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# Ancient Bonds, Contemporary Powers: Investigating the Causes of Center/Periphery Conflict in the Russian Federation

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# Ancient Bonds, Contemporary Powers: Investigating the Causes of Center/Periphery Conflict in the Russian Federation

## **Abstract**

What are the real causes of conflict between the federal regions and central authority in the Russian Federation? Why is it that some regions are compelled to act assertively towards Moscow, while others are not? These questions are relevant for any actor concerned with Russian affairs; moreover, they represent a critical debate for those who hope to bring aid to Russia's struggling regional populations. This research furthers the debate through a test of the two major schools of ethno-federal thought: primordialism and bargaining theory. The study (1) identifies relevant variables, (2) constructs indices to represent each of the theories, and (3) tests those indices for correlation with regional aggression. This research shows that characteristics suggested by both primordialism and bargaining theory exert influence on regional aggression; however, it also finds that bargaining theory more accurately explains the behavior of Russian regions. In the end, this study concludes that ethnic differences, per se, do not lead to center/periphery conflict in the Russian Federation.

## **Keywords**

Russia

# ANCIENT BONDS, CONTEMPORARY POWERS: INVESTIGATING THE CAUSES OF CENTER/PERIPHERY CONFLICT IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Brett A. Strand

*What are the real causes of conflict between the federal regions and central authority in the Russian Federation? Why is it that some regions are compelled to act assertively towards Moscow, while others are not? These questions are relevant for any actor concerned with Russian affairs; moreover, they represent a critical debate for those who hope to bring aid to Russia's struggling regional populations. This research furthers the debate through a test of the two major schools of ethno-federal thought: primordialism and bargaining theory. The study (1) identifies relevant variables, (2) constructs indices to represent each of the theories, and (3) tests those indices for correlation with regional aggression. This research shows that characteristics suggested by both primordialism and bargaining theory exert influence on regional aggression; however, it also finds that bargaining theory more accurately explains the behavior of Russian regions. In the end, this study concludes that ethnic differences, per se, do not lead to center/periphery conflict in the Russian Federation.*

## FEDERALISM: THE SOURCE OF RUSSIA'S PROBLEMS?

It is widely believed that the main threat to Russia's long-term stability is the increasingly autocratic behavior demonstrated by its central authority. However, any characterization of the Russian state as a political body experiencing unchallenged pressure from the center is a gross oversimplification. Differences in status and behavior have created a patchwork of diverse regions, each taking a unique stance towards Moscow. Within this ambiguous power structure, relations between the regions and central authority have varied widely. Several regions have felt justified in acting aggressively towards the center and have thereby increased their power on both the regional and national levels; conversely, a large number of regions have opted for more cordial relations with Moscow.

Plainly stated, Russia is a highly dysfunctional federation and, as such, it should be seen as a group of unique (and often irrational) actors rather than as a monolithic political unit. The resulting instability prevents international actors from being able to reliably judge the long-term potential of any individual federal unit. Therefore, a frustrating dilemma exists for any organization seeking to become active in Russian affairs: *while it is necessary to confirm regional stability before becoming active in the Russian Federation, there currently exists no reliable method by which to assess the behavior of its federal units.*

This study bases itself upon the premise that any assessment of regional stability should begin with an analysis of center-periphery relations. More specifically, it posits that interested parties ought to investigate a region's potential for aggressive behavior. Such an investigation will (1) assess the likelihood that a specific region will offend Moscow and face the inevitable repercussions and (2) analyze the potential for such conflicts to accumulate and lead to the unraveling of the Russian Federation, as they did in the USSR.

What causes certain federal regions to behave aggressively in their relations with Moscow, while others remain amicable and agreeable to the center's wishes? Why do some ethnically based regions feel compelled to strike out against the central authority? Why do others opt for more congenial relations with the center? And do the current political dysfunctions threaten to cause a collapse of the Russian Federation, much like the one that consumed the Soviet Union? By considering the predominate theories regarding ethno-federal relations and testing the viability of each school as a predictor of regional aggression, this study will attempt to clarify the rules by which Russian region's behave and to which all interested parties must therefore adhere.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF ETHNICITY & THE RUSSIAN STATE

The Historical Context. For over a millennium, Russian rulers promoted the political strength of the state over the ethnic value of its people. In doing so, they created a nation that differs sharply from most other Western states. Modern states most often organized around a specific ethnic identity; Russia, in contrast, gathered hundreds of different ethnic groups under a single authority. In order to complete this task, the Russian government repeatedly adjusted its policy towards minority cultures. Moreover, leaders occasionally redefined and manipulated the concept of ethnicity in order to meet the goals of the state. The long-term effects of these actions continue to be felt.

For the majority of the second millennium, Russia existed as an imperial state. As such, its borders expanded and contracted quite frequently; it was constantly overtaking and abandoning regional ethnic groups. In order to preserve this ever-changing body, identity was defined as a function of the state rather than of regional culture. Ethnic groups residing within the borders of imperial Russia were asked—or, more often, forced—to assume a common language and religion as

the state created a territorial empire spanning a huge landmass and populated by a diverse array of European and Asian peoples, who differed profoundly among themselves in religion, way of life, and relationship to Russian authority (Remington).

In this complicated situation, the suppression of ethnicity existed alongside the manipulation of identity. Hence, ethnic groups were asked to identify themselves as citizens of the Russian Empire and nothing more.

In 1917, the Russian Revolution and the coming of Soviet rule led to a sea change in relations between ethnic groups and the state. Whereas previous Russian governments had promoted a purely Russian identity over all others, the Soviet Empire was prevented from doing so, due to the simple fact that it was comprised of multiple national republics. Therefore, the Soviet government chose to actively employ its ethnic diversity as a tool for controlling its citizenry. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, entire communities were invented for political purposes, cultural groups were granted superficial autonomy, and ethnicities were erased from the record books (See Figure 1.1). In the most tragic cases, attempts were made to exterminate entire populations, as with the Ukrainians during the *Holodomor*<sup>28</sup>. Thereby, the Soviet period both

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<sup>28</sup> A deliberate, Soviet-created famine that nearly wiped out the USSR's Ukrainian population in 1932 and 1933.

inflamed and confused ethnic identity. In addition, it caused inhabitants of the Russian region to view central authority as an outside force, to which they were always beholden but never loyal.

As the Russian Communist state collapsed at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, ethnic identity once again emerged as an urgent issue. For most ethnic groups, the past millennium had been an

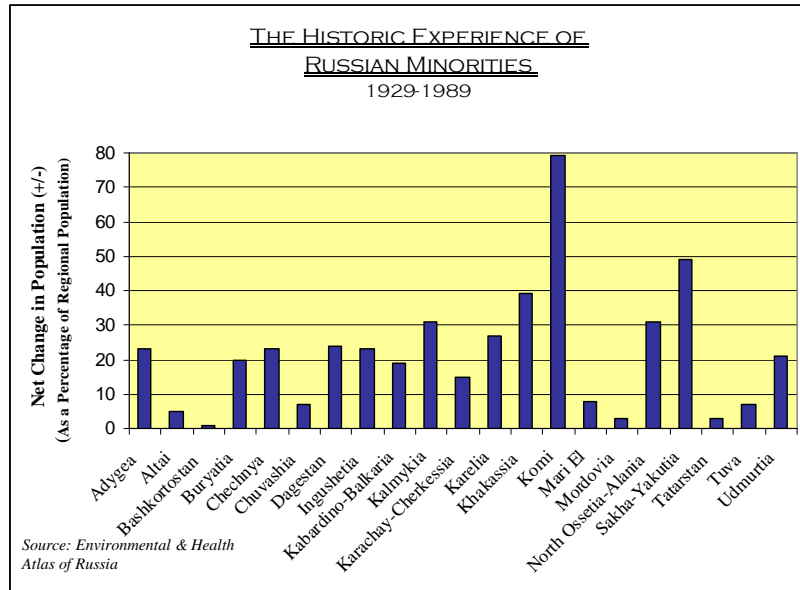


Figure 1.1

elongated cultural trial. The process of constant ethnic manipulation had created an environment in which self-identity was confusing at best and dangerous at worst. Post-Soviet leaders were charged with the difficult task of assessing this confusing situation and utilizing it as a means of organization. In the end, leaders designed a federal state consisting of 88 units, each belonging to one of several categories of autonomy and composition (see Table 1.1). Of the 88 federal units, 31 exist as ethnic regions with a specific titular nationality<sup>29</sup>.

<b>Categories of Federal Units</b> (From most to least autonomous)		
Type	Ethnically Based?	Number
Republic	Yes	21
Oblast	No	48
Krai	No	7
Autonomous Oblast	Yes	1
Autonomous Okrug	Yes	9
Federal City	No	2

Table 1.1

History's Continuing Relevance. In the decade and a half since its creation, the world has witnessed the maturation of the Federation as regions have worked alongside Moscow in developing the larger Russian sphere. The regions have diverged in identity and behavior, leading to the conclusion that *modern Russia is first and foremost a federation.*

This federal structure has had two concrete effects on the nature of the Russian state.

First, the Russian Federation is home to a large collection of independent political bodies. For members of the business and political spheres, this means that one cannot merely consider a commitment to Russia but to Tatarstan, Udmurtia, Komi or Chechnya as well. A clear example

<sup>29</sup> A political map representing Russia's federal structure can be found in Appendix A.

of the unique political situations found throughout Russia is the region of Kalmykia. Since its first national elections in 1993, the region has been under the rule of President Kirsan Ilyumzhinov. Mr. Ilyumzhinov has compiled a list of actions that range from the irresponsible to the bizarre: he has abolished the parliament, altered the constitution, threatened to turn the region into an independent tax haven, and single-handedly orchestrated the construction of *Chess City* (a 50-million dollar recreation complex on the outskirts of the capital city). President Ilyumzhinov's behavior, coupled with Moscow's inability and apparent unwillingness to interfere with his actions, clearly demonstrate the bizarre and troublesome nature of regional politics in Russia.

A second and far more pressing concern, however, is the humanitarian cost that federally based regional conflict often extols. Statistics regarding regional conflict in Chechnya alone are staggering: 500,000 civilian refugees, symptoms of physical or emotional distress among 86% of the population, 25,000 troop deaths, and perhaps 250,000 total casualties. Sadly, modern Russia plays witness to similar violent conflicts with unacceptable frequency and often manages these situations without international scrutiny. No explanation or rationalization is necessary to prove the urgency of these cases—plainly stated, *men, women, and children are dying due to the conflict that often consumes Russia's regions*. Federal relations play a central role in fueling these tragic events. Therefore, a thorough understanding of regional aggression is an urgent necessity.

## RUSSIA AS AN ETHNO-FEDERAL RESEARCH PROJECT

### **The Study of Ethnic Federalism and the Russian State**

Ethno-federal studies. Previous scholarship regarding ethnic federations can be divided into two subtly different areas of emphasis. The first vein includes those studies that primarily address minorities (Saideman 1997; Wright, Jr., 1991; Brancati 2006; Hale, 2004). The second includes research that is more focused on federations (Coakley 1992; Ellingsen 2000). Both of these schools rely heavily on the groundbreaking research of William Riker<sup>30</sup> and have built upon both his and other studies in order to analyze the complex relationship between governance and ethnicity.

Study of the Russian Federation. A large number of area studies have been conducted regarding Russia and its behavior as an ethnic federation. Russia's unique post-Communist situation has offered scholars a chance to analyze the behavior of ethnic groups, both in the

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<sup>30</sup> Federalism: Origin, Operation, Significance, 1964.

current Federation (Bahry et al. 2005; Zassorin 2000) and in conjunction with its Soviet history (Hanson 1998; Tishkov 1999). These studies have confirmed the more general conclusions of ethnic research by showing that ethnicity still matters in modern Russia.

The emergence of the Russian Federation has also provided scholars with an opportunity to observe and critique the way in which a developing federal state matures and behaves (Gibson 2001; Herd 1999; Lynn et al. 1997). Specifically, many studies have analyzed the negotiation of Russia's unique regional constitutions (Filippov et al. 1998; Stoner-Weiss 1999; Chebankova 2005). Researchers have also documented national development in order to compare the nature of Russia's federation with that of its communist predecessor (Alexseev 2001; Drobizheva 2005; Hale 2000). Lastly, there exists a group of scholars who have chosen to focus their research squarely on Russian regions. Their studies assess the region's role and behavior as part of the larger federal unit (Treisman 1997; Dowley 1998; Bahry 2005). This collection of research clearly demonstrates that federal regions are independent actors for whom unique economic and political situations lead to diverse actions.

Four Conclusions. Researchers have therefore established a number of clear notions regarding the Russian Federation. The following conclusions can be seen as the first four pieces of the puzzle being confronted:

1. Cultural identity still matters in modern Russia.
2. Ethno-federalism often breeds ethnic conflict.
3. Modern economic and political factors vary among Russia's federal units.
4. Two prominent schools of thought exist with regards to ethno-federal conflict: *primordialism* and *bargaining theory*.

The fourth and final conclusion is most pertinent to this research. Indeed, it is by testing these two schools against one another that this study hopes to establish a more reliable method of analyzing center/periphery conflict in modern Russia.

### **Ancient Bonds: Primordialism**

Researchers and pundits often argue that ethnic conflicts stem primarily from endemic qualities held by distinct cultural groups. Lists of the relevant dimensions of ethnicity typically include salient cultural aspects such as appearance, religion, language, custom, and history<sup>31</sup>. Primordial (or "essentialist") theory relies on the notion that these cultural identifiers determine the nature of the relationship between actors. It is also important to understand the role that

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<sup>31</sup> "Primordial Ties", Geertz.



minority or majority status plays in a region's behavior; indeed, while all ethnicities are considered minorities on the national level, only some constitute majorities within their titular region. Primordial theory suggests that these majority groups will behave more aggressively, emboldened by their apparent primacy.

Primordialists assume a level of inexpugnability when referring to ethnicity; they often assert that, "congruities of blood, speech, custom, and so on... have ineffable, and at times overpowering, coerciveness *in and of themselves* [Emphasis added]" (Geertz, 42). Moreover, they presume that this aspect of society will inevitably influence government and politics. Such an influence will occur when an ethnic group recognizes or believes that it is somehow different than the main national ethnicity. This belief will lead them to behave in a way that attempts to manage the effects of their "otherness".

In keeping with this theory, primordialists have argued that Russia's status as a *multiethnic* region continues to determine its political momentum in the most basic of ways (Bahry 2005; Coakley 1992; Drobezheva 2005; Ellingsen 2000; Gibson, 2001; Hale 2004; and Hughes 2002). Primordial scholars believe that the sordid history of ethnicity in the Russian state manifested itself when groups began to identify themselves publicly during the *perestroika* period. This is a logical statement if one accepts primordialism's basic tenets; indeed, "the argument that 'repressed' nationalisms inevitably reemerged the moment that Gorbachov removed the coercive controls formerly imposed... fits logically with a view of ethnicity as somehow fundamental to human social identity" (Hanson, 4). Consequentially, scholars of the primordial school discount the importance of contemporary factors when considering regional conflict; rather, they posit that Russia's federal system is inexorably linked to ethnicity as a means of organization.

This paper does not argue that primordial theory is based upon a false premise; a large amount of reliable data demonstrates the continuing diversity of ethnic groups in Russia (see Figure 1.2). Indeed, the very existence of such

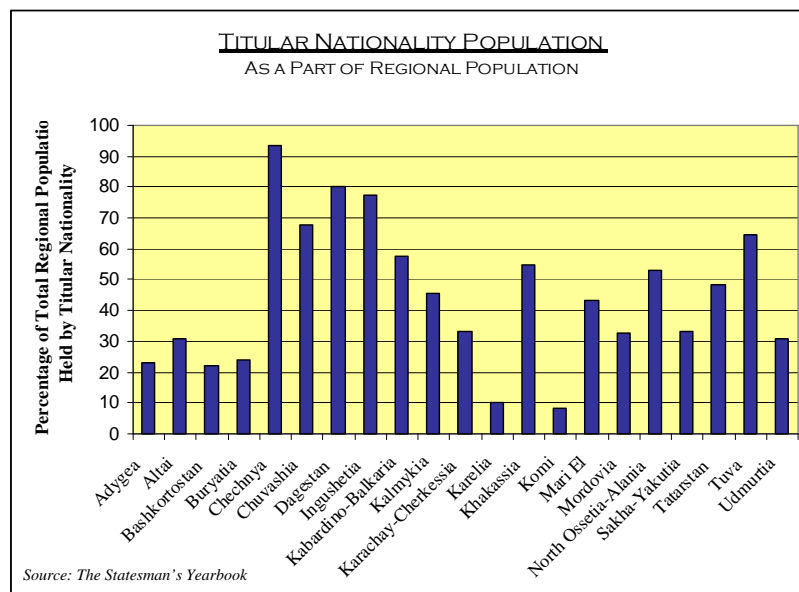


Figure 1.2

diverse characteristics is precisely what makes this research possible. Previous studies have also demonstrated ethnicity's indirect effect on elite behavior (Treisman 1997) and political culture (Zassorin 2000). However, this study seeks to show that ethnic characteristics, while evident, do not *themselves* lead to regional aggression.

### **Contemporary Powers: Bargaining Theory**

Scholars of the bargaining (or “instrumentalist”) school have argued that all political entities ought to be viewed as rational actors. This leads to the basic premise of bargaining theory: that actors, and in this case regions, will engage in conflict only when the rewards of conflict outweigh the risks. Bargaining theory argues that all parties approach the table in an attempt to benefit and that, furthermore, they do so only after having completed an analysis of their own position. Such an analysis will, presumably, lead to their acceptance of a rational strategy in terms of costs and benefits.

According to instrumentalists, the analysis performed by regions involves a review of their economic and political “bargaining chips”. Useful factors include such measures as international economic influence, natural resource potential and geographic importance. In cases in which these factors are present, leaders will likely realize that their economic might allows them to realistically challenge central authority. Such regions will decide that they have enough bargaining chips to win a given argument; therefore, they will act confidently and aggressively towards the center. A second possible outcome of such an analysis is that regions may realize the negligibility of their potential loss. In this situation, governments will decide that having so few bargaining chips at the outset of interactions means that they have nothing to lose by offending central authority. However, in either of these situations, regions behave in a rational manner after completing a concrete analysis.

Bargaining theory's accuracy in describing Russian affairs has been corroborated in previous research; studies have shown that the possession of some type of bargaining advantage greatly affects regional behavior in Russia (Dowley 1998; Hanson 1998; Herd 1999; and Lynn et al. 1997). In fact, bargaining scholars have even offered a counter-explanation for Russia's “ethnic revival” by writing, “[the situation] gave the impression that here there was a return to tribal tradition and to tribal separatism when in fact tribalism in the contemporary situation was one type of political grouping within the framework of the new state” (Cohen, 83). Data also show that the economic situations of the regions are exceedingly diverse and therefore lend themselves to an effective analysis of differentiation in bargaining power (see Figures 1.3 and

1.4). By connecting bargaining theory to regional aggression, this study takes the next logical step in this field of research.

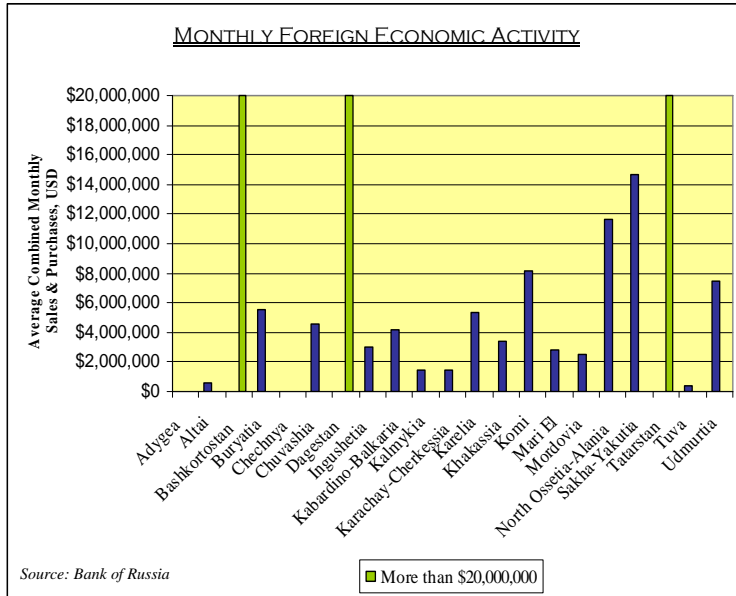


Figure 1.3

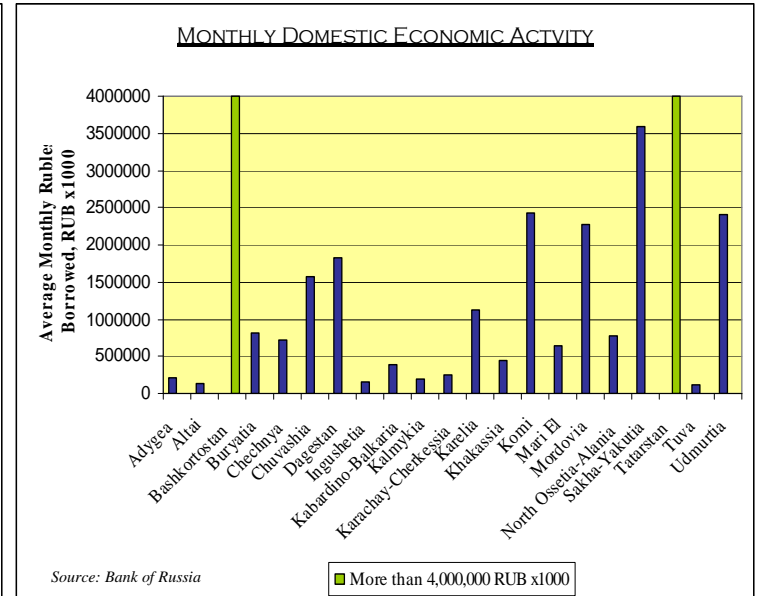


Figure 1.4

## TESTING CONFLICT AMONG RUSSIAN REGIONS: METHODS & MODELS

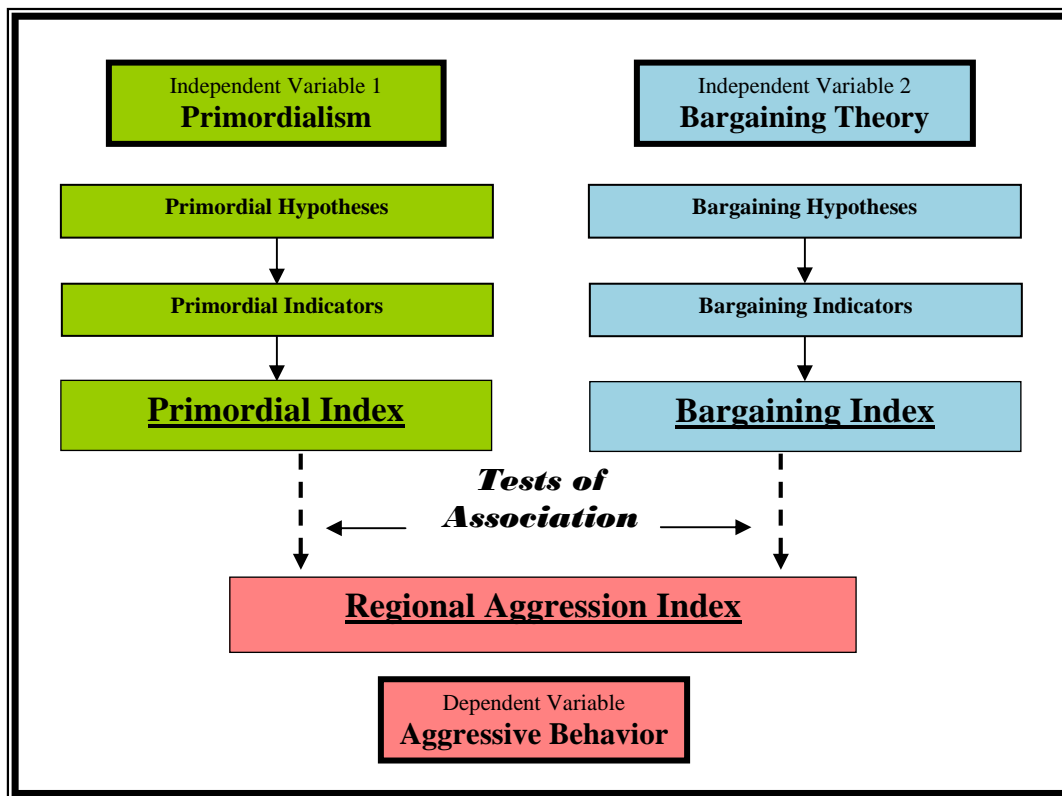
### Selecting the Most Appropriate Cases

The first issue that must be confronted is case selection. This study recognizes that, in order to accurately test the hypotheses, cases must be (1) autonomous, (2) ethnically based, and (3) similar and numerous enough to ensure reliable results. Unfortunately, the Russian Federation is composed of 88 highly diverse subjects; therefore, it is logistically impossible to collect the necessary data for all cases. It is also apparent that many of the federal member states do not possess the resources or even the authority required to behave aggressively towards the center. Therefore, this study selects the 21 autonomous republics of the Russian Federation as its case set<sup>32</sup>. These 21 cases boast a high level of autonomy, an ethnic basis, and the amount of available data necessary to conduct the intended research. In addition, this study will gain the increased reliability that stems from investigating an entire universe of cases (all 21 autonomous regions).

<sup>32</sup> A full list of the cases can be found in Appendix B.

### The Research Design Model

Operationalization of the suggested concepts will require extensive intuitive reasoning. In order to accurately capture the complexity of the referenced ideas, indices will be constructed as a proxy for each of the main independent variables (*primordialism and bargaining theory*) and the dependent variable (*regional aggression*). The following research model will be utilized in order to test the main hypothesis, which is that *bargaining theory will be more strongly associated with regional aggression than will primordialism and will, therefore, more accurately predict regional stability*:



The Investigatory Schema:  
Primordialism versus Bargaining Theory

## The Testing Schedule

This study's use of a tiered measurement system—one that utilizes both individual indicators and additive indices—allows for a sequence of increasingly pertinent tests. First, in the Pre-test Phase, the study will construct an accurate measure of the dependent variable. Phase One will include a preliminary analysis of the six individual indicators. Lastly, in Phase Two, the study will use the results of the preliminary investigations to construct its main indices and test the main hypothesis. Therefore, the schedule of tests is:

### Pre-test Phase

1. Operationalization and Measurement of the Dependent Variable

### Phase One

2. *Bivariate Analysis* of the Individual Indicators
3.  $\text{Eta}^{33}$  ( $\eta$ ) *Analysis* of the Individual Indicators

### Phase Two

4. Construction of the Main Indices
5. *Bivariate Analysis* of the Indices
6. *Linear Regression Analysis* of the Indices

## PRE- TEST PHASE: MEASURING AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR

Operationalizing Regional Aggression. The operationalization and measurement of aggression poses two puzzles. The first is, of course, which indicators will provide an accurate measure of regional aggression; for instance, this study must ensure that it is measuring aggressive behavior *towards* the center and not *from* it. The second puzzle is how best to choose these variables so that all forms of aggression are accurately accounted for.

This study confronts the first puzzle by reviewing past research that utilizes federal and regional aggression as a variable. A review of the existing literature suggests five reliable means of operationalization:

Timing of region's declaration of sovereignty<sup>34</sup> (SOVER). This indicator measures the political aggression shown by the region during the transitory phase of the development of the Russian state, using rankings created by Triesman\* .

<sup>33</sup> Eta is a test of association commonly used when the dependent variable is interval in nature and the independent variable is categorical.  $\eta^2$  can be used as a proxy for  $r^2$ .

<sup>34</sup> Explanations of this and all other data manipulations can be found in Appendix C.

Index of Constitutional Aggression (CONST). This indicator represents a measure of the amount of aggression encapsulated in the bilateral constitution negotiated by the region and the federal authority. It is constructed through a content analysis, which includes a review of a study that was completed by Stoner-Weiss in 1999.

Instances of Protest, War and Rebellion (WAR). This value is utilized to take account of any instances of actual physical violence that have occurred in the regions and uses data collected by the Minorities At Risk project since 1991.

Aggression in Elite Activity (ELITE). In order to measure the level of aggression shown by regional elites towards Moscow, this study will rely upon the extensive content analysis completed by Dowley\*, who then translated her findings into the scale that is directly borrowed.

Instances of Assertion of Legal and Resource Rights (LEG.ASN/RES.ASN). Again using data collected by Daniel Triesman for his 1997 study, a dummy variable is created for each type of assertion, with a score of 0 denoting no assertion and 1 indicating at least one instance of assertion.

A second puzzle that requires close attention is how this research can best measure each of the preceding indicators in appropriate proportion. For example, when considering a region's overall aggressive activity, an instance of armed aggression towards federal authority should clearly carry greater weight than an assertion of resource rights. This study therefore utilizes an index that includes each indicator along with an assigned weight, which is represented as a cofactor. The Aggregate Center/Periphery Aggression Index (ACPAI) is

$$(5*WAR) + (4*ELITE) + (3*CONST) + (3*SOVER) + (1*LEG.ASN) + (1*RES.ASN).$$

#### The ACPAI Described.

The resulting scores of the Aggregate Center/Periphery Aggression Index<sup>35</sup> comprise an evenly spread spectrum that ranges 13.32 to 67.32 (see Figure 1.5). Therefore, the values provide strong support for the notion that behavior towards the center varies among the Russian regions.

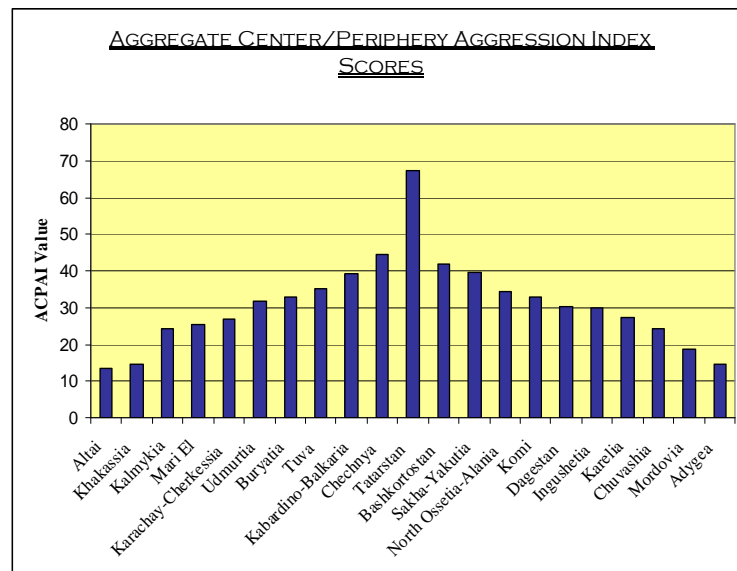


Figure 1.5

\* For specific figures and scales, see Appendix D.

<sup>35</sup> The Center/Periphery Aggression Index possesses a mean of 30.94, a standard deviation of 12.16, and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.555 (Cronbach's alpha, which is measured on a 0 to 1 scale, indicates the extent to which a set of items can be treated as measuring a single latent variable).

## PHASE ONE: ASSESSING THE INDIVIDUAL HYPOTHESES AND INDICATORS

### **Operationalizing the Primordial School**

The study derives the following set of auxiliary hypotheses from primordial theory:

*H<sub>1,1</sub> = Titular nationalities that have been historically autonomous will show more aggression in regional relations with the center.*

*H<sub>1,2</sub> = Those titular nationalities that do not share the Russian Orthodox religion will be more likely to show aggression in center-periphery relations.*

*H<sub>1,3</sub> = Those titular nationalities that reside in a region in which they constitute a majority will show more aggression in relations with the center.*

Each of these hypotheses captures an essential aspect of the theory that has been outlined in previous primordial literature. The first hypothesis assesses a key aspect of the historical experience of each ethnicity; the second takes account of ethnic religion (which, it is believed, corresponds closely with other cultural identifiers); and the third measures each ethnicity's demographic status in their region and, thereby, the potential impact of their activity as an ethnic group.

Indicators that correspond with each primordial hypothesis are then identified. The choice of such a system requires that each indicator move in the same direction; that is, a higher score has to indicate a higher degree of primordial differentiation from the center. It is also worth noting that primordial theory, due to its strictly ethnic nature, cannot be accurately tested through an assessment of the actual regions. Therefore, this study's 'primordial' variables *indirectly* measure the Russian regions by measuring each region's titular nationality. The following indicators are selected for their intuitive connection to the hypotheses and their frequent inclusion in the literature:

Majority or Minority Status (MIN.MAJ). This indicator is a dummy variable that denotes whether or not the titular nationality for which the region was created exists as a regional majority or a minority. Those ethnicities with majority status receive a score of 0 and those with minority status receive a score of 1. This classification is based upon data collected from the Statesman's Yearbook.

Religious Status (REL). Data is collected regarding the faith to which each region's titular nationality generally ascribes. This information is found using the Minorities at Risk data set and is given as a dummy variable, with 0 signifying adherence to the Russian Orthodox faith and a score of 1 denoting ascription to any other religion.

Historical Autonomy (AUT). In order to gauge the historical perspective of each titular nationality, each region is assigned a dummy variable that signifies its historical status as an autonomous state. Research is performed on each region's titular nationality and, subsequently, each region is assigned a score of either 0 or 1, with 1 signifying that an ethnicity enjoyed autonomy within an independent state at any point in history.

## Measuring Bargaining Theory

The auxiliary hypotheses that this study derives from bargaining theory are:

*H<sub>2,1</sub> = Regions with central capitals that have a larger population and a more urbanized society will be more aggressive in center-periphery relations.*

*H<sub>2,2</sub> = Regions that contain oil production or transport facilities will be more aggressive in center-periphery relations.*

*H<sub>2,3</sub> = Regions whose economies are more engaged as foreign and domestic traders will show more aggression in their relations with central authority.*

Each of these statements corresponds with an essential component of regional bargaining position. The first measures the development of each region, by the assumption that large urban centers suggest internal growth; the second hypothesis takes account of oil production and transportation, which plays a critical role in the larger Russian economy; and the third assesses each region's status in the domestic and international economy. The following indicators are utilized to measure the suggested concepts:

Population of the Regional Capital (CAP.POP). As a measure of the region's urbanization and development, the population of each capital city is found. These figures are then used to construct a 5-point scale, with higher values representing a larger size.

Economic Interaction (ECON.INT). In order to assess each region as an economic actor, data provided by the Bank of Russia is utilized. This study gathers the figures for each region in four categories: A) federal rubles borrowed by private enterprises, B) federal rubles borrowed by public enterprises, C) total foreign sales per month and D) total foreign purchases per month.

Oil Resources (OIL). Information regarding the location of key oil production sites and various oil transportation structures is collected from the Environmental Information Agency. Regions are then assigned a score of 0 if no oil production or transportation takes place within the region, 1 if the region is home to some form of oil transportation structure, and 2 if the region contains oil production sites.



## Tests of the Six Indicators

The first procedure, a test of bivariate correlation, measures association between the dependent variable and each of the six individual indicators. The results, which can be found in Table 1.2, are most useful when grouped according to the theory from which they are derived. This division into primordial and bargaining indicators will later allow for the construction of the main indices.

Bivariate Correlations		
	Pearson's R	Sig.
<i>Primordial Indicators</i>		
Titular Nationality Status as Ethnic Minority or Majority	.469*	.016
Titular Nationality's Sharing of the Russian Orthodox Faith	.289	.102
Historical Autonomous Status	.334	.069
<i>Bargaining Indicators</i>		
Population of Capital City	.470*	.016
Presence of Oil or oil Pipeline	.319	.080
Economic Interaction	.454*	.019
* -- Significance at the .05 level		

Table 1.2

When considering the primordial variables, it is clear that the most strongly correlated indicator is an ethnic group's majority or minority status. Indeed, none of the other primordial variables show a significant correlation with regional aggression. Therefore, the possession of a non-majority language or religion does not appear to have a significant influence on the amount of aggression with which a region behaves. In sum, *the strongest primordial determinant of regional aggression is whether or not the titular nationality resides in a region in which its members constitute a majority.*

The results of bivariate tests involving the bargaining indicators offer further opportunities for analysis. It is clear, though not surprising, that *regional aggression is most strongly correlated with economic interaction and the volume of the capital population.* Since these indicators take direct account of a region's economic development, the findings agree with the main hypothesis. It is equally noteworthy, however, that there appears to be a surprisingly weak relationship between regional aggression and involvement in the oil industry.

The study next conducts an auxiliary test of the indicators using an eta measurement. In this research, the eta tests are performed in order to simply reinforce the results of the bivariate analysis. All eta values mirror the findings of the primary tests; thus, the scores appear to increase the validity of previous results<sup>36</sup>.

<sup>36</sup> Results of the eta test can be found in Appendix E.

### Analysis of Phase One

It should first be noted that all relationships move in the directions predicted by the hypotheses, and that three of the six hypotheses receive significant support from the results (see Table 1.3).

Second, majority status appears to be the only primordial variable that correlates with regional aggression at a significant level. This is interesting in that majority status is also the primordial indicator that most readily fits with the arguments presented by bargaining theory. Indeed, this study argues only that majority or minority status does not *independently* lead to conflict; it remains quite possible that population demographics exert a strong influence and make the mobilization of ethnicity a more realistic option by reducing the costs and increasing the benefits of conflict.

Third, the weak correlation shown between oil production and regional aggression requires attention. This finding poses a dilemma for those who would argue that oil is a frequent cause of conflict between the center and periphery. Of course, the results could be due to the fact that the possession of oil leads to interference from central authority to which regions are unable to respond. It must be remembered that this study only measures regional aggression towards the center; therefore, it could not account for such conflict even if it did exist. Whether or not this is the case, it is worth noting that regions that are active in the production and transport of oil are no more likely to act aggressively towards central authority than those that are not.

<b>Summary of Auxiliary Hypotheses</b>				
	$H_n$	Indicator	Correct Direction?	Significant?*
Primordial Indicators	$H_{1.1}$	Majority Status	Yes	Yes
	$H_{1.2}$	Religion	Yes	No
	$H_{1.3}$	Historical Autonomy	Yes	No
Bargaining Indicators	$H_{2.1}$	Capital Population	Yes	Yes
	$H_{2.2}$	Oil Production	Yes	No
	$H_{2.3}$	Economic Interaction	Yes	Yes
* At the .05 level				

TABLE 1.3

## PHASE TWO: TESTING THE RIVAL SCHOOLS

### Constructing the Indices

Primordialism. The Aggregate Primordial Indicator Index<sup>37</sup> (APII) is constructed in accordance with the following two lessons, which were taken from the preliminary tests: (1) status as an ethnic minority or majority appears to be the most influential and, therefore, the most important of the three indicators and (2) while both religion and historical autonomy have weak correlations with aggression, religion's correspondence with other cultural identifiers (language, culture, custom) require that it be more heavily considered. When scaled in accordance with these lessons and combined into a single index, the measures accurately portray the identity of each titular nationality. The APII can be represented as

$$(6 * REL) + (6 * MIN.MAJ) + (3 * AUT)$$

Bargaining Theory. The Aggregate Bargaining Indicator Index<sup>38</sup> (ABII) is constructed based upon the following observations: (1) oil does not have a very strong influence on the bargaining position of each region and (2) both the population of the capital city and the level of economic interaction have significant and strong correlation with regional aggression. In order to account for the apparent variance in influence among these indicators, this study chooses to structure the ABII in the following manner:

$$(3 * CAP.POP) + (3 * ECON.INT) + (OIL)$$

### Testing the Indices

Bivariate Tests. The initial test of the indices utilizes simple bivariate correlation (see Table 1.4). The results show that both of the indices possess a significantly strong level of association with the dependent variable. Moreover, the findings support this research's main

<b>Bivariate Correlations</b>		
	<i>Pearson's R</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>Indices</i>		
Aggregate Bargaining Indicator Index	.524**	.004
Aggregate Primordial Indicator Index	.486*	.016
*-- Significance at the .05 level		
**-- Significance at the .001 level		

Table 1.4

<sup>37</sup> The APII shows a mean of 7.429, a standard deviation of 5.8187, and a Cronbach's alpha of .580.

<sup>38</sup> The ABII possesses a mean of 18.167, a standard deviation of 7.1438, and a Cronbach's alpha of .652

hypothesis: *when operationalized, bargaining theory is more strongly associated with regional aggression than is primordial theory, though by a relatively small margin.*

Linear Regression Analysis. The study next conducts a more rigorous, head-to-head test of the indices using the linear regression method. This procedure allows for a comparison of each index's influence when controlling for its counterargument; therefore, if consistent with the results of previous tests, these findings will greatly increase this study's confidence in its findings. The results of the OLS test are presented in Table 1.5.

An initial consideration is that a single model that includes both independent variables accounts for roughly half of the variance in the dependent variable ( $R^2 = .503$ ); this association is also highly significant (nearly at the .001 level). These findings support the assumption that primordial and bargaining indicators each play a large role in determining regional aggression.

The most valuable results of any linear regression test are the beta weights. Through these values, the OLS procedure allows for a direct comparison of each index's effect *when controlling for its rival theory*; therefore, the results are critical to this study. One of the strengths of beta weights as a tool of measurement is that these values do not require much analysis; quite simply, the Bargaining Index shows a larger beta weight than the Primordial Index. Therefore,

these values demonstrate that *bargaining theory is more strongly correlated with aggressive behavior—even when controlling for ethnicity's influence.* In addition, these results are significantly correlated with the dependent variable and, therefore, allow for a high level of confidence.

<b>Linear Regression Model Summary</b>		
R		.709
R Square		.503
Significance		.002

<b>Linear Regression Results</b>		
	<i>Beta Weights</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Aggregate Bargaining Indicator Index	0.517**	.006
Aggregate Primordial Indicator Index	0.478**	.010
**-- Significance at the .001 level		

Table 1.5

## Analysis of Phase Two

This research's main hypothesis was that bargaining theory would be more strongly associated with regional aggression than would primordial theory. The hypothesis was most succinctly and directly verified through the linear regression analysis, which clearly showed that the Aggregate Bargaining Indicator Index did indeed have a stronger correlation with the Center/Periphery Aggression Index. It should be noted, however, that the difference between the indices' beta weights was relatively small; this similar level of influence requires further investigation. Regardless, the findings support the study's main hypothesis.

Two useful conclusions can be made based upon the findings. The first conclusion is that *in order to accurately predict regional stability in the Russian Federation, actors should assess the given region's "bargaining chips"*. The second and more generalizable conclusion is that *cultural differences are not the strongest determinants of conflict in Russian center/periphery relations*. In other words, this study disputes Geertz's assertion that ethnic characteristics "have ineffable, and at times overpowering, coerciveness in and of themselves" when considering federal relations in modern Russia (42).

## RECONSIDERING ETHNICITY'S ROLE IN MODERN RUSSIA

Questions for Further Research. The results of this study suggest that, when considering the Russian Federation, there is less direct causality between primordial factors and regional aggression than has previously been suggested. This statement was supported by an investigation of the 21 autonomous federal regions and their corresponding titular nationalities. In addition, the investigation revealed a significantly strong relationship between leverage at the bargaining table and aggressive behavior towards the center. Therefore, this research achieved its goal of showing that regional conflict in the Russian Federation is most strongly governed by the rules of bargaining theory. In this sense, it brings greater clarity to the discussion of Russian center/periphery conflict. However, its conclusions also suggest several new questions.

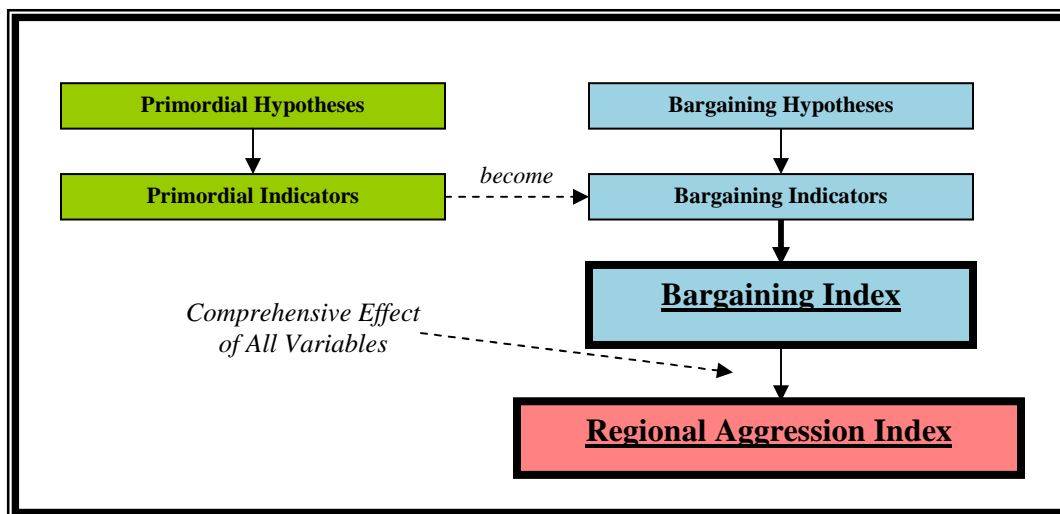
Investigating Bargaining Variable Interaction. Future studies should first address the way in which bargaining indicators interact in order to determine regional behavior<sup>39</sup>. While it is important that their influence as a theoretically linked group of characteristics has been verified, interaction among the variables almost certainly varies among regions. A fruitful question for

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<sup>39</sup> A cursory investigation of this issue can be found in Appendix F.

future study would be how bargaining indicators enhance or negate other regional characteristics.

Accounting for Primordialism's Influence. Vastly more important, however, is the need to account for the continued influence of primordial variables. Indeed, it should be recalled that (1) this study found a robust and statistically significant associations between the APII and center/periphery conflict and (2) that roughly 50% of the variance in the dependent variable is yet to be accounted for. Therefore, it may be most fruitful to consider ways of synthesizing primordialism and bargaining theory. A previous study<sup>40</sup> took the first step in explaining the link between primordialism and bargaining theory by hypothesizing that “[ethnic] stratification has no direct effect on an ethnic group’s propensity to engage in collective action, but that *its influence is mediated by the establishment of ethnic organizations or quasi-groups* [Emphasis added]” (431). According to this hypothesis, it is probable that primordial variables, when mobilized as “bargaining chips”, have an extremely large influence on regional behavior. The suggested relationship between primordialism, bargaining, and regional aggression is illustrated in the following figure:



The Suggested Relationship between  
Ethnicity, Political Bargaining, & Center/Periphery conflict

Hechter sums up the potential of such a synthesis by stating that it “offers the prospect of arriving at predictive statements, rather than at the post hoc descriptions [of ethnic behavior] for which sociologists have had to settle too frequently in the past” (91). Therefore, future studies should investigate the behavior of primordial characteristics in the arena of bargaining theory. Researchers should address how regional leaders most frequently mobilize ethnic identity, the

<sup>40</sup> “A Theory of Ethnic Collective Action”, Hechter, Friedman, and Appelbaum.

way in which ethnicity makes its presence felt, and the process by which the mobilization of culture leads to center/periphery conflict. The verification of these dynamics would render bargaining theory a much stronger predictor of center/periphery conflict by allowing theorists to acknowledge the influence of culture.

Conclusions. More than a thousand years of Russian history has proven that culture remains a force that, when mobilized, is capable of undermining central authority. Conversely, that same history also demonstrates that ethnic characteristics can actually be utilized as a means of organization and governance. Indeed, Russia's tumultuous past provides countless examples of ethnicity's dichotomous role as both a precursor for peace and a magnet for conflict. Perhaps, if scholars are one day able to fully understand culture and its influence on behavior, regional actors will find themselves better able to manage culture and stifle its potentially violent manifestations. Such capabilities would almost certainly lead to a more stable future for the Russian Federation and its 88 regions.

This research provides ample evidence to suggest that it is time to reexamine ethnicity's role in Russian center/periphery conflict; clearly, a new understanding of ethnic identity is necessary in order to place culture into a rational and modern context. This study merely takes the first step in the proposed investigation by demonstrating that, while culture continues to be of the utmost importance in the Russian Federation, any theory of ethno-federal conflict that emphasizes inexpugnable ethnic characteristics over the rational nature of modern politics is misguided and incomplete. If supported in future research, the proposed synthesis of ethnic identity and rational behavior will gain prominence as an accurate model of federal relations in modern Russia.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A– Administrative Divisions of the Russian Federation



Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Russian-regions.png>

### Appendix B– Full List of Cases

- |                        |                          |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Adygea              | 12. Mari El              |
| 2. Altai               | 13. Mordovia             |
| 3. Bashkortostan       | 14. Sakha (Yakutia)      |
| 4. Buryatia            | 15. North Ossetia-Alania |
| 5. Dagestan            | 16. Tatarstan            |
| 6. Ingushetia          | 17. Tuva                 |
| 7. Kabardino-Balkaria  | 18. Udmurtia             |
| 8. Kalmykia            | 19. Khakassia            |
| 9. Karachay-Cherkessia | 20. Chechnya             |
| 10. Karelia            | 21. Chuvashia            |
| 11. Komi               |                          |



## **Appendix C– Explanation of Indicator Manipulations**

### *Index of Constitutional Aggression*

The index was created by assigning 1 point for a region having demanded inclusion in the first round of treaty negotiations and 1 additional point for each instance of discrepancy between federal and regional law enshrined in the constitution.

### *Instances of Protest, War and Rebellion*

This project assigned each region a score between 0 and 3. A score of 0 signified no instances of protest, war, or rebellion; a score of 1 signified at least one instance of protest/rebellion; a score of 2 signified at least one instance of war; and a score of 3 signified instances of both protest/rebellion and war.

### *Timing of Region's Declaration of Sovereignty*

Treisman's rankings assign each region a number based upon the quickness with which they declared their sovereignty. The rankings, which are on a scale of 0-11, were recoded into a 0-5 scale by dividing each score by 2, and rounding up when necessary.

### *Economic Interaction*

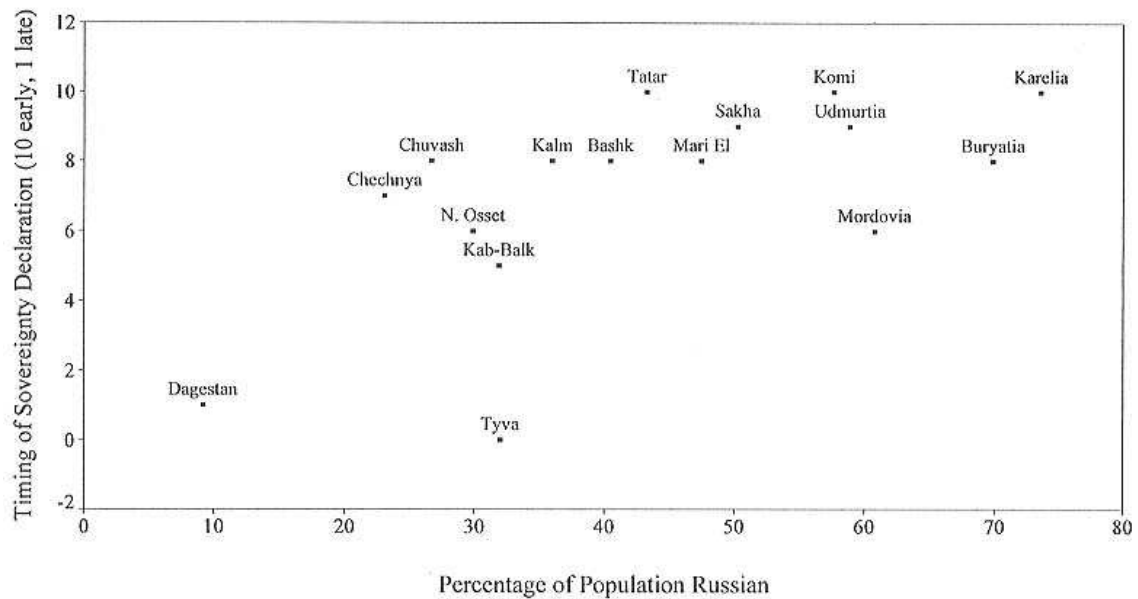
In order to accurately gauge the trend of these figures, this study averaged the figures for January 2000 and December 2005 in each category. After transferring each of the four figures onto a 5-point scale, this research chose to combine all resulting scores in order to construct a comprehensive index of economic activity. The resulting scores were again used to construct a 5-point scale, with higher values denoting a higher volume of economic interaction.

### Appendix D– Borrowed Data Sources

*Regional Elite Behavior– Dowley, 1998.*

Region	Score	N	Region	Score	N
Adygea	3.62	8	Karelia	3.56	25
Altai	3.33	6	Khakassia	3.64	11
Bashkortostan	4.00	46	Komi	3.44	16
Buryatia	3.50	15	Mari El	3.86	7
Chechnya	4.62	62	Mordovia	3.20	15
Chuvashia	3.62	13	North Ossetia-Alania	3.12	34
Dagestan	2.84	19	Sakha-Yakutia	3.68	41
Ingushetia	3.50	30	Tatarstan	4.33	43
Kabardino-Balkaria	3.05	21	Tuva	3.80	15
Kalmykia	3.29	17	Udmurtia	3.43	14
Karachay-Cherkessia	3.00	11			

*Timing of Regional Sovereignty– Triesman, 1997.*



**Appendix E— Results of the eta Test**

<b>Eta Values</b>	
	<i>Eta</i>
<i>Primordial Indicators</i>	
Titular Nationality Status as Ethnic Minority or Majority	0.522*
Titular Nationalities Sharing of the Russian Orthodox Faith	.323
Titular Nationality's Historical Autonomous Status	.288
<i>Bargaining Indicators</i>	
Total Population of the Capital City, 2002	.548
Presence of Oil or Oil Pipeline	.400
Combined Monthly Economic Interaction	.641
*-- Significance at the .05 level	

**Appendix F— Interaction among Bargaining Variables**

This study performed a brief, cursory analysis of the interaction between the three bargaining indicators. Three models were created, with each model including one of three possible pairings of bargaining indicators. The study then tested each two-indicator combination for correlation with the dependent variable ( $R^2$ ) through the OLS method. In this way, the research was able to assess which indicator pairings, if any, exert an exceedingly large influence on regional aggression. The results are as follows:

<b>Indicator Pairing</b>	<b><math>R^2</math></b>	<b>Significance</b>
Oil & Economic Interaction	0.275	.024
Oil & Capital Population	0.264	.055
Economic Interaction & Capital Population	0.250	.075

Clearly, none of the indicator pairings exerts a substantially greater influence on regional aggression than any other. Therefore, a region that possesses oil and a high-level of economic interaction will be no more likely to engage in conflict than will a region that possesses oil and a large capital-city population. This basic investigation does not suggest that there is *no* particular combination of “bargaining chips” that exert an exceedingly large influence on regional aggression; it merely demonstrates that, *among these three variables*, there is no substantially influential combination. In order to investigate the issue further, researchers should perform similar analyses using larger pools of variables and more theoretically coherent models.

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