

The Future of the Russian State as Viewed from the Federal System

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Introduction

It has been 10 years since the Soviet Union dissolved and new Russia was born. New Russia has faced various problems over these 10 years, but the major political problems may be roughly divided into the following three categories.

First, it was the "selection of the regime" that was the major focus in the first 4 years since inauguration of Boris Yeltsin as the first president of the Russian Federation until he was re-elected in July 1996. The question was whether to regress to the past regime or to resolutely carry out the reformation while the Russian society was utterly confused due to a deadlock in the drastic reformation. After many turns and twists, when Yeltsin defeated Gennadiy Zyuganov, leader of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation and was re-elected at the presidential election in July 1996, the "regression to the past regime" was denied by the Russian people and the "selection of the regime" issue was tentatively resolved.

The next major issue was the "stabilization of the central government", symbolized by the confrontation between the State Duma (lower house) where the Communist Party and other opposition groups against the Yeltsin administration (the presidential administration and the government) held the majority. This confrontation between the Duma and the administration not only blocked the passage of the domestic reformation bills but shelved the ratifications of the Treaty on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (START II) and other international treaties as well, and the Russian political situation continued to stagnate for a long time. At the election for the Duma in December 1999, however, the opposition parties lost seats heavily and the moderate parties gained more seats, which finally resolved the long confrontation between the administration and the Duma and brought about the "stability of the central government".

After an early resignation of President Yeltsin at the end of 1999, a presidential election was carried out in March 2000, when Vladimir Putin was inaugurated as President with overwhelming victory. The new problem faced by the new Russian regime shifted to the "problem of the federation system", and the first specific proposal that President Putin announced since the start of a new administration was the policy to strengthen the central government by introducing the system of seven federal districts.

The "selection of the regime" issue for the future course of Russia and the "stabilization of the central government" issue caused by the confrontation between the administration and the Duma were both solved in the Yeltsin administration, but will the "federation system" issue be solved as well? This paper shall try to forecast what kind of national system Russia, our neighbor still in the regime conversion phase, will develop into in the future through discussing

the characteristics, problems and future of the federation system.

1 Characteristics of the current federation system

(1) National identity crisis

When the Soviet Union collapsed at the end of 1991 and the constituent republics of the former Soviet Union became independent, the Russian Federation was also born as a sovereign nation, but it is facing a serious problem of the national identity crisis.¹ Russia is a federation of multiethnic groups residing in the territory of the former Russian Republic, and is now urged to take direct efforts to establish "self identify", or the justification for its existence and definition of itself.

What is Russia historically in the first place? Who are Russians and how far does Russia extend? Why is Russia limited to the territory of the Russian Republic, a constituent of the former Soviet Union? Why does Russia have to be one nation? What are the relations between Russians and non-Russians? These are the difficult questions the new Russian Federation must somehow answer now that it is an independent state from the extinguished Soviet Union.

It is even more difficult to find the foundation for an integrated state within the current borderlines of the Russian Federation because there are some 25 million expatriate Russians² in the new independent states (the Commonwealth of Independent States [CIS]) that were former republics of the Soviet Union. Although the ratio of the Russians in the Russian Federation has now increased compared to the former Soviet Union days³, it still remains to be a multi-ethnic state like the Soviet Union, and it is thus difficult to employ the identity as Russians as exerting the centripetal force for the federation.

The current Russian Federation lacks the national identity, which has roused suspicion in the legitimacy of a State.⁴ This fact is inviting separatism in the Republic of Chechnya and other federal components where the majority of the residents are non-Russian. For instance, there is a question as to while the Republic of Estonia with a small national territory and population of 1.5 million has become independent, why Tatarstan and Bashkortostan cannot

¹ National identity leads to the basic structure of a nation including the territory and the concept on the constitution, ethnical, religious, historical and cultural identity of a nation.

² Indicates the Russians who were left in the CIS nations other than the Russian Federation after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The largest number, 12 million, reside in Ukraine, and the rest reside in all former Soviet Union republics. The Russians have become a minority group in the Central Asia and Baltic nations, and serious racial discrimination has become a problem.

³ According to the mini-census conducted in 1994, the ratio of Russians in the Russian Federation is 82.95%.

⁴ Stephan D. Shenfield, "Post-Soviet Russia in Search of Identity," in Douglas W. Blum ed., *Russia's Future-Consolidation or Disintegration?* (Westview Press, 1994), pp. 5-16. This paper concludes that Russia under the national identity crisis will necessarily move toward disintegration of the federation.

establish their own sovereign states with larger territories and population over 3.7 million.

(2) Dependence on the Soviet Union system

Now what are the characteristics of the current federation system?

First, there are a number of disputes over the borderlines of the current Russian Federation because they depend on the administrative borderlines of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic in the former Soviet Union (hereinafter referred to as the "Russian Republic"). For instance, the Chechen Republic could not achieve independence from Russia because it was situated inside the Russian Republic in the Soviet Union days, and it is still not allowed to separate from the Russian Federation even today with the reason that it would give rise to other re-definition of the current borderlines, which is the apparent cause for the frequent Chechen conflicts.

Second, the Russian Federation consists of 89 federal components, which are divided into 6 types. They are 21 nationality based republics, 1 autonomous oblast (Jewish Autonomous Oblast), 10 autonomous okrugs, 6 geography based krais⁵, 49 oblasts, and 2 cities which have the status of the federal component (Moscow and St. Petersburg).⁶ These are direct inheritance from the system created in the former Soviet Union days. Therefore, they are treated equally as the federal components for the Russian Federation although the ethnic characteristics, economic potentials and the political influence against the central government are multifarious from the capital Moscow with the population of 8.7 million to the Evenk Autonomous Okrug in the East Siberian district with the population under 20,000.

Russia, which had not experienced the history of foundation of a western style nation state, obtained the opportunity to form a nation state when the Soviet Union extinguished in 1991. It, however, lacked the foundation for decisive national integration, and faced the serious situation where it had to grope for establishment of a nation state while depending on the irrational system created in the former Soviet Union days. There lies the origin of the various problems that the current Russian federation system faces.

(3) From centralization of government to decentralization

The path from the dissolution of the Soviet Union to the birth of the Russian Federation had not been smooth. Even before the fall of the Soviet Union, the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Republic and several other nationality based republics had tried for

⁵ A type of the federal component "krai" may be translated as "area", but the word "area" usually means locality, thus this paper distinguishes them.

⁶ A terse summary of the various problems of the federation system of Russia may be found in: Martin Nicholson, "Towards a Russia of the Regions," *Adelphi Paper*, No. 330, 1999.

independence, and after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Tatarstan Republic and other republics indicated refusal to join in the new Russian Federation. The federation administration (Moscow) entered a bilateral treaty with the federal components called the "power-sharing treaty" and pressed the decentralization policy⁷ in order to suppress the independence movement of the nationality based republics and smoothly proceed with the formation of the Russian Federation.

The official name of this treaty is the "Treaty on demarcation of subjects of competence and mutual delegation of powers between organs of state power of the Russian Federation and organs of state power of the federal component" (hereinafter referred to as the "power-sharing treaty"), literally a treaty to draw lines on the competence and delegation of powers between the federal government and the components. The signing of this treaty is de facto decentralization because competence and delegation of powers innate to the regions had not been allowed in the Soviet Union days.

As of April 2000, 10 republics, 4 okrugs, 26 oblasts, 4 krajs and 2 cities which have the status of the federal component (Moscow and St. Petersburg), or a total of 46 federal components have signed the treaty with the central federal government.⁸

Table: Federal components that signed the power-sharing treaty with the central federal government

1994	February 15	Tatarstan Republic
	July 1	Kabardino-Balkar Republic
	August 3	Bashkortostan Republic
1995	March 23	Republic of North Ossetia-Alania
	June 29	Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)
	August 29	Republic of Buryatia
	October 17	Udmurt Republic
1996	January 12	Sverdlovsk Oblast and Kaliningrad Oblast
	January 30	Krasnodar Krai and Orenburg Oblast
	March 20	Republic of Komi
	April 24	Khabarovsk Krai
	May 19	Omsk Oblast
	May 27	Irkutsk Oblast, Ust-Orda Buryat Autonomous Okrug and Chuvash Republic
	May 29	Sakhalin Oblast
	May 31	Perm Oblast and Komi-Permyak Autonomous Okrug
	June 8	Nizhnii Novgorod Oblast
	June 11	Rostov Oblast

⁷ For details, see Shinji Hyodo, "Gendai Roshiani okeru Chuoto Chiho no Kankei: Kengen Kubun Joyaku wo Chusinto Shite," *Annals of the Japanese Association for Russian and East European Studies*, No. 28, (April 2000).

⁸ The regional decentralization process by the power-sharing treaty has ceased since the City of Moscow signed the treaty as the 46th federal component in June 1998.

1996	June 13	St. Petersburg City, Leningrad Oblast and Tver Oblast
	November 29	Altai Krai
1997	July 4	Vologda Oblast, Chelyabinsk Oblast, Bryansk Oblast, Magadan Oblast and Saratov Oblast
	August 1	Samara Oblast
	October 30	Yaroslavl Oblast, Murmansk Oblast, Astrakhan Oblast, Ulyanovsk Oblast and Kirov Oblast
	November 1	Krasnoyarsk Krai, Taimyr (Dolgano-Nenets) Autonomous Okrug and Evenk Autonomous Okrug
1998	May 20	Amur Oblast, Voronezh Oblast, Ivanovo Oblast, Kostroma Oblast and Republic of Marii El
	June 16	Moscow City

(Source: The author's original table referring to the book of treaties (Dogovory s sub'ektami Rossiiskoi Federatsii) obtained from the preparatory committee of power-sharing treaties under the President, and a Russian paper (Rossiiskaia gazeta) for the data as of April 2000. The dates listed are those when the treaty became effective as a general rule.)

The power-sharing treaty was first signed in February 1994 with the Tatarstan Republic which had refused to sign the "Federation Treaty"⁹ in March 1992 and thus refused to join the Russian Federation. This decentralization policy made the Tatarstan Republic and other nationality based components with strong separatism tendency give up independence and the framework for the current Russian Federation was narrowly maintained. The Republic of Chechnya still adhered to the movement for independence as a sovereign state, and refused to sign the "Federation Treaty" together with the Republic of Tatarstan, and engaged in warfare against the Russians from 1994 for 2 years that developed into the first Chechen Conflict when tens of thousands of people were killed.

There are no movements toward separation and independence from the Russian Federation in the nationality based components except the Republic of Chechnya at the moment. It would be premature, however, to consider that the potential factors for separatism have been completely wiped out inside the Russian Federation, although the high-level separation and independence movements that would develop into separation of the sovereign have been suppressed by the power-sharing measure. Now, the author shall discuss the issues of separatism in various levels in the current Russian Federation.

⁹ The "Federation Treaty" is a collective name of three treaties concerning the authority and power sharing. This treaty takes into consideration the demands for further assignment of authorities by the federal component republics, and was intended to differentiate the authorities and positions of the sovereign republics and other federation components. Therefore the krai and oblast aimed to obtain it. The new constitution enacted in 1993 stipulated isonomy and equality for all federal components.

2 Problems for the current Russian Federation

On January 26, 1999, then-Prime Minister Primakov held the "all Russian conference on the problem of the development of the federal system" and gave a speech in front of the leaders of different regions at the Presidential administration to address the critical conditions of the current federation system. Primakov mentioned specific separatism issue¹⁰ in the federation system in his speech.¹¹

Separatism in the definition of the central federal government is not limited to the radical separation and independence movement like the one in the Republic of Chechnya, which would immediately lead to separation of the sovereign, but the overall activities that would considerably damage the stability and reinforcement of the federation. The specific examples of the separatism in the federal components in the Primakov's speech are as follows. (1) Movement that encourages independence of the federal components; (2) regionalism and nationalism movement; (3) legal separatism movement; (4) power-sharing with the central federal government; (5) economic separatism movement, and (6) movement to damage the federation relations financially. The following is the specific content of each movement.

(1) Movement to heighten blockage of the administrative borderlines in federal components

There are about 30 territorial disputes concerning the administrative borderlines in the federal components, and some regions are unilaterally trying to change the administrative borderlines. Primakov said in his speech that, "one-sided changes of the administrative borderlines are unconstitutional actions that would destroy the integrity and security of the sovereign," and insisted that all territorial disputes that would lead to change of the borderline should be frozen immediately.¹² This is because most of the current administrative borderlines in the federation components had been irrationally drawn in the former Soviet Union days, and changes of them might lead to denial of the current federation system itself.

Primakov also warned against the heightened blockage of the administrative borderlines. At the economic crisis in August 1998, some federation components enclosed the food and commodities inside the territory to prevent temporary shortage and banned the traffic across the borders as a means to regulate the prices and sales volume.¹³ Primakov said in his speech that, "such actions are intended to promote the administrative borderlines to borders

¹⁰ For details, see, Hyodo, "Gendai Roshiani okeru chuo to chiho no kankei: Renpo chuo kara mita renpo kosei shutai no bunri shugi" Russian Studies, Japan Institute of International Affairs, No. 30 (April 2000), pp. 143-157.

¹¹ *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 27 January, 1999, p.3.

¹² *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 27 January, 1999, p.3.

¹³ For details on the economic independence activities of the federal components immediately after the economic crises in August 1998, see, *Kommersant vlasti*, No. 35, 15 September, 1998, pp. 18-19.

with high blockage," and severely denounced them as "clear symptoms of separatism".¹⁴

(2) Regionalism and nationalism movements

The second is a structural problem caused by the "dual unity", where the Russian Federation is not a regionally organized State but a multi-national State. While the Constitution stipulates that the rights and obligations are "isonomic and equal in all federation components", the diversified national originalities of all Russian ethnic groups must be assured at the same time.

It is partially due to the fact that the decentralization based on the "power-sharing treaty" has not been conducted in all federal components, and the authorities assigned to regions by the "power-sharing treaty" are not equal but discriminating. Around the time of dissolution of the Soviet Union, several federal components declared sovereignty, demanded promotion of their positions in the federation and took pains to enlarge the economic sovereignty. Such regionalism¹⁵ that pursues unlimited interest of a certain region is regarded as one of the separatism movements in the federal components along with the nationalism.

(3) Legal separatism movement

The third is the "legal separatism" issue that is pointed out in the Presidential annual message to the Federal Assembly every year. It is caused by the fact that the central federal government and the administrative authorities of the federal components have not reached integrated cooperation and the vertical relations have not been created between them. Specifically, various kinds of Presidential decrees (*ukaz*, *rasporyazhenie* and *poruchenie*), governmental decisions (*postanovlenie*) and decisions by the courts are not only unobserved but the constitutions (or charters) of the federal components and the various laws and decisions adopted by the federal components are contradictory to the federation constitution and other central governmental laws as well. Such phenomena are called "legal separatism", and expressed as a problem of how to create unified legal space in Russia.

According to the Presidential annual message to the Federal Assembly in 1997, of the various laws and orders that had been adopted by the federal components, more than half of them registered to the Ministry of Legal Affairs did not comply with the central government's regulations as of 1995¹⁶. Most of them had been decided by the federal components on their own that concerned the issues under exclusive control of the central federal government.

¹⁴ *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 27 January, 1999, p.3.

¹⁵ For instance, for the regionalism in the Russian Far East, see, Hyodo, "Roshia kyokuto chiiki shugi," *Annals of the Japanese Association for Russian and East European Studies*, No. 24, 1995, pp. 126-133.

¹⁶ *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 4 March 1997.

According to the Presidential annual message to the Federal Assembly in 1999, the highest peak of this "legal separatism" was at the economic crises in August 1998. At that time, some federal components made their own decisions to regulate the sales of alcohol products that had been under a complete control of the central federal government, created their own currencies and foreign reserve, and controlled the fees for the energy business and other natural monopoly, all of which were breaches of the constitution.¹⁷

(4) Power-sharing issue

The fourth is the issue on the "power-sharing treaty" discussed earlier. This treaty consists of the "treaty (dogovor)" itself which is the general description of the power-sharing and the "agreement (soglashenie)" that stipulates the details of power-sharing. Primakov said in his speech that, "many of the contents of treaty and the agreement that the federal components have already signed are unconstitutional, but there has been no claim for judicial review on unconstitutionality," and insisted that it is necessary to reinforce the judicial reviews.¹⁸ As the treaty and agreement were signed between the central federal government and individual federal components, the contents, or the competence and delegation of power to be assigned to the federal components, were determined by the negotiation powers of both parties, and most of them are said to breach the laws of the central federal government.¹⁹

The following problems in application of the treaty were indicated in the Presidential annual message to the Federal Assembly in 1998. The federal components infringe the competence of the central federal government although the power of the central federal government, the power of the federal components and the joint authority of both are stipulated in the power-sharing treaty. Specifically, the federal components are making one-sided expansion of their authority, adopting laws that deviate from their assignment and trying to remove the influence of the central federal government on the joint authority items. Thus, in the Presidential annual message to the Federal Assembly in 1998, the central federal government demanded complete and unconditional observation of the authority of the central federal government and declared that it would take leadership in the items under joint authority.²⁰

(5) Economical separatism movement

This is the problem of how to allot the national assets at the federation level, federal

¹⁷ *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 31 March, 1999.

¹⁸ *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 27 January, 1999.

¹⁹ *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 31 March, 1999.

²⁰ *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 27 January, 1999, p.3.

component level and municipality level.²¹ The origin of the dispute between the central federal government and regional governments concerning the control over national assets dates back to June 1990, immediately before the dissolution of the Soviet Union, when the Republic of Russia demanded the management and disposal rights of the territories and resources inside the republic to the Soviet Union and made a sovereignty declaration.²² Even after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the economically wealthy federation components with abundant natural resources took the lead in the economic separatism movements with hopes to manage the national assets in advantageous conditions.

For instance, on January 10, 1999, then-President Yeltsin declared that the presidential order of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) concerning the sales of gold to the central federation government was a breach of the federation law, stopped the effectiveness of the presidential order, and instructed Mikhail Nikoraev, President of Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) to amend the order to agree with the federation law. Occurrence of such disputes between the central federal government and federal components over the control of natural resources is on the increase since the economic crisis in August 1998 when the entire Russian economy was paralyzed and the regions were forced to become economically independent.

(6) Movement to damage financial relations

The sixth is the financial relations between the central federal government and federal components. Specifically, it is the correlation between the tax paid by the federal components to the central federal government and the grant from the central federal government to the federal components. Primakov said in his speech that, "the current standard to determine the amount of the grant is groundless, and appropriate budget must be submitted," and admitted frankly that the current grant system was defective.²³ Flexible measures based on the economic potentials of the federal components are required for the correction of the grant system because there are some federal components called the "donor regions"²⁴ that are economically better off and the tax paid to the central federal government is higher than the grant, while some worse off federal components use the grant from the central federal government for as much as 90% of their budget.

²¹ The "local self governing body" in Russia indicates cities, towns, villages, wards and other lower structures of the federal components.

²² Hyodo, "Sorenpo hokai to hoppo ryodo mondai no tagenka" Review of Diplomacy, July-August issue, 1995, p. 74.

²³ *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 27 January, 1999, p.3

²⁴ The number of the "donor regions" is said to be around 10 among the 89 federal components. For details on the relations between the central federal government and the federal components in budgetary and financial aspects, see "Roshia no chiiki: Chuo to chiho" Institute for Russia and East European Economic Studies, March 2000, pp. 21-37.

The grant system, however, is not functioning normally due to the reduction of the federation budget caused by shortage in tax revenue and delay in the budget implementation, and the energy crises caused by unpaid public servants and unpaid energy bills have frequently occurred in various regions, which have pushed the Republic of Udmurt, Krasnodar Krai and other federation components to refuse to pay taxes to the central federation government and try to establish their own tax policies. The misappropriation of the grant by the federal component has become problems as seen in the coastal region in the Far East since the central federal government is unable to supervise the grant expenditure, which led to the situation where the expenditure for the local budget itself is a problem. Thus, no stable financial relations have been established between the central federal government and the federal components, which is one of the factors that promote economic separatism of the entire federation structure.

3 Future of the federation system

(1) Improvement of the federation system

As discussed earlier, the current federation structure of 89 components lacks rationality as an independent economic body because it employs the administrative bodies of the Russian Republic under the Soviet Union regime. As the independent measures of the federal components against the economic crisis had given rise to separatism that could destroy the entire Russia as an economic sphere, Primakov who assumed the office of Prime Minister in September 1998 tried to rationalize the federation structure components with the objective to create stable federation relations. Since it is difficult to draw new administrative borderlines, Primakov thought of unifying the current 89 components by regions based on the existing 8 inter-regional associations for economic cooperation²⁵, but he failed to give a drastic remedy to the current federation system itself.²⁶

One of the reasons was the dismissal of Primakov, who had advocated rationalization of

²⁵ The 8 inter-regional associations for economic cooperation and their representatives as of June 1999 are as follows. (1) Pri-Volga regional association for economic cooperation (Greater Volga), (Nikolai Merkushev, head of Republic of Mordovia), (2) Ural regional association for economic cooperation (Eduard Rossel, head of administration of Sverdlovsk Oblast), (3) Far east and Zabaikal inter-regional association for economic cooperation, (Viktor Ishaev, head of administration of Khabarovsk Krai), (4) North Caucasus social economic cooperation association of Republics, Krai and Oblasts, (Vladimir Chub, head of administration of Rostov Oblast), (5) Northwest regional association for economic cooperation, (Vladimir Yakovlev, governor, chairman of government of St. Petersburg), (6) Inter-regional association "Siberian Agreement", (Viktor Kress, governor of Tomsk Oblast), (7) Inter-regional association for economic cooperation "Central Russia", (Anatoliy Lisitsyn, governor of Yaroslavl Oblast, and (8) Central black earth economic cooperation association of oblasts, (Yegor Stroeve, head of administration of Orel Oblast).

²⁶ Before Primakov, Sergei Filatov, chief of the presidential administration (then) advocated creation of the federation districts in 1993, and Yuriy Lushkov, mayor of Moscow proposed the plan to divide into 10 to 13 districts according to the economic regions in 1997. (*Kommersant vlasti*, No. 17, 2 May, 2000, p.6).

the federation structure and been active in improvement and reinforcement of the inter-federation relations, from the prime minister's position, which meant a loss of the promoter of reformation of the federation system on the central federation government side. The second reason was the strong resistance of the elites in the regions for their self-protection since if the number of federal components was to decrease, there would be cut-down of the personnel including the heads of administrations. The third reason was the reluctance of the economically well-off regions or those with more advantageous authorities than others to unite with economically worse-off components having no vested authorities when unification was to proceed in view of economic rationality.²⁷ The fourth reason was the extreme difficulty in having the Federation Council that consists of regional leaders pass the law, which is the requirement of the federal constitution when the federal components were to be changed.²⁸ The fifth reason is the possibility of development of rationalization of the federal components into a serious major problem of reconsideration on the Russian parliament system itself, because reduction of the number of the federal components would mean reduction of the number of members of the Federal Council.

For the above reasons, reformation of the current federal system is extremely difficult, and it is highly unlikely that it would be realized in the foreseeable future.

(2) Possibility of dissolution of separatism

On December 17, 1997, President Yeltsin approved the "National Security Concept" that stipulated the basic rules of the national security of Russia, which stated the relations between the national security and separatism as follows.

In Chapter 3 titled "Threat to the national security of Russian Federation", it stated that the separatism of the federal components is; "making the nationalistic egoism, racism and exclusionism promote the national separatism" and "making the negative economic process promote the centrifugal tendencies of the federation components and destroying the territorial security and unified law space". It also said that, "the major causes of the radical intensification of nationalism and national and regional separatism are the dissolution of the Soviet Union, failures of economic policies of Russia and the CIS members and intensification of the ethnical conflicts," and indicated that those separatism movements had created tension in the relations between the regions and the central government and were the apparent threat to the federation system of Russia.²⁹

²⁷ Dr. Sirkin, deputy chief of Economic Research Institute, Far Eastern Branch of Russian Academy of Sciences, indicated on February 22, 1999 at the study meeting held in National Institute for Defense Studies that there would be no rationalization of the federal components for this reason, and the "power-sharing treaty" is playing the role to obstruct the reorganization of the current federation system.

²⁸ Passage of the constitutional laws of the federation requires majority by three-fourths in the Upper House and two-thirds in the Lower House.

²⁹ *Rossiiskie vesti*, 25 December, 1997, p.1

It also said that another point to consider was the fact that the major threat to the national security of the Russian Federation at present and in the future was not the foreign military factors but the domestic non-military factors, and clearly declared that one of the factors was the separatism.³⁰ Thus, separatism in the federal components is one of the most important issues of the Russian Federation in the 21st century, and is a serious problem that is not easy to solve.³¹

With the exception of the Republic of Chechnya, it is true that Russia has succeeded in suppressing the separation and independence movements and somewhat stabilized the federal relations by the power-sharing based on the "power-sharing treaty".³² Primakov, however, said in his speech discussed earlier that, "we have forgotten the time when the power-sharing treaty was a political tool to prevent regional and ethnical conflicts,"³³ and admitted that although the power-sharing was effective in restricting separatism at the early stage, its effectiveness was already lost. In other words, power-sharing can no longer be a decisive measure to completely remove the separatism in the federal components.

(3) Reinforcement of central control by new Putin administration

New President Putin conducted a significant reform on the traditional system of presidential envoys to federal components with the objective to strengthen the central control on May 13, 2000, one week after his inauguration. The presidential envoy to federal components is the system to place superintendents who monitor the activities of the federal components with the objective to protect the interest of the central federation government in the federal components, and the assignment had completed in virtually all federal components in September 1991, immediately before the dissolution of the Soviet Union.³⁴

Putin had assumed the dual posts of deputy chief of the presidential administration and director of the main department of superintendence before he was appointed as the successor to President Yeltsin. This is the position for the supreme authority of the policies for the regions at the presidential administration and for the total control of around 80 presidential

³⁰ *Rossiiskie vesti*, 25 December, 1997, p. II

³¹ As a study on the relations between the separatism of the federal components and the foreign policy, refer to: Haruko Ozawa, "APEC kamei mondai to Roshia: Ajia Taiheiyo kokusai keizai kyouryoku taisei sanku ni okeru Roshia kyokuto," *The Journal of Foreign Affairs*, September 1998, pp. 19-33.

³² Toshihiko Ueno, "Roshia no renposei: chuo, chiho kankei no seiji rikigaku," *Reviews on Nations and Peoples*, Menerva Shobo, 1999, pp. 107 - 109.

³³ *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 27 January, 1999, p.3.

³⁴ The major duties of the presidential envoys are: (1) to cooperate in execution of the Presidential authorities in the federal components, (2) to report the conditions of the federal components to the President, (3) to have the federal components execute the domestic and foreign policies and basic policies of the central federation government, Presidential orders and other orders and programs, (4) to investigate the political parties, social associations, religious bodies, etc. in the federal components, and (5) to execute special orders by the President. (*Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 16 July, 1997).

envoys to federal components.³⁵ Putin must have thoroughly learned the movements of the separatism in the federal components and other various problems of the Russian Federation system while he was at this post.

Thus President Putin established the federation districts that match with the 7 military districts of internal army on May 18, 2000³⁶, immediately after he assumed the office of president, and started to strengthen the central control with the backing of the military, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Federal Security Service by employing military personnel to the new 7 presidential envoys.³⁷ Some feel apprehensive that such action might lead to revival of the 19th century "general gubernator".³⁸ President Putin is expected to proceed with the drastic reformation of the federation system including the reorganization of the Assembly that consists of regional leaders, acquisition of the dismissal rights of the regional leaders and rationalization of the federal components as the means to restore the Russian Federation with no decisive national unification foundation into a "strong nation".³⁹

Can President Putin achieve the reinforcement of the central control?

First, President Putin expressed his view in his annual message to the Federal Assembly that "the current Russia is not a federation but a mere decentralized nation," and insisted re-strengthening of the central power⁴⁰, but the strengthening the central control itself is against the tide of the system conversion "from the centralized power to decentralization".

The second issue is the relations between the strengthened central control and democracy, in other words, whether the strengthened central control which Putin aims for will remain within the frames of observation of the legalism and appreciation of democratic procedures. If he were to lay importance on legalism and democratic procedures, it would be difficult to

³⁵ The total number of the personnel does not agree with 89, the number of the federal components, because some presidential envoys have multiple assignment on the regional districts within the kraies and oblasts and several federation components.

³⁶ The newly established 7 federal districts and their central cities designated by the President on May 13, and the 7 presidential envoys assigned on May 18 are as follows. (*Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 20 May, 2000, p.3).

(1) Central federal district (Moscow), Georgiy Poltavchenko, (presidential envoy to Leningrad Oblast, Lieutenant general of the taxation police, former senior official of KGB), (2) Northwestern federal district, (St. Petersburg), Viktor Cherkosov, (federation security agency first vice-commander, former senior official of KGB, one of the brains of the President), (3) Southern federal district, (Rostov on Don), Viktor Kazantsev, (Colonel general, former commander of the united troops in North Caucasus), (4) Pri-Volga federal district, (Nizhniy Novgorod), Sergei Kirienko, (head of the Union of Right-Wing Forces, a member of the State Duma, former prime minister), (5) Ural federal district, (Yekaterinburg), Petr Latyshev, (vice minister of internal affairs, Colonel general), (6) Siberia federal district, (Novosibirsk), Leonid Drachevskiy, (minister of CIS affairs, diplomat), and (7) Far eastern federal district, (Khabarovsk), Konstantin Pulikovskiy, (deputy commander of Russian troops in Chechnya, reserve lieutenant general).

³⁷ *Nezavimimoe voennoe obozrenie*, 19-25 May, 2000, p.1.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ *Kommersant vlasti*, No. 17, 2 May 2000, pp. 7-9.

⁴⁰ *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 11 July, 2000, p.3.

make a drastic reform on the federation system including reduction of the federal components that would require amendment of the Constitution.

Thirdly, although Putin, who had been unknown before, won the presidential election with overwhelming supports by the regional elites, how far can he proceed with the central control that would contradict with the intentions of the regional elites who are part of his political foundation? Furthermore, even if he succeeded in strengthening the central control, while it would stabilize the relations between the central and regional governments temporarily, it would not lead to the fundamental solutions to the various problems that have arisen in the federation system as discussed earlier.

(4) Prospect

Based on the discussion above, the author would like to mention the following 4 points for the future of the federation system.

First, the separatism arising in the Russian Federation can be considered as the structural problem that occurs from the groping endeavor for a new federation system based on the administrative structure formed in the former Soviet Union days during the process of transition from the strict centralized government system of the former Soviet Union to the democratic federation system.⁴¹ Therefore, it is necessary to make fundamental review on the traditional structure in order to completely remove the factors causing the separatism of the federal components, but as it is extremely difficult to make system reorganization in the current status, it would be unlikely that the separatism that could damage the stability and reinforcement of the federal relations would be removed in the foreseeable future.

Secondly, if the separatism movement cannot be removed and regress to the centralized government is impossible, then even though the disintegration of the sovereign did not occur, it would still be difficult to avoid the identity crisis, and the integrity and the unity as a sovereign of the Russian Federation will significantly deteriorate. In such event, it is anticipated that a problem of how far the Russian military forces, the ultimate execution device, can maintain structural integrity will emerge, as well as other phenomena of malfunctions of the sovereign in various fields.

Thirdly, one of the major problems the Russian Federation must face in the future is the issue of the Republic of Chechnya's independence. The "Khasavyurt Agreement" signed by Aleksandr Lebed, Secretary of the Security Council (then) in August 1996 shelved the independence issue of the Republic of Chechnya till the end of 2001, but if the independence was approved, it would inevitably exert serious impact on the current federation system and the federation relations. If independence was denied, and the Republic of Chechnya was to remain within the Russian Federation, it would require significant power assignment from

⁴¹ For details see, *ibid.* "Gendai Roshia ni okeru chuo to chiho no kankei: kengen kubun joyaku wo chuushin ni shite," pp. 100 - 114.

Moscow, which would spur the wreck of the constitutional principle of isonomy and equality among the federal components.

Fourthly, the on-going activities with the neighbor Belarus to form a federation state involves assignment of part of the sovereign of the Russian Federation to a new upper structure of the federation state. Such movement has strong secondary intention to politically confront the "US-centered Unipolar World Order" as witnessed in the eastward enlargement of NATO, NATO's air campaign against Kosovo, and NMD development. In the viewpoint of the domestic federation system, however, it would further thin down the centripetal force of the Russian Federation under the national identity crisis, and might give rise to further doubts on the national legitimacy.⁴²

Conclusion

Today, the Russian Federation is suffering from a national identity crisis, and facing the difficulties in groping for a new federation system while inheriting the administrative structure, a negative heritage of the former Soviet Union, with no decisive foundation for unification. Disintegration of the sovereign is not expected except for the Republic of Chechnya in a short run, but it is anticipated that malfunctions of the Russian Federation will increase and the phenomena of relative sovereignty will proceed because the separatism movements in the regions will not be resolved due to the doubt in the legitimacy of the nation and it is impossible to regress to the former central control system. Reinforcement of central control after the Putin administration is expected, but it will not lead to the fundamental solution of the various problems that arise in the federation system since it will be a mere temporary measure.

President Putin gave an annual message to the Federal Assembly on July 8, 2000, which was virtually devoted to the domestic political and economical reformation, most of which concerned strengthening of the federation system.⁴³ It is therefore no doubt that the major issue for the new Putin administration concerns the federation system of Russia. The "Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation" was announced two days later on July 10, which indicated the priorities of the domestic targets to the foreign policy of Russia.⁴⁴ The future foreign policy of Russia will strongly be restricted by the domestic issues, especially the issue of strengthening the national authority. President Putin hopes to make Russia revive to the major power that it used to be by strengthening the national authority, but what we see in the foreseeable near future is not Russia that has achieved revival as a major power through strengthened national power, but unstable, unpredictable Russia suffering from malfunctions of the sovereignty.

⁴² On July 10, 2000, Dr. Akhtonomov, director of the first department of the fund for the development of parliamentarism in Russia and research fellow of Institute of State and Law of Russian Academy of Sciences, indicated this opinion at the interview with the author.

⁴³ *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 11 July, 2000, p.3.

⁴⁴ *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 11 July, 2000, p.5.