

## **New Regionalism in Russia: Is the Western European Experience Applicable?**

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### **Abstract :**

The aim of the present article is to explore Western approaches to regionalism in order to analyze how the Russian experience of regionalism can fit into the existing paradigm. After having examined Western European theoretical approaches to regionalism ('old' and 'new' regionalism are compared) and experience in regional policy, the article examines the obstacles and opportunities for the rise of new regionalism in Russia. The primary statement of the article is that the political mobilization of Russian regions is dependent not only on external pressures (be it globalization and Europeanization), national pressures (dominance of the state-centred approach), but also on internal regional factors, such as the style of regional leadership, economic potential and proximity to the border which can shape the strength of regional 'actorness'. To show the validity of the proposed hypothesis, the regions endowed with such factors are studied through the prism of the analytical framework of 'opportunity structures'.

### **Introduction**

In spite of the fact that the pendulum has dramatically shifted towards defederalisation in the Russian Federation (RF) during Putin's presidency, it seems to be premature to say farewell to the federalism debate.<sup>1</sup> Considering growing interdependence as a recent trend in world politics and the need for cooperation between the European Union (EU) and Russia, one has to assume that the logical result of a spillover effect would be the gradual convergence of values and norms encompassing all concerned actors. In this regard, as the European experience shows, it can be stated that the new approach to regionalism - based on functional cooperation, economic rationale and horizontal linkages between state and non-state actors - is gradually replacing the old approach of a Westphalian system, which is based on the primacy of the nation-state as the only actor defining the rules of the game in international relations.<sup>2</sup> However, this change is a gradual and conflictual process, since the proponents of the state-centred approach regard their unconventional counterparts (such as regions, NGOs, and civil society groups) as a threat to their security interests. The result of their interaction is neither predictable nor universal for all countries and regions. Rather, the final outcome always depends on the existing levels of interdependence, the possibilities of a functional cooperation, as well as the prominence of shared or divided identities, and the nature of the states and regimes.

The contemporary theories of international relations and comparative regionalism are rarely applied explicitly when discussing Russian regions. On the contrary, the debates about the uniqueness of Russia and the impossibility of any comparison between Russia and Europe are now getting more vociferous in national political discourse. Against this background, the article aims to examine

Russian regional developments through the prism of the new regionalism approach and to explore the obstacles facing this exercise.

In the first part, the complexity of regional mobilisation will be examined by analysing the top-down and bottom-up approaches to regionalism (also known as 'old' and 'new' regionalism respectively) in the context of European integration. In the second part, by exploring the Western European experience with regional policy, the paper will analyse how 'opportunity structures' can induce structural change and hence facilitate regional mobilisation. In order to challenge the 'hard structuralism' approach, it will be argued that regions do not always passively operate within given structures but can obtain their own agency, which puts them into inter-subjective relations with the structures. In the third part, the analytical framework on regional mobilisation is applied to Russia. The purpose of this exercise is to find out what obstacles and opportunities there are to accepting and implementing the new regionalism approach. The main argument in this part is that the political mobilisation of Russian regions is dependent not only on external pressures (be it globalisation or Europeanisation) and on national pressures (dominance of the state-centred approach), but also on internal regional factors such as the style of regional leadership, economic potential and proximity to the border which can shape the strength of regional 'actorness'.<sup>3</sup> To show the validity of the proposed hypothesis, the regions endowed with such factors (e.g. the North-Western Russian regions participating in the EU Northern Dimension (ND) initiative and a Siberian region Krasnoyarsk kray) will be studied through the prism of the analytical framework of 'opportunity structures'.

## 1. Revisiting the theoretical approaches to regionalism

Starting with the seventeenth century German philosopher Althusius, the European political tradition has been rich in regionalist and federalist ideas. However, until recently state-centred approach based on the centralisation and hierarchical vision of centre-regional relations has remained dominant in the territorial politics of the nation-states. The underlying logic of such an approach is the idea of holism, according to which the 'whole' is more important than the parts. In regional policy this idea implies that the state is the sole bearer of the national interests and the distributor of public goods, whereas regions, with their specific interests, identities and needs are disregarded as active political actors.<sup>4</sup>

Even with the spread of the welfare state policy in the second half of the twentieth century, the state still remained the sole actor endowed with the exclusive state prerogative to formulate the principles of the regional policy. Although the aim of this policy was to support the backward regions and reduce regional disparities, the regions were deprived of any decision-making powers, since they were regarded just as administrative territorial units of economic planning. This hierarchical approach to centre-regional relations (or 'top-down' approach) was pertinent to the regional policy of both European nation-states and the European Commission (EC) until the end of the 1970s<sup>5</sup> and came to be known as 'old regionalism'.<sup>6</sup>

According to Loughlin, the centre-regional relations at the period of the 'old regionalism' can be described as a 'principal-agent model in which the state, 'the principal', co-opts sub-national authorities to act as 'agents' in the delivery of the welfare services.'<sup>7</sup> Within this hierarchical view of centre-regional relations, the emergence of a distinctive regional identity was perceived as an infringement of the territorial integrity; therefore, as always, it was perceived as a conflictual

zero-sum game. The presence of a strong centre and a weak periphery inherently implied the presence of confrontational relationships and the possibility of revolt. According to Gottman, 'confrontation is central to the centre-periphery model', especially once 'politics is introduced into the spatial pattern'.<sup>8</sup> The examples of the politicisation of the regional predicaments in the 1960s are the revival of regionalist/nationalist politics marked by a social and cultural agenda rather than economic development factors in Scotland, Wales, Brittany, Corsica, Catalonia, the Basque country and in Belgium.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, as Keating states, at that time the cultural demands or the demands for regional autonomy stemmed from social movements within the stateless nations, also known as 'historic nations'.<sup>10</sup>

The politicisation of the centre-regional relations, pertinent to the period of the welfare state and associated with 'old regionalism', was followed by a period of neo-liberalism (from the 1970s to the early 1990s), which dramatically changed the character of centre-regions relations from the 'principal-agent' to the 'choice' model.<sup>11</sup> In the latter model the regional authorities started to mobilise their resources through developing their competitive advantages and establishing 'alliances with other local authorities, both inside and outside their nation-states'.<sup>12</sup>

This period was characterised by a multiplicity of different centres of power and the focus on competitiveness, economic efficiency and depoliticisation (called 'globalisation' by Derrida,<sup>13</sup> or 'governmentality'<sup>14</sup> by Foucault) and has been associated with the new regionalism. Economic interdependence and the creation of multiple functional spaces have also resulted in the dispersion of power among multiple centres of power. This phenomenon has been called multi-level governance, which describes a shift from hierarchical modes of regulation towards negotiated modes of decision-making, where horizontal linkages between public, private, and territorial tiers prevail.<sup>15</sup>

Apart from the change in the centre-periphery relations, this development was explained by the enhanced need for more localised thinking and the ability to anchor national and supra-national policy convincingly at a regional level, and in even smaller entities. Gren defines 'new regionalism' as 'a response to new economic realities when the globalisation of the market and continental economic as well as political integration supplanted the old order of separated national economies and policy-making'.<sup>16</sup>

Unlike the old regionalism, characterised as being conservative, resistant to change, dominated by politics of identity and separatist sentiments, new regionalism is considered to be modern, outward-looking and pursuing the autonomy of the region through peaceful means (such as decentralisation, regionalisation and federalism) without destabilising the state.<sup>17</sup>

This new regionalism is also considered as a form of 'democratic maturation'<sup>18</sup> and an 'adaptation to the new conditions of modernity'.<sup>19</sup> The important implication of the regional mobilisation has become the decline of nation-state sovereignty, undermined both internally and externally by the 'multi-centric' paradigm introduced by the transnational networks.<sup>20</sup>

Recently, the new regionalism approach has been revisited. Many authors have come to the conclusion that it is no longer relevant to talk about the watershed between 'old' and 'new regionalism'. Instead, one should take into account the diverse forms of regionalism, existing not only in Europe but extending to a global scale, where political and economic rationales can be

closely intertwined. Within this new perspective, a region is understood both as an economic and a political entity. As MacLeod points out, the attempt to represent regions as purely economic powers where 'everyone is a winner' is misleading (can be a 'dangerous obsession'), since it does not include the idea of 'inter-territorial competition and socioeconomic relations of exploitation', which could be highly politically hued and result in political conflicts of interest.<sup>21</sup>

The terrorist attacks of the Basque nationalists in Spain, the eruption of the bloody riots of the nationalist IRA in Northern Ireland, as well as the growing popularity of Flemish nationalism leading to political crisis in Belgium prove that the 'old regionalism', understood as a call for historic roots, has not become outdated in the era of globalisation. Nation-states also remain the main gatekeepers, reluctant to give up their sovereignty from above, at the leadership level, to below, at the grassroots level. This could be seen at the early stages of European integration, when Charles de Gaulle and Margaret Thatcher stimulated nationalist feelings by attacking Brussels, and up to recent days, when the referenda on signing the Constitutional Treaty in Europe failed due to the negative vote of the people of France and the Netherlands. Therefore, while functional logic becomes increasingly important in transnational relations, one should not forget about the autonomous role of politics in translating functional pressures into behaviour and actions.

After having compared the different trends of regionalism, the question to be raised is the following: how can we understand the complexity of regional mobilisation? More specifically, how can frequently countervailing external and internal pressures impact on the rise of regional mobilisation? To answer these questions let us examine the complex constellations of variables at the global, national, regional and personal/individual levels which shape the character of regionalisation at any given time.

## **2. Towards a consolidated framework of regional mobilisation**

### **2.1. Opportunity structures for regional mobilisation**

One of the ways to explain regional mobilisation can be through recourse to the concept of 'opportunity structures',<sup>22</sup> which in Lecours' interpretation means internal and external institutional contexts which may impose many constraints as well as present opportunities for regional action.<sup>23</sup>

Based on a 'hard structuralist' approach, the concept presupposes a direct pre-determinancy between the structures at the regional level and the type of regional agency that would emerge without leaving much room for regional maneuvering beyond the given structures. Nonetheless, Lecours' analytical framework can still be a useful tool to explain regional mobilisation.<sup>24</sup>

#### **Table 1. Opportunity structures for paradiplomacy<sup>25</sup>**

As can be seen from Lecours' classification, there are four opportunity structures located at four levels of his analysis: regional, national, continental and global. Each level is defined by specific variables.

For the regional level the most important dimensions are the formal powers and the institutional development (such as, for example, the competences of the regions in the federal state) of the regions and the party system (namely, nationalist, regionalist, or ethnolinguistic parties).<sup>26</sup> In

addition to Lecours' definition of regional structures as primary institutional resources, Bartolini indicates other factors which are important to develop 'regional competitiveness', such as the concentration of economic resources in the region, access to fiscal resources and non-state financial markets, cultural distinctiveness, and political resources.<sup>27</sup>

The structures at the national level, such as the formal constitutional framework, the intergovernmental relations, the representation of regional governments in federal institutions, and the national foreign policy agenda are important for regional mobilisation since they define the limits, or 'appropriateness' of the regional actorness. As Lecours explains, the federal logic of divided sovereignty can be employed by the regions to justify that the regional internal competences will naturally be extended beyond national borders. At the same time, the lack of representation of federated entities at the federal level may impede regional actorness. A national foreign policy focused only on hard security issues can also act as an obstacle to sub-national forms of cooperation. In other words, these structures at the national level can be characterised as the 'state traditions'.<sup>28</sup>

The third level of analysis according to Lecours' classification is the continental level. At this level of analysis, supranational structures play an important role in influencing regional mobilisation. In the case of the EU, the emergence of regions and regionalist movements has been encouraged by the EC mainly through two mechanisms: (1) the establishment of direct links with the regions in the member states, thus, linking the regional level directly to the European level and building the multi-level governance ('institutional pressure') and (2) the promotion of the concept of 'partnership' across levels of government, hence socialising the actors in this frame of principles through social learning ('normative pressure').<sup>29</sup>

The first mechanism is related to the membership conditionality (applicable to EU member states and countries preparing for EU membership). An example of the institutional pressure of the EU has been the regional policy of the Structural Funds and the establishment of the European Regional Fund in 1975, which forced the member states to create a regionalised system in accordance with the map of European regions based on three scales, NUTS 1, 2 and 3.

The principles of partnership and subsidiarity introduced in the Structural Action Funds in 1988 and developed further in the Maastricht Treaty envisage the close cooperation between European, national and regional levels of government in implementing the national strategies.

Under pressure from the EU and through the regulations imposed via the distribution of the Structural Funds, many European states were forced to pursue the policy of decentralisation when the regions were recognised as administrative/territorial units - even in formerly unitarian states such as Ireland, Greece, Belgium, France, Portugal, Great Britain, etc.<sup>30</sup>

The second mechanism exerts 'normative pressures' through 'social influence', 'persuasion' or 'social learning'.<sup>31</sup> In accordance with this approach, non-EU countries modify their practices not due to the concrete pressures on their behaviour, but through the influence of norms which 'either persuade, shame, or praise actors into changing their policies'.<sup>32</sup> Illustrative examples of normative pressure, or 'social learning', are the EC initiatives to foster cross-border and trans-regional cooperation (like INTERREG, The RECITE Pilot Project, PHARE, etc.). Although the normative pressure of the EU presumably extends beyond its territorial borders, the effects of this mechanism turned out to be quite doubtful. For instance, unlike in Western Europe, in Central

and Eastern Europe (CEE), the pressure of Europeanisation did not mature into the fully-fledged decentralisation of the regional governments. On the contrary, the CEE being historically afraid of separatism and federalism, was reluctant to go through large scale decentralisation reforms.<sup>33</sup>

Therefore, we can see that European mechanisms putting normative pressure on the states have had a rather limited impact and still leave plenty of room for manoeuvre to the nation-states in implementing the requirements of the EU's regional policy, such as designing initiatives and defining how the specific organisation for the practical management of the Structural and the Cohesion Funds should be set up.<sup>34</sup>

Finally, in the context of the global system the following opportunity structures are important: (1) the readiness of international organisations to accept regions as members; (2) the preference of the states themselves to establish diplomatic-like relations with regional governments; (3) the attitude of other regions towards mutual cooperation; and (4) the effects of the global system.<sup>35</sup>

The exogenous pressure of globalisation on the regional mobilisation can be explained by the regime theories which stipulate that international regimes can change domestic policy, since the self-interest itself is not constant, but the change happens rather gradually over time.<sup>36</sup> As Keohane explains, international regimes include four components: principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures, where the linkage of the first three components gives the regime legitimacy. Similarly, according to Deutsch, the crucial factor for the domestic regime change in the process of integration is social interaction, whereas institutions and political predictions remain secondary. An increasing level of social interaction and communication leads democratic governments to the formation of a security community, in which no state or region poses a threat to another.<sup>37</sup>

## **2.2. Endogenous mechanisms for the rise of new regionalism**

Lecours argues that his analytical framework is a bridge between the agency and structure approaches;<sup>38</sup> yet, he focuses only on structures that shape actors' preferences and formulate policy outcomes without considering that interests are not always constructed by institutions, but may exist independently from them.

Besides, within 'hard structuralism' he attributes the change potential only to the continental and global structures while the domestic structures are presented as static ones, deprived of the dynamic element of political interactions. In the words of Cizar, 'when the level of domestic politics is defined in terms of the structure-like properties, the model becomes surprisingly parsimonious and motionless'.<sup>39</sup>

The solution which Cizar suggests is to introduce an actor-centred approach which can convey interactions of actors operating transnationally. In this regard, the role of regional agency can complement the explanations provided by hard structuralism and serve as a useful tool in explaining the mechanisms of change.

The most visible evidence of the importance of regional agency is that in the context of the common external opportunity structures (be it for instance state transformation, globalisation and/or Europeanisation), the regions can respond differently, opting for adaptation or resistance. Since the regions are both action spaces and actors at the same time,<sup>40</sup> one must look at the opportunity

structures as well as the dynamic characteristics of regional agency.

The explanation for the different choices of the regional strategies is that regional mobilisation can be driven by endogenous mechanisms at the regional level. In addition to the institutional structures of the regions such as the electoral system and the level of autonomy, the presence of a distinctive regional identity should not be underestimated either. Unlike institutional structures, regional identity is not static but depends on the type of region and the ability of regional elites to mobilise actors on identity grounds when necessary.

The degree of regional mobilisation depends on the stage of regional identity development which, according to Keating's classification, ranges from cognitive and affective steps to instrumental ones. The instrumental element of regional identity is the most important one because it can be 'used as a framework for mobilisation and collective action in pursuit of social, economic and political goals'<sup>41</sup>, notably in voting and referenda.

While analysing Keating's description of the mechanism of regional mobilisation, it can be deduced that the role of political elites' interests is decisive in the instrumentalisation of regional identity. The bearers of this instrumentalisation according to Schmitt-Egner are regional elites. In different types of regions particular elites play prominent roles: (1) cultural and political elites are the most influential in identity regions; (2) political and bureaucratic agents are especially significant in administrative regions; and (3) economic elites are important in structural regions.<sup>42</sup> As can be observed from the experience of regional mobilisation in the EU, in some periods of regional development, elites can opt not for the functional type of their demands, but for the politicisation of their predicaments, potentially leading to conflicts. Evidence for this statement is provided by the change in the regional perception of European integration from 1979 until today. While analysing the evolution of the sub-national parties' goals with regard to Europe, Hepburn distinguishes three periods.<sup>43</sup> Whereas the first (1979-87) and the third periods (1996-2005) are characterised by regional animosity towards Europe, the second (1988-95) period is marked by regional receptivity to Europe. This receptivity to Europe during the second period is explained by the fact that since the mid-1980s the EU started to encourage regional mobilisation by significantly increasing EU funding for the regions (under the Structural and Cohesion Funds), adopting the principles of subsidiarity and partnership (enshrined in the Maastricht Treaty on the European Union in 1992), and providing opportunities for regional representation primarily at the supranational level - through such institutions as the Committee of the Regions. The embodiment of such a functional strategy with regards to Europe was the reason behind the increased popularity of the 'Europe of the Regions' concept, which sets replacing the states by the regions in the post-modern European polity as a long-term goal. At the same time, during the other periods, when Europe did not provide sufficient opportunity structures (marked by the lack of institutionalisation in the first and inefficiency in the third period) for regional empowerment, the negative attitude towards Europe became prevailing among regional political elite. Besides, the change in regions' attitude vis-à-vis Europe was also accompanied by the change in the regions' relations with the national centre. In other words, regions can apply functional strategies towards the actors which provide them with the best opportunities to satisfy their core needs.<sup>44</sup> As Sterling-Folker argues in line with the neo-functional assumptions about the primacy of interests, 'the relationship between social practices, identity and interests is inverted. (...) Identity is not an antecedent to interests but is itself a result of functional institutional efficiency related to interest and environment.'<sup>45</sup>



The analysis of the mechanisms of change in regional mobilisation can provide us with a few preliminary findings. Firstly, the impact of external pressures such as globalisation and Europeanisation on regional actorness is very limited (and should not be overestimated). Secondly, politicisation or the depoliticisation of regional predicaments is conditioned by the interpretation of the regional interests by the political entrepreneurs (whether political or economic elites), who can use identity as an instrument to achieve their goals.

### **3. The significance of new regionalism for Russian regional development**

#### **3.1 Endogenous constraints for the emergence of new regionalism in Russia**

The state-centred hierarchical approach has always been pertinent to the Russian national historical tradition. During the Soviet period, the political system was centralised so that it completely excluded any possibility for regions to perform as independent players not only in international relations but even in developing inter-regional networks. However, unlike the Soviet period of Russian statehood when the political structure was described as ‘federal in form but not in content’, the post-Soviet development of Russian federalism represents a complex ongoing process, where the key objective for state survival has been how to find a balance between centripetal and centrifugal forces, territorial and ethno-territorial principles of federalism. The two consecutive periods of Yeltsin’s (1991-2000) and Putin’s (2000-2008) rule represent two extremes wherein the principles of federalism, such as self-rule and shared-rule, were in different ways violated.

After the collapse of the USSR under the rule of President Yeltsin, the federal centre was very weak and did not have a clear vision of federal development in Russia. Although the 1993 Russian Constitution proclaimed Russia a federal state with different types of constituent units,<sup>46</sup> it did not include the article defining the powers of the regions (especially financial ones). Instead, the Constitution specified the powers of the federal authorities (Art. 71) and the joint jurisdiction of the Federation and the regions (Art. 72). Another problem which the Constitution could not solve is the issue of the asymmetry of the different constituent units. On the one hand, the Law proclaims the equality of all members of the federation (Article 72, Clause 2), but on the other, in Article 5 it calls national republics ‘states’ (in contrast with other constituents).<sup>47</sup>

The lack of clarity on the centre-regions delimitation of powers and competences provoked outspoken resistance from the national republics which started to adopt their own laws, which contradicted the federal legislation with regard to questions of sovereignty, of associative status with the RF, and of endowment with international legal personality.<sup>48</sup>

The federal centre, which was weak at the time and feared complete disintegration, had to satisfy regions’ claims through accepting the practice of signing bilateral treaties with them. Starting with the Treaty with the Republic of Tatarstan in 1994, the centre had signed 46 such treaties by 1998. The specific feature of these treaties was that they were highly political arrangements, coming into force exclusively on the authority of the executive branch of the respective regional and federal governments without being ratified by either the federal or regional legislatures.<sup>49</sup> The use of informal practices in the bargaining with the centre was common practice. As Graham explains, ‘While the more ambitious leaders seized more power locally, the more timid were compelled to



assume more responsibility as a matter of survival'.<sup>50</sup>

These practices do not correspond to the bottom-up regionalism to be found in the Western European experience. This rise of the regions, which started with the 'parade of the sovereignties' in the early 1990s in Russia, was not a result of the well-developed regional strategies coupled with the democratic maturation of civil society groups,<sup>51</sup> but rather an abrupt empowerment of the regional political elites. The typical feature of this regionalisation was that the regional power was structured only by one group of interest – the political regional elite – which used their unlimited administrative resources to get hold of the regional economic wealth mainly through controlling the privatisation of economic assets inherited from Soviet times. As Turovsky points out, another important leverage of the regional leaders has been their enormous informal influence on the implementation of the federal policy in their regions, such as in the fields of law enforcement and tax collection (which gained them support from the regional businesses).<sup>52</sup> By creating allies with private local economic elites and restricting access to privatisation for the outsiders (business groups outside the region), the regional political elites managed to strengthen their powers.<sup>53</sup>

In this mono-polar model of the regional political regime thus created, the head of the executive power has become the key political and decision-making centre. Such a model has been especially visible in the ethnic republics<sup>54</sup>, since they have managed to gain the most extensive powers through using the ethnicity instrument to implicitly threaten the federal centre with the possibility of secession. In these regions authoritarian tendencies<sup>55</sup> continue to be the most sustainable. Even today the heads of some influential ethnic republics such as Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, etc. have continued to be in power since the early 1990s and have remained to be on good terms with the federal centre.

In order to deal with the emerged regional asymmetry (asymmetric federalism) as well as with the tendencies of disintegration and separatism, the government of President Putin conducted reforms (such as the establishment of the seven territorial districts with the plenipotentiary representatives of the President, the reform of the Upper chamber of the Federal Council, the cancellation of the regional heads' elections and its replacement with the appointment system, the equalisation strategy, the bringing into line of the regional legislation with the federal one) aimed at strengthening the 'power vertical' and establishing a more centralised state system.

However, in spite of the proclaimed objective to combat asymmetry and erase informal practices, the mechanism of centre-regions relations did not really change. The mono-polar system was so deep-rooted that it was not significantly challenged by Putin's reforms. Instead of formal channels of regional participation such as the Federal Council, the regions with strong bargaining capacity still resort to informal mechanisms of participation through heading the regional branches of the mighty pro-Kremlin party 'United Russia'. In exchange for their loyalty, the regional governments can be supported by the federal centre to prolong their stay in power. The most emblematic piece of evidence for this statement can be the surprising lack of any regional resistance when the seemingly anti-regional laws were adopted. For example, the amendment to the 2004 Federal Law on the appointment of the regional executives has been widely supported by regional leaders. The price for loyalty was that many incumbent governors were reappointed, in some cases even before the end of their terms, as was the case, for example, of the president of Tatarstan Shaimiev, whose fourth term was accepted in 2005. Generally speaking, by 2008 only one third out of all the appointed regional executives consisted of new people.<sup>56</sup> The reason why it was beneficial for

the federal centre to reappoint the regional executives was that officials, especially from ethnic republics, have been always skilful in gaining a high electoral turnout in favour of the federal ruling parties and leaders.<sup>57</sup>

As a result of the strength of these informal practices, the financial asymmetry between regions increased during Putin's term. As the Minister of Regional Development Kozak stated at the meeting of the Federal Council in 2007, the differentiation between the most prosperous and the poorest regions in volume of gross regional product was 35 times higher in 2004, whereas in 2006 this indicator increased to 43. The same tendency is pertinent to other indicators such as the unemployment level (29 in 2004, 53 in 2006) and fixed investments (158 in 2004, 250 in 2006).<sup>58</sup> Among the measures necessary for increasing the efficiency of the regional development, Minister Kozak suggested supporting the dynamically developing and efficient regions, through reforming the tax system and increasing regional responsibility by removing all federal bodies in the regions (except subsidiaries of internal affairs and military ministries).<sup>59</sup>

Some steps away from the equalisation strategy have already been taken. In 2007 the President had issued a decree on the performance indicators of regional administration bodies,<sup>60</sup> which aimed to control the effectiveness of regional authorities and to increase their responsibility for the managing of the regional assets.<sup>61</sup> Following the strengthening of competences of the Ministry for Regional Development, the regions were also enforced to develop their own programs for social and economic development.

Nonetheless, despite these efforts of the Russian federal centre, the mechanisms for stimulating the dynamically developing regions are not yet efficient. The only existing instruments currently employed are the Federal Target Programs for the social and economic development of the regions through allocating investments to the nationally important infrastructure projects. However, it is not based on the transparency principle and does not have clear project selection and efficiency criteria. As a result, the recipients of the investments are the projects best lobbied by the regional financial or political elites.<sup>62</sup> For example, some experts have criticised the rationale of supporting the road project in the deserted Polar Ural area which is clearly beneficial only for the Russian tycoon Gasprom while the construction of the transportation routes highly needed for boosting intraregional trade, such as connecting well-developed regions of the Middle Volga and Ural, is neglected.<sup>63</sup>

### **3.2. Opportunities for the rise of new regionalism in Russia: shifting from geopolitical to geo-economic logic**

Considering the strong role of the state as a gate-keeper, the impact of exogenous mechanisms still remains rather weak in Russia. The major limitation on the impact of external factors on the development of regionalism in Russia is the big gap between the Western and Russian understandings of globalisation. While the West views globalisation as a web of non-state interactions outside of state sovereignty, in Russia globalisation has been associated with the purposeful strategy of external actors aimed at eroding Russian sovereignty, including through their activities within the Russian regions which were seen as a potential threat of making Russian regions economically and culturally dependent on the West.<sup>64</sup>

The dominance of the geopolitical logic in Russian foreign policy has been reflected, for example,

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in the focus on NATO rather than on EU enlargement. The priority of security issues within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) cooperation as well as the increasingly confrontational, Cold War-like security discourse which became especially vociferous during Vladimir Putin's presidency, has continued under the current President Medvedev. According to the Russian foreign policy concept adopted at the start of his presidency in 2008, Russia should rebalance global diplomacy by developing the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation into a NATO-like bloc as well as by creating a new OPEC-style gas producers' cartel, where Russia would be the leading member.<sup>65</sup>

Similarly, due to the gap in understanding of common rules and norms and values between Russia and Europe, the impact of Europeanisation (which played a decisive role in mobilising regionalism in Europe) on the development of new regionalism in Russia has also been quite limited. As stated in the report of the far-right political Party '*Rodina*' ('Motherland Bloc') on the EU-Russia regional cooperation:

Russia must carefully fulfil the duties taken, but at the same time to keep sovereignty and define the ways of its development on the basis of its own interests, values, and traditions. The Partnership with the EU should be built on a pragmatic basis. Russia shall accept norms and rules existing in the EU only in case if they are acknowledged efficient and corresponding to the interests of Russian development. There is no sense in harmonising the Russian legislation with that of the EU, as the latter is constantly transforming and Russia has not had and will not have any chances to participate in the European law-making.<sup>66</sup>

Nonetheless, in spite of the importance of the geopolitical logic, the Russian foreign policy is starting to be increasingly guided by geo-economic motives. The most visible example of this can be found in Russian's strengthened role in the Northern Dimension initiative, launched in 1999 by the EU in order to promote regional cooperation between the regions in the North of Europe and the North-West of Russia. If, at the beginning, Russian participation in the initiative remained quite ambivalent, since 2006, when Russia became an equal decision-making partner in the initiative (together with the EU, Norway and Iceland), it has started to actively support the cross-border and inter-regional activities of its North-Western regions with its European partners.<sup>67</sup> The encouragement of the regional international involvement by the federal centre can be explained by the fact that Moscow has started to regard the Northern Dimension cooperation as a pilot project for testing new forms and practices of cooperation with the EU. At the same time, there has also been a shift in Russian regional policy towards a more permissive regulation of cross-border cooperation, since it started to be considered a way to improve the economic development of the deprived peripheral regions. Furthermore, considering that the Russian North-West regions have not demonstrated any secessionist intentions, Moscow has eased up its hard security approach to regional cooperation, and started to realise that soft security challenges can be solved efficiently through regional integration. In the case of Northern Dimension cooperation, the geo-economic rationale has coincided with the geopolitical considerations of Russia.<sup>68</sup>

Apart from the increasing importance of functional considerations in the context of inter-regional cooperation, the spread of geo-economic logic in Russia has also been pushed from below, namely from the regional level. Whereas in the early 1990s the sole beneficiaries of globalisation in Russia were the export-oriented regions, rich in natural resources (mostly oil and gas), the current trend

in Russia is that regions with more diverse economic structures are also becoming important actors on the Russian political scene. The specific feature of this later group is that they are gradually moving away from a mono-polar model of regional political rule towards more pluralistic state-society relations, where the monopoly of the regional political elite is contested by the interest of business groups. Often deprived of significant natural resources, these regions have to develop more efficient approaches to economic development and introduce innovative forms of governance, such as a more economically oriented financial policy and partnership-type relations with businesses in contrast to the control type pertinent to the authoritarian regional regimes.

This finding has been recently confirmed by the study of Russian regional competitiveness IPREX, conducted by the Institute for Regional Policy.<sup>69</sup> This rating takes into account the complexity of the economic, financial, social and territorial resources of the region (130 factors in total) and includes the integral evaluation of regional competitiveness, based on three parameters: (1) competitiveness level (ABC scale), (2) steadiness of development (ABCD scale), (3) FEST-profile (model of the dominant factor for the development of this region: F – financial, E – economic, S – social, T – territorial). The results of this study are quite challenging. Taking into account only one traditional parameter – competitiveness level –, the leaders at the top are Moscow, Saint-Petersburg and a number of regions endowed with natural resources. However, after adding the second parameter – steadiness of development –, the picture changes dramatically and new leaders come to the top, namely Krasnodar kray and Samara oblast (both are given AA). By contrast, Moscow, Saint-Petersburg and none of the oil regions were given the rating ‘A’ for the steadiness of the development parameter due to problems with ecology, infrastructure and a mono-sector economy profile. Although the latter group of regions represents financial leaders (in total they make up 45% of the all-Russian GDP, 38,5% of fixed investments and a quarter of the Russian population), the deep-rooted development problems are slowing down their growth in the long run.<sup>70</sup>

An even more complex picture of the sources of regional growth can be obtained, if we add another parameter – the style of the regional leadership. According to the study ‘Democratic audit of the regions’ of the Institute ‘Social expertise’, the regions – as poles of growth – can be evaluated on the basis of the style of the regional leadership, which ranges from the most harmful, ‘mess instead of leadership’ to the most efficient one, ‘relative efficiency’.<sup>71</sup> Among the regions in the category of ‘relative efficiency’ regional leadership style are the members of the North-West Federal District, (Republic of Karelia, Saint-Petersburg, Leningrad oblast, Arkhangelsk oblast, Vologda oblast, Novgorod oblast, Yamalo-Nenets autonomous okrug), some of which border with the EU and participate in the Northern Dimension programme; Siberian regions (Krasnoyarsk kray, Orenburg oblast, Perm oblast, Tomsk oblast, Khabarovsk kray, Chelyabinsk oblast, Khanty-Mansiysk autonomous okrug – Yugra); Central Federal District regions (Lipetsk oblast, Yaroslavl oblast, Kaluga oblast, Moscow oblast) and Volga Federal District regions (Samara oblast, Nizhni Novgorod oblast, Chuvashi Republic). Although this group is deprived of natural resources (with the exception of Khanty-Mansiysk and Yamalo-Nenets autonomous okrugs), it is moving towards a diversification of their economy and increasing the efficiency of the political regime.<sup>72</sup> This category of regions is characterised by the pluralistic state-society relations shaping a new approach towards regional governance, based on the spatial territorial development, with the emphasis on functional rationale and innovative strategies (such as public-private partnership, regional image-building, and inter-regional cooperation within and beyond the state borders).

This gradual change in the regional political regime has been possible due to the transformation of

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the regional elite type from the soviet *nomenklatura* (ruling class of the Soviet Union) to business-minded governors of the new generation. As Russian regional expert Lapina explains, as a result of Putin's reforms strengthening the power vertical, the role of the regional executives and big business groups as political actors at the federal level has been dramatically weakened. Therefore, this reconfiguration of the balance of power has forced business leaders to build alliances and cooperation partnerships with regional elites. As a confirmation of this statement, she refers to the fact that big business managers are becoming political actors at the regional level, being increasingly present in the legislative assemblies or even being elected as the heads of the executive power.<sup>73</sup> One vivid example of such a pluralistic approach to regional governance based on the state-business partnership is the governor of Krasnoyarsk kray Alexander Khloponin (the former head of the large Russian industrial group Nornickel)<sup>74</sup> whose pro-active and innovative all-Russian business initiatives are highly supported by the federal centre (e.g. his initiative of organising an annual Krasnoyarsk business forum is a rare all-Russian political event which is used as an efficient channel of communication and informal brainstorming between federal officials and businessmen). Importantly, governor Khloponin was one of the initiators of the new concept of inter-budgetary relations (together with the governors of Tomsk and Novosibirsk *oblasts*), according to which the centre opts for supporting the dynamically developing regions with federal transfers.<sup>75</sup>

Based on similar examples (by the time of her research 16 former top-managers were taking the positions of the regional governors), Lapina states that in the long run the increasing number of business people in office at the regional level will promote the gradual strengthening of the regions as political actors able to resist the centre. The expert expects that the entry of big businesses in the regions will lead to the gradual extinction of the mono-central model, since the business approach to regional governance is based on efficiency, political and economic competitiveness, and the establishment of transparent and formalised relations with the regional authorities. This change could be possible since big business groups can facilitate the attraction of foreign investors and inclusion of the region in the globalisation process through their extensive international contacts.<sup>76</sup>

Similar conclusions about the rising strength of the geo-economic logic can be drawn from the survey conducted by the Russian independent expert group 'Nikollo M' in 2008.<sup>77</sup> In spite of the broadly spread myth about the popularity of Putin's strategy of strengthening the power vertical, the results of their survey challenge this assumption. Russian elite groups residing in 64 federated entities<sup>78</sup> have been interviewed on their positions about the strategical directions of Russian political development. The crucial question of the survey was to investigate to what extent Russian political elites can be the motor of social development. The results of this study are quite surprising. Only 20 percent of the elite support Putin's policy of power verticalisation (even among the civil servants the number of Putin's fervent supporters does not exceed 25 percent, and among *siloviki*<sup>79</sup> it reaches 30 percent).<sup>80</sup> The critical approach towards the current state of the reforms is manifested in the fact that 64 percent of the surveyed group consider that the President does not have a well-qualified team to modernise the economy and improve the people's welfare.<sup>81</sup> Another conclusion of the survey is that 40 percent of the elite aim at using the European model of development (market economy plus democracy). Neither market authoritarianism, nor the return to the soviet planned system, nor the 'unique Russian way' are widely supported by the elite (less than 20 percent).<sup>82</sup>

As the author of the study explains, the problem of the political elite is not that they are against the reforms, but the fact that they pursue individualistic and self-interested approaches to career-building which prevents them from building horizontal cooperation linkages among themselves, and from creating the social capital (that is, according to Afanasiev, the extent to which the elites share trust towards the members of society and are willing to achieve social welfare) necessary for a radical societal transformation.<sup>83</sup> In this regard, the current financial crisis can be considered as a good testing-ground for the Russian regional elite to be more decisive in opting for the geo-economic rationale.

## Conclusion

As demonstrated in the present article, it is irrelevant to talk about the separation between 'old' and 'new' regionalisms. In spite of the fact that multiple actors are operating in world politics nowadays, states still remain the main gate-keepers, constraining the pressures exerted from supranational and subnational levels. In fact, the political logic based on the domination of nation-state interests is still the guiding principle of foreign and domestic policies in both Western Europe and Russia. Although the EU exerts institutional and normative pressures on its member states and acceding states to strengthen the regional level, the impact of this influence is still mediated by the domestic state structures. Depending on the state traditions, states can respond differently, ranging from radical transformation of state structures to only formal change in the legislation concerning regional policy. For example, whereas most of the Western European states have followed the first strategy, most of the new EU member-states from CEE are still very reluctant to delegate powers to the regional level.

Considering these differences, the analytical framework used to explain regional mobilisation in this article has focused not only on the exogenous (globalisation and Europeanisation), but also on endogenous (structures at the domestic and regional levels) mechanisms of change. Although our point of departure was the hard structuralist approach, based on Lecours' interpretation, our approach has extended it by attributing dynamic characteristics of agency both to external and domestic structures.

In this way, this approach has served as a guiding tool to explore the possibilities of change of the domestic structures in Russia, which have always been considered as path-dependent or even static. Our analysis of the recent regional developments in Russia has enabled us to discover a more complex picture. On the one hand, 'old' regionalism is still a dominant trend in Russia which is visible in the most obvious features of Russian regionalism, such as the lack of efficiency of both national and regional policy as well as regional governance. Such basic principles of new regionalism, as subsidiarity, public-private partnership, economic efficiency, 'democratic maturation' are almost disregarded. Instead, what still remains the prevailing trend in the regional governance is the state's control over business, the lack of societal actors, weak institutionalisation, and the dominance of informal practices.

On the other hand, against this general background, some outbursts of change can also be observed. Firstly, regional developments in Russia vary considerably, both in political and economic terms. Although the mono-polar model of the regional political regime is still prevailing, there are also pluralistic regions, where different groups of interests shape regional politics. Examples of such regions with 'relative efficiency' are the regions with a diversified economy and/or bordering the



EU where the gradual change in political elite from soviet *nomenklatura* to business-minded leaders could be potentially crucial for social transformation. The example of Krasnoyarsk kray shows that economically strong regions can exert enough pressure on the federal level to promote the efficient principles of regional policy. Similarly, the responsiveness of Russia to exogenous pressure can be also explained by the significance of the geo-economic logic, which is getting increasingly important for Russian national interests. Considering the centrality of the economic relations with the EU, Russia started to support the transnational activities of its North-West regions actively. At the same time, through communicating actively with their European counterparts, these regions started to adopt innovative practices of good governance in their political and economic administration. In such a way, the first success of the Northern Dimension has demonstrated the possibility of 'social learning' in Russia. Therefore, although these achievements are quite modest, they show us that domestic structures are not static and that there are possibilities and opportunities for change in Russia.

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## Notes

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**2** HOCKING (B.), 'Patrolling the "Frontier": Globalization, Localization and the "Actorness" of Non-Central Governments', *Regional and Federal Studies*, vol. 9, n° 1, Spring 1999, p. 17-39; HOGHE (L.) and MARKS (G.), *Multi-Level Governance and European Integration*, Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham, 2001; OHMAE (K.), *The End of the Nation-State: The Rise of the Regional Economies*, New York, Free Press, 1995; KEATING (M.), *The New Regionalism in Western Europe: Territorial Restructuring and Political Change*, Cheltenham, Elgar, 1998.

**3** Although in international relations literature the term 'regional actorness' is usually applied to macro-regions, or regional organizations such as the EU (see e.g. SJØSTED (G.), *The External Role of the European Community*, London, Saxon House, 1977; ALLEN (D.) and SMITH (M.), 'Western Europe's Presence in the International Contemporary Arena', *Review of International Studies*, vol. 16, n° 1, 1990, p. 19-37; ALLEN (D.) and SMITH (M.), 'The European Union's Security Presence: Barrier, Facilitator or Manager?', in RHODES (C.) (ed.), *The European Union in the World Community*, London, Lynne Rienner, 1998, p. 45-63) and is usually understood as a regional capacity to act in the international system, in this article we use this term in the context of micro-regions, or sub-national formations within the state. Regional actorness in the context of Russian regions means their ability to act in inter-regional cooperation (be it with Russian or international regions), attract foreign investors to their regions, introduce innovative practices and exert pressure on the federal government.

**4** The logic of denial of regional actorness has been developed in the centre-regional concept, introduced by Rokkan and Urwin to characterize different patterns of centre-regional interaction. In this model centre is defined as a 'privileged location within a territory where key military/administrative, economic and cultural resource-holders most frequently meet' (ROKKAN (S.) and URWIN (D.), *The Politics of Territorial Identity: Studies in European Regionalism*, London, Sage, 1982). By contrast, a periphery is 'dependent, controlling at best only its own resources and more exposed to fluctuations in long-distance markets; is isolated from all other regions except the central one; and contributes little to the total flow of communication within the territory, with a marginal culture that is fragmented and parochial, yet not fully dominant across the politically defined territory' (ROKKAN (S.) and URWIN (D.), *op. cit.*, p. 5).

**5** LOUGHLIN (J.), 'Europe of the Regions' and the Federalization of Europe', *Publius: the Journal of Federalism*, vol. 26, n° 4, 1996, p. 153.

**6** KEATING (M.), *op. cit.*

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- 10 KEATING (M.) and JONES (B.), *Regions in the European Community*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 3.
- 11 LOUGHLIN (J.), *op. cit.*, p. 396-397.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 396.
- 13 DERRIDA (J.), *Politics of Friendship*, London, Verso, 2005, p. 158.
- 14 FOUCAULT (M.), 'Governmentality' in Burchell (G.), GORDON (C.) and MILLER (P.) (ed.), *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1991, p. 87-104.
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- 16 GREN (J.), *The New Regionalism in the EU: the Lessons to be Drawn from Catalonia, Rhône-Alpes and West Sweden*, Östersund, Swedish Institute for Regional Research (Statens institut för regionalforskning), Stockholm, Fritze, 1999, p. 22.
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- 22 KEATING (M.), 'Regions and International affairs: Motives, Opportunities and Strategies', *Regional and Federal Studies*, vol. 9, n° 1, 1999, p. 6-10; TARROW (S.), *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- 23 LECOURES (A.), 'Paradiplomacy: Reflections on the Foreign Policy and International Relations of Regions', *International Negotiation*, vol. 7, 2002, p. 96.
- 24 Initially, Lecours' analytical framework was applied to the international political actorness of regions, but it can be equally used as a broad scheme explaining regional mobilisation.
- 25 LECOURES (A.), *op. cit.*, p. 101-104.
- 26 LECOURES (A.), *op. cit.*, p. 101-102.
- 27 BARTOLINI (S.), 'Old and New Peripheries in the Process of European Territorial Integration', in ANSELL (C.K.) and DI PALMA (G.) (ed.), *Restructuring Territoriality. Europe and the United States Compared*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- 28 LOUGHLIN (J.), 'Introduction: The Transformation of the Democratic State in Western Europe', in LOUGHLIN (J.) *Subnational Democracy in the European Union Challenges and Opportunities*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 1-36. Traditionally, as Loughlin states, there is a distinction
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between two extreme traditions, Anglo-Saxon [UK, USA, Canada (not Quebec)] and Napoleonic [France, Spain (before 1978) Portugal, Quebec, Belgium (before 1988)]. While the Anglo-Saxon tradition is characterised by the principles of non-centralisation and the tolerance of linguistic or cultural differences, the Napoleonic one is, by contrast, more notable for its adherence to centralisation and repressive attitude to differences – which is expressed through antagonistic state-society relations and regionalised unitary state. Between the two extremes there is also the German tradition [Germany, Austria, Netherlands Spain (after 1978), and Belgium (after 1988)]. One of its typical traits it is that since historically a state was very weak and unconsolidated for a long time, the formation of the nation predated state-building. As a result the concept of nation is understood as a community of people sharing a common linguistic culture, *kulturnation*, or nation as *ethnos*. This type of nation is characterized by the legal basis of the state, organicist types of state-society relations, and a federalist form of political organization.

**29** LAFFAN (B.), 'The Politics of Identity and Political Order in Europe', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 34, n° 1, 1996, p. 90; ROMAIN (P.), "'Cognitive Europeanization" and the Territorial Effects of Multilevel Policy Transfer: Local Development in French and Spanish Regions', *Regional and Federal Studies*, vol. 15, n° 3, 2005, p. 296.

**30** In Spain the Autonomous States were established on the basis of the 1978 Constitution. In Belgium the introduction of the territorial units called Regions in the 1980 Constitution, in addition to the three Communities existing since 1970, paved the way for the further federalisation of the country. In France the demands of European competition resulted in the decentralisation program, launched in 1982 when the regions were endowed with legal personality and appropriate institutions. Another example of the receptivity to external pressures is that the UK adapted to the Europeanisation in such a way that it turned from a unitary pre-modern state into an asymmetrically devolved multinational state (See more about decentralization reforms in LOUGHLIN (J.), 'Reconfiguring the State: Trends in Territorial Governance in European States', *Regional and Federal Studies*, vol. 17, n° 4, 2007, p. 385-403; LOUGHLIN (J.), 'Europe of the Regions' and the Federalization of Europe', *Publius: the Journal of Federalism*, vol. 26, n° 4, 1996, p. 141-162; KEATING (M.), 'European Integration and the Nationalities Question', *Politics and Society*, vol. 32, n° 3, 2004, p. 367-388; Engel (C.) and Ginderachter (J.), *Pouvoir régional et local dans la communauté européenne*, Paris, Pedone, 1992.

**31** KELLEY (J.), 'International Actors on the Domestic Scene: Membership Conditionality and Socialisation by International Institutions', *International Organization*, vol. 58, 2004, p. 425-457; CHECKEL (J.), 'Why comply? Social learning and European identity change', *International Organization*, vol. 55, n° 3, 2001, p. 553-558.

**32** KELLEY (J.), *op. cit.*, p. 428.

**33** KEATING (M.), 'European Integration and the Nationalities Question', *Politics and Society*, vol. 32, n° 3, 2004, p. 380.

**34** HOOGHE (L.) and MICHAEL (K.), 'The politics of European Union Regional Policy', in KEATING (M.) (ed.), *Regions and Regionalism in Europe*, Cheltenham, Elgar 2004, p. 466-492.

**35** LECOURS (A.), *op. cit.*, p. 104.

**36** GENEST (M.), *Conflict and Cooperation: Evolving Theories of International Relations*, Belmont, Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2004, p. 171.

**37** DEUTSCH (K.), *Political Community at the International Level: Problems of Definition and Measurement*, Princeton, Princeton University, 1953.

**38** LECOURS (A.), *op. cit.*, p. 96.

**39** CIZAR (O.), 'The Transnationalisation of Political Conflict: Beyond Rationalism and Constructivism', *Journal of International Relations and Development*, vol. 6, n° 1, 2003, p. 8-9.



<sup>40</sup> KEATING (M.), 'Territorial Politics in Europe - a zero-sum game? The new regionalism. Territorial Competition and Political restructuring in Western Europe', *EUI Working Paper RSC 24*, 1998; SCHMITT-EGNER (P.), 'The concept of 'region': theoretical and methodological notes on its reconstruction', *European Integration*, vol. 24, n° 3, 2002, p. 179-200.

<sup>41</sup> KEATING (M.), *The New Regionalism in Western Europe: Territorial Restructuring and Political Change*, Cheltenham, Elgar, 1998, p. 86.

<sup>42</sup> SCHMITT-EGNER (P.), *op. cit.*, 186.

<sup>43</sup> HEPBURN (E.), 'The Rise and Fall of a 'Europe of the Regions', The Territorial Strategies of Substate Political Parties 1979-2006', Paper delivered at the European Union Association (EUSA) Annual conference, Montreal, 17-19 May 2007, p. 9.

<sup>44</sup> HEPBURN (E.), *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>45</sup> STERLING-FOLKER (J.), 'Competing Paradigms or Birds of a feather? Constructivism and Neo-liberal Institutionalism Compared', *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 44, 2000, p. 102.

<sup>46</sup> Considering the variety of regional types and claims, the Russian Constitution of 1993 enshrined the federal asymmetry through recognizing six types of constituent units such as: republics, autonomous okrugs, one autonomous oblast, kraia (they were previously border regions), oblasts (regions) and federal cities. Whereas 21 republics, four autonomous okrugs (previously, before the mergers of the regions there were ten autonomous okrugs) and one autonomous oblast have an ethnically based nature, 6 kraia, 49 oblasts and two federal cities (Moscow and Saint-Petersburg) represent the administrative territorial formations. All the constituent units (subjects of federation, or federated entities) of the RF are usually referred to as 'regions' in academic literature as well as in political practice.

<sup>47</sup> The text of the English version of the Russian Constitution is available at the web site of the Council of Federation of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation:  
[http://www.council.gov.ru/eng/info/constitution\\_eng/index.html](http://www.council.gov.ru/eng/info/constitution_eng/index.html).

<sup>48</sup> For example, according to the regional constitution of the Republic of Yakutia, the region was considered as an independent state within the RF. The Constitution of Tatarstan refers to itself as a 'sovereign state' and a 'subject of international law' associated with the Russian Federation. In the Constitution of the Republic of Bashkortostan it was stated that the 'region is entitled to define and conduct independently its domestic and foreign policy.' The Republic of Tyva even goes further by recognising the possibility of its secession from Russia. Similar juridical mistakes were made in the constitutions of many regions of the RF which was common practice in 1994-1996.

<sup>49</sup> KAHN (J.), 'The Parade of Sovereignties: Establishing the Vocabulary of the New Russian Federalism', *Post-soviet affairs*, vol. 16, n° 1, 2000, p. 83.

<sup>50</sup> WENGER (A.), 'Engaging Russia and its Regions: Challenges and Opportunities for the West', *ETH Working Paper*, Center for Security Studies and Conflict Research, n° 11, 2001, p. 29.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>52</sup> TUROVSKY (R.), 'The Influence of Russian Big Business on Regional Power: Models and Political Consequences', in GRAEME (G.) (ed.), *Politics in the Russian Regions*, London, Palgrave, 2007, p. 142.

<sup>53</sup> GRAEME (G.) (ed.), *op. cit.*, 2007, p. 9.

<sup>54</sup> Unlike other type of regions, ethnic republics are constituted by the titular nationalities (e.g. Tatars, Bashkirs, etc.) and are endowed with some attributes of statehood, such as a Constitution, a titular official language, a President as head of the executive power, an anthem, etc.

<sup>55</sup> For the study of authoritarian regimes in the Russian ethnic republics see: MATSUZATO (K.), 'Authoritarian Transformations of the Mid-Volga National Republics: An Attempt at Macro-Regionology', *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, vol. 20, n° 2, 2004, p. 98-123;

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MATSUZATO (K.), 'From Ethno-Bonapartism to Centralized Caciquismo: Characteristics and Origins of the Tatarstan Political Regime, 1990-2000', *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, vol. 17, n° 4, 2001, p. 43-77.

56 PETROV (N.), 'Naznachenie Gubernatorov: Tri Goda Spustia' ('The Appointment of The Governors: Three Years Later'), The Moscow Carnegie Centre, 2007, <http://monitoring.carnegie.ru/2007/07/analytics/petrov-nikolaj-naznacheniya-gubernatorov-tri-goda-spustya>.

57 These methods of local bosses achieving their political goals through resorting to electoral mechanisms has been called by Matsuzato the rules of the 'centralized caciquismo'. See: MATSUZATO (K.), *op. cit.*, p. 43-77.

58 The verbatim records of the parliamentary debates 'About the current situation of the regional policy in the Russian Federation and its legal regulation', 25 October 2007, [http://www.council.gov.ru/files/parliament\\_attend/90.doc](http://www.council.gov.ru/files/parliament_attend/90.doc).

59 POPOV (A.), 'Kozak is against of Unitary Federalism', *Expert online*, 26 October 2007. <http://www.expert.ru/articles/2007/10/26/kozak>.

60 Decree of the President of the Russian Federation 'On the Efficiency Evaluation of The Executive Bodies of the Subjects of Russian Federation', 28 June 2007.

61 Report of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation in 2007 about the current state of the RF legislation. Moscow: Federation Council, 2008: 341-342. <http://www.council.gov.ru/lawmaking/report/index.html>.

62 ZAIKINA (O.), 'The Unification is Useless', *Expert* 613, n° 24, 16 June 2008, [http://www.expert.ru/printissues/expert/2008/24/interview\\_ukrupnyat\\_bespolezno](http://www.expert.ru/printissues/expert/2008/24/interview_ukrupnyat_bespolezno).

63 ZUBAREVICH (N.), 'Rossiiskaia Ekonomika Poka Slaba Dlia Vuravnivaniia Regionov' ('Russian Economy is Still Weak for Equalization of the Regions'), *Internet representation for Russian regions' executives 'Club of the Regions'*, 22 July 2008, <http://www.club-rf.ru/expert/1717>.

64 MAKARYCHEV (A.), 'Islands of Globalization: Regional Russia and the Outside World', *ETH Working Paper*, Center for Security Studies and Conflict Research, n° 2 (August 2000), p. 25-26.

65 The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation. Approved by Dmitry A. Medvedev, President of the Russian Federation, on 12 July 2008, <http://www.mid.ru/ns-osndoc.nsf/0e9272befa34209743256c630042d1aa/cef95560654d4ca5c32574960036cddb?OpenDocument>.

66 Head of the International Department of the Russian political Party 'Rodina' Demourin (Report on the Conference 'Agenda 2007: Regional Dimensions of the EU's Policy in the Context of the Neighbourhood Strategy' (St. Petersburg, 28-29 October 2005, [www.brcinfo.ru/files/download/Report\\_Agenda\\_2007.doc](http://www.brcinfo.ru/files/download/Report_Agenda_2007.doc)).

67 See Northern Dimension Summit, *Political Declaration on the Northern Dimension Policy*, Imatra, 24 November 2006, [http://ec.europa.eu/external\\_relations/north\\_dim/doc/pol\\_dec\\_1106.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/north_dim/doc/pol_dec_1106.pdf).

68 For the recent developments in the ND see: AALTO (P.), BLAKKISRUUD (H.) and SMITH (H.) (ed.), *The New Northern Dimension of the European Neighbourhood*, Brussels, Centre for European Policy Studies, 2008.

69 Institute for the Regional Policy,

70 *Ibid.*

71 This study was conducted by the Internet project: YAKOVENKO (I), *Democratic Audit of Russia*, a study conducted for the Institute of Public Expertise, available at: <http://freepress.ru/publish/publish043.shtml>.

72 *Ibid.*

73 LAPINA (N.), 'Biznes i Vlast: Sohranitsia li Regional noe Mnogoobrazie', ('Business and State Power: Will the Regional Diversity be Maintained?'), in FRUHTMANN (I.) (ed.), *Regional'naia Elita v*

*Sovremennoi Rossii (Regional elite in the modern Russia)*, Moscow, Fund 'Liberalnaia Missiia', 2005, p. 74.

74 It was a very common practice in early 2000 that in order to gain access to regional markets, normally controlled by the local ruling elites, a company would use a 'staff interaction' technique with the regional administration: managers of certain companies became deputy-governors and state officials obtained jobs in companies, and even a few isolated cases of oligarchs elected governor. See GRAEME (G.) (ed.), *Politics in the Russian Regions*, London, Palgrave, 2007, p. 144.

75 ZHUKOVA (T.), 'Economics as a Stimulus for Donors', *Rossiiskaia Gazeta*, n° 154 (18 July 2006), <http://dlib.eastview.com/sources/article.jsp?id=9780652> (accessed on 21 September 2008).

76 LAPINA (N.), *op. cit.*, p. 75.

77 For a discussion of the study see: *New Times*, n° 8, 2 March 2009, <http://newtimes.ru/magazine/2009/issue104/doc-60685.html> and the website of the political consultancy 'Nikkolo M': <http://www.nikkolom.ru>.

78 Experts understand elite groups very broadly including both political elite (or as they call it, 'power elite', namely federal and regional civil servants, military officials, lawyers, entrepreneurs, top managers) and cultural elite ('elite of development', namely, professors, doctors, journalists).

79 The term *siloviki* derives from *silovye struktury* (force structures) related to the armed services, law enforcements bodies, and intelligence agencies which former or current members have become powerful political elites under Putin's rule. (For the detailed explanation of this term see: SAKWA ( R.), 'Russian Politics and Society', London and New York, Routledge, 2008, p. 101).

80 AFANASIEV (M.), 'Rossiiskie Elity Razvitiia: Zapros na Novui Kurs'. ('Russian Elites of the Development: Request for the New Course'), Moscow, Fund 'Liberalnaia Missiia', 2009, p. 6-7, <http://www.nikkolom.ru>.

81 *Ibid.*, p. 7-8.

82 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

83 *Ibid.*, p. 101.

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