

# **Regional Ideologies in the Context of International Relations**

*By Arbakhan K. Magomedov*

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## Foreword

This paper offers a cultural outlook on Russian regionalism. The author, Dr. Arbakhan Magomedov, Professor of Russian Politics and Chair of the Department of Culture and History at Ulyanovsk State Technical University, examines the underlying ideological dimension of regional processes in contemporary Russia. The focus is on the regional political elites as the most important force shaping regional policy and identity. The author examines how political actors at the subnational level try to mobilize social support for their policy by calling on common social values and beliefs, thereby actively furthering the development of a regional identity. This paper addresses such questions as what is to be understood by the concept of a “regional ideology,” and how these concepts vary across the different regions of the Russian Federation. The paper will further examine the role and function of ideologies in the context of Russia’s regional transformation processes, and the importance of external factors for the shaping of regional ideologies.

The author argues that a regional identity is a socially constructed and reconstructed phenomenon. He draws on three concrete regions, Nizhnii Novgorod Oblast and the republics of Tatarstan and Kalmykia, to illustrate how regional politicians in each of these formulate their region’s special mission and thereby create what he calls “cognitive maps of reality” of their territories. Magomedov looks beyond the various concepts brought forward by representatives of the elite. He examines their motivations and reasoning that have stimulated the formulation of a specific regional “ideology” and analyzes the language used in political discourse, the elite’s political preferences and allegiances and the role of the media in translating political ideas.

The topic addressed by the author is a most challenging one also from a theoretical point of view. Ideologies consists of a peculiar mix of myths, symbols, slogans and rituals (often irrational), acting either as an instrument of a region's self-assertion in a national context or as a reaction to supposed loss of ethnic or religious distinctiveness in the era of globalization. However, it is difficult to assess at what point regional political ideas and concept turn into ideology, as the very notion probably is one of the most contested and unclear concepts in political science.

It remains for future analysis to decide whether the regional leaders' responses to the global challenges have been adequate and conducive to greater liberalization and transparency, or whether they have furthered regional authoritarianism and economic protectionism.

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Prof. Dr. Andreas Wenger

Deputy director of the Center for Security Studies  
and Conflict Research

## Introduction

This paper examines how the provincial authorities of selected Russian regions have shaped the political relations to suit regional interests. The study focuses on the processes of political self-affirmation and adaptation of regional governing groups during the Russian political transformation in the 1990s. Ways are shown how regional elites and ideologies create economic and political institutions to tie their regions in to the system of contemporary international relations.

The purpose of this article is to investigate and highlight ideological and political reactions of the regional Russian elites to the challenges of the transitional period, and to elicit mechanisms employed by the regional governing elites in their search for new international identities, institutions and relations. Three Volga regions (Nizhnii Novgorod Oblast, the republics of Tatarstan and Kalmykia) will be studied in detail.

### *The problem*

The most important peculiarity of post-Soviet history is that power and competences of the traditionally strong central state have been moving to subnational units. This led to an increase in the number of participants of the political process. This development became apparent against the background of the decline of state values and the degradation of the creative political will of the center. As a result of an uncontrollable decentralization of the state, one can confidently speak of a shift of power from the center towards the subnational level (and mainly to the 89 regions of the Russian Federation) as early as of summer 1992.<sup>1</sup> Not only were

1 In the following, the term *region* means one of the 89 subjects of the Russian Federation, unless otherwise indicated.

the main functions of the central state swiftly being appropriated by the provinces, but the local governing elite<sup>2</sup> were also reaching out to the sphere of national politics. As Blair Ruble, Director of the Kennan Institute, noted at the height of this process, "Moscow, remaining a psychological anchor for the inhabitants of the whole country, will resemble Rome rather than Paris – a national capital as a symbol of the national unity for the regions striving for self-determination according to the local economic and political relations."<sup>3</sup>

The traditional relationships between Moscow and the province changed. The events in Chechnya are just one example of the extreme scenarios that are possible in this connection. The evolution under consideration was determined by an increasingly sovereign and self-confident stance on the part of the regional elite. The regional leaders obtained considerable autonomy vis-à-vis the center and strengthened their grip on society. The provincial elite in Russia under Boris Yeltsin as formed by the governing minorities that played a strategic role in the process of decision-making at the local and federal levels. Their ideological positions and politically relevant views and values are the determinants of behavioral norms in the regional political systems. Therefore, the regional governing groups in today's Russia can be regarded as distinct units of political analysis.

But as a quick survey of Russian literature on regional history will confirm, the political convictions, world views and basic motivations of local leaders (which can shed light on political elites and their ideologies) are marginal topics in Russian political science. The activities of governing groups in modern Russia have not been subjected to thorough analysis; they are not an issue for national political science discourse. This state of affairs can partly be explained by an ingrained prejudice against all ideologies. Previous investigations of the elite have considered ideological policies to be deliberately radical and therefore directed against the existing system.<sup>4</sup> The thrust and results of the present investigation will lead to a different conclusion.

- 2 In the following, a functional definition of the elites is used. By the term elite, we mean governing political groups with real power to make political decisions.
- 3 Ruble, Blair. "Institut Kennana i regionalnaia Rossiia" (The Kennan Institute and regional Russia). *Zemstvo. Arkhiv provintsial'noi istorii Rossii* (Penza), no. 3 (1994), p. 35.
- 4 For example, Kathryn Stoner-Weiss asserts that the ideologically united elite is just a totalitarian elite: Stoner-Weiss, Kathryn. "Perekhod k demokratii i konsolidatsii – rol' elity" (Transition to democracy and consolidation). In *Na putiakh politicheskoi transformatsii (politicheskie partii i politicheskie elity postsovetskogo perioda)*, vol. 8, part 2. Moscow: MONF, 1997, p. 24. A. Ostapchuk, like other supporters of this approach, contrasts "ideological" and "pragmatic" politics, reportedly associating political rhetoric with the ideology of the nomenclature revenge: Ostapchuk, A. "Alkhimiia eliti" (Alchemy of the elites). *Pro et Contra*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1996), p. 111.



## ***Methodological basis of the investigation***

The reference points for this research paper were determined and specified taking into account existing theoretical approaches to the problem of the Russian regionalism, and as a critical contribution to current discourse on regional policy making.

First of all, many experts on Russian regionalism and federalism regard the subjects of the Federation as little more than potential opponents in the struggle for resources and power.<sup>5</sup> Under this model, the Federation is regarded as an association corresponding to the function "X+1" where X corresponds to the subjects of the Federation and 1 represents the national government.

In this approach, relations between the center and the regions are reduced to a mere exchange of material resources. This mechanistic approach makes for a rather restricted picture of the Russian politics. Attention is drawn away from the most important and apparently unique features of the regional political process.

The emphasis on ideology in politics allows us to propose the following methodology. Much of what we know about politics is related to power structures, decision-making and treaties being signed. Such an understanding only partly reveals the real motivating forces of the governing groups. Nevertheless, it has become fashionable to consider politics as derivative of decision-making processes.<sup>6</sup> But it is no secret that decision-making completely depends on the political incentives and interests of the governing elites. Their hidden aims, motivation, values, and outlooks are reflected in their behavior. Therefore, one can state with confidence that every system of decision-making is a secondary phenomenon compared to the subjective political aims of the governing minorities. American political scientists Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz have warned against "studying political problems before studying values and deviations existing in the political system." Not without sarcasm, they compared such efforts to "building up a structure on the attic story without building up a foundation."<sup>7</sup>

Goran Turborn has pointed out that to the extent that use of symbols contributes to strengthening of power or allows others to challenge it, the explanation

5 See Pavlenko, S. "Tsentri - regiony: kto kogo?" (Center and regions - who will win?). *Mezhdunarodnaia zhizn'*, no. 4 (1993); Ruble, Blair. *Op. cit.*; Hughes J. "Regionalism in Russia: The Rise and Fall of Siberian Agreement." *Europe-Asia Studies*, no. 7 (1994); Gibson, John and Philip Hanson. *Transformation from Below: Local Power and the Political Economy of Post-Communist Transitions*. Cheltenham, UK: Brookfield, Vt., US: E. Elgar, 1996.

6 This point of view became widespread after the appearance of Robert Dahl's work "Who Governs?," which is based on analysis of decisions making: Dahl, Robert. *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961.

7 Bachrach, P. and M. Baratz. "Two Faces of Power." *American Political Science Review*, no. 4 (1962), p. 949. The authors quote Professor E. Schattschneider: "Organization is a mobilization of bias."

of action from the ideological and cultural point of view is relevant for macro-politics and competes, for example, with political models of social choice and decision-making.<sup>8</sup>

It is not possible to analyze the political competition between governing groups in Russia thoroughly without adequate study of "mobilization of deviations" and values dominating among them. The challenge of these deviations and values is a part of the problem of political ideology in regional governing groups.

The concept of regionalization is not seen as a consequence of social and economic changes in this work, but as a process carrying its own logic that has developed in close connection with them. In the process, new symbols, ideas, views and systems of values surfaced from the province, and above all, for the sake of fulfillment of interests of the regional political elites.

In this context it is feasible to speak about emerging regions in terms of "imagined communities"<sup>9</sup> in the context of international relations. Hence, we will examine Russian regions as examples of attempts at political reconstruction. This investigation is dedicated to the description of the process within which one can imagine regional integrity as a part of an international economic and political order, and once this view has been accepted, it will be possible to adapt and transform it.

8 Turborn, G. "Prinadlezhnost' k kul'ture, mestopolozhenie v strukture i chelovecheskaia deiatelnost': ob''iasnenie v sotsiologii i sotsial'noi nauke" (The belonging to a culture and to a place in the structure and human activity). In *THESIS. Nauchnyi metod*. Al'manakh, no. 4, 1994, p. 105-106.

9 The concept of "imagined associations" as applied to the phenomenon of nationalism and processes of creation of national states is most fully and efficiently outlined by Aleksei Miller: Miller, Aleksei. "O discursivnoi prirode natsionalizma" (On the discursive nature of nationalism). *Pro et Contra*, vol. 2, no. 4 (1997), p. 141-152.

## Elite and ideology: descriptive approaches and analysis

Any reference to elitism and ideology results in prejudiced and unrestrained statements. Apologists and critics of the respective concepts often reduce serious discussion of these ideas to a mere caricature. The objective of this section is to thoroughly examine these categories in the context of post-Soviet Russian history and to find out how closely elite and ideology are interconnected in terms of their functions. In the author's opinion, such an approach will help to eliminate extreme and speculative interpretations of the terms.

For the present purposes, ideologies will be regarded as systems of values that, being political in their outlook and having the power to impact conscience, have an especially large orientation potential. Therefore they can contribute to restraining processes of social anomie connected with crisis. In this context, American cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz vividly and figuratively characterized ideologies as "maps of problematic social reality that enable collective understanding and comprehension of changes and challenges that the society meets."<sup>10</sup> They provide "new cognitive guides for the society and can help restore order." As maps of reality, ideologies form the sense and conceptualization of the modern political world, and can function as carriers of regional interests. Ideologies also allow the selection of deliberate dilemmas of the local development in the international context and due to that they play the core role in the political comprehension and decision-making.

10 See also his brilliant phrase: "It is just in an emotionally and topographically strange country that the man needs poems and road maps." See Geertz, C. *Ibid.*

Some remarks have to be made concerning the fact that “ideology” is one of the least clearly defined concepts of political science. The famous American scientist Robert Putnam started his work about the political ideology of European elites with the sorrowful remark: “Diving into the cold and dark water of literature on ‘ideology’ is a shocking and disappointing experience for any promising supporter of social science.”<sup>11</sup>

This remark reflects the fact that ideology often appears in the form of myths, political advertisement, ritual, or symbols to which importance is attached. In the case of regional ideologies, as it will be shown later, regional mythology often constitutes the basis of a local political identity. The regional political discourse, which can be evaluated as a process of marking and designating ideological symbols and sensibilities, is a manifestation of this identity.<sup>12</sup> All this proves that in the most typical cases, ideologies are flexible nets of ideas opened for interpretations and innovations of individuals and groups. Ideologies are flexible and easily adapted to the changing political situation.

As for the political elites, the availability of voluminous literature permits a cursory discussion of their approach to politics. The essence of this research consists of a thorough examination of governing groups in the light of their leadership mission. It is important to understand that the elite of any society is a natural generator of its own ideas, as well as a transmitter of borrowed ideas, and it is also the main subject of politics. Members of political elites appear as the most active individuals capable of generalizations. They perform the role of “producers” and “disseminators” of ideologies. The ideas of the ruling classes are dominant in any epoch, and the formation of societies is also naturally determined by the myths and doctrines of the governing minorities. This is especially important in times of crisis when society finds itself in transition. Owing to the force of these circumstances, the political consciousness and political ideology of the governing minorities are very important.

Thus, the ruling elites are political groups that are able to express their interests and will by means of ideologically charged language. Along with the exercise of power, the enforcement of ideologies is the elites’ primary political task. This is where the main categories of this research, ideology and elite, are in closest proximity.

The views of elite representatives are generally rich and variegated. The interpretation of society’s interests in the context of international problems is the most important aspect of both a professional politician’s and a state employee’s job. The elite skillfully determine the topics and conditions of political debate and

11 Putnam, Robert D. “Studying Elite Political Culture: The Case of ‘Ideology’.” *American Political Science Review*, no. 3 (1971), p. 651.

12 On the difference between these ideas and their realization see in more detail: Magomedov, A. *Mysteriia regionalizma*. Moscow: MONF, 2000.

delineate the social consensus on various aspects of world politics. Their considerable activity prompted Bachrach's and Baratz's statement that a leader or a governing group has power to the extent a leader of a group deliberately and purposefully creates or strengthens barriers of the public opinion about political conflicts.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, the elites are very sensitive to information that is ideologically slanted.

Political actors of all levels are voracious consumers of political assessments. Their ideological virtuosity and refinement are the consequence of a growing thirst for political information and comments. They also have a good command of political slang and constantly perfect themselves in it. According to Robert Putnam, "the leaders learn the political slang for the same reason as the golf players learn to be an associated team."<sup>14</sup> Any political group is a unit that exists due to common ideological interests and sees its existence in studying the enemy. Ideology and party preferences for the political elites make, according to Allan Kornberg, "a kind of a conceptual net for gathering, organizing and evaluating of incoming information that can be politically relevant."<sup>15</sup> A good education that representatives of the elite usually have, strengthens their cognitive capabilities to recognize and to set new problems.

The above also allows the conclusion that members of ruling minorities have a complicated system of political convictions. That's why even the latest methods of investigating public opinion and political behavior of the masses are insufficient for the study of elite systems of views. The study of the latter requires the analyst to use an instrument that will help reveal subtle peculiarities of the political culture of the small ruling groups, and at the same time to understand what prompts the occasionally risky behavior of the regional authorities.

These circumstances pre-determined the choice of research methods. The author chose the free interviews from the existing set of investigation methods because extra-institutional phenomena (values, culture etc.) require the use of relatively subtle cognitive techniques. This method is indispensable for this analysis because it has a high degree of adaptability and sensibility to nuances. From June 1994 till October 1997, the author personally interviewed 45 representatives of the Kalmyk ruling elite, 49 leading politicians of Tatarstan, and 48 members of the ruling elite of the Nizhnii Novgorod region. Among these were ministers, members of government, state secretaries and aids to presidents, leading parliamentarians in the republics; governors, leaders of executive power bodies and deputies of the regional legislatures. It is necessary to make some remarks about the selection of these groups of politicians. Representatives of these power and

13 Bachrach and Baratz. *Op. cit.*, p. 86.

14 Putnam, Robert D. *The Comparative Study of Political Elites*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1976, p. 89.

15 Kornberg, Allan. *Canadian Legislative Behavior*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967, p. 137.

political structures in the above regions are the most important members of the political elite. That's why the representatives of political and administrative power were investigated as the only relevant members of the governing groups (in the sense of the traditionally understood "party of power"). Though the category of regional interests is objectively relevant to all actors in the area, in practice the political elite of the society appears as interpreter of and speaker for the regional ideology. Its representatives are the main holders of political power and influence. They play the key roles in formulating policy (setting agendas in local politics) and making key decisions in allocating resources and power functions in the provinces. This means that everything stated below refers to the conglomeration of power structures.

The author is aware that some interviews can contain judgments that were made in an obviously uncritical manner and reflect the rhetoric strategy of those interviewed. But when the authorities speak about their actions, a situation arises where their narrative programs are set. One can outline their world outlook, one can study their behavior, and one can measure the scale of this world outlook. Political language forms the political reality, where it creates political "friend or foe" oppositions, whether the analyst likes it or not. This political discourse is characterized by stylistic peculiarities and the presence of a narrative scheme. As Paul Reeker noted, this amounts to a speech act, and one can speak of a deed as of something invariably symbolically mediated. The human activity, being symbolically mediated before it becomes accessible to external interpretation, is formed from internal interpretations of the deed itself; in this case the interpretation itself states the deed.<sup>16</sup>

16 Reeker, P. *Germenevotika, etika, politika* (Hermeneutic, ethics, politics). Moscow: AO "KAMI," 1995, pp. 10-12.

## The geographic scope of investigation

It is hardly possible to study in depth the processes of self-affirmation of the regional elite and their advancing of political ideologies in the entire territory of the Russian Federation. A superficial analysis that might argue “general tendencies” is unacceptable for the author. Therefore, the problem will be discussed studying processes in the most illustrative republics and regions as concrete examples.

Research is limited to Volga regions. This geographic area is the most suitable ground for an analysis of the political ideologies of the local authorities. Analytically exceptional territories, with a maximum of divergences among them, were selected for the study.<sup>17</sup>

First of all, the republics of Tatarstan and Kalmykia were chosen for comparison, as they reflect quite well the general division of Russia across north-south lines (the industrially developed and rich of raw materials Northern and Eastern regions, one the one hand, and the poor agrarian Southern regions one the other hand).

Both republics claim to be the leaders in their territorial, ethnic, cultural and historical environments. The regional justification of this claim in the case of Tatarstan consists of the fact that many local intellectuals and politicians regard Kazan as a special historical center for the peoples living between the Volga and the Ural. According to this interpretation, the Volga-Ural region with the peoples living in it (Tatars, Russians, Bashkirs, Chuvashes, Mordovians, Udmurts) is

17 This is what in applied political science is called the “principle of maximum difference of systems.” See Mannheim G., and P. Rich. *Politologiya. Metody issledovaniia*. Moscow: “Ves’ Mir,” 1997, pp. 343-344.

widely seen as a homogeneous association different from Russia, within the limits of which the administrative borders among the territories are recognized as relative.<sup>18</sup> In this connection, the Tatarstan ideologists persistently promote ideas of a “Volga-Ural civilization” and even a “Volga-Ural state.”

Tatarstan is the northern stronghold of Islam, and the Tatars were leaders of the Muslim movement in the pre-revolutionary Russia. One might add that at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Kazan became a hotbed of radical Turkic ideology. After being granted autonomy in the first years of the Soviet state, the Tatar autonomy already requested the status of a Union Republic during the drafting of the USSR constitution in 1977, and claimed this status from the very beginning of the Perestroika. Thus, Tatarstan became one of the leaders of national movements in the republics of the Russian Federation.

The Kalmyk society is the most western region of the Mongol-speaking world and has been surrounded by other than Mongolic cultures since the fourth century. History placed the Kalmyks at the intersection of the Turkic, North Caucasian and Slavic peoples. The passionate views of Kirsan Iliumzhinov, who emerged in the political landscape as President of Kalmykia, initially made him a political leader of sorts of the Mongol-speaking world.<sup>19</sup>

Both republics are aware of their ancient historical origin and claim descent from the famous state units in Russian history. Tatarstan refers to the Bulgarian Khanate, the Golden Horde and the Kazan Khanate as predecessors, while Kalmykia traces its roots to the Kalmyk Khanate whose apex fell into the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>20</sup>

Besides the two republics, the Nizhnii Novgorod Oblast has been chosen for closer examination. It is a territory of rather ostentatious but in the recent past active reforms. Former governor Boris Nemtsov used to be one of the most famous Russian politicians and was a noted favorite of the Kremlin authorities. Accordingly, the region was a leader among the provinces of Russia in terms of its spiritual proximity with Moscow and the West.

18 This interpretation was heard especially loudly at the international seminar on the problems of regionalism that took place in Kazan in September 1994. Besides the western and Moscow experts, 21 representatives from 10 republics and regions of the Volga-Ural regions participated in this forum: Lisa M. and A. Le Mair. “Regional Approach to Russian Federalism? IREX Seminar in Kazan,” International Research and Exchanges board, News in Brief, no. 6 (1994), p. 18.

19 Guchinova, E. B. “Vlast v etnokul’turnom kontexte” (Power in an ethno-cultural context). *Nezavisimaaia gazeta*, 9 July 1994. The author adduces the fact that the Mongols presented Kirsan Iliumzhinov with a silver sword like that of Genghiz Khan, thus establishing a nexus with the genealogical tree of Genghiz Khan.

20 I regard this problem in details because of traditionally strong positions of the historical criteria of the appearance of political ideology.



This choice of the regions makes a convenient analytical configuration for a comparative study of the political ideology of the leading groups. Within the limits of such a selection for purposes of comparison, the Volga regions appear as a crossroads of politics, economies, nations and civilizations crossroads.



## Regional ideologies: character, content and evolution of foreign policy priorities of local ruling elites

Under the growing regionalism of the early 1990s, the main objective of the governing groups was the legalization of their status.

For the most active and far-sighted regional elites in Russia, the urgent issue was not the adaptation to market models learned from Moscow but the elaboration of advanced reform strategy. Their self-affirmation took place within the concept of “self-rule.” One after another, the familiar models of regional development emerged in Nizhnii Novgorod, Ulyanovsk, Tatarstan, Kalmykia and others. As a rule, these efforts were accompanied by a conflict with the Gaidar government that was afflicted with a negative image in the provinces.<sup>21</sup>

The ideological basis of such a challenge from the part of local elites was contained in their statements that this is their developmental model that better reflects and historically substantiates the interests of the population of their provinces. Thus, the state counselor of the President of Tatarstan, Rafael Khakimov said: “Why shall we take the Russian reforms as a standard? They look chaotic to me. Doesn’t Tatarstan have the right to follow its own path to reforms that suit the interests of its population? Or is there only one way in the world – the way proposed by Moscow?”<sup>22</sup> This and other examples indicate that regional

21 Even Nizhnii Novgorod Oblast, while close to the Yeltsin administration, appealed to the Constitutional Court to take Gaidar’s cabinet to task because of a lack of cash: *Nizhegorodskii prolog. Ekonomika and Politika v Rossiia* (The Nizhnii Novgorod prologue: economics and politics in Russia). Nizhnii Novgorod and Moscow 1992, p. 63.

22 Khakimov, R. “Rossiia i Tatarstan: U istoricheskogo perekrestka” (Russia and Tatarstan: at the historical crossroads). *Molodezh’ Tatarstana*, no. 11 (17-23 March 1995).

leaders' understanding of their mission required an internal cultural reformation and a demonstrative renunciation of the priorities advocated by the center. In this situation, different regional world outlooks, programs and slogans were, to a great extent, compensatory reactions to the perception of crisis. These reactions at some points have included emotional breakdowns.<sup>23</sup> An escape from this crisis was provided by the culturally and historically unique emancipation of regional elites and the appearance of ideological centers in the periphery.

Many regional elites realize the historical implications. A typical example is the following statement in Kazan: "Tatarstan without a national idea, without a national aim will in the long run be perceived by the outer world as a separately minded administrative and territorial unit, as a part of the whole, that is, of Russia. Tatarstan, inspired by the national idea, united by the national aim, despite all external and internal obstacles on the way to this aim, announces itself to the world community as a historically stipulated and juridically legal state whole."<sup>24</sup>

The regional syndrome forms the ground for a strong local idea from where symbolic structures of regionalism grow (see table). The latter are easily recognized both inside the regions and outside. These ideologems establish a symbolic and semantic continuum of regionalism, its "internal" and "external" dimension.

These ideologems can be regarded as a form of local "great texts" identifying "natural ways" and "regional interests" as a part of public political self-affirmation of the regional elites.

But here one should make a rather important remark that highlights the real weight of each ideologem in the political life of the region. None of them can be taken as a comprehensive description of the regional development in real terms. As a variant of the interpretation of regional identity, each of them is to be seen as one aspect to consider local development models.<sup>25</sup> Concepts such as "Global Federalism" and "Euroislam" serve as shorthand labels for the interpretation of the "Tatarstan Model," while "Economic and Legal Oasis" serves as shorthand for the interpretation of the "Kalmykia Corporation" approach to regional development. All aspects of interpretations must be noted, but none of them is the only possible one. Obviously, the accuracy of each is relative. None of them can be characterized as the model of one or another region exclusively. The question of choosing the path is to be solved at the intersection of these aspects. The latter reveal the regional specificity in a transition society, claims and interests of the governing groups, and also the cultural resources that every group engages in. It

23 The most difficult case from the ideological point of view is the "Chechnyan revolution" with its aims and slogans.

24 Amirkhanov, R. M. "Natsional'naiia ideologiiia i natsionalnaia politika" (National ideology and national politics). In *Mezhetnicheskie i mezkhkonnessional'nyie otnosheniia v Respublike Tatarstan: Materialy nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii*. Vol. 1. Kazan 1993, p. 32.

25 I owe this term to V. Fedotova: Fedotova, V. G. "Sud'ba Rossii v zerkale metodologii" (Russia's fate in the light of methodology). *Voprosy filosofii*, no. 12 (1995), p. 21-34.

is the sum of their activities that makes up the regional ideological and political integrity.

During the periods of ideological and civilizational researches the status of elite inevitably becomes apparent as a keeper of ideo-civilizational potentials. Ideological constructions generated by the elite serve as “programs” that provide patterns for the whole political way of life. Here is the confirmation for our idea that ideology is a patterned reaction to a patterned desperation of a crisis mind and that the search of the systematized ideological formulas flourishes during the periods of socio-psychological stresses. The aim of these formulas is to make possible autonomous politics by means of supplying it with authoritative ideas (they give sense to it) and convincing images that help the politics to be intelligibly understood.

When explaining this table it is necessary to remark that the numbers (1,2,3...) given in the columns show the hierarchy of the ideological aspirations of the regional power holders. The concept of a target audience – the third column in the table – means the audience to which regional ideologems of the local politicians are addressed. Examining this column allows us to conclude that for Tatarstan and Kalmykia, an appeal to the population of their republics was more important than wooing Moscow or the Muslim world. This can be partly explained by the fact that the federal center was regarded by the ruling elites of the above-mentioned republics as a flawed political actor.

At first sight, the position of the Nizhnii Novgorod governing circles – the group surrounding Nemtsov – can seem strange against such a background. Despite his liberal views and the attention he attracted from western politicians and financial institutions, it was the Kremlin that Nemtsov appealed to above all. On the one side, Nemtsov’s group adopted the wit, manners and the way of life of the western political establishment quickly and willingly. Tennis matches, social function, and meetings with the regulars of European political salons became staple of local life. Russian and world celebrities (among whom were Margaret Thatcher and John Major who visited Nizhnii Novgorod) became multipliers for information on Nemtsov’s reforms and the “Model of Nizhnii Novgorod”<sup>26</sup> generated by the local ruling elite. On the other hand, and this is more important, Nemtsov demonstrated quite frankly that the Nizhnii Novgorod region for him was just jumping-off position for the Kremlin. He imposed his vision and his model of market reforms on the federal center. He was a pet and a favorite of the Kremlin. For Nemtsov, the appeal to Moscow was part of a game where his role was that of a crown prince of Russian politics and Yeltsin’s

26 Magomedov A. K. Politicheskii ritual i mify regional’nykh elit (Political ritual and myths of regional elites). *Svobodnaia mysl’*, no. 11 (1994), p. 108-144.

*Table:* Character and directions of the main ideological doctrines in the political discussions of elites in the regions

<i>Region</i>	<i>Conceptions (ideologems)</i>	<i>Target audience</i>
1. Tatarstan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. "Model of Tatarstan – a new paradigm"</li> <li>2. "Tatarstan people are a nation"</li> <li>3. "Euroislam"</li> <li>4. "Global Federalism"</li> <li>5. "Tatar diaspora"</li> <li>6. "Soft entry into the market"</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Appeal to the population of Tatarstan and to Moscow</li> <li>2. Appeal to the world community and global organizations</li> <li>3. Appeal to Moscow</li> <li>4. Appeal to Moscow and to the world community</li> <li>5. Appeal to the Tatar Diaspora</li> <li>6. Appeal to Moscow and to the neighboring peoples (idea of the Volga-Ural commonwealth of Turkic and Finno-Ugric peoples)</li> </ol>
2. Kalmykia	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. "Kalmykia Corporation"</li> <li>2. "Economic and Legal Oasis"</li> <li>3. "Mongol and Oirat Civilization"</li> <li>4. "North – South Transport Corridor" (NOSTRAK)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Appeal to the population of Kalmykia and to the future</li> <li>2. Appeal to the world community and to the future</li> <li>3. Appeal to the Buddhist tradition and philosophy of the East</li> <li>4. Appeal to the future</li> </ol>
3. Nizhnii Novgorod (during B. Nemtsov's governorship)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. "Private property" and "freedom"</li> <li>2. "The Russian Detroit"</li> <li>3. "Nizhnii Novgorod is a "pocket" of Russia"</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Appeal to Moscow and to the population of Nizhnii Novgorod Oblast</li> <li>2. Appeal to the republics of the Russian Federation</li> <li>3. Appeal to Moscow</li> </ol>
4. Nizhnii Novgorod (during Ivan Skliarov's governorship)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. "United and indivisible Russia"</li> <li>2. "Nizhnii Novgorod is a cornerstone of Russia"</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Appeal to the population of the region</li> <li>2. Appeal to the federal center</li> </ol>

successor. Yeltsin, in turn, expressed his sympathies for Nemtsov<sup>27</sup> in public as part of his Tsar game.

Especially interesting is the fact that the appeals from Nemtsov's environment to Moscow provoked a very negative reaction from the other regional leaders, above all from the Tatar leaders. A remarkable reaction to the special

<sup>27</sup> An important proof of such a favor is the fact that using the protection of the President, Nemtsov managed to protect the loyal local Soviets from the dissolution after the events of October 1993. The governor elections in December 1995, when Nemtsov received 58.4% of the votes, were held with Yeltsin's special permission.

relationship between the federal authorities and Nemtsov's administration came from Kazan. When an attempt was made to declare "KamAZ" bankrupt during the scandal in connection with the forming of the "All-Russian Extraordinary Commission" in autumn 1996, the following retort was received from Kazan: "Why did the two industrial giants of Tatarstan ["KamAZ" and "Tatneft"] come under fiscal pressure, while such highly dangerous defaulters as the Nizhnii Novgorod region - the estate of the 'model reformer' Nemtsov - live quite peacefully?"<sup>28</sup>

The steady anti-Moscow and anti-federal rhetoric (with the obligatory criticism of Gaidar liberal reforms as conducive to national degradation) is only characteristic in this case for the ideologists of Tatarstan and Kalmykia. The anti-Moscow origin makes up the sense and orientation of the ideological consolidation and public claims of the local elites of these republics.

Unlike Russian liberal reformers who were oriented towards a "great theory" (the "Chicago School"), the Tatar and Kalmyk reformers mobilized their own cultural resources and took advantage of them. They managed to do so thanks to the appeal to their regions' historical, ethnic, and religious heritage.

In the light of these efforts, the Tatar and Kalmyk elites consider the attempts of blind imitation and copying of Western models as a threat to their own roots and own initiative. Therefore, there is strong criticism of ready-made foreign models and of the Russian politicians who copy these models.<sup>29</sup> The result of the regionalization is that the very idea and model of the region is determined and provided in accordance with some list of challenges to its regional elite. Some regional politicians say that for democrats in power, monetary reform is more important than national and state independence. The majority of these think that the Kremlin leaders have been playing a damaging for Russia role in the field of foreign policy. To their mind, the market reforms held since 1992 by successive Russian governments and some regions (such as Nizhnii Novgorod) are just the most arrogant and vulgar form of westernization. It ignores both the state interests and local cultural and historical peculiarities. That was the background of the political leaders' intensive search for political terms that were not discredited in public opinion and at the same time reflected regional national identity.

All of the above goes to show that for some regions, the new Russia is an imperfect political entity, which has neither a firm strategy, nor a unified state policy concerning national interests. This point of view leads the regional elites to

<sup>28</sup> *Respublika Tatarstan* (Kazan), 26 October 1996.

<sup>29</sup> Especially remarkable is the critic of R. Khakimov of the article "Tatarstan is dancing in the bear's arms" published in the *Wall Street Journal*. The State Counselor of the President of Tatarstan writes that "the American counselors who recommended 'shock therapy' are considerably to blame for the chaos in Russia." In his opinion, this is the reason for the rejection of "questionable formulas of Jeffrey Sachs in Tatarstan." See *Molodezh' Tatarstana* (Kazan), no. 11 (17-23 March 1995).

actions towards increasing political self-affirmation. So today's regional modernization is considered by its leaders to be exempt from ideological theories for the new Russia made in Moscow. The ideological behavior of Tatar politicians from Kazan is very picturesque in that they set Tatar Euroislam against Russian Eurasianism. Eurasianism is considered by Tatars as a theory developed from the point of view of Russian interests and restricting the geopolitical freedom of Tatarstan.

The core of this concept is that Russia (or a territory even larger) is a special Slavic orthodox civilized area where a synthesis of various cultures has taken place (in general, these were Turk-Slavic cultures).<sup>30</sup> According to this approach Tatars find themselves in a "Eurasian mouse-trap." Under these circumstances, Euroislam becomes the basic factor that facilitates Tatarstan's exit from Russian Orthodox Eurasia. Following the local interpretation, there is no place for individuals or peoples with ethnic background in general in the Eurasian ideology with Russian Orthodox religion as its heart. The idea of a Eurasian state is self-sufficing and demands sacrifices from a person. By contrast, Euroislam, which emerged as the result of reforms within Islam in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (Jadidism), puts the ideas of liberalism and Islam together, having made individualism and freedom of thought the most important. So the ideological basis of Tatar individualism is the reformed Islam.<sup>31</sup>

Two conclusions can be made concerning incompatible perspectives of Russia and Tatarstan:

- Russian culture as the direct heir of Soviet culture and with its modern-day orientation towards Orthodoxy can only be adjusted to the needs of modernization with great difficulties;
- dynamic reforms of Islam made Tatar culture highly modern and well adjustable to modern tendencies. It intensifies the desire of Tatar society to establish direct contacts with representatives of European culture and civilization.

Reformed Islamic doctrine (Jadidism) cannot only cure from social crisis, but also expresses the political interests of local government. First of all, Euroislam gives expression to modern-day claims of the Tatar elite. Euroislamic identity supports local Tatar reformism because it feeds the regional energy of self-affirmation. The presentation of Russian Orthodox religion as an anti-democratic, anti-individualistic and anti-modern force is a challenge to Russian government. As a politician from Kazan said, "the erection of Christ the Savior Cathedral only reinforces the

30 Panarin, A. S. "Rossiia v Yevrazii: geopoliticheskie vyzovy i tsivilizatsionnye otvety" (Russia in Eurasia: geopolitical challenges and civilized answers). *Voprosy filosofii*, no. 12 (1994), pp. 19-31.

31 Iskhakov, D. "Model Tatarstana: 'za i protiv'. (Prodolzhenie)" (For and against the Tatarstan model. [Continuation]). *Panorama-Forum* (Kazan), no. 2 (1995), pp. 65-69.



impression of stiffness of Russian Orthodoxy and of the preposterous pretensions of the central government" (T-27).

In terms of this perspective, cultural synthesis of a Euroislamic type is an important strategic foreign-policy tool for the realization of the "Tatarstan model." In particular, it calls to protect the image of republic from Islamic fundamentalism and other symbols that are frightening for the West. Mintimer Shaimiev, the President of Tatarstan was quite outspoken on this question at the official level. According to a verbatim transcript, "Our reference point is by all means Western Europe. It is especially important for us because in this way we can distinguish ourselves from Islamic fundamentalism. To keep away from fundamentalism is favorable for us in terms of strategy."<sup>32</sup> According to this strategy, the authorities must redouble their attention to Jadidist Islam, the development of which depends on the free development of ethnic Tatar culture.

The attention paid to Euroislam in Kazan has prompted local ideologists to affirm that "geopolitical priorities of Tatarstan cannot be established within the narrow limits of Russian Orthodox Eurasia." The authors of this strategy consider it a challenge to Russia that it will have to accept.

Much attention has been given to the ideological structures of Tatar elite in the previous section because the leaders of Tatarstan are the most ideologically pronounced and have challenged the federal center most vocally. However, examples from other regions are no less interesting.

The political ideology of the Kalmyk elite is characterized by the idea of "escaping to the future." It does not indicate political deviation of its representatives. This is a reaction to the situation of Kalmykia as one of the most backward and the least prestigious regions that found itself in the worst starting position on the path to the market economy. This situation contributed to a formation of ideology in the republic that was aimed at the achievement of extraordinary goals ("the second Switzerland") with the use of extraordinary ideas ("Kalmykia Corporation," "Economic and Legal Oasis"), and appealed into the future. These slogans were seen as important tasks in public discourse. The President of Kalmykia, Kirsan Iliumzhinov, declared that the flourishing of the republic was to come at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. He enumerated the steps that were necessary to achieve this goal. First of all, plans for the construction of an international airport, of a Chess Palace to hold the World Chess Olympic Games, and of a high-class hotel were presented. Of the many ideas, the project of making Kalmykia a center of tourism and gambling is very interesting: "A toll road will be built through the republic - heated, with eight ways - linking Russia and the Caucasus on the

32 Protokol'nyi otdel Administratsii Prezidenta Respublii Tatarstan. "Stenogramma vstrechi Prezidenta respubliki Tatarstana Shaimieva s Prezidentom Kongressa mestnykh i regional'nykh vlastei Evropy Aleksandrom Chenoffym 11 maia 1996" (Shorthand notes of the meeting between the President of the Republic of Tatarstan Shaimiev with the President of the Congress of European Local and regional Authorities Alexander Chernoff on 11 May 1996).

shortest way. And in the center of the republic, in the middle of the steppe, a new town will be built along the road – a sort of Kalmyk Las Vegas.”<sup>33</sup>

But in the second half of the 1990s, the problem of oil transportation through the Caspian coast of Kalmykia became the most urgent ideological symbol turning into a main foreign policy task of the republican elite. A proposal was developed for building a transport corridor running north to south to link Central and Northern Europe with Asia through the Caspian harbors of Russia, Iran and Turkmenistan. The Kalmyk harbor of Lagan’ was to become an important point of this transit route that would link by ferry the coasts of Russia, Iran and Turkmenistan.

The international consortium Nostrak headed by Iliumzhinov is in charge of this project, to which the leaders of the republic attach great importance<sup>34</sup>. The ruling elite of Kalmykia declared itself the main architect of the transport “aggregation of Russia through its harbor of Lagan’ on the Caspian Sea. The chairman of the Kalmyk government declared in 1998 that Russia must proclaim that its national idea is a new economic re-division of spheres of influence through trade, integration, without wars and crusades, into the global market. Russian has a unique chance to really become a third Rome, proclaiming as a national idea the opening of another Great Silk Road, a route “from the Baltic to the Black Sea” through the Caspian Sea. The starting point of this route through Russian territory will be the territory of Kalmykia near the town of Lagan’.<sup>35</sup>). In the course of this project, Iliumzhinov paid working visits to India, Iran, Oman, Turkey during which he conducted negotiations on investments into the construction of a seaport at Lagan’.

The ideology of the ruling elite of the Nizhnii Novgorod region looks even more interesting but contradictory. Nemtsov’s discourse reflects quite logically and deductively the spirit of liberal reforms. His views can be described as the most in-depth and the most complete type of ideological position. Thus he asserted in an interview with the author that the “model of Nizhnii Novgorod embodies the modern-day destiny of Russia.”<sup>36</sup> Contrasting the “model of Nizhnii Novgorod” with the Ulyanovsk and Kalmyk reform variants, he demonstrated the authoritarian and dichotomical nature of his system of political thought. This position became a justification for the radical variant of market reform that was realized in Nizhnii Novgorod Oblast. But the Nizhnii Novgorod establishment of Nemtsov’s period demonstrated the following paradox: the liberal principles of the local politics were actively stated by the governor, but the ruling class of the

33 *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, 10 April 1996.

34 Magomedov, A. “Kalmykia fights for primacy in the Caspian Region.” *EWI Russian Regional Investor*, vol. 2, no.31 (30 August 2000).

35 *Izvestiia Kalmykii*, 2 December 1998.

36 Interview with the former governor of the Nizhnii Novgorod region. Nizhnii Novgorod, 16 June 1995.

region as exemplified by the regional administration took is rather chilly on them. The majority of local politicians and officials are anonymous and eclectic in their ideological positions and have little bearing upon the whole.

Therefore, the positive image of Nizhnii Novgorod as a market leader turned out to be shallow, without being deeply rooted emotionally, and had no real influence on local public opinion. This was also noted in the sensational conclusion of Igor Kliamkin that the general support base of local privatization of trade and service by the Nizhnii Novgorod residents is rather low, and the assessments of reforms' results are below the Russian average.<sup>37</sup> The reasons for this dualism of the Nizhnii Novgorod government are shown in the next section of this article.

After the resignation of Nemtsov and his entourage (he was promoted to vice-prime minister of the Russian government), the political world outlook of the Nizhnii Novgorod elite headed by Ivan Skliarov changed. Russia as a great state became the key focus of the political administrative elite headed by Skliarov. The attitude to Russia's great power ambitions is emotionally pronounced and is perceived as a special one. Such a mood gave rise to ideologems aimed at a pan-Russian audience: "One and indivisible Russia," "Nizhnii Novgorod – the pivot of Russia."

The analysis of this section confirmed that in practical terms, ideology often appears as myths, as political advertisement, as a ritual, and as symbols to which much importance is attached. It is the regional mythology and even the regional utopia that often forms the basis for local political identity. The regional political discourse, which helps to mark and deploy ideological symbols and senses, appears as an instrument of this manifestation.

This analysis testifies that the subjects of the Federation were resisting the chaotic process of fragmentation of Yeltsin's Russia in different ways. The regional elites' appeal to foreign policy discourse terms and international projects is a form of political adaptation to the uncertainty of a transition period and, at the same time, a mode of public self-affirmation.

To avoid repetitions in this section, the anti-Moscow bias in the ideology of Kalmyk and Nizhnii Novgorod elites is not examined in detail. This aspect can be seen clearest in Tatarstan elite case study. It is much more interesting to follow the evolution of regional ideology. While the regional authorities used the language of challenges and impressive declarations in the early 1990s, a more moderate tendency can be observed from the end of 1995. By that time, the regional ideologies that had previously challenged the federal center had found complacency in self-realization. The benefits obtained and the privileges and sanctions gained during

37 Kliamkin, I. M. "Kakoi avtoritarnyi rezhim vozmozhen segodnia v Rossii?" (What kind of authoritarian regime is possible in today's Russia?). *Polis*, no. 5 (1993), pp. 65-66.

political self-affirmation reduced demands for change and quenched the initial fit of passion. After obtaining the right to own property, resources, and political and economic institutions, the ruling elite toned down the romantic extremism of the early years of the struggle for sovereignty to a bureaucratic, moderate voice. Regional leaders, symbols and semantics of localism lost some of their initial charisma, and the local elites began to see power as an end in itself instead of a means to an end. Another reason for that were some warranties for political durability of regional leaders.

Such an evolution is entirely in tune with the concept of the Self-Termidorian transformation. According to this theory, any rebel politician becomes a stable authoritarian ruler after he has come to power. The transformation consists of a change from the radical romanticism of political fighters to the praise of strong rulers.

This evolution contributes to a better understanding of the real meaning of regional ideologies. In this context it is more realistic to regard regional ideologies and their international content as political instruments in accordance with Geertz's theory of interests. Despite the high pathos of ideological slogans, the regional elite had no long-term vision, and their opinions and views are instruments of political survival by means of short-term self-affirmation.

It appears that the anti-Western orientation of regional leaders addressed in the text is excessively phrased for public consumption. Local elites can be anti-Western at the level of political declarations but when it comes to obtaining a loan, for example, or creating a profitable joint venture, they stop this rhetoric. Anti-Western declarations basically serve an internal purpose and are meant for interregional use. The same applies to anti-Moscow rhetoric. Shaimiev, Iliumzhinov and other leaders oppose Moscow in words, but reached an understanding with Yeltsin's administration. Therefore, it is no coincidence that most regional leaders surrendered to Putin so easily.

## Regime ideologies and policy-making: case studies

This chapter explains how regional ideologies influence policy-making. In the following, we will examine the extent to which regional ideological constructions, which often appear as myths and symbols, possess a potential for strengthening international political and economic contacts of the regions. In other words, can regional ideological constructions function as factors contributing to more efficiency in regional foreign policy? This correlation is demonstrated here for each region separately.

### *4.1 Tatarstan*

The above steps were accompanied by further political self-affirmation of the local ruling elite. The strategy of “Tatarstan as a new paradigm,” as declared in Kazan many times, is aimed at the “overcoming of regional thinking” and orientating to the global economy and culture. Among the many regional leaders who criticized Moscow, the Tatar elite most strongly perceived the reform as implemented by the central government as conducive to Russia’s surrender to the West. Consequently, the federal power itself was seen as a defective political subject. An alternative to the Gaidar-Chernomyrdin course was proposed under the “Tatarstan model,” because the Tatar elite proclaimed the need to outstrip, not imitate other models. The approach of the local elite was to promote comprehensive modernization that was seen as superior to the defective monetary strategy of the Russian government. The wording of this approach turned out to be very impressive: “One can be a backward province in an economically leading country, but at the same time one can be a flourishing region in an economically

weak country. Even if Russia as a whole has a great economic policy, that doesn't guarantee success for the enterprises of Tatarstan because competitive benefits are established at the regional level."<sup>38</sup> This view of the regional authorities led to expanded activities towards its own political self-affirmation.

From the very beginning, regional elites tried to identify the direction of global and regional changes and to determine its place and role in the changing world. Outside of Moscow, Tatarstan shows the most activity among the Russian regions in the development of strategic cooperation on the international market. The power sharing agreement with the federal center provided Tatarstan with the right to conclude international economic agreements with foreign states and administrative and territorial units of other countries. Today, the republic maintains its representative offices in European countries, the US, Australia, Turkey and also in the regions of the Russian Federation and the CIS. "For the first time in the history of Tatarstan, the government will pursue an aggressive foreign market policy, meaning any consumers outside Tatarstan including the federal government," Ravil Muratov, the first vice-prime minister of the government of the republic, declared in 1996.<sup>39</sup>

It is very significant that this aspect of the activity of the local elite reveals a special cultural approach. In the opinion of local ideologists, one can gain a foothold in the world only by means of realizing one's own cultural peculiarity. The idea that Tatarstan is an indivisible part of the world and that its real economic and other relations must correspond to the requirements of the world culture, results in an unambiguous conclusion: "Tatarstan will be able to get its place on the world market only if it makes as much use of the historical traditions and national peculiarities as possible. World leaders in sophisticated production keep their competitive positions thanks to cultural uniqueness and originality but not due to unification of culture."<sup>40</sup> When the Russian regions were thrust into the community of globalized economies, where even the long-term members don't understand well each other, the Tatarstan elite tried to take charge of its own public relations on behalf of and in defense of its local community. In the light of these efforts, the local elite views the attempts to blindly imitate and emulate western models, which threaten regional basic values and initiatives, as risky. Hence the sharp criticism of both ready-made foreign models and of Russian politicians who copy them: "... By the way, the American counselors who recommended 'a shock therapy' are considerably to blame for today's chaos in Russia." Before criticizing our model, why not evaluate the role of Jeffrey Sachs and not to try to understand the reasons for rejection of his "questionable formulas in Tatarstan?"<sup>41</sup> It turned

38 *Molodezh' Tatarstana* (Kazan), no. 11 (1995).

39 *Vremia i den'gi* (Kazan), 7 September 1996.

40 *Molodezh' Tatarstana* (Kazan), no. 13 (1995).

41 *Ibid.*, no. 11.

out, that for the local leaders it is very important to find out if Tatarstan, for example, can enrich the world civilization with its historically rooted creativity or it is condemned to try on strange old clothes.<sup>42</sup>

The "Tatarstan model" allowed the elite to extend its activities to the international arena, aimed at strengthening its prestige and political resources. The foreign political aspect of the "Tatarstan model" was also expressed in the "Hague initiative" which embodied the Tatar claim to a bloodless resolution of the conflict with the federal center throughout agreement with Moscow. "We don't have enough time for a detached view of our own political activity, we don't perceive it as a historical experience. But for some, it may help avoid conflicts. It is probably because of this fact that some republics of the post-Soviet era and also international organizations and experts responded easily to our initiative about holding a "round table" in The Hague. There aren't that many successful models of conflict-free development, they must be studied attentively"<sup>43</sup>. On 14-15 January 1995, leaders and representatives of the post-Soviet states troubled by internal conflicts (Georgia and Abkhazia; Ukraine and Crimea; Moldova, Transdnister and Gagausia; Russia and Tatarstan) came together at the initiative of Tatar leaders. The conference was supported by Harvard University (where Shaimiev made a speech), by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, and by the Council of Europe. International non-governmental organizations such as the Nobel Peace Institute in Oslo and the "International Alarm" forum also joined them. The proposal found supporters in the Russian Ministry of Nationality Affairs.

Though the results obtained by the "Hague initiative" turned out to be much more modest compared to what the Tatarstan delegation had declared, the leaders of the republic tried to apply this practice to the solution of the Chechnya conflict. Shaimiev chaired a round table on the topic "From confrontation to making bridges" that took place in The Hague. Shaimiev's staff was one of the sponsors of this round table. The Chechnya conflict was at the center of attention at the forum. Relying on the experience of a peaceful dialogue between Russia and Tatarstan, Shaimiev intended to work out a similar model of a dialogue between Chechnya and Russia at The Hague.<sup>44</sup>

Nobody in Kazan denies the pragmatic nature of these efforts of Tatar leaders based on calculation on rewards of the measures taken. After the "Hague initiative," articles in the Western media drew attention to the peace-making politics of Tatarstan. Former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali considered it

42 In this respect, the speech of the first vice prime minister of Tatarstan, R. Muratov, "Dukhovnoe nasledie kak faktor ekonomicheskogo progressa" at the forum of the International Humanitarian Initiative of Caul Gali is characteristic where he describes conceptual approaches of the republic leaders to the solution of strategic development tasks. See *Vremia i den'gi* (Kazan), 7 September 1996.

43 *Molodezh' Tatarstana* (Kazan), no. 13 (1995).

44 *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 29 March 1996; *Novoe vremia*, no. 17 (1996), p. 10.

necessary to inform the UN Security Council about the new initiative and thanked Shaimiev in person. It is acknowledged quite frankly in Kazan that peace-making initiatives make a positive image of the republic and contribute to a more active economic cooperation, without which the access to the world market is impossible.<sup>45</sup>

## 4.2 *Kalmykia*

The creation of a state industrial and financial investment corporation "Kalmykia" became a fundamental part of Kirsan Iliumzhinov's "new borders" policy. It replaced the former system of the Council of Ministries, and, according to state political counselor Viacheslav Iliumzhinov, was to become a "locomotive for the republic." The creation of the "Kalmykia" corporation was the first serious step towards Kirsan Iliumzhinov's goal since long before he was elected president: the reconstruction of the whole financial and economic machinery of the republic on the model once used in Singapore, South Korea, and Japan. The shareholders of the corporation that involving the entire republic were to become family members, with a collective sense of responsibility and collective care for the "family farm." The key idea is to unite the citizens of the republic not only by political or national means, but also through corporate interest, creating a comprehensive economic system under which the whole country must work as one large corporation providing its workers with high incomes that have adequate commodity basis.

Other results of Iliumzhinov's presidency are connected to foreign political initiatives to a much greater extent than in other regions under consideration. One of the main objectives of the new Kalmyk authorities, as Kirsan Iliumzhinov noted, is to abolish the worst features of provincialism." In 1993, Kalmykia was a downtrodden backward republic holding the last place in the country in terms of living standards and infrastructure. Though the economic situation remains very difficult,<sup>46</sup> the local rulers gained a serious foothold with help of large economic and chess projects.

Chess made Kalmykia famous after the 33rd World Chess Olympiad was held in Elista with 1200 participants beginning on 26 September 1998. "Chess City" – a district of the Kalmyk capital built to the latest technologies – welcomed

45 *Molodezh' Tatarstana* (Kazan), no. 13 (1995).

46 The situation in agriculture and industry is close to the national average. The salary of workers in Kalmykia is half the average salary in Russia. Many elements of the economic structures that are being created are not regulated or coordinated. See "Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoe razvitiie Respubliki Kalmykia v 1 polugodii 1996" (Socioeconomic development of the Republic of Kalmykia in the first half of the year 1996). *Khal'mg Unn*, 6 August 1996; Statbiulleten'. "Osnovnye pokazateli sotsial'no-politicheskogo razvitiia i khoda ekonomicheskikh reform v raionakh respubliki Kalmykia za 1992-1995 gg." (Main indicators of the sociopolitical development and course of economic reforms in the areas of the Republic of Kalmykia in the years 1992-1995). Elista 1996.



guests from over 100 countries of the world. In this connection the following peculiarity should be noted: no matter what Kalmykia does – it rings throughout the country. It is probably thanks to such efforts that the authorities of the republic give their inhabitants access to many large economical, political and cultural events, trying to overcome its provinciality and isolation from the “civilized” world.

One of the instruments for realizing Iliumzhinov’s plans is an offshore tax haven that is mentioned in all his campaign promises. It was introduced in Kalmykia without preliminary permission, and attracted over 200 commercial companies.<sup>47</sup>

The fostering of an industrial base, especially of a processing industry, can be attributed to successes in the economic sphere. The leather plant “Arschi,” the largest in the North Caucasus, and a wool-washing mill were also built. The republic began exporting its own caviar.<sup>48</sup>

As for another main priority of the Kalmyk politicians, the North-South (“Nostrak”) transport corridor, work progressed during the whole second half of the year 2000. On 4 July 2000 Iliumzhinov signed an agreement on the construction of the “Lagan” sea harbor with the Iranian industrial and building company “Sadra.” The company was going to invest about US\$150 million in the harbor. To speed up construction, the authorities of Kalmykia are currently pursuing a three-fold strategy. The first aspect is an inter-republican one. During a meeting with the deputies of the Kalmyk parliament Iliumzhinov declared that the construction of a sea harbor in Lagan’ remained a strategic priority for the republic. In the same month he visited Lagan’ and at a meeting with local inhabitants confirmed that the international transport corridor would pass through the town. The second aspect of the Kalmyk strategy concerns the support of the federal center. On 13 October 2000, Iliumzhinov signed a decree according to which the Kalmykian Ministry of International Economic Links would function as a coordinator for the “Nostrak” project at the federal level. The third and the most important aspect of the Kalmyk transport strategy is aimed at foreign contacts, which must provide the investments necessary for the construction. This project is so important for the republic that Iliumzhinov called it the “Kalmyk road into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”

47 *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 28 October 1995.

48 See *NG – Regiony (Nezavisimaia gazeta)*, no. 15 (1998), p. 4. According to the statistical data, against the background of reduction of gross production of the agriculture, frozen fish production grew 20 times, and sturgeon caviar exports grew threefold. See *Khalmg Unn*, 6 August 1996.

### 4.3 *Nizhnii Novgorod Oblast*

The characteristics of the Nizhnii Novgorod elite – ideological instability and dual world outlook of its personnel – considered in the previous section became manifested very clearly in its policy. Nemtsov as the guardian of the “Nizhnii Novgorod market phenomenon” myth turned out to be the brain, motor and living embodiment of this image. This section tells how the Nizhnii Novgorod political class that suddenly found itself without Nemtsov rejected this myth and this image.

Let’s look at the epoch of Nemtsov in Nizhnii Novgorod more closely. Immediately after taking office, Nemtsov declared his intention to make the Nizhnii Novgorod region a source of radical economic reforms. To begin with, the governor engaged experts from the “Epicenter” group, headed by Grigorii Yavlinskii, to work out a reform plan. The group worked out a document entitled “The Nizhnii Novgorod Prologue” that was a comprehensive plan for regional economic development. This document manifested the ideology of the regional market break-through.

One can only understand the realization of the liberal populist version of market changes in the Nizhnii Novgorod region when considering the ideological and political allegiance of its leaders (these were Nemtsov and Yevgenii Krestianinov, as well as other top policy makers such as Dmitrii Bedniakov and Aleksandr Kosarikov). They understand market changes and their sympathies lie with the liberal economic ideology.

One of the first objectives of the Nizhnii Novgorod market project was the creation of the middle class. With this purpose, a small-scale privatization program for trade and service was developed in 1992-1993. During the same period, haulage enterprises were broken up and privatized according to plan. For a while, the region became a model for efficient privatization in Russia. The International Finance Corporation (IFC), which participated in small-scale privatization in the region, issued several brochures about “the Nizhnii Novgorod model” to help other regions to carry out privatization. It is remarkable that IFC representative Alan Bigman explained the success of IFC in Nizhnii Novgorod with the support from the side of the regional leaders, especially Nemtsov and the chairman of the regional legislature Krestianinov.<sup>49</sup>

Doing their best to support market changes, the leaders of the region began having small business companies registered. This system of registering small business enterprises contributed to a considerable growth of the market activity in the region.

49 Stoner-Weiss, Kathryn. *Local Heroes. The Political Economy of Russian Regional Governance*. Princeton Univ. Press, New Jersey, 1997, p. 109.

Part of the Nizhnii Novgorod leaders' plan for developing the regional economy was a rapid expansion of the region's interregional and international links. The regional leaders made this a priority, and they were right to do so. As Sergei Borisov notes, numerous polls during the last years show that the population approves the region's quest for external popularity and authority ("Nizhnii is the third capital of Russia") and of the status of an influential subject of interregional and international relations. The above matters give a good indication of the state of mass political consciousness.<sup>50</sup> The regional leaders strove for growth of free trade among the provinces and for the creation of joint favorable conditions to attract internal and external investments. With this purpose they took an active part in the work of the inter-regional "Greater Volga" inter-regional association to promote commercial and economic initiatives. At the same time, the region concluded many bilateral trade agreements beyond this association. These agreements superseded traditional barter agreements and included the establishment of trading houses and banks on the territory of partner provinces.<sup>51</sup> The agreement that the Nizhnii Novgorod region signed with two regions of Kazakhstan (Taldykurgan and Karaganda) allowed the Russian region to sell its goods to China.

Besides establishing trade relations within the CIS countries, Nizhnii Novgorod Oblast also stimulated trade relations with states from the "far abroad." The regional leaders used the historical fair of Nizhnii Novgorod to sell goods produced by the regional companies to external markets.

There are also other more or less successful examples of reform activity on behalf of the Nizhnii Novgorod leaders. The most famous of these is the agrarian reform (which was widely advertised, like other initiatives of Nemtsov): share holding and division of collective farms' property in the agrarian sector – the "ZERNO" program. This program was a strong blow to the collective Soviet farm system.

But it was the agrarian reform that demonstrated the indistinctness and incompleteness of the "Nizhnii Novgorod model" in the way the entire elite of Nizhnii Novgorod perceived it. It is interesting to see what happened to Nemtsov's reforms without Nemtsov. The ideological dualism of the Nizhnii Novgorod elite mentioned in the previous section was followed by a dual political course before and after Nemtsov's departure.

50 Borisov, S. "Aktual'nyi politicheskii rezhim v Nizhegorodskoi oblasti: stanovlenie v 90-e gody" (The present political regime of Nizhnii Novgorod Oblast: its genesis in the 1990s)." *Polis*, no. 1 (1999), p. 98-115.

51 See "Soglashenie po ekonomicheskomu, tekhnicheskomu i kul'turnomu sotrudnichestvu mezhdru administratsiiami Tiimenskoi i Nizhegorodskoi oblastei (1993g.)" (Agreement on economic, technical and cultural cooperation between the administrations of the Tyumen and Nizhnii Novgorod oblasts [1993]); "Soglashenie po ekonomicheskomu, tekhnicheskomu i kul'turnomu sotrudnichestvu mezhdru dvumia oblastiami Kazakhstana i Nizhegorodskoi oblast'iu (noiabr' 1992g)" (Agreement on economic, technical and cultural cooperation between two oblasts of Kazakhstan and Nizhnii Novgorod [November 1992]).

Nizhnii Novgorod began its agrarian reform in 1992 under the patronage of Nemtsov and in 1993 about 40% of agricultural enterprises, basically the weakest ones, were reorganized. The emergency model turned out to be an emergency brake for the dying agricultural sector. But such an experiment could hardly be possible in other regions; it was only feasible because it was supported by international financial organizations who were taken with Nemtsov's charm (the British "Know-How Fund" and the IFC granted financial support). Debts of the new owners were written off, and the responsibility for the social facilities and the military industrial complex was transferred to local administrations. The Nizhnii Novgorod fund for agrarian reforms ("NizhAgrofond") was funded with budget money.

As a result the Nizhnii Novgorod experiment turned out to be a wasteful undertaking, and there is still no real agrarian market. Another example is that of the IFC, whose investments in the region and in the reform of the agricultural complex were lost. Overall, many foreign investors realized that the return on investments in the region is more than low.<sup>52</sup>

### ***Governor Skliarov's entry into Nizhnii Novgorod politics***

After Nemtsov and his group of advisors moved to Moscow and Skliarov and his staff came to power, a big difference between them became apparent, not only in the style and methods of governing, but mainly in their political priorities. First of all, political initiatives that were aimed at transformation of the region into a "test ground" of market changes failed. The point is that the majority of the population didn't consider Skliarov a consecutive successor of Nemtsov's reforms. Skliarov's policy in Nizhnii Novgorod can be seen as a break with Nemtsov's liberal ideology and transformation of the region into a "fair of reforms." Skliarov spoke quite frankly about it in an interview: "The Nizhnii Novgorod region is not a showcase and, of course, not a "test ground", but our native land where our children and grandchildren will grow up...I wouldn't like to be known as a next reformer who leads people into the abyss of uncertainty without looking before leaping."<sup>53</sup>

The next examples clarify the new governor's attitude regarding his predecessor's policies. In autumn 1998, Skliarov (who formally remained a curator of "NizhAgrofond") let it be known that the presence of Nemtsov at the modest celebrations on the occasion of the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first agrarian auctions was undesirable. "You can't sell land by auctions!," the governor declared to voters. "Selling land by auctions has no prospects if we mean agricultural production.

52 See *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 6 February 1998, p. 8; *Rossiiskaia Federatsiia segodnia*, no. 16 (1998), p. 30.

53 *Rossiiskaia Federatsiia segodnia*, no. 16 (1998), p. 24.

Our way is competitive granting of low-interest credits for the period of 10-15 years to those who can buy land to work on it.”<sup>54</sup>

Skliarov made a transition from his predecessor’s romantic ideas to harsh reality. Now that more concrete objectives have been fixed, one can see the next goal and the results. The new head of the region began visiting districts more often. Nemtsov was more of a Muscovite than Skliarov in this respect. He tended towards global and big projects,<sup>55</sup> but the current governor is more in touch with the current problems of his region.

54 *Ibid.*, p. 30.

55 Nemtsov also abused his office of vice-prime minister of the Russian government. Thus, while making a speech before the deputies of the group “Russian regions” of the State Duma, he vividly described the perspectives of creation of a great railway “bridge” from Europe to Asia on the basis of the Ministry of Railways. See *Rossiiskie vesti*, 4 October 1997.



## Conclusion

I have considered the Russian regions in transition as examples of attempts at political reconstruction under conditions of a crisis of society and of the political system. The political challenge the Russian local authorities had to face in the early 1990s was a result of the peculiar circumstances of the epoch. After 1991, while the former "Soviet" ideological perception of the world collapsed, Russian society was disappointed with the way transformation based on "Western" ideas proceeded. Under the conditions of the nationwide ideological collapse, many of the regional politicians leaped forward in their thinking and made the transition to politically and geopolitically motivated actions. This means that local elites and ideologies being worked out by them appear as forces of development that see themselves as subjects of international relations.

The structure and the style of the elite worldviews show regional variation. Ideological projects becoming "formulas of government" of local ruling groups form a basis of regional interests.

These interests and incentives reduce the struggle for the corresponding symbols and senses to pragmatic considerations of strengthening authority, security and resources.

Globalization of economic developments causes important consequences for states: on the one hand, it increases the impact of economic problems in their foreign policy, and on the other hand it requires the involvement of federation subjects. All this indicates that such interdependency increases the role of provinces in the world economics.

Technical innovations determine more and more serious changes in the territorial layout of the world. Structural reconstruction that has been undertaken in

the West for a long time and that is becoming apparent in the Russian Federation causes serious territorial changes. Cyclical waves of technical innovations have accelerated and complicated this process. Swift qualitative and quantitative progress in the communications sector (radio, fiber-optical, satellite, and long distance audio-video telecommunications in combination with computer networks) has caused a revolution in the development of the regions.

The establishment of market relations leads to an increase of independent subjects of economic activity, including regional actors. Management at the city and regional levels – in a national system where every region and regional association wish to become a sample for the entire country – becomes a key element of political organization and a way of establishing profitable economic links with international companies. This process coincides with the other trend that can be seen in the industrial world – regionalization.

Nowadays some parts of Russia's vast territory are becoming more and more involved in regional trade relations. The solution of modern disputes over rights to natural resources such as oil, natural gas, timber, coal, diamonds (this is still one of the key aspects of collisions between the central and regional governing structures of modern Russia) is proving to be a key point for regional economic development.



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