

## Political Strategies of Regional Governors

Under all regimes, an element of conflict exists between political leaders of the periphery and those at the center. But in Russia in the 1990s tensions seemed unusually great. An embattled President Yeltsin accused his local counterparts in 1992 of using “guerrilla tactics” against the central authorities. They, in turn, cast their relations with Moscow as a struggle for liberation and dignity. “Who are we?” Boris Nemtsov of Nizhny Novgorod demanded of his fellow regional leaders in September 1992. “Are we genuine governors, who answer for millions of people living in the region, or beggars who appeal to the government and beg for what we should have been given long ago?”<sup>1</sup>

Confrontation appeared to be the order of the day. As described in chapters 1 and 2, regional leaders employed a repertoire of obstructive measures. Some declared their provinces autonomous, sovereign, or even independent, refused to remit tax, claimed local natural resources, sued federal institutions in court, withheld grain supplies, or refused to send conscripts to serve in the army (Pashkov 1993). Others threatened to halt implementation of central reform programs such as privatization, to withhold support in national referenda, or to declare a local state of emergency if their demands were not met. Governors warned of hunger in their regions, mass bankruptcies, and civil unrest. Though the ethnic republics led the assault, they were soon followed and even rivaled by ordinary oblasts and krais. By 1993, regions from Sverdlovsk to Vologda were declaring themselves republics with all the rights of their ethnic counterparts (Smirnov and Kotelnikova 1993; Petrovsky 1993). One region, Krasnoyarsk, set up a customs post at its border (Fedorchenko 1994), and deputies from the Far Eastern island of Sakhalin threatened to appeal for help to Japan and other Asian countries if Moscow did not send aid (Reznik 1995). In turn, the center delivered ultimatums, threatened embargoes, and, in the case of Chechnya, invaded with brutal military force.

What kept these individual challenges from linking up into a nationwide rebellion? As argued in chapter 1, individual cases of defiance reduce the deterrent power of the center, drain it of resources for enforcement and for providing public goods, and can initiate spirals of “opting out” of increasingly expensive and ineffective central arrangements. Yet in Russia, the rush to regional defiance did not pass a certain point. Even as it became increasingly obvious

that the center rewarded challenges with fiscal concessions, some of the early protesters were in fact becoming relatively more moderate in their demands. A dynamic of calming competed with the dynamic of escalation.

In the hope of explaining this puzzle, the present chapter examines what determined whether a given regional leader challenged Yeltsin's authority or supported him at key moments of constitutional crisis. The appearance of continual conflict actually hid a more complex reality. Not all regions were equally assertive; in fact, there was remarkable variation in the degree to which the leaders of different provinces challenged the center. While some, like Chechnya's Dzhokhar Dudaev, pressed maximalist demands, others, like his neighbor, Dagestan's Magomed-Ali Magomedov, preserved a deliberate silence. Yet other leaders—Kalmykia's Kirsan Ilyumzhinov—slipped back and forth from the role of sovereignty-seeking, anti-Yeltsin gadfly to that of self-sacrificing champion of Russian national integrity, changing their tack by 180 degrees within a matter of weeks. Moreover, regional activism fluctuated in observable cycles. The assertiveness of both regions and the center waxed and waned, with the center often temporarily clawing back past concessions in moments of victory (for instance, after the August 1991 failed coup and the October 1993 storming of the parliament).

Though ethnic identity or nationalist sentiment might explain a part of this variation, such factors do not operate in any obvious way. Among both autonomous republics and ordinary oblasts and kraia, some regions marked themselves out as risk-seeking, confrontational practitioners of the politics of brinkmanship while others adopted docile postures, joining regional protests against the center only after all others had, if then. If ethnic identity were the key, one might have expected the eastern, Buddhist republic of Tyva—where 64 percent of inhabitants were Tyvans, 99 percent of these spoke Tyvan as their mother tongue, 60 percent of public school students studied in the Tyvan language, and where ethnic consciousness was catalyzed by violent clashes between Tyvans and Russians in 1990—to have led the pack of separatists. In fact, it was far less assertive than Komi, a Christianized republic, where fewer than a quarter of inhabitants were Komis, nearly one-third of these no longer spoke Komi as their mother tongue, and where all schooling in 1993 was in the Russian language (Treisman 1997). Among the ethnic republics, there was no relationship between the concentration of the titular nationality and the separatist activism of its leader. Indeed, the more *Russians* there were in a republic's population, the faster it declared sovereignty in the 1990 sovereignty drive (Treisman 1997).

Why did leaders of different regions within the same system, with similar levels of ethnic or geographical remoteness from the center, adopt such different strategies? Why did some leaders choose tactics of high-stakes blackmail, while others consistently supported President Yeltsin? What rendered one gov-

ernor a rebel, another an obedient follower? The statistical analyses presented in this chapter suggest an answer. While the leaders of ethnic republics were more likely to oppose Yeltsin than those of administratively lower units were, the leaders of all regions appeared to be sensitive to the trend in political opinion within their own electorate. Governors were less likely to challenge Yeltsin's authority at moments of crisis if the level of public support for Yeltsin and his reformist allies in their region, as judged by votes in national elections, had recently been rising. By contrast, where regional voters were deserting the president, the chance of the governor publicly defying Yeltsin at moments of crisis was considerably higher.

This finding has an additional significance when combined with the results of chapters 3 and 4. Chapter 4 found that the level of regional support for Yeltsin and the reformers was itself related to recent changes in the level of regional government spending (which was increased by larger central fiscal transfers) and by other central financial aid. Such transfers were, in turn, disproportionately channeled to regions that had earlier staged protests—declaring sovereignty, staging strikes, and voting against Yeltsin. Thus, the outline of a stabilizing feedback emerges: regions that protested were appeased with greater fiscal transfers from the center; this increased the level of regional spending; and this, in turn, both increased voter support for the central incumbents and, indirectly, reduced the incentive for the regional political elite to protest.

### **Governors and President: Support or Opposition?**

What might determine whether a regional governor would support or oppose the central government at crucial moments? Western scholarship on political action and center-periphery relations suggests several possibilities, some of which recall the theories of integration discussed in chapter 1. First, the *personal backgrounds* of regional politicians are likely to color their attitudes and influence the political positions they take. Officials may have been conditioned through past participation in political and social organizations, by past employment, and by their social circles (Rosenberg 1989). Leaders who have made a career in the party or state apparatus might be less eager to see the powers of the bureaucracy reduced through democratic and market reform and more likely to oppose President Yeltsin, the central advocate of such reforms. Similarly, regional leaders' political beliefs, values, and loyalties may be shaped by ethnic identities. Politicians of non-Russian ethnicity may be less likely to be swayed by Yeltsin's appeals for support in the name of Russian nationalism.

Second, regional leaders may select their strategies based on their current place in the system of *political institutions*, and the nature of their *political resources*. While national parties and state hierarchies are weak, they may play some role in shaping loyalties. In 1992–93, politics in Russia was in large part

structured by a competition between the executive and legislative branches. Parliamentarians at different levels of the state tended to view each other as allies with shared institutional interests, and executive branch officials tended to side with other executives. In such a context, one might expect executives who were *also* in the legislature to be somewhat less dependent on support from Yeltsin—and therefore less loyal to him. Thirty-one of the 89 heads of administration and republic presidents had been elected to the national Congress of People's Deputies in 1990. If institutional position was important in determining policy, such executives should be more likely to oppose Yeltsin than their counterparts.

Similarly, a regional governor's likelihood of challenging Yeltsin might be influenced by the *manner of his appointment*. All heads of administration were initially appointed by President Yeltsin, usually from a shortlist provided by the regional soviet. However, in many regions Yeltsin merely reappointed the former head of the regional soviet's executive committee, who had been elected to the regional legislature in 1990 and then chosen to be chairman by his fellow parliamentarians. Such politicians might be expected to be more confident about their local base of support—both among the regional electorate and elite. And in 22 regions, elections were held for chief executive between 1991 and 1993, reducing even more greatly the Russian president's leverage.

Regional elections may have another effect. Where regional politicians are subject to elections, their positions in national debates are likely to be influenced by the *views of voters* in their constituencies (Miller and Stokes 1963; Page and Shapiro 1983). Some may see their role as primarily to express the views and demands of those they represent and may expect to be rewarded or punished at the polls on the basis of how faithfully they perform this function. A regional electorate hostile to the president may produce a governor and parliamentary delegation hostile to him; a shift in constituency support to or from the president may induce a parallel shift among the region's politicians. In such a view, regional politicians will at times be constrained from instrumental protests against central policies if attitudes towards central incumbents among their constituents are too positive. Such attitudes may make it easier for the center to respond to such protests by removing the governor, since his constituents would be less likely to rally behind him.

Fifth, the positions taken by provincial leaders in national politics might depend on *characteristics of their region*. In those regions most dependent on central financial support to fund public services, leaders might be more cautious about antagonizing either the president or the central parliament, both of whom participate in the allocation of central transfers (see chap. 3). On the other hand, in provinces that fund public services largely or entirely through domestic tax revenue, leaders might be less cautious. Fiscally self-sufficient regions might be less restrained in their criticism of the center than those provinces that relied

on central transfers and were vulnerable to retaliatory cutbacks in central funding.

Finally, the *administrative status* of the region might affect both the governor's political resources in confronting the center and the preferences of the domestic political elite. Various authors have commented on the way nationalism was institutionalized territorially in the Soviet system through the creation of Union and autonomous republics (Brubaker 1994; Roeder 1991; Zaslavsky 1992a). Indigenous cadres were recruited and ethnic identities woven into the formal administrative architecture, as a way of coopting and defusing the threat of independent nationalist mobilization. The political elites in autonomous republics have experience of higher administrative authority, as well as a potentially mobilizable set of political resources, largely created by the center but which could be used against it. This might make the leaders of autonomous republics—regardless of their ethnicity—more likely than those of oblasts or krajs to oppose Yeltsin.

Two moments of defining clarity in Russian politics came in December 1992 and September 1993. At both of these times, all regional governors came under pressure to explain their position with regard to ongoing struggles in Moscow between the president and parliament. In December 1992, the Seventh Congress of People's Deputies met at the height of a season of escalating parliamentary attacks on the reformist government. On December 10, Yeltsin demanded the holding of a national referendum in which citizens would declare whether they had confidence in the president or the parliament. At the Congress, Yeltsin was forced to surrender his prime minister, Yegor Gaidar, replacing him with the centrist industrialist, Viktor Chernomyrdin. Almost all regional leaders around this time made statements in the press, offering different degrees of support for each side. While 39 chief executives publicly declared support for Yeltsin or his government, 40 did not. Of these, seven went on record as positively critical of Yeltsin or the government (information was not available about the remaining nine).<sup>2</sup>

The second moment came in September 1993 when Yeltsin declared a state of emergency, dissolved the Parliament, and announced that new elections would be held in December. A rump of parliamentary deputies continued to meet, barricaded inside the White House, by candlelight after the electricity was turned off. At this time, while most regional governors supported the national head of the executive or remained publicly silent, some came out publicly in support of the parliament. Sixty-three sided with Yeltsin or were ambiguous, while 15 overtly opposed him or sided with the Parliament (information was missing for the remaining ten).<sup>3</sup>

This latter crisis quickly broadened from a mere competition for power between central elites to entangle the question of federal stability. Some acts of regional opposition to Yeltsin took on a distinctly separatist tone. For instance,

parliamentary leaders from 15 Siberian regions met in Novosibirsk on September 30 at the invitation of the oblast's governor, Vitali Mukha. The assembled leaders threatened to create a Siberian republic, to withhold all taxes from Moscow, and to cut communications along the Trans-Siberian Railway if the president did not rescind his decree dissolving parliament (see chap. 2). Had the crisis not been resolved when it was, such disintegrative tendencies might have spread.

Both cases were of great importance for the development of the Russian political system. One brought to an end the faltering experiment with "shock therapy" and introduced a period of intense confrontation between president and parliament over the proposed referendum. The other led to the military storming of the parliament building and the arrest of its leaders. Thus, the positions taken by the regional leaders are important in their own right. However, they also provide a way to assess which characteristics of regional governors and their constituencies made them more or less likely to side with the president at moments of crisis. Thus, analysis of these cases provides evidence about the basis of integration or disintegration in relations between central and peripheral elites.

Dichotomous dummy variables were constructed based on the responses of regional governors in each of these two conflicts. In both cases, the variable took the value 1 if the regional head of executive (president or chair of Council of Ministers in the republics; head of administration in the oblasts and krais) publicly opposed President Yeltsin or his government, and zero if he publicly supported the president, made a neutral or unclear statement, said nothing, or if no information was available. Thus, it is a measure of quite active opposition to the president. These two dependent variables were regressed by logistic regression on a set of independent variables designed to reflect the hypotheses previously outlined (for sources and explanations of the variables, see appendix D). The results are shown in table 5.1. Column 1, in each case, lists the coefficient estimates from the full model when all variables are included. Column 2 contains the coefficient estimates for the variables that remain once all variables that do not increase the significance of the model's chi-square are excluded. The results identify who the "spoilers" were in center-region relations—what kinds of regional governors were more likely to side with President Yeltsin or remain neutral in a crisis and which were more likely to oppose him.<sup>4</sup>

One of the most intriguing results in table 5.1 is the picture it offers of electoral influences taking root in Russia. By September 1993, the evidence suggests that regional leaders were beginning to take note of local opinion and voting patterns, and to act accordingly. In regions where the vote for Yeltsin was higher in the April 1993 referendum than in the 1991 election, the governor was much less likely to oppose the president publicly during his showdown with the

TABLE 5.1. Which Regional Chief Executives Opposed Yeltsin at Moments of Constitutional Crisis? (Logistic regression coefficients. Dependent variable is: Regional executive opposition to Yeltsin in December 1992 and September 1993)

	Opposed Yeltsin December 1992		Opposed Yeltsin September 1993	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
<b>Regional Public Opinion</b>				
Vote for Yeltsin	.08	.07	-.07	
June 1991	(.06)	(.04)	(.05)	
Pro-Yeltsin vote <i>rose</i> June 1991–April 1993			-3.58*	-2.43*
			(1.56)	(1.16)
<b>Background of Governor</b>				
Former state or party official	1.29 (1.21)		1.97 (1.31)	
Russian nationality	1.34 (1.59)		5.22* (2.21)	4.07* (1.73)
<b>Governor's Institutional History</b>				
Elected to Russian legislature 1990	2.14 (1.16)	2.06* (.94)	2.57 (1.39)	2.70* (1.22)
Chairman of regional executive committee before Yeltsin appointed him	.27 (1.26)		-1.41 (1.39)	
Popularly elected regional chief executive	.87 (1.54)		3.54* (1.49)	3.17* (1.29)
<b>Region's Dependence on Central Subsidies</b>				
Central subventions as percentage of regional tax revenue, 1992	-.02 (.04)		.003 (.03)	
<b>Republic Status</b>				
	-.71 (1.63)		4.93* (1.95)	4.58** (1.59)
Constant	-9.86* (4.53)	-7.56** (2.74)	-5.42 (4.22)	-7.88** (2.61)
Model $\chi^2$	10.30 (Sig at .25)	7.72 (Sig at .03)	31.17 (Sig at .0003)	26.24 (Sig at .0001)
<i>N</i>	65	88	65	65

Note: standard errors in parentheses.

\* $p < .05$     \*\* $p < .01$

Supreme Soviet that fall. Indeed, the logistic regression estimates imply that the difference was huge. Where public support for Yeltsin had dropped, the regional leader was about 12 times more likely to voice criticism of him or throw in his lot with the besieged parliamentarians.<sup>5</sup> Electoral outcomes appear to have had

a very marked effect on strategies of the regional political elite.<sup>6</sup> This conclusion is supported by some evidence from regional leaders' own public statements. The leaders of Khanty-Mansiisky Autonomous Okrug, for instance, declining to join the higher level Tyumen Oblast soviet in open condemnation of Yeltsin's September decree, pointed out that "they could not ignore the fact that 84 percent of people in the okrug who had voted in the April referendum had expressed confidence in Yeltsin" (Teague 1993, 21). One recent survey of public opinion in four regions also concluded that in making demands for greater autonomy, regional elites "may, in fact, have been representing the views of the majority of their constituents" (Andrews and Stoner-Weiss 1995, 404).

Journalists and observers have often deplored authoritarian aspects of the Russian state and insensitivity of leaders to voters' opinions, and associated this with voters' sense of apathy and powerlessness. But, if these results are correct, they suggest that the ineffectiveness and internal conflicts of Russian government may not always reflect weak incentives to listen to the electorate and a shielding of the elite from genuine democratic pressures. They may result, rather, from the way electoral pressures at different levels create conflicts, or from the incentives toward populist, disconnected, and ineffective responses to contradictory voter demands.

More evidence for such a view is offered by another aspect of the results. Those regional leaders who had been popularly elected in their region, rather than appointed by Yeltsin, were significantly more likely to oppose him in September 1993. Indeed, a regional leader who was elected had odds more than 20 times higher than an appointed counterpart of publicly criticizing the president during the September crisis.<sup>7</sup> Regional elections seem to give local leaders courage to stand out vigorously against the authorities at the center.<sup>8</sup> According to the Federation Council chairman, Yegor Stroyev, himself the elected governor of Orel Oblast: "elected regional governors have more confidence and freedom in their actions and statements. An appointed representative, though, has to watch his every word" (Medvedev 1996).<sup>9</sup> Thus, local democratization appears to have influenced relations between central and regional political leaders in two significant ways. Electoral legitimacy reduced regional leaders' personal dependence on Moscow and left them freer to try to build local support coalitions through the politics of confrontation. At the same time, most regional leaders were visibly tailoring their stance in relations with the center to be consistent with the trend in local voting.

Leaders of republics were more likely to oppose the president in September 1993 than those of oblasts or krais—the estimates imply odds nearly 100 times higher.<sup>10</sup> And this result already controls for the level of and recent change in local support for Yeltsin. Even in a republic where the electorate was increasingly supportive of the president, the leader would be more likely to oppose him than the leader of a similar oblast. Oddly enough, regional leaders

who were Russian were much more likely to be spoilers than those of minority ethnicity. This may reflect a greater need of Russian heads of government in non-Russian republics to prove their local loyalty to their own voters. But it suggests that anticenter activism may have more to do with the opportunities created by republic status than with ethnicity per se.

Besides electoral interests and the opportunities associated with republic status, aspects of the leader's personal situation at times also influenced his strategy. Those previously employed in the state or party administration—the career apparatchiks—may have been somewhat more inclined to resist the president, but this is not significant. And having been the leader of the region's government under communist rule made no noticeable difference. But, exactly as one might expect, those governors who were themselves members of the national parliament were more likely than others to take its side against President Yeltsin during both the December 1992 and September 1993 crises. Institutional position thus did seem to affect political action: where governors stood was related to where they sat. When the institutions of government at the center are divided among themselves, integrating regional politicians into them through multiple officeholding risks merely extending the central split into the regions. Finally, there is no evidence either in December 1992 or September 1993 that regions more dependent on central subsidies were any less likely to oppose Yeltsin.

In brief, the strategies of regional leaders in dealing with the central government at moments of crisis seem to have been fundamentally shaped by their perception of the institutional context of center-region politics and their own place and interests within it. Elections appeared to have found an important place in the strategic calculus. They did so in two ways. First, those governors who were elected rather than appointed felt freer to criticize the president publicly—and governors who were also elected members of the central parliament were more likely to side with it against Yeltsin. In this sense, the extension of elections to regions acted as a catalyst for conflict. Yet, at the same time, *how* regional electorates voted could restrain the impetus for confrontation. Whether a governor was elected or appointed, he appeared to take stock of how his electorate voted in national elections. Where regional populations had soured on Yeltsin particularly fast, the governor was far less likely to defer to the head of state. But where the benefits of reform or higher regional spending had bought Yeltsin a more supportive electorate, the governor tended to remain loyal. These results suggest that those who associate a confrontational style of government with the lack of genuine electoral institutions in Russia may be mistaken; in fact, such problems seemed to result from *responsive* leaders in a structure that provided incentives for conflict between *different* elected institutions—the regional governments, presidency, and national parliament.

Another way to gauge variation in regional governors' strategies is to ex-

amine which chose to support President Yeltsin during the 1996 presidential election campaign. Information on this was compiled by Robert Ortung of the Open Media Research Institute from a variety of sources. According to this listing, while 77 regional leaders eventually supported Yeltsin's campaign, 12 did not. Table 5.2 shows the results when a dummy variable based on this listing is regressed on a range of plausible independent variables with logistic regression. Besides the governor's background and institutional position, regional public opinion, dependence on central aid, and republic status, a number of variables are included to measure particular aid to or campaigning in the region, on the assumption that governors favored by recent Yeltsin initiatives might prove more loyal at election time. Because of the sparse information available on some of the governors, including the personal background variables in the regression leads to a substantial drop in the number of valid cases. Regressions are therefore shown both with the background variables and without (when included, these were not at all significant). Data sources and variable descriptions are provided in appendix D.

As in the previous period, a recent relative increase in pro-reform voting seemed to increase the governor's propensity to support the Yeltsin campaign. This reflected recent changes rather than a traditional pro- or anti-Yeltsin orientation in the region. A control variable measuring the rate of support for Yeltsin in the April 1993 referendum was not significant. As in September 1993, republics were more likely than oblasts or kraia to oppose Yeltsin, suggesting their greater institutional independence. Interestingly, regions with which Yeltsin had signed a bilateral power-sharing agreement also generally had a more pro-Yeltsin governor, though a separate analysis would be necessary to determine whether pro-Yeltsin governors tended to receive agreements or whether those that received agreements subsequently became pro-Yeltsin. The size of this effect exceeded the republic status effect, such that the head of a republic that received a bilateral agreement would be more likely to support Yeltsin than the governor of an oblast without an agreement.

Again, these results suggest the influence of trends in regional voting on the governor's choice of political strategy and alliances. Where voting for pro-reform parties increased or stayed relatively stable between 1993 and 1995, the governor was more likely to support Yeltsin's campaign. The background of regional leaders—even whether they were elected or appointed—did not significantly influence their stance toward Yeltsin this time around. Republic leaders apparently had greater institutional resources or incentives than oblasts or kraia to play "hard to get." But those treated to a bilateral power-sharing agreement could in general be brought on board.

The implication of these results is surprising. To the extent that regional politicians in Russia are obstructionist, confrontational, and parochial this would seem to reflect less the prejudices or concerns of antidemocratic and in-

TABLE 5.2. Which Regional Chief Executives Supported Yeltsin During 1996 Presidential Election Campaign? (Logistic regression coefficients. Dependent variable is: Regional executive was pro-Yeltsin.)

	A		B	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
<b>Regional Public Opinion</b>				
Vote for Yeltsin	.07		.06	
April 1993	(.06)		(.04)	
Above average rise (below average fall) in vote for reform parties in 1993–95 parliamentary elections <sup>a</sup>	3.45**	1.73*	3.03***	2.33***
	(1.56)	(.94)	(1.14)	(.90)
<b>Background of Governor</b>				
Former state or party official	–10.05	–9.06		
	(72.43)	(50.64)		
Russian nationality	–.59			
	(1.56)			
<b>Governor's Institutional History</b>				
Popularly elected regional chief executive	–2.38		–.81	
	(1.62)		(1.02)	
<b>Region's Dependence on Central Subsidies</b>				
Central budget transfers as percentage of regional tax revenue, 1995	.46		1.00	
	(.87)		(.72)	
<b>Republic Status</b>				
	–1.33	–1.98**	–3.66**	–2.60***
	(1.76)	(1.00)	(1.52)	(.95)
<b>Presidential Aid and Campaigning</b>				
Yeltsin visited region in 1996	2.58		.60	
	(2.86)		(1.72)	
Bilateral power-sharing treaty signed	15.03	11.00	5.38***	3.35**
	(74.52)	(52.22)	(2.03)	(1.34)
Yeltsin decree or government resolution giving region aid in 1996 (Jan. 1–June 15)	–1.94		–1.13	
	(2.29)		(1.22)	
Constant	7.45	9.57	–2.48	.91
	(72.51)	(50.65)	(2.45)	(.58)
Model $\chi^2$	30.57	25.66	27.47	21.23
	(Sig at .0007)	(Sig at .0000)	(Sig at .0006)	(Sig at .0001)
N	64	67	77	77

Note: standard errors in parentheses. A regressions include governors' background variables, leading to a drop in the number of available cases by at least 10; B regressions exclude these two variable in order to increase the number of cases.

<sup>a</sup>Classification of parties from Clem and Craumer (1995b). Reform parties in 1993: Russia's Choice, Russian Movement for Democratic Reform (RDDR), Party of Russian Unity and Accord (PRES), Yabloko; Reform parties in 1995: Russia's Democratic Choice, RDDR, PRES, Yabloko, Our Home Is Russia, Worker's Self-Government, Pamfilova et al., Forward Russia, Common Cause, CD Union.

\* $p < .10$     \*\* $p < .05$     \*\*\* $p < .01$

sulated regional elites than the cues they are taking from regional voters. Confrontation was not caused by too little democracy but by the incentives embedded in the particular democratic institutions that had evolved in Russia's federal system.<sup>11</sup>

## Conclusion

While what struck most observers about intergovernmental politics in Russia in the early 1990s was the open confrontation, protest, and threats, in fact the degree and types of conflict between Moscow and the regions were highly varied. Not all governors responded to the apparent fiscal incentives for disruptive action. Of course, in any interaction with the center there is a danger that its strategy will change from one of offering carrots to using sticks—in the Russian expression, from the “spice cake” to the “whip.” But clearly some factors must account for the regions' different evaluations of this danger, their different degree of risk aversion, and their different sense of vulnerability to potential central pressure.

The analysis in this chapter suggested several answers. Some of the constraints on centrifugal activism appear to have been linked to the ways in which specific regional leaders were institutionally integrated into national politics. A governor who was a member of the national parliament would take its side against the president more often than one who was not; but a region's parliamentary delegation that contained the region's governor would take the president's side more frequently (see appendix D). In part, regional elections, at least in off years in between national elections, seemed to give regional politicians greater confidence in opposing the center. Those who had local electoral legitimacy were less manageable than those who owed their position to central appointment.

Yet, at the same time, one of the *constraints* on regional leaders' strategies appeared itself to issue from the new logic of electoral politics. Regional leaders responded to recent voting by their constituents. Where the regional electorate was growing more favorable toward the president—or at least turning against him more slowly—the governor was more likely to support him in political struggles. While electoral institutions can create conflicts when voters express themselves inconsistently at the national and local levels, they could also constrain instrumental transfer-seeking confrontations by rendering regional leaders' threats less credible or by making them fear for their local political positions. Greater fiscal vulnerability may have played some role, but the results were not clear.<sup>12</sup>

These constraints appear to have been less binding on the leaders of Russia's autonomous republics. This chapter found evidence that higher past administrative status provided regions with resources for anticenter mobilization.

The evidence suggests, however, that the *motivation* for such mobilization was not, as one might assume, primarily rooted in primordial nationalist identities, cultural division, or ethnic conflict. Such mobilization looked far more like a rationally calculated means by which often ethnically Russian regional leaders applied pressure in the tense game of bargaining and threats that characterized Russia's politics.

The apparent responsiveness of regional leaders to their constituents' voting patterns acquires particular significance when linked to the results of the previous chapters. Chapter 3 showed that the central state in Russia in the early 1990s practiced a policy of fiscal appeasement, rewarding with greater net transfers those provinces that posed a threat to stability by their anti-Yeltsin voting or by their leaders' mobilization of discontent. Chapter 4 suggested that, when the beneficiaries of greater net transfers spent them in their region—as was generally the case—this, in turn, led to higher local votes of support for Yeltsin and the central incumbents. With the results of this chapter, the feedback is complete. By increasing the regional vote for Yeltsin, the center with its policy of targeted fiscal redistribution seemed able sharply to reduce the chances that that region's leader would publicly criticize Yeltsin and side with his opposition—even though such a strategy of confrontation might elicit additional financial concessions from Moscow.<sup>13</sup>

This logic is evident in the contrasting political history of several regions. The republic of Kabardino-Balkaria, in the North Caucasus mountains, shows one trajectory (see table 5.3). While Yeltsin started out here popular, with 64 percent of the vote in 1991, his rating dropped precipitously as conditions in the republic deteriorated. In 1992–93, the proportion of enterprises making a loss shot up from 6 to 22 percent, a rise 50 percent higher than the average. A small positive net transfer from the center in 1992 (2,700 rubles per capita) was not enough to prevent a sharp drop in real regional spending—by nearly 60 percent, compared to an average regional drop of 44 percent. By the April referendum, Yeltsin's support had slipped 28 percentage points. The republic's elected president, Valery Kokov, also took the risk of openly opposing Yeltsin during the September crisis, accusing the president of trying to “provoke a crisis of dual power” and equivocating when asked whether he would obey the orders of Yeltsin or of the vice president and rebel leader, Alexander Rutskoi (Teague 1993, 17).

Then, however, came the center's attempt at appeasement. Moscow reached into its pockets. In 1994, real direct transfers to the region grew by 124,000 rubles per capita, nearly six times the average increase, and the region was permitted to retain an additional 13 percent of the tax revenue it collected. While real spending in the average region dropped 116,000 rubles (10 percent), it *rose* in Kabardino-Balkaria by 34,000 (7 percent). A bilateral power-sharing agreement was signed with the republic that same year, and it was given the sta-

TABLE 5.3. Aid, Voting, and Governors' Strategies in Three Russian Regions

Region	1991 Yeltsin Vote (%)	Net Transfers 1992 (t.R.pc)	Real Spending Change 1991–92 (%)	Change in Yeltsin Vote 1991– Apr. 1993 (%)	Governor Opposed Yeltsin Sept. 93	Change in Real Transfers 93–94 (t.R.pc)	Change in Reg. Tax Share 93–94 (%)	Real Spending Change 93–94 (%)	OHIR Vote 95–RC Vote 93 (%)	Aid Decree 96	Change in Yeltsin Vote 1993–96
Kabardino- Balkaria	63.9	+2.7	-57	-28.1	YES	+123.8	+12.7	+7	+18.4	YES	+27.8
Yaroslavl	54.8	-18.1	-.02	+14.0	NO	+16.0	-3.6	-22	-13.6	YES	-8.3
Sakha	44.9	+7.5	-26	+23.2	NO	+20.8	+0.2	+19	+0.4	YES	-3.5
Average	52.3	-3.1	-44	+4.2		+21.9	+3.7	-10	-5.2		-3.9

Source: see appendixes to chapters 3, 4, and 5.

tus of a free economic zone. Votes followed the money. In December 1995, in the average region Chernomyrdin's Our Home Is Russia polled 5.2 percentage points below the total for its 1993 predecessor as the "party of power," Russia's Choice. But in Kabardino-Balkaria, OHIR's vote was 18 percentage points higher than its predecessor. Kokov, who had opposed Yeltsin in 1993, now became his political ally, endorsing his presidential election campaign. On April 3, 1996, the federal government signed a decree providing assistance to the republic. By the July election, Yeltsin's vote had rebounded upward, regaining the 28 percentage points it had dropped in 1993.

An opposite trajectory can be seen in the central Russian oblast of Yaroslavl. There, voters had started out in 1991 relatively unimpressed with Yeltsin, giving him about 55 percent, less than his nationwide total (though slightly more than the unweighted average across regions). Despite paying more in tax to Moscow than it received in transfers, the oblast was nevertheless allowed to keep sufficient revenues to be able to shield itself from the 1992 spending cuts and keep real regional budget spending more or less constant—at a time when in the average region it fell by 44 percent. While in its neighbors, large wage arrears backed up, in Yaroslavl, wages were paid on time. In 1992, the oblast had the lowest wage arrears of any region in Russia. This relatively enviable performance was followed by a jump in Yeltsin's support in April 1993 by more than three times that in the average region. And the governor did not challenge Yeltsin during the crisis later that year.

Quiescence, however, was not rewarded. Real federal transfers increased only about 16 percent in 1994, compared to a 22 percent rise in the average region. And while the average region got to keep about 3.7 percentage points more of its total tax revenue that year, Yaroslavl was required to give up an additional 3.6 percentage points. That year the region, along with neighboring Tverskaya Oblast, had the dubious distinction of paying a higher proportion of its tax revenue to Moscow than any other. In the face of this, the region could not maintain its spending levels, and real regional expenditures dropped more than twice the national average.<sup>14</sup> Voters responded in kind. OHIR in 1995 polled more than 13 percentage points lower than Russia's Choice had two years earlier—compared to a difference of 5 percentage points in the average region. While the administration signed a decree in aid of the region in 1996 and its governor, a Yeltsin appointee, publicly supported the president's reelection campaign, this only slowed the flow of deserting voters. Yeltsin's total in July was more than 8 percentage points lower than the level of regional support for him in April 1993.

The most effective regional strategy, where it could be sustained, combined credible challenges with a readiness to negotiate. In some of the richer ethnic republics, presidents managed to keep up the pressure and the implicit threat despite a voting trend toward support for Yeltsin. A good example is the

diamond-rich, remote, eastern republic of Sakha. The republic's population started out in 1991 with an unusually low vote for Yeltsin—45 percent—and a particularly high rate of support for the main Communist contender, Nikolai Ryzhkov. The next year, however, Sakha managed to get away with paying only about 1 percent of total tax revenues to Moscow. This huge reduction in remittances helped to cushion the region from the shocks of liberalization. While spending in the average region dropped 44 percent in real terms in 1992, in Sakha it fell only 26 percent. Apparently rewarding Yeltsin for his connivance at the republic's tax withholding, voters boosted their level of support for him by 23 percentage points in the April 1993 referendum. And, unlike some of his colleagues, the republic's president, Mikhail Nikolaev, took Yeltsin's side in the dispute with the parliament later that year.

Despite the surge in support for Yeltsin, Sakha's political elite was able to continue dramatizing a threat to central control. While Nikolaev, negotiating with Moscow, could cast himself as reasonable and open to compromise, his hand was strengthened by an assertive republic legislature. Sakha's Supreme Soviet in 1993 adopted its own laws on mineral resources and on citizenship, which were believed by many to violate the Russian Constitution. It considered a law on declaring economic states of emergency under which Sakha could suspend shipments of diamonds and precious metals to Moscow, or even stop the independent sale of these (Kempton 1996, 597). At the same time, Nikolaev could also point to pressures from the nationalist organization Sakha Omuk (Khazanov 1995, 182–83).

Against this drumbeat, Moscow continued to compromise. The republic's ability to increase its share of retained tax revenue was limited by mathematics—it was already in 1993 retaining 99.83 percent. But the center did enter into negotiations to regularize this arrangement. A bilateral power-sharing agreement was signed in June 1995, along with a secret decree that raised the republic's gold mining quota from 12 to 15 percent and its quota for gem-quality diamonds from 20 to 25 percent. According to the newspaper *Segodnya*, this would give Sakha an additional \$50 million in 1995.<sup>15</sup> Meanwhile, in 1994, real regional budget spending still managed to grow by 19 percent, at a time when it was falling in most regions. In addition, on the eve of the parliamentary election in November 1995, Chernomyrdin signed a generous decree promising the republic aid for its socioeconomic development and money to finance road building and a hydroelectric plant.<sup>16</sup> OHIR's vote that December was actually higher than that of Russia's Choice two years before—a feat the bloc achieved in only 11 of the country's regions. In the second round of the next year's presidential election, Yeltsin's level of support, already high in April 1993, fell less than the average drop.<sup>17</sup>

In brief, the way regions voted and the way regional leaders chose their strategies was related to the center's fiscal policy and the way regional spend-

ing levels changed during the period of painful adjustment. Crises could, at times, be alleviated by fiscal concessions, and regional leaders could be brought on board the president's electoral alliance. By contrast, fiscal neglect of regions often led to growing discontent with central incumbents. While various other factors also shaped the patterns of voting and regional assertiveness, central politicians were not resourceless in the face of these developments. The particular central redistributive strategy adopted, while balancing on the edge of fiscal solvency, appears to have stabilized the nationwide dynamic of regional crises.