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**DOING FRACTIONS:
AN ANALYSIS OF PARTISANSHIP IN POST-SOCIALIST RUSSIA**

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Abstract

Since its extrication from state socialism, Russia is notable for the ways in which coercive and, at times, violent displays of partisanship have divided its state. Drawing on evidence from ethnographic fieldwork and membership lists of civic organizations, the paper analyzes the composition and configuration of political factions in an in-depth case study of a Russian urban area, 1994-1999. The analysis demonstrates partisan antagonisms in the city emerged from a process of polarization that eliminated identification across factions. During the competition for state office, political groups became embroiled in a cycle of conflict setting the stage for partisans to purge themselves of coalition-builders.

Keywords: coalition, faction, community elites, democratization, post-socialism

Introduction

One of the more stable patterns of post-socialist Russian politics has been its instability. While empowering independent groups previously forbidden under state socialism, market-democratic reforms have ignited intense partisan rivalries emerging from the ruins of the party-state and a deteriorating economy. During Russia's "roaring nineties," a sequence of events, ending with the abdication of the country's first popularly-elected head of state, divided the new regime beyond recognition of its socialist predecessor. Disbanded parliamentarians, suspended cabinet members, impeached incumbents and the bodies of murdered civil servants filled the political landscape. So far did the conflicts go beyond what had previously been accepted that the actions of partisans were often characterized as without limits (*bez predela*). Scholars even offered analogies to the Weimar Republic or scenarios of a return to bureaucratic-authoritarian rule to place Russia's divided state in historical context (e.g., Yanov 1999; Hanson and Kopstein 1997).

The striking displays of partisanship in post-socialist Russia are typically attributed to prestige or class antagonisms that accompany large-scale social transformations. In particular, authors have interpreted the political crisis from contradictory perspectives seeing it as a circulation of elites or as the reproduction of the Soviet ruling class in a new institutional environment. Those who understand post-socialist society as part of a global capitalist system have emphasized the rise of capitalist fractions: the political crisis results from efforts of newly propertied managers to achieve their preferred form of government.

Yet, reading the divisions in the Russian state from established class and status roles omits that the state itself was allocating property and positions during the transition. Class and status roles of political groups were not given; partisans directly altered the social relations of production and political institutions in struggles for property and positions.¹ Class and status hierarchies were "in the making," even if parts were reproduced from a preceding era or imitated from so-called designer-capitalist models exported to the region (Eyal, Szelenyi and Townsley 1998, chapter 5).² Although many aspects of the post-socialist Russian transition are best understood through class and status lenses, understanding specifically why the Russian state became so divided might be more directly observable.

The puzzle of Russia's divided state is this: contrary to accounts that see these high-stakes battles as a legacy of state socialist politics or as an expansion of the polity, partisan groups had been affiliated with one another at the onset of the transition. During a prolonged extrication from state socialism, political brokers appeared espousing pragmatic solutions to mollify the antagonisms that initially split the polity between reform and communist blocs. In a hothouse of pluralism that accompanied the early fanfare of transition, these brokers were able to hold together coalitions between partisan groups. Although political groups hoarded opportunities and resources tied to the state, alliances kept in check the patronage that had been incubating for so long underneath the party-state.

¹ This reversal of causality is similar to Lachmann's (2000, pp. 8-14) condensed reading of Europe's transition to capitalism. Lachmann argues that elite conflict and its denouement were prior to the rise or fall of class fractions. This interpretation does not deny the existence of class fractions, rather it claims that Marxist interpretations put the cart before the horse.

² Role ambiguity is especially visible in the case of the Russian state, whose extrication from state socialism did not clearly end with the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Arguably, extrication extended until the fall of 1993, when the old parliamentary soviets were bombed in the nation's capital and then dissolved in most provinces.

A process of polarization eventually eliminated identification across partisan groups.³ Fueled by a downwardly spiraling economy and fiscal crises due to successive wars in the Caucasus, stress and strain encircled social relations between political groups. During the competition for state offices, partisans were unable to see potential allies in their rivals' enemies; partisans used viable collaborators as a target to achieve parity with rivals. This pattern of relationships splintered previously affiliated partisan groups into hostile "clans."⁴

The resolution to this cycle of conflict was that brokers lost their ability to hold coalitions together. Partisan members drove out persons with split loyalties, who united otherwise disconnected political groups. Partisan groups became segmented from one another and united internally with heterogeneous status and class compositions. Although this shift in relations was extremely important to the cohesion of partisan groups, it removed external social pressure from other members of the polity to cooperate. No longer constrained by the moderated middle, partisan groups adopted a "winner-takes-all" strategy to democratic politics. As in other transitional societies, the lack of accountability to other polity members unhinged partisan groups fostering mutual distrust and the use of coercive political technologies (O'Donnell 1994; Stark and Bruszt 1998, chapter 7).

The paper addresses the social organization of conflict in an urban area, Volchansk (a pseudonym). Locality rather than the national state is the relevant unit of analysis during Russia's circuitous transition.⁵ The truism "all politics is local" is evident in this fragmented terrain. Although it is possible to trace the origin of the conflicts to national and, even, global affairs, their unfolding has taken on a markedly local character in Russia. Localism was so far-reaching that organizations and enterprises replaced the national tender with various kinds of currency surrogates as the accepted medium of exchange for most economic transactions.⁶ Law enforcement fractured into protection rackets that resolved disputes and brought justice to clients.⁷ Opposition groups openly resisted paying taxes and making debt payments to rivals occupying a different piece of the state in efforts to get concessions for their group. The devolution of these responsibilities away from centralized authority invigorated localist identities with a force that stretches the notions of a national market and state.

In the following section, an introduction to the case study is provided with information about the data and methods used in the analysis. Next, alternative explanations to partisanship will be reviewed and empirically examined using materials from the case study. The third section explores the pattern of relationships entangled in the city's coalitional structure. Specifically, it examines shifts in the composition and configuration of partisan groups to determine whether they reveal a distinct pattern. The relationships display the political groups embroiled in a cycle of conflict that vacated the middle of the coalitional structure. Finally, the paper draws inferences from the case study for those studying the relationship between social structure and transforming states.

³ Coleman (1957) offers a depiction of polarization in communities. For a full discussion of this process in contentious politics, see McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2001, chapter 10).

⁴ In Russian the word, klan, describes the exclusionary character of contemporary Russian political groups even though they are not based on family relations. See Afanasev (1996) for a formulation and Gaman-Golutvina (1998, pp. 364-65) for a critique.

⁵ For the importance of localities to post-socialist transitions, see Grabher and Stark (1997).

⁶ Woodruff (1999) and Gaddy and Ickes (1998) provide vivid accounts of disunity in Russian monetary policy.

⁷ Varese (1994) and Volkov (1999) analyze the social bases and evolution of organized crime in Russia.

The Coalitional Structure of the Local Elite

Volchansk has a population of some 300,000 and is situated on a river a few hundred miles from Moscow. The population is ethnically homogeneous with a small number of non-Russians. The city is the administrative and commercial center of an agrarian region. Both the regional and city organs of political power are located within the city limits. Volchansk also houses a number of large and medium-sized enterprises that produces primarily for the military-industrial complex and agricultural markets. Without any profitable resource-extracting industries, the city and its surrounding townships have not played a central role in contemporary Russia's political economy. Aside from war-torn regions in the Caucasuses, economic indicators rank the region among Russia's poorest. The impact of the economic depression on the following local political structures can not be overestimated.

The research used a positional approach to sample the city's political elite.⁸ The criterion for being a member of the local political elite is occupying a legislative or an executive office in the city between 1994 and 1999. In total, there are 62 relevant positions. The positions make up the top official state jobs in the city excluding the judicial branch. So, on the city level, this is the office of mayor, the mayor's cabinet and seats in the city parliament. The regional level consists of the office of governor, the governor's cabinet and seats in the regional parliament. Finally, the position of presidential representative and local seats in the national parliament make up the positions from the federal level.

Information about the personnel shifts in these positions was gathered from newspapers and other public sources. The initial state of the population is the persons in these state offices after the founding democratic elections. The ending state is the persons in state offices after the second round of democratic elections. Many positions have irregular rounds of elections and appointments that were held before the scheduled second round of elections.

In all, 120 persons met this criterion. A research team conducted semi-structured interviews with around half of these people. Refusals and non-responses to interview invitations were common. The interviews are skewed against neutrals and independents because accepted invitations were most often mediated through local civic organizations. The topics of the interviews were: a) professional and personal biography, b) relationships with superiors and subordinates within work or civic organization and c) leisure/cultural activities. Fierce antagonisms among partisans made questions concerning election campaigns, policy preferences and opposition too politicized for an explicit topic of discussion. But, since their professional and personal lives were intimately tied with the dramatic events that occurred over the last decade, these topics inevitably arose.

From this population of 120 persons, the analysis constructed one type of 'civic relation' reflecting the civic affiliations of the persons in state offices. The civic organizations take on four different forms: national political parties, local political movements, humanitarian organizations and professional associations. Civic organizational membership lists were acquired from the city's official registry. Two-fifths of the sample do not have a civic affiliation at all. Non-partisanship is a status that differs from partisanship. Sometimes, administrators claim to work solely for the state and wear their non-partisanship as a badge of neutrality. Other times, persons running for elected office display their independence by campaigning without the support of partisan groups.

Table 1 shows the civic memberships of city's political elite excluding neutrals. Using Breiger's (1974) method to analyze dual mode networks, the analysis focuses on the ties between persons.

⁸ A reputational approach to sampling the community elite was abandoned when respondents accused the research team of being their rivals' co-conspirators or representatives of state security agencies. For more on the advantages and disadvantages of the two approaches, see Laumann and Pappi (1976).

A tie means that two persons were affiliated with the same civic organization. Ties are non-directional and multiple because it is possible to be a member of more than one civic organization. The factions were identified using a tabu search method which finds clique-like structures in the matrix.⁹ Does this algorithm accurately recover the faction memberships? A basic knowledge of the field of local politics would confirm the partition.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

The first and largest faction, the nomenklatura establishment, held top positions in the region during state socialism. After being abruptly kicked out of these positions in the fall of 1991, members found themselves in limbo for only a short period of time. Extraordinary sessions and new committees were organized to place the fallen bosses in the new field of politics. This faction tends to have strong nationalistic and rural perspectives. As inheritors of a routinized successor organization to the Communist Party, the faction had ready-made bureaus and thousands of supporters in rural townships and counties. Support for the nomenklatura establishment in the rural parts of the region contrasts sharply with the strength of other factions in the capital city.

The next subgroup, the informals, initially split the local political field when it set up a chapter of a human rights organization - the earliest officially sanctioned independent organization in the Soviet Union. During the coup attempt by communist hard-liners in Moscow, the informals was the only group in the city that publicly opposed the takeover. Once the democratic opposition was installed as the central government of the new regime, it appointed the charismatic leader of the informals as mayor of the city. Under his stewardship, the mayor's office resembled an academic department with nearly every vice-mayor having written a graduate thesis on modern Russian or Soviet history. The informals tend to have strong social-democratic and urban perspectives.

Members of the final faction, the pragmatists, were either thrown out of or left other factions after a split in the polity became so wide that it was increasingly difficult to solve problems concerning the welfare of the region. Centered on a local chamber of commerce, the pragmatists boast, among others, an alliance between the enterprise directorate and former law-enforcement agents. They are brokers between the state and the underworld of racketeering. The ideology of the pragmatists changes with each shift in national politics because members are persons of action, who do not subscribe to high-falutin principles, such as liberalism or socialism. "Solving problems," "making deals" and "getting things done" are code phrases for an ethos of pragmatism that refuses to let ideology get in the way of business.

The partisanship the city witnessed is remarkable. Politicians and administrators were regularly threatened or physically attacked, sometimes fatally, by opponents for taking up causes that were in opposition to their group. The absence of a 'live and let live' ethos meant that opposition groups were not above using unorthodox political technologies to remove rivals from their path. As a prominent enterprise manager complains in an interview,

Dirty technologies, unfortunately, have a place in the city's politics. Many of these non-profit organizations are like clubs, where members must prove their loyalty to the group.

So offensive were the verbal and physical attacks that victims formed social movements with names, such as Honor and Integrity, Hope, and For the Rebirth of Volchansk, designed to restore civility to local political life and to remind participants that they were members of the same community.

⁹ Faction expresses the contentious nature of transitional politics. Similar concepts that might characterize these networks of trust, such as quasi-groups (Mayer 1966) or action-sets (Boissevain 1974), do not fully capture the oppositional valences of transitional politics (cf. Laumann and Marsden 1979).

Other less physically threatening displays of partisanship were also widespread. Tax resistance became so orchestrated and commonplace that local tax collectors regularly revealed the names of enterprises that had arrears in newspapers as a shaming ritual. In less public displays of resistance, tax arrears to rival factions occupying a piece of the state were simply transferred to fictitious organizations with registration numbers and reams of official paperwork. Lists of registration numbers from bogus organizations were also publicized in newspapers to alert citizens of deceptive partners.

The conflict partisan groups entered is reflected in the coalitional structure presented in Table 1. Only a few persons within the civic affiliation network bridge outside their faction; the between-group affiliations make up less than ten percent of the ties in the coalitional structure. These dense internal connections and few bridges conform to a 'multiple causus' model of community power identified by Breiger (1990, pp. 109-112). But, as we shall see, these groups were at one time affiliated with one another and then splintered in a cycle of conflict.

Attributional Analyses of Partisanship

Before moving into the relationships implicated in the coalitional structure, the paper asks, are these political groups in fact structured along social prestige or occupational lines? If they are, then partisanship would be a superstructural manifestation of status or class antagonisms. These hypotheses are prevalent in the literature on Russia's transition. The main protagonist in such accounts might be characterized as 'oligarchy' in its managerial and Marxist forms. In most analyses, the two variants are not mutually exclusive relying instead upon both depending on which political group is in question. For present purposes, the conflicting logic of status and class arguments is treated as analytically distinct.

The relative unimportance of status and class solidarity to the factions is reflected in members' own statements about political action. As one prominent member of the informals explains,

People often say that we united like-minded persons. But no small task that would be. We were so different that to unite us on some kind of basis would seem impossible... We realized the necessity of unifying the young and the old, the communists and the anti-communists, the believers and the atheists, the workers and the specialists.

One way to see whether this is more than rhetorical flourish is to analyze the composition of the factions.

For analysts abiding to a Marxist framework, partisanship in Russia is a product of alterations in the social relations of production that encourage capitalism.¹⁰ So, for example, Burawoy and Krotov (1993, p. 49) argue that the state became divided because economic reforms failed. In this conception, groups represented in the state are segmented by their position in the social relations of production, such as managers of energy conglomerates, industrial proletariat and so on. Whereas social groups under state socialism were structured by positions and vertical dominance, they are now structured by assets and horizontal interdependence resembling economic classes (Burawoy 2001, p. 1113). Once liberal economic reforms begin, "the common interest which bound together different groups within the enterprises against the central planning apparatus evaporates and in its stead different fractions of management enter into battle over economic strategies [italics in original]" (Burawoy and Krotov 1993, p. 53). Antagonisms that divided the state thus arise from efforts of competing fractions of the capitalist class to achieve their preferred form of government.

[Insert Tables 2 and 2a about here]

¹⁰ For the foundation of a Marxist interpretation of politics, see Marx (1986).

Tables 2 and 2a present distributional data for the class hypothesis. The class argument does not hold up to scrutiny. There are no statistically significant differences in the occupational make-up among the factions. Political groups were not homogenized by position in the social relations of production. Instead, the factions have heterogeneous occupational compositions. The only difference is between partisans and neutrals; neutrals have more representatives of the enterprise directorate than partisans. These results do not advance arguments that see political divisions in Russia as a war among managerial fractions of the capitalist class.

Similar to a Marxist hypothesis is the argument that political groups are structured along status lines. Prestige arguments depart from a Marxist perspective by moving from the economic to the political realm. Two variants of a prestige argument are prevalent in the literature on Russia's transition echoing the ideas of Pareto (1939) and Mosca (1968). Circulation theses argue that Russian political groups are structured along old and new elites. So, for instance, Lane and Ross (1999, p.149) assert that "a circulation of elites has taken place in certain crucial sectors of the political and economic elite structure and that the old 'administrative class' is being replaced by an ascendant 'acquisition class.'" Despite its mixing with a class version, the core of this prestige argument is that generational differences exist in which a young elite with new skills (the 'foxes') replaces an older, more conservative elite (the 'lions'). The rising elite is characterized by its ability for manipulation and intrigue, whereas stability and order distinguish the old elite.

[Insert Tables 3 and 3a about here]

Tables 3 and 3a present the results for the circulation argument. Partisanship in the city was not a battle of the 'foxes' against the 'lions.' Table 3a shows that there are not any statistically significant differences in mobility positions among the factions. The factions have similar profiles of new recruits, exiters, movers and stayers; they are not split along lines of new, rising factions and old, descending ones. Even if we look at the age of faction members (results not shown), rather than mobility position, the factions do not reflect generational differences. The only significant difference in both mobility position and age is between partisans and neutrals. Neutrals are more interchangeable and younger than partisans.

Another prestige argument with roots in Mosca is the idea that partisanship in Russia emerges from positions within a social hierarchy, resembling its socialist predecessor, that separates the rulers from the ruled. So, for instance, Hanley, Yershova and Anderson (1995, p. 666) argue that "[enterprise] directors and their deputies have also penetrated into the upper reaches of the state apparatus, occupying almost 40 percent of the elite positions in the state bureaucracy. As a group, therefore, the old management is well positioned to direct economic reforms in a manner that conforms to their interests." In this conception, political groups are structured by the status of the offices they hold with a dominant fraction commanding positions over subordinate fractions. Closure at the top of this social hierarchy reproduces the old socialist party-state, where the nomenklatura had monopolized high status positions, "Institutional changes have not altered the typical routes of entry into the elite. The same positions that operated as launching pads into the elite continue to perform the same function today" (Hanley, Yershova and Anderson 1995, p. 641).

[Insert Tables 4 and 4a about here]

The evidence for the ruling class argument is lacking. There are no differences in status among the factions. Were the ruling class argument true, one would expect a single faction monopolizing high status positions over subordinate factions. Instead, there are three factions with relatively equal distributions of status. Moreover, neutrals have a similar status profile to two of the factions. The only statistically significant difference is between neutrals and the nomenklatura establishment. The city's political structure did not resemble its Soviet predecessor with a dominate fraction commanding elite positions over subordinate fractions.

Interpreting partisanship in the city as a superstructural manifestation of status or class antagonisms makes it unintelligible. Political groups are similar along occupational and status categories. Overall, social categories exogenous to the coalitional structure provide little indication of its striking segmentation. The burden of the next section then is to display how social relationships implicated in the coalitional structure divided the factions.

Polarization: From Coalition to Retrenchment

This section analyzes political succession to understand the antagonisms that divided the city. Research on political conflict typically studies specific issue areas or policies, such as a school's construction or water pollution, to understand the social organization of opposition. According to this view, partisan antagonisms revolve around issues that significantly impact political affairs.¹¹ The paper's point of departure is Schumpeter's conception of democratic politics (1950, pp. 269-283). In this interpretation, the stances of partisans on issues are not the ultimate motives in politics. Rather, policy and the stated principles are derivatives of group struggles for the organs of political power. In the parlance of post-socialist Russian politics, having a roof (*krysha*) over your head makes a big difference to the survival of your group.

Studying sequences of group struggles for political office has the added advantage of embedding the concept of transition in the micro-foundations of conflict. The initial fanfare of post-socialist transition theories has come under fire for its commitment to either some hypothesized future or heavily path dependent origins.¹² By linking the past to the future, sequential analysis provides a tonic to histrionic theorizing about genesis and legacy. Instead of rupture and past dependence, we see groups refashioning themselves in a process tailored to the realities of day-to-day affairs. As we shall see, rather than being the backdrop to partisanship, sequences of historical events altered the configuration of the factions.

By definition, political succession involves someone who occupies an office, but is eliminated through an end of a term, promotion, retirement or death and someone who fills this vacancy through legitimate means. Successions can take on many different forms. Successions can be transfers of power to anointed heirs as is typical of regimes based on lineage. Or the transfers can be to opposing camps as is expressed most precisely in regimes plagued by intrigue. This section's focus on succession is more modest than characterizing the city's politics under such rubrics. For present purposes, succession signals to observers a faction's solidarity and its relationship to other factions.

Just how sudden and coercive political succession became in the city is remarkable. During the transition, offices saw a rapid-fire succession of incumbents. To give some substance to the conceptual issues and quantitative analysis at hand, consider the revolving door to the highest profile federal office in the city, the presidential representative.

The informals successfully installed their candidate, Feodor Popov, as its first occupant days after the failed coup attempt by communist hard-liners in Moscow. While his co-faction members in the city were implementing liberal economic reforms, Popov entered an alliance with his rivals, who opposed the radicalism of the reform process. Popov voluntarily resigned from the position citing an inability to support figures from within his faction. Anatoly Kuznetsov, a political

¹¹ Such a focus also allows analysts to determine the "winners" and "losers" of conflict. Although it reached a stalemate, the debate between pluralists and power elite theorists about "Who governs?" is case in point. See Hunter (1953), Dahl (1961) and Domhoff (1978) for the exchanges.

¹² For critiques of transition theories, see Stark (1992) and Nelson, Tilly and Walker (1998).

neutral, was a compromise figure appointed as Popov's successor to mollify conflicts between the informals and their rivals. Immediately after the nomenklatura establishment won a majority of seats in local parliaments, Kuznetsov was summarily fired for inactivity during election campaigns.

The position's third incumbent, Valery Smirnoff, was simultaneously the city's mayor and the young, charismatic leader of the informals. Smirnoff's tenure however lasted less than a year because he died in unclear circumstances while occupying the position. Alexander Tikhonov, the recently ousted interim governor, was recruited next to the position from the pragmatists. Tikhonov held the job until he returned to the governor's seat defeating its incumbent in elections. The position's final occupant, Nikolai Beloglazov, was brought in as an heir to Tikhonov, whose faction now enjoyed control over the regional administration and support from the presidential administration. Beloglazov's tenure however lasted only a couple of months because the position was terminated due to a re-organization of the federal government.

However unstable and chaotic they may appear, the successions follow a distinct social pattern. In each transfer of power, relationships are implicated that reveal the relative distance of the incumbent to its successor. Should an incumbent be forced out of office by a rival, for example, observers might infer that the incumbent's faction is a less cohesive than its successor's. Other times, observers interpret a rapid-fire succession of incumbents as an indication of numerous and conflicting subgroups. Yet, if each successive incumbent is a member of the same faction, the carousel of opportunity may be evidence of internal coordination rather than internecine fights characteristic of disunity.

By this logic, partisanship should be sensitive to the range of relationships in the successions. Table 5 presents the factions defined by their incumbent-successor relationships. A definition was imposed on the successions to make them meaningful. The 'ego' category refers to incumbents who were re-elected or re-appointed after a change in their superiors. Re-election and re-appointment are not two person successions, even if the seats are hotly contested. The ego category thus reflects the ability of incumbents to reproduce themselves after a challenge from outside.

[Insert Table 5 about here]

The first striking feature of the table is that less than a fifth of incumbents were re-elected or re-appointed to their offices. Reproduction is difficult to achieve in this round of successions; positions slip easily from incumbents' hands. Moreover, the advantage of incumbency does not strictly follow from being partisan or not. Although two factions are able get their members re-elected or re-appointed, the informals do not have a significant number of members reproducing just like neutrals. Overall, the advantage of incumbency is surprisingly small.

The most interesting aspect of the successions is found in the off-diagonal cells of Table 5. Here we see the factions kicking each other out of office. The factions form a carousel of succession. Each loss that a faction incurs from one faction is responded in turn to another. The factions do not seek parity against their successors but against their successors' successors. In this revolving door to state offices, an enemy of an enemy is not a friend. One set of rivals takes over the positions from a faction, who in turn attempts to expand its dwindling turf in the field of politics by attacking another set of rivals. The only pressure valve in this viscous cycle are neutrals succeeding the informals. The informals, who are the one faction unable to have its members re-elected or re-appointed, are also the only faction with a significant number of neutrals replacing their ranks.

This sudden and coerced movement is buttressed by statements from faction members that indicate political groups were in a state of dynamic equilibrium. As one member of the informals argues,

The factions are characterized by, not surprisingly, political equilibrium. On one side, the apparatus is not so all-powerful and forced to act with an eye to the opposition and to the democrats. On the other, neither the democrats nor the opposition themselves are so well organized to decisively influence the affairs of the city.

Manufacturing consent among a group of elite insiders is not how community affairs operated. As the successions reveal, the factions were keenly aware of rivals from the wounds they had inflicted upon one another.

Even if the advantage of incumbency is surprisingly small and rivals are kicking incumbents out of office, the factions can create heirs. The ability to create heirs is especially important during periods of instability and conflict. A year before he died in unclear circumstances, the mayor of the city was asked whether he had a successor to replace him should a new configuration of politics arise,

Yes, I do. I am quite serious about questions concerning personnel shifts and removals. The situation is very complex and changes quite rapidly requiring extraordinary actions. It may turn out that I am forced to leave. But I don't want to give out the name of my successor because in sharp political conflict people defend themselves by shooting rivals even on the steps to power. I want to avoid them.

After the mayor's untimely death, the anointed heir appeared and successfully transferred the position to their faction.

Successors from within the same faction are in the diagonal cells of Table 5. As is clear, the factions were able to create heirs suggesting the existence of social solidarity. Replacing wayward members, deceased incumbents and rising new leaders at a minimum requires the faction to coordinate its personnel. The strongest faction organizationally, the nomenklatura establishment, was the best at transferring power to its members, while the two weaker factions were less so. The large number of neutral-to-neutral successions is a special case. Neutrals are not members of a faction, so they can not really have heirs; there is no direct social link to make a neutral-to-neutral succession intelligible as an in-group succession. By this strict definition, neutrals succeeded by other neutrals are between rivals. But, by any definition, the large number of neutral-to-neutral successions makes clear that neutrals form a separate vector of politics from partisans.

The role structure of these relationships, shown in Figure 1, displays a cycle of conflict. The ring-like image might be interpreted as a form of generalized exchange among the factions. However, except for reflexive ties, the successions do not represent support or esteem. The directed ties among factions are difficult to interpret as a basis of solidarity in the way that marriage relations among moieties might. Instead, the figure show the factions spinning in a revolving door to centers of power.

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

Given this cycle of conflict displayed in the faction relationships, does the coalitional structure display a shift towards retrenchment? The fact that factions succeed their successors' successors suggests that they were unable to form coalitions and pacts with other members in the coalitional structure. After all, if the factions are enemies with one another, then friends can only be members loyal to the faction.

One instance of this shift towards retrenchment occurred while the nomenklatura establishment occupied the regional administration. In an interview, a faction member explained his close associate's removal from office,

Some people were terrified to hear that [he] entered the anti-people's faction, particularly supporters of the communist and agrarian party. But, this is not the case. He says that he was surprised that his name was included in the list of faction members, when he read it in the newspaper. But, at the end of the day, it doesn't matter which faction you belong to, what's important is the candidate's intention so that he can realize progressive projects while in high office.

In fact, it did make a big difference to which faction he belonged. Having your name appear with an opposing camp is political suicide. A member loyal to the faction was appointed as his successor.

One way to begin to determine whether this is more than just an isolated case is to map out the network positions of incumbents and successors in the coalitional structure to confirm whether there are differences in their pathways. Define a 'bridger' as persons with split loyalties. Then, call persons 'partisan' if they have in-faction ties only. Table 6 presents the distributional differences in the successions.

[Insert Table 6 about here]

The overall structure of the successions reveal that bridgers were weak in comparison to partisans and neutrals during the transition. Bridgers dwindle to less than half of their original numbers by the end of the successions. By contrast, partisans and neutrals increase their numbers after the competition for state offices. But, who succeeds the bridgers? Partisans rather than neutrals weeded out coalition builders in the organs of political power. Moreover, partisans are the only network position capable of reproduction. Both bridgers and neutrals were unable to get re-elected or re-appointed in significant numbers.

Figure 2 starkly reveals the shift towards retrenchment in the coalitional structure from incumbents to successors. As the graphical representations of the coalitional structure make clear, incumbents have much less segmented relations than do their successors. In other words, those who won offices during the transition were more cohesive and had fewer coalitions than their predecessors. For successors, if two persons, who bridge the factions together, were taken out of the network, the coalitional structure would be entirely segmented.

[Insert Figure 2 about here]

Partisanship in the city then was a product of a cycle of conflict that faction members placed on one another. First, the factions attacked their enemy's enemy making them unable to see potential allies or partners in members outside their own faction. Second, the conflicts rival factions entered vacated the middle of the coalitional structure. Those who stood between warring factions were removed from office because their loyalty to the group was not transparent. The liquidation of coalition builders rewarded loyal members, who dug defenses in a process of retrenchment. Now, the paper turns to what the implications of the case study are for understanding the relationship between social structure and transitional polities.

Between State Socialism and Capitalism

Although this analysis comes from a circumscribed time and place, its results are suggestive. First, status and class solidarity had little direct connection to the divisions within the state during the transition. Second, the segmentation of political groups emerged from a cycle of conflict that made it difficult to see other members of the polity as coalition partners or allies. While partisan

groups were embroiled in conflict, those who had split loyalties were weeded out by loyal members because their commitment was not transparent.

These results are consonant with the argument that divisions in the post-socialist Russian state reflect a process of polarization that eliminated identification across factions. Parochialism, while extremely important to the internal cohesion of the factions, eliminated social pressure from other members of the polity to cooperate. This localism unhinged political groups from one another fostering mistrust and the use of coercive political technologies to remove rivals from their path.

But, what do these results suggest for Russia's transition or, for that matter, other transitional societies? Two propositions follow that sensitize us to the dynamics of the transition. One concerns the social organization of post-socialist politics and the second relates, more specifically, to the role of mediators.

Since extrication from state socialism, factions resemble patronage groups rather than representatives of classes that operate according their position in a modern capitalist hierarchy.

Does the paper's finding that class solidarity was unimportant to the formation of partisan groups mean that material interest plays no role in transitional politics? Given Russia's economic depression, the actions of partisan groups in the city were certainly borne of necessity. Many of the assassinations, removals and resistances against rivals revolved around the allocation of scarce resources (e.g., access to licensing privileges, tax immunity, social welfare benefits). But, to speak of coordinated capitalist classes operating in the Russian state is premature because the political field was in a state of perpetual change.¹³ Paying off pretenders to the throne or transitional figures is a risky enterprise for managers trying to extract resources for more than a narrow window of opportunity. Moreover, industrial, agrarian and, to a lesser degree, cultural workers had almost completely disengaged from institutionalized politics watching the endless fights for property and positions with a combination of annoyance and resignation.

Instead, factions resemble patronage groups with heterogeneous occupational compositions and segmented relations. Each faction possesses its own financial-economic base, mass communication outlet, protection group, patron occupying high office and restricted set of loyal clients receiving material and social welfare. This kind of vertical integration shares little with coordinated class politics. As we saw in the case study, cooperative relationships across the factions, even among those of similar status or occupational category, were almost non-existent. Highly segmented relations among political groups with no solidarity among persons of similar status or occupational profile often accompany patron-client groups (Eisenstadt and Roniger 1980).

This does not eliminate the historical possibility that relationships between the state and classes will emerge to resemble modern industrial capitalism. Indeed, since the abdication of Russia's first popularly-elected head of state, many of the tell-tale signs of class politics are on the rise. The new central government has begun to centralize under its auspices or through surrogates profitable resource-extracting industries, such as electricity, gas and oil conglomerates. Previously, these engines of the Russian economy were traded among competing factions in high-

¹³ As Russians say, money loves quiet, calm places. Witness the astonishing capital flight from Russia to off-shore zones and to Western bank accounts. Or for that matter, the small amount of foreign investment in Russia relative to its western neighbors and even to communist China. Although the lack of capital investment in Russia is often attributed to dishonest business practices, such valuations overlook shifts in the so-called the rules of the game that accompany each successive team of governmental agents. In general, the more stable the politics, the more likely a chorus of domestic and international investors will sing the praises of opportunities available.

stakes parlor games of primitive accumulation. The rise and fall of these patrons and their entourages is being replaced by relatively bureaucratized and centralized efforts of resource extraction.

Persons, who have split loyalties in disintegrating states, do not emerge as agents of unification.

The paper's finding that bridgers were weeded out by loyal partisans raises questions concerning the place of brokers in transitional politics.¹⁴ We often place special importance on persons who occupy a brokerage position in political networks. In fact, scholars argue that brokers, who carry information across boundaries, defines the social role of leader (Burt 1999). Exploring the relationship between structure and influence has enlightened comparative historical research on state building in the annals of history and the contexts of contemporary politics. This growing body of literature is cataloging a durable relationship between the capacity of states and the ability of state agents to bring together previously disconnected groups (e.g., Padgett and Ansell 1993; Barkey 1994).

The results from this case study are consonant with interpretations that claim state centralization is affected through these brokerage points. In Russia's divided state, those who stood between rival groups were sanctioned by members loyal to the faction. For persons with split loyalties, the question "Who are you?" was difficult to answer. The ambiguity aroused suspicion from loyal members while they were policing boundaries. Just because brokers were eliminated from participation does not mean, of course, that there were no leaders. Leaders were not between, but on top of groups; they emerged from within groups rather from their edges.

The fact that brokers were unable to unite partisan groups during the transition does not condemn the Russian state to perpetual division. If history is any indication, then quite the opposite is true. After protracted periods of internal hostility and division, new or reformed groups and leaders often appear in the wide-open space to stop the conflict from erupting into full-scale civil war. The rise of a vertical police state or a negotiated and consensual transition to state centralization are two distinct paths likely to emerge from the fractured field of politics that the paper has analyzed. In such scenarios, brokers in the coalitional structure will most likely ratchet the state towards centralization and integration.

Conclusion

The events that divided the Russian state during the 1990s pose a challenge for comparative sociology in which the agents that coordinated the transition must be explained. Marxists and elite theorists remain deeply split about who the protagonists of Russia's circuitous transition are. The paper presents one way of understanding these dramatic events through the process of polarization and the concept of coalition. From an historical perspective, sequences of group struggles for state office altered the relationships of partisans. A cycle of conflict resulted in the reconfiguration rather than expansion or renewal of the polity: previously affiliated partisans polarized into antagonistic clans. From a relational perspective, however, the rise and fall of state agents and their entourages depended on position in a coalitional structure. With whom persons and groups choose to affiliate affected their ability to prevail over rivals and incumbents in the organs of political power. Exclusion and patronage overpowered class and prestige solidarities as a way to organize groups in the polity. Studying the micro-foundations of conflict offers one

¹⁴ This discussion omits vertical brokerage or clientelism - that is, mediation between the center and periphery, between the state and local populations or between positions in other hierarchical structures. Brokers in such contexts occupy a patron/client role that is distinct from mediators between rivals. See Gould (1989) for a clear exposition of the differences between horizontal and vertical brokerage.

route towards bridging the gap between the built-in teleology of transition theories and the realities facing the protagonists of this extraordinary societal transformation.

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Table 1 Coalitional Structure of the Local Political Elite

Civic Organization	Nomenklatura		Informals		Pragmatists		Total
	Within Group Ties	Between Group Ties	Within Group Ties	Between Group Ties	Within Group Ties	Between Group Ties	
	Professional associations	2	4	13	10	15	
Humanitarian organizations	4	4	26	4	1	0	39
Local political movements	172	16	216	8	67	30	509
National political parties	400	0	22	0	26	0	448
Total	578	24	277	28	109	36	1046

The faction partition was derived from all four categories of civic organizations. Actual civic organizational forms in Russia are more numerous. See Kodin (1998) for their legal foundations. To minimize empty cells, organizational forms were collapsed into the following categories.

'Professional associations' includes associations of doctors, farmers, entrepreneurs, industrialists, bankers and builders. This category also includes a chamber of commerce.

'Humanitarian organizations' includes consumer, legal defense, religious and human-rights organizations.

'Local political movements' includes decentralized political organizations and social movements in which citizens must be invited by local members to join.

'National political parties' includes hierarchical political organizations headquartered in the nation's capital. Citizens are restricted by law from joining more than one party.

Table 2 Faction Distributions of Occupations

Occupation	Faction Membership				Total
	Nomenklatura	Informals	Pragmatists	Neutrals	
Industrial/construction managers	6	3	3	16	28
Transportation/retail managers	1	4	2	4	11
Agrarian managers	4	1	6	11	22
Intelligentsia	12	9	3	17	41
Military cadres	4	2	3	0	9
Skilled/semi-skilled workers	6	1	1	1	9
Total	33	20	20	47	120

Occupation was determined by examining a person's job title at the time of entry into the set of relevant positions. If persons listed other state offices for job titles, including those outside the set of relevant positions, occupations were coded from employment histories. Coding such persons in a 'state office' category collapses position in the social relations of production. So, for example, coding one person who listed Deputy Governor of Agrarian Questions in a 'state office' category obscures the fact that the person was the chair of a collective farm. In doing so, it would place together representatives of different class positions. Occupational coding followed International Standard Classification of Occupations: ISCO-88 (Geneva: International Labour Office 1990). To minimize empty cells, codes were then collapsed into the following categories.

'Industrial/construction managers' includes managers of manufacturing and construction firms.

'Transportation/retail managers' has managers of oil and natural gas transportation firms, as well as, retail and wholesale firms.

'Agrarian managers' includes managers of collective farms and agricultural firms.

'Intelligentsia' has doctors, teachers, researchers, lawyers, journalists, engineers and social workers.

'Military cadres' contains recently discharged or reserve members of the armed forces and state security services.

'Skilled/semi-skilled workers' includes machinists, a locksmith, agricultural workers, factory workers and the unemployed.

Table 2a Chi-Square Tests of Distributional Difference in Occupation

	χ^2	<i>p</i>
Nomenklatura vs. Informals	6.467	0.289
Nomenklatura vs. Pragmatists	7.045	0.240
Informals vs. Pragmatists	7.353	0.204
Nomenklatura vs. Neutrals	15.514	0.008
Informals vs. Neutrals	11.540	0.041
Pragmatists vs. Neutrals	12.073	0.026

Table 3 Faction Distributions of Mobility Position

Mobility Position	Faction Membership				Total
	Nomenklatura	Informals	Pragmatists	Neutrals	
New Recruits	12	8	10	30	60
Exiters	17	14	8	23	62
Movers	11	7 ^a	5 ^a	2	25
Stayers	10	4	5	2	21
Total	50	33	28	57	168 ^b

Mobility position was determined by following the movement of persons through the set of relevant positions. Mobility coding followed classifications developed for the vacancy chain model (White 1970).

'New recruits' enter from outside the set of relevant positions.

'Exiters' leave for some other status, such as death, retirement, enterprise manager and so on.

'Movers' leave for another office within the set of relevant positions.

'Stayers' are re-elected or re-appointed.

^a There is a single 'pooler' in the 'movers' category for both the informals and the pragmatists. Poolers hold two or more offices simultaneously. Because poolers never leave their original position, no new recruits can enter the set of relevant positions. This explains the disparity in the totals between new recruits and exiters.

^b Totals exceed the number of faction members because persons were in multiple mobility positions during 1994-1999.

Table 3a Chi-Square Tests of Distributional Difference in Mobility Position

	χ^2	<i>p</i>
Nomenklatura vs. Informals	1.116	0.789
Nomenklatura vs. Pragmatists	1.231	0.744
Informals vs. Pragmatists	1.906	0.620
Nomenklatura vs. Neutrals	19.805	0.001
Informals vs. Neutrals	12.887	0.004
Pragmatists vs. Neutrals	11.244	0.015

Table 4 Faction Distributions of Office Status

Office Status	Faction Membership				Total
	Nomenklatura	Informals	Pragmatists	Neutrals	
High	12	5	5	3	25
Mid	16	13	8	20	57
Low	28	15	13	32	88
Total	56	33	26	55	170 ^a

The partition of the offices combines the institutions of territorial unit and branch of government.

The high stratum has local seats in the national parliament, the position of governor, the position of mayor and the position of presidential representative.

The middle stratum contains the cabinets of the mayor and the governor. The middle stratum also has the chairs and deputy chairs of the city and regional parliaments.

The low stratum has seats in the city and regional parliaments.

^a Total exceeds the number of faction members because persons held offices multiple times during 1994-1999. Total also exceeds the number of mobility positions because two persons held two offices simultaneously.

Table 4a Chi-Square Tests of Distributional Difference in Office Status

	χ^2	<i>p</i>
Nomenklatura vs. Informals	1.263	0.514
Nomenklatura vs. Pragmatists	0.071	1.000
Informals vs. Pragmatists	0.510	0.510
Nomenklatura vs. Neutrals	6.103	0.046
Informals vs. Neutrals	2.809	0.252
Pragmatists vs. Neutrals	3.765	0.177

Table 5 Faction Distributions of Successions

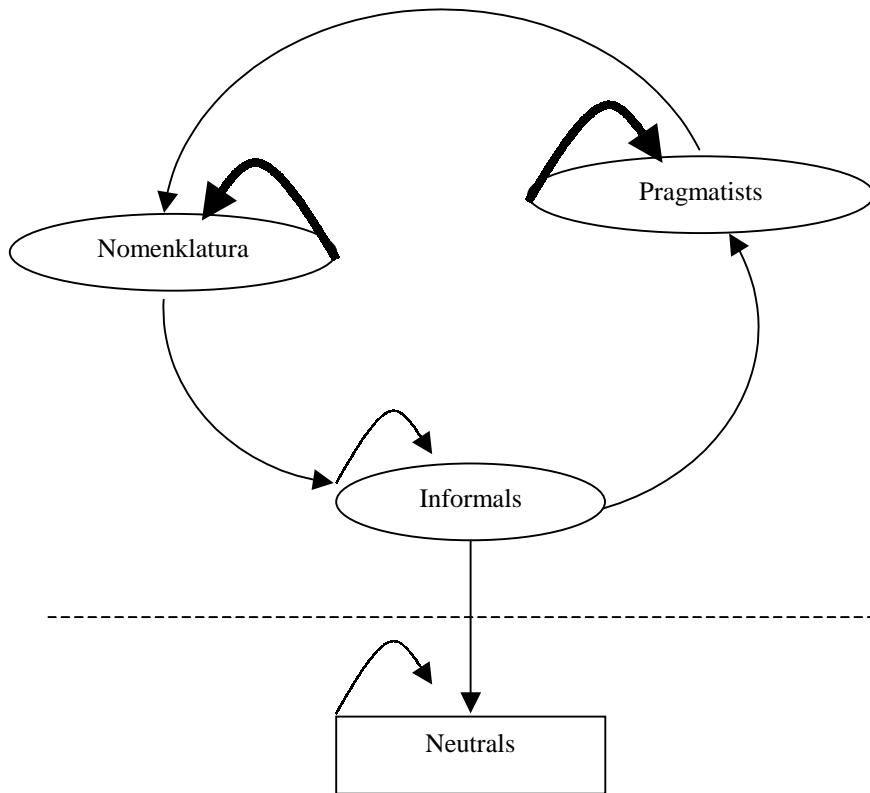
Faction of Incumbent	Faction of Successor					Total
	Ego	Nomenklatura	Informals	Pragmatists	Neutrals	
Nomenklatura	10 (26.3%)	11 (28.9%)	8 (21.1%)	4 (10.5%)	5 (13.2%)	38 (35.8%)
Informals	4 (16.7%)	2 (8.3%)	4 (16.7%)	5 (20.8%)	9 (37.5%)	24 (22.6%)
Pragmatists	5 (29.4%)	5 (29.4%)	1 (5.9%)	3 (17.6%)	3 (17.6%)	17 (16.0%)
Neutrals	2 (7.4%)	5 (18.5%)	2 (7.4%)	3 (11.1%)	15 (55.6%)	27 (25.5%)
Total	21 (19.8%)	23 (21.7%)	15 (14.2%)	15 (14.2%)	32 (30.2%)	106 ^a (100%)

Shaded cells indicate values exceed chance levels (chi-squared = 22.53, d.f. = 12, $p = <.05$; phi [nominal association] = .46, $p = <.05$).

'Ego' refers to incumbents who were re-elected or re-appointed after a change in their superiors. It reflects the ability of incumbents to reproduce themselves after a challenge from outside.

^a Total persons involved in the successions (2 x 106) exceeds the number of persons holding offices because persons occupied both successor and incumbent roles for the same position.

Figure 1 Successions Invoked among Factions



Round nodes indicate common membership in a faction for incumbents or successors. The square node indicates neutral incumbents or neutral successors. The boundary between partisans and neutrals is marked by the dotted line.

Directed edges indicate that members of a node were succeeded by members of another node. So, for example, the informals have successors from neutrals and the pragmatists. Reflexive edges register that the node created heirs for its incumbents leaving positions. Thick reflexive edges mean that the node, in addition to creating heirs, had incumbents who were re-elected or re-appointed.

Table 6 Network Distributions of Successions

Network Position of Incumbent	Ego	Network Position of Successor			Total
		Partisans	Bridgers	Neutrals	
Partisans	14 (26.4%)	22 (41.5%)	4 (7.5%)	13 (24.5%)	53 (50%)
Bridgers	5 (19.2%)	13 (50.0%)	4 (15.4%)	4 (15.4%)	26 (24.5%)
Neutrals	2 (7.4%)	9 (33.3%)	1 (3.7%)	15 (55.6%)	27 (25.5%)
Total	21 (19.8)	44 (41.5%)	9 (8.5%)	32 (32.0%)	106 ^a (100%)

Shaded cells indicate values exceed chance levels (chi-squared = 14.599, d.f. = 6, $p < .05$; phi [nominal association] = .37, $p < .05$).

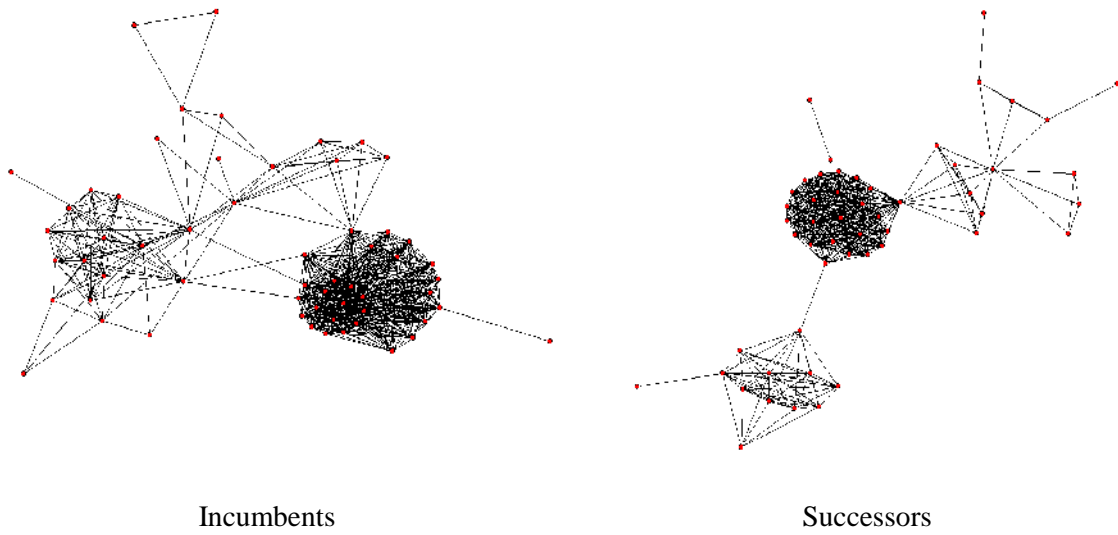
'Ego' refers to incumbents who were re-elected or re-appointed after a change in their superiors. It reflects the ability of incumbents to reproduce themselves after a challenge from outside.

'Partisans' are persons with in-faction ties only.

'Bridgers' are persons with split loyalties.

^a Total persons involved in the successions (2 x 106) exceeds the number of persons holding offices because persons occupied both successor and incumbent roles for the same position.

Figure 2 Shift in Coalitional Structure



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