

Federalism in the Russian Provincial Norths: Lessons for Nunavik?

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The task of accommodating northern, First Nations and Aboriginal demands for autonomy within an existing federal structure is just one of the many challenges facing Canada's provincial governments. Historically, the provinces have been reluctant to tamper with the concrete territorial divisions outlined in the Canadian Constitution. Yet, in order to accommodate demands such as the creation of a "third" order of government, provincial governments will have to deal with political, economic and social barriers to such changes.

While Canada is an established democracy with a high standard of living and a functioning political and economic system, the Canadian political system and, more specifically, federal structure need to be able to adapt to constantly changing societal demands and aspirations. As Samuel Huntington, among others, has noted, the failure of a political system to respond to societal pressure and long standing grievances may cause instability within a state.¹ In Canada, as in other federal states in the Circumpolar North, one such pressing and long-neglected set of demands involves the challenge of incorporating First Nations and Aboriginal self-governing territories into the current federal matrix. Continued reluctance to deal with this issue perpetuates the difficult conditions that exist in many First Nations and Aboriginal communities. Most importantly, the inability or unwillingness on the part of political actors to resolve this issue could very well intensify the types of violent confrontations and instability we have already seen at Oka and Burnt Church.

Given these difficult and challenging realities, the question that arises is how can the issue of First Nations and Aboriginal self-government in Canada be resolved in a just and peaceful manner that protects the integrity and values inherent in the Canadian federal system. While a "made-in-Canada" solution, involving representatives from all the main stakeholders, would be the optimal solution, is it also possible to draw on the experiences of other countries that have faced the same types of issues. In the Circumpolar North, for example, there is a wide range of countries

that have experienced the challenges of Aboriginal self-government and self-determination. Such comparative experiences could be useful in developing models and institutional structures to deal with this particular set of issues. At the very least, Canadians could learn from the problems experienced by other countries and seek to avoid these problems as they chart their own course.

Using the comparative approach, the main purpose of this paper is to examine the Canadian case within the context of the Russian Federation and its predecessor, the Soviet Union. In order to shed some light on the current process of reform and institutional development in Canada, the paper will explore the challenges and problems associated with the protection of Indigenous autonomy in the Russian provincial Norths in the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. The paper will begin by briefly reviewing the institutional mechanisms through which successive Soviet and Russian governments have responded to the issue of Indigenous self-government and autonomy. This will involve an overview of the system of nested or matryoshka federalism, which has been an institutional feature of the Soviet, and now Russian, federal system since the 1930s. The paper will then examine the benefits and shortcomings of this model, with a focus on the problems of nested federalism in the post-Soviet period.

The second part of the paper will look at the concept of nested federalism in the context of the provincial Norths in Canada. The discussion will focus specifically on the case of Nunavik, a region in northern Quebec, which exhibits features of the Russian nested federalism model. According to a comparative survey in the recent report of the Nunavik Commission:

While the Nunavut Government operates within a territorial framework under federal jurisdiction, and the Greenland Home Rule Government operates within its special relationship with the Danish Government, there exists no ready-made model for an autonomous form of public government within any of Canada's provincial jurisdictions. As a result, the Commission had to start from scratch when formulating its recommendations for the design of a Nunavik Government.²

Although the type of regional structure envisioned in the Nunavik Commission's report is indeed unprecedented in Canada, in many respects, the Commission's proposals closely mirror the type of nested federal arrangements that have existed in the Soviet Union and Russia for decades. As the future of Nunavik is currently in a process of transition, this paper will seek to inform the debate about the evolution of the Nunavik model through a scholarly examination of the similarities and differences between Nunavik and Russia's autonomous okrugs (districts). It is the author's contention that such an examination will lend support to the notion that sharing best practices can be a mutually beneficial process, not just a

unilateral arrangement in which established democracies bestow their political knowledge upon transitional and developing states.

Nested Federalism in the Soviet Period

The Russian North is populated by a myriad of different ethnic groups, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. Although non-Indigenous peoples have lived in northern Siberia for centuries, the bulk of the non-Indigenous population³ came to the region during the economic development boom that occurred in the post-World War II period. The large-scale development of natural resources by the Soviets in the 1960s and 1970s caused enormous economic and demographic changes in Western and Central Siberia. Resource development had a huge impact on the population of the region. Huge cities, dwarfing urban areas in the other countries in the Circumpolar North, were built to house workers in the resource extraction sectors and their families.

More importantly for the purposes of this study, the influx of migrants from all parts of the Soviet Union quickly overwhelmed Indigenous populations that had traditionally lived in the North. In many parts of the Russian North today, non-Indigenous peoples vastly outnumber Indigenous populations, a reality that poses a continual threat to the existing autonomy (territorial and otherwise) of Indigenous peoples. Moreover, resource development, with all its environmental, social and economic consequences, adversely affected the traditional lifestyles and cultures of the Indigenous peoples, which had already been damaged by earlier political and economic programs such as collectivization and relocation.

Prior to the resource boom of the post-war period, the Indigenous minorities of the Soviet North had been granted a certain amount of autonomy through the creation of national okrugs. These districts, many of which were founded during the Stalin era in the 1930s, were designed to provide the Indigenous peoples of Siberia with control over cultural and some administrative matters. The creation of the districts did, in some ways, give Indigenous minorities a voice at the local level. It should be pointed out, however, that this voice was constrained by a number of factors. First, although federal in form, the Soviet Union was a highly centralized unitary state. Political and economic decision-making was strictly controlled by the Communist Party and the centralized economic and administrative structures based in Moscow. Second, the districts themselves were situated within a regional-territorial hierarchy. They were considered autonomous units within another "host" region (usually an oblast (region) or a krai (territory)). The political and economic authorities in these "host" regions were often responsible for development decisions in the okrugs. The system resembled a Russian matryoshka or nesting doll, in which small-

er dolls fit within the larger dolls. Ultimate political and economic control was wielded along a strict hierarchy, leaving very little real autonomy for the Indigenous peoples of the national okrugs.

In addition to bestowing limited degrees of territorial autonomy on northern Indigenous minorities through the system of matryoshka federalism, Soviet governments in the 1920s and 1930s also actively promoted cadres from non-Russian ethnic groups to political offices at the local level through a policy known as *korenizatsiia* (nativization). In the national okrugs, many lower- and middle-grade positions within the Communist Party and administrative structure were filled by members of Indigenous minorities. A lack of training and formal education, however, meant that many of these individuals were unable to fulfill the requirements of the posts, leading to chauvinistic Russian charges that the members of Indigenous minorities were incapable of doing “responsible” work.⁴ Although the policy of *korenizatsiia* was abandoned by the late 1930s, and despite its shortcomings, it did set in motion a number of positive demographic and political effects for non-Russian peoples, including Indigenous minorities, which were felt well into the post-war period.⁵

Following the Second World War, the exploitation of northern and remote regions intensified as new sources of resource wealth were tapped to spur industrialization and economic growth in other parts of the Soviet Union. The discovery of massive oil and gas deposits in western Siberia in the mid 1950s and early 1960s set in motion a series of economic, political and demographic changes that would have an enormous impact upon the inhabitants and the environment of the national okrugs. The expansion of the oil and gas industries led to the migration of ethnic Russians and members of other ethnic groups from the western parts of the Soviet Union, a process that significantly diluted the Indigenous portion of the population. Relentless resource exploitation also had a damaging effect on the environment, adversely affecting the traditional lifestyles of the Indigenous peoples.⁶

By the late 1970s, constitutional changes introduced by the Brezhnev government modified the status of the national okrugs. The revised 1977 Soviet and 1978 Russian (RSFSR) constitutions provided the okrugs with greater autonomy by strengthening their links with national-level institutions. They were given representation in the highest state organs of the USSR and the right to legislative initiative, although it is important to bear in mind that such privileges were still being granted within a highly centralized, undemocratic system.⁷

In 1980, the Soviet government passed the Law on Autonomous Okrugs. This piece of legislation was seen by many as a step backwards for Indigenous minorities in their attempts to reinforce their political autonomy. The term “national okrugs” was replaced by the more neutral term

“autonomous okrugs” and all references to Indigenous minorities were removed from the text of the law. The law also enhanced the position of the “host” regions in relation to the okrugs, a move that further limited okrug autonomy.⁸ According to this law, the okrugs were still considered parts of their “host” regions. As a result, their budgets were still a part of the larger regional budget and the “host” regions still had the power to change decisions made by an okrug administration.⁹ In many respects, the changes made in the early 1980s caused the types of regional and ethnic tensions in the okrugs that existed in other parts of the Soviet Union at this time. Such tensions would eventually become one of the primary causes of the downfall of the Soviet Union in 1991.

The rise to power of Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985 heralded a new era in Soviet politics following the political and economic stagnation of the 1970s. Gorbachev’s policies of *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring) sparked new hope that the authoritarian regime was slowly starting to liberalize. Many territorially based national groups saw these changes as vehicles for achieving greater autonomy, self-determination and, in some instances, secession from the Soviet Union. Although the union republics were at the forefront of the autonomy movement, other regions within the Soviet federal hierarchy also recognized the opportunities created by Gorbachev’s reforms.

In the autonomous okrugs, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups engaged in grassroots protest and institution building. In 1990, the first Congress of Northern Minorities was held in Moscow.¹⁰ Regional and local governments across northern Russia, where the majority of the okrugs are located, also asserted their autonomy from the central government and, in the case of many okrugs, from their “host” regions. For example, in 1991, the regional council of the Chukotskii Autonomous Okrug, located in northeastern Siberia, declared the region an autonomous soviet socialist republic.¹¹ Although the collapse of the Soviet Union would later nullify this move, the region did secede from its “host” region, Magadan oblast, in 1992.¹² In the case of the rich, western Siberian oil and gas producing regions, the lure of resource rents provided an impetus for regional governments to claim ownership of these resources. The intergovernmental conflicts caused by such declarations set the stage for the development of federalism and intergovernmental relations in post-Soviet Russia.

Nested Federalism in the Post-Soviet Period

The hyper-centralized political and economic system described in the previous section persisted until the collapse of the Soviet Union. While the reforms introduced after 1991 were designed to speed the development of democracy and the market, the economic and political chaos caused by the

transition from communism has had a marked effect on the living standards of the vast majority of the population. The Indigenous peoples of northern Russia are no exception. In fact, many members of Indigenous minorities look back with nostalgia to the Soviet period, as oppressive and destructive as that period was, as a time of relative economic stability and comfort.

But what of the autonomy that Indigenous peoples enjoyed through the system of nested federalism? How have their situations changed as a result of the broader transformations affecting the Soviet Union and Russia? To begin with, many Indigenous peoples have become demographically outnumbered in the districts that were originally created to provide them with cultural and administrative autonomy.¹³ Although many Indigenous politicians are still in positions of authority, a legacy of policies enacted many decades ago, non-Indigenous peoples dominate in the economic sphere and increasingly in the political sphere.

Indigenous peoples also find that their interests are increasingly coming into conflict with those of the non-Indigenous political elite and the powerful economic interests they represent. In post-Soviet Russia, we see the development of a number of large, vertically integrated resource extraction companies that have divided the northern regions into territorial "fiefdoms." More recently, officials from these resource companies have even begun to play more direct roles in the political process by seeking political office in the regions, thereby securing their economic interests. Although further resource development promises to bring economic dividends for northern regions,¹⁴ it is questionable whether these economic resources will be used to preserve and promote the Indigenous cultures of these regions.

But what of the nested federal arrangements that Russia inherited from the Soviet Union? Despite that fact that the autonomous okrugs no longer fulfill the purpose for which they were originally designed, they still offer some degree of autonomy to the Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples of the Russian North. Nested federalism has largely survived the Soviet collapse intact. In some cases, the okrug governments have been able to carve out a larger share of political and economic resources, thus enabling them to enjoy a greater degree of political and economic autonomy from their "host" regions. In many cases, however, the okrugs remain dependent on their "host" regions and the federal government for revenues to fund the most basic state services.

According to the 1993 Russian constitution, the ten autonomous okrugs have legal status as subjects of the federation.¹⁵ Along with such status comes representation in federal bodies of state authority (the State Duma and the Federation Council) and in any intergovernmental (federal-regional) meetings. In this regard, the okrugs are considered equal to other federal units (republics, regions, territories, etc.).

At the regional level, the okrugs have representation in their particular "host" region's legislative body. Depending on the population size of the okrug, such representation could amount to a significant plurality of seats, or relatively nominal representation.¹⁶ In addition to this formal representation, interaction between representatives of the okrugs and their "host" regions also takes place on a more informal level, and usually at the executive level of government. As in Canada and in other federal states, such informal mechanisms of executive federalism are a common feature of intergovernmental relations in contemporary Russia.

The task of creating an effective legal framework for intergovernmental relations between the okrugs and their "host" regions has been complicated by many factors, not least of which are the political, economic and social instabilities of the transition period. Another source of interregional squabbling is the fact that the economic stakes are very high. Generally speaking, Russia's autonomous okrugs exhibit extremes of wealth and poverty. Some such as the Khanty Mansiiskii, the Yamalo-Nenetskii and Taimyrskii Autonomous Okrugs contain vast deposits of natural resources that are being actively exploited. Others, such as the Evenkiiskii and Chukotskii Autonomous Okrugs, have resource wealth, but it is largely untapped and the okrugs themselves are dependent on federal and "host" region subsidies for much of their revenues.

One of the most problematic aspects of nested federalism in Russia is the institutional instability that arises from the unclear delineation of responsibilities and jurisdictions between the okrugs, their "host" regions and the federal government. Legal instability and a lack of legal transparency are problems that have plagued Russia generally in the 1990s, but this problem is particularly acute in the Russian North because nested federal arrangements involving the autonomous okrugs cover vast stretches of this territory. The legal basis for the relationship between the okrugs and their "host" regions was not clearly spelled out in the 1993 Russian Constitution, and is still evolving as the regions in question adopt treaties and agreements to clarify their relations.¹⁷

These problems have been exacerbated by two other factors: a lack of leadership and guidance from the federal level, and the widespread use of concurrency or joint control to delineate responsibilities between the federal and regional governments in the federal constitution. During the 1990s, the federal government was unable to agree on a federal law outlining the relationship between the okrugs and their "host" regions, and has basically left it up to the regions themselves to institutionalize their relations. The result has been a patchwork quilt of arrangements, with some more defined than others.

Another issue is that many policy areas in the Russian Constitution

fall under the concurrent jurisdiction of the federal and regional governments. While this could be a positive feature of a federal state (encouraging cooperation and collaboration), the transitional and conflictual nature of Russian federalism has raised barriers to such collaboration. The incapacity of the federal government in the 1990s also encouraged regions to take on responsibilities in areas of concurrent jurisdiction. This resulted in the passage of regional legislation that was later challenged when the federal government finally started to get its legislative act in order.

More recent federal reforms by the Putin government have attempted to deal with the problems of intergovernmental conflict, and overlapping and contradictory legislation. The establishment of seven federal "super" districts, each one comprising between ten and fifteen regions, has improved interregional coordination. Each federal district is headed by a presidentially appointed representative who is responsible for coordinating relations among the regions and between the regions and the federal government. The Putin government has also taken steps to clarify the delineation of authority between the regions and the federal government in areas of concurrent jurisdiction through the Kozak Commission. These initiatives move Russia away from the chaotic decentralization that existed in the 1990s. The question, however, is whether they will lead to the creation of a viable and fair federal system, or something more akin to the centralized federal façade that existed in Soviet times.

The Future of Nested Federalism

One of the most striking features of the Russian federal system is the sheer number and complexity of the federal units. The Russian Federation is comprised of 89 federal units, which are further arranged into six different categories. Since 1991, there has been pressure to rationalize this system by reducing the number of federal units. Proposals for reduction have varied substantially, but the most recent proposal has called for the amalgamation of the ten autonomous okrugs into their "host" regions. This proposal has been met with considerable support from a number of federal and regional departments and officials, including the "host" regions and some of the federal district administrations mentioned above.

Within the okrugs themselves, there is substantial support for the idea of amalgamation, especially from the non-Indigenous populations that moved to the North in Soviet times for economic and employment reasons. The decline of the northern economy over the past decade has forced many people to leave the North, with many seeking to relocate to the southern "host" regions. By contrast, the Indigenous peoples of the North, having deep cultural roots in the North, are more reluctant to move. They also do not support the idea of amalgamation because it may take away the last ves-

tiges of the autonomy and status they enjoyed under the autonomous okrug system. Some of these privileges range from the formal (a certain number of seats in the okrug legislature being reserved for members of Indigenous populations) to the more informal relationships that have developed between Indigenous peoples' organizations and okrug-level politicians.

Is the Russian Model Applicable to Canada?

The question of whether the circumstances and experiences of Russia are in any way applicable to Canada and other established democracies is one that has been hotly debated in the academic literature.¹⁸ Despite the misgivings that scholars have about comparing Russia with the West, given their political, economic and historical differences, many similarities between Canada and Russia are clearly apparent. Both are territorially and ethnically diverse northern federations, with significant Indigenous populations. Both face the same challenges of how to accommodate demands for Aboriginal self-government and autonomy within an existing federal model of public government. Russia, arguably, has had more experience with territorially and constitutionally based solutions to the issue of self-government through its system of nested federalism. Nested federalism, however, has not really fulfilled the goal of Aboriginal self-government in Russia. At the same time, Canada too has begun to experiment with territorial solutions to the question of Aboriginal self-government. The creation of Nunavut is one recent example of this trend.

In some respects, the nested federal arrangements currently in place in the Russian Federation offer both a model for accommodating demands for Aboriginal self-government and a caution about the challenges of incorporating self-governing areas into existing territorial arrangements. Nested federalism demonstrates that existing communities in remote areas can be granted autonomy and jurisdiction over certain areas of government within an existing federal unit. Moreover, it suggests that special provisions can be put into place to strengthen Aboriginal representation in regional government.

The idea of nested federalism is not without precedent in Canada. In Nunavik, a region in northern Quebec, a nested federal arrangement has recently been suggested by the Nunavik Commission, which was created in November 1999 following the Political Accord between the Nunavik Party, the Province of Quebec and Canada. The Commission was comprised of representatives of the Nunavik Inuit, the Quebec provincial government and the federal government and was charged with the mandate of proposing a form of government for Nunavik.¹⁹

The Commission held extensive hearings with public and regional organizations in communities across Nunavik and in neighbouring regions, as well as with officials from the provincial and federal govern-

ments, Nunavut and Greenland. In March 2001, it tabled a report in which its principal recommendation was the establishment of a regional government for Nunavik.²⁰ According to the report, this government should consist of the following features:

- non-ethnic, public institutions of government;
- an assembly comprised of fifteen locally elected members (one for each community in Nunavik and one for the Naskapi²¹);
- a government composed of at least five members, including the leader, elected on a Nunavik-wide basis;
- a council of elders composed of fifteen representatives from all the Nunavik communities and the Innu of Chisasibi,²² which would advise the Assembly and act as the guardian of Inuit language and culture;
- a Nunavik court and specific judicial district;
- two intergovernmental commissions consisting of representatives of the federal, Nunavik, and Quebec governments (Nunavik Environmental Commission and the Nunavik Wildlife Commission);
- various intergovernmental and public forums such as a Nunavik Conference (consisting of members of the governments of Nunavik, Quebec and Canada), and a Forum of Aboriginal Peoples of Northern Quebec; and
- representation in the parliaments of Quebec and Canada.

The Commission also recommended that the Nunavik Assembly should have exclusive law-making powers on matters of Inuit language and culture.²³ Concurrent powers over areas such as education, health, the environment, public security, land and resources, economic development and justice would be shared with Quebec and Canada. Furthermore, no development of natural resources could take place in Nunavik without the consent of the Nunavik Assembly. The Nunavik Government would receive shares of rents, royalties, income and sales taxes levied in the region and would be empowered to intervene in the income tax and sales tax rates.²⁴ According to the report, the Government would also be empowered to generate revenue from other sources such as fees, fines and dividends from public services enterprises. Separate block funding agreements with the provincial and federal governments would consolidate the various subsidies provided for Nunavik.²⁵

One of the most important and controversial areas for any region or territory in a nested federal arrangement is intergovernmental relations. Although Nunavik would not be a separate federal unit with constitution-

al protection for its status within the federation, the Nunavik Government would still have to build relationships with other governments, both internally and externally. As noted above, a number of proposed intergovernmental forums, such as the Nunavik Conference, would assist in building these types of relationships. In addition to these specific institutional mechanisms, the Commission Report suggested that the members of the Nunavik Assembly be invited to confer with members of the Quebec National Assembly. The Nunavik Government would also be authorized to develop its own relations with governments in the territorial and Circumpolar Norths. Moreover, a Forum of Aboriginal Peoples of Northern Quebec, consisting of representatives of Inuit, Cree, Naskapi and Innu communities, would discuss mutual concerns both inside and outside the territory of Nunavik.²⁶

Nested Federalism in Russia and Canada

How does the situation facing the proposed region of Nunavik compare to that of the autonomous okrugs within Russia's nested federal model? What lessons can be gleaned from the experience of the autonomous okrugs, especially over the past decade, that could help Nunavik overcome the challenges and problems of building a viable and effective nested federal model?

The proposed political structure of Nunavik closely resembles that of Russia's autonomous okrugs, with a few important exceptions. Like the okrugs, Nunavik would have exclusive law-making powers in areas dealing with language and culture, as well as substantive and effective law-making powers in other important fields such as health and education. Although these powers would not be constitutionally entrenched (as they are in Russia), they do resemble the concurrent jurisdictional status of many areas of social policy in Russia.²⁷ In both cases, concurrency, whether constitutionally entrenched or not, necessitates the development of public policy in consultation with other levels of government.

The Nunavik government and parliament would be comprised of directly elected representatives, thus giving those representatives a democratic mandate, independent of the mandates granted to representatives at the federal and provincial levels of government. This is also the case in the autonomous okrugs where okrug-level politicians are directly elected. Nunavik would also have representation in the federal and provincial parliaments, in much the same way that the okrugs have representation in the "host" region and federal parliaments

Perhaps the most obvious similarity between Nunavik and Russia's autonomous okrugs is that both are examples of ethnically-based regions with public governments. In the case of the okrugs, the ethnic status of the Indigenous peoples has been compromised in recent years by economic development and demographic change. This suggests that mea-

asures should be put into place to protect the rights of Indigenous peoples through special and guaranteed representation in political institutions. The current ethnic composition of Nunavik is actually closer to that of many okrugs when they were first created in the 1930s. The experience of the okrugs, therefore, holds many lessons for Nunavik, especially in terms of the challenges of maintaining traditional cultures and Indigenous control in the face of economic modernization. The post-Soviet experience of the okrugs in areas such as intergovernmental relations and the distribution of powers could also provide guidance to this new region and its nascent governmental institutions.

An important distinction between Nunavik and the okrugs is that the former would not be a constitutionally recognized constituent member of the federation. In Russia, the autonomous okrugs currently possess such constitutional status and the benefits that come with it, such as equal political representation in the Federation Council, the upper chamber of Russia's bicameral parliament. By comparison, Nunavik would not have direct representation in the Canadian Senate. A Nunavik government, however, would participate in regular intergovernmental meetings with the federal and provincial governments, through institutions such as the Nunavik Conference, in order to discuss matters of mutual concern. This form of executive federalism is similar to the types of informal meetings that take place in Russia, both at the federal-regional and inter-regional levels, and is consistent with established Canadian federal practices.

While the development of Nunavik is still in its early stages, it seems that many lessons could be learned from the Russian experience with nested federalism. Over the last ten years, the Russian experience suggests that one of the most important requirements of nested federalism is a solid institutional framework, with a clear demarcation of authority between each level of government. In many cases, such an institutional framework has been sorely underdeveloped, a situation that has, in turn, caused a number of problems and intergovernmental disputes to arise over the last decade.

The broad use of concurrency as a method of demarcating responsibilities between Nunavik, and the governments of Quebec and Canada, although necessary, could also prove problematic. Many areas of government in the Russian Federation fall under the concurrent jurisdiction of the federal government and the regions. During the transition period, this has become yet another source of tension and conflict in the Federation, in large part because mechanisms for cooperation and dispute resolution are so underdeveloped. Concurrent management of important areas of jurisdiction such as health and education will place significant pressure on intergovernmental institutions such as the Nunavik Conference.

One positive aspect of the Nunavik Commission's suggestions is the

emphasis it places on the proposed regional government's control over natural resource development. This is necessary if the people of the region are going to control their economic destiny and, at the same time, preserve the environment in which they live. The Indigenous peoples of northern Russia have historically had very little say in the economic development practices employed in Soviet times and in the post-Soviet period, and this has diminished their ability to protect their culture and lifestyles.

Conclusions

In order to meet the changing circumstances and needs of the communities they represent, federal systems must engage in a constant process of incremental change. In countries such as Canada, new forms of representation such as the creation of a third order of Aboriginal self-government need to become part of the federal matrix. Only then can the federal system achieve its ultimate goal of guaranteeing unity, diversity and stability within a single political structure. The barriers to self-government are immense, especially in the provinces. But, as the case of Nunavik demonstrates, accommodation and cooperation are possible.

For many Canadians, the idea of an autonomous region within a province is a relatively new one. Nested federalism is a concept that has not been a part of our federal lexicon. It is not, however, a new idea in other federal states. The nested federal arrangements that have existed in many parts of the Russian North and the links between these federal arrangements and the concept of Aboriginal autonomy provide a number of insights for Nunavik and similar regions in other parts of Canada. At this very early stage in the constitutional development of Nunavik, the long-term positive and negative experiences of countries like Russia can be particularly useful and could well serve to inform this region's evolution.

About the Author

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Endnotes

1. Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 11.
2. *Amiqqaaluta – Let Us Share: Mapping the Road Toward a Government for Nunavik* (Report of the Nunavik Commission, March 2001), 1.
3. The non-Indigenous population itself is a diverse mix of members of different

- ethnic groups and nationalities, including Russians, Ukrainians, Tatars, Bashkirs and Azeris to name a few.
4. Nikolai Vakhtin, "Native Peoples of the Russian Far North," in *Minority Rights Group (ed.), Polar Peoples: Self-Determination and Development* (London: Minority Rights Publications, 1994), 54.
 5. Ronald Grigor Suny, "Transcaucasia: Cultural Cohesion and Ethnic Revival in a Multinational Society," in Lubomyr Hajda and Mark Beissinger (eds.), *The Nationalities Factor in Soviet Politics and Society* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), 235.
 6. Vakhtin, "Native Peoples," 63.
 7. Gary N. Wilson, "Matryoshka Federalism and the Case of the Khanty Mansiisk Autonomous Okrug," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 17, No. 2 (April-June 2001): 170.
 8. Vakhtin, "Native Peoples," 62.
 9. Vladimir Kryazhkov, "Status avtonomnykh okrugov: evolutsiya i problemy (The status of the autonomous okrugs: evolution and problems)," *Rossiskaya federatsiya* 2 (1996): 50.
 10. Vakhtin, "Native Peoples," 72.
 11. Gail Fondahl, "Siberia: Native Peoples and Newcomers in Collision," in Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras (eds.), *Nations and Politics in the Soviet Successor States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 489.
 12. Greg Poelzer, "Devolution, Constitutional Development, and the Russian North," *Post-Soviet Geography* 36, No. 4 (1995): 209-10; *EastWest Institute Regional Investor*, 1, No. 44 (November 23, 1999).
 13. In the Khanty Mansiiskii Autonomous Okrug in western Siberia, the Indigenous Khant and Mansii populations now comprise approximately 1.4 percent of the total population of the okrug, down from fifteen percent in the late 1950s. Ann Sheehy, "The Ethnodemographic Dimension," in Alastair McCauley, *Soviet Federalism, Nationalism and Economic Decentralisation* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 74.
 14. Now that the centralized economic system has been dismantled, the regions are able to keep a much larger portion of the rents from resource extraction.
 15. The term given to the 89 federal units in the Russian Federation.
 16. In the Tyumen Oblast legislature, the two autonomous okrugs in the oblast (Khanty Mansiiskii and Yamalo-Nenetskii) actually have a majority of the seats, based on the fact that their combined population is larger than that of Tyumen proper (the area of Tyumen Oblast that does not include the okrugs). On the other hand in Krasnoyarskii Krai, the population (and representation of) the krai proper far exceeds that of the two okrugs (Evenkiiskii and Taimyrskii).
 17. The federal constitution also provides little guidance. Article 66 (4) states that "the relations of autonomous areas that form part of a territory or region may be governed by federal law and a treaty between the bodies of state authority of the autonomous area and, respectively, the bodies of state authority of the territory or region."

18. See Philippe C. Schmitter with Terry Lynn Karl, "The Conceptual Travels of Transitologists and Consolidologists: How Far to the East Should They Attempt to Go?" 459-467 and Valerie Bunce, "Should Transitologists Be Grounded?" 468-480, in Archie Brown (ed.), *Contemporary Russian Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
19. The Political Accord between the Nunavik Party, the Government of Quebec and the Government of Canada describes Nunavik as "the part of Quebec located above the 55th parallel of latitude, except for Category 1A lands and 1B lands of the Crees of Great Whale as defined in the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA) and Category 1B-N lands of the Naskapi as defined in the Northeastern Quebec Agreement (NEQA)." See the Political Accord between the Nunavik Party, the government of Quebec, and the federal government for the examination of a form of government in Nunavik through the establishment of a Nunavik Commission, Montreal, November 5, 1999.
20. "Executive Summary of the Nunavik Commission's Report," *Amiqqaaluta*, i-ii.
21. The Naskapi First Nation lives in an area to the south-east of Nunavik but claims traditional lands north of the 55th parallel.
22. The Innu of Chisasibi live in the Cree village of Chisasibi, south of the 55th parallel.
23. Report of the Nunavik Commission, 9.
24. *Ibid.*, 40-44.
25. *Ibid.*, 19-25.
26. *Ibid.*, 45-46.
27. Areas such as education and public health fall under the concurrent jurisdiction of the federal and regional governments in Russia, with the "host" regions of many okrugs also having input into the policy-making process at the okrug level.