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State Legitimacy and the (In)significance of Democracy in Post-Communist Russia

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Democracy, legitimacy and the Russian state

A FEW APOCALYPTIC PREDICTIONS of a post-communist 'maelstrom' notwithstanding,[1] the break-up of the USSR was initially greeted by optimistic assessments of the prospects for democracy in the 'new Russia', with much faith placed in the explosion of new political parties, local organisations and social movements dating back to the Gorbachev era.[2] Recent assessments have been more cautious, predicting neither chaos nor democratic consolidation. In contrast to the optimists of a decade ago, a new generation of 'possibilists' now employ a minimalist definition in order to classify Russia as a 'democracy', emphasising the absence of an authoritarian backlash, the growth of a more robust 'discourse of democracy', the spread of politically aware social networks and an emerging 'civil society from above' under Putin's 'guided democracy'.[3] Sceptics, for their part, do not expect Russia to return to authoritarianism, but they view Russia's nascent democracy as possibly 'stillborn' and certainly enfeebled by the heavy-handed tactics of 'market Bolsheviks', increasing restrictions on the media, a legacy of public apathy and distrust dating back to the communist era, and demographic trends that appear to be leading to a crisis of 'human capital'.[4] While the predictions offered on both sides are less bold than they were ten years ago, the debate still revolves largely around the question of whether the glass is half empty or half full. The differences in interpretation are more a result of prior assumptions than any fundamental disagreement on the situation on the ground: cautious optimists emphasise the importance of whatever associational life and democratic procedures are presently in evidence, while restrained sceptics view these as irrelevant under a 'superpresidential'[5] system that offers little space for meaningful political contestation.

This article is predicated on the assumption that the debate over the prospects of democratic consolidation and civil society in Russia can be given new life only if subsumed within a more general problematique focusing on the level and sources of state legitimacy. By 'legitimacy' we mean, following Fish, 'a generally positive orientation among the populace toward the political regime. A regime is legitimate to the extent that the populace regards it as providing a satisfactory order and believes that no available alternative would be vastly superior'.[6] This is effectively a Weberian understanding of 'legitimacy' in that its conceptualisation depends not so much on the

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behaviour of leaders or the design of institutions as on how these are judged by those whom the leaders and institutions claim to represent. In relation to the territorial nation-state, legitimacy is something that enables agents of the central state (national executive, legislative and judicial institutions and the individuals constituting these institutions) to gain the willing cooperation and compliance of non-state actors—individual citizens and the associations they share—without having to rely on surveillance or coercion; they are able to do so because most citizens regard the agents as deserving of the right to make and implement laws, policies and programmes on their behalf—regardless of the short-term performance or popularity of particular programmes or leaders. Thus an exploration of the level and sources of state legitimacy is essentially an analysis of the evolution and structure of state–society relations, with 'society' referring to the range of institutions and social relations constructed by non-state actors.

The absence of democracy may well be an important reason for declining legitimacy in a society where most citizens place a high value on adherence to democratic procedures and protection of individual freedoms in evaluating their respective governments' claims to legitimacy, but this is a matter for empirical investigation and not something to be assumed or proclaimed by fiat. Severing the link between democracy and legitimacy in post-communist contexts, we view legitimacy as the higher order variable in the equation, analytically and normatively prior to arguments about the functioning and robustness of democracy. Focusing on the extent and sources of legitimacy, we contend, is likely to generate a coherent account of state–society relations which is, in turn, a prerequisite for fresh insight into the debate over the prospects for democratic consolidation and civil society in post-Soviet Russia. As Hoffmann puts it, without understanding the range of 'symbiotic or strained relationships' that link diverse societal actors to state institutions and their individual agents, we will not recognise 'the most important variables shaping core elements of the nascent Russian polity'.[7]

In this article we first review the evidence concerning the level of state legitimacy in post-communist Russia. The absence of widespread social upheavals, the popularity of top leaders and the overall stability of national political institutions do not constitute evidence of state legitimacy. More significant are mass attitudes reflecting a low level of trust in national institutions, growing protest at the local level, mass detachment from political and economic elites, the pervasiveness of informal private networks and arrangements to bypass official public channels, and frustrations over crime and corruption (accompanied by grudging participation in localised forms of the latter).

Next we consider the putative sources of declining legitimacy. According to currently popular lines of argument, democratic procedures in transitional contexts either generate increased uncertainty and unpredictability or serve to reduce uncertainty through the rule of law.[8] In Russia, neither an invariable preference for the stability and predictability of authoritarian rule nor the absence or imperfections of the rule of law under democracy constitute the core reason for the low level of state legitimacy. Although public opinion surveys generally indicate a preference for some form of 'democracy' in the abstract, much more significant are the *substantive* expectations that a state, democratic or not, ought to be able to do a better job in

providing such valued public goods as social order, economic stability, guaranteed welfare and a greater measure of distributive justice. Indeed, initial support for democratisation rested on assumptions that 'democracy' was inherently connected to these very outcomes, and evidence to the contrary is a key reason for the growing nostalgia for the Soviet regime.

Then we gauge the prospects for state legitimacy in light of public responses to initiatives associated with Putin's 'guided democracy'. Although it is apparent to most Russians that Putin's efforts to restore state power involve at least some undemocratic aspects—for example the muzzling of independent media, the reining in of many oligarchs and regional governors and, most recently, heavy handed tactics to ensure a landslide victory in the 2004 presidential election—responses to these initiatives have been by and large favourable. What remains to be seen, however, is whether Putin's programme of building a strong, just, unified Russian nation-state extends to efforts to provide the public goods most valued by ordinary citizens. Until the restoration of state power is accompanied by a meaningful effort to address the substantive anxieties and unmet expectations triggered by the post-Soviet transition, neither the further consolidation of democracy nor Putin's 'dictatorship of law' are likely to reverse the decline in state legitimacy over the 1990s.

State legitimacy in post-Soviet Russia

On the surface, the post-Soviet Russian state may appear to possess a high degree of legitimacy. The President, Vladimir Putin, although seen as a viable choice for president by just 2% in 1999, was just reelected by over 70% of those casting ballots, with his supporters representing a wide cross-section of the population, cutting across age groups, income levels, education levels and ideological dispositions.[9] Social unrest has been confined to local protests over specific grievances, and has not given rise to widespread mass movements aimed at fundamental political change. Although opposition forces exist, they are fragmented and unable to seriously challenge the Kremlin's policies or change the rules of the game. This is evident in the Communist Party of the Russian Federation's (KPRF's) loss of influence in the Duma and, more recently, in the fact that the KPRF candidate and Putin's liberal critics combined to account for just one-fifth of the vote in the 2004 presidential election. Moreover, the passage of a series of new laws, including a major bill on anti-extremism and a comprehensive new labour code, appears to suggest that the Russian state is resolutely embracing a spirit of tolerance and the rule of law. These observations constitute good reasons to refrain from predicting violent social upheavals or a sudden break-up of the Russian Federation, but they are not indicative of a high degree of state legitimacy as defined above. In fact, a closer look at the available evidence points to a steady decline in state legitimacy dating back to the mid-1990s and begs the question of how this decline can be squared with the absence of more vigorous social protest and the sustained popularity of the Putin administration.

Although public opinion polls are not the most effective means for capturing the nuances and complexities of political attitudes across Russia,[10] changes in aggregate results over time represent a plausible basis for gauging trends in the level of state legitimacy. Particularly significant for the legitimacy and effectiveness of newly democratised regimes is the trust that citizens place in governmental institutions that

formally claim to represent them.[11] Surveys indicate that the percentage of respondents stating that they had 'complete confidence' in various national state institutions steadily declined during the 1990s: whereas in 1993 the figures were 28% for the President, 18% for the government, 9% for the parliament, 39% for the armed forces and 20% for the security services, the corresponding percentages for 1998 were 11, 8, 7, 23 and 15.[12] The figures for the President and government dropped even further following the August 1998 financial crisis, and only those for the President later rebounded under Putin, standing at 50% in 2001, while the percentage expressing trust in political parties, Duma representatives, enterprise directors and bankers were all under 10%.[13]

The reasons for, and significance of, Putin's popularity are taken up below but, for the purpose of assessing state legitimacy, what is most telling is that the boost in Putin's approval ratings has not translated into increased government legitimacy or a positive outlook on the direction of Russian politics. Public opinion polls show mass dissatisfaction with political institutions and politically relevant actors. According to a nationwide poll conducted by VTsIOM in June 2003, while the differential between Putin's approval and disapproval ratings stood at +56%, the differential between approval and disapproval ratings for the Duma stood at −30% and that for the government as a whole stood at −23%.[14] Just 3% of the sample in a 1999 survey agreed that elections were won by 'the worthiest individuals', while 83% believed that elections were won by the 'most cunning'.[15] It is also worth noting that two categories of actors often considered to be the core of a liberal capitalist democracy, political parties and private business, are distrusted by over three-quarters of the population.[16] The same is true of organised labour, perhaps the largest component of whatever civil society exists in Russia: not only is the level of trust for national trade union federations at the same low level as it is for the parliament, but total membership in trade unions also dropped by over 40%, with one survey indicating that three times as many workers would rely directly on enterprise directors as would rely on trade union representatives to solve everyday problems.[17]

Even for Putin himself, it is worth noting that his 70% approval rating is significantly higher than the 50% that consider him to be 'trustworthy'; although still the most trusted politician in Russia, the percentage of those selecting Putin actually dropped from 49% in 2000 to 41% in 2002, while 46% also expressed disappointment in terms of the hopes they entertained when Putin became President.[18] In addition, a comparison of trust ratings across ten post-communist countries during the late 1990s indicates that Russia ranks last in the level of trust in the military, political parties, mass media and private enterprise, and second to last (behind Ukraine) when it comes to the parliament, the police and trade unions.[19] The Russian sociologist Lev Gudkov sums it up thus: 'Public opinion studies indicated widespread disappointment with practically all socio-political institutions … Those institutions meant to ensure social stability—the courts, and public prosecutor's office, the police, labour unions, etc.—were regarded as beyond redemption. The excessive confidence in the current president compensates for the mistrust in these institutions and politicians'.[20]

General attitudes towards the present political environment also suggest a profound sense of anxiety and dissatisfaction. A May 2003 survey by the Russian Centre for Public Opinion Research (VTsIOM) also indicated that nearly two-thirds of Russians viewed the current political situation as 'tense' (54%) or even 'critical and explosive'

(10%), while just 2% viewed the situation as 'favourable'.[21] A survey conducted at the Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences during the 1999–2000 electoral cycle showed that the percentage of Russians proclaiming themselves to be dissatisfied with the country's political system had risen to 80%, up from 57% in 1996.[22] In another poll asking respondents to identify the most characteristic features of the post-Soviet regime, the three most widely cited qualities were its 'criminal, corrupt' character (noted by 63%), its 'remote, alien' nature (noted by 41%) and its tendency to be 'weak, powerless' (noted by 30%). By comparison, just 2% of the respondents chose such favourable characteristics as 'respected', 'strong, durable' and 'close to the people'.[23] In fact, public opinion data also reveal that the main threat to stability in Russia is viewed as coming from the state itself![24]

Also worth noting is the gap in trust levels between central state institutions, on one hand, and regional or local institutions on the other. The same survey that found a decline in the level of 'complete confidence' for key national institutions between 1993 and 1998 also found that the level of complete confidence in local government increased during the same period from 13% to 18%.[25] A panel survey of voting-age respondents similarly indicated that 39.5% of the respondents were trustful of central state institutions and 51.3% were mistrustful, compared with 44.6% who said they were trustful of local and regional institutions and 42% who said they were mistrustful.[26] The force of public opinion in relation to regional/local and central administration has had cascading effects on the legitimacy and integration of the national state as regional and local leaders have been increasingly acting beyond their legal authority, so much so that 'the process of devolution of authority may now be largely self-sustaining, despite President Putin's best efforts'.[27] Putin's creation of seven federal districts with presidential representatives to ensure adherence to national laws across Russia's 89 regions represents an awareness of the problem but has yet to have the intended effect as stronger governors in more powerful fiefdoms have so far managed to go about their business as usual.[28]

Although collective protest has not taken place on a national scale, this is not an indication of satisfaction with the status quo. As Javeline has shown, the absence of large-scale social unrest is less an indication of the absence of grievances and more a matter of confusion and inconsistency in the manner in which blame is variously attributed to the national state, local authorities or other actors.[29] Moreover, the evidence of growing pockets of protest from various dissatisfied groups at the local level points to the potential for larger-scale collective action that can further undermine the authority of the Russian state in much the same way that the coal miners' strikes of 1989 did in the Soviet era. In fact, the blockade of the Trans-Siberian railway by striking miners in 1998 and a more recent hunger strike by the Federation of Air Traffic Controllers—actions that were not initially orchestrated by national unions—are dramatic reminders of the potential for vigorous protest when workers do attribute their difficulties to policies initiated by the state. It is also significant that the number and scale of local workers' strikes have been growing at a rapid rate even as national trade union federations continue to suffer from the same low trust ratings as governmental institutions.[30] More recently, the dissatisfaction of workers was evident in local elections following a lengthy industrial dispute at the giant Norilsk Nickel Company, the main employer in the city of Norilsk. The

stand-off increased the popularity of the company's union leader to the point that he eventually secured an unprecedented victory in mayoral elections for the city in 2003, defeating a former executive of Norilsk Nickel.[31]

In addition, there has been a sharp increase in local protests that include but extend beyond workers' grievances. In March 2002 protests and strikes took place in several cities (notably Voronezh, Khabarovsk and Lenin's hometown of Ulyanovsk) in response to sharp increases in rents and municipal utility costs as well as to a new set of rules governing conscription. The strikes in Voronezh, in particular, involved virtually the entire town and drew national attention when protestors forced local employers to revise wage agreements to match the sharp increases in the cost of living.[32] Even people running small businesses have joined in organising protests against the government's new uniform social tax, which has substantially raised the costs for local and self-employed entrepreneurs. These protests (including a rally involving some 16,000 local entrepreneurs in the town of Sochi) ultimately prompted the government to pursue an alternative form of taxation for small businesses.[33] These local strikes and protests are not independently suggestive of the view that state institutions are illegitimate, as protest can certainly be regarded as a manifestation of Hirschman's concept of 'voice'.[34] But when diverse groups in different locales launch protests at a greater frequency during a period when public opinion polls also reveal a low level of trust in central state institutions, then such protests may plausibly be considered an additional indicator of a declining level of state legitimacy.

The public also evinces a lack of confidence in the state's ability to enforce the rule of law and curtail crime and corruption. In spite of Putin's insistence on the rule of law, Russians exhibit an ambivalent attitude that combines frustration over rampant corruption and crime with the recognition of the need to skirt the law in order to preserve one's rights or improve one's livelihood. Intelligence reports from Russia estimate that criminal groups control 70–80% of all private business and 40% of the nation's wealth, with criminal elements thought to be exercising growing influence in state bodies, especially legislatures at the regional and local level.[35] A survey conducted in 2001 indicates that Russia is one of the ten most corrupt countries in the world, and that this corruption is so pervasive that a majority of Russians do not believe that government officials are in a position to control it.[36] More significantly, according to a government report prepared by the Institute of Legislature and Comparative Law, 70–80% of Russians generally believe that 'laws overall do not work', and over 50% consider the government and other federal bodies of the executive branch to be the most corrupt institutions.[37] While Russian citizens accept patronage networks and informal exchange relations as a part of everyday life, the self-aggrandising corruption of elites is viewed as the main basis for their wealth and influence, and this perception, in turn, has served to undermine confidence in the Russian state as a guarantor of the rule of law. At the same time, a vast majority of Russians believe that 'laws are often very hard on ordinary people', with 73% endorsing the belief that non-enforcement helps to soften the effects of harsh Russian laws and 70% believing they need to undertake illegal actions more frequently now than before legal reforms began in order to protect their rights and livelihoods.[38] In local surveys carried out in Novosibirsk and Altai krai between 1995 and 1999 nearly two-thirds of the respondents said they did not condemn theft from the workplace,

and as many as 40% stated that they would encourage their children to be prepared to break the law as necessary because ‘this is the accepted way’ or because the law ‘rarely solves human problems’.[39] To the extent that state legitimacy rests upon public confidence in the content and implementation of laws throughout a given territory, this ambivalence does not bode well for the Russian state.

The above discussion suggests that any optimism accompanying the arrival of a new ‘democratic’ Russian state quickly gave way to growing dissatisfaction with political institutions and actors. Putin’s personal popularity notwithstanding, public opinion in Russia indicates a distrust of key state institutions. Social unrest has not occurred on a nationwide scale, but there has been an increase in the frequency and intensity of collective protest at the local level. Individuals in key positions in federal government bodies are viewed as likely to be corrupt and self-serving, and laws are viewed as disproportionately constraining ordinary citizens. Taken together, these indications point to a low and declining level of state legitimacy in post-Soviet Russia. The question we must now turn to concerns the sources of this decline.

Sources of declining legitimacy: insufficient democracy or inadequate state?

Colton & McFaul contend that support for democracy is compatible with majority dissatisfaction with the current regime because most respondents do not actually consider the political system to be a democracy.[40] In effect, they attribute the decline in state legitimacy to the insufficient consolidation of democracy in Russia. Such a view, however, requires assuming that Russian citizens explicitly prefer the specific norms, procedures and institutions associated with all democracies under all conditions, and that they place a higher value on the presence, absence or imperfection of such norms, procedures and institutions than on the substantive content and outcomes of government policies in their assessment of the state. We argue in this section that neither of these assumptions are upheld by the available evidence concerning the political attitudes of Russian citizens. Although there is indeed a consistent general preference for ‘democracy’ in the abstract, this preference is not accompanied by a high value placed on specific attributes of liberal democracy as it is understood and practised in the West when it comes to trade-offs between these attributes and substantive outcomes encompassing public order, economic security and social justice. It is the association between these highly valued collective goods and Russian understandings of ‘democracy’ that accounts for the continued support for democracy alongside declining state legitimacy and rising nostalgia for the Soviet regime.

The difficulties of gauging the meaning and significance of ‘democracy’ in post-Soviet Russia become clear when we try to square the findings presented by Colton & McFaul with those of the New Russia Barometer surveys. The 2001 edition of the latter reveals that as many as 72% of Russians endorse one of four undemocratic alternatives to the present system (ranging from the restoration of communist rule, the most popular of these alternatives, to rule by a dictator or by the army).[41] By contrast, Colton & McFaul find that nearly two-thirds of Russians support ‘the idea of democracy’, with 12% content with ‘the political system that exists today’, 9% preferring further progress towards a ‘democracy of the Western type’, 41% opting for ‘the Soviet system, but in a different, more democratic form’ and 25% choosing

'the Soviet system ... before *perestroika*'.[42] While these figures also suggest that two-thirds of the respondents happened to opt for some variant of the Soviet system, Colton & McFaul choose to rely on the large plurality of voters preferring the Soviet system in a 'more democratic form' in order to make the case that a strong majority supports democracy in one form or another. In doing so, they bypass the crucial question of what such a system might actually look like if one were to try to reconcile the structure and function of existing 'Soviet' institutions (a hierarchically organised party-state apparatus in control of a command economy with full employment and generous welfare guarantees) with the expansion of various 'democratic' features (for example, competitive elections that might yield leaders opposed to maintaining full employment, or legal challenges to the validity of targets set by central planners). By the same token, the New Russia Barometer survey does not make clear whether restoration of communist rule would be preferred in all its aspects, especially given the Barometer's own finding in 2000 that about 80% of respondents viewed the post-Soviet government as permitting greater individual freedom in speech, religion and political participation when compared with the old regime.[43] However one chooses to interpret these findings on support for various democratic and undemocratic alternatives, the problem of squaring the findings in the two studies points to the need for a more nuanced examination of just what Russians mean by 'democracy' and just how much significance they attach to specific features of liberal democracy vis-à-vis the substantive content and outcomes of the state's policies.

Studies conducted over the past decade suggest that the association between Russian understandings of 'democracy' and such collective goods as public order, collective welfare and social justice is significantly stronger than that between democracy and competitive elections, formal constitutions or guarantees of individual political rights. One set of studies conducted immediately following the break-up of the USSR revealed that the three most important characteristics associated with democracy were fairness in the judicial system (74%), economic prosperity (68%) and a government that provided for basic material needs of citizens (68%). Far less emphasis was placed on a competitive electoral system (39%), freedom to criticise the government (42%) and a free market economy (44%). Even among the 18–29 year old age group, 65% felt that the provision of basic material needs of citizens was an essential aspect of democratic governments.[44] Deeper into the post-Soviet transition, studies continue to indicate an 'overall socialist orientation' among the masses, as evident in strong support for the values of social equality, strengthened state control over the economy and state-backed guarantees of employment and welfare.[45] According to the 2000 New Russia Barometer survey, the six features that at least 70% of the respondents considered to be 'very important' for Russia to become a 'normal' society were the opportunity to 'retire from work and live to a healthy age' (87%), employment for anyone who wanted a job (86%), preserving the value of money against inflation (84%), improved public safety in the face of crime (82%), opportunities to improve living conditions (81%) and a strong government (71%).[46]

Such findings are consistent with qualitative studies that have emphasised the role of pre-existing understandings of democratic self-government as practised in pre-Soviet local communities, understandings that survived under the Soviet regime and are implied in popular expectations of what democratic governance should look like in

contemporary Russia.[47] A distinctively Russian understanding of local democracy has long been identified with traditional local institutions such as the peasant commune (*mir*). Underneath the steeply hierarchical organisation of the Muscovite Russian state, frequently assumed to be supported by a political culture of authoritarianism and deference to central rule, the peasant commune survived for centuries, even in the era of serfdom, as 'an institution of an extremely democratic character'.[48] The commune was marked by the practice of including representatives of all households in deliberations over communal decisions and in periodic elections of all commune leaders. More significantly, these practices were not linked to a principled elevation of democratic procedures and individual rights but rather to a wider set of norms embedded in institutionalised mechanisms designed to uphold the principle of *sobornost*' (collective solidarity) against individual claims, and to limit socioeconomic differentiation within the community (for example by periodically redistributing land strips among households).[49] Although pre-industrial communities everywhere exhibited a preference for collective rather than individual identity, the Russian *mir* stands out as a social institution that combined this collectivism with a tradition of open, democratic participation and distributive justice; and, significantly, this set of attitudes proved resilient in the urban industrial centres where self-regulated groups (*arteli*) of workers from the same regions (*zemlyaki*) adapted the norms and organisational forms of the peasant commune and sought to defend these against alternative systems of work organisation well into the 1920s.[50]

The point is not that local social institutions in pre-Soviet Russia were all genuinely or uniformly 'democratic' but that a distinctively Russian understanding of democracy emerged long before the break-up of the USSR and was linked to norms of collectivism, economic security and egalitarianism. That this linkage survived in the Soviet era should not be surprising given the Bolsheviks' own flirtation with the language of 'democracy' in justifying their revolutionary mission to abolish class inequalities and promote collective solidarity. While Lenin's principle of 'democratic centralism' left little room for mass participation, given the concern for party unity and discipline (as evident in Lenin's ban on factions in 1921), it is also true that the Bolsheviks' public declarations just prior to the 1917 Revolution created expectations of a more inclusive, egalitarian, participatory regime by elevating such principles as collegial decision making (*kollegial'nost'*), spontaneous action by the masses, workers' self-management in factories and the reduction of wage inequalities across different strata of workers and administrators.[51] Although these notions proved to be short-lived after the Bolshevik take-over, the Soviet state later continued to invoke the language of 'democracy' as part of its claim to legitimacy: official rhetoric frequently proclaimed the superiority of 'real' socialist democracy—linked to employment and welfare guarantees and greater social equality in a 'workers' state'—to the 'bourgeois' democracies of the West which were characterised by capitalist exploitation, class inequalities, high levels of crime and impoverishment of the working masses. Such official claims may not have been taken seriously by cynical Soviet citizens by the 1970s, but the broader assumption behind the claim—that 'democracy' is associated with a fair system of government that can ensure orderly public life, collective welfare and social justice—appears to have resonated even with those critical of the regime. As Crowley has shown, striking miners in 1991 used slogans

in favour of 'democracy' not to promote policies and institutions associated with liberal democracies in the West but to demand that the state fulfil its obligations by delivering promised goods and services while allowing workers' collectives to have greater control over enterprise resources and products.[52]

Although more research is needed on what Russians mean by 'democracy', the above discussion may be viewed as a tentative starting point for a coherent account of why continuing mass support for 'democracy' in the abstract coexists with declining trust in a Russian state that is more democratic than any in the past. In contrast to Western liberal democracy, which is not inherently associated with any particular socioeconomic policies or outcomes, Russians' favourable predisposition to democracy is fundamentally intertwined with assumptions about the kinds of social and economic outcomes a democracy ought to produce.[53] In particular, public order, material security and distributive justice figure prominently among the expectations most Russians had of the new democratic state proclaimed after the break-up of the USSR. To date, however, these expectations have gone unmet and have given way to rising anxieties related to the socioeconomic consequences of transition.

A January 2003 VTsIOM survey found the most important sources of anxiety for Russians to be (in declining order of significance for the respondents) poverty, rising prices, growing unemployment, bribery and corruption, inadequate medical care, a growing gap between rich and poor, inaccessibility of education due to rising fees, and crime.[54] According to studies published by the World Bank, the percentage of the population in poverty (making less than $2 a day) in Russia grew from an estimated 2.2 million (less than 2% of the population) in 1987–88 to 57.8 million (nearly 40% of the population) by the mid-1990s, with 80% of the poor remaining in poverty for more than a year.[55] Perhaps more telling is that more than half of the population is estimated in the United Nations 2003 *Human Development Report* to survive on just $4 a day (at 1990 US dollars, adjusted by purchasing power parity),[56] which suggests that many of those not counted as below the poverty line are quite close to it. Economic insecurity and growing crime have resulted in a strong preference in a number of polls for greater public order and for a more active, paternalistic state that can 'look after us', a preference that appears to be shared by the Russian middle class. Coupled with the belief that 'democracies are not good at maintaining order', this suggests a readiness to trade off specific features of democracy in exchange for any state that can deliver greater order and economic security.[57] Notably, these preferences for greater physical and material security extend into the ranks of the Russian middle class as well. As Balzer notes: 'The impact of a demoralised and criminalised military; a corrupt judiciary; extreme inequalities in incomes, education, and health care; and an overall perception of insecurity are likely to make many members of the Russian middle class seek security rather than democracy'.[58]

The growing uncertainties Russians face with regard to their material conditions are compounded by the awareness of rapidly growing inequality. A World Bank study of transition economies published in 2000 noted that the Gini coefficient for inequality had risen by 80% since the beginning of the post-Soviet transition, far higher than the increased inequality noted in East-Central Europe, where Gini coefficients were closer to those in Scandinavian countries.[59] Up to 70% of Russia's economy is estimated to be under the control of just a dozen oligarchs who have grown enormously rich and

politically influential at every level through their control over restructured banks and their ownership of former state enterprises in lucrative sectors such as energy, telecommunications and mass media.[60] Although the Soviet *nomenklatura* elite also enjoyed a highly privileged position and participated in widespread corruption organised around *blat* (personal ties), this elite was much larger, included decision makers at multiple administrative levels of the party-state apparatus across regions and sectors, and developed more enduring ties with a more diverse array of patron–client networks that stretched from the state to the local level.[61] By contrast, the oligarchs are a much smaller, narrower band of individuals whose resources and wealth far surpass those of even the highest-ranked members of the Soviet official class, whose material interests were focused on specific regions and sectors, and whose status and influence did not depend on social networks extending down to ordinary citizens or their immediate communities. This growing social and material distance between ordinary citizens and the new centres of wealth and power may be regarded as a feature of what Rose has called an 'hour-glass society', a society in which there are few channels to connect the networks formed by well-connected Russian elites with those formed by ordinary citizens around their local communities.[62]

Under these conditions it should not be surprising that support for the general idea of 'democracy' can coexist with a growing nostalgia for the former regime in spite of the recognition of the increases in individual liberties and freedoms under the post-Soviet regime. Almost immediately after the effects of the first stages of economic liberalisation were felt, public support for a capitalist economy began to drop sharply, from 81% in 1993 to just 22% in 1995,[63] while support for the Soviet-era economic system began to rise. The New Russia Barometer survey of April 2000 indicated that 71% viewed the pre-*perestroika* Soviet political system favourably (and 22% unfavourably) while 82% viewed the old economic system favourably (and 13% unfavourably); the current political system was viewed favourably by 38% of the population (and unfavourably by 48%) while the current economic system was viewed favourably by just 29% (and unfavourably by 62%).[64] A 1999 poll conducted by the Public Opinion Fund found that 85% of Russians regretted the dissolution of the Soviet Union (the figure was 69% in 1992), and a 1998 Interfax poll found that most people saw the reign of Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev (1964–82) as the 'golden age' for Russia during the twentieth century.[65] In addition to the nostalgia for key features and leaders of the Soviet state, polls also reveal that the most characteristic features identified with the Soviet regime are favoured qualities that are not frequently associated with the current regime, while the most characteristic features identified with the current regime are negative ones not frequently associated with the Soviet regime (see Table 1). Whatever complaints citizens had concerning the Soviet state, and there were surely many, the stable, familiar, predictable system of formal and informal exchange in the old system must have seemed infinitely more reliable in retrospect when contrasted to the diminished public order, increased socioeconomic insecurity and uncertainty, and sharply heightened stratification associated with post-Soviet reforms.

Although some regard it as fortuitous that rising frustrations over economic reforms and their socioeconomic consequences are not correlated with declining support for democracy in post-communist settings,[66] such an interpretation neglects to consider

TABLE 1
MOST CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF THE SOVIET AND CURRENT REGIMES

Percentage of respondents choosing regime qualities
(1–5 are five most commonly noted qualities for Soviet regime in late 1970s; 1a–5a are five most commonly noted qualities for post-Soviet regime; corresponding figures for other regime given in parentheses)

Regime qualities	*Soviet era*	*Post-Soviet era*
1. Close to the people	36	(2)
2. 'Our own', which we were used to	32	(3)
3. Legal	32	(12)
4. Bureaucratic	30	(22)
5. Strong, durable	27	(2)
1a. Criminal, corrupt	(13)	63
2a. Alien to the people	(8)	41
3a. Inconsistent	(8)	32
4a. Weak, impotent	(8)	30
5a. Short-sighted	(23)	28

Sources: Adapted from a 1998 nationwide survey of 1,500 respondents replying to the question about the qualities of Soviet power in the late 1970s and those of the post-Soviet regime in the early 1990s. See *Ekonomicheskie i sotsial'nye peremeny*, 1998, 3, as reported in White, *Russia's New Politics*, pp. 192–193; and in Leonid Sedov, 'Russian Government Not Legitimate, People Say', *Obshchaya gazeta* (RIA Novosti), 23 July 1998 (Table 1).

the much stronger and more fundamental correlation between these frustrations and the declining confidence in the Russian state. Even if we were to grant that most Russians genuinely prefer democratic institutions and procedures and that they find the current political system to be insufficiently democratic, this does not mean that the *reasons* for dissatisfaction with state institutions have to do primarily with the extent or functioning of democratic procedures. In this regard, much more revealing than the ambiguous evidence on the preference for some kind of democracy among Russians is the plentiful evidence that most Russians view the post-Soviet Russian state as simply unwilling or unable to deliver the collective goods most valued by ordinary citizens in the midst of an extended and uncertain process of transformation. For the time being at least, it appears that the inadequacy of the state, and not the insufficient consolidation of democracy, is the primary reason for the low level of state legitimacy in Russia. We now turn to the question of what Putin's popularity and reelection signify in light of the above discussion.

The sources and significance of Putin's popularity

In long consolidated liberal democracies a government's poor performance on substantive policies and outcomes of interest to citizens may lead to low popularity ratings for leaders, but generally does not lead to declining trust in the institutions, laws and practices constituting the democratic state. In Russia precisely the opposite appears to be true: the government's poor performance on substantive policies and outcomes is associated with low levels of trust in state institutions, but the President's popularity has grown rapidly and remains high. The Chechen campaign initiated in

1999 following bombings in Moscow may account for the initial spike in the previously unknown Putin's popularity, but it is Putin's approach to state rebuilding, and the renewed expectations associated with this approach, that explain why his popularity has been sustained even in the face of such catastrophes as the sinking of the Kursk submarine in 2000, the hostage-taking crisis in Moscow in 2002 and a series of controversial legal manoeuvres and political shenanigans in the months leading up to the parliamentary and presidential elections.[67] In contrast to the image Putin projects to the West as a serious partner in the promotion of a free market economy and the building of global democracy, at home his statements and actions suggest that a strong, unified and respected Russian state (that is, a state consistent with the ideal of *gosudarstvennost'*) has priority over the expansion of democratic contestation and local forms of civil society. This is evident in the case of a number of moves made by Putin to consolidate state power, moves that are recognised by the public as largely authoritarian in character and yet have been accepted and even welcomed, presumably on the hunch that a 'firm hand' will lead to greater public order and economic security.[68]

Most significantly, Putin has vigorously criticised independent, commercially owned media as 'media of mass disinformation',[69] and has sought to establish direct or indirect state control over the television industry, arguably the most important media in Russian society. In 2001 Putin supported the take-over of the formerly independent NTV by the government-controlled energy giant Gazprom. The following year he sanctioned the withdrawal of TV6's broadcasting licence following a lawsuit brought by the partly state-owned energy giant Lukoil, prompting the liberal opposition leader Grigorii Yavlinsky (Yabloko) to declare that 'freedom of speech is finished—in a political sense'.[70] More recently, and perhaps most telling, in anticipation of the Duma elections of December 2003 and the 2004 presidential election, Putin allowed the Information Ministry to close TVS, the last remaining independent television station, supposedly on the grounds that the station had run out of money. This prompted Vladimir Pozner, one of Russia's best known commentators and now head of the Russian Television Academy, to lament that 'it will be very difficult for any broadcaster to provide an objective picture of a variety of political events'.[71] Not surprisingly, the 2003 Freedom House global survey of media independence downgraded the status ascribed to Russian media from 'partly free' to 'not free'.[72] Yet this has not created any widespread resentment among the masses, perhaps because three-quarters of Russians say they are in favour of censorship aimed at safeguarding 'public morals'.[73]

Although Putin's 2001 'civic forum', which sought to bring together state and non-state actors constituted at the federal level, has been hailed by some as evidence of an emerging 'symbiosis' between the government and a growing civil society,[74] this approach is decidedly statist in its orientation and has been accompanied by measures that severely limit the possibilities for independent political mobilisation by non-governmental organisations.[75] This is most clearly evident in new labour and tax codes that many fear will curtail the activities and autonomy of trade unions, small businesses and other constituent elements of civil society. The labour code only permits 'primary unions' to sign collective agreements with employers, leaving aside smaller unions seeking to unite workers by profession; and legal strikes are limited to the enterprise level and even then require authorisation from a majority of an

assembly of two-thirds of the firm's workforce (thus prohibiting workers belonging to certain professions or skill levels from striking without the support of other categories of workers). The tax code imposes a single social tax on all organisations regardless of size, purpose or non-profit status, discouraging the formation of new civic associations, subjecting unco-operative groups, such as recalcitrant trade unions, to raids from the tax police, and making it difficult for small-scale businesses and non-profit entities to maintain a large staff.[76]

Although there are lingering questions as to whether Putin is genuinely attempting to curtail the collective influence of the oligarchs,[77] there are clear indications that the presidential administration and the oligarchs do not share the cosy relationship that was cultivated during the El'tsin era. Two of the most prominent oligarchs of that era, Boris Berezovsky and Vladimir Gusinsky, have been forced into exile by a host of lawsuits and the Kremlin's persistent scrutiny of their business interests.[78] During much of 2002 and the early part of 2003 a number of oligarchs publicly criticised the President for the first time. Mikhail Khodorkovsky (former chief of Yukos oil and the wealthiest of the oligarchs) has not only called for amendments to the Constitution to reduce presidential power and made noises about running for president himself, but also accused Putin of trying to 'nationalise' the country's mineral deposits during debates over laws governing production-sharing agreements while challenging the government's refusal to support the United States' attack on Iraq.[79] Subsequent events, however, make it clear that Putin was no more cowed by Khodorkovsky than he was by Berezovsky or Gusinsky. First, Khodorkovsky's long-time business associate (Platon Lebedev, whose bank is the main shareholder in Yukos) was arrested in summer 2003 in connection with charges of embezzlement. Then, in October 2003, the oligarch himself was arrested in dramatic fashion shortly before a planned merger of Yukos and Sibneft and a planned sale of a 40% stake in Yukos to ExxonMobil. These decisive moves against Berezovsky, Gusinsky and Khodorkovsky may indicate that Putin is being pressured by other forces (the so-called *siloviki* from the former security apparatus, for instance) but they also represent popular measures intended at a minimum to change the rules of the game set up between the Kremlin and the oligarchs under El'tsin.

Similarly, Putin has deployed new administrative mechanisms to bring Russia's far-flung regions under tighter central control. For the purpose of gaining greater control over what Putin called the 'little islands of power'[80] established by the governors of Russia's 89 regions, a presidential decree established seven federal districts headed by individuals personally appointed by him (five of them former officials in the military, the police and the secret service) who sit on the Federal Security Council and report on the actions of regional governors.[81] Each of the 89 regions, including the ethno-national districts and republics, was now required to amend its own laws so as to be consistent with the federal constitution. Whether or not these moves against the regional governors serve to re-establish the authority of the central state in an unambiguous way, the very efforts to achieve this objective appear to be widely supported by the public even if perceived to be authoritarian in essence.[82] Together with the moves against the oligarchs, these efforts at reining in the regions point to a recentralisation of political authority that is very much at the core of Putin's 'dictatorship of the law' and that has so far been welcomed by most Russians.

In terms of generating a more coherent national identity to support state re-centralisation, while Putin has followed El'tsin in refraining from open appeals to Russian or Slavic ethnicity, he has also proceeded to place a much greater emphasis on patriotism, collective identity and symbols that unmistakably appeal to ethnic Russians. In his first 'State of the Nation' address following his election, he declared that 'the only choice for Russia is to be a strong country, strong and sure of itself', and asserted that 'the unity of Russia is strengthened by the patriotic nature of our people, by our cultural traditions, memories'.[83] During his April 2002 'State of the Nation' address to the Duma Putin mentioned the need to consolidate democracy and markets, but emphasised that these efforts were part of a larger struggle in a harshly competitive international arena: 'in this struggle Russia has to be strong and competitive', and he vowed to make the country 'rich and strong' by creating, not merely matching, 'best practice'. To promote this project, Putin declared his main foreign policy priority to be not co-operation with the EU or the US but closer integration among former Soviet republics—the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)—for the purpose of 'securing … competitive advantages on the world market'.[84] It is unlikely that the significance of this proclamation, while largely ignored in the West, was missed by those who have been supportive of a partial restoration of the former USSR. More generally, Putin's rhetoric is consistent with the public mood, with 48.3% (by far the highest percentage) declaring that the most important 'unifying and mobilising idea' in Russia is the 'revival of Russia as a mighty global power', compared with only 10.2% naming the 'idea of individual freedom, priority of interests of the individual over interests of the state'.[85]

It is not surprising that the Orthodox Church, one of the core symbols of 'Great Russian' nationalism, is continuing to experience a strong revival under Putin even as other religious establishments find themselves facing an increasingly repressive atmosphere.[86] Putin has supported the 1997 law 'On freedom of conscience and religious associations' which granted special privileges to the Orthodox Church and allowed local authorities to impose restrictions on other religious associations. In television interviews Putin has also spoken of halting the expansion of Islam, which used Chechnya as its springboard for advancing into North Russia, and saving Siberia and the Far East from being swallowed by its foreign neighbours.[87] With the exception of a small circle of liberal intellectuals and a few small parties such as Yabloko that unequivocally endorse a civic variant of nationalism, politicians across the ideological spectrum appear to be joining Putin in basing their appeals on the 'logic of Russian greatness, historical destiny and geographical primacy'.[88] And although Putin himself has declared that extremism and racism have no place in an internationally respected Russia, mounting demographic pressures may increase the likelihood of a Russian version of the 'Le Pen syndrome', characterised by steady support for chauvinist candidates from a stable and significant minority.[89] In effect, Putin's vision of a resurgent, internationally respected Russian nation has effectively shifted the centre of debate over national identity, forcing mainstream politicians to demonstrate their nationalist credentials and unintentionally feeding the growth of ultra-nationalist rhetoric and extremist organisations targeting foreigners or ethnic minorities.[90] Thus Putin's triangulation of a reinvigorated central state, assertiveness on the international stage and the revival of national traditions and memories appears

to appeal to those who most strongly identify with those traditions and memories—typically ethnic Russians—and not to those who place a higher value on strict adherence to democratic procedures, the preservation of individual rights or the cultivation of a more vibrant and assertive civil society.

The point is not that Putin is not the sort of committed liberal democrat that Colton & McFaul believe to be necessary for the further consolidation of democracy in Russia. What is relevant for the purpose of the analysis here is the correlation between his projected vision of a new Russia and his high approval rating. Certainly, the latter is being sustained in part as a result of what White & McAllister call 'an emerging personality cult' that has been carefully manufactured for public consumption, with the rapid spread of laudatory biographies, public tributes and consumer goods bearing his name or image.[91] But this would not by itself account for the fact that there is a great deal of overlap in the positions Putin has espoused and the positions that previously contributed to the appeal of the communists (KPRF) as the most serious challenger to El'tsin's rule.[92] And the favourable reaction to Putin's public pronouncements—in spite of public awareness that he has curtailed certain democratic freedoms and employed heavy-handed administrative methods to get his way—suggests a genuine receptiveness to an official discourse trumpeting a strong centralised state capable of bringing back public order, economic security and social justice, all linked to a stronger sense of national pride.[93]

In spite of Putin's high approval rating and broad base of public support, however, it is important to note that confidence in the President has been conditional on actual evidence of improvement in everyday life for most Russians. As White & McAllister note, Putin's high approval rating may be little more than 'an unprecedented honeymoon with the Russian electorate' and was always conditional on further progress in political and economic life.[94] In the end, Putin's popularity can neither be sustained nor converted into increased state legitimacy unless his initiatives to restore state power under 'guided democracy' are accompanied by concrete measures that will bring ordinary citizens the kinds of public goods they value most. As the aforementioned evidence suggests, these goods are not the rights and procedures associated with consolidated democracy but rather substantive programmes that can increase order and predictability in public life, restore economic security and the associated welfare benefits, and reverse the trend towards growing social inequality. And no one appears to be more aware of this than Putin himself, as is evident in recent speeches urging Russians to unite to eliminate mass poverty and double Russia's national income in ten years.[95]

Conclusion: whither 'guided democracy'?

This article has proceeded on the assumption that, in the absence of a more coherent account of the structure and dynamics of state–society relations in Russia, debates over the consolidation of democracy or the robustness of civil society are likely to be repetitive and futile. Consequently, we have attempted to construct such an account by focusing on the question of the extent and sources of state legitimacy in post-Soviet Russia. The evidence reviewed above neither pronounces democracy to be doomed in Russia nor declares that Russians are culturally predisposed towards

authoritarianism. It does, however, call into question assumptions undergirding optimistic assessments of the prospects for liberal democracy in Russia. Specifically, the evidence indicates (1) that the level of state legitimacy, as indicated by the level of confidence or trust in national governmental institutions, declined during the 1990s in spite of the existence of democratic practices; and (2) that the significance of democratic orientations in accounting for this decline is low compared with the significance Russian citizens attach to the state's effectiveness in providing public order, socioeconomic stability, reduced elite corruption and social stratification, and a coherent national identity that provides a sense of distinctiveness and continuity with the past. That is, in spite of a high level of support for 'democracy' in the abstract, when it comes to trade-offs pitting specific features of democracy against the public goods the state is expected to deliver, illiberal and undemocratic attributes of the state are not only tolerated but welcomed. This accounts in part for the coexistence of the public support for the sometimes undemocratic features associated with Putin's 'guided democracy' and the low trust in most official institutions associated with the state. What this implies is that any hope for restored state legitimacy, whether under Putin or his successors, depends less on democracy and more on measures taken by the state that are directly responsive to popular expectations of public order, economic security and reduced social and material distance between ordinary citizens and the new Russian elite.

What is happening in Russia now may be more than just a case of 'democratisation backwards'.[96] It may be a case of democratisation being *pushed* backwards in order to restore the position and power of the central state in the regulation of political and economic life. After nearly a decade of 'state over-withdrawal'[97] accompanied by economic hardship and growing inequality, it is hardly surprising that Putin's vision of a resurgent, unified and assertive state is being welcomed by the vast majority of citizens even if they are aware of its negative consequences for liberal democracy, presumably because most view this vision through the familiar lens of the late Soviet period when a strong central state was associated with greater order, material security and social justice. It is not clear whether Putin's project of state rebuilding will manage to satisfy these popular expectations, but it is clear that neither Putin nor the citizenry are prepared to ignore these expectations for the sake of a principled commitment to a liberal form of democracy. Thus the remedy for the disillusionment with state institutions is not necessarily 'for the leaders of the country to start behaving more like democrats and less like elected tsars', as Colton & McFaul argue,[98] but rather for the leaders of the country to start behaving more like leaders who care about the socioeconomic conditions that represent the most pressing sources of anxiety among the majority of the citizens.

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[1] Ken Jowitt, *New World Disorder: The Leninist Extinction* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1992), p. 301.

[2] Just a few examples include Jeffrey Hahn, 'Continuity and Change in Russian Political Culture', *British Journal of Political Science*, 21, 4, October 1991, pp. 393–421; Arthur Miller, William Reisinger & Vicki Hesli (eds), *Public Opinion and Regime Change: The New Politics of Post-Soviet Societies* (Boulder, Westview, 1993); M. Steven Fish, *Democracy from Scratch* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1994); and James L. Gibson, 'The Resilience of Mass Support for Democratic Institutions and Processes in the Nascent Russian and Ukrainian Democracies', in Vladimir Tismaneanu (ed), *Political Culture and Civil Society in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* (Armonk, NY, M. E. Sharpe, 1995).

[3] On 'possibilism' as a fruitful approach to studying democratisation in post-communist regions see George Breslauer, 'Introduction', in Richard Anderson, M. Steven Fish, Stephen E. Hanson & Philip G. Roeder, *Post-communism and the Theory of Democracy* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2001). On democratic discourse and politically conscious social networks see, respectively, Richard Anderson, 'The Discursive Origins of Russian Democratic Politics', in Anderson *et al.*, *Post-communism;* and James L. Gibson, 'Social Networks, Civil Society, and the Prospects for Consolidating Russia's Democratic Transition', *American Journal of Political Science*, 45, 1, 2001, pp. 51–68. For positive assessments of the prospects for civil society under Putin see George Hudson, 'Civil Society in Russia: Models and Prospects for Development', *Russian Review*, 62, 2, April 2003, pp. 212–222; Thomas M. Nichols, 'Putin's First Two Years: Democracy or Authoritarianism?', *Current History*, October 2002, pp. 307–312; and Marcia Weigle, 'On the Road to the Civic Forum: State and Civil Society from Yeltsin to Putin', *Demokratizatsiya*, 10, 2, Spring 2002, pp. 117–146.

[4] Graeme Gill & Roger Markwich, *Russia's Stillborn Democracy?: From Gorbachev to Yeltsin* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000); Peter Reddaway & Dmitri Glinski, *The Tragedy of Russia's Reforms: Market Bolshevism Against Democracy* (Washington, DC, United States Institute of Peace Press, 2001); Marc Morjé Howard, *The Weakness of Civil Society in Post-communist Europe* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2003); Alfred B. Evans, 'Recent Assessments of Social Organizations in Russia', *Demokratizatsiya* 10, 3, Summer 2002, pp. 322–342; and Harley Balzer, 'Demography and Democracy in Russia: Human Capital Challenges to Democratic Consolidation', *Demokratizatsiya*, 11, 1, Winter 2003, pp. 95–109.

[5] M. Steven Fish, 'When More is Less: Superexecutive Power and Political Underdevelopment in Russia', in Victoria E. Bonnell & George W. Breslauer (eds), *Russia in the New Century: Stability or Disorder?* (Boulder, Westview Press, 2001).

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 27.

[7] Erik P. Hoffmann, 'The Dynamics of State–Society Relations', in Harry Eckstein, Frederic Fleron, Erik Hoffmann & William Reisinger, *Can Democracy Take Root in Post-Soviet Russia? Explorations in State–Society Relations* (Lanham, MD, Rowman and Littlefield, 1998), pp. 97, 95.

[8] Gerard Alexander, 'Institutionalized Uncertainty, the Rule of Law, and the Sources of Democratic Stability', *Comparative Political Studies*, 35, 10, December 2002, pp. 1145–1170. The 'institutionalised uncertainty' thesis, although acknowledging the possibility of future winning as a positive feature of democracy that dissuades losers from challenging outcomes, generally emphasises the problematic effects of uncertainty created by changing leadership and policy in transitional democracies; see for example Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1991). The 'rule of law' thesis suggests that democratic procedures reduce *ex ante* uncertainty over decision rules, methods of political contestation and the rights of citizens; see for example Scott Mainwaring, 'Transitions to Democracy and Democratic Consolidation', in Scott Mainwaring, Guillermo O'Donnell & J. Samuel Valenzuela (eds), *Issues in Democratic Consolidation* (Notre Dame, IN, University of Notre Dame Press, 1992).

[9] Stephen White & Ian McAllister, 'Putin and His Supporters', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 55, 3, May 2003, p. 384.

[10] See for example the critique of traditional quantitative methods in gauging Russian cultural orientations in James Alexander, *Political Culture in Post-Communist Russia: Formlessness and Recreation in a Traumatic Transition* (New York, St. Martin's, 2000).

[11] The general significance of trust in determining governmental legitimacy has been well established. In the context of post-communist societies see for example William Mishler & Richard Rose, 'What are the Origins of Political Trust? Testing Institutional and Cultural Theories in Post-Communist Societies', *Comparative Political Studies*, 34, 1, February 2001, pp. 30–62.

[12] Stephen White, *Russia's New Politics: The Management of a Post-communist Society* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 270 (Table 8.1).

[13] Richard Rose & Neil Munro, *Elections Without Order: Russia's Challenge to Vladimir Putin* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 226.

[14] The survey was based on 1,601 responses, see *http://www.russiavotes.org/rvwhatsnew.htm*, accessed 18 July 2003.

[15] See *Ekonomicheskie i sotsial'nye peremeny*, various issues, as adapted in White, *Russia's New Politics*, p. 270; and Yuri Levada, 'Homo Praevaricatus: Russian Doublethink', in Archie Brown (ed.), *Contemporary Russian Politics* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 312.

[16] Anton Steen, 'The Question of Legitimacy: Elites and Political Support in Russia', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 53, 5, July 2001, p. 697.

[17] Centre for Labour Market Studies, *Formation of Social Partnership in the Russian Federation* (Moscow, Institute of Economics, Russian Academy of Sciences, 1995), pp. 13–14; and J. E. M. Thirkell, K. Petkov & S. A. Vickerstaff, *The Transformation of Labour Relations: Restructuring and Privatization in Eastern Europe and Russia* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 106.

[18] See Richard Rose, *A Decade of New Russian Barometer Survey* (Glasgow, Centre for the Study of Public Policy, University of Strathclyde, 2002); and White & McAllister, 'Putin and His Supporters', p. 390.

[19] Mishler & Rose, 'What are the Origins of Political Trust?', p. 57 (Appendix A).

[20] Lev Gudkov, 'Russia—A Society in Transition?', *Telos*, Summer 2001, p. 23.

[21] This survey of 2,107 respondents is reported at *http://www.russiavotes.org/rvwhatsnew.htm*, accessed 18 July 2003.

[22] Timothy Colton & Michael McFaul, 'Are Russians Undemocratic?', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 18, 2, April–June 2002, p. 96.

[23] White, *Russia's New Politics*, pp. 192–193, based on a February–March 1998 national representative survey of 1,500 respondents reported in *Ekonomicheskie i sotsial'nye peremeny*, 1998, 3, pp. 57, 76–77.

[24] Henry E. Hale, 'Civil Society From Above? Statist and Liberal Models of State-Building in Russia', *Demokratizatsiya*, 10, 3, Summer 2002, pp. 313–317.

[25] White, *Russia's New Politics*, p. 270 (Table 8.1).

[26] Kathryn Stoner-Weiss, 'The Russian Central State in Crisis', in Zoltan Barany & Robert Moser (eds), *Russian Politics: Challenges of Democratization* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 132, based on a 1996 panel survey of voting-age respondents coordinated and reported by Timothy Colton.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 133.

[28] Daniel Treisman, 'Russia Renewed?', *Foreign Affairs*, 81, November/December 2002, pp. 58–72; and 'How Free is Free?', *The Economist* (Special), 25 November 2000, p. 1.

[29] Debra Javeline, *Protest and the Politics of Blame: The Russian Response to Unpaid Wages* (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2003).

[30] On the low trust in unions see White, *Russia's New Politics*, p. 270; and Mishler & Rose, (eds), *Russia in the New Century* p. 57.

[31] The courts initially struck down the election results on shaky grounds at the behest of Norilsk Nickel officials, but the Norilsk union's candidate, Valerii Melnikov, went on to decisively win the rescheduled elections anyway; see Boris Kagarlitsky, 'Norilsk—A Landmark Victory', *Moscow Times*, 6 May 2003.

[32] Rudra Sil, interview with Aleksandr Nikolaevich Shepel, President of the Confederation of Labour of Russia (Konfederatsiya Truda Rossii, KTR), 8 June 2002.

[33] Gordon M. Hahn, 'Growing Middle Class Reinforces Civil Society', *The Russia Journal*, 26 April–2 May 2002. The social tax requires organisations of all types and sizes (including non-profit organisations) to pay a 22.8% tax on self-produced goods or a 35.6% tax on payments made to any individual who can be considered to be 'hired labour'. According to a key trade union leader, this law has already been used to send the tax police to investigate a number of unco-operative unions (Rudra Sil, interview with Sergei Khramov, President of Sotsprof, Moscow, 5 June 2002).

[34] Albert Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1970).

[35] Victor M. Sergeyev, 'Organized Crime and Social Instability in Russia: The Alternative State, Deviant Bureaucracy, and Social Black Holes', in Bonnell & Breslauer (eds), *Russia in the New Century*, p. 169. See also Richard Lindberg & Vesna Markovic, 'Organized Crime Outlook in the New Russia', *Search International*, 2001, *http://www.search-international.com/Articles/crime/russiacrime.htm*.

[36] 'Russia is on the Top Ten List of Most Corrupted Countries', *Pravda*, 31 January 2002, see *http://english.pravda.ru/main/2002/01/31/26135.html*.

[37] Cited in Alexander N. Domrin, 'Ten Years Later: Society, "Civil Society," and the Russian State', *The Russian Review*, 62, April 2003, pp. 205–206.

[38] Rose, *A Decade of New Russian Barometer Survey*, p. 302; and Domrin, 'Ten Years Later', p. 205.

[39] M. A. Shabanova, 'Institutsional'nye izmeneniya i nepravovye praktiki', in *Kto i kuda stremitsya vesti Rossiyu? …* (Moscow, Moskovskaya vysshaya shkola sotsial'nykh i ekonomicheskikh nauk, Intertsentr, 2001), pp. 319–327.

[40] Colton & McFaul, 'Are Russians Undemocratic?', p. 101.

[41] New Russia Barometer X, cited in Rose, *A Decade of New Russian Barometer*, p. 27.

[42] Colton & McFaul, 'Are Russians Undemocratic?', p. 99.

[43] New Russia Barometer IX, as reported on *http://www.russiavotes.org/rvwhatsnew.htm*. (Table 1, 'State of the Nation'), accessed 18 July 2003.

[44] Office of Research of the USIA, 'Russians Link Democracy to Prosperity and Equal Justice', *USIA Opinion Research Memorandum*, 16 October 1992, as cited in James Millar & Sharon Wolchik, 'The Social Legacies and the Aftermath of Communism', in James Millar & Sharon Wolchik (eds), *The Social Legacy of Communism* (Washington, DC, Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1994), pp. 8, 16.

[45] Judith Kullberg & William Zimmerman, 'Liberal Elites, Socialist Masses, and the Problems of Russian Democracy', *World Politics*, 51, April 1999, pp. 323–358 at p. 336. See also Domrin, 'Ten Year's Later', p. 204; Robert Brym, 'Re-evaluating Mass Support for Political and Economic Change in Russia', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 48, 5, 1996, pp. 751–766; and William Miller, Stephen White & Paul Heywood, *Values and Political Change in Post-communist Europe* (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1998).

[46] New Russia Barometer VIII, 19–29 January 2000, as reported on *http://www.russiavotes.org/rvwhatsnew.htm*, accessed 18 July 2003.

[47] In addition to Nikolai Petro, *The Rebirth of Russian Democracy* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1995) and Sergei Pushkarev, *Self-Government and Freedom in Russia* (Boulder, Westview, 1988) see also Russell Bova, 'Political Culture, Authority Patterns, and the Architecture of the New Russian Democracy', in Eckstein *et al.* (eds), *Can Democracy Take Root in Post-Soviet Russia?*, pp. 177–200; Frederic Fleron, 'Congruence Theory Applied: Democratization in Russia', in Eckstein *et al.* (eds), *Can Democracy Take Root in Post-Soviet Russia?*, pp. 58–67; and Victor Sergeyev & Nikolai Biryukov, *Russia's Road to Democracy: Parliament, Communism and Traditional Culture* (Brookfield, VT, Elgar, 1993).

[48] Stephen White, *Political Culture and Soviet Politics* (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1979), p. 58. On the 'alternative' tradition of local democracy and self-government see also Petro, *The Rebirth of Russian Democracy* and Pushkarev, *Self-government and Freedom in Russia*.

[49] For detailed discussions of collective decision making and the low level of socioeconomic stratification in the *mir* see Edward Keenan, 'Muscovite Political Folkways', *Russian Review*, 45, 2, April 1986, pp. 115–181, esp. p. 128; Moshe Lewin, *Making of the Soviet System* (New York, Pantheon, 1985), pp. 76–82; Theodor Shanin, *Russia as a 'Developing Society'* (London, Macmillan, 1985), pp. 76–77, 94–102; and Christine Worobec, *Peasant Russia: Family and Community in the Post-Emancipation Period* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 20–41.

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[52] Stephen Crowley, *Hot Coal, Cold Steel: Russian and Ukrainian Workers from the End of the Soviet Union to the Post-Communist Transformations* (University of Michigan Press, 1997), p. 143.

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[55] Branko Milanovic, *Income, Inequality and Poverty During the Transition from Planned to Market Economy* (Washington, DC, World Bank, 1998), p. 77; and Erzo F.P. Luttmer, *Measuring Poverty Dynamics and Inequality in Transition Economics: Disentangling Real Events from Noisy Data* (Washington, DC, World Bank, 2001), p. 31.

[56] United Nations Development Program, *Human Development Report 2003*, as noted at *http://www.undp.org/hdr2003/indicator/cty_f_RUS.html*, accessed 21 July 2003.

[57] Ellen Carnaghan, *Have Your Cake and Eat it Too: Tensions between Democracy and Order Among Russian Citizens* (Glasgow, Centre for the Study of Public Policy, University of Strathclyde, 2001), pp. 4–7; and Elena Bashkirova, 'Value Change and Survival of Democracy in Russia (1995–2000)', Russian Public Opinion and Market Research (ROMIR), 2002, at *http://www.romir.ru/eng/value-change.htm*, accessed 1 August 2002.

[58] Balzer, 'Demography and Democracy in Russia', p. 109.

[59] World Bank, *Making Transition Work for Everyone: Poverty and Inequality in Europe and Central Asia* (Washington, DC, World Bank, 2000), esp. pp. 367–377.

[60] Sergeyev 'Organized Crime and Social Instability in Russia'; and Fred Weir, 'In Russia, A "Creeping Coup"?', Special to *Christian Science Monitor*, 18 June 2003.

[61] On the size and diversity of the *nomenklatura* and the structure of their patronage networks see Grey Hodnett, 'The Pattern of Leadership Politics', in Seweryn Bialer (ed.), *The Domestic Context of Soviet Foreign Policy* (Boulder, Westview Press, 1981), p. 108; and T. H. Rigby, 'Introduction', in Bohdan Harasymiw & T. H. Rigby (eds), *Leadership Selection and Patron–Client Relations in the USSR and Yugoslavia* (London, Allen & Unwin, 1981), p. 6.

[62] Richard Rose, 'Russia as an Hour-Glass Society: A Constitution without Citizens', *East European Constitutional Review*, 4, 3, Summer 1995, pp. 34–42. It may be true, as Gibson argues, that private social networks in Russia are composed of 'weak ties' and feature high levels of political discussion as in the West, but such similarities cannot be assumed to be spurring the growth of civil society or consolidation of democracy in Russia as Gibson assumes (p. 66), if we consider the growing distance between elite and local networks.

[63] Bertram Silverman & Murray Yanowitch, *New Rich, New Poor, New Russia: Winners and Losers on the Russian Road to Capitalism* (Armonk; M. E. Sharpe, 1997), p. 129.

[64] New Russia Barometer IX, as reported at *http://www.russiavotes.org/rvwhatsnew.htm*, accessed 18 July 2003.

[65] 'About 85 Percent of Russians Regret USSR Dissolution', *Interfax*, Moscow, 28 January 2000; and 'Poll: Majority of Russians Lament for Brezhnev's "Golden Age" ', *Agence France Press*, 29 January 1999.

[66] Fish, 'Dynamics of Democratic Erosion', p. 64.

[67] White & McAllister, 'Putin and His Supporters', p. 386.

[68] Bova, 'Political Culture', pp. 185–186.

[69] Vladimir Putin, 'Inaugural State of the Nation Address to the Russian Parliament', 8 July 2000.

[70] Neil Chatterjee, 'Interview—Russian Opposition Leaders Say No Free Speech', *Reuters*, 12 February 2002, see *http://www.eng.yabloko.ru/Publ/2002/agency/reuters-120202.html*.

[71] Quoted in Jonathan Thatcher, 'As Russian Election Nears, TV Independence Goes', *Reuters*, 26 June 2003.

[72] Freedom House, *Freedom of the Press 2003: A Global Survey of Media Independence*, 30 April 2003, as reported at *http://www.freedomhouse.org/pfs2003/pfs2003.pdf*, accessed 15 July 2003.

[73] Yuri Levada, 'Sotsvopros', *Novaya gazeta*, 30 July 2001, as cited in Domrin, 'Ten Year's Later', p. 206.

[74] Hudson, 'Civil Society in Russia', p. 221; see also Weigle 'On the Road to the Civic Forum'.

[75] John Squier, 'Civil Society and the Challenge of Russian "Gosudarstvennost" ', *Demokratizatsiya*, 10, 2, 2002, pp. 166–182, esp. p. 169. See also Hale, 'Civil Society from Above'; and Alexander Nikitin & Jane Buchanan, 'The Kremlin's Civic Forum: Cooperation or Co-optation for Civil Society in Russia?', *Demokratizatsiya*, 10,2, Spring 2002, pp. 179–197.

[76] Rudra Sil, interviews with Evgeniya Gvozhdeva, Director, Assotsiyatsiya Sotsial'noi i Trudovoi Informatsii (ASTI), 9 June 2002; Sergei Khramov, President, Sotsprof, 5 June 2002; Aleksandr Shepel, President, Konfederatsiya Truda Rossii (KTR), 8 June 2002; and Irene Stevenson, American Center for International Labor Solidarity, Moscow, 4 June 2002.

[77] Andrei Piontkovsky, Director of the Moscow Centre for Strategic Research, argues that Putin 'can throw one or two people out of the country, but he can't do anything to change the political and economic power structure that developed under El'tsin and that over the past two years has showed itself to be quite strong'; quoted in Francesca Mereu, 'Russia: Putin Presidency at Two-Year Mark—Do Oligarchs Still Have a Role? (Part 1)', *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL)*, Moscow, 19 April 2002. Similar scepticism is also expressed in Treisman, 'Russia Renewed?'

[78] See *ibid.*; Neil Robinson, 'The Economy and the Prospects for Anti-Democratic Development in Russia', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 52, 8, December 2000, pp. 1391–1416; and Neil Robinson, 'Mr. Putin and the Oligarchs', *Washington Post*, 22 July 2000.

[79] The draft law was to declare all mineral deposits to be state-owned and require privatised oil companies to sign concessions and share revenues with the government; see Stanislav Menshikov, 'Dancing With the Oligarchs: Privatisation or Nationalisation?', *Moscow Tribune*, 2 August 2002. The opposition to Russia's policy on Iraq is evident in the comments of Yukos chief Mikhail Khodorkovsky; see 'Die Welt: Khodorkovsky vs. Putin', *Pravda.Ru*, 15 April 2003, as printed at *http://english.pravda.ru/main/18/88/351/9714_Khodorkovsky.html*, accessed 15 July 2003.

[80] Putin, 'Inaugural State of the Nation Address to the Russian Parliament'.

[81] 'Russia's Seven New Super-Regions', *Reuters*, 31 May 2001.

[82] See Robinson, 'The Economy and the Prospects for Anti-Democractic Development of Russia', p. 1391.

[83] Putin, 'Inaugural State of the Nation Address to the Russian Parliament'.

[84] Vladimir Putin, 'State of the Nation Address to the Russian Parliament', 18 April 2002.

[85] 'Anatomiya Russkoi Dushi: Desyatiletie otechestvennykh reform v rasshifrovke sotsiologov', *Izvestiya*, 16 April 2002, cited in Domrin, 'Ten Years Later', p. 202. Note that, adding the 48% favouring Russia's revival as a 'mighty global power' to the 15.3% who named a 'return to socialist ideals and values' and the 8% who named Russia's 'uniqueness as a nation, special historical mission of Russian people', over 70% would subscribe to themes that are far removed from the kind of liberal democratic orientation many expected to find over the course of the post-Soviet transition.

[86] Theodore Karasik, 'Putin and Shoigu: Reversing Russia's Decline', *Demokratizatsiya*, 8, 2, Spring 2000, p. 178; and 'Russia's Growing Religious Repression', *Washington Post*, 5 May 2002.

[87] Vladimir Shlapentokh, 'Putin's First Year in Office: The New Regime's Uniqueness in Russian History', *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 34, 2, 2001, pp. 371–399 at p. 374.

[88] Alexander Motyl, 'Why Empires Re-emerge: Imperial Collapse and Imperial Revival in Comparative Perspective', *Comparative Politics*, 31, 2, January 1999, p. 137. See also Dmitry Shlapentokh, 'The Illusions and Realities of Russian Nationalism', *The Washington Quarterly*, 23, 1, Winter 2000, pp. 174–177, 182–186.

[89] Balzer, 'Demography and Democracy in Russia', p. 100.

[90] Since May 2000 racist attacks have injured more than 100 foreigners. The most extremist fascist organisation, the People's National Party, claims that its membership includes 10,000 members from across the country and has been growing rapidly since 2000; see 'Russia's Culture of Racism', *Los Angeles Times*, 19 July 2002; and Peter Baker, 'Attacks on Foreigners Rising in Russia: Frequency of Violence, Recruiting by Fascist Groups Alarm Kremlin', *Washington Post*, 11 August 2002.

[91] White & McAllister, 'Putin and His Supporters', p. 388.

[92] On this point see *ibid.*, p. 384; and Richard Rose, Neil Munro & Stephen White, 'How Strong is Vladimir Putin's Support?', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 16, 4, October–December 2000, p. 304.

[93] Bova, 'Political Culture', p. 186; and V. Shlapentokh, 'Putin's First Year in Office', pp. 378–379.

[94] White & McAllister, 'Putin and His Supporters', p. 390; quote from p. 397.

[95] Ron Popeski, 'Putin Sets High Growth Target, Wages War on Poverty', *Reuters*, Moscow, 16 May 2003.

[96] Richard Rose & Don Chull Shin, 'Democratization Backwards: The Problem of Third-Wave Democracies', *British Journal of Political Science*, 31, 2, April 2001, p. 331. Rose & Shin use this phrase to describe the fact that third-wave democracies have introduced competitive elections before consolidating such basic institutions as the rule of law and civil society.

[97] Kazimierz Poznanski, 'Transition and Its Dissenters: An Introduction', *East European Politics and Society*, 15, 2, Spring 2001, pp. 207–221.

[98] Colton & McFaul, 'Are Russians Undemocratic?', p. 118.