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“We Never Said We’re Independent”: Natural Resources, Nationalism, and the Fight for
Political Autonomy in Russia’s Regions

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By Cassandra N. Turner

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for completion of the
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The University of Mississippi

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Approved:

Advisor: Dr. Joshua First

Reader: Dr. William Schenck

Reader: Dr. David Fragoso-Gonzalez

ABSTRACT

CASSANDRA NICOLE TURNER: “We Never Said We’re Independent”: Natural Resources, Nationalism, and the Fight for Political Autonomy in Russia’s Regions
(Under the direction of Dr. Joshua First)

After the fall of the Soviet Union, the federal government permitted the regions and republics to obtain political autonomy, which led to a measure of self-governance during the 1990s and 2000s. The amount of political autonomy provided to the regions and republics was affected by the existence of a natural resource sector, and whether or not the republic or region in question had a nationalized ethnic minority. Natural resource sector data and federal and regional budgetary data was collected and analyzed from federal and regional government websites. Historical information on ethnic minorities as well as information on their anti-federal government protests were collected from Russian, European, and American newspapers. The republic with the longest-running natural resources sector and the largest and most anti-government ethnic minority received the most political autonomy and held it the longest. The region with the most financially successful natural resources but no nationalized ethnic minority received the least political autonomy. Regional political autonomy was affected by regional natural resource wealth, as the federal government heavily relied upon that wealth to fund the federal budget. The presence of a nationalized ethnic minority was successfully used as a tool by regional elites to obtain more political autonomy, although when the political autonomy system began to end they were unable to utilize that tool to keep their autonomy.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER I: CONSTITUTIONAL SEPARATISM (1990-1995)	17
CHAPTER II: REVISING AND RE-ENVISIONING AUTONOMY (1996-2006)	43
CHAPTER III: THE END OF AUTONOMY (2007-2017)	51
CONCLUSION.....	59
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	63

Introduction¹

After the fall of the Soviet Union, the federal government of the Russian Federation began allowing the regions and republics to obtain political autonomy. The regions received different levels of political autonomy based upon their production of natural resources and whether or not there was a significant nationalized ethnic population to utilize when bargaining with the federal government. The Russian Federation has always been a multinational country, with over one hundred nationalities. During the 1920s, the Soviet Union undertook a process called national delimitation, where it attempted to divide up Russia along ethnic lines. Many of those republics and regions would exist into the 90s, following the principle of path dependency, where the modern regions and republics were drawn along the lines of the old regions and republics, allowing past problems to continue into the future. In 1990, President Boris Yeltsin told the regions to “take as much sovereignty as you can swallow”², and they took the opportunity provided by declaring sovereignty, signing bilateral treaties, and writing their own constitutions and charters.

The Republic of Tatarstan was the first of all the regions to receive political autonomy during the 1990’s because of its position as a region with a highly nationalized ethnic population and possession of a lucrative natural resources sector that has been instrumental in funding the government, which were both used by regional elites to

¹ Title quote from interview with Mansir Ayupov in: Ian Traynor. “Putin Redraws the Map of Russia: Plans to Put the Kremlin Back in Control Face Resistance in Bashkortostan.” *The Guardian* (Kings Place, London), May 14, 2000.

² Traynor.

leverage Tatarstan into having the most autonomy of any region. The Republic of Tatarstan was initially granted autonomy in the 1920s, during the period of national delimitation, due its position as the ancestral home of the Tatar people in the Volga Region of Russia. Tatars are the second largest ethnic group in the Russian Federation.³ The government of Tatarstan aggressively pursued greater autonomy as soon as the opportunity presented itself, as a consequence of its status. The current population of Tatarstan is about 3.8 million, made up of 53% Tatar, 39.7% Russian, and 7% other ethnicity.⁴ In 2000, Tatars held between 70 and 80% of administrative positions, despite only being about 50% of the population at the time.⁵ Tatarstan is one of the only regions in Russia with a majority population of non-ethnic Russians, and that has led to a greater sense of nationalism in the region, as it is not only their ancestral homeland, but they are a majority in the government and in general.

The Republic of Bashkortostan was the second republic to receive political autonomy during the 1990's, after Tatarstan, primarily due to its position as a region with a lucrative national resources sector that was a center of oil refining and its nationalized ethnic population, which would be used as a bargaining tool with the federal government. The Bashkir Autonomous Soviet Republic was formally established on March 23rd, 1919, as the very first national autonomous region in Russia.⁶ Bashkortostan lies in the Ural Mountains, in the Volga Federal District. The region was named after the Bashkirs, the main ethnic group. It is considered a multi-ethnic territory, with the population being

³ Robert Orttung, Danielle Lussier, and Anna Paretskaya, *The Republics and Regions of the Russian Federation: a Guide to Politics, Policies, and Leaders* (EastWest Institute, 2000), 539.

⁴ "Tatarstan," Geohistory. <http://geohistory.today/tatarstan/>.

⁵ Valery Stepanov. "Ethnic Tensions and Separatism in Russia," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 26, no. 2 (2000): 315.

⁶ "Respublika Bashkortostan," O respublike, Respublika Bashkortostan. <https://www.bashkortostan.ru/republic/about/>.

33% Russian, 29.8% Bashkir, 24.1% Tatar, and 13.1% other. The state languages are Bashkir and Russian.⁷ In February 1992, it was officially named the Republic of Bashkortostan. Bashkortostan's level of autonomy was greater politically than economically, and it was unable to maintain it once the federal government began a campaign to regain centralized control.

Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug-Yugra initially received political autonomy during the early Soviet Union, established on December 10th, 1930 in the Ural Oblast as the Ostyak-Vogel Ethnic Okrug.⁸ In the new wave of political autonomy, it was grouped together with all of the other regions in Russia, who received autonomy after the republics. Khanty-Mansi's autonomy came because of its position as an extremely resource-rich region, without a nationalized ethnic minority. Governor Filipenko, while neither Khanty or Mansi, maintained as his top priority gaining greater autonomy, and he campaigned on obtaining greater economic independence.⁹ The amount of autonomy that Khanty-Mansi has been granted during the Soviet Union was minimal and short-lived, as it was almost immediately placed under the governance of Tyumen Oblast despite the Okrug's legal status as an equal constitutional subject, and the autonomy it was granted in the 90s lasted for an even shorter period of time and existed in name only.

Methodology

The case studies for this thesis were chosen on the basis of their status as autonomous republics or regions with an ethnic minority presence, which are also one of the major producers of oil and natural gas in Russia. The three different ethnic groups

⁷ "Respublika Bashkortostan," O respublike, Respublika Bashkortostan.

⁸ "Brief Historical Information," Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug-Yugra: Official Site of the Public Authorities, Accessed November 29, 2017, <https://admhmao.ru/en/about/general/historical/>.

⁹ Orttung, Lussier, and Paretskaya, 237.

chosen each make up a different population percentage in their regions. The Tatars are one of the largest national minorities in the country, the Bashkirs are a significant minority in their own territory, and the Khanty and the Mansi are so small that they are barely registered in their own historic homeland. The production of oil and gas in these republics ranks at the top of the entire country, which has allowed them to fund their regions without requiring the same amount of federal subsidies as other regions. There were three bilateral treaties signed that formed the legal basis for the political autonomy system and each case study signed a different one. Each case study is to be evaluated on its level of ethnic unity and nationalism, level of oil and gas production, and how long it maintained autonomy and to what degree it was autonomous. Ethnic nationalism in the regions and the existence of a significant amount of natural resources, should be proven to have affected how political autonomy was formed and fought for in the regions. Nationalism and the possession of lucrative resources created the initial push for further sovereignty during the early 1990's. Then, after Putin took power and began cutting down on the number of regions that had autonomy, natural resource possession became a liability for maintaining autonomy, and nationalism continued the push for regional sovereignty. Possession of natural resources directly affected how much political autonomy regions were able to bargain for with the federal government, despite their use of regional ethnic nationalism and the threat of independence struggles as another bargaining tool.

Measuring how influential each region is in terms of natural resources can be based on published data. The Russian Federation itself as well as each individual region keeps track of the volume of petroproducts produced, the extent of reserves, and the

dollar amount in terms of foreign and domestic contracts each region has to some degree. Ethnic nationalism in these regions can be measured by the push for laws protecting the culture of the major ethnic group (i.e., the titular nationality), the amount of support for political autonomy, the amount of and reasons behind protests over the right to political sovereignty, and the presence of separatists. The effect of natural resources and nationalism on political autonomy will be measured by amount of political autonomy each region received, as well as when it began and how long it lasted. Ultimately there were different levels of autonomy granted to different regions and republics, and nationalism and natural resources affected what they were granted in bilateral power-sharing agreements.

The Tatars are the majority ethnicity in the Republic of Tatarstan, and intellectual, religious leaders and politicians have constructed elements of modern nationhood since the late-imperial period. Tatarstan's autonomy was in question as recently as July 2017, when the federal government officially decided to let the bilateral power-sharing agreement expire. The Republic of Tatarstan is one of the most vital regions for the Russian government as it is a center of oil and natural gas production. Tatarstan combines strong nationalism with a lucrative industrial sector, and yet never pushed for full independence from the central government despite nominally having the ability to support full nationhood. The Bashkirs are smaller in their own region than the percentage of ethnic Russians. There have been relatively consistent pushes to protect the Bashkir culture and language, as the Bashkirs have a strong sense of nationalism, which can be measured in the number of protests. Bashkortostan declared itself a sovereign state, before losing autonomy in 2004. It is one of the top areas in Russia for oil processing and

producing oil and natural gas. However, despite strong nationalism and a lucrative natural resources sector, they also never pushed for full independence. Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug-Ugra has never had the same fight for independence, and only received autonomy because of its position as a region with a minority population. The Khanty and the Mansi are small and isolated to the point of being almost insignificant, without a true sense of ethnic nationalism. Khanty-Mansi leads Russia in the production of oil and natural gas, providing tax revenues to the federal government. Even if the Khanty and Mansi managed to strongly push for independence, the federal government would never let the Okrug separate from the central government. The government's desire to control the Okrug is contributing to why it is extremely unlikely to ever lead to a full push for independence. Ethnic nationalism was a bargaining tool used to strengthen the push for political autonomy in the regions, bolstering natural resource possession.

Literature Review

In *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil*, Timothy Mitchell states that countries that almost exclusively produce natural resources are not always politically stable.¹⁰ The political autonomy system that was created in the 1990's became officially codified during a politically and economically unstable time in Russia. It led to continued instability in the country. He also claims that oil affects the producer state through funding, in connection to pipelines, refineries, royalties, and negotiations, which allows the state to avoid any demands from the labor force.¹¹ While primarily seen in the case of protests over wages and benefits, this theory can also be extended to other protests. After the demise of the regionally popular political autonomy system, oil prevented the regions

¹⁰ Timothy Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil* (New York: Verso, 2011), 5.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

(who provide the labor force for the petro products sector) from being able to regain their lost autonomy. Nationalism has been used in the regions as a tool for the elites to coalesce the population behind the regional government, but they have also relied upon the natural resources for the financial and social benefits. Mitchell also claims that a worker's political power in oil producing countries is entirely dependent on how oil is used and what vulnerabilities those uses have created.¹² Regional ethnic groups' and regional governments' political power directly stemmed from the production and sale of natural resources when negotiating treaties with the federal government. This provided groups with the ability to negotiate from a position of power that allowed them to receive concessions from the federal government. The use of natural resource revenues as a negotiation tool relied upon the use of nationalism to be successful.

Benedict Anderson asserts that nations are "imagined" as the members will never know, meet, or hear of most of the other members, and that they are imagined as communities because they are supposed to have a sense of comradeship.¹³ Russian ethnic minorities do have a sense of comradeship inside their ethnic groups, and occasionally with other groups against the Russian federal government. As well, their sense of having their own "nation" inside the Federation has been related back to long dead members who were once not Russian and potentially part of their own empires, but those members do not exist for the modern national minority. He references Ernest Gellner in *Thought and Change* who describes nationalism as "the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist,"¹⁴ which in some cases, regional nationalists and separatists are doing by arguing that there has always been an undercurrent of revolution

¹² Mitchell, 31.

¹³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (2006), 6-7.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

in the regions. Anderson's book sees nationalism as a unifying force that may not have any basis in historical reality.

In Robert W. Orttung's overview of the Russian regions after the Russian Constitution had passed, he wrote "it is important for the central government to maintain good relations with the ethnically defined republics, particularly those which expressed their desire for autonomy from the center."¹⁵ Kirkow notes that ethnic minorities have a cultural and historical connection to each other, with common values, traditions, languages, and identity that do not always match administrative boundaries.¹⁶ Stepanov asserts that national territories with sustained nationalization have a higher potential for ethnic tension and conflict.¹⁷ Sustained nationalization refers to maintaining the group's culture, language, etc. as part of their sense of inter-group unity. The Republic of Tatarstan and the Republic of Bashkortostan both have sustained nationalization, while Khanty-Mansi did not. Stepanov also states that ethnic tensions will increase if there are two or more large ethnic groups living next to each other in the same territory,¹⁸ which applies to all three territories. He ranks Tatarstan and Bashkortostan as "ethnically-troubled", but not Khanty-Mansi.¹⁹ Tatarstan and Bashkortostan have united ethnic groups with enough power to fight back against the federal government, but Khanty-Mansi does not. Nationalism in Russian regions is entirely dependent upon the ethnic groups involved, as only some of them have united around a history, culture, and language.

¹⁵ Orttung, Lussier, and Paretskaya, 44.

¹⁶ Peter Kirkow, *Russia's Provinces: Authoritarian Transformation versus Local Autonomy?* (St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1998), 47.

¹⁷ Stepanov, 306.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., 307.

The Russian Economy, and the Oil Sector

Russia is the world's largest producer of crude oil, second largest producer of dry natural gas, and third largest producer of petroleum and other products. Oil and gas revenues accounted for 43% of all federal budget revenue in 2015. In general, every dollar increase in the price of oil gives the Russian exchequer one billion dollars in extra revenue.²⁰ The government controlled domestic energy prices even after the USSR collapsed.²¹ By 1994, the only price-controlled exports left, which together accounted for 70% of all exports, included petroleum products and natural gas.²² The Russian government heavily relied upon natural resources to fund itself immediately after the Soviet Union. This time period overlaps with the same period of the regional autonomy push, and while the government was willing to allow the regions some freedom, it was highly unlikely to let anything get in the way of the production and sale of natural resources. The Russian government, because of historical choices to lean heavily on the sale of natural resources to other countries to fund the state now faces a situation where they cannot afford to lose control over these resources.

Tatarstan has the sixth largest Gross Regional Product per capita,²³ and is the third largest oil-producing region in Russia.²⁴ The majority of Tatarstan's wealth comes from crude oil production.²⁵ Tatarstan is also influential in oil refining.²⁶ Oil is the most

²⁰ "Country Analysis Brief: Russia." U.S. Energy Information Administration - Independent Statistics and Analysis, October 25, 2016, Accessed September 05, 2017. <https://www.eia.gov/beta/international/analysis.cfm?iso=RUS>, 1-5.

²¹ Stephen Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse, 1970-2000*. (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2001), 125-126

²² *Ibid.*, 126-127

²³ "Tatarstan: the Last Autonomous Republic in Russia," Stratfor Worldview, July 13, 2017. <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/tatarstan-last-autonomous-republic-russia>

²⁴ "The Republic of Tatarstan," JSC Svyazinvestneftekhim, 2012.

²⁵ "Natural Resources," Republic of Tatarstan Official Archives, http://1997-2011.tatarstan.ru/index.html@0&node_id=1362.html.

²⁶ Geohistory.

significant export for the republic, with 81.6% of total exports in 2014 consisting of petroproducts,²⁷ and in total, the republic trades with firms from over 60 foreign countries.²⁸ Tatarstan is a donor region to the federal budget in terms of tax revenue because of oil and gas production and exports.²⁹ Tatarstan is also economically important because of oil and natural gas transportation. Despite some modern attempts to economically diversify, the oil and natural gas producing sector of the economy remains the most successful and has allowed the republic to fund itself almost entirely without the assistance of the Russian government.

A large portion of the Republic of Bashkortostan's industry is the processing and extraction of its raw materials, especially oil and gas.³⁰ It also contains one of the highest concentrations of petrochemical military industry in all of Russia.³¹ As of the late 90's, over 50% of the Republic of Bashkortostan's exports were fuel and energy.³² It has extensive foreign economic relations as a consequence of its large amount of natural resources and production, and in 1997 traded with 71 different countries, with the money from those exports contributing to 20% of Gross Regional Product.³³ The Republic of Bashkortostan is a major republic for the production and procession of oil and natural gas, and that has brought it financial success.

Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug-Yugra is one of, it not the, most important region to the federal budget because of its extremely lucrative production of natural gas and oil. Khanty-Mansi is a leader in Russian oil and gas production, industrial output,

²⁷ "Guide to Investment: Republic of Tatarstan," PWC, Republic of Tatarstan, 2015, 15.

²⁸ Orttung, Lussier, and Paretskaya, 539.

²⁹ JSC Svyazinvestneftekhim, 2012.

³⁰ Orttung, Lussier, and Paretskaya, 41.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 44.

power generation, and equity investment.³⁴ Current predictions estimate that Khanty-Mansi will continue to be the main production center for raw hydrocarbons for at least the next few decades based on explored and proved reserves, production, industrial infrastructure, and commercial viability for the oil fields.³⁵ Khanty-Mansi is number one in oil production, and is number two in natural gas production and the amount of tax revenue contributed to the federal budget³⁶ in Russia. Because Khanty-Mansi produces over 60% of Russian oil and is a net donor to the federal budget it is of great strategic importance.³⁷ There are 107 thousand kilometers of pipelines³⁸ that allow the Okrug to export what it produces to border countries. About ninety-nine percent of all exports consist of crude oil.³⁹ Given how much Khanty-Mansi exports, the revenues for both the region and the federal government are astronomical.

The federal budget relies heavily upon the taxation of natural resources produced in the regions, so politicians work to maximize regional resource extraction for federal gain. As can be seen in Figure 1, the total consolidated budget of the Federation's constituent entities, i.e. the regions, is a significant amount of the actual federal budget. The federal government taxes the regional economies, so when the regions are successful the federal government will be as well. The total federal budget is significantly impacted by regional budget revenues. Each year, the segment of the federal budget that comes from the regions is fairly large, even in 2014 when the federal budget is larger than

³⁴ "Brief Historical Information," Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug-Yugra: Official Site of the Public Authorities, Accessed November 29, 2017, <https://admhmao.ru/en/about/general/historical/>.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ "Ekonomika," Khanty-Manciickii Avtomonyi Okryg-Yugra: Edinyi Ofitsialnyi Sait Gosydarstvennyx Organov, Accessed October 08, 2017, <https://admhmao.ru/ob-okruge/obshchie-svedeniya/ekonomika/>.

³⁷ Orttung, Lussier, and Paretskaya, 237.

³⁸ "West-Siberian Oil and Gas Province," Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug-Yugra: Official Site of the Public Authorities, Accessed November 29, 2017, <https://admhmao.ru/en/about/general/historical/>.

³⁹ Khanty-Manciickii Avtomonyi Okryg-Yugra: Edinyi Ofitsialnyi Sait Gosydarstvennyx Organov, "Ekonomika."

normal. As can be seen in Figures 2, 3, and 4, the general movement of the federal budget follows the general movement of the regional budgets. While there are other factors affecting the movement of the federal budget, over all and over time, if the regional budgets are increasing so is the federal budget. As Khanty-Mansi’s GRP increases, so does the GDP, complete with spike around 2008. Bashkortostan’s and Tatarstan’s are less directly correlated, but the general trend remains similar. It is only around 2013 and 2014 that the trends begin to diverge, which could be attributed to geopolitical factors. Tax revenue is how the federal government collects federal funding from the regions, and a significant part of those taxes comes from the natural resource sector and exports. As a consequence of these regional revenues, the federal government was willing to do what they regions wanted when making bilateral treaties to some extent.

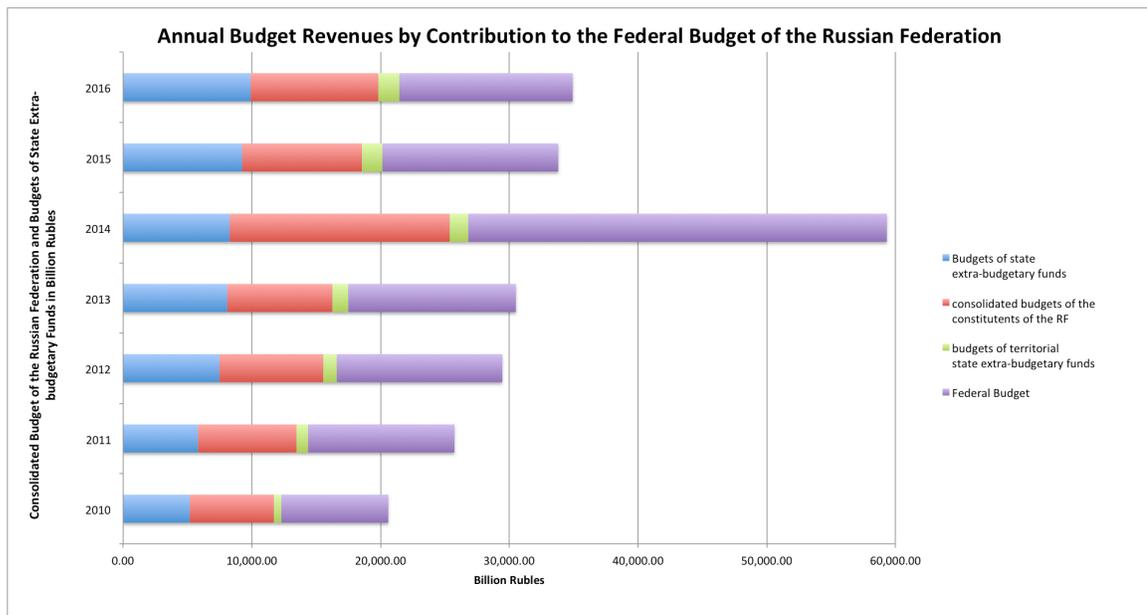


Fig. 1 “Annual Budget Revenues by Contribution to the Federal Budget of the Russian Federation.”
 Source: “The Information on Execution of Budgets of the Budgetary System of the Russian Federation Annually as of January 1, 2011 to December 31, 2016,” Federal Treasury, 2017.

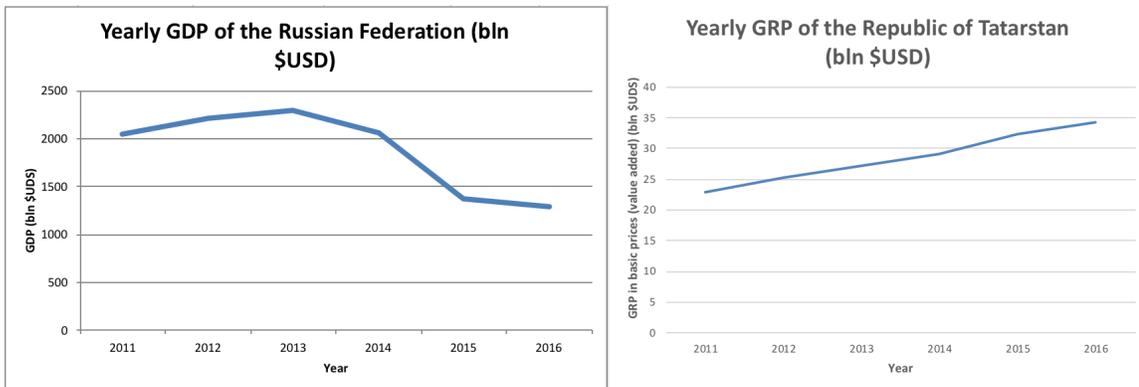


Fig 2. “Yearly GDP of the Russian Federation vs. Yearly GRP of the Republic of Tatarstan.”
 Source: “GDP (current million US\$),” Data, The World Bank; “Obem i izmenenie valovovo regionalno produkta v osnovnix tsenax v Respublike Tatarstan, May 2017,” Territorial’nyi organ Federal’noi sluzhby gosydarstvennoi statistiki po Respublike Tatarstan.

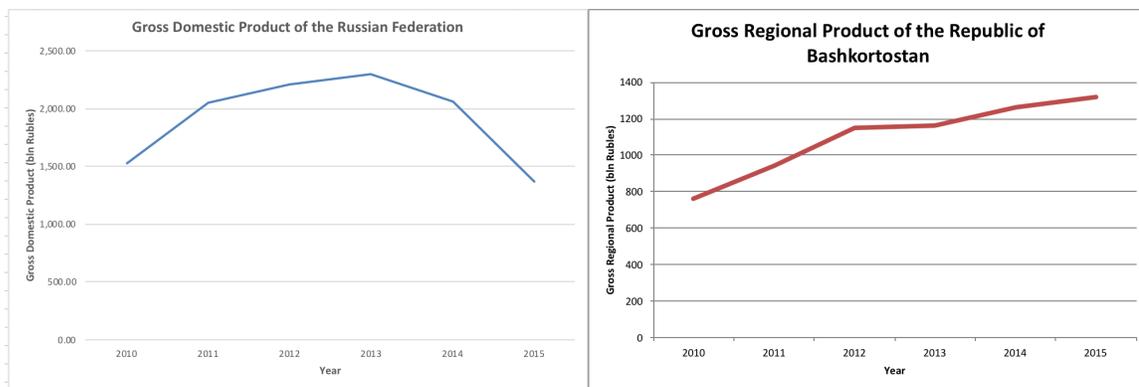


Fig. 3. “Yearly GDP of the Russian Federation vs. Yearly GRP of the Republic of Bashkortostan.”
 Source: “GDP (current million US\$),” Data, The World Bank; “Makroekonomika,” Territorial’nyi organ Federal’noi sluzhbi gosudarstvennoi statistiki po Respublike Bashkortostan.

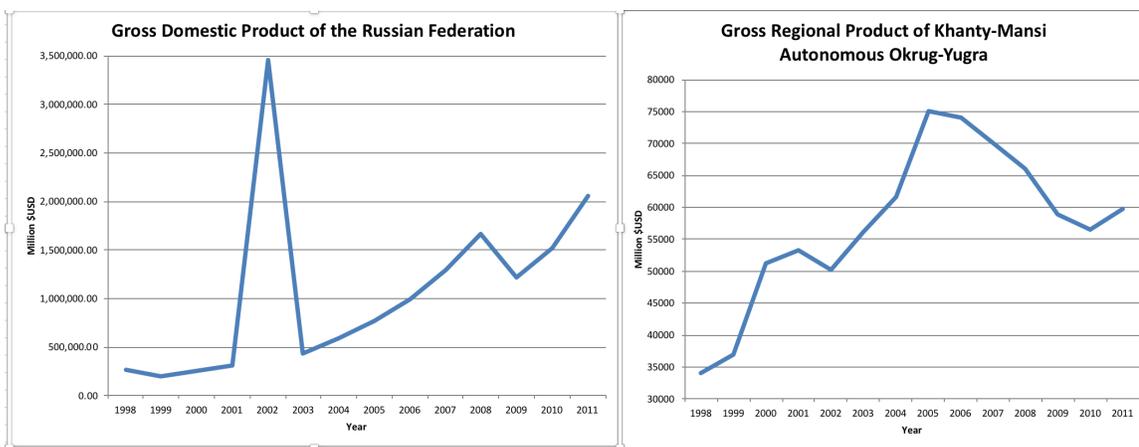


Fig. 4 “Yearly GDP of the Russian Federation vs. Yearly GRP of Khani-Mansi Autonomous Okrug.”
 Source: Indeksi fizicheskovo obima valovovo regional’no produkta v osnovnih tsenax (protsent, znachenie pokazatelya za god). Federalnaya sluzhba gosudarstvennoi statistiki. Territorial’nyi organ Federal’noi sluzhby rosydarstvennoi statistiki po Khanty-Manciickomu AO-IUGRPA; “GDP (current million US\$),” Data, The World Bank.

Granting regional governments the ability to somewhat govern themselves began to threaten the federal government's ability to strongly control these resources from production to final shipment abroad. On the other hand, it gave regional governments a place of strength when initially bargaining for the right to political autonomy. Ultimately, the federal government's desire for control over natural resources, and the increase in federal power, helped lead to the cracking down and eventual end to the political autonomy system. The federal government indiscriminately allowed the regions to obtain autonomy, and then indiscriminately took it back once the drawbacks to decentralization became obvious.

Ethnic Nationalism in Autonomous Regions

Tatar nationalism is evident as the majority Tatar regional government has enshrined Tatar culture into law and a separatist movement has been a consistent presence in the Republic. Even when the republic was allowed to be mostly separate from the federal government and essentially rule itself, the separatist movement did not fade away completely despite seeing that there were laws in their favor passed by the regional government. The regional government also passed laws protecting the Tatar language, an important factor of culture, before the federal government agreed to pass those laws as well.

Ethnic nationalism in Bashkortostan is visible through the legal protection of the Bashkir language and religion, and presence of nationalists and their protests against the central government. Bashkortostan has protected Bashkir language and culture by having Bashkir language facilities, schools, and media. Mansir Ayupov was a member of the

regional government when he called all ethnic Russians “imperialist.”⁴⁰ He was not the only one who had strong pro-Bashkir views and extreme anti-federal government views in the 1990s. Historic ethnic tension stems from tactics employed during the Russian Empire to drive the Bashkirs off of their land, which decreased their homeland and population size. During the 1990s and into the present day, protests have stemmed from the federal government’s actions.

Khanty-Mansi does not have a nationalized ethnic population. The Khanty and the Mansi, the titular nationalities of the autonomous Okrug, only make up about 1.86% of the population combined.⁴¹ During the Soviet Union, the central government heavily promoted a policy of natural resource extraction and development, and the Khanty and Mansi were pushed off of their land.⁴² Most of the remaining Khanty and Mansi do not follow their traditions any longer,⁴³ due to decades of migration into Siberia which made their traditional, reindeer-herding nomadic lifestyle difficult, and historical religious persecution. The advent of oil and natural gas production in Khanty-Mansi was a boon to the federal and regional economies, but it saw the beginning of the end for the nomadic Khanty and Mansi peoples who could not be nationalized as they were living in a region that barely registered their existence, much less their culture.

This thesis will be structured into three chapters focused on the three main time periods, ending with a conclusion chapter. Each chapter will focus on how the three regions were affected by ethnic nationalism and natural resources in terms of their political autonomy. The push for political autonomy in Russian regions was initiated by

⁴⁰ Traynor.

⁴¹ Victoria Vorobeva, Zoya Fedorinova, and Ekaterina Kolesnik, “Three Crucial Crises in the Development of the Khanty and Mansi’s Unique Culture,” *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences* 206 (2015): 109.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 111.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 109.

the regional governments using the amount of natural resources in each region and the presence of nationalism in the local ethnic minority populations as bargaining tools to bolster their attempts to gain sovereignty. However, when the federal government turned on the regions in an attempt to consolidate power, the regions were unable to rely upon those bargaining tools to maintain their sovereignty.

Constitutional Separatism: 1990-1995

When Yeltsin promised the regions a chance at official sovereignty, they immediately began declaring sovereignty and dragging the federal government into a decades-long fight. The federation treaty passed in March 1992 gave the republics state sovereignty, ethnic language and citizenship recognitions, and increased rights to the control of natural resources, fiscal autonomy, and international trade.⁴⁴ Between 1992 and 1994, most regions signed bilateral power-sharing agreements with the federation government that would allow each one to have some kind of preferential treatment, primarily involving taxes.⁴⁵ The bilateral power sharing agreements codified the right of the regions and republics to have a semblance of sovereignty from the federal government. The argument over sovereignty began with the federal government hesitantly following through with their promise.

The official Constitution of the newly formed Russian Federation was signed on December 12th, 1993. It states that the constitution of the Russian Federation and federal laws have supremacy. The federation consists of republics, territories, regions, cities of federal importance, autonomous regions, and autonomous areas, all of which are stated to be equal subjects of the Russian Federation. It allows republics to have their own constitutions and legislation, and allows regions, etc. to have their own charter. The constitution is given the “supreme judicial force” in the federation, and any other laws

⁴⁴ Peter Kirkow, 47.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 63.

made by other legislatures cannot contradict it. Republics are permitted to establish their own state languages, which means that republics with a significant national minority population can elevate that minority language to be equal with Russian. Joint jurisdiction of the Russian Federation and its subjects are stated to include: the utilization of natural resources, the coordination of international and foreign economic relations of federal subjects, and the fulfillment of international treaties.⁴⁶ The federal government is permitted to own natural resources or to allow one of the large oil and gas companies in the country to own them. Essentially, the constitution ensures that as much as possible, the federation remains in control of the regions, as it is directly stated in the federal constitution that regional laws, charters, and constitutions are subordinate to federal legal acts. It also sets up the contradictory position of natural resources, where they are at once meant to be for the support of the people and are to be controlled by the federal government.

The Republic of Tatarstan

In 1990, the Republic of Tatarstan adopted the Declaration on the State Sovereignty of the Tatar Soviet Socialist Republic, a direct consequence of Yeltsin's proclamation to the regions and republics that obtaining sovereignty was allowed. It was the first true declaration of the right to autonomy for the Republic of Tatarstan. The Declaration was meant to help ensure the inherent rights of Tatars and the Republic's population to self-determination and seeks to create a legal sovereign democratic state. It lays out that land and natural resources are the exclusive property of the Tatar people. It ensures that the Tatar Constitution and the acts of the regional government are supreme in

⁴⁶ St. 4, 5, 9, 15, 66, 68, 72 Konstitutsiya Rossiskoi Federatsii (prinyata na vseharodnom golosvanii 12 dekabrya 1993 g.) (s popravkami).

the Republic of Tatarstan.⁴⁷ The Declaration of State Sovereignty specifically mentions that land and natural resources are the property of the Tatar people, pulling it away from federal control. Oil production in Tatarstan was already vital to the federal budget, and both the Republic and the Federation knew how much money was at stake. Tatarstan specifically naming natural resources was deliberate so that the federal government would have to listen to their demands for autonomy. Proclaiming state sovereignty appeased the separatists but was largely meant as a symbol to the federal government that the Republic was serious about threatening independence if they were not granted economic control.

On March 21st, 1992 the Republic of Tatarstan held a referendum on becoming a sovereign state, and a subject of international law, which passed by 61.4%.⁴⁸ The Tatarstan Supreme Soviet told the population that the referendum was simply to change the region's status to a sovereign state and not to declare independence.⁴⁹ Even after the long history of pushing for autonomy in the republic, the Republic refused to declare independence. The referendum asked citizens of the Republic of Tatarstan: "Do you agree that the Republic of Tatarstan is a sovereign state, a subject of international law, building its relations with the Russian Federation and other republics on an equal basis?"⁵⁰ President Yeltsin denounced the action afterwards as an act that "presupposes that Tatarstan is not part of Russia,"⁵¹ which was along the lines of what the Tatar government wanted. Tatar separatists, who believed that the federal government had been

⁴⁷ Declaration on the State Sovereignty of the Tatar Soviet Socialist Republic, August 30th 1990.

⁴⁸ Ildar Gabidullin and Maxim Edwards. "Remembering Referendums: Tatarstan and Crimea." *Aljazeera*. 20 April, 2014.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Sergei Shargorodsky. "Russia Worried over Tatarstan Referendum on Independence." *Associated Press*. March 19th, 1992.

⁵¹ Gabidullin and Edwards.

been robbing them since the Khanate of Kazan fell, threatened a “liberation struggle” were the federal government to attempt to block the referendum.⁵² This marked the first break with the regional government, who was strongly opposed to an actual civil war. The federal legislature claimed that the referendum would cause further ethnic strife because while half of Tatarstan’s population is ethnic Tatar, the rest is a mix of ethnic Russians and other minorities.⁵³ Despite the benefits to sovereignty, the regional government was careful to ensure that it was not separating too far as they did not want to lose the support of the federal government completely. They were also careful not to lose the support of Tatar separatists, who were pushing for a total separation of the republic from Russia.

The Constitution of the Republic of Tatarstan, signed in 1992, lays out the legal basis for the Republic to function as a partially independent state under the Russian Federation. The Republic of Tatarstan is a subject of the Russian Federation but has sovereignty that must consist of full state authority legislatively, executive, and judicially.⁵⁴ This allows the Republic to rule itself without requiring the input of the federal government, but does not permit it to become its own country. Even in the constitution, which creates the legal set-up of Tatarstan as a sovereign state, the regional government refused to declare independence. The Republic of Tatarstan is permitted to independently participate in international economic relations.⁵⁵ This is one of the most important parts of the constitution because it states one of Tatarstan's real goals by declaring and pushing for autonomy - the right to independently export natural resources

⁵² Shargorodsky.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ St. 1 Konstitutsiya Respubliki Tatarstan ot 2012 goda.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

without the direct control of the federal government. The Republic can exercise its own legal regulation, and Tatarstan's legal acts are held up over the Federation's.⁵⁶ This places the legal acts of the Republic on its territory as more important than federal law, which would violate the federal constitution, passed a year later. At the time, the federal government was fearful that the Tatar government would shut down the production of oil and did not force them to amend this article. The constitution protects the nominal sovereignty of the Republic, in the understanding that it is still a subject of the Russian Federation and tacitly supports the Republic's unofficial independence. It allows Tatarstan to balance between declaring sovereignty from the federal government and maintaining a level of economic and political independence.

Most importantly for the economic situation of the Republic of Tatarstan, it is entitled to "enter into economic relationships with subjects and administrative-territorial units of foreign states, foreign states, [and] conclude international agreements."⁵⁷ This provides Tatarstan with the actual autonomy it wanted - the ability to have international economic relationships that does not need the interference of the federal government. Natural resource exports provide the republic with a large amount of budget revenues, and by stating that the republic would be able to enter into these trade deals alone supposedly it would have allowed the republic to hold onto more of the revenues and send less to the federal government. Tatarstan is also able to have economic relationships with other Russian federal subjects.⁵⁸ This goes a bit further and allows the republic to make economic deals with the rest of Russia (i.e. with the regions that send oil and natural gas to Tatarstan for refining) without the oversight of the federal government. If

⁵⁶ St. 4 Konstitutsiya RT.

⁵⁷ Ibid., St. 6.

⁵⁸ Ibid., St. 7.

the federal government is not in charge of these deals, Tatarstan can more easily make a deal that economically benefits itself and not the federal government. As well, the constitution laid out that natural resources are supposed to be used and protected in order to sustain the citizens of the Republic.⁵⁹ That sets the legal basis for total regional control of the natural resource sector, by claiming Tatar resources for Tatar citizens alone. It also applies to exports because the case can easily be made that the sale of natural resource is a vital part of sustaining the life of Tatar citizens. Related to this, all budgetary funds of the Republic of Tatarstan, as well as any other property that contributes to the economic self-sufficiency of the republic, belongs to the citizens.⁶⁰ This doubles down on the idea that all money made from the sale of natural resources, as well as any taxes and duties levied on said sale, have to stay within the confines of the republic, thus placing the economic rights of the republic above the federal government which is still technically in charge. The Republic's state council has jurisdiction over legislative regulation, budget approval, taxes and duties.⁶¹ The regional government thought that economic autonomy was more important than anything else because the ability to make their own taxes and levy their own duties would change the amount of revenues that Tatarstan could keep. The ability to make their own legislative regulations over companies that operate on the territory is another path to direct regional control over the natural resource sector.

The Constitution of the Republic of Tatarstan was written to protect the economy, especially the natural resource sector, from federal control. It was only by declaring political autonomy that the Republic was able to find an excuse to attempt to fully wrest control of the production and sale of oil and natural gas from the federal government. It

⁵⁹ St. 16 Konstitutsiya RT.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., St. 75.

provides a cultural excuse as well, by claiming that natural resources and budget revenues are meant to be used by the citizens of Tatarstan only, which does imply Tatars as they were supported political autonomy more than any other group in Tatarstan. The federal government was willing to allow Tatarstan to pass this constitution because of the amount of oil and natural gas that it had produced and maintained at the time, which was important for financial stability. The risk of reprisals shutting the government off from a lucrative resource was enough to allow the republic to declare total control.

The Russian Federation and the Republic of Tatarstan signed a treaty entitled “On the Delimitation of Jurisdictional Subjects and Mutual Delegation of Powers between the State Bodies of the Russian Federation and the State Bodies of the Republic of Tatarstan” on February 2nd, 1994. The treaty was signed after every other region signed on to the same one in 1992, when Tatarstan refused as it did not feel that the federal government went far enough. The federal government felt that keeping Tatarstan in line was important enough that it wrote a separate treaty entirely for the Republic. In keeping with the constitution, the treaty allows the republic to form its own budget, to define and impose its own taxes, and to impose legal regulations on natural resources.⁶² The federal government, spooked after the earlier referendum, did not take away the right of the Republic to economic control. It allowed the Republic to continue to have its own separate budget without federal oversight. The ability to create regional taxes separate from the central government allowed the Republic to have the power to fund itself as it saw fit. Tatarstan is allowed to decide issues related to the possession, use, and disposal of any natural resources, which are considered to be the exclusive property of Tatarstan

⁶² St. 2 Treaty between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Tatarstan “On the Delimitation of Jurisdictional Subjects and Mutual Delegation of Powers between the State Bodies of the Russian Federation and the State Bodies of the Republic of Tatarstan,” February 2, 1994.

unless claimed by the federal government.⁶³ While the constitution had not included the clause about federal claims, this still backs up the regional government's ability to completely control the natural resource sector. This is also an instance of the federal government reminding the Republic that it is not independent. The treaty allows Tatarstan to establish and maintain relations and to conclude its own treaties and agreements with other parts of the Federation.⁶⁴ This also backs up the constitution, and allows Tatarstan a level of autonomy economically.

In the same vein, Tatarstan can participate in international affairs, establish relations with foreign states, and conclude relevant agreements not contradicting the constitution and international obligations of the Federation, constitution of Tatarstan, and this treaty.⁶⁵ While the ability to create its own international economic agreements follows the constitution, the treaty institutes the agreement that regional agreements may not contradict federal law. The federal government was not entirely willing even at this point to allow Tatarstan complete freedom when making international political and economic agreements. Tatarstan is also allowed to conduct independent foreign economic activity, but Tatarstan has to jointly coordinate international and foreign economic relationships with the federal government.⁶⁶ While slightly contradictory, this statement also changes the constitution's proclamation that Tatarstan has the ability to make these relations alone and inserts the federal government into international economic relationships - especially export deals. They must also jointly address the matter of

⁶³ St. 2 Treaty between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Tatarstan.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ St. 3 Treaty between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Tatarstan.

natural resource use.⁶⁷ That also contradicts the constitution, which had stated that Tatarstan had the exclusive right to decide how to utilize natural resources. The federal government was unwilling to let Tatarstan do this alone, out of federal jurisdiction, when Tatar oil and natural gas helped fund the federal budget. Tatarstan's refusal to sign onto the same deal as everyone else got it a more personalized agreement, that allowed it to have almost full control over its own production and sale of natural resources. That alone would allow Tatarstan to almost fund itself without requiring federal subsidies. The possession of natural resources allowed Tatarstan to receive a large amount of de facto independence because it provided an economic cushion against potential reprisals from the federal government. For the federal government, the glimmer of a potential conflict in 1992 forced it to allow Tatarstan more economic leeway than any other region or republic. Tatarstan's economic agreements showed that the largest reason for declaring sovereignty and gaining political autonomy was to have more control over the natural resource sector.

Mintimer Shaimiev, the President of the Republic of Tatarstan from 1991 to 2010, was the first regional leader to sign a power-sharing agreement with the federal government,⁶⁸ thus codifying political autonomy to a greater extent than in the constitution. Shaimiev helped to keep violent conflicts from occurring by putting nationalists in power, playing the center off the regional government, and using the Tatar economy to avoid the worst consequences of Russian shock therapy,⁶⁹ which refers to the post-Soviet policy of privatizing industry, releasing price controls, and stopping subsidies

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Orttung, Lussier, and Paretskaya, 540.

⁶⁹ Stepanov, 315.

all at once. He brought secession supporters into the government,⁷⁰ which helped to cool down some ethnic tensions in the region by giving the separatists a voice. Shaimiev understood that no matter how much some elements in the country might have wanted actual independence from the federal government, so much of their economy relied on the assistance of the center that Tatarstan would have to compromise. Tatarstan managed to keep most of its oil profits in the region, avoid the worst parts of shock therapy, sign contracts with foreign investors, and heavily reduce their payments to the federal budget,⁷¹ which would not have been possible without their de facto independence. Tatarstan was dependent on Russian pipelines, and yet the federal government allowed it to keep the duties from the sale and production of oil and gas, while Moscow collected federal taxes.⁷² Tatarstan is separate from the center in ideology, legislation, and the economy, but it will never start a war of independence.⁷³ Tatarstan is economically dependent on the federal government, and the federal government is economically dependent on Tatarstan. Natural resources have both given Tatarstan leverage in sovereignty discussions, but also kept it from having the ability to separate.

The Republic of Bashkortostan

The Declaration on the State Sovereignty of the Bashkir Soviet Socialist Republic was signed on October 11th, 1990, as the first official document declaring sovereignty for Bashkortostan. It proclaims state sovereignty throughout the territory.⁷⁴ Bashkortostan capitalized on the federal promise to let the regions have a measure of sovereignty. In

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Kirkow, 48.

⁷³ Stepanov, 325.

⁷⁴ Dekalratsia o rosydarstvennom suverenitete Bashkirskoi Sovetskoi Sotsialisticheskoi Respublike ot 11 oktyabrya 1990 goda.

part, it was written because the Bashkir government did not feel that having the status of an autonomous republic was enough to ensure the socioeconomic development of the territory.⁷⁵ The Bashkir government declared sovereignty to protect the economic future of the the republic from the federal government. The constitution also declares that natural resources on the territory of Bashkortostan, as well as the entire economic, scientific, and technical future potential of the republic is the exclusive property of the people who live there.⁷⁶ The Declaration placed natural resources under the direct control of the Bashkir government, supposedly for the future of the citizens. Realistically, the government was concerned about the economy not their citizens, but the document's wording lays the groundwork for claiming natural resources as a part of Bashkir freedom. The Declaration also directly lies out that when the government of Bashkortostan enters into a relationship with any other part of the USSR or the USSR itself, Bashkortostan retains all state power.⁷⁷ The regional government began to separate itself from the federal government in terms of economic agreements by claiming that Bashkortostan is not beholden to the federal government during economic negotiations. The sovereignty declaration also lays out that the supreme laws of the land on Bashkir territory are the constitution and laws of Bashkortostan, unless it voluntarily transferred a sphere of legal regulation to the federal government.⁷⁸ This places the laws of Bashkortostan above federal laws, which was technically illegal at the time, and ensured that that there was still a way to backtrack in case the federal government threatened reprisals for the sovereignty declaration. The entire push for sovereignty in Bashkortostan was over the

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Dekalratsia o rosydarstvennom suverenitete Bashkirskoi Sovetskoi Sotsialisticheskoi Respublike

ability to control the production and refining of oil on the territory which funded the republic's economy.

The Treaty on the Delimitation of the Subjects of Jurisdiction and Powers Between the Federal Bodies of State Power of the Russian Federation and the Authorities of the Sovereign Republics within the Federation was signed on the 1st of March 1992. It was the first federal document to officially lay out different legal jurisdictions for the federal government and the republics. It states that the jurisdiction of federal bodies includes foreign policy and international relations and foreign economic relations.⁷⁹ This blocks Bashkortostan from engaging in foreign trade alone, a large part of the economy, and from creating new economic relationships without the knowledge of the federal government. Joint jurisdiction between the federal government and the republics includes ensuring that the republics' laws and constitutions are consistent with the federal constitution and laws, and establishing general taxes and fees.⁸⁰ This lays out the legal basis for political autonomy in the republics, where regional laws are subordinate to federal laws. Regional laws are limited to the narrow scope of anything already federally legal, limiting autonomy. The treaty also forces Bashkortostan's taxes to be approved by the federal government, which implies that the federal government can force the republic to change them if a new tax in the Republic limits the tax revenue sent to the federal budget.

The Federation allowed the republics to be independent participants in international and foreign economic relations, as long as they coordinate with the federal

⁷⁹ St 1 Dogovor o razgranichenii predmetov vedeniya i polnomochiy mezhdru federal'nymi organami gosudarstvennoy vlasti Rossiyskoy Federatsii i organami vlasti suverennykh respublik v sostave Rossiyskoy Federatsii. Moskva, 31 marta 1992 g.

⁸⁰ Ibid., St. 2

government, and to make agreements with other republics, territories, regions, and autonomous regions in Russia only if they do not contradict federal laws and the federal constitution.⁸¹ This is slightly contradictory to the article above stating that the federal government was in charge of foreign economic relations, but it does allow the republics limited representation to advocate for themselves. As Bashkortostan relies heavily upon exports, this clause placates the regional government by allowing it to be a part of trade negotiations, as long as the federal government is present. It also allows the republic's government to make economic agreements with other parts of the Russian Federation, which also ensures that the Bashkir government remains settled because it protects their oil refineries. However, it ensures that all of these economic deals are under federal law, and the federal government could declare agreements it does not feel are beneficial to the federal budget unconstitutional or illegal. The treaty does allow for natural resources to be the property of the peoples living on the republics' territories, but issues of ownership and use of natural resources are to be regulated jointly.⁸² Allowing the regional government the ability to claim natural resources as their property placates both the Bashkir government and Bashkir nationalists, but the federal government refused to allow them total control over these resources. The governments of the republics were granted some political independence, but the federal government refused to allow them to have much economic independence. Bashkortostan was unable to advocate for a better deal, because it did not want to put its natural resources sector in jeopardy.

The Constitution of the Republic of Bashkortostan was officially signed on the 21st of December 1993. It states that the Republic possesses total state power outside the

⁸¹ St. 3, Dogovor o razgranichenii predmetov vedeniya i polnomochiy mezhdru federal'nymi organami gosudarstvennoy vlasti Rossiyskoy Federatsii i organami vlasti suverennykh respublik v sostave Rossiyskoy Federatsii.

⁸² Ibid.

jurisdictional boundaries of the Russian Federation, and that it must follow the federal constitution.⁸³ In their own constitution, Bashkortostan had to agree to be subordinate to the federal government, despite their position as a somewhat sovereign state.

Bashkortostan's constitution has the highest legal force in matters referred to its jurisdiction, must be applied throughout the republic, and cannot be contradicted.⁸⁴

Despite previously agreeing that a condition of their autonomy was to put the federal constitution first in their republic, the Bashkir constitution backtracks and grants itself the highest legal authority in the republic. The Bashkir government is not permitted to pass laws that abolish or diminish the rights and freedoms of citizens, but the federal government can.⁸⁵ While Bashkortostan cannot limit rights in the republic, as a nod to their own ethnic minorities, they legally allowed the federal government to do so, which would allow them to blame any limiting of ethnic rights and increased ethnic tensions on the federal government - which ensures that the federal government would be wary of limiting any rights. The head of the Republic of Bashkortostan must know the state languages, Bashkir and Russian.⁸⁶ Technically, this is unconstitutional because less than 30% of the population was Bashkir, and it violated their own article stating that they could not limit the rights of any citizens. The Bashkir government's abilities, actions, relations with state authorities of the federation's constituent entities are determined under both federal and Bashkir law.⁸⁷ This forces the republic's government to follow federal law to have economic and political relationships with other parts of Russia, and even when it is trying to pass laws for itself. The constitution lays out that political

⁸³ St. 1,3 Konstitutsiya Respubliki Bashkortostan ot 21 dekabrya 1993 goda.

⁸⁴ Ibid., St. 14.

⁸⁵ Ibid., St. 20.

⁸⁶ St. 86 Konstitutsiya RB.

⁸⁷ Ibid., St. 99.

autonomy in the Republic of Bashkortostan is not full autonomy, as the Republic is still beholden to the federal constitution and laws in most cases.

Bashkortostan's constitution has several articles that were added to provide the republic with a basis for economic autonomy. The constitution specifically states that natural resources are to be used and protected as the basis for life and work of the multinational peoples who live in the republic.⁸⁸ This article allows the regional government to make economic decisions on the basis that they are meant to help and support the Bashkirs who live in the republic. Management and disposal of natural resources are to be done in accordance with federal laws and agreements between the Federation and the Republic.⁸⁹ That allows Bashkortostan to argue that natural resources are mostly under regional control, but forces them to cooperate with the federal government when drilling and refining natural resources. The Republic has claimed all of its own budget funds and any other property necessary for carrying out tasks and functions of the republic.⁹⁰ This creates some economic sovereignty by stating in the constitution that all funds used to fund the regional government are Bashkortostan's, and are not able to be transferred to the federal government. Claiming property allows Bashkortostan to declare a wide variety of buildings, land, and materials for solely regional use, which allows the regional government to claim that the natural resources sector is necessary because it funds the region. The Republic is permitted to carry out international and foreign economic relations.⁹¹ This power was already granted to Bashkortostan in the initial treaty, which was then codified in the constitution to ensure

⁸⁸ Ibid., St. 9.

⁸⁹ Ibid., St. 9.

⁹⁰ St. 10 Konstitutsiya RB.

⁹¹ Ibid., St. 15.

that the Republic did have the power to make its own international economic deals, in order to maintain regional funding. Bashkortostan is constitutionally permitted to conclude treaties and agreements with the administrative territorial entities, subjects, and state authorities of foreign states in accordance with Russian federal law.⁹² Bashkortostan understood that the export of natural resources is what allows the region to require limited to no federal subsidies, and so it laid out that it would be allowed to have treaties with every subset of foreign entities, as well as maintain control over its own natural resources even if it has to do so under federal law.

On August 3rd 1994, the Republic of Bashkortostan signed a power-sharing agreement with the federal government. Bashkortostan was only the second republic to sign a power-sharing agreement,⁹³ modeled after the successful treaty signed by the Republic of Tatarstan earlier in the year. It officially makes Bashkortostan a fully-fledged subject of the Russian Federation, and a sovereign state within the Russian Federation.⁹⁴ This muddies the legal status of Bashkortostan by creating a situation where it is at once its own sovereign state and a Russian subject beholden to Russian laws, which would set the stage for legal trouble between the republic and the federation. The republic was granted all legislative, executive, and judicial state power within its borders outside of what the Federation held.⁹⁵ This article sets the legal basis for Bashkortostan, supposedly sovereign, to still be a part of the federation that has to follow federal laws. It also grants Bashkortostan the right to its own constitution and legislation,⁹⁶ which allows it to pass

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ "Russia in Power-Sharing Deal with Province." *United Press International* (Boca Raton, Florida) August 3rd, 1994.

⁹⁴ St. 1 Dogovor mezhdru Rossiyskoy Federatsiyey i Respublikoy Bashkortostan ot 03.08.1994 "O razgranichenii predmetov vedeniya i vzaimnom delegirovaniy polnomochiy mezhdru organami."

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

laws and gives it the right to have a constitution, which grants Bashkortostan's autonomy more legitimacy than a charter. The Republic of Bashkortostan's jurisdiction includes: protecting the rights of national minorities, forming the state budget, defining taxes and fees in the budget, using and disposing of natural resources, managing questions of citizenship in the territory, etc.⁹⁷ Allowing Bashkortostan the right to protect the rights of national minorities, implying the Bashkirs, was granted to help calm down ethnic tension in the region because the regional government could make laws protecting the Bashkirs without federal oversight. The ability to make their own state budget including taxes and fees allow the republics to have a measure of economic sovereignty when funding the republic, which appeased the regional government who did control an economic sector that helped to fund the federal government.

Natural resources are left to the jurisdiction of Bashkortostan specifically because they are considered to be the property of the peoples that live there,⁹⁸ implying that Bashkortostan inserted that clause in order to maintain control of its most lucrative product using the excuse of protecting the Bashkirs. Joint jurisdiction includes coordinating international and foreign economic relations, and ensuring the unimpeded and duty-free movement of products along all types of routes, one of which is specifically stated to be pipeline transport.⁹⁹ The federal government was willing to let Bashkortostan have control over natural gas and oil, but was determined to stay involved in the transport and sale, which would prevent Bashkortostan from being able to fully separate.

Bashkortostan relies more upon refining than production, which means that it needs both a place to transport oil from and a place to sell oil to, both of which the federal

⁹⁷ Ibid, St. 3.

⁹⁸ St. 3, Dogovor mezhdru Rossiyskoy Federatsiyey i Respublikoy Bashkortostan.

⁹⁹ Ibid., St. 4.

government ensured that it could oversee. While Bashkortostan was granted political autonomy and managed to get some concessions for the national minorities on their territory, it was only granted limited economic freedom with the federal government ensuring that it had at least a small level of oversight as the federal government collects tax revenue off of regional economic activity.

These documents formed the legal basis of the Republic of Bashkortostan's political autonomy. Bashkortostan was allowed great political freedoms as long as they did not contradict federal laws and the federal constitution. Bashkortostan was permitted to be relatively economically autonomous, as they could control their own regional economy but had to make foreign economic decisions jointly with the federal government. Concessions were made to offset the likelihood of increased ethnic tension in the region, but because the Bashkirs are outnumbered by other ethnic groups, the concessions were small. However, there is a significant amount of Tatars in the region, and they are likely to unite with the Bashkirs against the federal government.

Bashkortostan received the concessions it did because the government was aware of the consequence of angering a center of oil refining and production, and that if they angered the population or government enough to close off the border or refuse to sell natural resources, that the federal government would suffer.

The Bashkir elite did not appreciate attempts by the federal government to strip the regions and republics of their autonomy.¹⁰⁰ Mansir Rakhimov, president of Bashkortostan from 1993 to 2010, came to power in the republic as part of a regional agreement among the elite that wanted to maintain control over natural resources when

¹⁰⁰ Traynor.

bargaining with the federal government.¹⁰¹ The elite began to worry that they gave too much power to the federal government, and that it would take more. Through the power-sharing agreement, Bashkortostan was able to reform its own way taking into account its unique history and ethnic minorities, which helped it be economically strong.¹⁰² It was able to become a donor region to the federal budget, and to develop its resources further, which in turn were the reason Bashkortostan could economically develop.¹⁰³ The Bashkir elite did not want to run the risk of jeopardizing the good economic situation in the Republic with federal interference. The Russian constitutional court declared the law forcing presidential candidates to speak Bashkir unconstitutional, but the Bashkir government never officially repealed it.¹⁰⁴ While Bashkirs are a small portion of the population, they are 67.5% of the Cabinet of Ministers and 58.5% of the heads of towns and district administrations,¹⁰⁵ and so the Bashkirs in government saw the law as protecting their outsized governmental majority and their minority population.

Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug-Yugra

Khanty-Mansi signed a bilateral power-sharing agreement on March 31st, 1992 with the federal government, along with all of the other non-republic federal subjects. The federal government was in control of foreign policy, international relations, international treaties, and foreign economic relations, etc.¹⁰⁶ This takes away Khanty-Mansi's right to make trade deals with other countries, when exporting to other countries

¹⁰¹ Vladimir Gel'man, Sergei Ryzhenkov, and Michael Brie, *Making and Breaking Democratic Transitions: the Comparative Politics of Russia's Regions* (Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), 29.

¹⁰² Marina Shymilova, "Dogovoru o razgranichenii polnomochiy mezhdru Rossiyskoy Federatsiyey i Respublikoy Bashkortostan - 12 let." *Bashinform.ru* (Ufa, Russian Federation) August 1st, 2006.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Orttung, Lussier, and Paretskaya, 42 - 43.

¹⁰⁵ Stepanov, 318.

¹⁰⁶ St. 1 Dogovor o razgranichenii predmetov vedeniya i polnomochiy mezhdru federal'nymi organami gosudarstvennoy vlasti Rossiyskoy Federatsii i organami vlasti avtonomnoy oblasti, avtonomnykh okrugov v sostave Rossiyskoy Federatsii. Moskva, 31 marta 1992 g.

is essentially its entire economy. The federal government claimed this power in order to prevent Khanty-Mansi from circumventing the federal government when making a lucrative agreement. The treaty declares that autonomous regions are independent participants in international and foreign economic relations and in agreements with federal subjects within the Federation.¹⁰⁷ This allows Khanty-Mansi to advocate for itself in international and domestic agreements, but it cannot do so without the oversight and presence of the federal government, as the federal government actually carries out negotiations. Joint jurisdiction between the regions and federal government includes taxation, nature management, and legislation involving land, water, and forests.¹⁰⁸ This permits the federal government to be involved in regional taxes, which prevents the regions from keeping too much revenue from the federal government. Nature management and legislation can be used to affect where new oil wells and natural gas fields can be drilled, and the federal government involved itself in order to ensure that it can force Khanty-Mansi to leave more land to the oil companies. Issues of possession, use, and disposal of natural resources in the autonomous regions are to be regulated by the Russian Federation and regional legislation.¹⁰⁹ Khanty-Mansi is not allowed to control its own production of oil and natural gas. Essentially, Khanty-Mansi signed a deal that prevented it from truly being autonomous, as its entire economy was under the oversight of the federal government.

On April 26th, 1995, Khanty-Mansi signed its charter, which functioned like a less powerful constitution. The charter states that Khanty-Mansi is allowed to exercise legal

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., St. 3.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., St. 2.

¹⁰⁹ St. 3, Dogovor o razgranichenii predmetov vedeniya i polnomochiy mezhdru federal'nymi organami gosudarstvennoy vlasti Rossiyskoy Federatsii i organami vlasti avtonomnoy oblasti, avtonomnykh okrugov v sostave Rossiyskoy Federatsii.

regulation on topics that are under joint jurisdiction, as long as it is in accordance with federal law.¹¹⁰ Even in its own charter, Khanty-Mansi is unable to rule itself as all laws have to follow federal law and the constitution. Khanty-Mansi is allowed to enter into agreements with other subjects of the Russian Federation.¹¹¹ Khanty-Mansi essentially needs to import everything except energy, and the ability to enter into agreements with other parts of the Russian Federation without the oversight of the federal government was a boon. Regions are allowed to unite resources with state authorities in other parts of the country, as well.¹¹² This allows Khanty-Mansi to work with other parts of the Russian Federation in case it needs economic assistance without the permission of the federal government, which provides a measure of economic sovereignty. Khanty-Mansi and the Russian Federation are to work together in terms of protecting civil rights, specifically the rights of national minorities, nature management and environmental protection.¹¹³ This allows the federal government oversight of Khanty-Mansi's treatment of the small population of national minorities, and the federal government can pass any laws governing the treatment of national minorities and Khanty-Mansi has to implement it. As well, the federal government inserted itself into laws governing nature management and environmental protection to protect its budget revenues and prevent the regional government from protecting the environment if they felt it would affect their bottom line. National minorities are given privileges on land and nature use, and can have reserve territories for their use.¹¹⁴ Supposedly this was meant to protect the culture and livelihoods of those Khanty and Mansi who still choose to live the traditional way, but it

¹¹⁰ St. 1 Ustav: prinyat Khanty-Mansiiskovo avtonomnovo okryga 26 aprelya 1995 goda.

¹¹¹ Ibid., St. 5.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ St. 15, Ustav: prinyat Khanty-Mansiiskovo avtonomnovo okryga..

¹¹⁴ Ibid, St. 63

has not happened. The Khanty and the Mansi are small enough and not united that there is nothing they can do to fight back against the federal and regional governments.

The Okrug is entitled to participate in international and foreign economic relations, and the federal government can also participate in foreign economic relations, conclude appropriate agreements, and participate in the implement of international treaties.¹¹⁵ This allows Khanty-Mansi the ability to be a part of negotiations that affect its natural resources sector, which fund the region. The ownership, use, and disposal of natural resources are all under joint jurisdiction.¹¹⁶ Khanty-Mansi is permitted to be in charge of its own natural resources, but it has to allow the federal government equal control. Overall, Khanty-Mansi does not have control as the federal government can declare their laws unconstitutional. Khanty-Mansi is allowed to participate in relationships in the sphere of natural resources, taking into account preservation, historic forms of management, the interests of indigenous minorities, and federal legislation.¹¹⁷ This forces Khanty-Mansi to include other interests when creating economic relationships, but does leave the federal government out of these relationships. The free movement of services, goods, financial assets, etc. is supported by the state and measures will be taken to protect investments.¹¹⁸ This article is almost a threat, reminding the government that investments in Khanty-Mansi's natural resource sector, and the transport of oil and natural gas is more important than anything else to the region. Bodies of state power and local self-government cannot impose any restrictions on economic

¹¹⁵ Ibid., St. 15.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ St. 64, Ustav: prinyat Khanty-Mansiiskovo avtonomnovo okryga..

¹¹⁸ Ibid., St. 67.

activities,¹¹⁹ which once again puts the natural resource sector above everything else by stating that the federal government and local governments in Khanty-Mansi cannot threaten the ability of the regional government to produce and ship natural gas and oil. Even in the charter of Khanty-Mansi, the federal government is extremely involved in the regional economy because of how much money is at stake.

Relations between Tyumen Oblast and Khanty-Mansi are built on the basis of the autonomy of Khanty-Mansi as an equal subject of the Russian Federation,¹²⁰ but unlike other autonomous subjects of the Russian Federation, Khanty-Mansi is expected to be legally subordinate to Tyumen. Forcing Khanty-Mansi to follow the laws of Tyumen Oblast and the federal government takes away part of the autonomy granted to it in the 1992 agreement and prevents it even further from being able to separate if the question were to arise. Tyumen Oblast and Khanty-Mansi are to coordinate relations through joint meetings between legislative or executive regional bodies.¹²¹ This forces Khanty-Mansi to coordinate all economic and political relations with both Tyumen and the the federal government before making any decisions, which rips away more of Khanty-Mansi's ability to be autonomous. State bodies in Khanty-Mansi have to participate in the organization and conduct of elections to Tyumen Oblast's state bodies, in accordance with their agreements.¹²² Participating in elections forces the government of Khanty-Mansi to all but admit that they are a legal part of Tyumen Oblast, and not their own autonomous region.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid., St. 19.

¹²¹ St. 20 Ustav: prinyat Khanty-Mansiiskovo avtonomnovo okryga..

¹²² Ibid., St. 21

The legal relationship between Khanty-Mansi and Tyumen Oblast is very complicated, and even the federal government is not sure which one is in control.¹²³ When the Okrug gained constitutional equality with all other members of the Russian Federation, it started trying to separate from Tyumen's control. Khanty-Mansi wanted more control over the region's natural resources and the accompanying revenue, which is why the Oblast wanted control.¹²⁴ In the Soviet period, Tyumen got to keep oil and gas revenues as the "head" of the region, but after the 1993 constitution lost to Khanty-Mansi, which got a windfall because it was able to control the oil and gas sector within its borders.¹²⁵ That alone spurred the conflict between Tyumen and Khanty-Mansi, as Khanty-Mansi wanted more autonomy to hold onto what it sees as its revenues, while Tyumen wanted the revenues. The federal government prefers Khanty-Mansi to war with Tyumen over revenues, and not with the federal government. The federal constitution gave the Okrug equal rights to a regular Oblast, which then caused further fights between Tyumen and Khanty-Mansi's authorities.¹²⁶ Khanty-Mansi's political and ethnic autonomy was severely limited by its legal position as part of Tyumen Oblast, despite also being a separate entity, which allowed the federal government to maintain control.

These documents form the legal basis of Khanty-Mansi after the fall of the Soviet Union, where it had been granted a limited amount of political autonomy. Khanty-Mansi has few powers that are not under the jurisdiction of the federal government. Economic autonomy is even more limited - Khanty-Mansi can make no deals with foreign or domestic governments without the knowledge and in some cases, participation, of the

¹²³ Gary Wilson, "'Matryoshka Federalism' and the Case of Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug." *The Journal of Post-Soviet Affairs* 17, no. 2 (2001): 176.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 169.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 183.

¹²⁶ Orttung, Lussier, and Paretskaya, 236.

federal government. Khanty-Mansi is so economically important that the federal government was not willing to grant it the smallest semblance of true economic autonomy. The Khanty and the Mansi are not large enough, or united enough, to have threatened an ethnic conflict if the federal government did not grant the region autonomy. Khanty-Mansi did not receive the few concessions it did until after all of the republics had received far more. The regional government is so reliant upon the sale of natural resources that it was willing to accept the ability to be an independent part of foreign economic relations even with the federal government's oversight. However, Khanty-Mansi did receive the ability to mostly self-govern and to have stewardship of the land and natural resources, which give it a measure of political and economic freedom to make its own decisions. The federal government has forced it be a part of Tyumen Oblast, which does not allow it to have much, if any, real political autonomy. The federal government barely gave Khanty-Mansi political autonomy as they do not want to let the Okrug separate from the federal government or want more concessions.

There were three waves of political autonomy during this time period. The first was for the Republic of Tatarstan, a nationalized and wealthy republic, where it received the most political and economic autonomy. The second was for the other republics, including the Republic of Bashkortostan, which was also nationalized and wealthy, where it received an equivalent amount of political autonomy but almost no economic autonomy. The third was for the regions, including Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug-Yugra, which was not nationalized but wealthy, where it received almost no political or economic autonomy.

Revising and Re-Envisioning Autonomy: 1996-2006

The regional governments took the power provided to them during the early 1990s, working with the federal government to create the legal basis for political autonomy. After permitting the regions and republics to obtain their autonomy, the federal government began attempting to legislate it away. The Constitutional Court ruled that regional sovereignty declarations were unconstitutional in 1997,¹²⁷ despite having permitted them to stand for seven years. When Vladimir Putin became the president of Russia, he worked to strengthen federal central authority by reforming federal-regional relations.¹²⁸ Russia was in a slightly better place economically and the federal government switched tactics under Putin to regain total central control.

The federal government passed laws to ensure that Khanty-Mansi was unable to use the little economic autonomy it had been granted. A 1996 law on Natural Resource Use in Khanty-Mansi states that relations between resource users on the Okrug's territory are regulated equally by federal law, present law, and the Okrug's normative acts,¹²⁹ which functioned as an attempt to gain a little bit of control back from the federal government. It failed because the federal government could come in and upend relations if Khanty-Mansi looked like it was becoming too autonomous. A federal law on Production Sharing Agreements states that in order to develop an oil field, the Oblast or Okrug in question must get the permission of the State Duma, which caused oil fields to

¹²⁷ Richard Sakwa, *Putin: Russia's Choice* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 139.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 130.

¹²⁹ Wilson, 185.

get cut when Khanty-Mansi and Tyumen could not get along.¹³⁰ This law also prevents natural resource rich areas of Russia from developing without the federal government's knowledge and permission.¹³¹ Combined, these laws allowed the federal government to have extreme oversight of Khanty-Mansi's rich oil and natural gas fields and full knowledge of when Khanty-Mansi wanted to develop a new one, and use that knowledge to control Khanty-Mansi.

Governor Filipenko, who was appointed in 1991, led the okrug in its attempts to secede from Tyumen Oblast.¹³² Khanty-Mansi refused to participate in the 1996 Tyumen elections,¹³³ as a form of protest against the oblast. According to Khanty-Mansi's own charter, it has to participate in the elections, but the government was extremely invested in separating even symbolically from Tyumen. Authorities in Khanty-Mansi relented quickly after the federal government stepped in, but in the end only 15% of eligible voters participated, which invalidated the election because 25% of voters legally must participate.¹³⁴ Khanty-Mansi did not participate in the second round of voting.¹³⁵ In July 1997, in an attempt to solve the problem, the Russian Constitutional Court ruled that Khanty-Mansi was simultaneously an equal federation and Tyumen subject, but that it was allowed to secede whenever it wanted if the federal government could validate it constitutionally,¹³⁶ which would never happen. Khanty-Mansi was also forced to continue participating in oblast elections,¹³⁷ and thus legally remain subordinate to Tyumen.

¹³⁰ Wilson, 186.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Orttung, Lussier, and Paretskaya, 237.

¹³³ Ibid., 238.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Orttung, Lussier, and Paretskaya, 239.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

In October of 1997, the State Duma adopted a new law stating that regional authorities had to cooperate with the Foreign Ministry when they negotiated with foreign governments,¹³⁸ a move that would affect regions like Khanty-Mansi, Tatarstan, and Bashkortostan greatly as they have a significant export business. The federal government must be included in these export negotiations as of passage of the law. This allows the government to circumvent the regions' bargaining tools by forcing negotiations to take place under their watch. It also creates a situation where the federal government is always aware of the amount of money the regions stand to gain in negotiations. The federal government controls how federal funds are allocated and disbursed to each region, which allows the government to have both cohesiveness and the ability to undermine any regional autonomy.¹³⁹ However, these regions have a significant amount of natural gas and oil in reserve and in production, which allow them to have enough energy sales to access global markets, providing them with a useful resource when bargaining with the federal government for funds.¹⁴⁰ Khanty-Mansi's large global sales are not enough to win over the federal government, as the federal government can very easily use one of the other laws that it passed to crack down on a different part of the natural resource sector. As for Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, their global sales are not nearly as large, but they do have a larger possibility for ethnic conflict. The law also stated that the regions have to inform the foreign ministry when they have international projects, and any legal documents have to be approved by the ministry before being signed.¹⁴¹ The ministry can

¹³⁸ Sakwa, 135.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 132.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ M.J. Bradshaw and Andrei S. Makarychev, "Globalization and Fragmentation: the Impact of the International Relations of Russia's Regions," ed. B.A. Ruble, Jodi Koehn, and Nancy E. Popson (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2001), 278.

open regional branches whenever it wants, and any trade missions have to coordinate with Russian Embassies.¹⁴² This law was targeted at energy producing regions, which provide most of the state's exports and budget revenues. It allowed the federal government to suppress some autonomy from these regions by forcing them to allow federal oversight on trade negotiations.

In 1998, Bashkortostan's President Rakhimov claimed that the center was uninterested in the political and economic situation of the regions, and that he had the power to appoint Supreme Court judges, a power held by the federal government and not the regions.¹⁴³ In April 1998, a regional law allowed residents to be Tatar citizens but not Russian citizens, because the regional government felt that Russian state passports diminished Tatarstan as an ethnic state.¹⁴⁴ This was put in place by the regional government to appease Tatar nationalists who felt that the Republic was not sovereign enough. The federal law on citizenship was amended fairly quickly in February 1999 to allow regional citizens to have an extra page in their passport in their local language,¹⁴⁵ to coincide with the Tatar law instead of force it to change. Tatarstan had another law allowing the president to appoint mayors and local officials, which actively violated the Russian constitution and the federal government did nothing.¹⁴⁶ Bashkortostan could also openly break federal law.¹⁴⁷ The federal government was unlikely to crack down on regions with lucrative natural resource sectors and nationalists.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Orttung, Lussier, and Paretskaya, 42, 44.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 541.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Orttung, Lussier, and Paretskaya, 540-541.

¹⁴⁷ Traynor.

On May 13th, 2000 the government created a total of seven federal districts encompassing Russia's 89 regions, each headed by a presidential representative, which established a vertical power that worked to undermine regional autonomy.¹⁴⁸ This action not only granted the president's regional representatives more authority in the regions, it merged the regions into federal districts to centralize power. The representatives in the districts are to be appointed by, dismissed by, and subordinate to the President of the Russian Federation. The main tasks of the representatives are to organize the relevant federal district, organize control over the execution of state bodies decisions in the federal districts, etc.¹⁴⁹ This was done in an attempt to reverse the fragmentation of Russia,¹⁵⁰ and create a powerful center from a weak center with powerful regions and republics. The central government was worried that large regions would set themselves strongly against Moscow and would potentially separate from the Federation while small regions would not.¹⁵¹ The federal districts allowed the federal government to have more direct control over the regions and republics by centralizing power and appointing representatives that report directly to the federal government. Also, in 2000, the Russian federal constitutional court demanded that all regional constitutions be amended to comply with Russian federal law.¹⁵² One of the constitutions in question was Bashkortostan's – in part because of the earlier law stating that the president has to speak Bashkir, as only 20% of the population was Bashkir.¹⁵³ This law was ruled unconstitutional because it placed the Bashkirs over all of the other ethnic groups in the

¹⁴⁸ Sakwa, 130, 141.

¹⁴⁹ Ukaz Prezidenta RF ot 13 maya 2000 g. N 849 "O polnomochnom predstavitele Prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federatsii v federal'nom okruge" (s izmeneniyami i dopolneniyami).

¹⁵⁰ Traynor.

¹⁵¹ Peter Kirkow, 2.

¹⁵² Gabidullin and Edwards.

¹⁵³ Traynor.

region. The federal government was beginning to retake control of the regions through laws and court rulings that would allow the federal government to consolidate central power.

On April 19th, 2002 the State Council of the Republic of Tatarstan adopted the revised federal constitution which lists out individual rights and liberties, and the adoption of the new constitution required the autonomous republic to provide those rights as well.¹⁵⁴ Amendments to the constitution were passed officially stating that Tatarstan is a part of Russia.¹⁵⁵ Tatarstan made these constitutional changes as a response to the federal court ruling, despite how anti-federal government the Republic had always been. It was easier to comply with the new federal government than to fight back and potentially lose autonomy.

On July 7th, 2003, Federal Law No. 95-FZ “On Amendments and Additions to the Federal Law on General Principles for the Organization of Legislative and Executive Bodies of State Power of the Subjects of the Russian Federation” passed, which established that all power-sharing agreements currently in existence had to be approved within two years or be canceled.¹⁵⁶ The central government had begun to view the bilateral treaties as undermining the integrity of the country, and they canceled about thirty of the forty as a consequence of the growing negative sentiment.¹⁵⁷ To the regions bilateral treaties had helped them to form a real statehood, establish a balance of power,

¹⁵⁴ “State,” Official Tatarstan.

¹⁵⁵ Geohistory.

¹⁵⁶ Ilya Spiridonov, “Dogovor o razgranichenii polnomochiy mezhdru Rossiyskoy Federatsiyey i Respublikoy Bashkortostan prekratil svoye deystviye v 2005 godu — Albina Vorobyeva,” *Bashinform.ru* (Ufa, Russian Federation), November 28, 2014.

¹⁵⁷ Shumilova.

and defuse societal, or ethnic, tensions.¹⁵⁸ The remaining ten, which included Tatarstan, kept their bilateral treaties but were worried about the future of regional political autonomy. Another 2003 federal law stated that the head of state in a region is the main conductor of the political process to signing treaties between regions in the Russian Federation,¹⁵⁹ and by this point all of them were appointed by the federal government.

In 2004, a new draft agreement to renew the 1994 power-sharing agreement between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Bashkortostan was submitted, and it was not considered by the federal government.¹⁶⁰ As the treaty was not successfully re-approved, Bashkortostan lost its autonomy on July 7th, 2005.¹⁶¹ Then, in fall 2005, Bashkortostan sent Putin an appeal to renew the center – regional relations, which would have started the process of updating the treaty,¹⁶² but was also unsuccessful. Unfortunately, despite the Bashkir government's attempts, it was unable to obtain autonomy again. The government was unable to enact any reprisals for the federal government's actions because anything to cut the government off from its most lucrative resource - oil and natural gas - would have affected the republic's economy just as negatively.

The federal government took a step back to prevent an actual independence movement from forming, allowing Tatarstan to have laws that violated the constitution and a power-sharing agreement which no one else had to be allowed to have at that point. The federal government was most worried about instability in Tatarstan, and because of the powerful wealthy regional government allowed Tatarstan to maintain

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Shumilova.

¹⁶¹ Spiridonov.

¹⁶² Shumilova.

autonomy. In 2001, Khanty-Mansi achieved de facto legal separation from Tyumen Oblast, but that just led to instability and affected investment in oil in the region.¹⁶³ Khanty-Mansi, due to its extremely large amount of oil reserves, is a top place in Russia for foreign investment,¹⁶⁴ and could not afford to lose the foreign investment in its oil fields, which made the long sought for separation from Tyumen a problem. However, Khanty-Mansi is still part of Tyumen Oblast, and the federal government took away their political autonomy. Mansir Ayupov, a Bashkir Nationalist and aide to President Rakhimov, claimed that, “we’ve never said we’re independent, in no document,”¹⁶⁵ summing up the line the Bashkir government tried to walk during the 90s and early 2000s, between outright calling for independence and having some sovereignty without leaving the Russian Federation. Ultimately, they were unable to maintain sovereignty.

This time period saw the end of autonomy for almost all regions and republics, except for the Republic of Tatarstan. Nationalism and natural resources were not enough in most cases to maintain autonomy. Khanty-Mansi and Bashkortostan did not have enough leverage to convince the federal government to renew their power-sharing agreements, but Tatarstan did.

¹⁶³ Wilson, 169.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 172.

¹⁶⁵ Traynor.

The End of Autonomy: 2007-2017

From 2007 to 2017, the federal government officially centralized power. By 2009, the only remaining power-sharing agreements were with Chechnya and Tatarstan, and by then the terms had been renegotiated to the point that the agreements were mostly symbolic.¹⁶⁶ Tatarstan lost its autonomy by the summer of 2017, officially ending the system of regional autonomy. However, this time period saw an increase in the amount of anti-government protests in the regions as the population was angered by the repeal of regional political autonomy.

In 2007, when the federal government had managed to take away autonomy from almost all other regions, Tatarstan broke out into protests again and the government again worried about an independence struggle and allowed Tatarstan to keep its autonomy. There were more protests during the Russian economic downturn over what Tatars saw as the federal government overreaching and economically controlling Tatarstan when it began to siphon more money from the region to the federal budget. Then, the Republic of Tatarstan and the federal government signed a new treaty, which acted both as an extension of the last agreement and a brand-new agreement.¹⁶⁷ Tatarstan received this deal from the government while other regions' agreements were in the process of being canceled.¹⁶⁸ The Treaty with the Russian Federation on the Delimitation of Jurisdictional

¹⁶⁶ "Russia Revoking Tatarstan's Autonomy," European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity. 9 August 2017.

¹⁶⁷ Stratfor Worldview.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

Subjects and Mutual Delegation of Powers, signed on June 26th 2007, helped to codify the continuing status of the Constitution of the Republic of Tatarstan. The most important part of the treaty is that it lays out that the delimitation of jurisdictional subjects and powers between Tatarstan and Russia is affected by the Constitution of the Russian Federation.¹⁶⁹ This forces the republic to continue legislating without contradicting the federal government in order to allow the federal government more oversight and control over the region. The treaty grants Tatarstan full state authority.¹⁷⁰ The new treaty takes a harsher stance on the Republic's laws, more aggressively stating that they must follow federal law to be considered legitimate. It also officially codifies the new legal status of the Republic, as having authority within the bounds of its territory as long as its authority is under the federal government, which is a form of federalism.

Most importantly, the treaty states that the federal government and Tatarstan's Cabinet of Ministers have to make agreements jointly in regards to economic and environmental issues,¹⁷¹ which do involve the extraction and processing of natural resources. Even though the federal government was willing to extend Tatarstan's political autonomy, not something they did for every region and republic, the federal government was not willing to allow Tatarstan continued economic freedom. The republic only demanded autonomy as a means for increased economic freedom, and the federal government was not willing to allow it to continue if they could not be involved. They did not completely take away Tatarstan's ability to control natural resources at this time because of continued fears of separatist activity. Tatarstan could still carry out

¹⁶⁹ St. 1 Treaty with the Russian Federation on the Delimitation of Jurisdictional Subjects and Mutual Delegation of Powers. June 26, 2007.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., St. 2.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

international economic relations with foreign states and other parts of Russia, as well as sign agreements for the implementation of international economic relations.¹⁷² This allowed Tatarstan to continue to directly control both their international relations, including the oil and natural gas trade, and creates a situation where the Russian Federation maintains some measure of control over Tatarstan's ability to resolve issues that arise from oil and natural gas production. While other republics and regions were actively losing their sovereignty, Tatarstan received a renewal because the federal government understood that the situation would become tense if not outright dangerous if the separatists became enraged over the loss of sovereignty. The situation had already turned sour in other regions.

There is no ethnic nationalism in Khanty-Mansi, as there have been no protests along ethnic lines, no protection of Khanty and Mansi culture, and certainly no separatists. While other ethnic groups are diametrically opposed to the central government, these are more opposed to the oil companies and only somewhat to the central government. However, in 2010, they did protest Medvedev's appointment of Natalia Komarova for governor instead of Filipenko.¹⁷³ Unlike other protests that have fallen along ethnic lines, most of Khanty-Mansi was protesting Komarova. Khanty-Mansi's parliament endorsed the appointment,¹⁷⁴ the only check and balance to the ascension of a regional governor, before protests began on the 14th of February 2010.¹⁷⁵ Komarova would take power despite the protests.

¹⁷² St. 2 Treaty with the Russian Federation on the Delimitation of Jurisdictional Subjects and Mutual Delegation of Powers.

¹⁷³ "Protests Against New Regional Governor, Barred Candidate on Hunger Strike," *RadioFreeEurope* (Prague, Czech Republic), February 15, 2010.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ *RadioFreeEurope*, "Protests Against New Regional Governor, Barred Candidate on Hunger Strike."

During the time period of her appointment, rumors started that she was appointed because of her close ties to Gazprom, implying that she would work for the oil and gas companies instead of the people.¹⁷⁶ This is a real worry in Khanty-Mansi, because the oil companies are extremely powerful. Even in the 90's Lukoil had the most power in the region because of its control over most of the local economy.¹⁷⁷ The oil companies in Khanty-Mansi are actively pushing the Khanty off their land for drilling, because Khanty land is in the middle of a part of Siberia that provides half of overall Russian oil extraction.¹⁷⁸ And as the Khanty are a small part of the population, isolated, and not united, oil companies are not afraid of reprisals. Lukoil West Siberia built a road for oil drilling in 2014 through some of the very last free Khanty land.¹⁷⁹ The company puts itself over the locals' wants, in the thinking that if the locals successfully stop oil production on sacred Khanty sites, that it will lead to the ruin of Khanty-Mansi's economy.¹⁸⁰ The regional and federal governments have gone along with this because they tacitly agree with it. Anti-oil company protests have begun breaking out in Khanty-Mansi because of a series of oil spills that are actively affecting the local way of life.¹⁸¹ However, the Khanty and the Mansi will never have a successful protest without the assistance of the other citizens of the region. In part, this is because of how few of them there are, and the fact that the population relies heavily upon the production and sale of natural resources.

¹⁷⁶ Brian Whitmore, "Kremlin Stumbles in Regions as Unrest Mounts," *RadioFreeEurope* (Prague, Czech Republic), February 16, 2010.

¹⁷⁷ Orttung, Danielle, and Paretskaya, 238.

¹⁷⁸ Emma Biermann, "Will the Khanty Save Russia?" 350.org, January 14, 2014, <https://350.org/will-the-khanty-save-russia/>.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

Protests in Bashkortostan did not really break out after autonomy was officially revoked in 2007, because of how quietly it went away. It was only when it became clear what the Bashkirs had lost that protests officially broke out. One wave of protests began on March 3rd, 2011, when the Bashkir Youth Union (BYI) went on a hunger strike in response to police putting pressure on nationalists, and they demanded the release of activists that had been thrown in prison.¹⁸² BYI stated that it was defending Bashkir language and culture, because the central government restricted Bashkir-language schools and state media broadcasts, which had been almost completely eliminated.¹⁸³ Essentially, it was not until the federal government, which had already taken away political autonomy in the region, began to cut down on Bashkir culture that nationalists reacted, because it was the first moment they could point to of federal overreach.

In 2013, Russian authorities made calling for separatism punishable by three to five years in prison,¹⁸⁴ which only served to anger regional separatists, who to this point had never fully vanished. The passing of this law would have a ripple effect in Bashkortostan and Tatarstan, where activists would be jailed. On October 11th 2016, the twenty-sixth anniversary of the sovereignty declaration, Bashkir nationalists assembled because they were angered that the central government had destroyed the document.¹⁸⁵ They complained that Putin suppressed the freedom of the regional president's office, distorted Bashkir history, and closed Bashkir schools and facilities in an attempt to undermine the language.¹⁸⁶ The Bashkirs have become more assertive in defending what

¹⁸² Robert Coalson, "Russia's Bashkortostan Strains Against Moscow's Centralization Policy." *RadioFreeEurope*, (Prague, Czech Republic) March 24, 2011.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Gabidullin and Edwards.

¹⁸⁵ Paul Goble, "Is Bashkortostan About to Explode Along Ethnic Lines?" *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 13, no. 179 (2016).

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

they see as their rights to their own republic.¹⁸⁷ They are a minority in their own republic, and faced past marginalization, so these fears are not unfounded. Bashkir activists want the return of the 1990 sovereignty declaration, a true federal state, Bashkir control of national resources, a true regional presidency, reopened Bashkir schools and institutions, and the end of the repression of Bashkir national organizations.¹⁸⁸ Bashkir nationalists are very vocal in the region, and are active in leading anti-government protests, but there are not a large number of them.

In mid-July 2017, the state council of Tatarstan appealed to the federal government in the hopes of extending the power-sharing agreement, as it was set to expire on July 24th 2017.¹⁸⁹ On July 24th 2017, the federal government allowed the power-sharing agreement to expire, ignoring the Tatarstan State Council's proposal completely.¹⁹⁰ Now, at least fourteen of Tatarstan's constitutional articles and several federal laws all need to be amended¹⁹¹ to reflect the new legal status of the republic. The office of the president is no longer legal, so the status of current president Rustam Minnikhanov is in question. Tatar parliamentarians have petitioned the United Nations for independence,¹⁹² going over the Russian Federation's government completely. In part, this is to appease the angry Tatar population. The regional government will never let Tatarstan become its own independent country because their economy could collapse if Russia cut it off from exporting natural resources. Ultimately, Tatarstan lost the ability to

¹⁸⁷ Goble.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Stratfor Worldview.

¹⁹⁰ "Russia Revoking Tatarstan's Autonomy," European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity. 9 August 2017.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity.

maintain autonomy because the federal government found an excuse to allow the power-sharing agreement to die.

In 2017, mandatory ethnic language classes were in jeopardy all over Russia after the Prosecutor-General's Office was asked to investigate the problem, the central government claiming that these classes are illegal.¹⁹³ On August 28th, the federal government officially ordered the Prosecutor-General to ensure that all regions had canceled their classes.¹⁹⁴ On September 7th, the Republic of Tatarstan's Education Ministry stated that these attempts to end mandatory Tatar studies contradict federal and regional laws guaranteeing them the right to make local ethnic languages official state languages.¹⁹⁵ The federal government will be forcing Tatarstan to cancel Tatar classes. It was not just separatists protesting over this, as many Tatars view it as the central government trying to take away their culture. Protests broke out in Bashkortostan on September 16th, 2017, as a consequence of the revocation of mandatory Bashkir language classes in regional schools.¹⁹⁶ The Bashkirs saw this as evidence that the federal government does not view them as a valid segment of the population and that it is willing to tear their culture away from them.

Protests in Tatarstan tend to break out when the federal government is seen to be taking away the autonomy or culture of the Tatars. Nationalism there has remained strong for decades and that is extremely unlikely to change. Ethnic nationalism, which had been evident, but not a problem before the cancellation of political autonomy in Bashkortostan became a problem afterwards. Nationalists saw every action taken in Bashkortostan as

¹⁹³ *RadioFreeEurope*, "Bashkortostan Nationalists Plan Protests for Mandatory Bashkir Classes."

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

anti-Bashkir act. In some cases, like the closing of Bashkir language facilities, they were absolutely correct. Nationalism is nonexistent in Khanty-Mansi because there is no large ethnic minority to come together under a similar culture to protest against the federal government. The closest Khanty-Mansi has managed to come still are a few small protests against the oil companies, which have not been successful.

During this time period, even Tatarstan lost autonomy. Not even nationalism in that republic was enough to maintain sovereignty when the federal government decided to take it away. Ultimately, the explosion of regional protests and the possession of natural resource revenues were not enough to convince the federal government to allow the last politically autonomous republic to maintain autonomy, or to give it back to the regions that had lost it. The federal government had been more concerned with the centralization of power than ethnic uprisings, and the regional governments were concerned about reprisals from the federal government and did not fight back.

Conclusion

In the 1990s, the government of the Republic of Tatarstan was able to push for more political and economic freedom because the central government was weak and worried about the consequence of angering the Tatar government. Tatarstan for two decades successfully held onto the autonomy granted to it as a region with an ethnic minority because it is so rich in natural resources. A poorer region would not have had the money to bankroll the government in case of getting cut off from obtaining federal subsidies or to successfully threaten the federal government with the risk of an independence struggle cutting off the economy. That was independence in all but name. Natural resources have provided Tatarstan with the ability to separate itself from the federal government in order to have some semblance of independence, but as the republic does not have a foreign border, the regional government understood that it could not become sovereign. The republic has had the potential for an ethnic conflict simmering for decades, because of how strongly Tatar separatists have positioned themselves against the federal government. An actual conflict is unlikely to erupt, but elites did use the threat of an independence struggle to bolster their push for political autonomy. As of July 24th, 2017, the Republic of Tatarstan is no longer an autonomous republic. However, the government has not given up on obtaining semi-autonomy. Despite Tatarstan's desire for a return to autonomy, anger at the central government, and rise in nationalism, with Putin in power, it is highly unlikely that Tatarstan will ever regain its previous legal status. The Republic of Tatarstan was the Russian region that had sovereignty the longest, and was

one of the few that is majority national minority, and natural resources provided Tatarstan with the ability to seize sovereignty in the early 90's, and they are the reason that Tatarstan cannot fight for sovereignty now.

The discovery and production of oil during the Soviet Union allowed the Republic of Bashkortostan to seize autonomy from the center and maintain it for a decade.

However, the reliance on refining and selling natural resources meant that they were not bargaining from a strong position during the 1990s. As a consequence of natural resource revenues and nationalism, the republic was able to get some concessions from the federal government, including a high level of political autonomy, but was only allowed to gain some economic autonomy. Bashkortostan has the right to make its own political and economic decisions, under the oversight and laws of the federal government. It was easier to revoke Bashkortostan's autonomy because of how relatively insignificant the Bashkir nationalists were in the region. The risk of a successful insurrection was fairly low, as there were not enough people to have made a difference against the might of the central government. As well, Bashkortostan's ability to manufacture, produce, and sell oil and natural gas – its most lucrative asset – hinges on the assistance of the federal government. Bashkortostan does not have a border with a foreign country, and as such cannot transport any goods without the agreement of the federal government and the use of their transportation systems. The Bashkir government had briefly tried to fight back before realizing that it was hopeless, and accepted the quiet death of their autonomy in the knowledge that they could not risk their economy for a likely to fail rebellion. The Bashkirs will continue to protest for their rights, but the regional government will continue to prevent it from breaking out into anything more than a protest to avoid losing

their economic situation. The Bashkortostan government will continue to attempt to protect the rights of the Bashkirs in order to prevent separatists from breaking out into a full revolution, and petition for more autonomy, but the federal government is unlikely to allow the Republic to regain it.

Khanty-Mansi's status as an autonomous region began early in the USSR as a consequence of the push to create homelands for national minorities in Siberia. It was only after that had passed that the central government discovered that Khanty-Mansi had oil and understood exactly how much money was at stake if Khanty-Mansi was allowed to rule itself. Autonomy in Khanty-Mansi formed as sovereignty in name only. Almost all freedoms the federal government allowed the region were also handed to Tyumen Oblast, abridged later with federal laws, or granted to the federal government. Oil and natural gas in other regions allowed them to grasp sovereignty, but in Khanty-Mansi it directly prevented the government from being able to have any. Every agreement made with the federal government about sovereignty did not grant Khanty-Mansi control over natural resources and foreign economic relations, both of which meant that Khanty-Mansi was not autonomous at all. When the bilateral treaties were signed, Khanty-Mansi's government had to take what was offered, in the understanding that it was not receiving an actual deal. The confusing relationship with Tyumen Oblast contributed to the lack of autonomy, as it meant that Khanty-Mansi has constantly been fighting with the Oblast over who is in charge and cannot call for further autonomy from the federal government until they obtain it fully from Tyumen first. As well, the Khanty and Mansi were too small and isolated to have visibly protested in their ancestral homeland. There was never any risk of Khanty-Mansi erupting in a rebellion against the federal government. Like

every other region, Khanty-Mansi no longer has an active power-sharing agreement, and quite literally, is autonomous in name only now.

The political autonomy system in Russia formed after the collapse of the Soviet Union as a way to appease the regions, especially those who produced the most economically necessary natural resources for the future of the country. Without resource-rich regional governments cooperating with the federal government, it was not clear that Russia would ever recover from its economic troubles after the fall of the Soviet Union. Therefore, the federal government allowed regional governments to seize sovereignty. How much political autonomy they received was dependent on both how large and lucrative their natural resources sectors are, and how likely they were to erupt in an ethnic struggle if they were not granted political autonomy. The regional governments attempted to balance the fact that they could not economically sustain a revolt against the federal government, with the federal government's fear that a revolt would be disastrous. The federal government officially proved as of August 2017 that the regions would never cut the federal government off from oil and gas or break into an ethnic struggle if autonomy was revoked.

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