from the vague notions laid out to frame the 1994 agreement. In 1995, Georgia passed its first post-Communist constitution (they had been operating on an amended 1921 constitution), where it acknowledged the existence of an autonomous Abkhazia. However, given that there was no settlement to the conflict, the Constitution was vague on what autonomy meant in the Georgian context. Its authors explicitly conceded that these issues would be resolved once the terms of peace were settled.[450] Not only did this send a message to the Abkhazians that the Georgians were hedging their bets, it left relations between the center and Ajara confused as well, since Ajara had to wait until the stalemate with Abkhazia was resolved.

To deal with this ambiguity, the Georgian constitution until 2002 referred to Abkhazia and Ajara as "territorial units," although it does not define the precise nature of the powers or units, except to note in Article 4, Section 3 that representatives from

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[448] *Declaration on Measures for a Political Settlement of the Georgian/Abkhaz Conflict*, (April 4, 1994).
[449] Ibid.
[450] Personal Interview. Vakhtang Khmaladze, MP and Head of the 1995 Georgian Constitutional Commission, Tbilisi, Georgia, April 2002.

"Abkhazia, Adjaria and other territorial units of Georgia" will be represented in the Senate. The 1995 constitution envisions a bi-cameral legislature, with the Senate being a regional body, while the lower house, called the Council of Georgia, would be a country-wide body. However, even now, Georgia has only one chamber of Parliament, since Article 4, Section 1 does declares that the bi-cameral system will be established "when conditions are appropriate and self-government bodies have been established throughout the territory of Georgia."[451] Vakhtang Khmaladze, chief drafter of the 1995 Constitution, notes, however, that outside of the amendments, there is little concrete understanding of what autonomy actually means.[452] While budgetary and taxation laws refer to the budgetary responsibilities of the region to the state and vice versa, there is little sense that these laws are enforced at all, and in the case of Abkhazia, are not really relevant to the conflict resolution. Rather, in the Abkhazian context, they serve to empower the government in exile, which ostensibly represents the IDPs, but has not undergone election since before the war.

In South Ossetia, as part of the June 1992 ceasefire agreement, the Georgians, Russians, and Ossetians (North and South) established a Joint Control Commission (JCC), which acted to adjudicate administrative questions in the region until a political settlement could be established. The Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has observer status on the Commission and actively coordinates with the four members. The commission oversees the peacekeepers and helps resolve local problems, but has achieved little by way of political resolution.

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[451] Georgian Constitution, Article 4

[452] Personal Interview. Vakhtang Khmaladze, MP and Head of the 1995 Georgian Constitutional Commission, Tbilisi, Georgia.

The more common strategy under Shevardnadze was to avoid the issues if possible. Georgian central government leaders complained a great deal about Abashidze's abrogation of the Georgian constitution, but took no action to bring him into line. Ajaran officials complain that the Georgian government did little to establish precise delineations of power between the two.[453] With regard to South Ossetia, Eldar Shengelaia, the Chair of the Georgian Parliamentary Commission on Issues relating to problems of Tskhinvali, reported in 2002 that throughout the 1990s, there were only sporadic high-level political negotiations.[454]

Leaders on all sides, especially with regard to Ajara's ambiguous political rights and status, recognize that this lack of institutionalization by the government is intentional. Top officials on both sides were convinced that the other side had no interest in resolving the Ajaran questions.[455] Indeed, the leaders of both the central government and Ajara benefited from this arrangement: Abashidze could push the power envelope by taking what he wanted and waiting for punitive results that rarely, if ever, came. Shevardnadze managed to juggle Ajaran demands without making excessive concessions that would jeopardize later negotiations with separatist regions Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

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[453] Personal Interview. Hamlet Chipashvili, Head of the Ajara Representation in Tbilisi, Former Foreign Minister of Ajara, Tbilisi, Georgia.

[454] Personal Interview, Eldar Shengelaia, Member of Parliament and Chair of the Georgian Commission on Issues relating to problems of Tskhinvali, November 7, 2002

[455] Personal Interview. Hamlet Chipashvili, Head of the Ajara Representation in Tbilisi, Former Foreign Minister of Ajara, Tbilisi, Georgia, Personal Interview. Vakhtang Khmaladze, MP and Head of the 1995 Georgian Constitutional Commission, Tbilisi, Georgia.

Proposition$_4$	*Outside actor interests are more pervasive in states with lower state capacity.*
Expectation	*Collapsed states will have less ability to deter outside actors from involvement in separatist regions.*

In Georgia, the state has experienced three types of outside actor interest. The first, and most crucial to the separatist regions, has been Russia and its influence in promoting and enabling the de facto independent status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Russia also played a role in the politics between the Georgian central government and Ajara. The second type concerns the interests of internal actors within Georgia who pursue agendas that are contrary to the stated interests of the Georgian state in resolving the territorial conflicts. Third is the role of the West and how its presence and support creates perverse incentives for Georgian leaders to follow status quo policies that contribute to the lack of negotiation with the separatist regions.

External Powers: The Role of Russia

Russia shares a border with both of the *de facto* independent regions, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Not only is there a CIS peacekeeping unit in Abkhazia (and, arguably a fully equipped Russian base in northern Abkhazia), the Russians have offered Abkhazians partial citizenship. This offer does not formally incorporate Abkhazia into the Russian Federation, but extends some social welfare benefits to the economically devastated Abkhazian population. Abkhazian observers note that this new policy is one of many changes that occurred once Vladimir Putin became President of Russia.[456] Even so, Abkhazian officials admit that the Russians may have had several goals throughout the conflict that may not have corresponded with Abkhazian interests. Russia has not recognized Abkhazia as an independent state, and is a member of the Friends of the

[456] Personal Interview. Stanislav Lakoba, Historian and Former 1st Deputy Speaker of the Supreme Soviet of Abkhazia, Sukhum(i), Abkhazia, September 19, 2002.

Secretary-General of the U.N. regarding Georgia, including among others the United States, which encourages a peaceful political settlement of the conflict so that Abkhazia will be part of Georgia.[457] However, the Abkhazians generously interpret the dual message sent by the citizenship and trade relations on one hand and the rhetoric on the other. They recognize Russia as offering their only path to independence. Barring outright statehood, desire membership in the Russian Federation. In 2003, they sent a formal request to the Russian government for acceptance.[458] Russia has not accepted their request.

Finally, as with the Abkhazian case, the Georgian officials tend to view the problem in South Ossetia as one between external actors – the West and Russia. In addition to the OSCE, the European Commission has begun infrastructural projects that are designed to tie South Ossetia and Georgia together, for example, creating a dependence on the same water or natural gas delivery systems. The Georgian perception of this interest is that it enhances their bargaining position vis-à-vis Russia.[459] They welcome the increasing European interest (the European Commission is moving steadily toward an official observer seat on the Joint Control Commission), but also anticipate that the American interest in the area will stymie continued Russian support for South Ossetian separatists.

Although it lost revenue in this relationship with Ajara, the Georgian government under Shevardnadze had its own reasons for withholding pressure on Abashidze. One was a concern for Russian interests. The Russians have maintained a base within Batumi

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[457] Personal Interview. Astamur Tania, Personal Assistant to Abkhaz President Vladislav Ardzinba, Sukhum(i), Abkhazia, September 2, 2002.
[458] Elizabeth Fuller, "Abkhaz Parliament Ratifies Appeal for 'Associate Membership' of Russian Federation," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newsline*, March 19, 2003.
[459] Personal Interview. Irakli Marchavariani, Personal Assistant to the President of Georgia on the Question of South Ossetia, November 13, 2002.

since the collapse of the Soviet Union, in order to defend against possible invasions by neighboring Turkey, a traditional rival and NATO member. The Georgians invoked the Russians and their close relationship with Abashidze as deterrents to Georgian efforts to consolidate its power over Ajara. This excuse faltered, however, once Saakashvili came to power and expelled Abashidze from Batumi. Ironically, the Russians helped broker the deal that allowed Abashidze flee Georgia, as well as provided him a home for his exile.

Corruption in the Central Government

Although not technically outside actors, Georgian officials and citizens have their own reasons to avoid resolution of the conflicts, due to the income potential of the contraband crossing uncontrolled borders from Russia into Georgia. Throughout the 1990s and until Saakashvili's reforms in 2004, the Ossetian territories (North and South) shared an open border, despite the fact that by law they existed in separate countries. Georgia refused to place control booths on the border between South Ossetia and Georgia, arguing that no boundary existed and that the territory of South Ossetia did not exist. This permitted a bustling contraband industry on the Dzhava road. The now defunct Ergneti market, on the "border" between South Ossetia and Georgia was famous for its supply of illegal petroleum, narcotics, food products, alcohol, cigarettes, and weapons.[460] Abkhazia also has its share of contraband. Given the lack of customs control, especially on the Abkhazian side, some observers argue that personal enrichment has become more important than conflict resolution. Stability exists because of informal agreements has

[460] Kukhianidze, Kupatadze, and Gotsiridze, *Smuggling through Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region of Georgia*.

emerged between Georgian and Abkhazian paramilitary gangs. based on mutual interests in maintaining their source of income – contraband.[461]

Non-governmental and international organization representatives concur that the contraband industry perpetuates the conflict, given that important actors on both sides profit from the industry.[462] Moreover, one could argue that the people in the South Ossetian area were better off than they would be in Georgia, because the prices for necessary products are much cheaper in Ergneti than in Georgian villages and cities.

Many Georgian elites also had incentives to maintain the stalemate with Abkhazia. For one, a significant number of political elites kept their power because of the lack of a settlement. The Abkhazian government in exile, for example, has not faced election since 1992, and will continue to represent the IDPs until a new political regime is established in Abkhazia. In its current situation, the government in exile has an elaborate apparatus, with executive and legislative leadership, a military budget, and a department for foreign affairs. It draws a budget from the government, of which part is spent to pay a monthly stipend to the IDPs. There have been, however, allegations that this money might have been misdirected. In February 2002, the Georgian Control Chamber filed charges against the government, alleging that it had falsified documents for non-existent IDPs in order to collect the state monies directed to them. The chamber reported cases from 1996-2000, noting misdirected funds up to $460,000.[463] Although the Abkhazian government in exile denied these allegations, there is some sense among the international

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[461] Personal Interview. Mikhail Saakashvili, Then Head of the National Movement Organization and Chairman of the Tbilisi Sakrebulo, Tbilisi, Georgia. This is also discussed at length in Kukhianidze, Kupatadze, and Gotsiridze, *Smuggling through Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region of Georgia*.

[462] Several personal interviews, off the record, with representatives of international organizations and non-governmental organizations, 2002

[463] Liz Fuller, "Abkhaz Government-in-Exile Denies Issuing Fake Documents," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newsline*, February 5, 2001.

community in Georgia that the government in exile benefits from the current stalemate at least politically if not economically, and would have little to gain in a peacefully negotiated settlement due to the current Georgian bargaining position.[464] Surely the Georgians would be less represented in a new Abkhazian autonomy than they before. The Abkhazian government in exile has been the quickest group to demand military action in Abkhazia, which Georgian officials claim hinders the bargaining process.[465]

Shevardnadze's incentives for continued ambiguity in political relations between Ajara and Tbilisi centered chiefly on the personal relationship between he and Abashidze and their ability to act as a foil to the other if necessary. For example, observers point to the 2000 Presidential election as an example of patronage. They argue that Shevardnadze (who controlled the Parliament) promised Abashidze would get an official Autonomous Republic status (garnering budgetary support and greater prestige, but little control, given the ambiguity of the term) in exchange for election support. Shevardnadze's chief rival, Jumber Patiashvili was favored in Ajara and was a personal friend to Abashidze. However, Patiashvili lost overwhelmingly to Shevardnadze in Ajara, where the personal influence of Abashidze factors greatly in electoral outcomes.

In general, Georgian political analysts have tended to assess the Ajara-Tbilisi relationship in terms of personalized politics between Abashidze and Shevardnadze. When Shevardnadze was politically weak, Abashidze acted the role of the loyal compatriot. In November 2001, Shevardnadze faced accusations of government corruption, weakness in Abkhazia and public protests thronging downtown Tbilisi. Shevardnadze flew to Batumi, and appealed for Abashidze's support as mediator in the

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[464] Personal Interview, Off the Record, Representative of International Organization, 2002

[465] Personal Interview. Malkhaz Kakabadze, Minister of Special Circumstances, Presidential Appararatus, Tbilisi, Georgia, June 28, 2002.

Abkhazian conflict. Some argue that such events are evidence of a personal political arrangement between the two, particularly given the fact that Shevardnadze (or those affiliated with this office), when not in a time of crisis, were highly critical of Abashidze, referring to him occasionally as a separatist.[466] This relationship became dramatically evident as Abashidze forcefully responded to Saakashvili's Rose Revolution, defending his patron by organizing rallies in his favor.

In every case of ethnic separatism in Georgia, the central government has faced contradictory incentives regarding the processes of creating institutions to formalize relationships, as well as resolving conflicts. The corruption of the Georgian state has hampered decision-making processes, creating conditions where individual actors on all sides were better off with an unstable and unresolved status quo rather than formal resolution. The contraband regimes in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the lucrative and seemingly permanent position of the Abkhazian government in exile, and the horse-trading for border revenues between Shevardnadze and Ajaran leader Aslan Abashidze created conditions where central-regional relations stagnated in Georgia.

Role of the West

A significant factor hampering Georgian efforts to solidify an agreement with Abkhazia is the hint of an improved bargaining position for the Georgians. Georgian elites tend to blame Russia entirely for the conflict and argue that they are powerless to achieve anything in the face of such a powerful and manipulative neighbor. Moreover, while many Georgians are quick to state that they would hope for a peaceful solution to the conflict that would grant the Abkhazians some deserved autonomy, they often point out at the same time that any settlement designed to significantly enhance representation

[466] Personal Interview. Levan Berdzinishvili, Head of Georgian National Library, Tbilisi, Georgia.

beyond their population proportion would violate the rights of the Georgians and break international law.[467] In essence, the Georgian perspective is that because of the Russian pressure, Georgians are being forced to give the Abkhazians more autonomy than they deserve. If the Russians were not in the picture, or silenced, the Abkhazians would have few options but to return to Georgia. In such a circumstance, the Georgians have few incentives to offer any kind of specific settlement to the Abkhazians, particularly if they think their political, economic, and military fortunes will improve.

Throughout the longstanding stalemate with Abkhazia, there has been evidence that President Shevardnadze expected Western (particularly American) support for the war. The war itself came just as the international community recognized Georgia's independence. Shevardnadze has made several appeals to the international community to put pressure on Russia to disengage from the conflict. While no Western country has engaged in military intervention, the West has stepped up economic assistance and investment in Georgia. Moreover, the United States in particular has increased its activity in Georgia. First, it has invested heavily in and spearheaded the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline project, which transports petroleum from the Caspian Sea into Turkey via Georgia. Not only does this bring badly needed infrastructure and money into Georgia, but it solidifies Georgia's strategic position. Second, the U.S., in response to reported Al Qaeda presence in Chechnya and in Chechen refugee camps located in northeastern Georgia, allocated $64 million dollars for a two-year train and equip mission developed to empower the Georgian army to expel terrorists from its borders. This renewed interest has signaled to the Georgians that they might be able to strengthen their bargaining position vis-à-vis

[467] Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War*.

both the Russians and the Abkhazians: armed with a newly equipped army and an American friendship, the Georgians hope to be able to set the bargaining agenda.

Conclusion: The Costs and Benefits of living in a collapsed state

The crises in Georgia indicate that the bargaining and negotiation theory outlined in Chapter 2 assume some minimum levels of state capacity. The state must be able to offer credible bargains to entice regions to remain within the state. The dismal Georgian infrastructure of the 1990s offered Abkhazian and South Ossetian officials little incentive to pursue political settlements after the cessation of conflict in the early 1990s. Indeed, as time went on, Abkhazian and South Ossetian officials witnessed Georgia's tumble into systematic government corruption and infrastructural collapse, with most of the country without power for days at a time, and increasing unemployment and poverty.

Central government officials also balked at resolving the conflicts for several reasons. First, they delayed resolution, fearing that by resolving the conflicts formally, particularly in South Ossetia and Ajara, they would institutionalize their own weakness. Thus, in the case of South Ossetia, the conflict itself was virtually ignored. Possible areas of political negotiation, for example reinstatement of South Ossetia's autonomous status, were neglected. In Ajara, Abashidze was permitted to violate constitutional norms, reject democratic reforms altogether, and enrich himself on customs and tax revenue he withheld from the Georgian center. The Georgian state also balked at resolution because many individuals actually benefited from the ambiguous status of the regions – Shevardnadze benefited from electoral gifts from Abashidze. Contraband trade through South Ossetia and Abkhazia enriched many.

A final key factor in Georgia's lack of conflict resolution activity has been the continuous and pernicious influence of Russia, which destabilizes Georgia by

encouraging and enabling the Abkhazian and South Ossetian *de facto* regimes. Georgian officials excuse their lack of activity in conflict resolution by pointing to Russia's malicious interaction, arguing that without Western support, they can do nothing against Russia. With increasing Western aid moving into Georgia, the Georgian leadership under Shevardnadze seemed to be waiting for American military intervention to resolve the problem with Russia. Because of the Russian influence, the Georgian government has had a reason to delay any negotiation processes with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. This delay brought a great deal of stability to the system. Those seeking to enrich themselves on contraband found mutual interest in keeping the stalemates intact; central government leaders avoiding formalizing their weakness waited for either the state's own growth or outside actors to improve their chances for a more favorable settlement. This stability bought by inaction dissolved once Saakashvili came to power, however, in part because the corruption reforms he promises threatened to destroy this odd arrangement.

INVITING BARGAINING: YELTSIN AND BUILDING THE NEW RUSSIAN STATE

Yeltsin's Russia is the ideal state for the separatist bargaining framework outlined in Chapter 2. As discussed below, Yeltsin's evaluation of Russian political circumstances required him to mobilize support among the regions. The regional leaders drew similar conclusions, finding that Russia, while reeling from the political and economic reforms of the period, nevertheless had something to offer for bargains. Wealth and patronage become the currency of the regions as they sought promising new political and economic arrangements.

Regional Incentives for Bargaining: Economic Wealth, Military Power

Proposition$_1$	*Strategic bargaining depends on state strength.*
Expectation	*Regions are more likely to use bargaining in weak states.*

In the Russian Federation during the 1990s, regional leaders considered separatist bargaining with Russia not only to be possible, but profitable. They found this despite Russia's obvious economic turmoil after the Soviet collapse. After all, by October 1993, one-third of the Russian people lived in poverty, inflation ate people's savings, and many industries preferred to pay their workers in kind rather than with rubles, in one memorable case offering coffins for hours worked.[468] However, for the Russian elite, the new economic system promised paths to quick enrichment. In *Stealing the State*, Steven Solnick chronicles the embezzlement of the riches (such as they were) of the Soviet state by well-placed managers and Soviet *apparatchiks*.[469] The new economic system, notes Joel Hellman, institutionalized the interests of "reformers" who sought just enough privatization and economic reform to enrich themselves, but not enough to create a competitive marketplace that they might not monopolize.[470] Shevtsova indicates that "central and provincial bureaucrats openly put their own enrichment first," reporting that Yegor Gaidar in February 1992 remarked this his greatest obstacle in economic reform was "corruption among government authorities."[471]

Moreover, the regions were aware of the economic potential of their own territories. The most aggressive separatism occurred in regions enjoying their own economic wealth, in particular, natural resource wealth. The leaders of Tatarstan,

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[468] William Barclay, "Russian Workers Offered Coffins," *United Press International*, May 4, 1994, Shevtsova, *Yeltsin's Russia: Myths and Reality*.
[469] Steven L. Solnick, *Stealing the State: Control and Collapse in Soviet Institutions* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).
[470] Joel S. Hellman, "Winners Take All: The Politics of Partial Reform in Postcommunist Transitions," *World Politics* 50, no. 2 (1998).
[471] Shevtsova, *Yeltsin's Russia: Myths and Reality* 36.

Bashkortostan, and Chechnya (after the fall of Zavgaev) expressed separatist demands economically, specifically access to profits made on their own soil. For example, Tatarstan demanded to keep greater proportions of the income from oil extraction, ultimately drawing Moscow concessions on keeping 100 percent of such revenues for five years.[472] Bashkortostan achieved a similar agreement for the income from its oil extraction and refining industries, as well as for natural gas.[473] Chechnya under Dudayev established a deal that split oil revenues 50 percent; Maskhadov's key negotiation activity after the end of the first Chechen war dealt with establishing precise ownership and profit sharing agreements for the pipelines crossing Chechen territory.[474]

In all three of Russia's highly separatist national territories, the leadership acknowledged Russia's role in accepted central state competencies: the coining of money, the creation of a central bank, the conduct of foreign policy, and the maintenance ofa military.[475] Even though all three regions at times expressed stark separatist rhetoric vis-à-vis Russian central power, referring to themselves as sovereign, independent, or subject to international law, all three offered to "delegate" authority to Russia to maintain certain responsibilities common to most federal governments: monetary and foreign policy. Marat Galeev, a member of parliament and actor in negotiations with Russia, indicated that although Tatarstan engaged in highly separatist rhetoric, the regional leadership expected to stay within the state. He argued that two key factors pressed the

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472 "Soglasheniye Mezhdu Pravitel'stvom Rossiiskoi Federatsii i Pravitel'stvom Respubliki Tatarstan Realizatsii i Transportirovke Nefti i Produktov Nefttekhnim Perepabotki," in *Federalizm Vlasti i Vlast' Federalizma*, ed. Mikhail Nikolaevich Guboglo (Moskva: InterTekh, 1997), 445-47.

473 "Respublika Bashkortostan: Soglasheniya Mezhdu Pravitel'stvom Rossiiskoi Federatsii i Pravitel'stvom Respubliki Bashkortostan o Sotrudnichestvye v Otraslyakh Toplivno-Energeticheskogo Kompleksa," in *Federalizm Vlasti i Vlast' Federalizma*, ed. Mikhail Nikolaevich Guboglo (Moskva: IntelTekh, 1997), 419-20.

474 Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars: Will Russia Go the Way of the Soviet Union?* 52.

475 Murtaza Rakhimov, "The Center Must Have Appeal," *Rossiiskiye Vesti*, December 29, 1992, "Tatarstan Favors an Integral Russia," *Argumenty i Fakty*, May 3, 1993.

sovereignty movement: Tatarstan's ethnic status and its extensive economic development.[476] Amir Yuldashbaev, assistant to Bashkir President Rakhimov indicated similarly, noting that in Bashkortostan, "initially no one thought about actually being independent."[477] Dudayev himself desired the return of a strong national government, bemoaning the loss of the strength of the Soviet Union. Although all these concessions could be cast as preferences for a powerful supranational CIS acting like a European Union or at least a loose confederation, Russia under Yeltsin, although weakened, was nonetheless strong enough to have something to offer to even the most separatist of its regions.

Central Incentives for Bargaining: Yeltsin's Need for Regional Clients

Proposition$_2$	*Central government patronage ties lessen central government sponsored violence.*
Expectation	*Weak states will seek to establish and maintain patronage ties.*

In the period from the early 1990s to the signing of the bi-lateral treaties in 1994, Boris Yeltsin pled for regional support, offering generous autonomy deals, but also began to renege on his promises as he sensed his power strengthening. The early period of client seeking came to an end following the October 1993 revolution, when Yeltsin emerged victorious over a rebellious parliament and embarked on constitutional reform that substantially strengthened his own power, as well as constructed a strong central government at the expense of promises made to the regions. Even so, the wealthiest and most connected regions, such as Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, were able to engage the

[476] Personal Interview. Marat Galeev, Gossoviet Member, on Commission on Economic Development, Kazan, Tatarstan.
[477] Personal Interview. Amir Murzageleevich Yuldashbaev, Head of the Directorate on Questions of Socio-Political Development, Administration of the President of Bashkortostan, Ufa, Bashkortostan.

changing political system and exact concessions from the center in the form of generous bi-lateral treaties.

Boris Yeltsin's style of governance relied on well-placed clients within the political system. His system paralleled the styles of earlier Soviet leaders, in particular Joseph Stalin, who successfully worked to consolidate the Soviet state to include the national territories. Like Stalin, Yeltsin sought to create a political cadre of loyalists to himself personally, although not necessarily united in political ideal or philosophy. Lilia Shevtsova, a well-respected Russian political analyst, observes that Yeltsin's political instinct was to surround himself with loyalists, no matter their level of commitment to his platform of democratic reform. "Yeltsin found influential places in the inner circle for some old allies who had proven their loyalty to him during the difficult period when he was out of power. Yeltsin was not interested in their political convictions. He knew how to reward loyalty…."[478]

Shevtsova indicates that at the same time, Yeltsin promoted provincial and regional interests early on, particularly from his home region (Sverdlovsk) and other Russian regions; a key example is the appointment of Ivan Silayev, formerly the manager of the Gorky Aviation Plant in Nizhnii Novgorod, as Russia's first prime minister. The result was an increase in regional and provincial actors in the internal workings of Russian politics. Although these promotions did not come from the national territories, they do indicate an interest by Yeltsin to seek and find allies that would help unify and stabilize his weakened state. Moreover, Shevtsova's analysis concludes that Yeltsin elevated clientelistic politics over even ideological factors, such as democratic reform, a crucial element of Yeltsin's presidential bid. The result was that movements seeking to

[478] Shevtsova, *Yeltsin's Russia: Myths and Reality* 16.

advance in the system did whatever they could to advance in the Yeltsin structure: "This largely explains the character of Russian democrats, their style of thinking and conduct, their occasional lack of consistency in following democratic principles, and their attempts to rely mainly on leaders and clientelistic networks rather than on the support of the society at large."[479]

This practice extended to Yeltsin's approach to the national territories before 1993. In August 1990, before the demise of the Soviet Union, Yeltsin encouraged separatism from the regional leaders by inviting them to "take as much power as you can swallow."[480] In a trip throughout Russia in his attempt to shore up support for his presidential bid and to enlarge his political capital vis-à-vis Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev, Yeltsin used this phrase in his stump speech in Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, and Komi. Yeltsin armed the regions with a strategy: make demands of the central government, and that government might deliver. In doing so, he could ensure that the autonomies would bargain with him, not Gorbachev. In this way, Yeltsin won not only the loyalty of the regional leadership, but also their dependence on the Russian executive office for the promised outcomes. This lessened the level of risk for the regional autonomy demands. Yeltsin's offer, however, was vague. It did not give the regions guidance over the limitations of possible demands, creating a scenario for the richest and most connected regions to take greater advantage of their autonomy possibilities than others.

After his victory over Gorbachev and the subsequent dissolution of the Soviet Union, Yeltsin still needed regional allies. Yeltsin's federal strategy grew in concert with his growing rivalry with the Congress of People's Deputies (CPD). The CPD resented

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[479] Ibid. 31.
[480] "News/Current Events."

Yeltsin's unilateralism, particularly given that the legislative body had emerged from the Soviet period as the only legitimate law-making body in the country.[481] Yeltsin established a system of personal representation within the regions. Shevtsova notes that by December 1991, Yeltsin had established his representatives in sixty-two of Russia's eighty-eight regions.[482] This directly affronted the Congress, given the presidential competition with the legislature's system of local soviets, local legislative bodies, throughout the provinces.

The year of regional demands for national sovereignty, 1992, posed a stark quandary to the Russian government. Although Yeltsin had invited such activity, opponents feared that the autonomy movements jeopardized Russia's unity. They cited as precedent the autonomy drives of the Union Republics, which led to the demise of the Soviet Union. At the time, Yeltsin's opposition still discussed mechanisms to re-establish central power over the successor states; in their eyes, any sovereignty for the national regions increased state vulnerability. Others complained at the ad hoc mechanism behind the sovereignty designations: they varied from region to region, and not all regions received favorable deals, particularly the Russian regions. Shevtsova observes that these criticisms did not change the policies of Yeltsin's governing team. Instead, she notes, "they continued to govern according to the divide-and-conquer principle, buying off some subjects and threatening others."[483]

The growing tensions between Yeltsin and the parliament placed regional leaders in awkward positions. The Congress' members were elected from regional governments, and thus represented some regional interests. In Bashkortostan, Rakhimov had close ties

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[481] McFaul, *Russia's Unfinished Revolution: Political Change from Gorbachev to Putin* 126.
[482] Once Ingushetia split from Chechnya, this number became 89.
[483] Shevtsova, *Yeltsin's Russia: Myths and Reality* 42.

with the Congress, having been a member from 1989-1991. However, their discussions of the Federal Treaty and of bi-lateral negotiations occurred on the executive level. Shevtsova observes that although the provincial and regional governments sympathized with the parliament in the standoff of October 1993, they stayed out of the fray because the executive controlled their subsidies.[484] As highlighted in Chapter 5, the leadership of Tatarstan and Bashkortostan used Yeltsin's weakness to further regional autonomy.

Yeltsin's sense of accomplishment rose after his victory over the CPD in October 1993. His need of the regional governors decreased, his political capital soared, and thus he changed course and reverted to a central government strengthening policy.[485] One of his first and most controversial acts in this respect was to omit the Federation Treaty, which established extensive autonomy rights to the regions, from the text of the new constitution. Two of the most outspoken regions against this new policy, Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, pressured Yeltsin to follow the course of bi-lateral treaties upon which he had previously agreed.

Central Government Disincentives for Bargaining

Despite the horse-trading environment of the early 1990s, in the case of Chechnya, Russia experienced patronage collapse. If Yeltsin was so eager to find deals with the regions, why did he initiate military action against Dudayev? Why did he refuse, as noted in Chapter 4, to meet with him to find a negotiated settlement? This, after all, is the crux of Matthew Evangelista's critique of the Yeltsin regime's conduct prior to the Chechen War: the sense that Dudayev was ready to make a deal to preserve his position as president (as well as his life).

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[484] Ibid. 56.
[485] McFaul, *Russia's Unfinished Revolution: Political Change from Gorbachev to Putin.*

Two factors created a circumstance keeping Yeltsin from a compromise position, even despite Dudayev's last attempts to meet with the Russian president. First, and most important, Dudayev had ceased to be useful to Yeltsin. Yeltsin rewarded loyalty. He had placed Dudayev in position in Chechnya in order to maintain stability in the region, not to invite the threats, condemnations, and militant rhetoric that he ultimately received. Moreover, Dudayev had violated the conditions of his position – not only had he framed himself as a populist leader, but he reneged on agreements over the sharing of oil revenue and infrastructure. Once crime in Chechnya crossed the border into the other regions, Yeltsin decided to oust the truculent Dudayev, finding that he had no use anymore for the leader. The action was envisioned as a short military action, replacing Dudayev with a member of the sizeable Chechen opposition, who theoretically would be loyal to Yeltsin. Yeltsin had little expectation that the mission would go so wrong, or that Dudayev would be so successful in mobilizing militias to the cause of his own self-preservation.

A second factor that contributed to Yeltsin's decision to enter Chechnya was his victory over the Congress of Peoples Deputies in October 1993 and his success in pushing through the Russian constitution that December. Castigated by his opposition as weak and ineffectual, particularly with the regional governments, Dudayev provided Yeltsin with a delightful political opportunity: oust the man that betrayed Yeltsin's good will, and demonstrate Russia's burgeoning strength at the same time. The action in Chechnya came months after Bill Clinton's incursion in Haiti in September 1994, which had demonstrated the President's strength. Gall and de Waal quote a conversation between Oleg Lobov, the Secretary of the Security Council, and Sergei Yushenkov, the Chairman of the parliamentary defense committee, where Lobov stressed the importance of war with Chechnya, not only as a response to the "question of the integrity of Russia.

We need a small victorious war to raise the President's ratings." Yushenkov remarked to the journalists, "I was not able to convince Lobov that Chechnya was not Haiti."[486]

The critical component to explain the military action in Chechnya, therefore, was the fragility of the patronage bond between Yeltsin and Dudayev. Yeltsin did not anticipate a separatist war in Chechnya: rather he expected to replace a client that had turned against him with someone that would offer more stability and behave more predictably. It is not the case that Yeltsin placed cronies (or people he expected to act as such) in every region, but where he did, he expected loyalty and adherence to the established rules. With Chechnya, he used military action to obtain such loyalty. Dudayev, facing daily assassination attempts and a growing Chechen opposition, chose to rouse and mobilize militia groups instead of stepping down. Consequently, what began as an attempt by the Kremlin to create clientelistic ties for regional control became the first Chechen war – a veritable showcase of Russia's weakness.

Proposition$_3$	*A state's level of institutionalization varies according to state capacity.*
Expectation	*Weak states will avoid permanent institutions that formalize their weakness.*

Russia under Yeltsin was loath to create permanent formalized institutions organizing center-regional powers. Although Yeltsin appealed to the national territories to seize autonomy, he balked at making such agreements permanent. Yeltsin hoped for a strengthened central state that would not rely on regional interests for unity. This intent emerged particularly after Yeltsin's success in October 1993, and evolved into a policy of political unilateralism, particularly with regard to the new draft constitution. The text of the document was to be considered by referendum in December 1993. In a move that

[486] Gall and De Waal, *Chechnya: Calamity in the Caucasus* 161.

angered the leaders of the national territories, the draft did not include a clause protecting the sovereignty of the national territories. Moreover, Yeltsin also decided to omit the Federal Treaty from the draft.[487] Shaimiyev and Rakhimov furiously objected to what they perceived to be a subversion of their interests in the least, and of the law at worst, as well as a betrayal of Yeltsin's previous promises. Shaimiyev objected that without the sovereignty clause, Russia would be reverting to an empire or monarchy. Rakhimov concurred, and predicted that such an effort would lead to greater separatism in Russia, not unification.[488]

According to Cameron Ross, the resolution of the October parliamentary crisis in Yeltsin's favor was crucial to the centralization of the state. Only after Yeltsin's triumph at the White House, where the parliament was bunkered, did the regions understand that the balance had shifted to the executive: "The dramatic assault by Russian troops on the Russian parliament . . . , followed by Yeltsin's decrees abolishing the institutions of the local assemblies (soviets), frightened the regions into submission."[489]

A December 1993 referendum passed the Russian constitution, although the effort failed in Tatarstan. Yeltsin began meeting with the leaders of the national territories to hammer out bi-lateral agreements that would establish shared competencies. Yeltsin, however, balked at creating permanent arrangements for the revenue agreements and extended political autonomy, setting limitations for all Tatar agreements at five years.[490]

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[487] Ross, "Federalism and Democratization in Russia," 26.
[488] Radik Batyrshin, "Russian Federation: The Provision on Republic Sovereignty Is Stricken from the Draft Constitution," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, October 23, 1993.
[489] Ross, "Federalism and Democratization in Russia," 30.
[490] "Respublika Tatarstan: Soglasheniya Mezhdu Organami Gosydarstvennoi Vlasti Rossiiskoi Federatsii i Gosydarstvennoi Vlasti Subektov Rossiiskoi Federatsii o Razgranichenii Predmetov Vedeniya i Polnomochii."

The agreements with Bashkortostan had even shorter time limits.[491] In 1994, although Yeltsin still paid obeisance to the strength of the national territories, his concern overall was in strengthening the state. The regions supported Yeltsin in the 1996 presidential elections, particularly Tatarstan. Even when Russia experienced a financial collapse in August 1998, the regions supported the government. One might expect that in such a period of state weakness that the regions would take advantage of this period of vulnerability. Instead, the national territories unanimously supported the Kremlin's choice for the new Prime Minister, Victor Chernomyrdin.[492] One reason for this flexibility is that the regions by this time depended on state contracts for their own well-being. Indeed, for the Tatarstan government, this meant that the regions would become closer to the center, not farther apart. News reports of the period note that the Tatarstan economics minister, "expressed dissatisfaction with the falling output of the republic's military-industrial complex and the absence of state orders in the necessary volumes for it," saying that "he favoured closer coordination between the regions and the center."[493] By the financial collapse in 1998, the center-regional economic ties were such that renewed separatism would be more hurtful to regional financial interests than close cooperation. Even so, in 1998, the regions still had extensive political clout in the system. By 2000, when Putin took over, even Tatarstan and Bashkortostan found themselves struggling to maintain a semblance of what they had achieved through Yeltsin.

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[491] "Respublika Bashkortostan: Soglasheniya Mezhdu Organami Gosydarstvennoi Vlasti Rossiiskoi Federatsii i Gosydarstvennoi Vlasti Subektov Rossiiskoi Federatsii o Razgranichenii Predmetov Vedeniya i Polnomochii."
[492] Vladimir Shpak, "The Main Thing Is to Prevent a War," *Vremya MN*, August 25, 1998.
[493] "Tatarstan Official Voices Support for Reforms at Meeting with Kiriyenko," *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, August 15, 1998.

Proposition$_4$	*Outside actor interests are more pervasive in states with lower capacity.*
Expectation	*Weak states will experience some disparate actor activity, but less than in collapsed states, and more temporary.*

Outside actors had limited impact in Russia during the 1990s, with the exception of the Chechen conflict. The fundamental weaknesses of Yeltsin's Russia permitted external intervention, despite Yeltsin's domestic successes in 1993. He found unexpected resistance for his armed efforts to oust Dudayev in order to place members of the Chechen opposition movement. Part of his problem was the haste with which the military action was deployed, with untrained soldiers unaware of the basic terrain. As Chechen resistance grew, the Russian army became its own worst enemy, selling weapons to Chechen militias in exchange for boots, food, and vodka. Although fewer high-level Russians profited individually from the outbreak or continuation of conflict than in Georgia, there has been evidence of high-placed Russian officials aiding the Chechen movement. Valery Tishkov observes that a key problem was the influence of the oligarchs, former Yeltsin ally Boris Berezovsky being a key example, seeking enrichment in the region, investing in the futures of Chechen leaders such as Shamil' Basayev by providing equipment for communication, such as cell phones and fax machines. Tishkov implies that Berezovsky not only provided this somewhat innocuous equipment, but that his investments funded more dangerous purchases.[494] Later, as the conflict wore on, Yeltsin faced new forms of enemies as the Chechen movement became increasingly Islamic, inviting theological, economic, and military support from fundamental Islamic groups from the Middle East and South Asia. This influx contributed to the transition of the conflict from a political to religious conflict.[495]

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[494] Tishkov, *Chechnya: Life in a War-Torn Society*.
[495] Miriam Lanskoy, "Daghestan and Chechnya: The Wahhabi Challenge to the State," *SAIS Review* 22, no. 2 (2002).

Conclusions for Weak States

Under Yeltsin, state weakness invited national separatism. Part of the reason was the vulnerability of the state itself, and the regions' perception that they had a unique opportunity to obtain more power for themselves within the system. Cameron Ross observes, "during this period of weak central power [until December 1993] the republics became especially vociferous in their demands for national autonomy." He notes also that this effort found a counterpart in central government strategy, when the republics "were wooed by representatives of both the parliament and president, who promised the regions ever greater degrees of autonomy."[496] Thus, the Russian state conforms to the expectations of the first proposition, that separatist bargaining would increase in a weak state.

Chechnya's exception to this however, indicates that there are limitations to central state strategies. The difference separating Chechnya from the dealer regions was Dudayev's betrayal of Yeltsin. Dudayev had placed in the region in order to provide loyalty and stability to Yeltsin, but was inadequate in supplying either. As demonstrated by the analysis in Chapter 4, Dudayev seems to have overestimated his hold over the Kremlin, perhaps because of his interpretation of Chechnya's oil potential. Once he realized he had squandered his position, he repeatedly sought to meet with his patron. By that time, however, Yeltsin had abandoned Dudayev in favor for the opposition. Tatarstan and Bashkortostan skirted betrayal by using strategies of co-optation.

Propositions three and four also work in Yeltsin's Russia. Despite his weakness and need for regional cooperation, Yeltsin hesitated to create permanent and formal divisions of powers between center and region. Rather, he signed the Federal Treaty in 1992, only to abrogate it in favor of a more unifying constitution in 1993. By this time, he

[496] Ross, "Federalism and Democratization in Russia."

had shored up his political capital through a face-off with the Congress of Peoples Deputies. Not only did he succeed in avoiding codification of the concept of sovereignty in the constitution, the bi-lateral agreements he established with Tatarstan and Bashkortostan had time limits.

Yeltsin's growing strength, however, did not eliminate the possibility of separatism from Chechnya. Indeed, the continuing weakness of the state permitted the intervention into the conflict by actors, even representatives of the central government, to manipulate the situation to their own advantage. Lieven has argued that Yeltsin's weakness in this regard crippled his presidency and Russia's reputation as a major power.[497] Putin must have thought similarly, and has embarked on a reform to enhance the central power of the Russian state.

GROWING CENTRALIZATION: PUTIN AND THE VERTICALIZATION OF POWER

Russia's experience with ethnic politics changed dramatically as new President Vladimir Putin took over Boris Yeltsin's chaotic state. Putin's approach to Russian ethnic regions emerged in two forms. One, his aggressive and unrelenting strike against the Chechen rebels, most significantly in his refusal to negotiation with Aslan Maskhadov, who made repeated overtures for negotiations with the Russian president. Second, Putin initiated a series of bureaucratic reforms to streamline and centralize center-regional interactions. Both of these policies countered Yeltsin's administrative system of asymmetrical federalism (where some regions have more powers than others) through bi-lateral negotiations.

I argue that the strengthening of the Russian state, measured in part by a growing economy, narrowing political debate, and institutional change, stifled ethnic separatism in

[497] Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*.

Russia. After becoming president, Putin began chipping away at the hard-fought autonomy regions gained under Yeltsin. The regional-central patronage that dominated the structure in the Yeltsin years persisted somewhat, although the advantage is with the Kremlin, and regional leaders are seeking closer ties with Putin to maintain some influence over the changing system. Once again, Tatarstan and Bashkortostan emerged as winners in the process of cooptation. Unlike the bilateral agreements under Yeltsin, or the unofficial deals under Shevardnadze in Georgia, Putin's reforms took concrete formulation – he created institutions he hoped to be permanent and certain to frame center-regional relationships in the long term. Finally, Putin attempted to narrow the pool of actors dominating Russian ethnic politics. He restricted oligarch manipulation of the circumstances in Chechnya, thus tightening the political arena. In this aspect, however, Putin has not managed to forestall external actors such as foreign Islamic groups from contributing to the Chechen revolt.

Strengthening state in Russia under Putin

State capacity refers to a state's ability to "*penetrate* society, *regulate* social relationships, *extract* resources, and *appropriate* or use resources in determined ways."[498] Putin's Russia is a state increasing its capacity. Putin managed this with several state consolidating policies that took advantage of favorable public opinion amidst increased economic growth, as well as an upsurge in terrorist attacks. Putin undertook reforms that narrowed the scope of political competition by exacting greater control over the media, extending state influence over major industries (particular natural resources such as oil and natural gas), and by creating bureaucratic structures that limited the power of the

[498] Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World* 4-5.

regions. These political changes were accompanied by extensive economic growth, brought about in part by a steady increase in oil prices.

The public opinion shift in support for the Kremlin and the "backsliding" of privatization policies for key industries created an atmosphere of increasing Kremlin control, smoothing the path for extensive bureaucratic reforms, referred to by Putin's office as the "verticalization of power." Public opinion under Yeltsin was deeply suspicious of the Chechen war, as well as disgusted by the President's seeming incapacity (especially in later years of his term) to handle key issues. The Russians tired of a president whose drunkenness tainted Russian image and jeopardized responsible policy. Yeltsin, even after his victory over the Duma in 1993, seemed weak. For Russians, the hardships of economic reform coupled with continuous political struggles, life was chaotic. The promised prosperity and efficacy of capitalism and democratization seemed a myth. Yeltsin's drunkenness and ill-health seemed to confirm these fears.[499] Putin in many ways appeared to be an antidote to Yeltsin's image problem: a sober, kempt, calm individual who exuded stability. Putin rarely showed the kind of exuberant emotion that Yeltsin commonly radiated.

Two factors helped propel Putin into the good graces of the Russians. In September 1999, the new Chechen war appeared to arrive in Moscow, even though a ceasefire was technically in place. Two apartment buildings in Moscow were wracked by explosives, about 200 people died. The Kremlin swiftly blamed Chechen terrorists. Putin, then Yeltsin's Prime Minister, quickly promised retribution, although no evidence was offered to prove Chechen participation.[500] Soon after, the Russian army responded to an

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[499] Shevtsova, *Putin's Russia.*

[500] Indeed, a popular conspiracy theory is that Russian security services, not Chechens, were responsible for these initial acts. Former FSB members have written about these allegations in Litvinenko and Felshtinskiii, *Blowing up Russia: Terror from Within. Acts of Terror, Abductions, and Contract Killings*

incursion by militia groups from Chechnya into neighboring Dagestan. Thus the second Chechen War had begun. Russian public opinion, once extremely critical of the Kremlin's handling of the Chechen situation, welcomed these responses.[501]

Popular support for the new war is unsurprising. First, Muscovite casualties brought the costs of the war closer, from the far-away North Caucasus into the seat of Russian power. Second, the new military action in Chechnya was coupled with growing state influence over the mass media. Once Putin became president of Russia on January 1, 2000, he embarked on a steady process to consolidate his control over media outlets, either by dissuading the media industry from producing material critical of government policies, or by taking over upstart media outlets altogether. In February 2000, Putin had a famous meeting with Russia's oligarchs, which at that time had been perceived as excessively and detrimentally controlling of state policies. As Solnick and Hellman have noted, powerful oligarchs had managed in the mid-90s to promote just enough economic reform to create monopolies for themselves, managing afterward to stall continued privatization policies.[502] In Putin's meeting with the oligarchs, he admonished them, essentially drawing a line on their level of political influence. The state would overlook their 1990s violations of law as long as they stepped away from the political battlefield and ceased their blatant criminal capitalization.

This meeting, hailed by Western political observers as a welcome departure from Yeltsin's corrupt collaboration with the oligarchs, signified Putin's developing approach

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Organized by the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation 104--40. However, militants seeking independence for Chechnya claimed the more recent terrorist activity in Russia – the hostage taking at the popular production of Nord-Ost, bombings in metro stations, and the devastating school bombing in Beslan.

[501] "Two-Thirds of Russians Approve of Chechnya War -- Pol," *Interfax*, November 26, 1999.

[502] Hellman, "Winners Take All: The Politics of Partial Reform in Postcommunist Transitions.", Solnick, *Stealing the State: Control and Collapse in Soviet Institutions.*

to opposition.[503] The attack on the popular media exemplifies the growing impact of the Russian state on society. It also explains in part why a public so critical of the Chechen war under Yeltsin would be so supportive of one under Putin. Soon after his inauguration, Putin began containing critical media coverage of himself and Kremlin policies. Boris Berezovsky and Vladimir Gusinsky, formerly members of the Yeltsin's advisory team, lost out in this battle, both eventually fleeing the country in the face of criminal charges leveled by the Kremlin. Gusinsky, arguably one of the most powerful oligarchs in Russia, had owned the Media-Most empire, which controlled the extremely popular and critical NTV television channel, magazines *Itogi* (Results, in Russian) and *Segodnya* (Today), and the popular radio station Ekho Moskvy. Gusinsky had also supported Putin's opponents in March 2000 presidential elections. Lilia Shevtsova notes that it took Putin only four days after his inauguration to punish Gusinsky's betrayal with a police raid on Gusinsky's holding company. Facing criminal charges, Gusinsky fled Russia. Shevtsova notes that such misfortunes did not befall all oligarchs equally: "it was clear that the Kremlin attack was selective in nature." She concludes, "if Gusinsky had supported Putin and his media outsets had not attacked the Kremlin team, and if Gusinsky had not tried to demand preferential treatment from Putin, Gusinsky would not have been touched. The [Media-] Most affair showed that the Kremlin had begun taking on its critics and potential competitors."[504]

Even during the escalation of conflict in Chechnya, once fodder for media critique of Kremlin policies, media groups felt the growing power of state intervention. One by one, independent media outlets disappeared, replaced by state-owned or influenced

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[503] For a discussion of the long-term implications of this meeting, see Peter Baker and Susan Glasser, *Kremlin Rising: Vladimir Putin's Russia and the End of Revolution* (New York: Scribner, 2005), Shevtsova, *Putin's Russia*.
[504] Shevtsova, *Putin's Russia* 94.

companies. Ousted NTV journalists, for example, started up a new television station, Channel 6; nine months after it began broadcasting, the Kremlin shut it down, due to relationships between the owner and oligarch Boris Berezovsky.[505] A key *glasnost'* era publication, *Nezavisimaya gazeta* (Free Newspaper, in Russian), was taken over by the state on April 3, 2004. Popular political satire television shows, such as *Kukly*, a puppet show that lampooned Kremlin officials, were threatened with shutdown if they did not comply with Kremlin restrictions that ceased criticism of Putin.[506] The popular media on every level, particularly broadcast journalism, Russia's most popular source of information, became beholden to Kremlin power and interests. Putin had constructed his own media empire to better regulate and penetrate society to his own ends. A consequence of this narrowing of political debate was continuing support for, rather than opposition to, the Kremlin's war against Chechnya.

Putin's public opinion revolution accompanied institutional and administrative reforms that curtailed mechanisms for regional interaction with central government policymaking. One reason for Putin's early attention to his "verticalization of power" policy was that under Yeltsin, regional legislatures routinely passed legislation that was at odds with the Russian federal constitution. Putin decried the practice, noting that "it is a scandalous thing when – just think about this figure -- a fifth of the legal acts adopted in the regions contradict the country's Basic Law, when republic constitutions and province charters are at odds with the Russian Constitution."[507] The Kremlin altered regional interaction in Russian politics in three key ways: by creating an alternative structure to consolidate federal relations, changing the selection process for Federation Council

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[505] Baker and Glasser, *Kremlin Rising: Vladimir Putin's Russia and the End of Revolution* 95.
[506] Ibid. 93.
[507] "Putin Proposes Major Revamping of Senate," *Current Digest of Post-Soviet Press*, June 14, 2000.

membership, and moving regional governorships into appointed, rather than popularly elected, positions.

In May 2000, Putin changed the federal administrative framework of the country by creating a system of seven *okrugs* (districts) through which the country would be administrated. This differed significantly from Yeltsin's framework, which operated with the 89 republics as key administrative units, appointed presidential representatives that would monitor the legislation passed and executive behavior within the republics. The problem with this system, notes Cameron Ross, was that many of the representatives "went native," becoming co-opted by the interests of the republics. The result was that the presidential representatives became apologists for, not monitors of, regional acts that might contradict federal legislation.[508]

Putin's seven okrugs limited the autonomy of the ethnic regions in several ways. First, the organizational structure placed the national territories amongst the non-national region within each okrug. Thus, the ethnic republics lost prestige and a sense of special status, since Tatarstan would now be administered just as other regions within its okrug. Additionally, Putin designated for each okrug an administrative capital where his representatives operated. None of these capitals were placed within the national territories. The okrug administrators, all appointed by the President, were tasked with ensuring that regional laws would correspond to Russian legislation (not contradict it), as well as oversee regional appointments to federal bodies, such as the Federation Council. The representatives were to oversee all federal expenditures within the regions, as well as monitor and ensure tax collection and delivery to the central government. The administrative representatives were also tasked with ensuring national security measures

[508] Ross, "Federalism and Democratization in Russia."

for the regions. The regional territories themselves were based on the seven Russian military districts, and five of the seven administrative representatives were selected from the security services.[509] This new administrative entity had with its purpose to curb what Putin perceived to be excesses and unnecessary asymmetries of regional power.

A second prong of Putin's verticalization of power strategy entailed changes in the make up of the Federation Council. The Federation Council the upper house of the parliamentary system, was created in 1993 and acted as a foil to the more excitable Duma. The Federation Council not only had veto power over legislation passed in the Duma, it approved key executive branch appointments such as members of the judiciary. The first members of the Federation Council, two representatives for each of the 89 regions, were popularly elected in December 1993, the same round of elections that produced the first Duma members, as well as the ratification of the Russian constitution. In 1995, in an effort to exact more control over the boisterous Duma, Yeltsin issued a decree that altered the representation of the Council, announcing that a regions' executive and legislative heads would also act as Council members. The presidents of the national territories were elected positions, but at the time Yeltsin appointed the regional governors. This gave strength to the republican leaders, who carried a legislative mandate into the Federation Council. Unfortunately, it also meant that the Federation Council members had dual roles of leadership in both federal and regional spheres. The result of this, notes Ross, is that the Federation Council rarely met. As such, it relinquished its powers to check Duma legislation. Even so, the Federation Council under Yeltsin provided a mechanism by which the leaders of the national territories could maximize their influence and protect their interests.

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[509] Shevtsova, *Putin's Russia*.

Putin's reforms to the Federal Council diminished this direct impact regional leaders could have on federal policies. He pressed in August 2000 that the Federation Council membership alter its make-up, suggesting that the chamber's representation should include two regional representatives appointed by the heads of the region's legislative and executive branches, both subject to regional legislative approval.[510] Although this move has diminished the direct effect of regional leaders, the reform created a body that acted full-time. According to Ross, however, by changing up the representation, Putin effectively removed the immunity of prosecution granted to federal legislative representatives from the regional leaders. The implication of this is that "Putin will now be able to use the threat of prosecution to keep the chief executives in line."[511] Tatar president Mintimer Shaimiyev commented at the time of the decree that the Federation Council would diminish in power, and that its future seemed "vague."[512]

As he changed the make-up of the Federation Council, Putin created a new advisory body, the State Council, made up of regional leaders, to be based within the Kremlin. This council, which Shevtsova labels "a consolation prize for the regional bosses," was to convene at Presidential request to offer advice on regional matters. At first, regional leaders were excited about a post that could maintain their position within central government circles, pressing for Putin to grant even greater powers to the Council. However, Putin resisted greater institutionalization, and thus legitimization, of the Council, maintaining its position as an advisory body.

This growth of Russian state capacity has diminished regional separatism in Russia. Even the "upstart regions," Tatarstan and Bashkortostan have truculently

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[510] Yulia Latynina, "Inside Russia: New 'Investments' in Federation Council," *The Moscow Times*, August 2, 2000.
[511] Ross, "Federalism and Democratization in Russia," 146.
[512] Nikolai Sorokin, "State Council May Oust Federation Council -- Shaimiyev," *TASS*, August 3, 2000.

accepted the centralization of power, Bashkortostan at times seemingly embracing it. Central incentives for bargaining likewise have diminished: with Putin in a position to legislate as he wishes without opposition from the State Duma (which is dominated by members of Putin's party of power, Unified Russia), Putin has little incentive to make concessions to the regions. However, while the strengthening of Russia has had consolidation effects on most national territorial elites, Putin has not been able to maintain control of Russia's most evident vulnerability – Chechnya.

Regional Separatism in a Strengthening Russia

Proposition$_1$	*Strategic bargaining depends on state strength.*
Expectation	*Regions in strengthening states will be less likely to use separatist strategies.*

Regional leaders in Russia have by and large accepted these restrictions of their formal powers. Indeed, contrary to the arguments of democratization scholars who contend that greater restrictions of power will lead to great separatism through conflictual methods, in Russia, some of the most contentious of the separatist regions have become docile. In a March 2000 article in the *New York Times*, Russian political analyst Nikolai Petrov notes that the new president had quickly changed the pattern of regional strategies from the Yeltsin years, remarking, "now, the issue is not how much regional leaders will be able to get form the center, but about how much they can avoid losing."[513] In Tatarstan, political analyst Rafik Abdrakhmanov observed that the regions are certainly aware of the strengthening power of the state: "of course, Putin came to power with more popularity among the people. The State Duma obeys his administration. The upper house

[513] Celestine Bohlen, "Russian Regions Wary as Putin Tightens Control," *The New York Times*, March 9, 2000.

practically complies because the governors obey him. Putin has much more power and pressure than Yeltsin [did]."[514]

Marat Galeev, member of the Tatarstan GosSoviet and on the Commission for Economic Development, concedes that there is little to do about Putin's reforms. He notes that Shaimiyev has tried with little success to convince Putin to allow greater regional autonomy: "Putin has a unitary mentality and does not hide this point of view. Shaimiyev tells him that this is not profitable for Russia."[515] Rafael Khakimov, Shaimiyev's advisor on federal and political issues notes that negotiations with the center had all but stopped under Putin's system. "We can question [policies] with Putin, but that doesn't mean it will be considered."[516] As a result of these frustrations, according to Galeev, Shaimiyev has embarked on a strategy to make himself an indispensable ally of the president. "Shaimiyev is on the lower end. He joined [the party of power] Unified Russia to have a better relationship with Putin."[517]

In Bashkortostan, the government has gone even further to embrace Putin's position on the verticalization of power. Konstantin Tolkachev, the Chairman of Bashkortostan's State Assembly, conceded that the bureaucratic reforms had limited regional powers: "I have to say that the powers of the regions have diminished, controlled by the federal center. These powers concern economic relationships, justice, budget and taxes." However, he indicated his acceptance of these restrictions, saying that the change in federal power "is the right think to do, because it strengthens the federation. I feel no

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[514] Kvarchelia, "Georgia-Abkhazia Conflict: View from Abkhazia."
[515] Personal Interview. Marat Galeev, Gossoviet Member, on Commission on Economic Development, Kazan, Tatarstan.
[516] Personal Interview. Rafael Khakimov, Personal Assistant to the President of the Republic of Tatarstan on Federal Issues, Kazan, Tatarstan.
[517] Personal Interview. Marat Galeev, Gossoviet Member, on Commission on Economic Development, Kazan, Tatarstan.

dissatisfaction."[518] Amir Yuldashbaev, a key advisor to Rakhimov in Bashkortostan's presidential apparatus, characterized Putin's policies on the verticalization of power as "important," contending that the Russian President "should do more, in my opinion." At the same time, like Tatarstan's Khakimov, Yuldashbaev admitted that the days of negotiation strategies over regional autonomy and power are essentially finished: "There is not a regional process of negotiation delegations come and go. The federal center does not send delegations. Rakhimov might go to visit."[519] Bashkortostan's political elite seems to welcome the strengthening Russia. Moreover, with this new system, the politics seem to have become even more personalistic – all negotiations happen as determined by personal visits by Rakhimov to the Kremlin.

In some ways, this approach has paid off. In 2000, when Putin was embarking on his initial policy changes, he passed a new taxation code that would revoke the favored taxation status for the autonomous regions, such as those enjoyed by Bashkortostan and Tatarstan. The new taxation code called for a flat income tax of 13 percent to be delivered directly to central government coffers.[520] In what political analysts considered an effort to pacify anticipated outcry by these favored republics, Putin matched this new tax reform with an offer of budget credits for social and infrastructural development. In Tatarstan, he offered 60 billion rubles over a period of 6 years.[521] Bashkortostan received a similar offer of development credits.[522]

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[518] Personal Interview. Konstantin Borisovich Tolkachev, Chairman of the Kurultai, Ufa, Bashkortostan, June 10, 2003.
[519] Personal Interview. Amir Murzageleevich Yuldashbaev, Head of the Directorate on Questions of Socio-Political Development, Administration of the President of Bashkortostan, Ufa, Bashkortostan.
[520] Shevtsova, *Putin's Russia* 101.
[521] Personal Interview. Marat Galeev, Gossoviet Member, on Commission on Economic Development, Kazan, Tatarstan.
[522] Personal Interview. Ilshat Azamatovich Tazhitinov, Head of the Directorate on Economic Development and Social Policy, Administration of the President of Bashkortostan, Ufa, Bashkortostan.

Ilshat Tazhitinov, of Rakhimov's presidential apparatus' Directorate on economic development, is optimistic that the region's economy will grow along with Russia's altogether, making up for the parallel loss of direct taxation revenue.[523] In Kazan, the officials are not so optimistic, warning of a loss of economic development with the removal of special economic allowances for Tatarstan. Rafael Khakimov warns that, "the new tax system to benefit the center will not be efficient; the poor regions will become more dependent. There are only eight donor regions, they cannot build a strong federation from poor regions. Economic crises will occur."[524]

Despite some reticence on the part of Tatarstan's regional leaders, the path taken by these once upstart regions has been a docile one in the face of growing Kremlin power. Moreover, national separatist movements that pushed the political landscape in the early 1990s are relatively quiescent in the face of growing Kremlin support. The last issue of national separatism for Tatarstan is an effort by Tatar legislators to switch the Tatar alphabet from Cyrillic to Latin, the alphabet used by its Turkish cousin. So far, Russian courts have stymied this effort. In Bashkortostan, the national movement appears silent regarding growing Russian power and the loss of Bashkir autonomy. Says Tolkachev, "in Bashkortostan, people are very law abiding. We haven't observed any conflicts."[525]

Central Incentives for Bargaining with Regions in a Strengthening Russia

Unlike Yeltsin, who co-opted regional leaders in his fight to consolidate Russia and win a political battle with Gorbachev, Vladimir Putin has needed no such help. Table 6.2 summarizes the propositions and expectations introduced earlier affecting central

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[523] Personal Interview. Ibid.
[524] Personal Interview. Rafael Khakimov, Personal Assistant to the President of the Republic of Tatarstan on Federal Issues, Kazan, Tatarstan.
[525] Personal Interview. Konstantin Borisovich Tolkachev, Chairman of the Kurultai, Ufa, Bashkortostan.

government incentives in permitting and encouraging regional separatism. Putin's Russia, a continually strengthening state, has not been as vulnerable to these incentives.

Table 6.2 Central State Bargaining Incentives in Strengthening States

P_2	*Proposition: Patronage ties lessen central government sponsored violence*
	Expectation: Strengthening states need patronage less.
P_3	*Proposition: A state's level of institutionalization varies according to state capacity.*
	Expectation: Strengthening states will seek to institutionalize their formal authority.
P_4	*Proposition: Outside actor interests are more pervasive in states with lower state capacity.*
	Expectation: Strengthening states will experience negligible problems with outside actors.

A central difference between Yeltsin's presidency and Putin's has been the renewed interest in a military action in Chechnya. The analysis introduced both in this chapter and in Chapter 4 point to Putin's interest in symbolizing his presidency with a demonstrable show of strength. Some theorists argue that Putin in fact created conditions that brought about the beginning of the Chechen war in order to demonstrate renewed Russian strength, both by having Russian secret services plant the bombs in Moscow apartment buildings to bring the conflict into Russia's heartland to helping the coordination of Basayev's incursion into Dagestan. [526] Journalists present at the latter event noted that Russian forces that could have repelled the attack rested nearby, in full view of the Chechens – indicating either collaboration for the attack or at least a desire to

[526] Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars: Will Russia Go the Way of the Soviet Union,* Litvinenko and Felshtinskiii, *Blowing up Russia: Terror from Within. Acts of Terror, Abductions, and Contract Killings Organized by the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation.*

respond to an attack as opposed to deter one.[527] Analysts of the 1999 Chechen war argued that it symbolized in many ways Putin's desire to showcase a revitalized, stronger Russia.

As discussed in Chapter 4, one strategy Putin used to rationalize the renewed Russian attack on Chechnya was to link the terrorist activity with the Chechen president Maskhadov. Maskhadov, admittedly a weak executive who could not control the rampant criminal behavior throughout the region nor put reins on his militant opposition such as Basayev, persistently attempted to establish ties with the Russian government, offering bargains for pipeline revenue, and seeking Russian police support to suppress the growing crime.[528] In November 1999, according to journalists Peter Baker and Susan Glasser, Maskhadov's chief deputy Akhmed Zavkaev flew to Moscow to discuss a detailed negotiation plan with Putin's presidential envoy, General Viktor Kazantsev. According to Zakaev, Kazantsev examined the proposal and replied, "It's ninety-nine percent certain that we will continue our dialogue and the war will end. But it's one percent unclear. Because it is Putin who must make the final decisions." Zavkaev told Glasser and Baker, "That's how our meeting ended. And of course after that we had no other meetings."[529] Putin rebuffed Maskhadov's efforts, at first criticizing Maskhadov's failures as an executive, in the years afterward maintaining that Maskhadov was a terrorist. Indeed, the Russian president exulted at the victory over terrorist leaders when Russian commandos assassinated Maskhadov on March 8, 2005.[530]

Assessing the lack of Russian military action against the remainder of the national territories is more difficult. For one, regional separatism under Putin (outside of

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[527] Gall and De Waal, *Chechnya: Calamity in the Caucasus,* Anne Nivat, *Chienne De Guerre: A Woman Reporter Behind the Lines of the War in Chechnya*, trans. Susan Darnton (New York: Public Affairs, 2001).
[528] Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars: Will Russia Go the Way of the Soviet Union?* 52, Fuller, "Primakov Claims 'Breakthrough' in Relations with Chechnya."
[529] Baker and Glasser, *Kremlin Rising: Vladimir Putin's Russia and the End of Revolution* 113-14.
[530] Valeria Korchagina, "Maskhadov Declared Dead in FSB Sweep," *Moscow Times*, March 9, 2005.

Chechnya) has been negligible. Even so, there is evidence that regional leaders have sought to strengthen the patronage relationships with Putin that they had enjoyed under Yeltsin, particularly with electoral returns. In the presidential election of March 2004, Putin received 91.84 percent of the vote in Bashkortostan, with a regional turn-out of 89.13 percent of registered voters.[531] Putin returned the favor for Rakhimov, intervening on the Bashkir president's behalf to secure him his own election in December 2003.[532]

Putin has also formalized his reforms. Unlike Yeltsin, who attached time limits and deadlines to the bi-lateral treaties and distanced himself from the Federation Treaty after winning his battle with the Russian Duma, Putin's reforms have been offered as a mechanism to permanently centralize the federal structure. Moreover, Putin's efforts have been multi-pronged, as if to shore up his policy on all sides. He combined the changes to the Federation Council and the establishment of the seven okrugs to administer to the region with new rules on taxation and budgeting. The only aspect of these changes that are internally temporary are the budget credits promised to Bashkortostan and Tatarstan for social development, to expire in 2006.

One arena where Putin has been unable to affect state change has been the presence of external actors within the state. Chechnya's current struggle draws strength from forces outside of Russia, in particular, from Islamic militant groups in the Middle East and South Asia. One of the most famous of these was Saudi-born Khattab, who was killed in action on March 19, 2002. Unlike the first Chechen war, the result of Dudayev's battling with Russian attempts to unseat him and replace him with Chechen opposition groups, the Chechen action now occurs in part because of the efforts and influence of outside actors. Putin has attempted to combat this by placing Chechen-born clients into

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[531] Oksana Yablokova, "Republics Give Putin 90 Percent," *Moscow Times*, March 16, 2004.
[532] Sovershenno, "Election Chemistry."

power within Grozny, at the same time portraying the Chechen rebels as insurgents who are acting against the interests of the "general" Chechen population. Indeed, in the March 2004 presidential election, Putin garnered 92.3 percent of the vote in Chechnya, although journalists noted that "some polling station officials said they fulfilled orders to stuff ballot boxes."[533] Despite his efforts for "electoral normalization," Putin lost his first Chechen president, Akhmad Kadyrov to a bomb in a Grozny stadium.[534]

CONCLUSION: THE ROLE OF THE STATE IN REGIONAL SEPARATISM

The central state environment creates the conditions within which bargaining and negotiation might take place. The processes of ethnic separatism in Georgia and Russia have varied in strategy and outcome, depending on the capacity and interests of the central state. In Georgia, regional actors had little incentive to bargain, since Georgia had little to offer them in return. Moreover, even the central government balked at serious formal negotiations. Central government leaders feared institutionalizing the state's weakness, which they considered temporary. Rather, for Ajara, still within the state, terms of autonomy varied as the Ajaran leader tested Tbilisi by taking what he wanted and offering Shevardnadze *faits accomplis*. Moreover, in some cases, individual officials found that they benefited a great deal by conditions created by the ambiguous status of the secessionist regions, taking advantage of contraband trade that passed uncontrolled across the Russian border. Although the late 1990s under Shevardnadze were periods of relative calm in Georgia, this calm was due in part to the stability of bought by patronage and corruption. Once power changed hands from Shevardnadze to Saakashvili, that stability evaporated into renewed discord between the center and the regions.

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[533] Yablokova, "Republics Give Putin 90 Percent."
[534] "Itar-Tass News Highlights," *TASS*, May 9, 2004.

Under Yeltsin, the conditions were best for regional-center negotiations. Yeltsin was consolidating his power within a weakened state, but one still wealthy enough to offer lucrative and credible bargains with the regions. Thus Yeltsin actively encouraged regional separatism. Wealthy regions such as Tatarstan and Bashkortostan responded with extensive autonomy demands, taking advantage not only of their wealth by of Yeltsin's needs for clients.

The Russian state under Putin indicates the changes in bargaining and negotiation within a strengthening state. Although there are certainly gaps in the control Putin's government exacts over the regions, Chechnya a crucial case, the growing capacity of the Russian state has tightened the political arena for regional autonomy. Regional separatism and autonomy seeking has all but ceased, former powerhouses Tatarstan and Bashkortostan dutifully accepting limited development funding in exchange for allowing Putin to abandon the bi-lateral deals from the early 1990s. Moreover, the revitalized Russian state has acted quickly to institutionalize its new strength on several levels, creating new administrative structures that diminish the influence of the ethnic regions, and constricting regional influence on federal power by changing the makeup of key government bodies, in particular the Federation Council.

Within this analysis, I argued that while the conditions that govern negotiation and bargaining between region and center have changed overtime, the underlying factors that reward some regions vis-à-vis others have not. Regional leaders, particularly in the strengthening Russia, understand that the opportunity for taking advantage of Russian weakness has diminished, and shifted their strategies to maintain and concretize their personal relationships with the Russian center. As interviews with officials in Tatarstan and Bashkortostan revealed, the processes of center-regional discussion now take place on a personal level. Moreover, the explicit strategy of the leaders, in order to maintain

their positions within their regional governments, is to ensure that they are indispensable to the Russian leader.

Conclusion

To a casual observer, ethnic conflicts seem irresolvable. By definition, ethnic war emerges from interactions based on ascriptive characteristics such as family, tribe, history, culture, or religion. These characteristics defy compromise, provoking stereotypes and generalizations that stymie negotiation rather than promote dialogue. This appearance of intractability may explain why ethnic conflicts appear so pervasive and enduring. But conflict is not inevitable. Rather, other zones of disagreement provide sources of contention and overlap with ethnic identity. Happily, political and economic factors are not ascriptive but based on mutable characteristics of individuals or groups. If political figures can identify the underlying political and economic concerns leading to ethnic strife, they can take measures to deter violent conflict and find cooperative strategies that enhance the likelihood of nonviolent negotiation.

THEORETICAL CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation sets out to uncover key factors that have led to elite strategies of ethnic separatism in the former Soviet republics. Rich variation in three critical variables makes the post-Soviet arena ideal for scientific study of ethnic separatism. Regional strategies differ, both in levels of autonomy demanded of the central government, as do the means by which regional leaders embarked on realizing their goals, whether through violent or non-violent methods. By examining these processes over time, this research project developed conclusions about the state structures that permit or provide incentives for enhanced ethnic separatism, as well as the internal factors that enhance a region's power to demand increased status.

Ethnic separatism is affected, but not determined, by state institutions. Some scholars have argued that democratic federal structures deter ethnic separatism and

conflict, others have argued that federal structures promote separation. This project, by examining the variation of ethnic separatism within the inherited Soviet federal structure, concludes that these institutions did not determine behavior. Nevertheless, they did impact behavior. The most separatist areas in the former Soviet Union were those with federal administrative designations, with political and ethnic legitimacy endowed in their autonomous status. This fact became particularly evident in South Ossetia, when conflict arose after the Georgian government revoked the autonomy it enjoyed during the Soviet era. The Soviet federal system established mechanisms for regional interaction with central policymaking, provided precedents for economic development programs, and also patronage networks to enhance regional elites' ability to advance within the Soviet system. Although the existence of the institution itself in the successor states did not determine how regional actors would act, the Soviet federal structure provided channels separatist behavior.

Likewise, the central state's capacity affects the political arena within which regional leaders promote themselves. The dissolution of the Soviet system brought about a weaker set of successor states that faced multiple obstacles for state building. Not only did they inherit the weakened and delegitimated economic system of the Soviets, but also faced overwhelming tasks in rebuilding a political system, consolidating power, and providing services and infrastructure to a devastated yet expectant public. Democratization complicated the process by opening up media arenas and new elite cohorts for competition within the new political environment. Although the international community and the states themselves often considered democratization programs necessary and ideal ways to organize political systems, the fact remains that democracies are much more difficult to manage than authoritarian regimes. This fact meant that the leaders of new states would have to learn a new method of making policies within an

utterly changed environment, in an increasingly complex political arena, during a period of economic decay. The task was daunting.

This environment opened the door to separatist actions. Not only did regional ethnic leaders act to take advantage of their new political opportunities, but central government elites also had incentives to invite such action. The circumstances in Russia in 1991 mimicked those during the Russian Civil War of the 1920s, when central government leaders courted non-Russian elites in order to draw them into the state. Stalin offered autonomy deals and established a federal system that rewarded non-Russian minorities with enhanced economic and political agency. Seventy years later, when consolidating his new state, Yeltsin offered autonomy deals and real de-centralization to the members of Stalin's system, in a sense truly following through on the promises made by his authoritarian predecessor.

Such methods only worked, however, if the state was sufficiently powerful to ensure that the actors were invested in the system. As Georgia's first decade of independence unfolded, it was rended by stalemated ethnic wars in the early 1990s, followed with failed or unambitious attempts for negotiation later. The regions had few incentives for bargaining. Both Abkhazian and South Ossetian leaders watched as Georgia, which Western observers had considered to harbor great potential for democratic reform and economic success, plummeted into political stagnation wrought by government corruption at the highest levels. Government officials embezzled tax revenues as they collected them, skimmed from customs collections as products entered the country, and created tax shelters for the industrial monopolies of friends and family. As a result, the already flagging infrastructure of the dying Soviet economy worsened. Leaders of neither region felt they had much to gain from negotiating with Georgia

(although the Abkhaz were more consistent in this view than the Ossetians, who seemed willing to compromise in the early years).

Moreover, central government leaders in Georgia found they had few incentives to compromise with the regional governments. For one, the Georgian government was not keen on creating formal institutions that cemented its weaknesses. Even with Ajara, with which there was little actual disagreement or conflict between center and region, the government in Tbilisi resisted creating absolute mechanisms that structured the differentiation of power. In Russia during the early 1990s, where the state was strong enough to offer credible deals, Yeltsin was careful to create expiration dates for the most generous deals. In Georgia, corrupt officials benefited from contraband materials crossing the borders and therefore had no interest in establishing a peace agreement that would create and enforce legitimate border controls.

Within the environment of diminished state capacity, the leaders of national territories began seeking greater levels of influence into the political system, not only in interacting with the central government, but also in achieving greater levels of autonomy for their regions. One key implication of this project is that the political demands for autonomy or independence from the central government occurred at the elite level. Those making bargaining strategies and interacting with the central government held high positions of power within the autonomous republics. Those republics that saw a transfer of power from the Soviet to the new government generally elected a leader either from the former Soviet *nomenklatura* (such as Bashkortostan's Rakhimov), or someone who had held elected office in the waning days of the Soviet Union, for example members of the Congress of People's Deputies (Ardzinba in Abkhazia). All of these leaders interacted with national movements within their constituencies, sometimes mobilizing these movements themselves (such as Dudayev in Chechnya) or by taming their rhetoric (such

as Shaimiyev in Tatarstan). Even so, few leaders point to pressures from the national movement when discussing their strategies. Instead, their ethnic status legitimated their drives for greater autonomy (even without a social movement), and greater wealth and closer ties with the central government ensured greater political position.

A final impact of diminished state strength is the impact of exogenous actors on the separatist process. In this study, the most significant instance of this phenomenon has been the Russian involvement in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The Russians prop up these regimes, offering Russian citizenship and social support in order to destabilize the Georgian government. Implicit in this arrangement is military support – Russia's legal code permits the Russian military to intervene in states when Russians are endangered. That many Abkhazian and South Ossetians have accepted Russian visas provides a formal mechanism for Russian intervention should the conflicts once again become violent. The Russian threat also provides a rationalization which Georgian leaders can offer as they avoid resolving their territorial problems. Under Shevardnadze, central government leaders protested that any action to resolve problems with the regions, even with Ajara, was largely determined by Russian interests, not the interests of the regional governments themselves. Although the role of Russia is certainly quite stark, this rationalization also fed the interests of those officials who benefited from the benefits of patronage with Ajara or corruption in contraband trade across Abkhazian and South Ossetian borders. This open secret held back arrangements with South Ossetia to establish customs controls along the northern border, as well as solidified the patronage between Abashidze and Shevardnadze. The Russia crutch became obvious in 2004 when the anti-corruption campaign of Saakashvili quickly achieved what Shevardnadze could not over his twelve-year tenure as president of Georgia: ousting Abashidze (ironically with Russian help rather than against Russian intervention that had been predicted),

establishing controls along the road to South Ossetia, as well as in the northern regions. Saakashvili's efforts demonstrate a break from the inactivity of the Shevardnadze period, but he may not achieve his goal of reestablishing Georgian *de jure* control over these regions. However, his strategy has been to address the leaders of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, as well as offer compromises based on his perceptions of the needs of their governments and citizens. Although he might fail, it is an energetic alternative to weak complaints of Russian imperialism while capitalizing on the benefits of territorial ambiguity.

Economic wealth was crucial to the regional leaders' evaluations of their chances for advancement. Their economic wealth bought them greater bargaining leverage, which regions such as Tatarstan and Bashkortostan used successfully to extend their autonomy. Lack of economic wealth showed limitations of bargaining potential. Impoverished Ingushetia had very little to bargain with Moscow. Dudayev in Chechnya vastly overestimated the resource potential of Chechnya, and relied on the perceived Kuwait-style riches to bring a settlement on his terms. As this effort failed, he backpedaled, too late to appease Yeltsin's entourage, which slated Dudayev for removal. In Georgia, economic wealth mattered less on the official bargaining table, but was crucial for the maintenance of patronage ties in Ajara, and in establishing a stalemate in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Ajaran leader Abashidze lorded over his fiefdom by keeping the customs revenue generated at the Turkish border, as well as refusing to send tax revenue to the central government. This arrangement helped Shevardnadze, who did little to reclaim the lost revenues besides complain, because Abashidze offered critical political favors. Abashidze was the surest loser in Shevardnadze's ouster in November 2003, fleeing the country soon afterward. South Ossetia, the most impoverished of the Georgian regions, had little to bargain with in the initial stages of separatism and independence seeking.

Ironically, only after South Ossetia became *de facto* independent did its economic position rise, due to the contraband travel over its uncontrolled border with North Ossetia in Russia. Thus, South Ossetia became more beneficial to the corrupt regime as a stable and reliable adversaries to keep contraband channels open and profitable. Now that Saakashvili has become president on a platform of corruption eradication, the stability of the Shevardnadze regime has dissolved into unstable and sometimes violent interaction. As Saakashvili sought to place customs controls on the South Ossetian border, he found armed resistance not only by South Ossetians, but also from Georgians benefiting from the contraband trade. South Ossetia in 2004 once again became a conflict zone, as Saakashvili moved to establish some control and offer terms for political bargaining.

Regional and central government leaders use elite ties to protect otherwise risk acceptant separatist behavior. Regions whose leaders enjoyed ties with central government leaders could make greater demands without fearing retribution. Patronage relationships provided mechanisms not only to manage demands and subsequent bargaining, but also a way by which central government leaders could consolidate their country and ensure the loyalty of the most independent minded of their constituent territorial units. Following the precedent set by Stalin before him in the formation of the Soviet Union, Boris Yeltsin actively promoted ethnic separatism, inviting a mechanism through which he could attract the loyalty of regional elites, even at some cost to the Russian central budget and to the ideals of democratic reform, since many of these leaders profited from industrial wealth and from less than competitive electoral processes. Similarly Shevardnadze offered Aslan Abashidze essentially his own kingdom, complete with a lucrative port that oversaw, among other things, the shipping of oil piped in from Caspian wells. Abashidze offered election returns favorable to the President, and loyalty

in times of political crisis, most notably as Shevardnadze was forced from office in November 2003.

In this study, three critical aspects of patronage emerge. One is that deterring violence in weak states depends on lack of elite turnover. In Georgia, power changes from the Soviet period leader Jumbar Patiashvili to Zviad Gamsakhurdia brought in a figure who had few ties to regional leadership, particularly in South Ossetia (Gamsakhurdia did have ties to Abkhazian and Ajaran leaders). Likewise, Shevardnadze's rise to power put established bargains at risk, particularly with Abkhazia. When Saakashvili came to power in 2004, only one autonomous region remained that claimed loyalty to the Tbilisi government. This arrangement, purchased by the patronage between Abashidze and Shevardnadze, dissolved with the new leader's accession to power. Abashidze attempted a standoff, offered negotiation, threatened military action, and left the country, defeated and exiled. A second aspect of the patronage phenomenon is that although it flourishes in weak states where formal institutions are not the only structure to constrain political action, there is a threshold of economic wealth it requires to work. Thus Yeltsin's Russia, weak as it was, could spend considerable wealth (or forego some of its potential wealth) to keep wayward regions within the state. Yeltsin's administration actively sought to "buy" regional loyalty. We see this tactic particularly in Chechnya, where central state officials established revenue sharing deals with Dudayev over oil revenue, and at the height of the Chechen separatist rhetoric consider a "Buy Chechnya" option. Yeltsin ultimately rejected this alternative, even in the days leading up to the Russian incursion, when Dudayev signaled he was eager to discuss options that would forestall violence. The Georgian leaders had fewer such options to "buy" off their secessionist territories.

Linked to the Chechen experience is a third conclusion that patronage structures are fragile structures that need constant nourishment from both sides. Dudayev, placed into power by an administration that sought loyalty, squandered all goodwill through his insulting rhetoric and reneging on agreements governing oil revenue sharing. His was a mistake of overestimating his position – both his economic position and the strength of his relationship with Kremlin elites. Without strong economic leverage, Dudayev could not compel the Kremlin to put up with his insults and betrayals. By 1994, in Yeltsin's eyes, he needed not correction but replacement.

EXTENDING THE THEORY

These conclusions offer perspectives counter to current scholarship on the role of institutions, regime type, and corruption in transitioning states with heterogeneous populations. This section explores these implications, extending the analysis to applications outside the post-Soviet region. The analysis offered here is not comprehensive, nor is it intended to be a test of the hypotheses introduced in previous chapters. Rather, it is intended to provide a sense of how the findings of this study might be applied to other arenas, in particular other cases where ethnic violence might be likely.

Federalism is a common panacea offered to creating constitutional arrangements for ethnically diverse states. Democratization scholars Linz and Stepan argue that ethnically constructed federal units within democratic states provide outlets for ethnic groups to engage the state system.[535] A critical assumption of this prescription is that ethnic separatism and conflict emerges from groups that have been oppressed by a state governed by a competing ethnic group (majority or minority). But past repression is not always the chief motivation for ethnic strife. The institutional lesson of this project has

[535] Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*.

been that federal institutions can have a dual effect. They do, as Linz and Stepan argue, define processes by which oppressed ethnic groups can affect public policy. However, federal systems also provide deleterious outlets for increased ethnic separatism by providing bureaucratic and administrative infrastructure for doing so, as well as contributing to the political legitimacy of such action. Contrary to expectations that conflict is more likely from groups subjected to discrimination during processes of modernization and industrialization, the wealthiest regions under the Soviets were among the most separatist. Urbanization and education levels enhanced separatism, rather than diminished it.

In post-2003 Iraq, one constitutional suggestion has been to construct an ethno-federal administrative structure that would provide territorial legitimacy and representation to Kurdish, Sunni, and Shi'a populations within Iraq. The ambitions are worthy: they attempt to redress the severe repression of the Kurds and Shi'a under Saddam Hussein's regime, while preserving political access for the Sunnis, a minority in the country that nonetheless benefited from Hussein's system. There is little evidence, however, that such a plan is enticing for Iraq's constituent groups. The Sunni have been loathe to participate in the creation of government structures, many boycotting the January 2005 elections, and demonstrating a reticence to join the constitutional committee. In the Kurdish territories, the January elections accompanied an informal referendum for independence from Iraq. Another consequence of the creation of the Soviet national territories under Stalin was the creation of a hierarchy of ethnic groups, with greater legitimacy and importance offered to larger groups, or groups with stronger central government ties. This sense of hierarchy led to federal competition among groups, and discrimination by the titular popular of minority groups within the inevitably

heterogeneous population. Already we see similar behavior in the Kurdish territories in Iraq, with the repression of the regional Turkmen minority.

Despite these problems, however, there are ways to create federal units based on ethnicity that will not necessarily lead to federalism. In their article in *Journal of Democracy*, Peter Ordeshook and Olga Shvetsova argue that the creation of national political parties that transcend ethnic group membership help provide a civic identity that helps limit emphases on ascriptive differences.[536] My project's conclusions follow a similar path, finding that within Russia and Georgia, patronage ties were a critical factor in the avoidance of violence by both the national territories and by the central government. In fact, particularly in Russia, patronage ties preceded party formation. Leaders of Tatarstan and Bashkortostan joined Unified Russia, the party of power, only after they perceived it to be a mechanism by which they could maintain their ties with Putin, and thereby affect central government policies. Since within Iraq, the party formation thus far has been dominated around popular figures within religious or ethnic structures, it is more likely that patronage ties, not party affiliation, can provide opportunities for regional leaders to reach out to members of other communal or ethnic communities.

A patronage outcome, however, may lead to damaging political circumstances that will maintain stability in the short run, but promote endemic state weakness and perhaps state collapse in the long run. In Georgia, the patronage politics that kept the Ajaran government quiet also contributed to an overall political malaise within the country. Corruption flourished, not only between Shevardnadze and Abashidze, but became a form of currency within all sectors of society. Not only did the central

[536] Peter C. Ordeshook and Olga Shvetsova, "Federalism and Constitutional Design," *Journal of Democracy* 8, no. 1 (1997).

government bankrupt the country through embezzlement and waste, government officials followed strategies that would perpetuate the existence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as ambiguous states without controlled borders, enriching themselves on the contraband. In Iraq, with extensive borders across multi-ethnic territories (particularly Kurdistan), with a lucrative natural resource, and a rebuilding state with minimal infrastructure, the temptations to engage in contraband trade will be high. A government whose stability is tied to entrenched corruption might have trouble securing this important industry. While patronage and corruption might be remedies to avoid ethnic violence, they unfortunately encourage, rather than discourage, government practices that can lead to state collapse.

A final implication of this study has been the surprising effect of democratization on state consolidation in weak states. Many political observers of the early 1990s predicted prosperity and peace to the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union. In the former Soviet Union, for the most part, the popular response to democratization reforms has been lukewarm. In some states, such as Russia and Georgia (among others), peace has been difficult to obtain. The Chechen tragedy has taken an exacting toll, not only on the hundreds of thousands of Chechen civilian victims and refugees, but also on the psyche of Russia as a whole, which suffers from the fear of terrorist attacks, experiences the pain of sending children, often untrained, off to war, and live with a continuing reminder of Russia's failure to establish control in the region. In Georgia, although the wars have been considerably less bloody and the toll less harsh, thousands of internally displaced Georgians wait to return to their homes in Abkhazia. Meanwhile, in Abkhazia, citizens continue to live in a country that no one will recognize, depends on Russian currency and good will for their existence.

Ironically, the processes of democratization enhanced separatism in Russia and Georgia. As Jack Snyder observed in his book *From Voting to Violence*, democratic

reforms bring greater political competition without formal institutions to control the mechanisms of deciding political outcomes.[537] My findings indicate that during a period of political reform, when the state is relatively weak, minority groups will seek greater influence within the system, taking advantage of weak central governments to obtain favorable political position. Under conditions of regional poverty and poor ties with the central government, violent separatism becomes more likely. Interestingly, the emergence of Vladimir Putin as the president of Russia, his policy of the verticalization of power, and his narrowing of political competition (most particularly through state control of the media), has led to decreasing, not increasing, levels of separatist rhetoric. Although some scholars might attribute this change in separatism to greater repression through authoritarian control, my findings indicate that non-Russian leaders are flocking to the Putin camp, joining his party, and supporting him by delivering election results favorable to the President and his allies. By constricting the space of political competition, Putin has limited separatism within Russia, but has managed not to alienate the non-Russian regional leaders, who have emerged as some of his staunchest supporters. Even Shaimiyev, whose administration offers gentle critiques of the consequences of Putin's anti-federal policies, firmly established himself in the higher ranks of the Unified Russia party, as well as the head of the federal question in Putin's personal advisory board, the State Council.

One additional problem that has emerged with regard to democratization in ethnically heterogeneous states has been the efforts by ethnic elites to control the demographic circumstances of the regions. Within the realm of ethnic conflicts, ethnic cleansing has emerged as not only a way to punish or defeat an enemy, but also as a

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[537] Snyder, *From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Nationalist Conflict*.

mechanism to ensure demographic superiority in a democratic arena. One arena for continued debate between the Georgians and the Abkhazians is the return of Georgian IDPs to their pre-war homes in Abkhazia. The Abkhazians are reluctant to accept any suggested repatriation, because an influx of Georgians would eradicate the demographic and electoral majority the Abkhazians secured during the war. Likewise, the Georgians exult in the possibility of a political majority in a prodigal Abkhazia, noting that quota systems to ensure Abkhazian dominance would be "anti-democratic." Such officials are undoubtedly hiding behind the ideals of democratization to further their own punitive agenda. In the former Yugoslavia, for example, elites claimed to pursue democratic reforms, while actually seeking to control the demographic landscape to secure political outcomes in electoral politics.

In many ways, this study has discovered a dark side to conflict avoidance and resolution. Although there are common mechanisms to avoid ethnic separatism, patronage, such bargaining tools can contribute to long-term problems inhibiting state development. The policy prescription offered by democratization scholars in the 1990s, increased pluralism for ethnic minorities through federal arrangements, sets the stage for weakening the most vulnerable states. Ironically, two policy avenues democratization scholars do not endorse, corruption and authoritarianism, provided stability and peace to Russia and Georgia.

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