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RUSSIA'S PARTY SYSTEM:
IS RUSSIAN FEDERALISM VIABLE?

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Abstract

Is Russia likely to develop a stable or efficient federal system that matches the definitions of federalism commonly offered in the literature or the descriptions that characterize intergovernmental relations in Germany, Switzerland, or the United States? Unfortunately, our answer to this question is NO. Unlike other discussions of federal relations in Russia - discussions that focus on current economic circumstances, federal treaties, and relations between political elites - we reach this conclusion by taking the view that the extent to which a federal state integrates the functions of different levels of government is determined largely by its political party system and the incentives for cooperation engendered by electoral politics at all levels. Assuming that Russia will continue on the path of democratic reform, we consider the types of parties that are likely to emerge in the long run as a function of Russia's current constitutional structure, current electoral arrangements for choosing a president and a national legislature, and that structure political competition at the regional and local levels. We argue that parties in Russia will be more like those found in, say, Canada than in the United States and Germany. Russia's current electoral arrangements, in combination with the political institutional designs of its regional governments - designs that mirror the command and control systems inherited from the Soviet past and which focus power on regional governors - will continue to encourage only the development of a party system that is not only highly fractured at the national level but one that fails to create adequate incentives for cooperation between levels of government. Even if the Russian economy recovers in the next few years or so and even if reformers maintain their position in Moscow, an adversarial relationship will continue to exist between regional and national governments, a relationship that will merely move the state from one crises to the next. We conclude with several suggestions for political reform, including simultaneous election of Duma deputies and president, increased use of elections as a method for filling regional and local public offices, and alternative methods for forming the Federation Council. However, we remain pessimistic about the prospects for a well-functioning federal system since most if not all of these suggestions are unlikely to be pursued as political reforms.

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Tolstoy began *Anna Karenina* with the assertion that "All happy families resemble one another, but each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way." This essay extends Tolstoy to federations by identifying the first principles of political-institutional design that any stable federal state must satisfy. Contrasting these principles with its current constitutional and electoral arrangements, we conclude that Russia is unlikely to develop a stable or efficient federal system that matches the definitions of federalism commonly offered in the literature or the descriptions that characterize intergovernmental relations in Germany, Switzerland, or the United States. Even if we ignore the current state of its economy and the absence of a legal infrastructure essential for a productive market economy, the maldistribution of resources across Russia's oblasts and republics, and a political mentality in the Kremlin that more often than not seems more in keeping with its imperialist traditions than with any basic understanding of federal relations, the long term prognosis for Russian federalism is anything but good. Nevertheless, we will propose a set of political institutional reforms that can be implemented without constitutional amendment, that do not run counter to any well-entrenched set of interests, and that would improve the long term prospects for stable democratic federal relations.

Of course, despite constitutional assertions that it is a federation, the issue of whether Russia can or should be federal is another matter. On the one hand, we can argue that Russia is too diverse to be run from a single seat of power, that its history describes a state unable to compete against "the West" with a centralized governmental apparatus, that only decentralized power can provide the proper seedbed for the gradual refinement of its infant democratic structures, and that by design or otherwise, Russia's regions will act to ensure the emergence of a *de facto* federalism regardless of Moscow's preferences. On the other hand, owing to an entrenched bureaucracy that will resist any meaningful deviation from socialist democratic centralism, a geographic location that makes it vulnerable to external threats, and the necessity for a painful economic transition that can only be implemented by a strong central government, one can also argue that the attempt to implement federalism in any form will be produce a system that either threatens Russia with dissolution or paralysis or that threatens democracy itself.

There is little doubt, then, that federal relations will remain a vexing issue in Russia's transition, to democracy or elsewhere. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia emerged as a state wholly unfamiliar with the precepts of democratic federalism, and even today, despite constitutional assertions to the contrary, the Kremlin prefers to treat its regions as mere administrative subdivisions or, as with its ethnic republics, as entities that must be dealt with using old imperialist policies and approaches. Further confounding the task of assessing the prospects for Russian federalism and the political institutional reforms that await implementation is the fact that federalism itself seems too broad a

subject for focused academic debate. Alternative definitions of federalism abound, and treatises on the subject offer a multitude of alternative approaches and conceptualizations. Some are concerned primarily with economic matters and proceed implicitly or explicitly under the assumption that an economic prosperity without significant disparities in economic well-being across regions is a necessary and possibly sufficient condition for stable federal relations. Thus, these essays, when suggesting additional reforms in Russia's federal system, focus on policies like income transfer schemes, economic development strategies, and proposals for the disbursement of state owned property (see, for example, Wallich 1994). Other studies focus on macro issues such as ethnic diversity, the number and relative size of federal units, and the degree of state centralization (Riker and Lemco 1987, Lemco 1991). And still other discussions, most notably the theory of federalism set forth by Hamilton and Madison in *The Federalist*, focus on political institutional design. Typically, such studies are concerned with the structure of representation, the advisability of presidential versus parliamentary government, on the structure and role of political parties (Riker 1964, Chandler 1986, 1987, Kramer 1994), and, as with Horowitz's (19xx) discussion of the prospects for South African democracy, on electoral institutional arrangements.

Evaluating these alternative emphases in the Russian context is difficult since we cannot be certain that Russia will even be democratic. For example, the promised elections for regional governors might encourage a bottom-up evolution of democratic practice, but they might also merely reenforce the boss rule that characterizes most regional governments today. Here, though, we assume that Russia will be democratic, if only because we have little interest in dealing with the design of an authoritarian state. We also assume that even if we cannot in the future judge it to be federal by any contemporary definition, Russia will be decentralized, with its regions and republics enjoying even greater autonomy than they possess today. Thus, the things we can learn from the experiences of other democratic federal states about the sources of stability and instability and about the efficiencies and inefficiencies of federal decentralization will bear importantly on any judgments we offer about Russia's current circumstances.

When attempting to draw lessons from the experience of other states we will look most closely at the United States. Given Russia's current circumstances, its political traditions, and the decidedly undemocratic mentality of many of its political elites, the American experience might seem wholly irrelevant. It is certainly foolhardy to suppose that the circumstances America confronted in 1787, 1861, or even 1932 bear a close resemblance to the circumstances Russia confronts today. But the United States is history's most successful democratic federal experiment, and we need to understand what general theoretical principles can be culled from it. Was it successful because of fortuitous circumstances that cannot be replicated elsewhere? Would nearly any political organization have sufficed to induce stability and economic prosperity? Are there things that the United States has in common with other successful federalisms such as Germany and Australia, but that it does not share with, say, the failed Czechoslovak federation, the threatened Canadian one, or Russia itself? Does the American Civil War invalidate the American experience as a model for other states?

Our answers to these questions are predicated on the supposition that all successful federalisms, if not all successful democracies, have something in common -- on the assumption that each such federation must satisfy the same necessary condition for stability. We may be only imperfectly able to identify that condition, but it is a mistake to suppose that it corresponds to a specific political institutional structure, a specific economic environment, a specific political tradition, or a specific and fortuitous constellation of political leadership. Although we should not assume that

Russia must match America's experience or anyone else's, we cannot also reject the proposition that a stable democratic federal Russia must satisfy the same general theoretical principles of decentralized political institutional design that all other such states satisfy.

To illustrate by analogy, suppose we observe two explosions. Trying to determine the cause of each without the benefit of theory would be fruitless, since neither explosion is likely to have occurred in precisely the same environment or circumstance as the other. One may have involved dynamite whereas the other gasoline; one may have been ignited by a match, and the other spontaneously. However, our understanding of chemistry and the theory constituting that field tell us that neither gasoline nor dynamite nor matches are **necessary** for an explosion. Instead, what we require is a highly combustible material, an adequate supply of oxygen, and a heat source capable of initiating combustion. Standard laws of chemical reaction and a classification of things that are combustible would then dictate whether the current environment and the particular things at our disposal are sufficient to make a third explosion or whether we must somehow augment what we have by something else. So it is with Russia. Russia may not benefit from an occupying force that ensured political stability as was the case for West Germany, from a forgiving environment conducive to agricultural prosperity and the absence of a feudal past as was the case for the United States, or from the absence of external military threats and a common culture as was the case for Australia. But like the relationship of dynamite and gasoline to explosions, these things may only be elements of a sufficient condition for stable federal relations, and not necessary. Other things that Russia possesses may be sufficient as well, provided only that they are combined in the right way according to those general theoretical principles that any stable federation must satisfy.

1. Theoretical Principles

It is by now virtually axiomatic to suppose that the constitutional structure of a federal state must provide for at least the following:

- representation of federal subjects in a national legislature with meaningful lawmaking authority,
- national and regional elected officials who have independent access to their constituencies,
- an unambiguous statement of the principle of the supremacy of federal law, and
- specific limits on the authority of the national government over regional governments so that courts can adjudicate disputes between levels of government.

Hamilton and Madison focused on these constitutional provisions when writing *The Federalist*, but however reasoned their arguments, we should not assume that they understood fully how a democratic federal state would operate. It is not only the Civil War that broke out some sixty years after they wrote that should lead us to question their arguments, but also the experience prior to that war in which America employed a variety of constitutional adaptations (e.g., allowing states to determine for themselves whether to be slave or free, and maintaining a Senate balance between slave and free) in the unsuccessful attempt to sustain the republic. The items on this list, then, may describe essential features of a democratic federal state, but they cannot be necessary and sufficient. Referring again to our analogy with explosions, what we must do is identify the general principle of federal stability to which the items

on this list are directed, but which the American experience suggests takes us only part way to a complete understanding of the proper design of a democratic federalism.

To identify this principle we can begin by noting that the conceptualization of federalism most consonant with the preceding list of institutional features is one that models federalism as an $N+1$ person game -- a game among N federal subjects (oblasts, republics, states, lande, or provinces) plus the national government. Regardless of whether it concerns a federation in which federal subjects empower the national government (as was the case with the United States and Switzerland), in which the national government empowers federal subjects (as is the case in Russia), or in which some third party creates both the national government and federal subjects (as was the case for Canada and Nigeria), such a conceptualization begins with the assumption that there are a variety of public goods that federal subjects, acting independently, cannot provide efficiently on their own such as national defense, protection of a common market, a stable national currency and banking system, a guarantee of the obligation of contracts across federal subjects, a coherent tax system, and the regulation of externalities across federal subjects (see, for example, Solnick 1996, Tullock 1994, Aranson 1995, Rapaczynski 1985, Chen and Ordeshook 1994, Treisman 1996). Their inability to provide such things efficiently derives from the fact that each federal subject has an incentive to free ride on the efforts of all others: Although each subject may prefer a strong national defense, each prefers that this defense be paid for primarily by all other subjects; although each prefers to enjoy the benefits of a common market, each would seek to protect the industries within its borders; and although each federal subject prefers to see its contracts enforced by all courts elsewhere, each would be unable to resist the temptation to abrogate contracts formed elsewhere when their terms are disadvantageous in the short run to its citizens. A national government, then, must be empowered to coerce individual subjects so that each abides by collective decisions and sustains their contribution to the collective welfare. This objective can be met, though, only if the national constitution provides a clear enunciation of the supremacy of federal law. On the other hand, federalism assumes that there are governmental functions that are best decentralized so as to allow for flexibility, for the reflection of regional differences in tastes, and for experimentation with alternative policies. But for decentralized decision making to be viable, federal subjects require protection against abuse of the supremacy clause. Thus, subjects must be given a veto over federal law via their representation in the national legislature. This second constitutional provision, though, raises the specter of a national government that is merely the agent of some majority coalition of federal subjects and not an independent actor able to measure and reflect a general will that can be distorted by the formal mechanics of legislative representation. Hence, the national government must be allowed its own electoral mandate via direct election of at least one branch of the national legislature and, in the case of presidential systems, independent election of chief of state. Finally, if regional and national governments both possess independent electoral mandates, and if each can counter the actions of the other, the stage is set not only for compromise but for deadlock as well. Thus, as a final protection not only against undue decentralization and centralization, but against governmental immobilization as well, independent courts, as interpreters of the constitution, are empowered to referee disputes between levels of government.

It is evident from this rationalization of institutional provisions that federal subjects in an $N+1$ person conceptualization of federalism are presumed to bear a natural 'antagonistic' relationship to the national government as well as each other. Each subject prefers to maximize the benefits from confederation while minimizing its share of the cost, while agents of the national government seek to aggrandize their power at the expense of federal subjects.

But even if the just described institutional structure is necessary for the resolution of these conflicts, it is commonly assumed that, because the conflicts must necessarily remain an undercurrent of national politics, stability requires one additional thing -- a uniform economic prosperity. If federalism is an $N+1$ person bargaining game that is somehow directed and moderated by constitutional barriers, then it seems reasonable to suppose that political stability can arise only if that game is positive sum for all participants -- only if dissident federal subjects can be bought off by the rest or only if the public benefits provided by the center are such that no subject or coalition of subjects can hope to secure more by seceding from the rest.

There are problems, though, with the hypothesis that prosperity in combination with the institutional structure just described is sufficient for federal stability. Even if we ignore the chicken and the egg issue of whether stability engenders prosperity or prosperity engenders stability, we know that determinate outcomes deemed equitable or fair and which cannot be upset by some other 'less fair' arrangement are unlikely to exist in the $N+1$ person bargaining scenarios most likely to arise within a country, prosperous or otherwise:

- If the national government can redistribute money and resources within the federation, then regardless of whether the 'game' is negative or positive-sum, federal subjects will compete for control of that authority, while at the same time the allocations made by the national government will be distorted by its desire to secure its position and the rents that flow from it.
- Even if the public benefits provided by the national government greatly outweigh the cost of providing those benefits, it is unlikely that there will be any self-evident 'fair' or 'natural' allocation of that cost, in which case disputes will arise among federal subjects over that allocation.
- Even if those public benefits are truly public in consumption (i.e., consumed equally by all federal subjects), they are not likely to be public in production. One federal subject is likely to benefit more than another when it comes, for example, to decisions over who should be awarded a contract to build an aircraft or over who should possess a military base, just as a creditor state will have different preferences with respect to monetary policy than a debtor state.

We understand, of course, that the experiences of the USSR and Czechoslovakia demonstrate the relevance of prosperity to federal stability. Not only did the Soviet Union founder when it became apparent that the economic system governed by the national government destroyed economic value, but opposition to the Union first appeared in those regions (the Baltic republics) that felt most disadvantaged by the system while opposition to dissolution of the USSR was weakest in those regions (the Moslem republics) who were net beneficiaries of inter-regional transfers. Similarly in Czechoslovakia, the different character of the Czech and Slovak parts of the country, which promised a future in which the Slovak economy would require subsidies from the Czech half but in which the Czech half, with two thirds of the country's population, would be politically dominant, encouraged a mutually-agreed-upon dissolution of the federation. On the other hand, there are examples that tell us that mere prosperity imbedded in an institutional structure consonant with an $N+1$ person conceptualization of federalism cannot be sufficient for stability. Canada is prosperous, and few citizens of Quebec believe they will enjoy a significant increase in wealth upon separation. In fact, the secessionist's argument is somewhat the opposite -- separation will not impair Quebec's prosperity. Similarly, the states

of the Confederacy did not suffer economically relative to the rest of the United States prior to the outbreak of the Civil War. Although average incomes were somewhat less than those of the northeastern states, they were higher in the south (ignoring slaves) than in such staunch pro-Union states as Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, and Indiana (Easterlin 1960). This is not to say that economics did not lie at the heart of the conflict or that an $N+1$ person conceptualization of American federalism in 1860 was inappropriate, but only that the American Civil War did not arise simply because one part of the country was economically deprived relative to the rest or because the national government was financially unable to service its federal obligations.

We can conclude from all of this that our initial specification of the essential institutional characteristics of a democratic federation cannot be sufficient for stability. This is unfortunate since the $N+1$ person conceptualization of federalism that rationalizes them describes a great many federations, especially Russia, where "a bargaining model is not just analytically powerful, but also descriptively accurate" (Solnick 1996, p. 55). With a few prosperous regions protective of their relative prosperity, with a national government that must try to use some of that prosperity to buy out the opposition of other regions but that is otherwise poorly equipped to provide even the basic goods and services that are part of its general obligation, all types of conflict and sources of instability have full play (Polishchuk 1996). Unsurprisingly, then, regional and national governments have largely accepted this conceptualization as their model of federalism. While Moscow negotiates bilateral agreements with individual republics and regions as if it were conducting diplomatic relations with foreign powers, distributes financial resources on an ad hoc basis so as to mute regional unrest, contends with federal subjects over the meaning of the supremacy of federal law, and establishes the structure of representation in its parliament (primarily the Federation Council) merely to mollify the demands of regional bosses, those bosses and their governments struggle to meet the social obligations Moscow has abandoned (Wallich 1995), draft regional charters that are concerned more with wresting power from Moscow than with establishing coherent regional governmental structures (Smirniagin 1995), and compete against each other for a share of a shrinking pie. The promise of stability is presumed to lie in some future economic prosperity, in the inability of Russia's regions to engage in effective collective action against the center, or, at worst, in Moscow's threat to impose its will by military force.

However, although an $N+1$ person conceptualization of federal relations is the one that dominates the thinking of Russia's political leaders, it is not the one that Hamilton and Madison appeared to have had in mind when they wrote *The Federalist*. Perhaps their words were mere rhetoric designed to secure ratification of the U.S. Constitution. But in their view, a stable federation cannot be merely a prosperous state in which federal subjects are but another set of interests that must contend for national power and influence. Instead, "The proposed Constitution ... makes [state governments] constituent parts of the national sovereignty ... This fully corresponds, in every rational import of the term, with the idea of a Federal Government" (*Federalist* #9).

We cannot be certain what Hamilton and Madison meant by "constituent part" but we do know that the institutional devices of supremacy, representation, and direct access to the electorate were not, in and of themselves, necessary and sufficient for this end. Instead, these institutional provisions were devices intended to bring about some more general condition, an 'integrated' federation. Today we know that these devices are not sufficient to engender the requisite integration, since otherwise we would be hard pressed to explain the failure of the Czechoslovak federation, the American Civil War, and the tensions that currently bedevil Canada as contrasted with the presumed stability of

Germany, the United States, and Switzerland. But while our understanding of 'constituent part' may be vague and the list of conditions required to bring about the requisite integration incomplete, the history of federalism does not invalidate the general principle suggested by Hamilton and Madison that a federation can achieve stability if and only if its internal relations correspond to something other than an $N+1$ person game and more to something that somehow blurs the distinctions between levels of government. What we require, then, is a clearer understanding of 'constituent part', of how this idea relates to the regulation and management of conflict, and of the instrumental variables at our disposal that encourage the development of a federation that fits whatever understanding we can achieve. This is the task to which we now turn.

3. Political Parties

If we can imagine how we might think a stable federation **ought** to function, then it is tempting to define 'integration' or to conceptualize the notion of a properly formed federation as a multi-leveled system of government in which the structure of representation and authority engender a government in which each level has a well-defined constitutional realm of authority, in which both national and regional politicians respect the definitions of those realms, in which redefinition of those realms occurs only through constitutional amendment or consensual agreement, and in which voters must ultimately ratify any amendment or agreement. It is unlikely, though, that any state has ever existed under these terms. More importantly, it does not offer any suggestions as to how to achieve an 'integrated' federation. So instead, let us modify our definition slightly, as follows:

- each level has a *somewhat ambiguous* constitutional realm of authority,
- both national and regional politicians *find it in their self-interest* to respect the definitions of those realms,
- redefinition occurs only through constitutional amendment, consensual agreement, *or as a product of 'normal' public policy*,
- voters, *acting simultaneously as regional and national electorates*, must ultimately ratify any amendment, agreement, *or policy*.

To illustrate what we mean by this definition and its implications for the institutional design of a democratic federal state, let us consider three situations drawn from the American experience.

Case 1: Lubell (1952) tells the story of the Democratic candidate for local judge in New York City in the 1930's who, while running at the same time as a great many other local and state offices were being filled and Franklin Roosevelt competed for the presidency, gave the funds he had collected for his campaign to the local Democratic party in anticipation of professional assistance. Weeks went by, but he saw nothing on his behalf -- no posters, buttons, or radio broadcasts in support of his candidacy! Upon returning to party headquarters to complain, the head of the party took him to the southern tip of Manhattan where the ferry from Staten Island landed. As a ferry pulled into its dock, the party head pointed to the floating debris that swirled at the ferry's stern, towed by its wake, and said "the name of your ferry is Franklin Delano Roosevelt."

Case 2: Throughout the American Civil War, Lincoln enjoyed far greater success at maintaining a united front and at ensuring the subservience of state militias to national direction than did his counterpart in the confederacy, Jefferson Davis. McKittrick (1996), in his seminal essay comparing the political strategies and political fortunes of the opposing presidents, attributes this difference to the existence of a competitive party system in the North and an uncompetitive system in the South. Following secession, the South was left largely with a single-party system, the Democrats, whereas the North retained not only the Republican party but the northern wing of the Democratic party. That competition between them survived the war is attested to by the fact that although Republicans controlled all northern governorships after secession, they failed to maintain control everywhere during the war just as they failed to maintain control of all state legislatures. Republican political candidates, then, relied throughout the war on Lincoln's national leadership for their political survival just as Lincoln, uncertain of success against McClelland in the presidential election of 1864, never lost sight of the need to maintain the support of state and local Republican party organizations. In contrast, neither Davis nor the governors of the states of the Confederacy confronted such challenges. With a discredited Republican party, governors there confronted few immediate challenges to their political status and had little to gain politically from coordinating with Davis.

Case 3: Looking at one of the great historical failures of federalism -- the American Civil War -- we know that although America succeeded in establishing and reestablishing a succession of national parties (Federalists, Jeffersonians, Whigs, Democrats, and Republicans), neither the parties nor America generally ever fully resolved the regional conflict between Slave and Free. Nor can we say that the War interrupted progress to some resolution. In fact, no such resolution short of abolition was possible. In retrospect, the only alternative to war was the gradual diminution of slavery's profitability, but that impending economic imperative was not seen clearly in 1860, if it was seen at all. Had the South understood fully the inevitability of slavery's economic demise, and had the North seen the same timetable, a negotiated solution might have been achieved -- a solution that the country had desperately sought since virtually its very inception. However, we cannot say that the American party system failed to yield a resolution of the conflict; indeed, we might even say that the parties kept the conflict from tearing the Union asunder earlier, when it was even more vulnerable to disruption. For more than fifty years, America's parties facilitated a succession of compromises over slavery and maintenance of a balance between slave and free states in the Senate (e.g., the separation of Maine from Massachusetts, the admission of Texas, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the Missouri Compromise, the admission of California as a free state). Slavery, though, was an issue that could not be compromised forever, and its salience by 1860 precluded any Democrat (Stephen Douglas in particular) from occupying the White House. To side with slavery meant abandoning the North; to side with abolition was to abandon the South. So when compelled by events to choose between slave and free, the Democratic party split, thereby destroying its integrating role.

Our first case alone tells us a great deal about the relationship between local and national politicians, about the means for implementing an integrated federalism in which state governments are constituent parts of the national government, and, most importantly, about the role of political parties in ensuring that that integration occurs naturally and as a part of 'normal' politics. Briefly, the key characteristics of this example are the following:

- elections that simultaneously fill a great many local public offices,
- a local party organization designed to facilitate the election of its candidates to those local offices,
- the simultaneous election for a singularly visible national office, the presidency.

In an election in which voters confront scores of candidates for public office about whom they know little or nothing, the essential commodity possessed not only by the candidate for judge but by all others as well is their party label and the fact that this label is shared by other more visible candidates. Even when salient local and national issues do not coincide and even if personalities distort the relationship between national and local political outcomes, the fates of national and local politicians cannot be wholly separate. The multitude of candidates for local office rely on national political figures to give meaning to the party labels attached to their names that give direction to voters who cannot learn much about their candidacies. At the same time, neither Roosevelt nor any other presidential candidate can have the resources required to erect organizations that are as effective at mobilizing voters as are existing local party structures. Thus, although the name Roosevelt and the label "Democrat" doubtlessly helped the local candidate for judge and other Democratic candidates as well, Roosevelt depended on the local party as much as the local party depended on him.

This story is repeated in our account of Lincoln's relative success at coordinating the Union's war effort, so that in a symbiotic relationship like those found extensively in nature, we can see that in both America of the 1930's and the Union of the 1860's, regional and national candidates relied on each other for survival and success. The same is true today. This symbiotic relationship exists up and down America's political structure. The fates of local candidates are intimately connected to those of their parties' candidates for offices contested on a state-wide and national basis, while at the same time the success of a presidential candidate will depend on how effectively that candidate mobilizes state party organizations, which depends, in turn, on the extent to which state and local party candidates believe that their electoral success is linked to the success of the party's candidates for national office.

Notice, moreover, that this symbiotic relationship is accompanied by -- indeed, requires -- regional and local autonomy of political party organizations. No national organization dictates a party's nominees for state office or even for candidates for the national legislature. Those things are controlled largely by state organizations, which together control the nomination for the presidency. These state organizations, in turn, are creatures of local party bodies who dictate their parties' nominees for local office. National parties, then, are not merely federalized; they are wholly decentralized. This decentralized structure is critically important. Without local and regional autonomy, symbiosis disappears and is replaced by a command and control system in which national political elites struggle with local elites for control of the party. This struggle can only lead to a party that reproduces the *N*+1 person characterization of conflict inherent in an unintegrated federalism, which, in turn, threatens the disintegration of the party system.

The key, then, to understanding the meaning of 'integrated federalism' in the United States at least is to understand the structure of its political parties. Specifically, if we use the American experience to generate general lessons, we must conclude that the key to designing a democratic federal state lies in those constitutional and electoral institutions that encourage the development of parties that subvert or otherwise invalidate a simple $N+1$ person characterization of federal relations. That this lesson applies to the United States is unsurprising: "in a country which was always to be in need of the cohesive force of institutions, the national parties, for all their faults, were to become at an early hour primary and necessary parts of the machinery of government, essential vehicles to convey men's loyalties to the State" (Hofstadter, 1969: 70-1). And that it applies generally is suggested by Riker's (1964: 136) observation that "Whatever the general social conditions, if any, that sustain the federal bargain, there is one institutional condition that controls the nature of the bargain in all instances here examined and in all others with which I am familiar. This is the structure of the party system, which may be regarded as the main variable intervening between the background social conditions and the specific nature of the federal bargain."

Hamilton and Madison, of course, failed to foresee this role for parties if only because, absent any experience with parties as we know them today, they equated them with factions -- as things to be controlled by constitutional structures, not as things that ensure the proper functioning of those structures. Fortunately, the institutions they participated in erecting appear to have engendered parties of the right type at the right time. Thus, what remains to be done here in filling out our hypothesis about parties is to see what particular institutional features of America's federal system were critical to the development of parties of the requisite type and to examine other federations so that we might extend Riker's observation about the role of parties and our conclusions about the requisite institutional characteristics of successful federations.

4. Parties in Federal States

That America's parties are "vast, gaudy, friendly umbrellas under which all Americans, whoever and whatever and however-minded they may be, are invited to stand for the sake of being counted in the next election" (Rossiter 1960: 11) is part of American political folklore. In contrast, parties in Europe's parliamentary democracies are assumed to be characterized by their cohesiveness and absence of ideological ambiguity. But parties in, say, France, England, Sweden, and Italy need not serve the same function as parties in a federal state and, thus, the parties that should concern us are the ones we find in, say, Germany, Australia, and Switzerland. First, though, let us consider Canada, which is an especially important point of contrast given the apparent tenuous nature of its federal system.

We can begin by noting that although Canada's two primary national parties, the Liberals and Conservatives, look much like America's -- like large, all encompassing, umbrellas -- the similarity of Canada's party system to America's essentially ends there. Among the most evident differences are the following:

- Although the Conservatives and Liberals compete nationally in Canada, unlike in the United States, a variety of regional or purely provincial parties compete with each other and these two for provincial offices. Thus, although the Parti Québécois can control Quebec's government without competing in any other province, the

Liberal Party can, until the formation of the Bloc Québécois in 1990, capture virtually all of that province's representation in the national legislature.

- The fortunes of even Liberals and Conservatives at the provincial and national level need not correlate within a province. For example, although Ontario's Conservative party has won every provincial election since 1943, the Liberal party averaged over half of the seats filled by that province in the national parliament (Johnson 1980, McCormick 1989).
- Selection of delegates to the Democratic and Republican national party conventions are dominated by state party organizations, which are in turn largely creatures of local party organizations. In contrast, the national conventions of Canadian parties are dominated by national party organizations, which even at the provincial level are generally distinct from the party organizations bearing the same label that serve the candidacies of provincial politicians (Gibbins 1982).
- Between 1920 and today, five presidential candidates from third parties have succeeded in securing more than three percent of the vote in the United States, whereas in Canada, 'minor' parties achieved this level of support forty times in the same period, with most federal elections (14 of 22) being characterized by two or more such parties.

There is one additional fact that points to a critical difference between Canadian and American party systems. Specifically, although approximately half of those who held elective office before succeeding to the presidency of the United States served as governor of a state, no Prime Minister of Canada has ever served as head of a provincial government. Thus, while Schlesinger (1966: 200-1) writes of American politics that "within the states the most vigorous and ambitious men are drawn inexorably to the national arena, either to the Senate or to some place in the presidential office complex," Gibbins (1982: 141) notes that for Canada "there is very little movement from provincial to national office. Aspiring politicians appear to make an early choice between a provincial or a national career, and once launched on their path very few cross over. Provincial office is not a way station on the road to national office but rather an alternative."

In general, then, the American political system gives evidence of being a far more integrated system than the Canadian one, and lacks Canada's sharp distinction between regional and national politics. But now we must ask about the source of this difference, and here, of course, we can only offer reasoned speculations. It is tempting to begin with the fact that the U.S. is presidential and Canada is parliamentary, with the prime difference being that the rules of the U.S. electoral college greatly diminish the prospects for third parties, regional or otherwise. On the other hand, a variety of regional parties have sustained themselves in Canada without the prospect of formal national political power. But without wholly dismissing the potential differences between presidential and parliamentary federalisms, there are three other institutional differences that our example of the candidate for New York City judge suggests are critical:

- Except for special elections to fill vacancies, United States local, regional, and national elections occur simultaneously whereas in Canada they follow no specific schedule and, being proclaimed independently of each other, are generally held at different times.

- While over 600,000 offices are filled by election in the U.S. (if we exclude state legislative and judicial offices, the average number of state-wide offices filled by election is 12), Canadians elect only their representatives to the national parliament, provincial parliament, mayors, aldermen, and school boards (Gibbins 1982: 112).
- The U.S. Senate is a legitimate legislative body, whereas Canada's is not. The U.S. Senate, elected directly within the separate states and with a veto over legislation that cannot be overridden by the lower legislative chamber, contrasts with a largely ceremonial Canada Senate that is filled by appointment from Ottawa and does not represent provincial interests in any meaningful way.

We do not have the temerity to suggest that these three institutional factors alone explain the differences cited earlier between American and Canadian party systems, but it is foolish to suppose that they do not contribute importantly to those differences. The absence of simultaneous local, state, and national elections, in combination with a far smaller number of elections, can only reduce the value of common party labels across levels of government and the symbiotic relationship among political candidates from those levels. And the absence of a meaningful Senate can only increase the extent to which provincial governments and politicians regard the Canadian national government as an 'alien' force -- as the $N+1^{\text{st}}$ player in some $N+1$ person bargaining game.

However, to make this point more forcefully, it is useful to consider a third example, Germany, whose institutional structure seems wholly different from either that of Canada or the United States. The important point here is that although Germany is a parliamentary democracy like Canada, it has a party system that looks more like America's. Specifically,

- the national fortunes of each of its three largest parties -- the CDU/CSU, the SPD, and the FDP -- correlate highly with the fortunes of these parties in lander elections (Brady, Lohmann, and Rivers 1995),
- one of those three parties (generally either the CDU/CSU or SPD alone or in coalition with the FDP) controls each lander government,
- national party conventions are dominated by lander party organizations (Conradt 1986), and
- national political figures have roots in local politics to nearly the same extent as their American counterparts (Golsch 1995). Kiesinger and Kohl both served as Land minister-presidents, Brandt was mayor of Berlin, and Schmidt began his political career in local Hamburg politics.

Institutionally, Germany is like Canada in that neither requires simultaneous national and regional elections, and the upper legislative chamber in Germany, like Canada's, is appointive. But the similarity ends here. German elections, like their American counterparts, often involve filling vast numbers of lander, regional, district, county, and local offices, and unlike Canada's Senate and more like the U.S. Senate prior to passage of the 17th Amendment, deputies to the Bundesrat are appointed by lander governments rather than the national government. There is also the matter of the relative importance of the Bundesrat when compared to Canada's Senate. Although not constitutionally as powerful as the U.S. Senate (it does not have a universal veto), it can delay or veto all legislation that directly impacts the lander and its approval is required for all constitutional amendments. Insofar as the lower legislative chamber is concerned,

although half the seats of Bundestag are awarded to parties on the basis of each party's national vote share, party lists are regional, which, perhaps even more clearly than the American or Canadian single-mandate election format, gives the lander explicit representation in the lower legislative chamber. Finally, perhaps in compensation for the absence of a president elected independently of the national legislature, the lander and not some national bureaucracy controlled by the national government, are the primary administrators of national law.

The comparison of the American and German systems suggests that there is no unique path to the development of a party system that integrates state, local, and national public officials, but it is evident that both systems seek to satisfy the same principle of federal institutional design. The United States accomplishes this through extensive and simultaneous local, state, and national elections, a directly elected president, and a powerful upper legislative chamber with explicit state representation. Germany uses some of these devices (extensive use of elections, explicit representation in a meaningful upper legislative chamber) and substitutes some other things such as explicit lander representation in the lower legislative chamber. And although Germany eschews the presidential election and presidential nominating conventions as a means for ensuring state influence over the national executive branch, it instead requires direct lander involvement in the day-to-day administration and execution of federal law so that just as the fate of an American presidential candidate depends on state party organizations, the fate of a German governing party depends on the performance of the party organizations that govern the affairs of the lander.

Both Germany and the U.S. contrast sharply with Canada, which eschews explicit provincial representation in the national legislature and extensive use of elections to fill local and provincial public offices. Rather than design a system such as Germany's whereby the administrative functions of the national government are integrated with those of the provinces, or a system that compels national political organizations to be subservient to regional ones, it has a system that explicitly makes provincial governments and even provincial party organizations adversaries of national governments and party structures. Thus, although the U.S. and German political institutional systems encourage federalized parties that have an incentive to resolve inter- and intra-jurisdictional disputes, Canada's institutions discourage such incentives or at least fail to provide incentives to the same degree. In short, Canada's institutions seem more consonant with an $N+1$ person conceptualization of federalism whereas Germany's and America's encourage and even compel parties to integrate these $N+1$ actors.

4. The Prospects for Russian Federalism

The preceding discussion leads to the inescapable conclusion that when formulating its political institutions and when copying or modifying the institutions of other countries, Russia seems determined, at least with respect to the issues of designing a stable democratic federal system, to make bad choices or, when making a good choice, to make modifications that convert that choice into something else:

- **Duma elections:** Although Russia largely copied the German electoral system when choosing a method for electing Duma deputies, that system in combination with implementing legislation

- subverts a critical federalizing feature of the German system -- the requirement that **all** seats be allocated by proportional representation using regional lists, where the regions (lander) are **exogenously** defined and where the parties in them have full autonomy in the makeup of their lists.
- encourages an adversarial relationship between central and peripheral party structures by reserving the first set of party seats to be filled by election to a 'national' (read: Moscow) list,
- diminishes the representative role of Duma deputies by giving control over the geographic definition of the single-mandate constituencies to Moscow, which can only make deputies subservient to those in Moscow who determine district boundaries at the expense of the voters who elect them, and
- further reduces the autonomy of regions and regional political organizations by creating a Central Elections Commission with virtual police power over the administration of elections and the registration of parties.

Thus, if the Duma elections play any role in determining party structures and functions, we can only conclude that Russia's current electoral arrangements will, as in Canada, encourage only a top-down party system in which party leaders, centered in Moscow, must continually struggle to command the allegiance of regional and local political bosses, using threats of administrative sanction and promises of pecuniary gain. We should not be surprised, then, to see local and regional political bosses, absent party labels, compete successfully against the candidates of national parties, as occurred recently (March 1996) in Yaroslavl oblast and Stavropol krai, when local administrative bosses defeated communist party candidates for local and regional offices despite the fact that the communist party was notably successful in those oblasts in the latest (December 1995) parliamentary election.

- **The Federation Council:** Although Russia now possesses a bicameral national legislature modeled after the American and German systems, with an upper legislative chamber to represent its 89 regions and republics,
 - Yeltsin's preference for a hand-picked Federation Council that is little more than his legislative shield threatens, as in Canada, to render the Duma the region's only independent voice in the national government.
 - the constitutional authority of the Duma to over-ride the Federation Council's veto of ordinary legislation further reduces the Council's relevance and once again moves Russia closer to the Canadian model than to Germany's or America's.
 - the decision to 'form' the Federation Council by seating regional governors and heads of regional legislatures as deputies renders the Council a part-time legislature.

Although this last provision bears close resemblance to the German Bundesrat and to the U.S. Senate prior to the 17th Amendment, equating Council deputies with regional governors and heads of regional legislatures discourages the rise of regional political personalities separate from these officials, and thereby encourages autocratic regional political systems. Also, the failure to require direct election of Federation Council deputies removes one of the rungs in the

ladder of political advancement between regional and national politics and encourages regional governors, when seeking to speak on national issues, to campaign, as in Canada, against the national government. Finally, the impotence of the Federation Council as compared to the Duma in all legislative matters except constitutional amendments and constitutional law threatens to make the Council little more than a symbolic pawn in the power struggle between the president and the Duma.

- **Regional Elections:** Although direct election of regional governors will take Russia part way toward encouraging a top up development of parties,
 - the encouragement such elections give to the development of intra-regional political competition will be offset by the absence of other visible region-wide elected positions,
 - direct election of regional governors with a constitutional obligation to oversee the actions of the Duma and president via their automatic status as Federation Council members, encourages those governors, like provincial ministers in Canada, to campaign against Moscow or the president when seeking reelection.

Current electoral arrangements in the regions are critically deficient. Filling only a single elected office, the governor, on a region-wide basis provides little encouragement for the development of multiple power centers within each region, and, thus once again, encourages autocratic rule within the regions. At the same time, limiting elections to the offices of governor, mayor, and deputies to regional and local legislatures subverts the value of party labels, encourages candidates to focus on personalities rather than on general party platforms, and discourages the development of a symbiotic relationship between local, regional, and national political elites like the one illustrated by our American example of the candidate for local judge.

- **The Presidency:** Finally, although Russia's new constitution provides for a directly elected president who might serve as a powerful unifying force for Russia's infant party system,
 - the election timetable imposed by Yeltsin precludes simultaneous presidential-legislative elections, and minimizes that unifying role, and,
 - by empowering the president to suspend any regional administrative act he deems unconstitutional, the constitution renders the presidency a constant threat to each region and reenforces the $N+1$ game character of Russian federalism at the expense of political integration.

The shortcomings of this second feature of the constitutional structure of the Russian presidency might not be so glaring were it not for the first feature -- the election timetable -- and the procedures for electing Duma deputies. First, that timing and procedures make the Duma election little more than a presidential primary as we see them in the United States so that, rather than encouraging the consolidation of national parties, it encourages their proliferation. Perhaps more importantly, electing half the Duma on the basis of national party-list proportional representation

independently of the President allows both the President and the Duma to lay competing claims to an electoral mandate and thereby encourages legislative-executive conflict (Ordeshook 1995) and is a well established source of political instability in presidential systems (Jones 1996, Mainwaring 1990). Such conflict is not, of course, unknown in presidential systems even when presidential and legislative elections are held simultaneously. But to the extent that the Duma is a voice of the regions in national politics owing to seats filled in the single-mandate districts, this conflict encourages presidential-regional relations of the sort we attribute earlier to Jefferson Davis and the Confederacy rather than the type which characterized Lincoln's relations with state elected officials from his party.

This review of institutional deficiencies leads to anything but an optimistic assessment of the prospects for Russian federalism and democracy. Nevertheless, several of the deficiencies on our list can be addressed with feasible political institutional reforms that do not run counter to any well-entrenched set of interests. Specifically, keeping in mind again the lessons taught us by the American, German, and Canadian experiences, the pros and cons of the following modifications in Russia's political institutional structure should be considered:

- eliminate the 'national' (Moscow centered) part of each party's list for the Duma elections, and fully implement the German system for proportional representation. Establish ten or so roughly equally populous proportional representation electoral districts and require that parties submit only regional lists when competing to fill the 225 proportional representation Duma seats. It is important here, moreover, to emphasize that these elections districts are only that -- election districts -- and not a political recombination of Russia's 89 (88?) regions and republics.
- In a move that is unlikely to meet with any strong opposition within the Duma, extend the current Duma's tenure by six months so as to allow for the simultaneous election of president and Duma by the year 2000.
- Encourage regional charters that allow for the simultaneous election of as many regional and local government officials as is practical, including regional and local prosecutors, judges, vice-governors, sheriffs, and auditors, and require as well direct voter approval of all regional charters, constitutions, and amendments to those documents. Regional and local governments might even consider the creation of new offices to be filled by direct vote. These offices need not possess any meaningful authority, but the opportunity to compete for them would give local and regional aspirants for meaningful office a stepping stone to those offices and, at the same time, would increase the value of partisan labels, thereby encouraging the growth of regional and local parties.
- If it is infeasible to require the direct election of members of the Federation Council, instead allow regional governors and regional Dumas to jointly appoint representation in the Federation Council, where those deputies cannot hold any other appointive or elected position. Allowing regional governors and legislatures to appoint deputies to the Council does not diminish their authority, but it does afford governors and legislators an opportunity to form visible political coalitions among those who seek public office, which is an essential ingredient in the creation and maintenance of a political party.
- Allow regional governments greater independent taxing authority. Such a reform would decrease the opportunities of regional governors to entirely blame Moscow for fiscal mismanagement and financial shortfalls, and, thereby, diminish the incentives of regional politicians, when running for office, to campaign

"against Moscow" and increases the likelihood that they will campaign against each other. Again, this can only increase the incentives for the development of regional party organizations that would have an incentive to forge links with national parties.

- Give regional governments control over the geographical definition of the single-mandate Duma districts within them, give them the authority to require that deputies be residents of the regions they represent, and, in general, decentralize the authority of the Central Elections Commission.

Aside from feasibility, one objection to this list of proposed reforms is that increased regional autonomy with respect to elections and greater use of elections for the selection of public officials will increase the likelihood of vote fraud, and will thereby diminish the legitimacy of all elections. It is, of course, unclear whether there is room for any additional fraud. But the fact is that just as there is only one way to eliminate inefficiency in markets, there is only one way to eliminate election fraud -- competition. And competition requires competitive regional parties. However, the development of such parties is retarded if there is electoral competition for only one meaningful office -- the regional governor. Instead, such competition encourages only boss rule, which provides the surest guarantee of fraudulent elections. In addition, boss rule reinforces the adversarial and purely redistributive character of Russian federalism. Absent the need to compete against an organized opposition, regional bosses, like governors in the American Confederacy during the Civil War, can maintain their positions merely by being perceived by their constituents as commanding a gallant struggle against Moscow on behalf of their regions.

Failure to comply with this list not only ensures a polity plagued by fraud and corruption, but also one that renders any plan for a coherent economic system unattainable. Regardless of what utopian schemes are generated or implemented (for such proposals absent the requisite political reforms see Wallich 1994), they will eventually be corrupted unless the political system itself encourages an integrated and coordinated federalism. Until and unless Russia's regions are made 'constituent parts' of the national government and until and unless that government bears symbiotic democratic relationship to regional and local governments, any new economic reform or policy will at best merely open new venues for inter-regional conflict and for a struggle between Moscow and regional governments for autonomy and power. It may be true that any improvement in Russia's economy will also improve its chances for becoming a democratic state. We cannot deny that current circumstances, especially the relative impoverishment of many regions, greatly enhances interregional conflict as well as the willingness of members of the national legislature to be 'bought off' by Moscow's corporate interests (Polishchuk 1996). But the development of a more productive economy by itself will not resolve matters since productivity alone merely increases the rents each level of government can hope to wrest from the other.

Russia's great economic inequality across regions is, admittedly, a profound barrier to the development of democratic federalism. But if we look again at the American Civil War as the quintessential example of failed federalism, we see that none of the internal conflicts that currently bedevil Russia seem as divisive as the issue of slavery. The things that pit one region of Russia against another today are not like the moral dilemmas that confronted America, but are merely economic and, hence, more readily resolvable. However, another lesson of the American Civil War is that although some degree of economic prosperity almost certainly remains a necessary precondition for a stable federation, economic prosperity alone cannot suffice. As we note earlier, both North and South were about

equally prosperous in 1860. Instead, the Civil War occurred because the issue of slavery disrupted the integrating role of America's parties. America did for a time develop a party system that facilitated integration and compromise and without that system America would in all likelihood have dissolved earlier and permanently, without war and without slavery as the primary source of disruption. But even though we can see no single issue that might disrupt a party system in Russia to the same extent that slavery disrupted America's, the danger for Russia is that it will fail to develop any integrative party system in the first place. Mere proposals for economic reform, for reform of fiscal relations between Moscow and federal subjects, or for the use of explicit revenue-sharing formulas, absent political institutional reform, will almost certainly be for naught. Until and unless the fundamentals of the self-interest of Russia's politicians change, economic and fiscal 'reform' will only change the currency and magnitude of today's transactions but will in general retard the development of a truly efficient and smoothly functioning federal state.

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