LEGAL NOTICE

The Government of the District of Columbia has certified an amendment of the Articles of Incorporation of the National Council for Soviet and East European Research changing the name of the Corporation to THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR EURASIAN AND EAST EUROPEAN RESEARCH, effective on June 9, 1997. Grants, contracts and all other legal engagements of and with the Corporation made under its former name are unaffected and remain in force unless/until modified in writing by the parties thereto.

PROJECT INFORMATION:

CONTRACTOR: Columbia University
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Steven Solnick
COUNCIL CONTRACT NUMBER: 810-08
DATE: December 18, 1997

COPYRIGHT INFORMATION

Individual researchers retain the copyright on work products derived from research funded by Council Contract. The Council and the United States Government have the right to duplicate written reports and other materials submitted under Council Contract and to distribute such copies within the Council and U.S. Government for their own use, and to draw upon such reports and materials for their own studies; but the Council and the U.S. Government do not have the right to distribute, or make such reports and materials available, outside the Council or U.S. Government without the written consent of the authors, except as may be required under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. 552, or other applicable law.

---

1 The work leading to this report was supported in part by contract funds provided by the National Council for Eurasian and East European Research, made available by the U. S. Department of State under Title VIII (the Soviet-Eastern European Research and Training Act of 1983, as amended). The analysis and interpretations contained in the report are those of the author(s).
THE 1996-97 GUBERNATORIAL ELECTIONS IN RUSSIA: OUTCOMES AND IMPLICATIONS

STEVEN L. SOLNICK

Columbia University

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the fall and winter of 1996-97, more than half of the regions comprising the Russian Federation held elections for the post of chief executive. In most cases, these races pitted incumbents appointed by Boris Yeltsin against challengers backed by a coalition of socialist parties. At first glance, these gubernatorial elections appeared to be a rematch of the 1996 presidential race.

A closer examination of the voting suggests that any attempt to portray the gubernatorial elections as an extension of the national partisan contest between the "party of power" and the Communists is seriously misguided. The correlation between gubernatorial outcomes and votes for presidential candidates or Duma parties in the oblasts and krais is weak at best: the association with economic conditions in the regions is almost non-existent. Local issues and personalities predominated in the regional races, suggesting that the three major election campaigns since December 1995 have failed to produce any coherent political party structures operating at the regional level.

The elections did reveal some trends suggesting that democratic mechanisms are increasingly accepted as the means for managing political conflict. However, this latest round of elections is likely to perpetuate the syndrome of regional leaders negotiating with central authorities for economic concessions for particular regions, with few mechanisms or incentives to coordinate these zero-sum demands on a national scale.
THE 1996-97 GUBERNATORIAL ELECTIONS IN RUSSIA:
OUTCOMES AND IMPLICATIONS

STEVEN L. SOLNICK

Between June 1996 and the end of March 1997, 55 regions of the Russian Federation held elections for the “head of administration,” generally known as the “governor.” In many regions, these executive branch elections were coupled with elections for the regional legislature, for the mayor of the regional capital city, and for local councils. Forty-eight of these elections were held in oblasts, krais, federal cities, and autonomous okrugs in which the incumbent chief executive had been appointed by President Yeltsin, and had not yet faced voters at the polls.

Many observers in Russia and the West expected that these Fall-Winter 1996 elections would serve as a “rematch” of the dramatic presidential showdown of June and July. The Yeltsin administration assembled a coalition of “democratic” forces to endorse a slate of candidates, and Zyuganov’s Communist Party did the same. Yeltsin’s critics predicted that the regional elections would reveal the true levels of dissatisfaction among the electorate, which Yeltsin’s presidential campaign had managed to temporarily assuage and deflect. Yeltsin’s aides, on the other hand, confidently predicted that the Communists would win a mere handful of races, proving once and for all that they were spent as a political force.

As it turned out, neither side could claim victory from the gubernatorial election marathon. Roughly half the incumbents who faced the voters were defeated, shattering the myth of regional political machines in command of large blocs of obedient voters. On the other hand, many of the “opposition” candidates who did win were moderates or centrists, most of whom quickly expressed their eagerness to work with rather than against the Presidential administration.

A closer examination of the voting, which I present below, suggests that any attempt to portray the gubernatorial elections as an extension of the national partisan contest between the “party of power” and the communists is seriously misguided. The correlation between gubernatorial outcomes and votes for presidential candidates or Duma parties in the oblasts and krais is weak at best; the association with economic conditions in the regions is almost non-existent. Local issues and personalities predominated in the regional races, suggesting that the three major election campaigns since December 1995 have failed to produce any coherent political party structures operating at the regional level. Instead, as I suggest below, this latest round of elections is likely to perpetuate the syndrome of regional leaders negotiating with central authorities for economic concessions for particular regions, with few mechanisms or incentives to coordinate these zero-sum demands on a national scale.

While this scenario suggests that comprehensive economic reforms are unlikely to develop a strong regional constituency, it does suggest that a centrifugal impulse to dismantle federal controls over the regions is equally unlikely. Cleavages within the Council of Federation will not necessarily correspond

---

1 On the importance of regional parties, particularly for the development of federal institutions, see (Ordeshook 1996).
with the emerging legislative party alignments within the Duma, leaving the parliamentary opposition to President Yeltsin divided and diffuse. Indeed, the redistributive struggles of largely autonomous regions fighting over a static or shrinking economic pie may provide a forceful rationale for the maintenance of a strong central authority (as it was for the American Colonies under the Articles of Confederation).

I begin by presenting some background to the recent elections, including the emergence of coordinating councils by the administration and the Communists. I then present some interpretations of the results, with particular attention to voting patterns in the oblasts and krais, where unelected Yeltsin appointees faced large numbers of voters. Finally, I consider the implications of these elections for democratic consolidation, political stability, and economic reform in Russia.

**Background: Regional Power in Russia**

In the Soviet era, regional power was concentrated primarily in the hands of the regional (obkom) Party secretaries. These officials, dubbed “prefects” by Hough (1969), were both representatives of the central state’s power (most were members of the CPSU Central Committee) and the unquestioned arbiters of political and economic authority within each region. In addition to enforcing political conformity and economic plan-fulfillment at the regional level, the Party secretaries also bound the units of the Soviet (and Russian) federal state tightly into the centralized structure of the Communist Party.

When Boris Yeltsin banned the Communist Party in the Russian Federation in 1991, he created a vacuum of power at the regional level. In the 21 “autonomous republics” of the RSFSR, regional leaders were already aping Yeltsin’s declaration of sovereignty and establishing their claims to power through hastily organized elections. In the 55 predominantly Russian oblasts and krais, Yeltsin moved quickly in the fall of 1991 to appoint his own cadre of loyal “heads of administration.” These officials became known informally as “governors.”

Yeltsin apparently intended to proceed with the election of governors in all oblasts, krais and okrugs once the constitutional questions of federal structure were resolved. In the April 1993, he authorized a round of gubernatorial elections in seven oblasts and krais, resulting in the defeat of five of Yeltsin’s appointees. Also in April, the Cheliabinsk regional legislature organized a gubernatorial election without presidential authorization in which Yeltsin critic Petr Sumin defeated the incumbent Vadim
Solov'ev; ignoring the ratification of the election's results by the Constitutional Court. Solov'ev refused to leave office.

When Yeltsin moved against the Supreme Soviet in October 1993, he also moved to reassert control over regional administrations. Regional legislatures were disbanded, and a new moratorium on gubernatorial elections was declared. Yeltsin removed from office two governors elected in April (Surat in Amur and Lodkin in Bryansk), and reaffirmed that the Cheliabinsk election results were invalid. The powerful showing of Communist and nationalist candidates in the 1993 Duma elections had shown the strength of the protest vote, especially outside of the large cities. Consequently, while elections to scores of regional legislatures were held beginning in December 1993 (see Slider 1996), only one gubernatorial election was authorized between December 1993 and August 1995.2

In the second half of 1995, Yeltsin permitted gubernatorial elections in a limited number of regions. In August, he allowed Eduard Rossel to stage elections in Sverdlovsk oblast. Rossel was Yeltsin's appointed governor in Sverdlovsk until he was dismissed in October 1993 for championing the idea of a "Urals Republic." Rossel was promptly elected Speaker of the regional legislature and a representative to the Council on Federation, and continued to agitate for elevating the status of the oblast. Rossel easily defeated the incumbent Aleksei Strakhov—a leader in the national hierarchy of Nash Dom Rossii—and then quickly abandoned the incendiary rhetoric of an opposition firebrand.

In December 1995, Yeltsin allowed 12 more oblasts and krais to hold elections.8 For the most part, these were regions where Yeltsin could expect incumbents to do well, and in nine cases the incumbent won re-election. In Tver, however, the incumbent lost on the first ballot, and in Tambov and Novosibirsk challengers were elected in runoffs. Where incumbents did win, they often based their campaigns on distancing themselves from Yeltsin's policies in Moscow, essentially running "against" the center. This trend, combined with the strong showing of the Communist Party in the December Duma elections, prompted Yeltsin to postpone any further regional elections until after the 1996 Presidential vote.

---

2 Elections were also held for mayor of Moscow and St. Petersburg in 1990, in conjunction with elections to the RSFSR Congress of People's Deputies.
3 He also appointed heads of administration in the 11 autonomous okrugs and oblasts not elevated to republican status in July 1991.
4 By 1997, the title of "governor" had been formally adopted in some but not all regions. It remains in common use as a label for all regional chief executives (other than "presidents" of the autonomous republics) and I shall adopt that usage in this article.
5 Incumbents lost in Amur, Briansk, Orel, Penza and Smolensk. In a sixth region, Lipets, the incumbent failed to stand for re-election. The only Yeltsin appointee to survive a direct election in April 1993--Valeri Zubov in Krasnoyarsk krai--was appointed less than three months before the elections. Data on the 1993 elections comes from (Glubotskii, Mukhin and Tiukov 1995; McFaul and Petrov 1995, pp. 13-14, 22-24, Zlotnik 1996).
6 In that election, incumbent Iuri Nozhikov won reelection as governor of Irkutsk by a landslide. In October 1994, a bid by Primorskii krai governor Nazdratenko to stand for reelection was canceled on the eve of the vote after Yeltsin ordered it halted.
7 The "Urals Republic" episode is discussed in greater detail in (Solnick 1997).
8 Elections were held in Belgorod, Moscow, Nizhni Novgorod, Novgorod, Novosibirsk, Omsk, Orenburg, Tambov, Tomsk, Tver, and Yaroslavl oblasts, and Primorskii krai (Zlotnik 1996, p. 32). Several other regional leaders were refused requests to hold elections at the same time.
Concern about the hostility of regional voters prompted Yeltsin to push for an important adjustment to the structure of regional institutions. Concerned that an anti-government protest vote might sweep Communists into dominant positions in both houses of the Russian parliament, Yeltsin began pushing for the abolition of direct elections to the Federation Council. After a prolonged struggle with the Parliament, the final law governing formation of the Federation Council for 1995 decreed that it would consist of the heads of the executive and legislative organs from each federation subject. Since 47 of the governors in the oblasts, krais and okrugs were Yeltsin appointees who had yet to face the voters, and another 11 of his appointees had managed to secure re-election since 1993, Yeltsin would be able to confidently count on the support of at least 58 members of the new Federation Council—roughly a third of the upper chamber—when it convened in January 1996.

This re-organization of the Federation Council reduced the risk to Yeltsin of the December 1995 elections and ensured that he would be equipped to control any attempts to reformulate the rules governing the 1996 Presidential elections; it even gave him a chance to survive an impeachment attempt if he chose to postpone those elections altogether. However, the new rules also meant that when gubernatorial elections finally did occur, they would dramatically affect not just regional administrations but the national Parliament as well.

Of course, the stakes in the gubernatorial elections went beyond the composition of the upper house of the Russian parliament. Since the Soviet collapse, governors have exercised growing control over policy implementation, fiscal flows, and personnel appointments at the regional level. Armed with newly ratified regional charters and, in many cases, bilateral treaties signed with Moscow, governors have increasingly been deciding who gets paid, who gets fired, who gets taxed and who owns what within their regions.

Federal officials were genuinely worried that electoral legitimacy would encourage more insistent shows of independence by governors. Aleksandr Kazakov, Yeltsin’s deputy chief of staff, articulated these fears clearly in his gloomy dissection of the electoral results: “For Russia to go ahead with gubernatorial elections under the current conditions was a mistake... I’m convinced that in any country undergoing economic restructuring, there needs to be a sufficient degree of centralization and governability. I’m aware that elections are necessary and important, but I just think we rushed into it.” (Rossiiskie vesti, 22 January 1997, p. 1).

**Launching the Fall 96 Season**

The 1996 regional election season began even before the summer presidential elections. On June 2, St. Petersburg mayor Anatolii Sobchak was narrowly defeated by his deputy, Vladimir Yakovlev. While some observers saw the election as a poor omen for incumbents on the national level, the outcome was more likely a consequence of Sobchak’s failure to win endorsements from many of the democratic

---

In the elections to the first Federation Council, in 1993, voters cast ballots directly in dual-mandate races in each federation “subject” (i.e., oblast, krai, okrug, republic). In other words, each voter cast two ballots and two representatives were elected.
reformers he once led. Two weeks later, simultaneous with the first round of the presidential elections, Moscow mayor Yuri Luzhkov sailed to an easy and expected landslide reelection.

In the wake of the presidential balloting, both the Yeltsin administration and the Communist opposition apparently agreed on the desirability of postponing the fall regional elections. Presidential advisors recognized that incumbent governors would be unable to distance themselves quickly enough from an administration already reneging on the promises it had been making all spring. They also feared that the presidential race had emptied the government’s coffers, leaving few resources that could be doled out to regions in the hopes of winning votes through largesse. The Communists, for their part, were eager for the opportunity to reorganize after the crushing collapse of Zyuganov’s campaign.

According to an account published in Segodnua (Cherkasov and Shpak 1996), unnamed Yeltsin advisers actually secured the agreement of Communist leaders to postpone gubernatorial elections after the first few races in September. Several top officials even began laying the groundwork by publicly questioning the wisdom of holding regional elections in 1996. The agreement was apparently derailed by Yeltsin’s worsening illness; opposition leaders grew less sanguine about leaving Yeltsin appointees in control of regional administrations as an impromptu Presidential election grew more likely.

As a consequence of this late shift in expectations, neither the Yeltsin administration nor the opposition entered the regional elections season with a well-developed strategy extending through the entire election season. The administration’s effort was split between two groups. Within the Presidential apparatus, presidential chief-of-staff Anatolii Chubais put his deputy Aleksandr Kazakov in charge of coordinating regional election activities, consisting chiefly of extending support to Yeltsin appointees seeking reelection. At the same time, Yeltsin’s former chief of staff Sergei Filatov converted the All-Russian Movement of Public Support for the President—a coalition of reformist and “democratic” parties that had backed Yeltsin’s reelection bid—into an “All Russian Coordinating Council” (OKS) that would endorse pro-reform candidates in gubernatorial races.

Just as the OKS was intended to cement the pro-Yeltsin alliance that was forged for the presidential elections, opposition parties created the Popular-Patriotic Union of Russia (NPSR) to hold together the coalition that had backed Zyuganov. The NPSR was a direct descendent of the Bloc of Popular-Patriotic Forces forged in the spring of 1996 by the leading communist and pro-communist parties. In theory, the

---

10 The regional leaders of Svyatoslav Fedorov’s Party of Workers’ Self-Government, Irina Khakamada’s Common Cause, Boris Fedorov’s Forward, Russia’s jointed decided not to support Sobchak’s re-election bid. Together, these parties captured 8.7% of the regional vote in December 1995 (see OMRI Daily Digest, 91, 10 May 1996). In addition, local Yabloko leader Igor Artemev withdrew from the race before the first ballot and endorsed Yakovlev.

11 Perhaps the most prominent example was Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin’s call for regional elections to be postponed until 1997, citing the “serious shortfall of taxes . . . as a result of the [Duma and Presidential] elections” (Segodnua, 9 August 1996, p. 1). Chernomyrdin’s observation that the economy had “barely survived” the successive electoral campaigns spoke volumes about the administration’s free-spending strategy in the previous votes, as well as its recognition that similar largesse would be required to keep its string of victories alive.

12 The regional elections were covered well by OMRI’s weekly electronic bulletin Russian Regional Report (hereafter RRR). The administration’s regional elections structures are discussed in some detail in RRR 1:3, 11 September 1996.

13 The background of the NPSR is outlined in RRR 1:4, 18 September 1996.
NPSR sought to coordinate and focus the opposition to Yeltsin-appointed incumbents by promoting alternative candidates in each race. In practice, as I discuss below, the NPSR played little role in nominating candidates, but rather played the more limited role of extending endorsements to candidates already on the ballot.

Thus, by the beginning of September 1996, the two major blocs that had contested the presidential elections did indeed seem poised for a rematch. As one observer put it: “If the majority of the present administrative heads are re-elected—which would be tantamount to the victory of current powers in the regional elections—the political system will be stabilized for at least the next few years. However, the opposition has a chance to take revenge for the defeat in this year’s presidential elections.” (Cherkasov 1996)

Reviewing the Results

Coverage of the gubernatorial races by the Russian media had a distinctly Western horse-race tone. Analysts kept “score” of victories by OKS and NPSR candidates, and offered alternative classifications of their own (Cherkasov and Shpak 1996). Both camps could and did claim a limited triumph. The NPSR pointed to the large number of incumbents who were defeated, sometimes resoundingly, at the polls. The OKS, for its part, could justifiably claim that many of the challengers who emerged victorious were non-ideological administrators unlikely to cause the Kremlin much grief. The results are summarized in Table 1.

Before examining these results in greater depth, it is important to distinguish between elections held in oblasts/krais, and those in republics and autonomous okrugs. In each of the seven republics that elected chief executives between June 1996 and March 1997, incumbents held their posts by virtue of prior elections and not as a direct result of presidential appointment. Thus, the republic elections were less clearly rematches of the summer 1996 campaign, since there was no Yeltsin proxy on the ballot.

The elections in the ten autonomous okrugs and the Jewish autonomous oblast did feature Yeltsin appointees, but involved a small fraction of the Russian population. The combined total of the electorates in all of these territories represents less than 1.5% of the overall Russian electorate. In fact, if we exclude the two restive and rich okrugs that constitute the bulk of Tumen Oblast (Khanti-Mansi and Yamalo-Nenets AOs), the remaining nine territories include just over 500,000 voters, or roughly 0.5% of the national electorate. Including these nine races—in which five incumbents won and four lost—in the national “score” on a par with races in Krasnodar or Rostov skews the picture dramatically.

---

14 To be precise, the presidents of Adygea, Kabardino-Balkaria, Mari-El, Sakha, and Tyva were all previously elected. The post of president was newly created in Khakassia, but the previous head of state was the chairman of the republican legislature, an elected post. Chechenya, of course, is a special case: Moscow’s victorious candidate in the uncontroverted December 1995 elections, Doku Zavgaev, was supplanted as head of state by Zelimkhan Yandarbiev, successor to rebel leader Dzhokhar Dudaev.
The bulk of the analysis in the remainder of this article will therefore focus on the 35 oblasts and krais, as well as the two Tiumen’ okrugs, in which Yeltsin appointees faced the voters. In these races, more than half of the Russian electorate was eligible to vote for its governor. In particular, I will consider whether these races represented a presidential rematch by proxy, whether regional voters began to show signs of nascent party loyalty at the regional level, and whether economic factors were decisive in the outcomes.

**Incumbency**

In the 37 main contests, 16 governors were re-elected. In seven oblasts and the two major okrugs, the incumbents won decisive victories on the first ballot. Four governors required two rounds of voting to secure re-election. Ten other incumbents who were forced to a second round lost when opposition forces united behind a single candidate to defeat them. In four of these races (Kaliningrad, Murmansk, Pskov, Volgograd), governors leading after the first ballot lost in the second round.

In three other cases—Chita, Sakhalin and Ulianovsk—incumbent governors may have been spared this fate by their regions’ adoption of a single-round plurality system. In each of these races, the incumbent was able to secure re-election with well under 50% of the votes cast. In Chita, for instance, Ravil Geniatulin won re-election with just 31% of the vote in October, in a region that had given Gennadii Zyuganov 52% of the vote in July.

Incumbents were defeated in 21 oblasts and krais. Some of these races were clear repudiations of presidential rule: in Briansk and Cheliabinsk voters returned to office by wide margins governors removed by Yeltsin in 1993; in Kursk, voters elected Yeltsin’s nemesis and former vice-president Aleksandr Rutskoi; in Krasnodar, voters overwhelmingly rejected Yeltsin’s former Chief of Staff Nikolai Yegorov; and in Tula, voters handed a first ballot victory to Vasilii Starodubtsev, a leader of the 1991 Soviet coup. In Magadan and Voronezh, single-ballot electoral rules worked in favor of the challengers rather than the incumbents. In Leningrad and Vladimir oblasts, challengers capitalized on splits within the “democratic” camp to achieve decisive first round victories. In Kurgan and Kirov oblasts, incumbents were eliminated on the first ballot after receiving just 11% and 18% of the vote, respectively.

This pattern of outcomes clearly suggests that, however strong governors had become in recent years, they remained vulnerable to removal by democratic means. In other words, contrary to the impression of some observers that Russian elections were merely elaborate rituals with preordained outcomes, for more than half of the governors, outcomes proved unable to manipulate.

---

15 In addition to the republics and the lesser okrugs, I also exclude Moscow and St. Petersburg from this discussion, since both incumbents were previously elected to their posts (Luzhkov jointly with Gavril Popov) and also because both elections in 1996 occurred before the true fall regional election “season.”

16 In Vladimir, the governor was opposed by a former Presidential Representative in the region, his former deputy, and the regional Yabloko leader, in addition to a single Communist candidate (Vinogradov) who emerged victorious (see RRR 1:16, 11 December 1996). In Leningrad, challenger Vadim Gustov reportedly received support from Yeltsin advisers eager to see the incumbent governor replaced (Cherkasov and Shpak 1996).
The vulnerability of sitting governors also throws into question any regional strategy interpretation of the 1996 presidential race (such as that implied by Treisman (1996), for instance). According to this version of events, a large factor contributing to Yeltsin’s victory was his policy of placing significant discretionary resources at the disposal of governors, who then used these funds to boost the pro-Yeltsin vote. While the poor showing of many governors in their own reelection races may be a consequence of the exhaustion of these discretionary resources, it also suggests that regional electoral “machines” remain highly anemic in many oblasts and krais.17

While a comparison of the two 1996 elections shows a weak correlation between the votes cast for Yeltsin in July and his appointees in the fall, a scatterplot comparing these outcomes reveals a wide degree of variance across the 37 regions (see Figure 1). In twelve of these regions, Yeltsin replaced the governors during or after the presidential campaign (i.e., after January 1, 1996), and Figure 1 shows that these newly appointed governors did fare slightly better than the long-term appointees, using the July 1996 Yeltsin vote as a baseline. In both sets of regions, however, the presidential vote was a poor indicator of the gubernatorial vote; for purposes of comparison, Figure 2 shows the much stronger relationship between the December 1995 vote for communist and nationalist parties (as defined in the next section) and the July 1996 presidential vote in these same regions.18

Since there are serious problems of ecological inference in interpreting these data, I must clarify what they might and might not indicate. Since I am only utilizing aggregate data at the regional level, it is impossible to determine whether the same voters who supported Yeltsin in July were more or less likely to vote for his appointees. We cannot, therefore, use the vote for governors to judge the trajectory of Yeltsin’s regional support after the July election.19 On the other hand, at least some governors who were sufficiently popular or organized to mobilize large numbers of supporters on their own behalf failed to do so for Yeltsin, while in other regions Yeltsin was apparently able to command broad support despite the weakness or unpopularity of his gubernatorial appointee.

17 This does not imply, however, that governors did not tend to dominate local media and enjoy large financial advantages. In many regions, however, even with these distinct advantages, the ultimate effect on voting behavior was surprisingly minimal. The same could not be said, however, for the mayors of Russia’s largest cities. Mayoral reelection rates were much higher than that of governors, with 20 of 22 winning reelection in the oblast capitals in the fall of 1996 (Cherkasov and Shpak 1996), at the national level, the urban vote has been consistently more pro-administration than the rural vote. Russian political machines, in other words, appear to more closely resemble the Cook County model than the Texas/Louisiana model.
18 To be more precise, the Pearson’s correlation coefficient for incumbent governors’ “final” vote tally (i.e., second ballot if held, otherwise first ballot total) compared with Yeltsin’s second round vote in the 37 regions considered was .45, with a two-tailed significance of .006. If we control for the replacement of 12 governors in this group during or after the presidential campaign (i.e., after January 1, 1996), the correlation becomes weaker but remains significant. If we look only at governors’ first ballot totals, then the correlation with earlier votes (July 1996 presidential or December 1995 Duma) almost totally disappears. For comparison, the correlation coefficient for the July 1996 and December 1995 races (taking the vote for Communist and nationalist parties as the indicator for the latter) for these 37 regions is .96.
19 On ecological inference see King (1996). The ecological inference problem could be partially addressed by utilizing district level voting data, assuming the same districts were used for gubernatorial and presidential races. Given the wide variance of electoral rules and number of candidates in the fall races, however, a clear picture of the national trends would still be difficult to elicit.
Role of Parties

As noted above, Yeltsin’s “coordinating council” (OKS) and Zyuganov’s “patriotic union” (NPSR) seemed at first glance to represent strong national blocs—proto-parties—that had emerged to contest both national and regional races. From this perspective, the NPSR’s claims to have won 27 races against the OKS’s 20 (out of 53 races contested beginning September 1996) seems to suggest a significant reservoir of strength for Zyuganov and his pro-communist alliance.20

In fact, the two coalitions were far looser than these data suggest and played a far less decisive role overall. In Khabarovsk krai and Khanti-Mansi and Komi-Permiak okru gs, the incumbent was endorsed by both the OKS and NPSR. In several cases, disagreements among the OKS’s constituent parties yielded a multiple endorsement, with Yabloko and Nash Dom—Rossiia often at odds.21 In Volgograd oblast, for instance, incumbent governor Ivan Shabunin and Volgograd mayor Iurii Chekhov both claimed OKS endorsement (the capital was the only part of the oblast carried by Yeltsin in July). In first round voting on December 22, Chekhov and Shabunin split 53% of the vote, opening the door for Communist challenger Nikolai Maksiuta to win on the second ballot.22

In four regions—Astrakhan, Khakassia, Ulianovsk, and Krasnodar—the OKS failed to endorse the sitting governor: in Astrakhan and Ulianovsk they won anyway, with the active support of Nash Dom—Rossiia. In other regions incumbents received the official endorsement of the OKS only to find their opponents receiving clandestine support from within the presidential administration. According to at least one account (Cherkasov and Shpak 1996), the new Chubais team around Yeltsin saw quietly supporting “alternative” gubernatorial candidates as a convenient means of unseating old-guard adversaries in oblasts like Kirov and Leningrad without forcing a public showdown over OKS endorsements.

When the OKS and administration were united in their support for an incumbent, the resources available to back his bid were often extremely limited. In Saratov, the first oblast to hold elections, a massive influx of federal funds allowed wage and pension arrears to be settled before voting began, producing a landslide victory for the newly appointed governor.23 However, in the words of one account,

---

20 The tallies on OKS and NPSR endorsements are taken from Grigorii Belonuchkin’s coverage of the gubernatorial races. Belonuchkin’s analyses are generally found in the products of the Moscow-based Panorama political consulting group. Panorama’s published summaries of the gubernatorial races were not available for this article, and Belonuchkin’s data are taken from his invaluable web site (http://www.cityline.ru/politica/vybory/rrre97.htm and /rrre96.htm). Tallies through the end of December 1996 are also offered in (Cherkasov and Shpak 1996) and (Pribylovskii 1996).

21 On OKS divisions, see Laura Belin’s reportage in RRR 15, 25 September 1996.

22 On the Volgograd race, see the coverage by Sergei Gutsaksis in Politicheskii monitoring, Part 1, nos. 11-12, 1996. (Politicheskii monitoring is an independent monthly published by the Mezhdunarodnyi Institut Gumanitarno-politicheskikh Issledovanii, which operates under the auspices of Yabloko.) The hard-fought contest between Chekhov and Shabunin weakened the latter and allowed Maksiuta to survive the first round relatively unscathed.

23 For background on the Saratov race, see Svetlana Tsakh, “Russia: First Gubernatorial Election Set for Saratov on 1 September,” OMRI Analytical Brief #306, 1996; and the coverage by Damir Faritov in Politicheskii monitoring, Part 1, nos 8-9, 1996.
Saratov "was the first and last time the Kremlin offered its candidates such strong support." (Cherkasov and Shpak 1996)

Since some challengers received at least tacit support from the presidential administration while many sitting governors received little or none, it is likely that those incumbents who were reelected they probably felt only slightly indebted to the Kremlin. It would be unwise, therefore, to assume that reelected governors represent Yeltsin’s regional “team.”

Conversely, the 27 victorious challengers endorsed by Zyuganov’s NPSR are far from an opposition “team” in the regions and in the Federation Council. Since the NPSR played little or no role in nominating opposition candidates in the regions, it had limited capacity to shape regional races in the early stages. Where possible, the NPSR endorsed communist activists already registered as candidates: in general, these challengers were not elected (see below). In the remaining regions, the NPSR endorsed the candidate most likely to defeat the incumbent, regardless of ideological leanings. In at least three regions in which the incumbent was unseated (Kaliningrad, Murmansk and Pskov), the NPSR shifted its endorsement to the ultimate victor after its first choice was eliminated. In many regions, challengers seeking to portray themselves as non-ideological “managers” able to defend regional interests at the federal level did not actively seek the NPSR endorsement.

Given the weak linkages between successful challengers and the national-level opposition movement, it is hardly surprising that many of the new governors moved quickly to cement deals with the Kremlin (Snegov 1996). In the most extreme example of this phenomenon, Yeltsin nemesis Aleksandr Rutskoi was so quick to signal his willingness to cooperate with the Kremlin that the Communist Party branded him a “traitor.”

Despite the weakness of his ideological core at the regional level, Gennadi Zyuganov nevertheless urged newly elected governors to unite along a “red axis” and to join forces with the parties of the left in the Duma (Razuvaev 1996). However, as Figure 3 indicates, while a weak correlation exists between the regional vote for communist and nationalist parties in the December 1995 election and the gubernatorial vote, Zyuganov’s red axis may prove difficult to realize.24 Challengers’ prospects were greater in regions that had supported opposition parties in the legislative election, but party loyalties among the regional electorates seem to explain only a small share of the variance in the gubernatorial races.25

Ultimately, then, the grand coalitions of the 1996 regional elections seem unlikely to cast a long shadow over Russian politics. Since the NPSR played little role in recruiting challengers, the OKS had
limited resources to aid incumbents, and party association offered candidates a limited boost at best. None of the winners were likely to feel strong bonds of loyalty to either camp. The gubernatorial campaigns themselves downplayed ideological rhetoric as well, further diminishing the lasting impact of the preceding electoral alignment.

**Economics and sociotropic voting**

The limited role of economic conditions in determining voting behavior has long been puzzling in Russia. Despite the protracted economic slump, Colton found that “pocketbook and sociotropic perceptions translate[d] weakly into votes” in the December 1995 Duma election (Colton 1996). Though a definitive conclusion on the regional elections would require individual-level data comparable to Colton’s, aggregate regional data reflect a surprisingly weak sociotropic effect. Figure 4 shows the relationship between votes for the incumbent and the rise in the share of population living below the poverty level from January to October 1996 in the 35 oblasts and krais. Only in Perm and Tiumen did governors who presided over a contraction of the population living in poverty (i.e., an improving economy) receive more than 50% of the vote. On the other hand, in nine regions where poverty deepened the incumbent was re-elected.

A comparably weak relationship exists for the level (rather than the change in level) of poverty in October 1996, and for the volume of capital investment in each region. No significant bivariate correlation exists for any combination of vote for incumbents and economic indicators, and economic variables drop out of any multiple regression model. I have not been able to test whether gubernatorial votes were linked with levels of wage arrears, which might be suggestive of a primitive business cycle effect. Anecdotal evidence from regions like Saratov or Ivanovo suggests that incumbents benefited when Moscow was able to be more precise, the Pearson’s coefficient for the “final” vote for incumbents (as defined above) and the December 1995 vote for communist and nationalist parties is -0.447 with a two-tailed significance of 0.007 for the 35 oblasts and two okrugs identified in the previous section. Communist and nationalist parties are defined according to the Colton’s (1996) classification of “socialist” and “nationalist” parties. The correlation remains significant when controlled for newly appointed governors (i.e., after January 1, 1996). Curiously, there is no significant correlation between party voting in December 1995 and the first ballot vote for incumbents, perhaps suggesting the strong impact of divided loyalties among the administration camp.

Once again, however, the problems of ecological inference are great. It would be inaccurate to conclude from these data that communist voters were less likely to vote for Yeltsin-appointed incumbents. However, it would be fair to conclude that challengers who emerged victorious were unlikely to credit much of their success to the party loyalties forged among the electorate in the 1995 campaign.

“Sociotropic” effects link voting behavior to the general economic environment, while “pocketbook” effects link it to individual voters’ own economic gains or losses. Given the nature of the aggregate data available at the regional level, I can only comment here on sociotropic effects.

Data on poverty levels are taken from Goskomstat RF, *Informatsionnyi statisticheskii bulletin*, no. 14, December, 1996, pp. 37-38. The variables discussed in this article, only one—vote for socialist and nationalist parties in December 1995—survives into a final OLS regression model. All economic variables and a dummy variable representing appointment to office after January 1, 1997 fail to be significant in a model that includes the December 1995 vote. Similar results obtain from including the July 1996 vote. Only one of these national election tallies can be included in any OLS model, given the tight correlation between the results at the regional level, as shown in Figure 2.
to pay debts to pensioners and workers. Unfortunately, I have been unable to test this systematically with reliable wage arrears data.

**Nature of Candidates**

The 1996/97 gubernatorial elections may have replaced a number of chief executives, but they did not result in a wholesale reshaping of the regional political elite. Indeed, the personnel changes from January 1996 to March 1997 resembled a revolving door more than a sweeping broom.

Yeltsin replaced thirteen governors before the voting began, in the hopes of improving incumbents’ odds in regions that supported communists and nationalists in December 1995 and July 1996. Of these thirteen new governors, however, five were serving as mayors or deputy mayors within the oblast (Amur, Chita, Vologda, Voronezh, and Saratov), three were deputy governors of the oblast (Arkhangelsk, Briansk, and Permr), one was head of the regional legislature (Ivanovo), one was a former governor (Krasnodar), one was the presidential representative in the region (Kaluga), and two others were lower level officials in oblast administration (Riazan, Nenets AO). As Figure 1 suggests, these new appointees did only slightly better against the baseline of July 1996 than governors who were in office for longer periods. The ultimate victory of six of these newcomers is impressive, however, considering that the oblasts that received new faces were precisely those where the administration had done poorly in the preceding elections.

Among the challengers, candidates with substantial electoral experience at the oblast level were far more effective than candidates associated with national party politics. Candidates serving in the Duma representing territorial constituencies within the oblast fared significantly better than Duma representatives elected from KPRF or other opposition party lists. In addition, eleven of the successful challengers had been elected to the Federation Council in 1993, thus offering them important electoral experience and

---

31 In Ivanovo, for instance, the collapse of the Russian textile industry had thrown over 40% of the population into poverty and had led to a strong showing for Zyuganov in July. In February 1996, Yeltsin named Vladislav Tikhomirov, the head of the regional legislature and a former CPSU obkom secretary, as governor. In the final two weeks before the December election, nearly 80 billion rubles in federal transfers arrived in the region, to settle wage arrears extending as far back as July, and settling the federal governments debts to regional enterprises. Though the NPSR/Communist candidate in the race was a relative unknown, Moscow’s largesse may have been prompted by a late surge in the polls for Sergei Sibotkin, the LDPR candidate. Tikhomirov won reelection on the first ballot, with just over 50% of the vote (Vera Rodionova, “Ivanovskaya oblast v Oktiabr 1996,” Politicheskii monitoring, no. 11, 1996).

32 In a conversation in December 1996, presidential adviser Leonid Smirnagin asserted that wage arrears levels were not correlated with electoral outcomes. To support this assertion, he cited the case of Sakha/Yakutia, where high levels of wage arrears did not hinder the reelection of the incumbent president. Smirnagin did not provide more specific data on the oblasts and krais that I have focused on in this analysis. Another partial corroboratation comes from the Expert Institute (1996) report on regional development, which classifies regions by level and trends of wage arrears—without distinguishing state, private and pension arrears. Among the regions with high per capita wage debts in 1996 and more than 10% growth in these arrears since 1993 are Arkhangelsk and Sakhalin, both of which returned incumbents to office. Among the regions showing low and declining arrears are Pskov and Kirov, both of which overwhelmingly rejected incumbents.

33 In addition, Bolot Aiushev, was named governor of the tiny Aga Buriat AO in January 1996. Aiushev was a former head of the okrug legislature and a member of the Federation Council from 1994-1996. Aiushev was fired in February 1997, however, after a first attempt at a gubernatorial election was annulled in October.
exposure at the oblast/kray level. And two candidates, Lodkin in Briansk and Sumin in Cheliabinsk, had already triumphed in gubernatorial elections held in 1993.

Though several “non-political” candidates enjoyed some first round successes, only Leonid Gorbenko, the director of the port of Kaliningrad, triumphed in a major race with no significant political or governmental background.  

Kingmakers and Minor Players

Beyond the two main coalitions inherited from the national campaigns of 1995 and 1996, several other forces were active in the gubernatorial campaigns. Zhirinovski’s LDPR fielded candidates in many of the races, and actually succeeded in winning the governor’s race in Pskov (RRR 1:11, 6 November 1996). In Pskov, Zhirinovski campaigned actively on behalf of Mikhailov, and the campaign focused on tensions with the neighboring Baltic states over the treatment of ethnic Russians. The LDPR success in Pskov, where Zhirinovski captured 10.2% of the presidential vote in June 1996 (vs. 5.7% nationally) indicates that it remains a potent force in certain regions.

Building for the future rather than sustaining past strength, Moscow mayor Yurii Luzhkov actively supported several candidates in regional races. Luzhkov visited several regions during the campaigns and in several cases attempted to bolster the incumbent by signing joint agreements between the region and the city of Moscow. Luzhkov was also reportedly instrumental in arranging campaign financing for several candidates through Moscow banking networks, but the extent of these activities remains murky (Petrov and Petrova 1997).

A more active and organized force in the gubernatorial elections was former Security Council head Alexander Lebed. Lebed’s political organization “Chest’ i Rodina” (Honor and Motherland) endorsed its own slate of candidates in the regional races, and Lebed himself visited several regions to campaign for his choices. In the Republic of Khakassia, Lebed’s brother Aleksei was elected president. In Murmansk and Kaliningrad, candidates carrying his endorsement were successful in unseating incumbents.

Lebed’s role was clouded, however, by confusion surrounding many of his endorsements (Pribylovskii 1996). In Cheliabinsk, for instance, three candidates claimed his support. Lebed’s staff seemed to constantly be clarifying whom he did or did not support, and Lebed himself often seemed susceptible to manipulation by distant candidates.

Nowhere was the amateurism of Lebed’s operation more obvious than in Murmansk, where Lebed originally endorsed Yurii Yevdokimov (Planykh 1996). Yevdokimov, a local businessman who had worked in the regional branch of Lebed’s Congress of Russian Communities, was non-ideological and well financed and thus stood a good chance of unseating the incumbent. In September, Lebed met with
Yevdokimov in Moscow and wrote a letter declaring him to be the “man who can pull Murmansk out of its crisis.” In November, four days before the first ballot, posters appeared around Murmansk claiming Yevdokimov was using Lebed’s name without his permission and labeling him an “opportunist” and a “liar”; two days later, Lebed’s staff denounced the posters as falsehoods.

On the next day, however, on the eve of the vote, regional television (controlled by the incumbent, Yevgenii Komarov) broadcast a taped interview with Lebed in which he repeated the charges made on the posters. By the time Lebed’s staff figured out what had happened—that Lebed had granted an interview without his staff’s knowledge to a journalist working for Komarov’s reelection and had responded angrily to an allegation that Yevdokimov was exaggerating their friendship—the interview had already been broadcast six times in Murmansk. Finally, at the end of the day, a somber Lebed granted another televised interview to announce that he had misspoken and supported Yevdokimov after all. Yevdokimov was elected governor on the second ballot, but it is unlikely he feels any great debt of gratitude to Lebed.

Consequences and Implications

The 1996-97 gubernatorial elections brought to a close a 15-month electoral season that produced, for the first time in Russian history, elected governments at the national and subnational levels throughout the country. As the regional elections began, there were already plans for their postponement and the national political coalitions returned to their reflexive bipolar standoff. As it ended, however, democratic practices were reinforced and bipolar alignments were seriously blurred. As I discuss below, these developments may be encouraging signs for the consolidation of democracy in Russia, but do not necessarily bode well for federalism, economic reform, or the rule of law.

**Gubernatorial Elections and the Consolidation of Democracy**

As noted above, many of the winners in the gubernatorial races were politicians who had previously held elected office as senators, mayors, deputy governors, or regional legislators. Two had previously been elected to the post of governor and been removed by Yeltsin (Sumin and Lodkin). On the other hand, Presidential adviser Kazakov suggested that many sitting governors ran poor campaigns because they “lacked experience in public politics” (Rossiiskie vesti, 22 January 1997, p. 2). The value of prior electoral experience in these elections is an important sign of the emergence of a cohort of professional electoral politicians in Russia at the regional level.

Some observers have warned that as elective office increasingly grows restricted to members of a closed political elite, the “potential benefit from elections as a mechanism for effecting elite removal may

---

12 The winners in two of the smaller autonomous okrugs—Nenets, and Ust-Ordinskii Buryat—also lacked political backgrounds.

13 For instance, Luzhkov signed bilateral agreements with Saratov (RRR 1:1, Part 2, 28 August 1996), Pskov (RRR 1:11, 6 November 1996), and Voronezh (RRR 1:16, 11 December 1996) shortly before the elections in each of these oblasts. Luzhkov was also a strong and active supporter of Ivan Skliarov, who won a tough campaign to succeed Boris Nemtsov as governor of Nizhni Novgorod oblast in July 1997.
be canceled out" (Shevtsova and Bruckner 1997). A more benign interpretation is possible however: the emergence of professional politicians represents an important step toward the widespread acceptance of electoral norms among the politically active elite.32

The "professionalization" of electoral politics not only reinforces norms of electoral procedure, but also increases the commitment of politicians to working within the political system even after a significant electoral defeat. Former Federation Council members, former Duma deputies, ousted governors, and even two figures who had been jailed for attempting to overthrow the government (Starodubtsev and Rutskoi) all returned to high office through legitimate electoral means. By confirming the possibility of peaceful democratic return to office, the gubernatorial elections helped reduce the perceived costs of electoral defeat at all levels. This shift in perceptions helps lower the stakes of political conflict, an important step toward democratic consolidation (Przeworski 1991).

Party Development after the Gubernatorial Races

The regional elections did not prove to be continuations of the 1995-96 national electoral confrontations. Local issues and personalities played important roles and the national coalitions exerted only selective influence over outcomes. While "multipartism" may be emerging in the Duma (Fish 1995; Remington and Smith 1995), the results of the governors' races cast doubt on the likelihood of any similar development in the Federation Council.33

Important evidence of the dealignment of political forces, at least at the regional level, comes from the behavior of new governors following their victory. Many of the victorious challengers elected under the NPSR banner rushed to strike deals with the Kremlin to gain some economic benefits for their region (Arkhangelskaya and Kamyshev 1996).34 Even some of Yeltsin's most partisan opponents—Aleksandr Rutskoi in Kursk and Nikolai Kondratenko in Krasnodar—indicated their intention to withdraw from partisan politics to focus on regional problems. The rush to mend fences with the Yeltsin administration was so great that by January, Yeltsin's aides were already declaring that only eight of the newly elected governors remained ideological opponents (RRR, 2:1, 8 January 1997).

This rush to the center by the new governors may have already triggered a long-debated transformation in the nature of the Communist Party (Snegov 1996). Faced with the abandonment of their programmatic goals by candidates they helped to elect, KPRF leaders began to emphasize electoral victory as an end unto itself. With no real institutional leverage to effect a coordination of national and regional politicians, any national opposition is likely to remain weak and unfocused. Instead, the socialist opposition

---

32 For one discussion the emergence of professional politicians in the post-Communist transition, see (Fish 1997).
33 As Remington (1997) notes, the Federation Council, unlike the Duma, gives no role to factions in its rules of procedure. In this discussion, I am speaking about multipartism in the broadest sense, comprising both formal legislative parties and more informal voting blocs.
34 Perhaps the earliest sign of the de-polarizing power of national-level office was Yegor Stroev's renunciation of partisan politics following his the former Politburo member's election as Speaker of the Federation Council in January 1996 (see RRR 2:4, 29 January 1997).
parties concluded the regional election season sounding more like Western mass parties organized around electoral performance than legislative parties with strong programmatic agendas.

As Aldrich (1995) has argued, parties emerge during formative stages of political development in order to serve specific needs of politicians. The preceding analysis suggests that national parties only marginally (and highly selectively) helped candidates contest races at the regional level. Only a small number of governors are likely to feel that an OKS or NPSR (or Chest' i Rodina) endorsement was decisive in securing their victory, and in only a few cases were those endorsement accompanied by significant practical resources.

Since economic factors were seemingly irrelevant in deciding races and since past races were poor predictors of regional outcomes, the new governors sitting in the Federation Council are unlikely to organize along the same lines as their counterparts in the Duma. Instead, the departure of the 1996-97 regional races from past electoral trends lends credence to McFaul's claim that Russia's phase of "polarized politics" has passed for now (McFaul 1997). Political alignments in the Federation Council, if they emerge at all, are more likely to follow sectional lines than ideological ones; the likelihood of these alignments is considered in the next section.

Implications for Center-Periphery Relations

As the regional elections began, there was much speculation that directly elected governors would be more likely to assert their autonomy from Moscow, perhaps even to the point of threatening the stability of the federation. While Moscow has lost the power to appoint and dismiss governors, however, it still wields considerable power to sanction regional cooperation and defiance. Much of this power derives from the particularistic nature of economic benefits still under the discretionary control of federal officials. Since fiscal resources are scarce nationally, Moscow's role in deciding which regions enjoy preferential treatment allows it to cast regional leaders as actors in a zero-sum game. Within a zero-sum framework, regional actors are far more likely to strike deals with the center than to cooperate against it.

Moscow's chief vehicles for doling out benefits to regions have been direct bilateral negotiations. Most prominently, the central government has signed over thirty bilateral treaties with federation subjects—and over 200 associated ministerial-level agreements—covering such areas as tax policy, fiscal transfers, environmental protection, division of federal and regional property, and the division of revenues from the exploitation of natural resources. Such formal documents capture only a part of the leverage exercised by federal authorities, however. Given the massive shortfalls in the federal government's

---

17 By "sectional" cleavages, I mean the convergence of geography and political interests (Key 1964). This is distinct from the ideological cleavages—left/right or nationalist/cosmopolitan—that dominated the preceding Duma (and presidential) elections.

18 The showdown between the Yeltsin administration and Yevgenii Nazdratenko in Primorskii krai in June 1997 raised the possibility that the president still retains the power to dismiss elected regional leaders (as he did, for instance, in Briansk in 1993). As of this writing, this question remains unresolved.

19 The literature on asymmetries in the distribution of economic benefits is extensive. For useful overviews see Polishchuk (1996) and Lavrov (1996).
payment of its budgetary obligations, the decision simply to pay its bills in a particular region is a
significant discretionary benefit. The federal government also exercises wide discretion in granting tax
deferrals to large taxpayers within different regions, thus allowing wages or regional taxes to be paid.
Whether paying its bills or forgiving its taxes, when the federal government grants benefits to one region it
lessens the resources available to distribute to others.

Since 1996, the federal government has also been playing an important role in resolving struggles
between Moscow-based and regional interest groups over the control of regions' major industrial assets.
Coinciding with the effective bankruptcy of several enterprises included in the notorious “loans-for-shares”
deal and the ongoing process of “second-stage” privatization, the interests of regional leaders and outside
financiers have come increasingly into conflict. In many cases, Moscow-based financial groups have sought
to take control of major enterprises and implement radical restructuring plans, often entailing widespread
layoffs and dramatically lower revenue targets in the short run (translating into dramatically lower tax
revenues for regions heavily dependent on them). In response, regional governments have been appealing
to Moscow to be given at least some fiduciary control over these enterprises. At stake are not only the fates
of these industrial and resource-extraction giants, but also control over revenue flows that could create
regional competitors to the Moscow-dominated financial sector.

Two cases illustrate this growing preoccupation with property rights at the regional level. In
Krasnoyarsk, governor Valerii Zubov has been struggling to wrest controlling shares of Norilsk Nickel (the
largest mining and metals concern in Russia, producing 20% of the world’s nickel and 42% of its platinum
metals) away from the Moscow financial giant Oneksimbank (Maliutin 1997). In December of 1995,
Oneksimbank received controlling shares in Norilsk Nickel as part of the loans-for-shares deal, and Zubov
initially supported the bank’s efforts to restructure the enterprise and restore its profitability. During the
course of 1996, however, as the bank consolidated its control over the company, profits continued to
decline. As they fell, so did Norilsk Nickel’s contributions to the krai budget (which had previously
amounted to 40% of total krai revenue). By the beginning of 1997, Zubov was actively campaigning to
have Oneksimbank stripped of its Norilsk Nickel shares and to have them placed under the control of krai
officials. A bill to achieve this ownership transfer was narrowly defeated in the Duma in February 1997, but
the presidential administration would act as the final arbiter whether or not the bill passed.

A similar struggle has been taking place in Kemerovo over the fate of the Zapadno-Sibirskiy
Metallurgy Combine (Zapsib). During the spring, the Moscow-based Alfa-bank began operations in
Kemerovo, and opened bankruptcy proceedings against the metallurgical combine (Bagaev and Demkin

---

30 On 1 October 1996, for example, 58% of scheduled transfers to regions paid through the “Federal Fund for
Regional Assistance” had been completed for Russia as a whole. However, some regions enjoyed nearly all of their
allocated payments (Vologda 100%, Kostroma 73%), while others had received next to nothing (Ivanovo 39%,
Volgograd 37%) (Lavrov 1996).

31 One of the most vivid recent examples of federal discretion, even under the more stringent 1997 budget law,
came while Yeltsin was attempting to cultivate the support of big-city mayors to balance the power of newly
elected governors. On June 9th, Yeltsin telephoned the mayor of Cheliabinsk to congratulate him on his 50th
birthday. Yeltsin concluded the conversation by granting a multi-year tax deferment to the Cheliabinsk Tractor
Factory, one of the city’s largest employers (Kommersant-Daily, 11 June 1997).
In response, the oblast's arbitration court placed the enterprise into receivership and turned controlling interest over to the oblast administration. Since this court ruling put Alfa-bank's plans for taking over and restructuring Zapsib into jeopardy, the Moscow bankers appealed directly to patrons in the federal government. Within two weeks of the court's decision, Yeltsin fired Mikhail Kisliuk, the last unelected governor in Russia.12

The importance of center-periphery struggles over the control of key assets was clearly articulated by Primorskii krai governor Nazdratenko. As Nazdratenko declared in July 1997, in the midst of his confrontation with federal authorities: "While I'm governor of Primor, the second wave of privatization...will meet decisive opposition in the krai." Nazdratenko explained his position by noting that the enterprises left to be privatized were mostly industrial giants, and "no regional structures are equipped to compete with Moscow groups controlling as much as 80% of the country's finances" (Bagaev and Demkin 1997).

Struggles for control over regional assets might potentially serve as a catalyst for regions to finally unite in defiance of Moscow's authority. In any federal system, regional defiance can only succeed if at least a large number of regions act collectively to limit the power of federal institutions (Weingast 1997). Such collective action is most likely to emerge from the Federation Council, which regularly brings together all regional leaders. At the Council's first meeting after the gubernatorial elections, in January 1997, speaker Egor Stroev seemed to signal that the Council might indeed begin to play such a role when he reconfirmed his support for constitutional amendments to augment the upper house's powers (Segodnya 23 January 1997, p. 2). If implemented, such reforms would be an important step toward creating credibly limited government at the federal level since the upper chamber, unlike the Duma, does not face the constant threat of presidential dissolution. From January to July, however, the only real sign of solidarity among senators was their opposition to Yeltsin's attempts to strip Primorskii krai governor Nazdratenko of many fiscal and appointment powers.

A wide divergence among the economic situations of the regions has been a key factor frustrating more widespread solidarity against Moscow. Political interests have not grouped regionally—as a classic sectional struggle might—but rather have pitted rich regions against poor. Moscow mayor Yuriy Luzhkov's attempt to unite the ten "donor" regions—net contributors to the federal budget—in demanding greater control over fiscal policy had the inevitable consequence of threatening the remaining oblasts, krais and republics with diminished redistributive assistance (Kommersant-Daily, 24 October 1997, p. 2). Similarly, disputes over Moscow's contribution to the federal road fund, Tatarstan's use of its special taxing powers to close its vodka market to outside producers, struggles over the right to implement free enterprise zones, disputes over the deregulation of electricity rates—to name just a few—have all pitted one region against its neighbors.

---

12 The Zapsib episode was only one of several potential factors leading to Kisliuk's removal from office. In an effort to jump-start his moribund election campaign (which he had succeeded in postponing for nearly a year by citing the regions budgetary problems), he had been turning increasingly vocal in his anti-Moscow propaganda. With a gubernatorial election scheduled for October 19, the administration decided to transform Aman Tuleev from the leading challenger to the favored incumbent.
The potential for economic competition among regions to trigger a "race to the bottom" provides an important rationale for preserving a strong federal center (as it did for the American colonies in 1787). Any center strong enough to maintain economic order will also retain discretionary control over the distribution of many economic benefits. Thus, regions—in the person of their newly elected leaders—will continue to seek exemptions from universal rules for sharing the costs of federation, and exceptions to universal rules for the distribution the public goods created by federation. These appeals will likely give Moscow leverage to continue to blunt arrest the spread of centrifugal tendencies at the regional level.

Thus, the newly elected and reelected governors find their new autonomy from Moscow balanced by a continuing reliance on the federal government to distribute scarce resources and decide questions of ownership. Facing new pressures to secure reelection, a united front against Moscow seems far less likely than a continuation of the bilateral ongoing negotiations that have dominated center-periphery relations to date. As a consequence, while the gubernatorial elections may have reinforced democratic norms at the regional level, they have probably not moved Russia any closer to establishing universal rules governing commercial and legal transactions across the whole of Russian territory.
Table 1: Results of the 1996-97 Gubernatorial Elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Republics</th>
<th>Winner</th>
<th>Runner-up</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adygea</td>
<td>Aslan Dzharimov (58)</td>
<td>K. Tsiku (16)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chechnia</td>
<td>Aslan Maskhadov (65)</td>
<td>Shamil Basaev (26)</td>
<td>Incumbent president Yandarbaev received approx. 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kabardino-Balkaria</td>
<td>Valerii Kokov (98)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Kokov ran unopposed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khakassia</td>
<td>Aleksei Lebed (45/71)</td>
<td>Yevgenii Reznikov (19/20)</td>
<td>Incumbent eliminated in first round. Winner is brother of Alexandr Lebed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marii-El</td>
<td>Viacheslav Kislytsyn (47/59)</td>
<td>Leonid Markelov (30/36)</td>
<td>Incumbent. Zotin, had sought to cancel vote; eliminated in first round. OKS endorsed Kislytsin for second round to block LDPR’s Markelov</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sakha Republic</td>
<td>Mikhail Nikolaev (60)</td>
<td>Artur Alekseev (20)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyva</td>
<td>Sherg-Ool Oorzhak (71)</td>
<td>K. Bicheldei (10)</td>
<td>Opponent was Chinn of republican Parliament</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oblasts/Krais</th>
<th>Winner</th>
<th>Runner-up</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Altai Krai</td>
<td>Aleksandr Surikov (47/49)</td>
<td>Lev Korshunov (43/46)</td>
<td>Winner is Speaker of krai legislature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anuur Obl.</td>
<td>Anatoli Belonogov (41/60)</td>
<td>Iurii Liashko (41/24)</td>
<td>September election was annulled. Liashko, a former mayor, was appointed only in May 1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkhangelsk Oblast</td>
<td>Anatoli Yefremov (36/58)</td>
<td>Yuuri Guskov (29/33)</td>
<td>Yefremov appointed 3/96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Astrakhan Oblast</td>
<td>Anatoli Guzhlvin (52)</td>
<td>Viacheslav Zvolinskii (39)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Briansk Oblast</td>
<td>Yuri Lodkin (55)</td>
<td>Aleksandr Semernev (26)</td>
<td>Lodkin elected governor in 4/93 then fired. Semernov appointed summer 96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheliabinsk Oblast</td>
<td>Petr Sumin (54)</td>
<td>Vadim Solovev (16)</td>
<td>Sumin won 4/93 election annulled by Yeltsin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Data on the election results in this table come primarily from three sources: Nikolai Petrov’s summary of election results in Biulleten’ rossiskoi politiki, no. 1 (March), 1997 (published by the Moscow Carnegie Center); Grigorii Belonuchkin’s web site (http://www.cityline.ru/politica/vybory/vre97t.htm and /vre96t.htm), and OMRI’s Russian Regional Report, especially 2/18 January 1997. Where these sources disagreed on vote tallies, I gave preference to Petrov’s data. Biographical information came from Glubotskii, A. A. Mukhin, and N. Tkukov 1995. Organy vlasti sub"ektov Rossiskoi Federatsii (Moscow: Panorama), Polititcheskie monitoring, Oct-Dec. 1996 (published monthly by the Mezdunarodnyi Institut Gumanitarno-politicheskikh Issledovanii, Moscow), and Panorama’s handbook Federal’noe sobranye (March 1996), as well as Belonuchkin’s election summaries and various issues of OMRI’s Russian Regional Report.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yelets %</th>
<th>Winner</th>
<th>Runner-Up</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jun/Jul 96</td>
<td>(1st/2nd round vote percentage, incumbent in bold)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RF=35/54</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25/41</td>
<td>Chita Oblast (Oct 27)</td>
<td>Ravit Genatulin (31--plurality*)</td>
<td>Yaroslav Shvyraev (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/53</td>
<td>Ivanovo Oblast (Dec 1)</td>
<td>Vladislav Tikhomirov (50)</td>
<td>Sergei Sirotkin (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33/58</td>
<td>Kaliningrad Oblast (Oct 6 20)</td>
<td>Leonid Gorbenko (22/50)</td>
<td>Yuriy Matachkin (34/40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31/49</td>
<td>Kaluga Oblast (Oct 27 Nov 9)</td>
<td>Valerii Sudarevskov (47/63)</td>
<td>Oleg Savchenko (37/31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34/62</td>
<td>Kamchatka Oblast (Nov 17 Dec 1)</td>
<td>Vladimir Birianov (48/61)</td>
<td>Boris Oleinikov (10/28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39/50</td>
<td>Khabarovsk Krai (Dec 8)</td>
<td>Viktor Ishayev (77--plurality)</td>
<td>Viktor Tsoi (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31/51</td>
<td>Kirov Oblast (Oct 6 20)</td>
<td>Vladimir Sergeevnikov (40/50)</td>
<td>Gennadii Shitin (31/45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28/50</td>
<td>Kostroma Oblast (Dec 8 22)</td>
<td>Viktor Sherushnov (43/64)</td>
<td>Valerii Arbuzov (26/31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26/44</td>
<td>Krasnodar Krai (Oct 27 Dec 22)</td>
<td>Nikolai Kondratenko (57/82)</td>
<td>Viktor Krokhmal (8/8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29/43</td>
<td>Kurgan Oblast (Nov 24 Dec 8)</td>
<td>Oleg Bogomolov (41/67)</td>
<td>Anatolii Koltashov (32/Withdraw)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24/36</td>
<td>Kursk Oblast (Oct 20)</td>
<td>Aleksandr Rutskoi (79)</td>
<td>Vasilii Shutchev (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37/61</td>
<td>Leningrad Oblast (Sep 29)</td>
<td>Vadim Gustov (53)</td>
<td>Aleksandr Beliakov (32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37/64</td>
<td>Magadan Oblast (Nov 3)</td>
<td>Valentin Tsvetkov (46--plurality)</td>
<td>Viktor Mikhailov (41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61/77</td>
<td>Moscow (federal city) (Jun 16)</td>
<td>Yurii Luzhkov (89)</td>
<td>O. Sergeeva (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41/70</td>
<td>Murmansk Oblast (Nov 17 Dec 1)</td>
<td>Yurii Yevdokimov (20/44)</td>
<td>Yevgenii Komarov (32/41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55/71</td>
<td>Perm Oblast (Dec 8 22)</td>
<td>Gennadii Igunnov (41/65)</td>
<td>Sergei Levitan (30/29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25/45</td>
<td>Pskov Oblast (Oct 20 Nov 3)</td>
<td>Yevgenii Mikhailov (23/56)</td>
<td>Vladimir Tumanov (31/37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yeysin %</td>
<td>Winner</td>
<td>Runner-Up</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun/Jul 96</td>
<td>(1st/2nd round vote percentage; incumbent in bold)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RF=35/54</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25/43</td>
<td>Rostov Oblast (Sep 29)</td>
<td>Vladimir Chub (62)</td>
<td>Leonid Ivanychov (32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/53</td>
<td>Riazan Oblast (Dec 8-22)</td>
<td>Viacheslav Liubimov (38/56)</td>
<td>Igor Ilev (30/38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/52</td>
<td>Sakhalin Oblast (Oct 20)</td>
<td>Igor Farkhutdinov (39--plurality)</td>
<td>Leonid Chernen (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28/44</td>
<td>Saratov Oblast (Sep 1)</td>
<td>Dmitrii Ayatskov (81)</td>
<td>Anatoliy Gordeev (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50/74</td>
<td>St. Petersburg (fed. city) (May 19-Jun 2)</td>
<td>Vladimir Yakovlev (22/48)</td>
<td>Anatoliy Sobchak (29/46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/56</td>
<td>Stavropol Krai (Oct 2-Nov 17)</td>
<td>Aleksandr Chernogorov (48/55)</td>
<td>Petr Marchenko (38/40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/52</td>
<td>Tiumen Oblast (Dec 22-Jan 12)</td>
<td>Leonid Roketskii (40/59)</td>
<td>Sergei Atroschenko (25/33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/52</td>
<td>Tula Oblast (Mar 23, 97)</td>
<td>Vasili Starodubtsev (62)</td>
<td>Viktor Sokolovskii (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34/38</td>
<td>Ulanovsk Oblast (Dec 22)</td>
<td>Yuriy Goriachev (43--plurality)</td>
<td>Aleksandr Kruglikov (3-4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31/52</td>
<td>Vladimir Oblast (Dec 8)</td>
<td>Nikolay Vinogradov (63)</td>
<td>Yuriy Vlasov (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29/44</td>
<td>Volgograd Oblast (Dec 22-29)</td>
<td>Nikolai Maksutov (28/51)</td>
<td>Ivan Shabanin (37/44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45/64</td>
<td>Volgoda Oblast (Oct 6)</td>
<td>Viacheslav Pozgalev (80)</td>
<td>Mikhail Surov (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23/37</td>
<td>Voronezh Oblast (Dec 8)</td>
<td>Ivan Shabanov (49--plurality)</td>
<td>Aleksandr Tsapin (41)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AUTONOMOUS OKRUGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(Autonomous OKrug)</th>
<th>Winner</th>
<th>Runner-Up</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Feb 23, 97)</td>
<td>Bair Zhamsuev (44%--plurality)</td>
<td>Iv. Dondokov (33)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Dec 22)</td>
<td>Aleksandr Nazarov (63--plurality)</td>
<td>Vladimir Yetvlin (23)</td>
<td>Repeat election after 10/96 election yielded no winner (both candidates under 50%). Incumbent B. Aishev, who won 49% in October, fired in early Feb 97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yeltsin %</td>
<td>Winner</td>
<td>Runner-Up</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun/Jul 96</td>
<td>(1st/2nd round vote percentage; incumbent in bold)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RF=35/54</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43/66 Eventki AO (Mar 23)</td>
<td>Aleksandr Bokovikov (51)</td>
<td>Anatolii Yakimov</td>
<td>Repeat election after 12/96 ballot annulled (Both candidates had won approx. 35% of the vote). Victor was head of okrug legislature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/49 Jewish Auton. Oblast (Oct 20)</td>
<td>Nikolai Volkov (72)</td>
<td>Sergei Leskov (17)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53/74 Khanty-Mansi AO (Oct 27)</td>
<td>Aleksandr Filipenko (72)</td>
<td>G. Korepanov (9)</td>
<td>Filipenko endorsed by both OKS and NPSR.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53/63 Komi-Permiak AO (Nov 17)</td>
<td>Nikolai Poluninov (70)</td>
<td>Anatolii Fedoseev (17)</td>
<td>Incumbent supported by OKS and local communists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46/70 Koriak AO (Nov 17)</td>
<td>Valentina Bronievich (46---plurality)</td>
<td>Sergei Leushkin (25)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43/62 Venets AO (Dec 13)</td>
<td>Vladimir Butov (22-49)</td>
<td>Vladimir Khabarov (43/39)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50/72 Taimyr AO (Dec 22)</td>
<td>Gennadii Nedelin (64)</td>
<td>G. Subbotkin (12)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37/49 Ust-Orda Buriat AO (Nov 17)</td>
<td>Valerii Maleev (37---plurality)</td>
<td>Aleksei Batagaev (26)</td>
<td>KPRF candidate finished third.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1: Gubernatorial and Presidential Voting (37 regions)

Yeltsin Vote Percent July 1996
Figure 2: Duma Party List Voting and Presidential Voting (37 Regions)
Figure 3: Duma Party Voting December 1995 and Gubernatorial Voting (37 regions)
Figure 4: Sociotropic Voting: Gubernatorial Vote and Rise in Poverty Rate (35 oblasts/krais)

1996 percent of pop below poverty level—increase from 1995
REFERENCES


Bagaev, Evgenii. and Denis Demkin. "Kto tut voznessisia glavou nepokornoi." (Who has Become the Chief Troublemaker Here?) *Kommersant (weekly)*, 8 July.


