

Chapter 4

Regional Changes and Changing Regional Relations with the Centre

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How have the regions changed politically since the early 1990s? What explains their different political evolutions? Despite the size and strength of the literature on Russia's regional politics, almost no research has incorporated both cross-sectional and temporal dimensions by contrasting the regions' political *trajectories* (exceptions include Aksenov, Zinov'ev and Pleshchenko 2005). Change over time has been examined, but either for a single region or for 'the regions' as a whole (particularly their relations to the federal Centre). To study trajectories is to employ cross-sectional comparisons but with each case indicating how a region has changed over time. Regions' economic, social and political trajectories since 1991 can reveal the processes that have produced change. They also may provide more insight into likely future developments than cross-sectional analyses alone.

In this chapter, we examine the regions' political trajectories from the early post-Soviet period on. In particular, we ask why some regions resisted the trend in the 2000s to close down the political arena while others became much more extremely authoritarian than the norm. In post-Soviet Russia, strong political control by regional authorities has frequently allowed them to deliver high levels of voting for the Kremlin's preferred candidate or party, along with high voter turnout to burnish the legitimacy of a victory. We have developed an indicator of each region's 'deference to the Kremlin' that captures extremely high levels of voting and turnout in each of the four federal election cycles from 1995-1996 through 2007-2008.¹ We use these measures to calculate the differences among the regions in how deferential they become from the first to the last cycle.

Our analyses show that delivering votes for the Kremlin begins during the mid-1990s, not during Vladimir Putin's presidency, although it becomes more widespread and extreme then. Regions showing the highest increase in obeisance to the Kremlin from the mid-1990s to the late-2000s are more likely to be in the Caucasus, to have a high proportion of ethnically non-Russian residents and to have experienced relatively better growth in per capita income. Regions bucking the trend toward extreme deference are more likely to be found in the northwest

¹ We refer to each pair of legislative and presidential races in close time proximity (several months) as a cycle. For example, the December 1995 legislative and June 1996 presidential races formed an extended period of judgment on the early transition years.

or central part of the Russian Federation and to have had higher socioeconomic development in the early 1990s. Moscow and St. Petersburg, the two cities that are also regions, stand out on both dimensions. While initial intra-regional political competitiveness has little impact on a region's trajectory, over-time change in competitiveness does correlate with higher deference to the Kremlin. In a multivariate analysis, the strongest factor by far is the proportion of the population that is non-Russian. To a high degree, the federal leadership's electoral dominance rests on vote totals provided by the republics and autonomous regions. Russia's 'power vertical' may be weaker than was apparent a few years ago, resting on deals that are difficult to maintain during lean economic times.

Suspicious Trends in Russian Elections

In the electoral sphere, regional results in federal elections have varied widely, over time and among the regions, and have had salient meaning for the regions. Nine federal elections have occurred since the Soviet Union ended: five to elect deputies to the federal legislature, the State Duma, and four to elect the federal president. Figure 4.1 illustrates regional distributions of voting for the in-power presidential candidate (Boris Yeltsin, Vladimir Putin or Dmitrii Medvedev) and for the 'party of power'² for all nine post-Soviet federal elections, as well as for the 1991 presidential election as a comparison. For the 1999 Duma race, we include the distribution for *two* parties that were contending as parties of power: Prime Minister Putin's Unity and the party bloc known as Fatherland/All-Russia (OVR in its Russian initials), led by former Prime Minister Yevgenii Primakov and several key regional governors.

Figure 4.1 illustrates the rise in regional voting totals. 1991 is distinguished from all subsequent elections by the size of the lower tail and the three low outliers. Note as well that the low outliers – the Altai Republic, Aginsk Buryat Autonomous Okrug and the Republic of Tyva – are all ethnic regions, the term we use for the 26 regions designated as a republic, autonomous okrug or autonomous oblast. Subsequent elections, however, are notable for their *high* outliers. (The single low outlier in 2000, Kemerovo Oblast, reflects the fact that that Kemerovo's governor, Aman Tuleev, was himself running for president.) Even OVR's performance in 1999, which compares poorly to Unity's, relies on extremely high returns from ten regions – topping out at Ingushetia's 88 per cent (5.8 standard deviations above the mean!). The median regional vote for OVR is 7.6 per cent, substantially

² A 'party of power' is the party that represents or is perceived to represent the federal executive (see, *inter alia*, Glebova 2004). The extent of executive-branch involvement with the party of power has varied. So, too, has whether the party leadership was based in the Kremlin (symbolising the offices of the presidency) or in the White House (symbolising the prime minister and the agencies comprising the government). Despite this variation, the appellation has held meaning for both voters and elites during electoral periods.

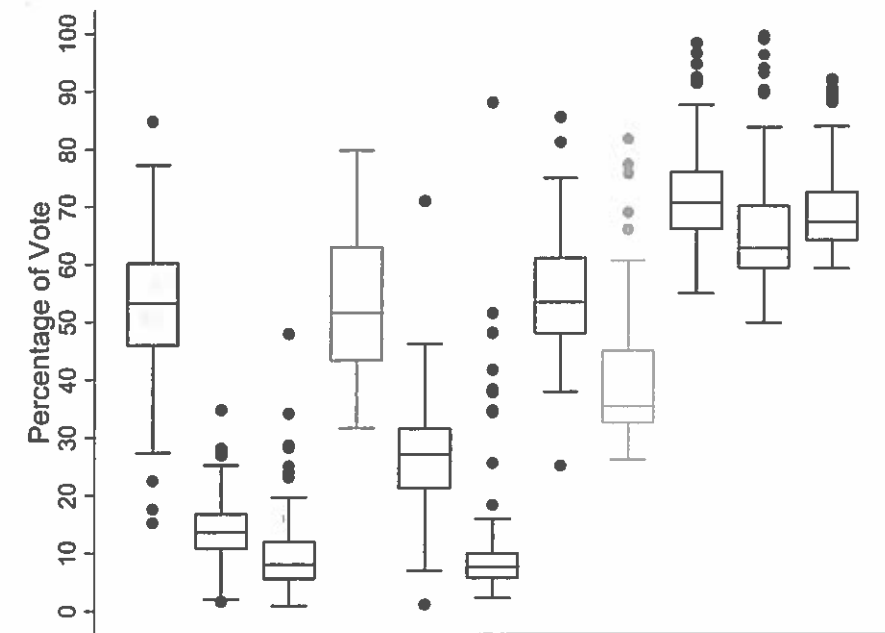


Figure 4.1 Regional voting for the in-power presidential candidate or the 'party of power'

Note: Box-and-whisker plots refer to (from left to right) 1991 Presidential, 1993 Duma, 1995 Duma, 1996 Presidential (Round 2), 1999 Duma (Unity), 1999 Duma (OVR), 2000 Presidential, 2003 Duma, 2004 Presidential, 2007 Duma, 2008 Presidential. The values of the regional vote at the 25th and 75th percentiles define the box, with the line through the middle indicating the median level. The lines above and below the box (the tails) show the 'adjacent values,' which are defined as the 75th percentile plus 1.5 times the distance between the 75th and 25th percentiles. The dots indicate cases that lie beyond the adjacent values. The means and standard deviations for each voting distribution and for the corresponding level of turnout are noted below the appropriate box.

Source: See appendix.

below its 13 per cent nationwide total. While the high outlying regions were led by governors who backed OVR, seven of the ten are also ethnic regions.

The 2003 Duma race, in which Putin's United Russia party receives a high enough vote total to gain primacy in the legislature, is particularly interesting. The low line marking the median within the box in Figure 4.1 illustrates that the party's median success in the regions (35.5 per cent) is lower than the party's 38 per cent nationwide total, which in turn is lower than the average regional score of 40 per cent. In other words, it demonstrates how a handful of high outlying regions provided United Russia the total votes to control the Duma. Equally

significant is that five regions, all ethnic, delivered two-thirds or more of their votes to United Russia: Dagestan, Tyva, Kabardino-Balkariya, Mordoviya and Chechnya. And, of those five, Tyva had been Unity's best performer in 1999 while Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria and Mordoviya had all been among OVR's best performers. (Chechnya did not vote in 1999.) In other words, whereas in 1999 regional leaderships 'delivered' high vote totals to different parties of power, in 2003 United Russia benefited from being the only game in town for regions intending to show strong support for the Kremlin.

A final trend evident in Figure 4.1 involves the jumps in vote totals and turnout levels from 2004 on. In these three elections, most regions delivered unprecedentedly high vote totals for Putin, United Russia, and Medvedev, with quite a few exceeding 90 per cent. Indeed, in 2004, *every single region's* vote for Putin exceeded the average that the winning candidate received in any previous presidential election. In 2007, although the number of parties on the ballot is still moderately high at 11, United Russia gains almost two-thirds of all votes cast, with the second-place Communist Party receiving below 12 per cent. Moreover, many regions far outstrip United Russia's quite high overall average, including six regions (all ethnic) that reported more than 90 per cent of their voters having selected United Russia: Tyva, Karachaevo-Cherkessiya, Mordoviya, Kabardino-Balkariya, Ingushetiya and Chechnya. Also, despite these elections' predictability, turnout is quite high in most regions.

Regional Trajectories in Deference to the Kremlin

As the preceding overview suggests, if regional vote totals and turnout levels in Russia were reflecting voter behaviour, then they have supported the Kremlin to a highly improbable extent. Even in earlier elections, some regions are notable for violating democratic rules governing electoral conduct. By the 2003-2004 cycle and 2007-2008 cycles, regions still differ but within much narrower bounds and around a much higher mean. When federal election data reach improbably high levels of support for the Kremlin (see Appendix), they should not be used to examine how Russians' political preferences vary by region. They may, though, prove valuable for tracking the strength and activities of the political organisations governing the regions. We deploy these results to estimate one type of regional leadership strength: the ability to deliver turnout levels and vote totals for a party or candidate that exceed what could reasonably occur absent elite pressure or falsified votes (for details, see Reisinger and Moraski 2009). Such strength is likely to be *organisational* strength, with cadres of state employees and others who support the leadership forming one or another sort of political 'machine' to achieve the reported results. We assume that highly improbable turnout and vote totals reflect not only the regional leadership's *capacity* to produce those results but also their *intent* to curry favour with federal executive authorities. When such high totals are absent, we cannot distinguish whether the leadership lacks capacity or intention, but most

regional leaders have wanted the Kremlin to see them in a favourable light, even before the Kremlin gained the power to fire them in 2005. And, when the elections in question are for federal offices, the regional leaders lose little by helping the Kremlin meet its goals. In the Russian geographer N.D. Kozlov's (2008: 9) words, 'the characteristic sign of the "manageability" of regional political regimes is the monopolisation of votes. The political stakes of regional leaders are directly expressed by election results. This sharply differentiates regions and allows one to distinguish groups with various levels of political loyalty'.

Our measure of 'deference to federal executive authority' or 'deference to the Kremlin', captures the degree to which regional organisations use tools at their disposal to produce election outcomes that are politically valuable to the Kremlin. Calculated for each election cycle, our measure is a logged, weighted sum of scores above a cut-off point for each cycle's vote for the party of power, vote for the president and turnout levels for the two races. Regions scoring zero on our measure were below the cut-off point on all four components. That is, their pro-Kremlin voting and turnout fell short of 'highly improbable' levels. Higher scores on our measure indicate component scores farther above the cut-off points. To capture regional trajectories in deference to the Kremlin, we calculated the slope of the line that best fits the scores from the first to the fourth cycle. The Appendix provides more details on the measure.

Explaining Different Trajectories in Deference to the Kremlin

We begin by looking for relationships between regional trajectories in deference and a variety of regional characteristics. Some describe variations in the regions' 'initial conditions'— their situations prior to 1992. Others capture how regions' circumstances and choices unfolded over the post-Soviet period. (For studies of post-Communist transition that incorporate both sets of factors, see de Melo et al. 2001, Popov 2001, Bunce 2003, Kitschelt 2003, Ahrend 2005, Pop-Eleches 2007). Table 4.1 shows the bivariate relations between our measure of the slope of change in deference to the Kremlin and both sets of characteristics. When a variable is continuous, we correlate it with the deference slopes; when it is dichotomous (that is, when a region belongs to a category or not), we provide the t-test of the hypothesis that the average slope of change in deference is the same for the regions belonging to the category as for those outside it.

We begin with regions' locations. Federal administrative district has limited impact. The Urals, Siberian and Far Eastern Districts have averages that are essentially identical with the national average. Regions in the Northwest District saw their deference grow at a slightly lower rate than the national average, while those in the Volga District grew at a slightly higher rate. More notable are the regions in the Central District, which saw growth rates substantially lower on average than regions elsewhere, and regions in the Southern District, which had sharply higher growth rates than elsewhere.

Table 4.1 Bivariate relations between slope of change in deference to the Kremlin and possible explanatory variables

| | Correlation Coefficient | T-test Score |
|--|-------------------------|--------------|
| Federal administrative district housing the region: | | |
| Northwestern District | | 1.80 (.076) |
| Central District | | 2.40 (.019) |
| Volga District | | -1.63 (.106) |
| Southern District | | -3.27 (.002) |
| Urals District | | .32 (.748) |
| Siberian District | | -.06 (.955) |
| Far Eastern District | | 33.00 (.744) |
| Longitude of the regional capital | .01 (.907) | |
| Latitude of the regional capital | .34 (.002) | |
| The region is partially or entirely in the Far north | | 1.73 (.087) |
| Moscow or St. Petersburg | | 2.62 (.010) |
| The region is an ethnic region | | -4.25 (.000) |
| The proportion of the region's population that is ethnically non-Russian | .48 (.000) | |
| Index of level of development in the early 1990s | -.25 (.025) | |
| Index of living quality in the early 1990s | -.10 (.389) | |
| Effective number of candidates, 1995 | .05 (.687) | |
| Per cent growth in per capita income, 1994-2007 | .25 (.024) | |
| Slope of change in foreign direct investment, 1995-2007 | -.24 (.029) | |
| Slope of change in foreign direct investment <i>without Moscow</i> , 1995-2007 | -.14 (.217) | |
| Slope of change in population above the poverty line, 1994-2007 | .14 (.225) | |
| Change in effective number of candidates, 1995-2007 | .23 (.035) | |

Notes: For both the correlations and t-tests, we provide the significance levels in parentheses even though our cases are not a sample and we are not inferring to a larger group. The levels provide a commonly understood way to assess the size of the statistic. When the sign of a t-test is negative, that indicates that the group in question has average scores *above* the mean for the remaining regions and vice-versa. Regions in the Far North are those identified by Bradshaw (1995, 196). An ethnic region is one that has the constitutional status of a republic, autonomous okrug or autonomous oblast.

A different way to capture regional location is to examine east-west and north-south placement, which we measure with the longitude and latitude, respectively, of the region's capital city. Some research has shown that regions in greater geographic proximity to Western Europe or having been influenced by Western culture to a greater extent in previous centuries evince distinct political characteristics (Lankina and Getachew 2006, Gel'man and Lankina 2008). Correlating growth in deference with capital-city longitude tests for such a pattern. As Table 4.1 shows, however, the two are entirely uncorrelated. Latitude, meanwhile, picks up the sharp climatic differences from north to south in Russia, which has led to quite distinct economies and residence patterns. That capital-city latitude correlates strongly and negatively with growth in deference to the Kremlin suggests that climate, possibly through its effects on economics or social conditions in the Far North, may be influential. On the other hand, the Southern District contains regions with above-average growth in deference, so the correlation with latitude may primarily reflect that the regions in the Southern District also have the smallest capital-city latitudes. It may be more useful, therefore, to ask whether regions in the 'Far North' (as defined by Bradshaw 1995: 196), with their distinct challenges are different in their political trajectories. The tendency for northern regions to have become deferential at a slower rate is supported by the t-statistic of 1.73, but it is a moderate distinction.

The two 'cities of federal status', Moscow and St. Petersburg, display unusual properties. Long before the collapse of Communism, Russia's 'two capitals' dominated Russia's educational, cultural, scientific, economic and governmental spheres. For these reasons, their populaces had, and are likely to continue to have, the most interactions with Western culture and Westerners. This is most strongly true of Moscow, which has also benefited disproportionately from post-Soviet social and economic trends. St. Petersburg is among the top regions in economic growth and other indicators but is less an outlier than Moscow. The t-test in Table 4.1 shows that these two 'regions' are indeed distinct, being significantly lower on growth in deference than the other 81 regions. Moscow's .003 growth rate places it two standard deviations below the mean, while St. Petersburg's score of .032 is over one and a half standard deviations below the mean.

Differences among regions based on their constitutional status are unlikely to be limited to the 'cities of federal status'. Since early in the 1990s, observers have noted that ethnic regions' leaders are better able to establish organised political dominance in their region and, with that organisation, control electoral outcomes (e.g., McFaul and Petrov 1997: 517, Afanas'ev 2000: 207-210, Stepan 2000). The t-test in Table 4.1 confirms this expectation, with growth in deference proving significantly higher among ethnic regions than non-ethnic ones. The strength of this relationship is worth emphasising since the opposite finding was theoretically plausible. Given President Putin's successful drive to remove regional powers, and particularly to reduce rights accorded to ethnic regions (Ivanov 2006, Busygina 2007), one might have expected some regional leaders to use the control mechanisms at their disposal to resist the centre's re-centralisation policies. The resulting antagonism, therefore, may have emerged as *less* deference to the centre

from these regions. If such a dynamic did take place in the republics and other ethnic regions, however, it was clearly a rare event.

Rather than merely differentiating among the regions by their constitutional status, we also show in Table 4.1 how the slope of deference correlates with the per cent of non-Russians in each region's populace. Per cent non-Russian, while strongly correlated with constitutional status (-.82 [.000]), provides an interval-level measure of what might underlie the impact of constitutional status. The strong positive correlation between per cent non-Russian and trajectory of deference to the Kremlin shows that, even within the set of ethnic regions, the more deferential have fewer Russians.

To investigate how regions' initial social and economic conditions relate to changing deference to the Kremlin, we constructed two indices, both using variables measured either in 1991 or the earliest post-Soviet year available.³ Our first index captures the regions' initial socioeconomic development by combining the regions' population in 1991, urban population percentage in 1991, roads density in 1990 (measured as km/1,000km²), the percentage of the population with higher education in 1989, and the regions' number of delegates to the 1981 CPSU Congress. The index has a sufficiently high reliability level with a Cronbach's alpha for standardised items of .835.

The rationale for including these variables in a development index is straightforward. A low population level in a region limits the potential workers in the regional economy; meanwhile, a region's economic condition can be gleaned from its percentage of urban residents and residents with higher education. The road density of a region serves as a useful proxy for comparing regional infrastructures, while the number of regional delegates to the 1981 CPSU Congress provides a sense of how the Soviet authorities themselves weighted the regions' relative importance in all-Union governance.

The second socio-economic index estimates the quality of life in the regions when the Soviet Union collapsed by combining life expectancy rates in 1990; infant mortality rates in 1991; and levels of violent crime in 1991. A higher life expectancy rate and lower infant mortality rate in a region indicate a stronger public health infrastructure in the broad sense. Violent crime levels, meanwhile, capture other quality-of-life conditions, such as social trust and feelings of alienation and anomie,

3 Most of the data for our variables come from official sources: *Regions of Russia* (Russian Federal State Statistics Service various years), the 1989 and 2002 censuses (Russian Federal State Statistics Service 2005) and *Crime and Law-Breaking* (Ministerstvo Vnutrennikh Del Rossiiskoi Federatsii and Ministerstvo Yustitsii Rossiiskoi Federatsii various years). Specific volumes and page numbers, as well as sources for other data, are available upon request from the authors. Analysts have several technical concerns about the Rosstat economic data, especially at the regional level (see, e.g., Van Selm 1998: 605-605, Solanko 2008: 288). Nonetheless, unlike data on the outcomes of either regional or federal elections, these data are widely used and considered free from manipulation by political authorities.

or how well regional and local authorities maintain the state's monopoly on violence (see Volkov 2002). The Cronbach's alpha for these variables standardised is .808.

Table 4.1 indicates that regions possessing lower initial development levels are the regions with steeper growths in deference during the post-Soviet period. Although the relationship between the living quality index and deference is also negative, it fails to attain standard significance levels. Still, our initial analysis suggests some support for modernisation (or democratic prerequisites) hypotheses in the democratisation literature.

Of course, not all initial conditions that might shape an ability or willingness to produce deferential elections results are geographic, social and economic. Political differences across the regions likely matter as well. A natural candidate for analysis is the level of competition for regional political office. Accordingly, we use regional election data for each region's top post – the regional chief executive – to measure the regional levels of political competition. Specifically, we calculated the effective number of candidates competing in the gubernatorial election preceding each election cycle.⁴ Regions with fewer effective candidates represent less competitive regions. We expect deference to correlate negatively with competition since instances where one politician dominates an election can also indicate instances where patron-client relations prevail, all else equal. Surprisingly, based on the bivariate analysis at least, regional competition levels in the mid-1990s are uncorrelated with our indicator of deference to the Kremlin during national elections.

The next three variables examined in Table 4.1 move the analysis from static, initial conditions to investigating the regions' changing economic and political characteristics. We examine changes in economic conditions across the regions because, although initial levels of economic development and living quality might set regions on a specific path for political development, economic *performance* also can impact the ability of regional leaders to show deference to the Kremlin.

If the trend in federal relations moved from decentralising in the 1990s to recentralising in the 2000s, the Russian economy, and therefore the economies of the regions to varying degrees, moved from steep decline in the 1990s to growth in the 2000s (until late 2008, when the international economic crisis hit Russia). However, the regions differed substantially in the extent to which they partook of the gains of the 2000s (Kwon and Spilimbergo 2009). From our perspective, strong economic performance over time is theoretically important because such success grants regional elites more economic capital to distribute and utilise when creating political machines and more political capital among a population that is commonly believed to be willing to trade political freedoms for economic

4 The effective number of candidates is the inverse of $\sum v_i^2$, where v_i is the fractional share of the i th candidate (Taagapera and Shugart 1989: 79). Data on gubernatorial election results come from the Central Election Commission's website (www.fci.ru) and the website of the Independent Institute of Elections (www.vibory.ru). More information on the calculation of this variable is available from the authors.

prosperity. By contrast, weak economic performance creates pressures from above and below to remove regional leaders.

Although data on gross regional product per capita would best capture the regional economies' relative performance and over-time change in performance, Rosstat changed the way it calculates this figure in the early 2000s (Solanko 2008: 288), making it inappropriate for studying change over time. We therefore use the alternative that is most commonly used by analysts (e.g., Ahrend 2005, Solanko 2008, Kwon and Spilimbergo 2009): real (inflation-adjusted) per capita monthly income in roubles. A second economic performance variable that we examine is changing foreign direct investment in the regions, measured in US dollars. Because some regions start at zero and a percentage-change measure would ignore substantial annual ups and downs, we use the slope of the line through each region's values from 1995 through 2007. Annual fluctuations also lead us to measure our third indicator of economic performance – change in each region's percentage of the population above the poverty line – with a line estimate.

The correlations between these economic performance variables and deference to the Kremlin reveal two interesting trends. First, regions that have performed better economically over time witnessed greater increases in deference to the Kremlin during national elections. Both changes in income growth and the percentage of the population above the poverty line are positively correlated with increases in deference, with the percentage of change in real income reaching standard expectations of significance (above the .05 level for a two-tailed test). Thus, at the regional level in Russia, better economic performance appears to have been translated into political capital spent in the national executive's favour. A critical question, of course, is whether this tendency holds when one controls for initial levels of development and living quality. In other words, do short-term economic gains undermine political competition in more developed regions, thus nullifying the comparative advantage for boosting political competition that modernisation theorists attribute to economic development? We address this question below.

The second, and somewhat more surprising finding is the significant and *negative* relationship between foreign direct investment and deference levels. More direct foreign investment makes regions less financially dependent on the Centre, which matters in cases where the Kremlin allocates federal money to encourage regional deference during national elections. However, the strength of this relationship – though not its direction – rests largely on the influence of one regional outlier: Moscow, which is over eight standard deviations above the mean. When Moscow is removed from the analysis, the relationship remains negative but no longer meets conventional expectations for significance.

Before moving on to a multivariate analysis, we also considered whether changing levels of political competition *within* each region correlate with changing regional deference in national elections. To measure the former, we calculated the slope of change from the first to the last cycle in the effective number of candidates competing in the relevant gubernatorial election. (We use the results of the regions' last gubernatorial elections to estimate regional competition levels for the 2007-

2008 election cycle). Some descriptive statistics of this variable deserve note. The mean slope of change in the effective number of gubernatorial candidates over time is 0.007, which suggests an increase, albeit slight, in competitiveness over time across the regions. While the standard deviation for the variable is 0.17, the regions at the endpoints are extreme outliers, located 2.80 standard deviations below and 2.95 standard deviations above the mean. Specifically, Mordoviya stands out as the region experiencing the steepest drop in political competitiveness, closely followed by Murmansk.⁵ Primorskii Krai, on the other hand, witnessed the largest rise. Table 4.1 shows that regions where the effective number of candidates declined over time demonstrated greater growth in deference levels.

How do these bivariate patterns hold up in a multivariate model? Table 4.2 presents two ordinary least squares regressions on the slope of change in deference to the Kremlin. The two equations differ only in that the second includes our longitudinal measure of political competitiveness for regional office. Since many institutional reforms in the Putin era sought to bring Russia's regions in line, political competition for regional office may be construed as another indicator of our dependent variable (i.e., more deferential regions are those where political competition for regional office is diminished). So we present regression equations with and without change in competition.

Among the variables in the model, regional deference during the 1995-96 election cycle is used to control for a ceiling effect: regions already demonstrating high levels of deference at the outset will, mathematically, have less room to become more deferential over time. Our discussion of Table 4.1 informs the other independent variables in the model. For example, given the bivariate results, we use the latitude of the regional capitals to capture geographic differences among the regions. Likewise, we opted to include the interval measure of ethnicity (the percentage of ethnic non-Russians) rather than the simple dichotomous variable (status as an ethnic region or not). Since Moscow and St. Petersburg are outliers on a number of our socioeconomic variables and because the t-test presented in Table 4.1 reveals that these two regions experienced significantly less growth in deference, we include a dummy variable to distinguish them from the other 81 regions.

To capture initial levels of political competition for regional office across the cases, we include the effective number of candidates competing to be regional executive. To assess whether regional levels of deference are path dependent and reflect the regions' post-Soviet starting points, we include both the development

5 In 1991, the Republic of Mordoviya elected its first regional president in a hotly contested election. With eight candidates competing, the vote shares of the top three vote getters were 18.9 per cent, 16.6 per cent, and 13.1 per cent (see McFaul and Petrov 1998: vol. 1, 596 and vol. 2, book 1, 215). While the post of republican president was subsequently eliminated in 1993 (Golosov 2004: 64), we use the number of effective candidates from the 1991 election as an indicator of the level of political competition in the region during the early 1990s (i.e., prior to the 1995-96 national election cycle).

Table 4.2 Regression of changing levels of regional deference to the Kremlin on cross-regional and longitudinal differences

| Variables | Equation 1 | | Equation 2 | |
|---|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| | Coefficient | T (signif.) | Coefficient | T (signif.) |
| Deference to the Kremlin, 1995/1996 cycle | -.049 | -3.21 (.002) | -.048 | -3.20 (.002) |
| Latitude of capital city | -.001 | -0.52 (.602) | -.001 | -1.11 (.271) |
| Moscow or St. Petersburg | -.033 | -0.52 (.606) | -.023 | -.38 (.706) |
| Non-Russian 1989 | .002 | 5.53 (.000) | .002 | 5.63 (.000) |
| Initial development index | .005 | 0.28 (.778) | .003 | .18 (.858) |
| Initial living quality index | .002 | 0.25 (.800) | -.001 | -.13 (.896) |
| Effective candidates, 1995 | .001 | .26 (.797) | -.005 | -1.04 (.302) |
| Change in real income | 6.75E-5 | 0.44 (.661) | -3.85E-5 | -.25 (.805) |
| Change in population above the poverty line | .010 | 1.78 (.081) | .006 | 1.06 (.293) |
| Change in foreign direct investment | -2.23E-9 | -0.10 (.924) | -5.80E-9 | -.26 (.799) |
| Effective candidates slope | — | — | -.094 | -2.28 (.026) |
| Constant | .122 | 1.93 (.059) | .184 | 2.74 (.008) |
| No. of observations: | 77 | | 77 | |
| Adjusted R ² | .418 | | .453 | |
| | | | | Beta |
| | | | | -0.356 |
| | | | | -.109 |
| | | | | -.061 |
| | | | | .545 |
| | | | | .035 |
| | | | | -.014 |
| | | | | -.115 |
| | | | | -.026 |
| | | | | .108 |
| | | | | -.039 |
| | | | | -.269 |

Note: Beta indicates the standardized coefficient.

index and the living quality index. Meanwhile, we utilise our three over-time measures of economic performance to determine whether economic changes explain deference to the Kremlin better than initial conditions.

As expected, regional deference in the first election cycle relates strongly and negatively with deference slope even when controlling for the other factors, since regions high in the first cycle have less room to increase over time. Yet, even though ethnic regions are the most deferential in the 1995-1996 cycle, regions with higher percentages of non-Russians also grew dramatically more deferential over time. Since conflicts over regional sovereignty dominated Centre-regional relations during the early to mid-1990s, while the Putin administration's reforms were explicit attempts to rein in regional power, the Kremlin's increasing ability to count on deferential election results from Russia's more non-Russian regions is, at least in a comparative perspective, counter-intuitive.

While the two previous results emerge in both equations, the two models differ from one another in important ways. Specifically, when change in political competition is excluded from the analysis (i.e., equation 1), the change in the percentage of the population above the poverty line proves substantively significant. As in the bivariate analysis, the relationship is positive: Regions where the percentage of residents above the poverty line increased over time also became more deferential to the Kremlin across Russia's national election cycles. However, when one controls for changing levels of political competition for regional office (i.e., equation 2), the strength of this relationship diminishes. Still, the multivariate analysis suggests that Russia's federal centre benefited from economic improvements in regions over time even when controlling for initial economic development and quality of life. Future research should explore to what extent less poverty stems from the Kremlin rewarding more deferential regions and to what extent an ability to reduce poverty enables regional leaders to produce deferential outcomes.

The results from equation 2 also reveal that, as anticipated, regions experiencing less competitive gubernatorial elections over time were significantly more likely to experience an upsurge in deference. Thus, the Kremlin clearly has benefited from reductions in regional political competition levels. Note as well that the percentage of non-Russians in the regions remains, by far and away, the most powerful independent variable. In other words, the political dynamics that make Russia's ethnic regions deferential to the Kremlin are independent of the relative levels of competitiveness in these regions or their competitiveness trajectories.

Discussion

Given the collapse of every other former socialist federal state along ethnic lines (see Bunce 1999, Hale 2005), the Kremlin's ability to develop increasing levels of electoral deference from what should have been its most troublesome regions deserves special attention. Our analysis suggests that while Russia's ethnic

population and ethnic regions may have begun as threats to state hegemony, they became integral components of the Kremlin's electoral strategy. To the extent that state power in Russia today depends on the Kremlin's ability to control the electoral arena, the politicians comprising Russia's executive branch must have found a way to balance their federal interests with the more localised interests of those governing the country's most ethnically non-Russian regions.

Although other commentators have observed the role that Russia's regions play in shaping national election outcomes, our analysis exposes how an increasing dependence on the country's ethnic regions has accompanied the Kremlin's growing electoral vote totals. It also suggests that this dependence began during the Yeltsin era and extended through the Putin era, which is particularly surprising given the latter's push for reforms designed to rein in the sovereignty of Russia's regions. The question that future research must answer is: how has the Kremlin continued to benefit from deferential election results in regions that, theoretically, should have been most opposed to its changes in centre-regional relations? One possible answer is that Putin-era reforms merely changed the formal rules governing centre-regional relations without changing the substance. In other words, Putin's Kremlin may have pursued only *de jure* federal control over Russia's ethnic regions, knowing that its electoral prospects would be less certain if it were to take *de facto* control away from the country's regional barons. Indeed, if regional leaders have utilised their administrative and organisational resources to produce results that will curry them the Kremlin's goodwill, then the Kremlin has an interest in preserving the structures of power that enable these regional barons the ability to produce favourable – at times, implausible – outcomes.

Our analysis implies, then, that genuine federal reform in Russia – reform that can loosen the grip of Russia's regional barons and make federal laws supreme – will require breaking the Kremlin's dependence on the ethnic regions' political machines. The Kremlin might accomplish this, for example, either by making Russia so authoritarian that elections become meaningless or by returning the country to some semblance of electoral democracy. The former allows those in the Kremlin the best chance at remaining at the country's helm but risks breeding ethnic insurrection. The latter would grant Russia's ethnic minorities an institutionalised voice in the reform process and provide the Kremlin with a popular mandate but also would produce the electoral uncertainty that the Kremlin has, so far, been unwilling to accept. As a result, it seems reasonable to expect the current bargain between the Kremlin and Russia's ethnic regions to persist and, while it does, to underpin Russia's electoral authoritarian regime.⁶

⁶ 'Electoral authoritarian regimes play the game of multiparty elections by holding regular elections for the chief executive and a national assembly. Yet they violate the liberal-democratic principles of freedom and fairness so profoundly and systematically as to render elections instruments of authoritarian rule' (Schedler 2006: 3).

Appendix

We treat each of the four electoral cycles as a unit containing four outcomes of interest: regional vote totals for the party of power in the proportional-representation portion of that cycle's Duma balloting, regional vote totals for the in-power presidential candidate and the regional levels of turnout for the same two races. We incorporate both vote totals and turnout because both have concerned the Kremlin. Our data on regional voting and turnout totals from the 1995-2008 federal elections come from McFaul and Petrov 1998, vol. 1, 408-411 and 422-428; Ortung 2000, *passim*; the Russian Federal Electoral Commission's website: <http://www.izbircom.ru/1911/xod/index.shtml>; and Golosov 2008. The Cronbach's alpha statistics for the four raw variables are .57 in the 1995/1996 cycle, .77 in the 1999/2000 cycle, .91 in the 2003/2004 cycle and .95 in the 2007/2008 cycle. These scores are high enough to satisfy us that all four component variables measure a single concept.

We establish cut-off points based on results in the Russian experience and from other countries, one for each of the four types of component variable. For voting for the party of power, the cut-off point is 50 per cent; for turnout in the legislative election, 70 per cent; for voting for the in-power presidential candidate, 65 per cent; and for turnout in the presidential race, 75 per cent. Levels above any of these cut-off points are extremely rare among electoral democracies worldwide. In Russia prior to the 2003/2004 cycle, these cut-offs are surpassed only by a few regions that were remarked on at the time as having had elite control exerted to shape the outcomes. Outcomes above each cut-off point increase the measure. First, the cut-off point minus one is subtracted from the percentage of the vote for the case in question with all scores below one converted to one.⁷ So, for example, in the 2003 Duma race, United Russia's score in St. Petersburg is 30.9. Subtracting 49 from it produces an initial score of -18.1, which is changed to 1. For Tyva in the same election, subtracting 49 from its vote percentage of 69 produces a score of 20, which is left as is. At this stage, then, the component variables range from +1 upward, with the highest score coming in the 2007 Duma elections when Chechnya's 99.5 per cent vote for United Russia gives it a transformed score of +50.5.

We then take these transformed component scores and create a weighted sum for each electoral cycle that gives more influence to voting for the president, since that outcome has had the highest stakes and drawn the most concern from the Kremlin. We multiplied the component scores for the Duma race, its turnout and the presidential turnout each by .2 and the component score for the presidential vote by .4 and summed the results. A region that is below the cut-off points on all four components in a cycle will have a weighted sum equal to one. Finally,

⁷ This mathematical procedure is necessary to make sure that no region has a raw score of zero at this point in the transformation since it would then be treated as a missing case when it is logged.

we take the natural log of each cycle score. Doing so creates distributions that more closely approximate normality and thus more appropriate for the regression analyses we conduct. This transformation preserves the regional ordering, and the extreme outliers remain so. All the regions whose cycle scores were one now have scores of zero, indicating that they were below the designated cut-off points on all four components of that cycle's measure.

To capture the extent and direction of each region's change in deference across the four election cycles, we employ the slope of the line through its values for each of the four cycles. Negative scores indicate that the trend from the first to the fourth cycle was downward; positive scores indicate a trend for higher (more deferential) scores.

With only one exception (the Nenetsk Autonomous District), all the regions increase their deference to federal authority over the four cycles. Yet the regions vary quite a bit in how strongly their scores increase across the four electoral cycles. The scores range from -.02 to .30, with an average of .13 and a standard deviation of .06. The distribution approximates normality well. 30 regions have a positive slope below .1, 40 are at or above .1 and below .2, and 12 have a slope of .2 or above.

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Chapter 5

The Transition to Managerial Patronage in Russia's Regions

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By the end of the 1990s Yeltsin's federal policy, based on concessions to particular regions and their leaders, had generated many dysfunctional effects, namely a limited ability of the federal centre to enforce its policy preferences, a rising sense of inequitable treatment, and, in some cases, spiralling demands from regional elites. One of Putin's priorities was to strengthen the federal centre and assure conformity between regional and federal laws. Dubbed the creation of a 'power vertical', the goal was to create a uniform system of executive power throughout the country, justified by reference to Article 77 of the 1993 Russian Constitution. Putin's reforms were not presented as altering the underlying federal nature of the Russian system, but rather as an improvement in its realisation.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine one particular aspect of the transition from Yeltsin's more decentralised federal policy to Putin's more centralised variant. During the 1990s there was a considerable degree of variation between regions in terms both of internal political relationships and relations with the federal Centre. One of the essential aspects of Putin's federal reform package involved measures to bring regional political machines into the orbit of federal policy by increasing the political dependence of regional executives on the President and his administration. Leaving aside conflicting normative assessments, the application of diverse strategies to realise this dependence across a wide range of regions is one of the most successful aspects of Putin's tenure as President of the Russian Federation.

By 2008, we argue, a relatively uniform template for regional-federal relations was emerging. An initial step in this process had been the termination of gubernatorial elections in 2004 and their replacement by a quasi-appointment process, which involves approval of a presidential nominee by the regional legislature. Evidence of the success of the strategy, in terms of creating the 'power vertical', has been the nearly uniform support provided by regional legislatures for the presidential choice as well as the gradual movement of governors into United Russia (Slider 2006), the dominant establishment political party, which has become a key vehicle of patronage politics in Russia. This chapter examines the process through which Putin achieved the goal of moving initially diverse regional political configurations to a more uniform type of arrangement, which continued to rely on a pattern of personal dependence characteristic of patronage politics, but