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MINORITY ISSUES

**DAGESTAN'S CONSOCIATIONAL
MODEL? THE POTENTIAL FOR
REGIONAL CONSOCIATIONALISM
IN RUSSIA**

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ECMI WORKING PAPER #85
March 2015



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ECMI Working Paper # 85

European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI)

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Dagestan's Consociational Model? The Potential for Regional Consociationalism in Russia

The working paper focuses on Dagestan's consociational political system between 1994 and 2003. It explores the research question whether Dagestan's consociationalism can be viewed as a precursor to consociationalism in other Russian regions. In providing with the answer, the study splits into three key sections. The first part assesses consociationalism, looks at grand coalitions, the mutual veto, proportionality and autonomy. The second section then links the literature on consociationalism with the case study of Dagestan. If Dagestan's consociational model can operate in other Russian regions, it would call into question the heretofore state-centric literature on consociationalism, the need for centralisation from the Kremlin and the use of sub-national authoritarianism for 'clans' to control their respective republics. The example of Dagestan could serve to help protect minorities on a regional basis within the Russian Federation and assist the creation of the underpinnings of a democratic society, culture and polity within Russia.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Throughout the 1990s, Russia epitomised state instability. The federal centre throughout the 1990s tried to wrest control from the regions. Regional governments had fluid political systems and legislation that directly contravened the federal constitution¹. After Putin's election in 2000, the President started to rectify the central state's loss of power through his creation of a power-vertical. One aspect of this meant that local elites in order to

maintain power locally had to maintain the writ of the central state², and this was the cornerstone of Putin's centralism policy³. Central government created "informal rules of the game" placing federal entities under Kremlin tutelage, dismissing regional competition and integrating (by force if necessary), regional elites into the Kremlin's new party of power, United Russia⁴. Part of this new policy has forced regional elites to generate electoral results for the Kremlin⁵ and Putin's power-vertical was a policy that aided



the central state becoming the “main player” in the political system⁶.

Regionalism remains a concern for the Kremlin. The central government views the emergence of regional identities as anathema. It has become particularly concerned with regional identities that have developed and evolved to (in the view of the Kremlin) to form a volatile mixture⁷. A sense of identity that is disparate from the central government’s perception of ‘togetherness’ makes it increasingly harder to consolidate a Russian identity⁸. The Kremlin has on the one hand endeavoured to accommodate ethnic diversity. At the same time other sections of the central regime’s discourse has contributed to the development of an identity that alienates non-Russian ethnic minorities⁹.

Central government discourse has created a Russian identity that is quintessentially Russian, whilst disparaging an ‘other’. This has become synonymous with ‘Chechen’ and by extension Caucasian and Muslim which has alienated non-Russian ethnic groups making it increasingly difficult to integrate ethnic groups in Russia¹⁰. The former head of Dagestan’s police (Magomed Shamilov) contends that the Kremlin’s nationalist policy has alienated non-Russian ethnic groups precipitating militant support¹¹. Medvedev¹² has advocated that Russia should become a multicultural society to accommodate its significant minorities. As ethnic tensions are rising he contends that a multicultural state

would better accommodate ethnic tensions. However, in the same speech he advocated that central government should build a unitary state with a common identity. The central government seems to have a confused discourse on how to ease ethnic tensions and incorporate ethnic minorities.

There are 170 ethnic groups according to the most recent All Russian Census¹³. According to Putin¹⁴ the Russian government will provide money for regional initiatives to accommodate ethnic tensions. For Putin this allows the central government to respond quickly and effectively to ethnic tensions. At a meeting with Muslim leaders Putin¹⁵ contended that more Islamic institutions will be set-up to accommodate Muslim minority groups and counter extremism. The Russian Ministry for Regional Development published a document (2013) entitled ‘Strategy of the State National Policy of the Russian Federation for the Period through 2025’, which advocates that education on inter-ethnic relations should occur at schools, the creation of more youth groups to integrate the young together, regional cultural festivals will be promoted and NGOs allowed to operate to prevent ethnic tension. Yet, the document is unclear on how the Russian government will ease ethnic tensions. It remains unclear as to where the money will come from to make these projects viable and operational¹⁶. I contend that conflict can be reduced by changing the regional political systems.



Russia has an example of such a system that alleviated ethnic tensions. Between 1994 and 2003 the political system in Dagestan provided all ethnic groups in the republic a voice allowing them to preserve their interests and at the same time maintain republican stability. This system was consociational in nature and eased ethnic strife through accommodative institutions and preserving each ethnic group a say (either at local or republican level). Potentially this system could be reproduced in other Russian regions.

To comprehend whether Dagestan can be viewed as consociational, I need to ascertain some research questions to help clarify contentions made here. The main research question is whether Dagestan's political system between 1994 and 2003 is consociational. If Dagestan's political system had consociational features I can then ask whether Dagestan's model can be used in other Russian regions. This would allow the study to ascertain whether Dagestan's political system between 1994 and 2003 could operate in other Russian regions. Of course there are issues with this contention. The central government has created a heavily centralised political system and made local elites accountable only to the central government¹⁷. However, this does not detract from the contention that Dagestan's mode of consociationalism could be used in other regions. This paper is a theoretical argument that Dagestan's consociational system could

be used in other Russian regions as other republics are experiencing ethnic violence. Creating a consociational political system in these republics could counter growing hostility. The rise of Islamic nationalism in Russia's 'Muslim' republics, coupled with the Russian authorities' overzealous reaction to mild Islamic feeling have both contributed to alienation and radicalisation and a spiral where violence begets violence^{18 19}. In all likelihood over the next decade Russian authorities will need to be conciliatory towards mild Islamists to deal with growing radicalisation. Malashenko²⁰ contends that Muslim population growth in Russia will force the central government to provide more freedom in the republic's political systems, or face growing Islamic radicalism.

According to the 2010 All-Russia census there are 170 ethnic groups residing in Russia. At the regional level there exist 27 territories where Russian is shared as the official language with another. For example, in the Republic of Bashkortostan, the two official languages at republican level are Russian and Bashkir. The central government's policy rather than attempting to accommodate other ethnic groups has become increasingly conflictive, contributing to growing antagonisation of ethnic tensions^{21 22}. This has become more pertinent as some ethnic groups have seen their historic homelands incorporated with other regions (particularly between 2005 and 2008)²³. Thus, it is



pertinent to provide an analysis of a potential new policy. The Kremlin has created a regional committee to try to accommodate ethnic minorities and curb violence. However, it remains unlikely that the central government will instigate the committee's recommendations. Eventually the central government will have to deal with the impending escalation in violence through change in the current system²⁴. Putin²⁵ in his state of the nation address did in fact speak of reforming political institutions to accommodate ethnic groups and to change the current closed political system.

II. A THEORETICAL OVERVIEW OF CONSOCIATIONALISM

To understand Dagestan's consociationalism it is required first to investigate consociationalism. To do this I will assess the four key aspects of consociationalism: grand coalitions, mutual veto, proportionality and autonomy²⁶. This will help the reader understand the underpinnings of consociationalism and will allow the study to analyse Dagestan's consociationalism and how it could be used in other Russian regions.

Grand Coalitions

The most important aspect of consociational theory is the grand coalition. This system of government entails "the political leaders of all significant segments of...society cooperate....to govern the country"²⁷. It is

based on providing all ethnic groups with a place in government. How many positions in government that are reserved for each ethnic group is dependent on the percentage of the ethnic group compared to the overall population, "it stipulates ...conditions under which a minimum winning coalition will occur"²⁸. It is best that a grand coalition is oversized and includes many divergent forces. These coalitions rely on elite negotiation²⁹. The grand coalition form of government relies on different groups negotiating with each other; otherwise the state is unable to function³⁰. Yet, grand coalitions do not necessarily have to exist in a consociational society as "what makes consociations feasible and work is joint consent across the significant communities"³¹ and a grand coalition may not exist, which could plausibly be the case in Dagestan³².

Mutual Veto

The mutual veto is the way that the theory of consociationalism provides minorities with a voice. The grand coalition is reliant on decisions made by a majority vote and therefore, the minority runs the risk of being outvoted³³. Thus the mutual veto is an important feature for minorities as it provides them with the provision of protecting their interests without them being overridden by the majority. In order for a consociational system to work effectively conditions that protect minority interests from the majority should be incorporated into the system so that the



minority does not feel it is losing on its own key issue³⁴. If it did then it is unlikely that the consociational system would be able to survive for very long. The mutual veto is a control mechanism.

Proportionality

Proportionality is a key aspect of consociational theory³⁵. It offers minorities a certain number of positions in government and other state political institutions dependent on the group's size of the overall population. By incorporating ethnic groups and allocating them positions, proportionality ensures that each group will try to maintain the functionality of the state and not undermine it³⁶. Whereas, majoritarian systems rely on majorities and simplicity for groups to win power, proportionality gives different groups a voice allowing for the "overrepresentation of small segments"³⁷. This creates systems and institutions where minorities "are overrepresented...that they reach a level of equality with the majority" resulting in the protection of the minority or minority factions³⁸. Providing a set number of seats for minorities is only one aspect of proportionality. A further aspect is funding. Public funds should be distributed proportionally to all minorities, dependent on each group's size. Proportionality uses a proportional representation (PR) electoral system³⁹ as this electoral system constructs "multi-party systems and hence multi-party

parliaments, in which all significant segments of the population can be represented"⁴⁰. Proportionality is an important part of consociational theory.

Autonomy

Autonomy is an important aspect of consociational theory as it gives minorities the opportunity to deal with issues that are of concern to them at a regional level⁴¹. Consociationalism recognises that states often have ethnic cleavages, so it allows for recognition of these issues and provides political institutions for minorities for devolved government at the regional level and territorial autonomy⁴². Autonomy is used "to empower a specific group to exercise a greater degree of self-governance"⁴³. Autonomy is thus an important aspect of consociationalism.

III. CONSOCIATIONALISM IN DAGESTAN

Ethnic Composition of Dagestan

I will analyse the ethnic composition of Dagestan, before assessing its historical institutions. Both are important for consociationalism. The large number of ethnic groups in Dagestan makes a consociational structure viable as an agent to restrain violence. This was its purpose between 1994 and 2003, which was to an extent achieved. As table one emphasises Dagestan's body politic is diverse⁴⁴.

**Table One: Ethnic Groups of Dagestan**

Name of Ethnic Group	Size of Population	% of Overall Dagestan Population	Name of Ethnic Group	Size of Population	% of Overall Dagestan Population
Avarians	850011	29.4	Andiyts	11448	0.4
Archints	6	0.0002	Ahxahhtzi	7923	0.3
Beztints	5956	0.2	Botlihts	3508	0.1
Ginuhts	439	0.02	Godoberints	426	0.01
Gunzibts	918	0.03	Didoyts	11623	0.4
Karatints	4761	0.2	Tindal	634	0.02
Hvarshins	526	0.02	Chamalals	16	0.001
Dargints	490384	17	Kumykis	431736	14.9
Lezgins	385240	13.3	Lakts	161276	5.6
Russians	104020	3.6	Azerbaijani	130919	4.5
Tabasarani	118848	4.1	Chechens	93658	3.2
Nogays	40407	1.4	Rutulz	27849	1
Aguls	28054	1	Chahurs	9771	0.3
Armenians	4997	0.2	Tats	456	0.02

Source: All-Russian Census, 2010.

Table one gives the number of ethnic groups in Dagestan and their overall population percentage. As the All-Russian Census⁴⁵ shows many ethnic groups are miniscule. The four most prominent are the Avarians, Dargins, Kumyks and Lezgins. But, none constitutes a majority. Other ethnic groups (Lazkis, Russians, Azerbaijanis and Tabasaranis) are significant. The lack of a

dominant group forces all ethnic groups to engage in dialogue with one another so that in order to govern all groups, they have to consider the wishes of others⁴⁶. Dagestan's political system during the 1990s and until 2003 managed to calm tensions between ethnic groups to such an extent that Dagestan did not follow the same violent path as Chechnya. It also started to create a nascent



Dagestan identity⁴⁷. It is apposite thus to gauge Dagestan's consociational aspects and how the region was able to alleviate violence which was an unfortunate aspect of the political systems of other Caucasian regions (most pertinently Chechnya).

Consociationalism in Dagestan

Dagestan's consociationalism only survived for a short time before the political system was changed to mirror Russia by the central government in 2004. The wider North Caucasus' region in the 1990s was inundated by terrorist violence and Islamic fundamentalism, but Dagestan's consociational system survived this hostility to a great extent due to its consociational political system. Since the change of system in 2004 Dagestan has fractured along nationalist and fundamentalist lines. The Russian central government to maintain order has used central forces, funding Dagestan's government and providing training, so that the republic government can deal with the growth in Islamic militants. The growth of Islamic fundamentalism, which grew out of disaffection at the loss of access to power for other ethnic groups, had spiralled due to growing state repression⁴⁸. Before, whilst terrorist violence did exist, Dagestan's political system was created to accommodate ethnic groups and thus alleviated the potential for violence. In the 1990s with a weak centre⁴⁹, a system that created a tenable peace in an ethnically heterogeneous region deserves

to be studied. It was the consociational system that reduced Dagestan's potential ethnic issues that could have resulted in increased violence. With the change in Dagestan's political system to fit the federal constitution, ethnic tensions rose, as factions competed in a zero-sum game⁵⁰. Dagestan's consociationalism needs to be studied as hypothetically it could contribute to the solution of minority issues in Russia.

Dagestan's political system had its antecedents in the past. The system between 1994 and 2003 copied the historical institution of the *Djamaat* which was reincorporated into Dagestan's 1994 constitution⁵¹. The *Djamaat* system of governance consisted of institutions across Dagestan. These existed in villages that were culturally or historically linked, thus embedding a kinship system. Each *Djamaat* was run by a council of elders who governed by customary law and had authority over 'economic, political and socio-cultural norms'. The *Djamaat* was 'a proto-consociational society insofar as it is a plural association of segmented kinship structures governed by elites drawn from each segment. This cohesive structure negated the pull of ethnicity and largely placated ethnic tensions before they reached boiling point. The *Djamaat* 'transcended both kinship and ethnic structures' but 'nevertheless endured in...extraordinary crises, and...provides for peaceful integration'⁵². This system negated the conflicts that had continued intermittently



for centuries. It was this historical institution that was used as the archetype for the 1994 to 2003 institutions⁵³. Although the *Djamaat* system was not used in the same way that it had operated in past centuries the values behind it lent themselves to the new institutions created in 1994. During the Soviet Union, Moscow had governed Dagestan using strong-men who had given patronage to their family and ethnic group. With the collapse of the Soviet Union a return to some form of *Djamaat* system was seen as the best solution to reduce ethnic tensions⁵⁴. Granted the *Djamaat* political system in its entirety was not incorporated into the 1994-2003 political system, it served as its antecedent⁵⁵. Whilst, I do not contend that historical institutions are integral to the applicability of a consociational system, historic regional institutions that serve remain in the conscience of a society are more applicable than using newly created ‘alien’ influences⁵⁶. I will investigate whether other regions in Russia have institutions that could serve to underpin a consociational political system. If this is the case, as I argue, it would serve as the basis for future studies.

Political parties were based on the *Djamaat* system. They were created to cut across ethnic cleavages and incorporate more than one ethnic group. To gain votes and thus a seat in government and the regional parliament candidates had to gain votes from other ethnic groups and thus cut across ethnic cleavages. The republican government left the

constitution to a ‘collegial executive...which consisted of one representative from each of Dagestan’s major ethnic groups’. Firstly, the constitution created an electoral system giving a proportion of seats to all ethnic groups dependent on each group’s size. Secondly, the State Council was created to placate ethnic differences within the bicameral structure of the People’s Assembly and National Assembly. The three chief offices in the legislature (chairman, prime minister and speaker) were allocated to politicians from three of the four main ethnic groups with rotation after one four year term⁵⁷. The composition of the State Council required that there could not ‘be more than one representative of each of fourteen major ethnic groups’⁵⁸. The constitution’s stipulation of consociational structures and the proportionality of the system show how Dagestan was a consociational system.

The lower house had 242 seats, of which the 121 representatives in the National Assembly cut across ethnic lines. Representatives sought votes across ethnic groups⁵⁹. The 121 People’s Assembly members were elected along ethnic lines, with each of the 66 electoral districts designated to one ethnic group. The other 55 seats were reserved for smaller groups⁶⁰ so all ethnic groups could be represented⁶¹. It was a system that ‘was widely regarded as equitable and legitimate’⁶². This allowed half the assembly to be voted by preference, meaning that representatives were voted by their



popularity, rather than by ethnicity⁶³. Article 72 of the constitution created an electoral system giving all groups equal representation⁶⁴. The Electoral Commission, delineated constituency borders around a single ethnic group, negating ethnicity as an issue⁶⁵. The Electoral Commission created constituencies for small minorities, stopping other groups competing for these seats. For Dagestan's fourteen most prominent ethnic groups, the system begot a near proportional structure. The Electoral Commission generated regional districts (*okrugs*) which mirrored the republican system, giving minority groups to small to be represented at republican level a voice⁶⁶.

IV. DID DAGESTAN HAVE CONSOCIATIONAL POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS?

The political institutions within Dagestan established representation for all ethnic groups in the republic, proportionate to their numbers. To incorporate a heterogeneous society whilst maintaining stability, a consociational form of government was considered by ethnic elites as the best option. However, Dagestan's consociationalism did not have all features of a true consociational political system, as it lacked local autonomy⁶⁷. Therefore, can one talk of a Dagestan consociational model?

The composition of the State Council incorporated a type of grand coalition as it

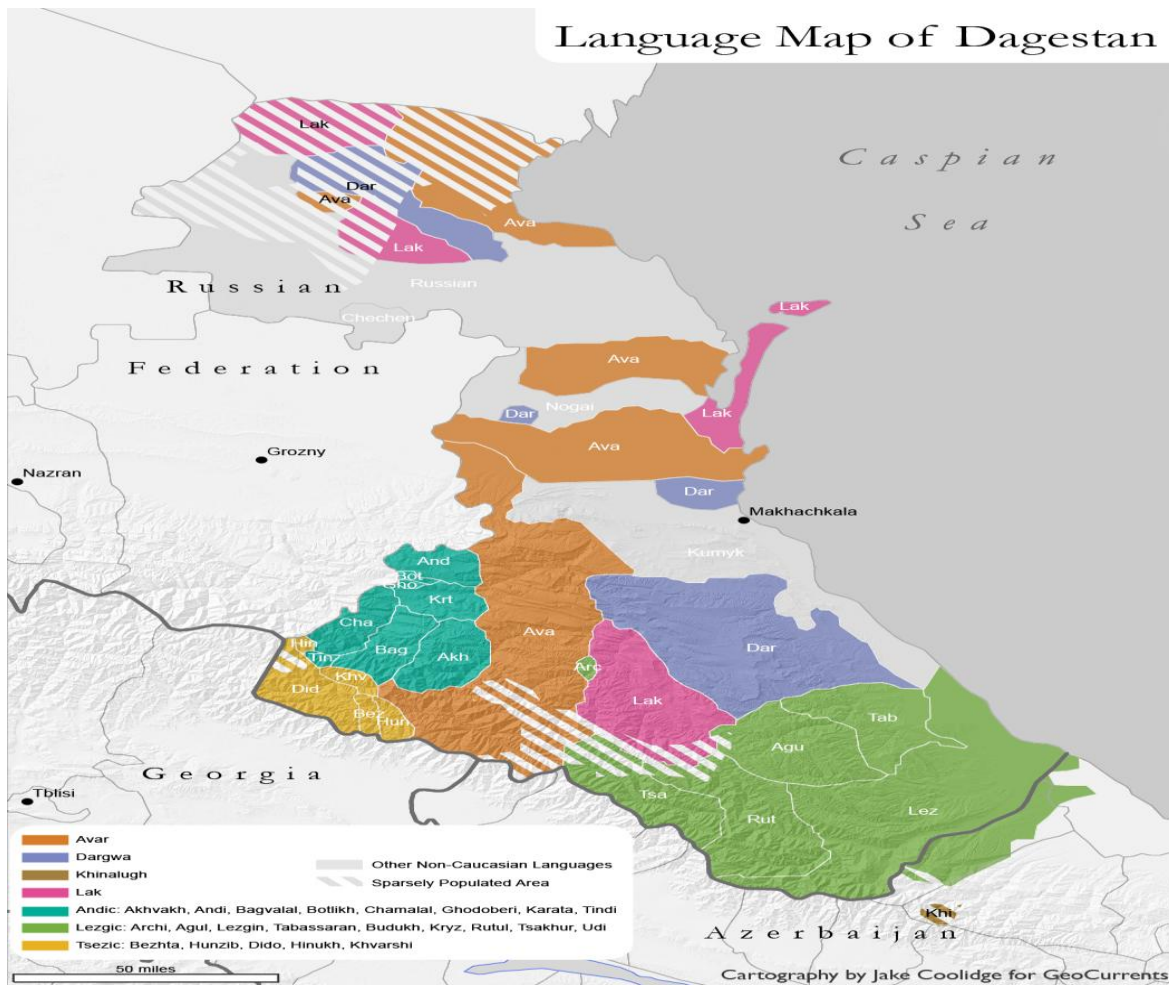
was formed of a representative from each of the fourteen main ethnic groups⁶⁸. It also acted as a collegial presidency where 'collective leadership' maintained stability⁶⁹ and so Dagestan had a grand coalition. Another important consociational tenet is the mutual-veto. Members of the People's Assembly used a veto power if legislation affected their ethnic group. Article 81 of Dagestan's constitution⁷⁰, stipulated that for a veto to be effective, two thirds of the National Assembly must accept it. Representatives were elected through proportionality, which created a 'remarkably precise proportionality'⁷¹. This proportionality in the electoral system contributed to alleviating and containing ethnic conflicts and even existed at the local level^{72 73}. How to represent each ethnic group at government level could have led to significant difficulties, but the system was built to resolve such issues through 'packet replacement'⁷⁴. Groups of ministries were replaced at the same time, meaning that ethnic groups could be re-distributed without the displacement of the entire executive. 'Packet-replacement' was used in individual ministries too. Civil servants were replaced and different ethnic groups were re-distributed, so that all ministries were represented on an ethnic level⁷⁵. 'Packet replacement' acted to establish ethnic quotas that incorporated different groups into institutions across the republic⁷⁶. This system created proportionality in the National Assembly, State Council and other



institutions. At the regional level, district institutions were divided ethnically, meaning that each institution was controlled by one ethnic group⁷⁷. Dagestan does not fit the generic literature on consociationalism as it is a region and consociationalism makes provision for some level of regional autonomy⁷⁸. According to Dagestan's 1994

constitution all of Dagestan's thirty-nine *okrugs* were based on multi-ethnicity and had autonomy in 'cultural and agricultural affairs'⁷⁹. Dagestan's Ministry of Nationalities provided funding for minority radio stations and helped the funding of preserving eleven languages. Map one highlights the different language groups in Dagestan.

Language Map of Dagestan



Source: Geocurrents



V. DID CONSOCIATIONALISM WORK IN DAGESTAN?

Dagestan's consociational institutions brought competing ethnic groups together, which provided neutralising aspects to stop one ethnic group gaining too much power. The head of the State Council (Magomedali Magomedov) did appropriate power, however, the institutions did not allow him to gain total control. Whilst, he was able to manipulate the system to be re-elected on consecutive terms overturning restrictions in place to maintain the balance of power he was unable to gain total control of republican institutions⁸⁰. The system successfully kept larger ethnic groups content and in power, but it limited opportunities for smaller ethnic groups to achieve high positions in the republic⁸¹. Dagestan's institutions were weak and an individual could hoard power, however, at the same time various ethnic groups got some power and representation, making the system better than others that existed in Russia in the 1990s⁸². The system created viable legal and political systems that regulated local self-government, electoral legislation and ethnic quotas with the objective of preserving inter-ethnic harmony. Dagestan serves as an example of an alternative political system for other Russian regions⁸³. For all the system's failings, from Magomedov's power grab, to certain violations of the quota system, to the exclusion of smaller ethnic minorities, as well as economic disparities, corruption and

growing Islamic fundamentalism, Dagestan's system created regional stability⁸⁴.

Dagestan's model occurred at a time of instability when the central government lost central functions to the regions⁸⁵. After 2000 Putin was able to prevail against regional elites and establish a 'power-vertical' which incorporated 'the hierarchical subordination of...governors...the de facto prohibition of...political competition of local elites...and making...local regimes responsible for the provision of favourable results of...elections'⁸⁶. In 2003 the central government forced the regions to fit their constitutions to follow (to the latter) the federal constitution⁸⁷. The Kremlin used Chechen violence and terrorist attacks in Moscow and Beslan to end regional constitutional differences and create a universal governance system⁸⁸. Recentralisation became a tool to counter terrorism⁸⁹ which affected the regions in a number of ways. The regions suffered from a decay in regional power, the inability of regional legislatures to enforce laws and the resulting decrease in public participation⁹⁰. The Kremlin recreated the Tsarist institution of regional governor, making regional elites accountable to the central government, rather than to the regional electorate, thus further emasculating the possibility of division⁹¹.

Putin's recentralisation affected Dagestan with its constitution changed in 2003 to fit Russia's constitution and to include the

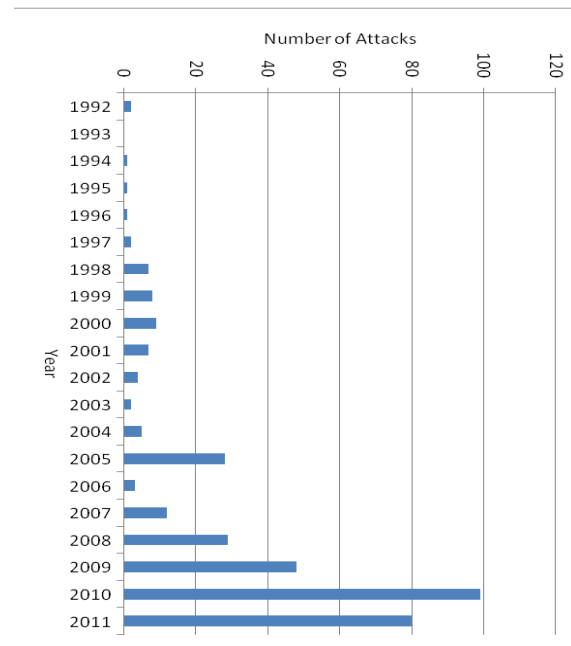


requirement of a republic president. During three referendums (the latest being in 1999)⁹² the people of Dagestan rejected changing their political system to align with Moscow's wishes, fearing that Dagestan would revert back to something similar to the Soviet era where the republic was controlled by a single ethnic group. Without the control that the Soviet Union inspired, a dominant ethnic group it was thought would undermine the fragile political system and force other ethnic groups into violence to try to gain power⁹³. Although the political system had amassed personal power for Magomedov, his grip on power was less certain, as he relied on other ethnic groups to help in maintaining political stability⁹⁴.

However, Dagestan relies on federal funding from Moscow and so is susceptible to federal pressure. This was a significant reason to why Putin was able to centralise power in Dagestan and change its political system and constitution to fit his plan for the federation⁹⁵. Moscow used economic blackmail (the proposal to withdraw federal funds) to force Dagestan's parliament to change republican legislation and follow federal legislation⁹⁶. In creating a presidential system, the federal government instigated an unaccountable (in terms of to the local populace), patronage and corruption ridden government that has aggravated ethnic and religious cleavages, fuelling violence⁹⁷. Dagestan's authorities have hoarded federal money, creating

dissatisfaction among the populace and affecting jobs. This corruption has led to disaffected youths, who unable to find a job have turned to extremism⁹⁸. The change in political institutions from consociationalism to a presidential system affected Dagestan in a number of ways, the most pertinent of which was the rise in terrorism. A regional structure answerable only to Moscow has exasperated this, with violence becoming an almost daily occurrence⁹⁹. As graph one emphasises, the number of terrorist attacks in Dagestan has accelerated since changes to the political structure occurred.

Graph One: Terrorist Attacks in Dagestan, 1992-2011



Source: Global Terrorism Database

As graph one highlights the number of terrorist attacks has grown since the creation



of a presidential system in Dagestan. This can be put down (mostly) to growing competition between ethnic groups¹⁰⁰.

These terrorist attacks cannot be put down just to a competition for power. Chechen terrorist networks suffering from improved Russian counter-terrorist networks expanded the field of conflict, both to gain new recruits and make it harder for the Russian government to counter effectively. With the incursion of terrorism into Dagestan, Dagestan's security forces have been repressive which has increased public support for the insurgency, thus precipitating violence¹⁰¹. Yet, it remains pertinent to contend that the acts of violence cannot be attributed exclusively to insurgency with the violence being a mixture of Islamic insurgency and ethnic groups attempting to usurp power from the new presidential republican system¹⁰². It is true that terrorism increased in the late 1990s and was used by the federal government as justification for changing the political institutions. But as Kisriev and Ware¹⁰³ argue, many of the attacks in the 1990s were perpetrated by Chechen terrorists trying to expand the insurgency. In 2001, opinion polls pointed to a growing overall Dagestan identity had started to split clan culture by creating an identity away from ethnic groupings and this could have alleviated the growth in terrorism¹⁰⁴. The creation of a presidential structure by the central government created an increasingly violent system, as different clans attempted to

appropriate the power of the ethnic group that gained the presidency¹⁰⁵. On top of this Dagestan's authorities exploited the regions resources for their own ends, whilst maintaining electoral results for the Kremlin. An example of this was in the 2012 presidential election, where Putin received 93.22% of the vote in Dagestan¹⁰⁶.

Yet, I argue that the consociational political structures helped to alleviate violence. Of course violence occurred in Dagestan between 1994 and 2003. But a representative system that provided the local populace with accommodation negated the support for ethnic factions and thus violence¹⁰⁷. After 2003, Russia's central government copied the presidential system first devised in Chechnya and imposed it on Dagestan¹⁰⁸. This has had deleterious effects in Dagestan as the imposition by central government of Mukhu Aliev (president of Dagestan from 2006-2010) created cleavages between the new political system and the Dagestan populace who felt unrepresented. Aliev created a system of patronage with regional governors beholden to him and playing them against each other. When divide-and-rule was too conflicting the republican security forces used violence, further alienating the populace. The conflictive nature of Dagestan's post-2003 political system precipitated cleavages and increased violence until the present period¹⁰⁹. Whilst, the consociational experiment in Dagestan has ended, it is important to note as



I argue that hypothetically it could be used in other Russian regions to assuage ethnic violence.

VI. CAN DAGESTAN'S CONSOCIATIONAL MODEL BE USED IN OTHER REGIONS OF RUSSIA?

Russia has many district governments, with local 12,261 municipalities and 83 regions known as 'Subjects of the Federation'¹¹⁰. It is not applicable to analyse all Russian regions here as many Russian regions are dominated by one ethnic group. Yet, using the All-Russian Census will help find regions where a consociational model could work.

I am appraising a consummately understudied topic, it is important for the investigation to really assess a few select regions that can best accommodate Dagestan's consociational model. Future studies can expand the analysis to incorporate more cases. Whilst regions with a heterogeneous ethnic population are more attuned to consociationalism, historical issues remain pertinent¹¹¹. Firstly, I will assay the choice of cases on an ethnic level, before focusing on usable historical institutions. I will not investigate North West, North, Centre and Black Soil federal districts, as the majority of the population are Russian¹¹², so it is unlikely that consociationalism could operate here as one prominent group concentrated across a wide area is unlikely to willingly share power with other groups¹¹³,

especially if they are also the dominant state group.

In studying the All-Russian Census there is a continual pattern. Many regions have a high Russian population (over 80%). As mentioned for consociationalism to work, one ethnic group that controls institutions is not beneficial for creating a consociational system. A majority ethnic group is unlikely to share power. Russia which suffers from a paucity of democracy makes the feasibility of workable consociationalism tenuous¹¹⁴. Chechnya, Ingushetia and Tuva will not be incorporated, as one ethnic group dominates each republic. Having excluded regions where Russians constitute over 80% of the population, it is parsimonious to include regions where one ethnic group dominates¹¹⁵. Using Chechnya as an example, the literature has advocated a consociational solution to the conflict. However, Chechen society is highly ethnically homogenised (95% of the population are ethnic Chechens). The conflict's end has not led to peace, making consociationalism unachievable as negotiation and dialogue are mandatory for consociationalism to be able to work¹¹⁶. Governance is highly unequal, with ethnic Chechen's excluding all other groups from political power¹¹⁷. Future studies could, if consociationalism was viewed applicable here, investigate regions where the majority ethnic group represents a slight majority, (like



the republic of Kalmykia)¹¹⁸. Yet, this is for a later study.

This study is new and explanatory. I will evaluate two cases. These are the republics of Bashkortostan and Sakha. I do not deny these two republics are different from Dagestan. Their historical composition is dissimilar to Dagestan's consociational political system. In the 1990s, both republics' elites negotiated an agreement with the centre, whereby they would support Yeltsin in return for personal freedom in their respective republics¹¹⁹. Rakhimov (president of Bashkortostan) in the 1990s vote gathered for Yeltsin, whilst gaining more regional control. The collapse of the relationship between Rakhimov and Putin terminated this agreement and the Kremlin started to curb Bashkortostan's regionalism to centralise the state¹²⁰. Bashkortostan's government like Dagestan's has the main target to inflate votes for United Russia and Putin. It is unlikely the Kremlin would willingly allow Bashkortostan to gain any regional independence as it would be unable to control this.

However, a change in political system does not connote sovereignty. Putin¹²¹ stated at a meeting of the Presidential Council on Interethnic Relations that regions would have more freedom in ethnic relations. Whilst, this does not indicate calls for political change, I argue that an available possibility for a political system in Bashkortostan and Sakha is Dagestan's consociational political system.

The Kremlin perceives Sakha (due to many natural resources) as strategically important¹²². Yet, studies show high levels of corruption in the Siberian regions governments, leading to apathy among the populace¹²³. The Kremlin faces the possibility that heightened ethnic tension and state sponsored Russian nationalism will lead to increasing racial anxieties and possible secession attempts by some ethnic groups across Siberia¹²⁴. The consociational system that existed in Dagestan could operate in Bashkortostan and Sakha. As ethnic tensions increase, the Kremlin needs to find means to alleviate this. A consociational system based on Dagestan could help assuage existing strains. Using the All-Russian Census¹²⁵ I will assess the two region's ethnic composition and determine whether consociationalism could work in these two regions.

Table Two: Ethnic Composition in Bashkortostan and Sakha

Republic of Bashkortostan	
Ethnic Groups	% of Group
Russians	36.1
Bashkirs	29.5
Tatars	25.4
Chuvash	2.7
Mariis	2.6
Ukrainians	1
Udmurts	0.5
Mordvians	0.5
Belarussians	0.3
Other Nationalities	1.4

**Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)**

Ethnic Groups	% of Group
Yakuts	49.9
Russians	37.8
Ukrainians	2.2
Evenki	2.2
Evens	1.6
Tatars	0.9
Buryats	0.8
Kirgiz	0.5
Armenians	0.4
Uzbeks	0.4
Tajiks	0.3
Dolgans	0.2
Yukagirs	0.1
Chukchi	0.1
Other Nationalities	2.6

Source: All Russian Census, 2010.

Whilst, the regions do not have the same ethnic make-up as Dagestan, no ethnic group has a majority. So dialogue between groups is necessary. As table two shows, both regions have at least two ethnic groups that are numerically close. If districts in the two republics are multi-ethnic, it is possible these could accommodate a consociational model. Secondly, it is pertinent to assess how each community is composed. In Dagestan, the community is clan based. Historically these clans created cross-ethnic institutions for dialogue. If institutions exist in Bashkortostan and Sakha that could be consociational, they could follow a consociational path.

Due to the difficulty of collating data on ethnic composition of each district and the political implications inherent in gathering it, I provide a partial picture of ethnic composition in Bashkortostan and Sakha. The collection of data is ‘a sensitive and controversial issue’¹²⁶ especially in Bashkortostan where many regional governments provide data on ethnic composition only if Bashkirs are a majority in the *okrug*. Whilst, the majority of districts provide data, some do not, or state in passing that many ethnic groups reside there. There are 56 regions in Bashkortostan and the majority have either state diversity in their *okrugs*, or provide data on ethnic composition. Of these 56 *okrugs* only 24 provide data comprehensive enough to emphasise ethnic composition in their territories. Of these 24, 13 territories are ethnically diversified. It is likely that other regions in Bashkortostan hold similar data, but it is politically difficult for the *okrug* governments to publish, as it signifies that Bashkirs are not the majority in their republic¹²⁷. Ethnic groups in Bashkortostan are disparate and spread across the republic meaning that consociationalism could operate at republic level as it has diverse ethnic groups making power-sharing necessary to curb tensions.

Using the All-Russian census for Sakha, the majority of districts supply data on ethnic composition. Of the 23 *okrugs* the majority are split between a Yakut or Russian majority. However, at republic level, like in



Bashkortostan there are significant ethnic groups that making it difficult for one ethnic group to govern alone. Sakha's regions are ethnically diverse so autonomy could work there, in the same way it operated in Dagestan. Ethnic diversity in each republic makes it hypothetically plausible they could follow Dagestan's consociational model.

Another aspect is to assess whether each case study has institutions similar to Dagestan's *Djamaat* as the basis for a consociational system. Although ethnic composition in a region is important to explain whether consociationalism can operate, regions or states need to be ethnically diverse to make consociationalism functional and there needs to be historical institutions¹²⁸. As remarked on earlier, Dagestan's *Djamaat* system gave a 'proto-consociational' example to the system in Dagestan as it incorporated different ethnic groups, promoting dialogue and easing ethnic cleavages and confrontation¹²⁹. The *Djamaat* system was used by the Dagestan constitution in 1994 to build the current political system and the necessary institutions to diffuse ethnic tension¹³⁰ served as an illustration for the institutions that existed in Dagestan. Similarly there are historical institutions that could serve as a consociational model in Bashkortostan and Sakha.

Historically Bashkir society was based on tribalism. Each tribe was governed using the 'chronicle' of *Shezher* which defined laws each person could live by. Historically tribes

would elect leaders to represent them at congresses to discuss issues of importance for the ethnic group¹³¹. Although these congresses focused on cultural issues, their existence highlights that ethnic groups came together in dialogue at regular intervals. According to Zakirova¹³² ethnic groups enjoyed 'peaceful cohabitation and multiculturalism' and at the district-level ethnic groups experienced relative stability. When Bashkortostan was incorporated into the Russian Empire, the territory was split by the empire's bureaucracy into a Bashkir estate and a Tepitar estate. This provided that Bashkirs had a powerful voice that was preserved, but at the same time to gain any new change in Russian policy the Bashkir and Tepitar estate had to negotiate together to come up with a single policy that would benefit the region. Regional government (apart from the governor) was split between both estates and so it was difficult for Bashkirs to rule alone effectively without negotiation and dialogue with the Tepitar estate¹³³. Dialogue between the two groups was an integral aspect of Bashkir society, bringing competing ethnic groups together and negating ethnic violence, without enhancing ethnic cleavages¹³⁴. Bashkortostan is ethnically and religiously diverse and the religious diversification (historically at least), served to dampen ethnic cleavages and brought different groups together through religious plurality¹³⁵. The emergence of the Bashkir republic as a subject of the Russian Federation saw the appearance of democratic



institutions, similar to regional historical institutions. But these were overturned by ethnic Bashkir elites to create an ethnically attuned state. Unlike Dagestan in the 1990s and to a lesser extent Sakha, Bashkortostan became an overtly authoritarian republic¹³⁶. But, Bashkortostan has historical institutions that could be fit into a consociational model akin to Dagestan. Bashkortostan has the potential for a consociational model, but it remains unlikely. The current Russian political system is loath to give political independence. Whilst, the *Djamaat* system was copied in Dagestan it was not used and Bashkortostan is reliant on ancient institutions that may or may not function in present society.

The different regions of Siberia have historic institutions that incorporated ethnic groups in local self-government institutions among ethnic minorities, throughout the Siberian region. After the Soviet Union's collapse, Siberian regions reincorporated historical institutions allowing ethnic minority self-government. These institutions were taken from historical examples¹³⁷. Sakha has an historical institution (the Naslega) that could be consociational. The ethnic make-up of Sakha has changed due to the influx of Russians and so the Naslega has had to adapt and become more inclusive¹³⁸. Although the institutions in Bashkortostan were quickly overturned, institutions in Sakha still exist at local level. The Naslega allows for a quota

system to fulfil ethnic quotas¹³⁹, to accommodate ethnic groups in the republic. In local districts, seats are reserved for smaller ethnic groups that are too small for representation at republican level¹⁴⁰. Historically, the Naslega allowed the community to discuss issues at the village level, as competing ethnic groups lived in the same villages and so dialogue was needed to maintain local harmony¹⁴¹.

Although this does not analyse dialogue between ethnic groups, it provides an institution that allows a forum for different ethnic groups. The Upper House of parliament in Sakha (before 2000), was voted along district lines. Whilst this was not an institution based on promoting ethnic minorities (due to the ethnic divide between Russian and other ethnic groups), it provided ethnic representation in parliament¹⁴². The Naslega did not provide access to the regions governing institutions, which were controlled by a 'clan'. Yet, it did manage to stop ethnic tensions from becoming violent, as ethnic groups had some voice however minimal¹⁴³. However, Sakha was also as authoritarian in the 1990s as Bashkortostan¹⁴⁴, but Naslega did serve as a local institution for minorities¹⁴⁵, whereas Bashkortostan did not have any institutions for ethnic groups. With recentralisation of regional political structures, the Siberian population has according to Sveshnikov¹⁴⁶ become increasingly dissatisfied with central government political



structures which have usurped regional powers. Like Bashkortostan, Sakha's power structures were controlled by a small coterie of elites that hoarded power and kept other groups from power¹⁴⁷. Unlike Bashkortostan, the institution that could serve as a consociational model in Sakha did exist in the 1990s, but it was only at the local level. It is difficult even hypothetically to argue that this institution could serve as anything but an assumptive postulation. However, theoretically Bashkortostan and Sakha could use a consociational political system as Dagestan did between 1994 and 2003.

VII. DISCUSSION

In providing the above analysis, I have argued that Russia had an example of consociationalism. The Dagestan model is the only example of consociationalism at a regional level. It provides a study for how consociationalism can operate at a regional level, rather than the current state-centric focus of the literature and thus by providing an example of consociationalism at the regional level, I have expanded the wider academic literature.

The first section analysed the main research question of whether Dagestan was a consociational political system. Dagestan's system in the 1990s accommodated the disparate ethnic groups in this heterogeneous

republic. By analysing the four main tenets of consociationalism (grand coalitions, mutual veto, proportionality and autonomy) I showed that Dagestan accommodated all four aspects of consociationalism. Dagestan's institutions brought ethnic groups together in dialogue and to formulate policy. The State Council provided seats to a representative from each of the fourteen largest groups. Whilst, not strictly a grand-coalition to gain votes politicians had to cut across cleavages to gain votes and thus accommodating different demands. Ethnic groups could use a mutual veto to preserve ethnic interests and thus the mutual veto allowed groups to protect these concepts. Proportionality also existed in the electoral cycle and secondly, throughout ministries with posts being issued on a proportional basis. Thirdly, at the district level this proportionality was repeated to allow smaller groups power. Autonomy was provided in certain political areas to give all ethnic groups autonomy. Thus I contend that Dagestan was a consociational political system. Whilst of course I have not said that Dagestan was peaceful in the 1990s I contend that the presidential system imposed by the Russian central government after 2003 led to the fact that Dagestan remains an area of turbulence with the regional government and its central equivalent engaging in a small 'civil-war' with Islamic and ethnic groups. With a war-torn and unstable neighbour and competing identities in terms of religion and ethnicity it is understandable that Dagestan is a violent



unstable region. I do not paint a rosy picture of consociationalism in the 1990s, when corruption and violence were prevalent, but I contend that consociationalism reduced the possibility of the “chechenisation” of Dagestan. Consociationalism, whilst not perfect, was able to curb the escalation to violence.

The second aspect of the argument was about whether Dagestan’s model could be exported to other regions. There remain two difficulties to the possibility of implementing consociationalism in Russia. Primarily, this paper only remains hypothetical. It is unlikely that the central government would allow Russian regions to change their political systems that cannot be controlled by the federal regime. Thus, this paper can only be hypothetical. Russians are the dominant ethnic group in most of Russia and would be loath to share power for this reason. At the same time in regards to other republican regions, some regions (Chechnya and Tuva) have vast ethnic majorities and so would be unwilling to share power with other ethnic groups similar to why Russia would not happily do the same. Due to the difficulty of implementing consociationalism in a state where one ethnic group predominates, the study had to look primarily at regions where no ethnic groups prevail. I highlight that Bashkortostan and Sakha could accommodate a consociational model like Dagestan.

At the beginning of the investigation, I argued that I could only make inferences and open this topic to future academic analysis. It is hypothetical that Dagestan, Bashkortostan and Sakha could one day use consociationalism in their political systems. If it were implemented one day, it is plausible that this could occur in other regions of Russia. Yet, it must be stated that this is only hypothetical. It is difficult to envisage that regions with a majority Russian population would willingly implement a consociational model to accommodate other ethnic groups even if that region is named for an ethnic group (Karelia for instance). The incumbent central government would not allow a system it cannot control to operate in regional political systems. Elections, autonomy and independence of operation are integral aspects in a consociational political system. It is ambiguous to countenance that the current regime would allow this to occur. However, this is not the issue analysed here. Its purpose was to argue whether Dagestan’s political system between 1994 and 2003 could be classified as consociational and whether it could operate in other Russian regions. The answer is a positive if looked at hypothetically. In reality, of course, it remains unlikely. Further research needs to be conducted to ascertain how extensively this model could spread in Russia’s regions.



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