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The Problems of "Stateness" and Transitions: The USSR and Russia

THE MOST SEVERE problems of stateness that we consider in this book occurred in the former Soviet Union and in the former Yugoslavia. Stateness problems were also critical, but ultimately less traumatic, in the former Czechoslovakia and, in a unique form, in the former German Democratic Republic. The most difficult problems that must be resolved in Latvia and Estonia before they can become consolidated democracies are not economic but involve citizenship and stateness. From once being neglected in the literature on democratic transitions, stateness problems must increasingly be a central concern of political activists and theorists alike.[1]

As comparativists interested in transitions from nondemocratic regimes, our focus is on what, if anything, can be learned from the disintegration of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. All too often, when the horrors of ethnic cleansing in Yugoslavia, the bloody consequences of the Chechen secession struggle, or the interethnic clashes in such former Soviet Republics as Azerbaijan, Moldova, or Georgia are addressed, it has been only too easy to explain the violent conflicts by referring to "primordial identities" and their consequences. Indeed, a growing belief emerged that, in the face of such "irrational emotions," neither international actors such as the European Union, nor statecraft of any sort could do anything to prevent the inevitable clashes of the new age of nationalisms.

However, in our opening discussion of stateness problems we argued that political identities are less primordial and fixed than contingent and changing. They are amenable to being constructed or eroded by political institutions and political choices.[2] In the Spanish case we documented how the choice of electoral sequence

1. For our analysis of why the classical literature on democratic transitions almost completely neglects stateness problems and for an alternative conceptual approach, see chapter 2.

2. With different emphases a variety of works in social science show how history, institutions, and imagination shape and constantly change nations, nationalism, and concepts of citizenship. See Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalisms* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991, rev. ed.); and Joseph Rothschild, *Ethnopolitics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981). With reference to the Soviet Union, see especially

helped create democratic state power and helped construct multiple and complementary political identities. Even with extremely skillful handling, we acknowledge that the stateness problem in the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia would have been much more difficult than in Spain.[3] However, we want to highlight the consequences of political structures, institutions, incentives, and choices, which we believe do not receive the attention they merit in the new debate about democratization, nationalism, and stateness.

We develop three closely inter-related arguments concerning stateness and transitions in the Soviet Union. First, we argue that the specific institutions and principles of Soviet-type federalism found in the Soviet Union and, with modifications, in Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia created incentives and resource mobilization opportunities for the politicization of ethnicity. To be sure, in the Soviet Union before Gorbachev, these incentives and opportunities were greatly mitigated by the de facto control by the center of coercive and economic resources and by the fact that the federal constitution remained largely fictive. However, our intention is to call attention to the great *potential* stateness problems these structures engendered.

Second, we argue that, given the above structures, the transition path chosen of perestroika and glasnost, liberalization but not democratization of the early post-totalitarian central power structures, and the electoral sequence of holding the first non-single-party competitive elections at the republican rather than at the all-Union level had severe disintegrative consequences. This path eroded the party-state's ideological, coercive, and economic control capacities; did little to create new democratically legitimated state structures at the center; and directly helped make noninclusive ethnic nationalism the most dynamic force in politics.

Third, we argue that the major successor state of the USSR, Russia, in addition to the normal problems faced by all post-Communist polities, has a highly specific and difficult legacy of stateness and citizenship problems that would have greatly complicated its democratic transition and consolidation no matter what choices were made. However, the privileging of economic restructuring over democratic state restructuring further weakened an already weak state, deprived

Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), and Alexander J. Motyl, ed., *Thinking Theoretically about Soviet Nationalities: History and Comparison in the Study of the USSR* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).

3. Indeed, we believe that the problem of the Baltic countries—because of the compounding resentments stemming from their previous status as independent states, their relatively recent and forceful absorption into the USSR, their comparatively greater wealth, and their religious and linguistic differences—was insolvable within the context of the USSR. It could possibly have been better handled by Gorbachev making an announcement that he recognized the illegitimacy of the secret pact between Hitler and Stalin and holding a referendum on the fiftieth anniversary of that pact which asked the population of the Baltic countries whether they wanted to join the Soviet Union voluntarily. Had they voted not to join the Soviet Union (as they probably would have), a peaceful and rapid split might have been arranged with full citizenship rights for all. It is also unlikely that much could have been done to have kept Georgia, and possibly even Moldova, within the USSR.

the original economic reform program of the state the coherence necessary for the creation of an efficacious economic society, and contributed to the mutual delegitimation of the three democratic branches of government.

The State's Contradictory Structuring of Nationalisms

One of the reasons for the extraordinary disintegration of the USSR may well be that so many of the major political actors did not really consider that the USSR had the potential for a severe stateness problem. Mikhail Gorbachev, for example, began his famous book, *Perestroika,* with a strong argument that "the country was verging on crisis." There was a "slowing of economic growth," an "erosion of ideological and moral values," and "eulogizing and servility were encouraged." Because of all this, he argued, "Perestroika is our urgent necessity." Delays in reform would mean that the USSR would be "fraught with serious social, economic, and political crises."[4]

Against this threatening backdrop, Gorbachev mentions the nationality policy as an area of almost unqualified success.

> The USSR represents a truly unique example in the history of human civilization. These are the fruits of the nationality policy launched by Lenin. The Revolution and socialism have done away with national oppression and inequality, and ensured economic, intellectual and cultural progress for all nations and nationalities. . . . Every unbiased person is bound to acknowledge the fact that our Party has carried out a tremendous amount of work. . . . If the nationality problem had not been solved in principle . . . our state would not have survived [nor] the republics formed a community based on brotherhood and cooperation, respect and mutual assistance.
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> Meeting people during my tours of republics and national regions of the Soviet Union, I see for myself over and over again that they appreciate and take pride in the fact that their nations belong to one big international family, that they are part and parcel of a vast and great power which plays such an important role in mankind's progress. This is exactly what Soviet patriotism is all about.[5]

Gorbachev was not alone in this misperception. In separate private conversations with us, both Aleksandr Yakovlev, Gorbachev's key advisor and reform ally, and Yegor Ligachev, a key hard-line opponent in the Politburo, acknowledged that they had not given much attention to potential problems with nationalism when perestroika and glasnost had been launched.[6] This political unawareness was not

4. Mikhail Gorbachev, *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), 3–7.

5. Ibid., 104–7.

6. Discussion of Alfred Stepan with Aleksandr Yakovlev in Moscow, October 24, 1989, and of Juan Linz with Yegor Ligachev at Yale University in November 11, 1991. Fedor Burlatskii, a prominent reformer and pro-Gorbachev intellectual, at a lecture given in 1990 at Harvard University, argued that the most important problem the USSR was facing was not ethnic but economic. Indeed, Burlatskii argued that, if economic reforms were accelerated, the national problem would disappear and even the Balts would agree to stay in the union. This line of thought, which emphasized the primacy of economic considerations, was typical of Gorbachev's circle.

confined to party leaders. Writing after the abortive coup of 1991, one of the Soviet Union's leading scholars on ethnicity observed, "The years of perestroika, especially the last two or three years, were marked by an unprecedented upsurge of national movements, national agitation and conflict. . . . These events were completely unexpected by the public, by experts on nationalities, by the press, and by political authorities. Why was this the case?"[7] We will attempt to explain.

One major reason (as in Yugoslavia and in Czechoslovakia) had to do with Soviet leaders' underestimation of the potential for conflict built into Soviet-style federalism. This type of federalism had its origins in history, ideology, and party-state power. The Soviet Union, Europe's last major multiethnic empire, was structured on potentially contradictory principles.[8] Because many of the nations or nationalities had had a prior period of independence, the regime made an effort to win compliance and attain integration by creating a federal system that contained an extraordinarily high degree of dualism. On the one hand, republics were made proto-states, organizations of cultural distinctiveness were legitimized, and there were extensive incentives for elites from the "titular republics" to advance their republic's (and especially their nationality's) specific interests.[9] On the other hand, the republics were members of a regime that espoused a universalistic ideology and was run by a centralizing party-state that not only monopolized important decisions but kept non-Russian nationalities (except for Ukrainians) out of almost all of the key command and control posts in the central party secre-

7. Galina Staravoitova, "Nationality Policies in the Period of Perestroika: Some Comments from a Political Actor," in the extremely informative volume edited by Gail W. Lapidus and Victor Zaslavsky with Philip Goldman, *From Union to Commonwealth: Nationalism and Separatism in the Soviet Republics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 114. For a particularly acerbic discussion of the marginalized role of nationality studies in sovietology, see Orest Subtelny, "American Sovietology's Greatest Blunder: The Marginalization of the Nationality Issue," *Nationalities Papers* 22, no. 1 (1994): 141–56.

8. S. N. Eisenstadt, a major theoretician of comparative empires, describes this effort at integrating two principals of legitimation thus: "On the ideological level, the basic mode of legitimation of the new regime—its strong universalistic and participatory orientations—in principle transcended any specific national boundaries. . . . The expression of the cultural heritage of different communities within the overreaching frameworks of the universalistic socialist Fatherland was fully legitimized. . . . It involved also the full scale legitimation of these republics as autonomous, providing them with all the organs of government. . . . Thus, their distinctiveness was fully legitimized, even if in reality these tendencies were overshadowed by the Russian centrist hegemony." He remarked that "the contradictions inherent in these policies could be suppressed by a strong totalitarian regime." See his "Center-Periphery Relations in the Soviet Empire: Some Interpretive Observations," in Motyl, *Thinking Theoretically about Soviet Nationalities,* 220, 205. For a discussion of the concept of *empire* as applied to the USSR, also see Alexander J. Motyl, "From Imperial Decay to Imperial Collapse: The Fall of the Soviet Empire in Comparative Perspective," in Richard Rudolph and David Good, eds., *Nationalism and Empire: The Hapsburg Monarchy and the Soviet Union* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 15–43. For the idea of the "outer empire," see Alex Pravda, ed., *The End of the Outer Empire: Soviet East-European Relations in Transition 1985–1990* (London: Sage Publications, 1992).

9. For a particularly strong historically anchored comparative analysis of this phenomenon, see Ronald Suny, who argues that, whereas Czarist Russia was called the "prison house of nations," for many groups "the Soviet Union became the incubator of new nations" and that "the story of Soviet nationalities can be characterized as one of a state making nations, but not just as it pleased." See Suny, *Revenge of the Past,* 87, 160.

tariat, the KGB, and the army.[10] Contradiction and conflicts, while in some ways growing, were contained in the Brezhnev period. These contradictory structures remained reasonably effective for managing nationalism as long as the centralized party-state was in overall control of the federation. However, as we shall see when we consider the perestroika period, the same structures can produce different dynamics under different conditions and different policies—especially if such structures harbor as many incentives for the politicization of ethnicity as did those of Soviet-style federalism (exhibit 19.1).[11]

We will conclude this section with a long quotation from an excellent historical study that captures the contradictory aspects of Soviet nationality policy.

> Nation-making in the USSR occurred within a unique context: a state that had set out to overcome nationalism and the differences between nations had in fact created a set of institutions and initiated processes that fostered the development of conscious, secular, politically mobilizable nationalities. Despite the stated goals of the Communist party, the processes of nativization, industrialization, urbanization, and state-building in the Soviet Union provided the social and cultural base, first, for ethnic elites to organize low level resistance to rule by Russia and, later, for counterelites to mobilize broad-based nationalist movements. Still, the open challenge to the empire came only after the top party leadership decided to reform radically the political system, only when Communists themselves began a process that delegitimized the Soviet system and allowed a political voice to the nationalist alternative.[12]

In the next section we will explore how, why, and with what consequence Gorbachev began this process of state delegitimization.

Disintegrating the Soviet State: Liberalization without Democratization at the Center

As numerous studies have shown, the Soviet Union under Brezhnev began to experience a series of compounding and interconnecting problems in the late

10. For example, writing in 1980, Seweryn Bialer asserted that "not one position in the central party secretariat is occupied by a non-Russian. Only three non-Slavs serve within the central party apparatus, among over 150 top officials." And that "in almost every republic regardless of the degree of its self-administration, three top executive positions are almost invariably occupied by Russians . . . one is the head of the KGB . . . the second is the commander of the military forces stationed within the borders of the republic. The third position, [is] that of second secretary of the republican party organization." See his *Stalin's Successors: Leadership, Stability and Change in the Soviet Union* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 219, 214.

11. Bialer, in his above-mentioned 1980 book, was exceptionally prescient about the potential dangers these structures presented to the Soviet state. "The concept and reality of Soviet federalism contains a potentially dangerous dualism. . . . In practice it denies any but the slimmest margins of autonomy to the federated nationalities, but at the same time its symbolic institutions and administrative framework provide the base from which the struggle for national autonomy can be waged." (p. 210) "These institutions, . . . which are administered by local indigenous elites . . . provide a ready-made vehicle for those elites to fight for their autonomous national aspirations." (p. 211).

12. Suny, *Revenge of the Past*, 126.

Exhibit 19.1. Preperestroika Soviet Federalism: The Coexistence of Contradictory Structures, Principles, and Incentives

I. Mode of Adhesion to Federation

Theoretically, in any federation there can be three major contrasting modes of adhesion: traditional identification of core units, voluntary petitions to join, and forcible annexation. Traditional identification and voluntary petition present the least potential for conflict over membership. In the USSR, most of the major non-Russian nationalities and republics were brought into the federation by some degree of force. Estonia (1918–40), Latvia (1918–40), and Lithuania (1918–40) had had a significant period of independent statehood and were forcibly annexed as a result of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Bessarabia seceded from Russia and joined Romania but was annexed by the USSR as the core of the republic of Moldavia. Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Khiva, and Bukhara had periods of one to four years of independence after World War I. For less than a year Belorussia, the Crimea, Bashkiria, the Volga Tatar region, and the Kazakh-Kirghiz steppe had some degree of independence. Numerous additional nationalities inside the core republic, Russia, claimed autonomy and the right to self-rule. Some of the nationalities that had been a part of the Czarist empire were not members by tradition but had only been annexed in the 19th century after a prior period of political independence.[a]

II. Principle of Federal Unit's Political Identity, Administrative Organization, and Electoral Representation

There can be two contrasting principles of identity and representation in federations: the simple territorial principle or a principle based on ethnicity, language, or religion. The Soviet Union fused these two principles into territorial ethnofederalism. Each of the fifteen republics was explictly based upon and named after a different ethnic nationality. If other ethnic groups in the republics were relatively concentrated, autonomous administrative districts were created for them. In addition to the fifteen union republics, thirty-eight territorial administrations were designated as ethnic homelands: twenty as autonomous republics, eight as autonomous oblasts, and ten as autonomous okrugs. These administrative units in theory were to serve as the basis for electoral representation. In the pre-perestroika era, when elections were not seriously contested and the center controlled politics in the state, these structures did not matter. However, once some degree of electoral competition was introduced, there was a high potential for the mobilization of traditional—and contingently structured—ethnicity.[b]

III. Principle of Individual Citizen's Identity.

In most federations, an individual's primary legal identity is as a citizen of the state. In the Soviet Union, the Communist Party's ideological aspiration (and expectation) was of an ultimate merging (sliyanie) of national ethnic identities into the higher identity of being a member of the Soviet people. However, all internal passports made it obligatory to define oneself as a member of an ethnic nationality. Because the principle of identity was blood, rather than where one lived and worked, one did not acquire a new nationality even if one's family had resided in a different republic for generations. These state-mandated ethnic identities in fact impeded the emergence of multiple complementary political identities.[c]

IV. Principle of Secession

The constitutions of most federations are silent on secession procedures but do have detailed and mandatory mechanisms and courts that regulate federal relationships. Soviet constitutions were unusual in that both the Stalin Constitution of 1936 and the Brezhnev Constitution of 1977 accorded the right of the republics to secede. Article 72 of the 1977 constitution explicitly said that "every union republic shall retain the right of free secession from the USSR." However, the constitution was absolutely silent on how the right of secession could be implemented. Thus, there was inherently a high degree of potential conflict if there was any progress toward the rule of law, if elections became competitive, and if any republic wanted to exercise its constitutional prerogative to secede.

Exhibit 19.1. *(continued)*

V. Principle of International Representation and Foreign Policy Autonomy

Most federations explicitly accord to the center the exclusive right to represent the state internationally and to make treaties. In 1944, the Soviet Constitution accorded the right to the republics to enter into diplomatic relations with other states, to negotiate and sign treaties, and to exchange diplomats and join international organizations. The 1944 amendment was largely motivated by the center's successful effort to get Ukraine and Belorussia admitted to the United Nations as voting members. This amendment was largely fictive but represented a potential for federal conflict and republic resource mobilization if politics became competitive and the center weakened.[d]

VI. Structure of Career Incentives for Republican Political Elites

De jure and de facto in the Soviet Union, the center created a complex system of special incentives and affirmative action policies for the leading titular ethnic group in each republic. In almost all of the republics, the titular nationality was over-represented in universities, party-state posts, and cultural organizations. Ethnic political elites, in return for their privileged position and the extremely long tenure of republican first secretaries, prevented the emergence of ethnic counterelites to the center as long as the center was able to provide critical coercive and economic resources. The conflict potential here was that ethnic political entrepreneurs, with special ethnic constituencies and control over republican institutions, had the capacity and the incentive to act as political entrepreneurs by mobilizing their extensive ethnic political resources if and when their old power base, the centralized party-state, could no longer guarantee their careers.[e]

[a]See Alexander J. Motyl, *Sovietology, Rationality, Nationality: Coming to Grips with Nationalism in the USSR* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), esp. 30-45, 146–60; Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917–23* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954); and Suny, *Revenge of the Past*, esp. 20–83.
[b]See the excellent article by Philip G. Roeder, who develops a resource mobilization as opposed to a primordial sentiment approach to ethnicity, "Soviet Federalism and Ethnic Mobilization," *World Politics* 43 (Jan. 1991): 196–232.
[c]See Leokadia Drobizheva, "Perestroika and the Ethnic Consciousness of Russians," in Lapidus, Zaslavsky, and Goldman, eds., *From Union to Commonwealth*, 98–114, esp. 98–99, and Suny, *Revenge of the Past* for his discussion of the "territorialization of ethnicity," esp. 110–12. The coexistence of the above principle of the federal units' political identity and the above principle of the individual citizen's political identity involved a potential for contradiction and a legacy of conflict. It meant that a large number of "nationals"—not only Russians—lived in the diaspora in republics or autonomous ethnic homelands other than that of their "titular nationality." One consequence was that, after the independence of the fifteen union republics, many of their residents—citizens—were identified legally as of a nationality that was not the "titular nationality" of the new state. In addition, that nationality—except in the case of mixed marriages—was not the result of a choice of identity nor a result of long-term residence but of descent. Many of the minority problems of the new states are therefore a legacy of Soviet federalism that interacted with and contributed to emerging nationalist identities and sentiments.
[d]A comparative specialist on federations, Stephen Kux, calls these provisions "unique." See his article, "Soviet Federalism," *Problems of Communism* 39 (March–April 1990): 12.
[e]See Roeder, "Soviet Federalism and Ethnic Mobilization," 196–232; Bialer, *Stalin's Successors*, 210–11; and Suny, *Revenge of the Past*, 117–24.

1970s.[13] However, although many of the key ideas and concepts developed by Gorbachev had been aired among intellectuals close to the party before he came to power, Gorbachev was not forced by any group to launch his reforms. Gorbachev and his key advisors made a choice to transform the Soviet system and, in

13. The major work that analyzes the origins and course of perestroika is Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). Also see the collection of original articles, Archie Brown, ed., *New Thinking in Soviet Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1992). A valuable review of the literature is found in Edward Wilkes Walker, "Structural Pressures, Political Choice, and Institutional Change: Bureaucratic Totalitarianism and the Origins of Perestroika" (Ph.D. diss., Department of Political Science, Columbia University, 1992).

this respect, the Soviet Union clearly falls into our category of a *regime-initiated change*.[14]

However, why did this regime-initiated change lead to an explosion of nationalisms and the disintegration of the Soviet state? Exhibit 19.1 clearly shows that the answer is not just primordial nationalism and irrational emotions. Three of the most important recent bodies of social science literature can be brought to bear in the analysis of Exhibit 19.1: rational choice, resource mobilization, and neo-institutionalism.[15] The existing institutional structures, even before perestroika, provided *rational incentives* for republican elites to play ethnic politics and to build constituencies by creating ethnic agendas. The fact that ethnic regional elites had special control over cultural organizations, universities, and state personnel policies gave them access to *resources they could mobilize*, if politics ever developed in such a way that it was in their interest and within their capacity to do so.[16] In fact, the *institutions* created by the party-state virtually created some nations that had not existed before.[17] The other side of the neo-institutional perspective is, of course, that, in addition to structuring some outcomes, institutions constrain the choices available to decision makers. The existing structures constrained the effective choices Gorbachev could make. He wanted to put pressure on those members of the party-state who were impeding the program of perestroika. The liberalizing policies of glasnost, by allowing a freer press, initially helped mobilize perestroika supporters (especially among intellectuals) and helped shed the glaring light of publicity on practices and groups opposed to perestroika.[18] Eventually, however, Gorbachev, supported by Yakovlev, decided to use elections as part of his regime transformation strategy.

14. Gorbachev was at pains in his initial writings to stress that perestroika was a regime choice. A subtitle of his opening chapter of *Perestroika* is called, "What Inspired Us to Launch Perestroika," and he goes on to say that "the perestroika drive started on the Communist Party's initiative, and the Party leads it. . . . Perestroika is not a spontaneous, but a governed process." Gorbachev, *Perestroika*, 41–42. In this book, we have considered two other important cases of regime-initiated change, Spain and Brazil. However, in both cases a complex dialectical process of "regime concession and societal conquest" pushed liberalization to democratization of the center. In the Soviet case, given the interweaving of party and state, a caveat applies. It is difficult to say how much the restructuring was party or state inititated. With this caveat in mind, the restructuring was clearly initiated by the inside, as opposed to the outside, of the regime. But resistance to change could be found both in the official party and in the state apparatus. In addition, given the passivity of society outside some cities, the mobilization of society by the regime initiative—in contrast to the other cases mentioned—was initially limited.

15. A pioneering and convincing use of the rational-choice approach to ethnopolitics in the Soviet Union is Motyl, *Sovietology, Rationality, Nationality*, esp. 30–45, 146–60. For an excellent neo-institutionalist analysis, see Rogers Brubaker, "Nationhood and the National Question in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Eurasia: An Institutionalist Account," *Theory and Society* 23 (1994): 47–78.

16. The previously cited article by Roeder, "Soviet Federalism and Ethnic Mobilization," 196–232, is conceptually—and powerfully—driven by the resource mobilization approach.

17. Victor Zaslavsky, as does the previously cited work of Suny, goes as far as to say that these structures "promoted a peculiar process of nation-building." See his "The Evolution of Separatism in Soviet Society under Gorbachev," in Lapidus, Zaslavsky, and Goldman, *From Union to Commonwealth*, 71.

18. This is a classic state-led liberalization tactic used effectively, for example, by Generals Geisel and Golbery in Brazil against their hard-line opponents in the security apparatus. See Alfred Stepan, "State

We do not believe that the role of elections has received the prominence it deserves in the analysis of the disintegration of the Soviet state. The existing structures presented in exhibit 19.1 potentially presented an extraordinarily broad set of incentives and opportunities for the mobilization of ethnicity. Nonetheless, as long as the constitution remained largely fictive and the party-state had sufficient coercive, ideological, and economic resources to maintain control of ethnic elites in the republics, ethnicity, while never disappearing, was not mobilized to a degree that threatened the physical integrity of the USSR.

However, given the structure presented in exhibit 19.1, the regime transformation strategy chosen by Gorbachev directly mobilized the Soviet Union's territorially based titular nationalities against the state. This was due to three interacting phenomena: regime type, the choice of liberalization over democratization, and electoral sequence.

What type of regime did Gorbachev inherit? Let us quote at length from the excellent study of Gorbachev by Archie Brown.

> Although there were important differences between the totalitarian dictatorship of Stalin and the highly authoritarian but post-totalitarian Khrushchev and Brezhnev regimes which followed, a great deal of conceptual stretching was involved in any attempt to attach the label, "pluralist," to the Soviet Union at any time earlier than the late 1980s.
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> Political pluralism implies political organizations independent of the state (or, in the Soviet case, party-state) and to this Soviet leaders from Lenin to Chernenko were implacably opposed. Even a social pluralism encapsulated in the notion of 'civil society' can scarcely be said to have existed prior to the Gorbachev era. . . . In the Soviet Union prior to the second half of the 1980s, the creation of any organization without the sanction and surveillance of the state was impermissible, even if that organization were not overtly political. . . .
>
> . . . in the later Brezhnev years and under Andropov and Chernenko the Soviet dissident movement was at its lowest level of activity in two decades and had, to a large extent, been crushed.[19]

This is not the place to attempt a detailed empirical and historical characterization of the 1917–91 regime in the USSR in terms of our typology. However, the regime that Gorbachev inherited was not just another authoritarian regime, nor was it sultanistic.[20] The real question for this chapter is where the pre-Gorbachev regime stood on the totalitarian–post-totalitarian continuum we discussed in chapter 3. Concerning sociopluralism, the regime was far from being mature post-totalitarian, as the quote from Archie Brown makes absolutely clear.

In comparative terms, detotalitarianization-by-choice in the Soviet Union had certainly not gone nearly as far as in Hungary. There was nothing comparable to

Power and the Strength of Civil Society in the Southern Cone of Latin America," in Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol, eds., *Bringing the State Back In* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 337–38.

19. See Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor*, 16–17 and 8.

20. Some of the long-serving first secretaries of the central Asian republics displayed some patrimonial and indeed at times sultanistic qualities. High Stalinism also had some sultanistic features.

Hungary's 1982 regulations, which created quasi-private property and inaugurated an expanded domain of statewide contractual relations which by 1988 contributed to the emergence of autonomous statewide entrepreneurial and trade union organizations. Most importantly, in Hungary three major opposition political party groupings had emerged before the transition. Nothing remotely similar existed in the Soviet Union.[21]

Indeed, we could even say that the ossification of the apparatus, the gerontocratic leadership, the wooden language of the ideology, the loss of mobilization capacity, and the passivity of the population made the USSR mostly a case of post-totalitarianism by decay.[22] Ironically, it was precisely this decay and degeneration that made the pre-Gorbachev regime *further away* from the totalitarian ideal type than was the German Democratic Republic. In the German Democratic Republic, many top cadres in the mid-1980s still, perhaps because of their constant confrontation with and their need for legitimation against the Federal Republic of Germany, retained a commitment to ideology, which they saw as the necessary justification for the leading role of their party and even a degree of mobilization.[23]

Notwithstanding this decay-induced post-totalitarianism, three factors concerning the uniquely great weight of the totalitarian legacy in the USSR, compared to East-Central Europe, should be stressed. First, for the core population of the USSR, unlike the Central European countries, Leninist and Stalinist versions of totalitarian Communism were domestic creations, not foreign importations. Second, for the people in the core of the USSR, in contrast to those in Central Europe, Communism lasted seventy-five years instead of forty years. Third, some people in Central Europe (the Poles) never lived under fully installed totalitarianism, while others, as in Hungary, lived under totalitarianism for only about fifteen years. Depending on where they lived in the USSR, many citizens lived under conditions that approximated totalitarianism for thirty or forty years.[24]

The fact that the Soviet Union was founded by Lenin after the Civil War in the early twenties as a totalitarian political system and that Soviet citizens lived for decades under Stalin must be stressed. Krushchev's de-stalinization campaign was, of course, important in moving the USSR away from a regime of terror, but it should be remembered that some totalitarian features were reintroduced or in-

21. For further analysis of Hungary, see our discussion in chapter 17. In fact, the USSR before Gorbachev had never advanced even as far on the post-totalitarian criteria as Czechoslovakia had in the Prague Spring in 1968.

22. The distinction between "post-totalitarianism by decay" and "post-totalitarianism by choice" is developed in chapter 3 and especially in chapter 17.

23. As the Friedman survey we discussed in chapter 17 showed, even the GDR coercive elites' belief in the use of force had eroded away from the pure totalitarian pole by the late 1980s.

24. In contrast to Czechoslovakia, we could also say that the USSR virtually had no usable pretotalitarian democratic past and limited advanced capitalist regulatory and/or industrial structures. But in this respect the USSR was not unique. Some other countries in East-Central Europe also had relatively underdeveloped pretotalitarian democratic or advanced capitalist structures.

tensified under Khrushchev, such as the attack on religion, the messianic commitment to "burying the West," and the massive use of force to retotalitarianize Hungary after the successful 1956 revolution. And, as we have seen, the Brezhnev era was more one of detotalitarianization-by-decay than detotalitarianization-by-choice. In summation, we can say that Gorbachev inherited a regime in which entire generations had not experienced any other political system, indeed any other society, than Soviet Communism. The combined influence of the "October Revolution," the Civil War, Stalinism, and the patriotism awakened in the face of the heroic defense against Nazi conquest in World War II understandably had a much greater effect on Soviet society than did the shorter totalitarian period in Central Europe (1948–57 in many countries), which was imposed in the wake of Soviet occupation or "liberation."

In this context liberalization in the USSR and even the dismantling of the party-state that began to occur in the late 1980s after seventy years of Communism could not result in the rapid emergence of a civil society in the Western sense of the term. Too many structures and traditions that managed to survive in the outer empire had, in the USSR, been destroyed or so profoundly distorted (e.g., the Orthodox Church) that their regeneration was a painful task. Thirty-five years of totalitarianism, combined with a totally socialized economy, had shaped the life of all subject-citizens. Practically all those who occupied any positions of social prominence in the early 1980s had been recruited, trained, and formed in the system. Only in some urban centers of the vast Soviet Union did small groups of dissidents develop a "non-Soviet" culture. Even when dismissing, rejecting, and even denouncing the ideology, a distinct Soviet mentality had been shaped by the system.

This helps account for the weakness of the liberal and democratic ways of thinking of the new elites emerging out of Soviet society. In fact, we suspect that in many places the displacement of the top elite who supported Gorbachev or Yeltsin (such as Aleksandr Yakovlev) and who for a variety of reasons had access to other ideas and experiences by second echelon and "provincial" elites who have not had comparable access or experiences has not helped in the transition to "democracy."

The society that had taken shape during almost seventy years of Communism was the one in which Gorbachev came into power and in which those in power in the periphery would try to retain power. Once Gorbachev put into motion actions and policies that began to weaken the ideology and structure of the centralized party-state, republic elites began to look for new sources of power, new sources of ideological legitimacy, and especially new identities. Thus, for the regional republic elites, the ethnofederalism of the USSR and the potential legitimacy to be derived from national cultures, however impoverished, distorted, or invented, became useful. Those in power in the peripheral republics could often most easily attempt to justify themselves by appealing to a specific form of nationalism—that of the "titular nations"—simultaneously against the "minority ethnic" groups in their own territorial domains, as well as against the centralized Soviet state.[25] In this sense the ethnonationalism that emerged during the disintegration of the USSR was a result both of the totalitarian destruction of society and the peculiar instititutions of ethnofederalism of the USSR.[26] We can understand how *independence* came to be privileged over *democratization*. But more about that later, since we have jumped ahead of our story.

Politicians are specialists in the mobilization of hopes and grievances. But what hopes and grievances would be mobilized? And how? And by whom? Gorbachev inherited a "flattened" post-totalitarian social and political landscape. What we mean by a flattened landscape is that many social structures such as churches, business and interest groups, professional associations, and some research institutes (even political parties in Chile and Uruguay) managed to persist with some independence or identity in the authoritarian regimes we analyzed in South America and southern Europe. However, during the totalitarian period in the USSR such organizations had been so penetrated or integrated by the party-state that they could not play a comparable role in the transition in the Soviet Union. This does not mean that with more freedom there could not appear a myriad of groups on the border between "civil society" and an emerging "political society." In fact, despite the flattened landscape a large number of democratic associations, fronts, and clubs managed to spring up during 1987–88. These groups were focused on a diverse set of goals ranging from ecology to the commemoration of the victims of Stalin's terror. These groups were largely composed of people between the ages of thirty and fifty, with higher education, and without experience in the dissident movement. Protopolitical organizations like the Moscow Association of Voters were created in late summer 1989, and their leaders began to plan for the electoral campaign for the Russian Supreme Soviet.

In January 1990 an alliance adopted the name Democratic Russia and ran 5,000 candidates for seats in soviets at all levels in the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR).[27] Democratic Russia was able to organize two large rallies in Moscow, and candidates they supported gained fifty-seven of the sixty-five seats contested in Moscow for the Russian Congress of Peoples Deputies. After the elections Democratic Russia managed to form a parliamentary block in the RSFSR Congress of People's Deputies, but they numbered at best only 30 percent of the total. Although Democratic Russia played a crucial role in supporting re-

25. While recognizing the significant degree of elite opportunist utilization of nationalism, we do not want to deny that there were significant groups in each region who genuinely identified with a historic culture. This identification was particularly strong among intellectuals, artists, academics, and, exceptionally, as in Armenia, among members of a church that combined its own tradition *and* external links.

26. Ernest Gellner refers to post-USSR Russia as the "vacuum society." See his "Home of the Unrevolution," *Daedalus* 122, no. 3 (1993): 141–254.

27. See Yitzhak M. Brudny, "The Dynamics of 'Democratic Russia', 1990–1993," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 9 (April-June 1993): 141–70.

form, liberalization, and calls for democratization, they remained more a movement than a political party.

One crucial factor that contributed to the failure of groups like Democratic Russia to become real unionwide parties was the ambivalence, as we shall document in this chapter, of leaders like Gorbachev and Yeltsin, toward the creation of well-organized democratic political parties. Yeltsin benefitted from the support of Democratic Russia in his drive to gain power, but he did not want to lead it as a party or even to help it to become a party. Given such a landscape, if elections were held, the *easiest* hopes, grievances, interests, and identities for politicians to mobilize would predictably be related to ethnicity. In fact, the republics were protostates and the only cleavage that was partially legitimate in the Soviet Union was ethnicity.

This leads us to the question of the constrained choices facing Gorbachev. We are not sufficiently knowledgeable about the Soviet Union to judge whether Gorbachev could have chosen to maintain the status quo or, as China in the 1990s, tried to transform the economic system without transforming the political system. Certainly, many have argued that the party-state at the end of the Brezhnev era was facing a position where it increasingly did not have enough economic and ideological resources to maintain what Peter Hauslohner called its "social contract" with the Soviet citizens.[28] However, since Gorbachev made the choice to realign the system and to use elections as a key part of this restructuring, he fundamentally faced the two classic choices in the transitions literature, to "liberalize" or to "democratize."[29] Here there is a fairly sharp debate among scholars, and much of it depends on one's frame of reference. Some (but by no means all) scholars who were specialists in the Soviet Union and who were inspired by Gorbachev's constant use of the term *democratization* and by the fact that perestroika and glasnost unquestionably set so many liberalizing forces into motion argued that Gorbachev was committed to democracy. In much of the sovietology literature, there was in fact little distinction made between *liberalization* and *democratization.* Often the two processes were equated.[30]

However, as scholars of comparative democratic transitions, we believe that it is important to stress that Gorbachev *never* at any time from 1985 to 1991 unequivocally committed himself, the party-state, or the government of the center to *democratization* in the strict sense. That is, freely contested, all-union, multiparty elections whose winners would form a government at the center and assume the management of public policy and the state apparatus were never held or even planned.

28. Peter Hauslohner, "Gorbachev's Social Contract," in Ferenc Fehér and Andrew Arato, eds., *Gorbachev: The Debate* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1989), 61–83.

29. For our discussion of this fundamental distinction, see chapter 1.

30. As we argued in chapter 1, *liberalization* and *democratization* are quite different concepts. Also, empirically, liberalization has often occurred *without* democratization. For a discussion of how different Soviet specialists saw the question of Gorbachev and democracy, see Stephan White, "'Democratization' in the USSR," *Soviet Studies* 42, no. 1 (1990): 3–24 and John Gooding, "Gorbachev and Democracy," *Soviet Studies* 42, no. 2 (1990): 195–231.

Among contemporary theorists of democracy and of democratic transition, there are inevitable differences of emphasis. However, on a number of basic issues there is a consensus, a consensus shared even by the vast majority of Euro-Communists. This consensus includes a clear recognition that, in a democracy, power outcomes are necessarily *contingent* and cannot be guaranteed or fixed by one historical decision,[31] a political *opposition* must have the right to legal existence, internal party democracy is important but never a substitute for free *multiparty elections* for central power, and no degree of social pluralism is a substitute for *political pluralism.* Gorbachev's thought in 1985–89 was hostile or at best ambivalent to all of these positions (exhibit 19.2).

Elections were held in 1989 and 1990 in the USSR.[32] In 1989, the elections to the Congress of People's Deputies in the USSR clearly helped weaken some of the opponents of perestroika. However, in our judgment the elections had fundamental flaws. The 1989 elections to the central legislature were not multiparty. The elections had a mandate to produce a new legislature but not really to produce a government. The legislature never produced a new constitution and without this could not help reconfigure the federation.

The liberalizing elections of 1989 did, even at the center, begin to weaken the centralized party-state in a number of respects. A group of deputies, the Inter-Regional Deputies Group, many of whom wanted to push forward toward real democratization, began to criticize Gorbachev and the party-state for being illegitimate. In turn, a growing hard line in the party began to criticize Gorbachev for allowing the weakening of the party-state. Although the elections of 1989 provided an opportunity in the Baltic republics and the Caucasus for the mobilization of the nationalist-independence movements, in other republics they created the basis for a challenge to the central government under the ambiguous term of *sovereignty,* which cut across ideological lines. This was the case of the Ukraine—where the more independence-minded movement *Rukh* did not win—and in Belarus. The accelerated and irreversible erosion of the party-state and the center, however, came with the campaign for republican elections, which began in late 1989 and were held throughout much of 1990.

Let us look more clearly at elections and particularly at electoral sequences in

31. As Adam Przeworski correctly argued when he discussed the role of uncertainty in the transition to democracy, "Democratic compromise cannot be a substantive compromise; it can only be a contingent institutional compromise. . . . If a peaceful transition to democracy is to be possible, the first problem to be solved is how to institutionalize uncertainty." See his "Some Problems in the Study of the Transition to Democracy," in Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead, eds., *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 59–60.

32. And, of course, by May and June 1991 important presidential elections were held in Georgia and Russia, respectively.

Exhibit 19.2. Mikhail Gorbachev's Statements on Competitive Democracy: 1987–1991

1. On the Opposition and the Role of the Communist Party: 1987

"Official opposition does not exist in our country. This places even greater responsibility on the Communist Party of the Soviet Union as the ruling party. That is why we regard the further development of intra-party democracy, the strengthening of the principles of collective leadership in work, and broader openness in the party too, as a top priority."[a]

2. On the Noncontingent Nature of Outcomes in the Context of Perestroika and Democratization: 1987–88

"Socialist pluralism, and this is why it is called socialist, is the discussion, the scientific work, that is carried out *within* the boundaries of our socialist choice made by our people once and forever in October 1917."[b]

"We are conducting all our reforms in accordance with the socialist choice. We are looking within socialism, rather than outside it, for the answers to all the questions that arise. . . . Every part of our program of perestroika—and the program as a whole, for that matter, is fully based on the principle of more socialism and more democracy."[c]

3. On the Possibility of a Multiparty System in the Period before the First Multicandidate Semicompetitive Election: February 1989

"There is no basis for discussing it (ie. a multi-party reform) . . . two parties, three parties it is all nonsense. If you have three or four parties you can still have so much tyranny that nobody can open his mouth and speak freely . . . all of this is being foisted upon us by irresponsible people."[d]

4. On the Vanguard Role of the Communist Party: November 26, 1989
(The campaign for the republic elections had begun and the Berlin Wall had fallen.)

"We advocate real democracy . . . A special role in the social organism is played by the Communist Party, which is called upon to be the political vanguard of the Soviet society . . . Developing the masses' independent activity and the processes of the democratization of all social life within the framework of the one-party system is a noble and difficult mission for the Party."[e]

5. On the Communist Party's Role in Developing Pluralism: November 26, 1989

"At the current complex stage, the interests of consolidating society and focusing all its healthy forces on the resolution of the difficult tasks of perestroika dictate the expediency of retaining the one-party system. But the party will nonetheless promote the development of pluralism . . . The Party cannot yield the initiative to populist demagoguery, nationalistic or chauvinistic currents, or unruly group interests."[f]

6. On His Continued Commitment to a Unified Communist Party: Press Conference the Day after the Failed Coup: August 23, 1991

"I am sorry that the forces that should be making a contribution to reform the party are leaving. I see my role in this. I do not intend to give up the positions I have taken."[g]

[a]Mikhail Gorbachev, *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), 23.
[b]Mikhail Gorbachev, "Politika partii, politika obnovleniya," *Kommunist* 4 (1988): 4. Emphasis added. Cited in Neil Robinson, "Gorbachev and the Place of the Party in Soviet Reform, 1985–1991" *Soviet Studies* 44, no. 3 (1992): 423–43.
[c]Gorbachev, *Perestroika*, 23.
[d]Quoted in Victor Yassman, "Gorbachev's Formula for the Second Stage of Perestroika: Full Ahead but Keep Right," *Radio Liberty: Report on the USSR*, March 10, 1989, 19.
[e]Mikhail Gorbachev, "The Socialist Idea and Revolutionary Perestroika," *Pravda*, November 26, 1989, 1–3. English translation in FBIS-Sov-89-226, November 27, 1989, pp. 78–79. On February 5, 1990, however, at a plenum of the Central Committee Gorbachev finally advocated the abandonment of article 6 of the constitution enshrining the leading role of the party and also recommended the creation of the institution of the presidency with sufficient powers to oversee the progress of reform.
[f]Ibid.
[g]Mikhail Gorbachev's Press Conference, English translation in FBIS-Sov-91 164, August 23, 1991, p. 28.

the Soviet Union and at the rather analogous elections in Yugoslavia.[33] In both countries elections were allowed, but in both countries the most democratic and contested elections were for regional power. The point is clearest in Yugoslavia, where competitive all-union elections were simply never held in the post–World War II period. Republic elections were held in Yugoslavia in the summer and fall of 1990 and, not surprisingly, ethnic issues became of paramount concern.

The situation in the Soviet Union was somewhat more complicated. The first elections in the Soviet Union were indeed all-union elections for the Congress of People's Deputies in March 1989. However, these elections were not multiparty, so democratic political society in the real sense could not develop. We should not forget that only in March 1990, just weeks before the elections began in Russia, did the Communist Party of the Soviet Union give up its guaranteed monopoly based on article 6 of the Soviet constitution. Only after article 6 was abrogated could other political parties be registered.[34] Although candidates endorsed by different democratic groups or movements were elected, parliamentary parties—or more exactly caucuses—really emerged only *after* the 1989–90 elections.

We cannot emphasize enough this basic difference from southern Europe, Latin America, and most of Central Europe, where parties had legal existence *before* the first or founding election. One consequence was that, in much of the Soviet Union and especially in Russia, though there were democratizing movements that were expressions of a society in the process of articulation, the transition to political society was delayed. In Russia, Democratic Russia, like Solidarity in Poland, the Civic Forum in Czechoslovakia, the Neues Forum in East Germany, and the Sajudis movement in Lithuania, was an umbrella organization, and its later crisis shows considerable similarities with that of those movements. However, unlike these other umbrella organizations, Democratic Russia *never* coordinated a statewide general election.

The March 1989 elections were extraordinarily important in creating a new spirit of freedom in the Soviet Union. However, from the perspective of creating an autonomous political society or democratic power structures, the elections had some obvious limitations.[35] One-third of the seats in the 2,250-member Con-

33. The next few pages draw heavily on our "Political Identities and Electoral Sequences: Spain, the Soviet Union, and Yugoslavia," *Daedalus* 121, no. 2 (1992): 123–40. Permission to cite is gratefully acknowledged.

34. For our subsequent analysis of Russia, it should also be noted that the 1990 elections to the Russian parliament were also not multiparty. In the 1990 Russian elections, Democratic Russia was not in our sense really a political party but an emerging movement on the border of civil society and political society. Because of this state-society context, M. Stephen Fish argues that the 1989–90 political opening was *"too sudden* and *too partial*. It strongly—and negatively—influenced the growth and effectiveness of alternative political parties. The timing of the elections reduced incentives for ambitious radical leaders to join parties and encouraged a highly individualistic form of political entrepreneurship." See his important book, *Democracy from Scratch: Opposition and Regime in the New Russian Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 73. Emphasis in original.

35. For a good discussion of the limits of the 1989 elections, see Victor Sergeyev and Nikolai Biryukov, *Russia's Road to Democracy: Parliament, Communism and Traditional Culture* (Aldershot, England: Edward Elgar, 1993), 101–51.

gress of Peoples' Deputies were set aside for the Communist Party and its affiliated organizations and did not face popular ratification. Furthermore, the nomination process allowed many Communist Party–dominated local electoral commissions to pack meetings with their supporters and thus control the nominating process. In many districts, all the candidates to emerge from the local electoral commissions were Communist Party supporters. Indeed, in one-quarter of the contests only a single candidate emerged from the local electoral commission. In this context many opposition candidates fell by the wayside.

The highly selective 2,250-member Congress of Peoples' Deputies that emerged from this process became the electoral college for indirect election to the Supreme Soviet. This indirect method of selections further weakened the electoral credibility of the upper—and more powerful—house and produced numerous inequities. For example, Boris Yeltsin won his seat in Moscow with 89 percent of the popular vote but was initially denied a seat in the Supreme Soviet until one member offered to step down in his favor. Other less prominent deputies were not so lucky. Thus, though the first elections in the Soviet Union *were* all-Union, the proposition holds: the most important and contested elections in both the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia were not at the all-union but at the republic level.

Cognizant of the shortcomings of the all-union electoral law, republic parliaments drafted legislation that avoided many of the practices that had helped to discredit the all-union parliament. Election rules varied somewhat across republics, but in general they allowed republic-level actors to make a greater claim to legitimacy than their all-union counterparts. Almost all of the republics discarded guaranteed seats for the Communist Party and Communist Party–dominated public organizations. Inequities did occur in elections to republic parliaments, especially in Central Asia and in the area of the rights of ethnic minorities. Yet, on the whole, deputies from republic Supreme Soviets could not only claim to be the defenders of ethnic interests, but also make a stronger claim to legitimacy than could the USSR Supreme Soviet deputies.

Throughout this book we have argued that elections can create agendas, can create actors, can reconstruct identities, help legitimate and delegitimate claims to obedience, and create power. The regional elections in the USSR and Yugoslavia did all these things. In Spain the process set in motion by statewide general elections reconstituted stateness on even firmer grounds. The regional elections in the USSR and Yugoslavia did the opposite. The following series of quotes from reports written by teams of electoral observers with the Helsinki Commission capture the extent to which the process of regional electoral campaigns—in a context of the Soviet multinational state, which had never submitted itself to an all-union election—contributed to the disintegration of the state. It did so by weakening the center and strengthening independence and sovereignty claims by the ruling elites and by mobilizing nationalist sentiments among the titular nationalities in the republics.

Moldavia (Election: February 25, 1990)

"The election campaign pointed up the necessity for every movement vying for power in the Republic to develop a program for sovereignty, the minimum demand in Moldavia. . . . Whether Moscow has to deal directly with a Popular-Front dominated Moldavian Supreme Soviet, or work through Party First Secretary Lucinski is irrelevant, for it will be faced almost immediately with a demand to make good on the republic's demand for sovereignty."[36]

Ukraine (Election: March 18, 1990)

"The Democratic Bloc of opposition groups formed to contest the election successfully focused the campaign on voters' concerns, inducing the Communist Party candidates often to follow suit. High on voters' lists were greater political autonomy, [and] national and cultural issues."[37]

"Increasing demands for the use of Ukrainian language resulted in an important Ukrainian SSR Supreme Soviet decree stipulating that as of January 1, 1990, Ukrainian is the state language of the republic, while Russian is to be used for communication between nationality groups. . . . Long suppressed national feelings are now sweeping the Ukrainian population."[38]

"It is likely that their will be even greater progress for Ukrainian self-determination leading to independence."[39]

Georgia (Elections: October 28, 1990)

By election day, all contending parties—including the Georgian Communist Party—advocated independence.[40] "In an effort to shore up its nationalist credentials, the Georgian Communist Party platform demands guarantees for Georgia's territorial integrity, the introduction of Georgian citizenship. . . . Proclaiming that Georgian citizens should only perform military service inside the republic."[41]

The independence and titular nationalist themes of the election exacerbated relations with the center. Nationalist outbidding in Georgia, as in many other republics, worsened relations with minority groups in the republic and eroded a core component of future democratization—full citizenship rights for all inhabitants regardless of ethnicity. The election observer team noted that in Georgia "the eventual winner Gamsakhurdia made many statements that have alarmed non-Geor-

36. *Elections in the Baltic States and the Soviet Republics* (compiled by the Staff of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Washington, D.C., December 1990), 89.
37. Ibid., 115.
38. Ibid., 119.
39. Ibid., 135
40. Ibid., 165.
41. Ibid., 170.

gians. In June 1990, for example, he called mixed marriages 'fatal to the Georgian family and the Georgian language.' "[42] "Fearing for their national rights in an independent Georgia, some non-Georgian groups have attempted to protect themselves. . . . the Abkhaz Autonomous Republic and the Southern Ossetian Autonomous Oblast declared sovereignty in August and September, 1990, respectively."[43]

The result of the regional elections in the USSR and Yugoslavia, in the absence of prior freely contested all-union democratic elections, contributed to five interrelated and compounding state-disintegrating dynamics. First, virtually the day after the regional elections, the statewide legitimacy of the central government was damaged because the regional pro-sovereignty forces could make a stronger claim to democratic legitimacy via elections.[44] Nowhere was this more significant than in Russia. The election in the republic of Russia created a new democratically legitimated base for Boris Yeltsin, who was elected chairman of the Russian Parliament in May 1990. From that base he issued Russia's declaration of sovereignty of June 12, 1990. In June 1991 Yeltsin became the directly elected president of Russia. In July 1991, in his first official decree as president, he banned Communist Party organizations from enterprises. Since the Communist Party had no neighborhood organizations but only workplace cells, this decree was effectively a death sentence to the Communist Party in Russia. The coup attempt in August 1991 was thus not only a result of the 9+1 agreement to decentralize the USSR but also of this decree.[45]

Second, in no republic in the Soviet Union did a major new unionwide political organization compete in the elections as an effective counterweight to local nationalism, given the fact that, until article 6 was abrogated in March 1990, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was the only legal party in the USSR. In Yugoslavia the elections in the republics were also dominated by non-unionwide parties or movements.

Third, in the process of the elections, political identities in the USSR and in Yugoslavia became more narrow, compounding, exclusive, and unsupportive of participation in a potentially all-union democratic entity. In Spain during and after the electoral processes political identities had become more multiple, cross-

42. Ibid., 169.

43. Ibid., 165–66.

44. An important indicator of the erosion of stateness is the sharp drop in citizens who answered the unionwide military draft. By the end of 1990 draft, quota fulfillment in Latvia was 39.5 percent, in Lithuania 35.9 percent, Armenia 22.5 percent and in Georgia 18.5 percent. By mid-1991, these figures had declined to 30.8 percent for Latvia, 12.4 percent for Lithuania, 16.4 percent for Armenia, and 8.2 percent for Georgia. Most importantly, by mid-1991 Moscow itself had fulfilled only half its quota for this six-month period. See Steven Foye, "Student Deferments and Military Manpower Shortages," *Report on the USSR* (Aug. 2, 1991): 5–8.

45. The "state" in the Weberian sense had been disintegrating in the Soviet Union even before the failed coup attempt of August 1991, a coup whose trigger was the desperate effort of some elements within the all-union forces of the party, the KGB, and the military to block the implementation of the 9+1 Treaty, which would have given a de jure status to the de facto decentralization of the USSR.

cutting, inclusive, and supportive of participation in a reconstituted Spanish democratic state.

Fourth, in many republics such as Georgia, Azerbaijan, Serbia, and Croatia, the prospect of ethnic warfare led the newly elected presidents to repress dissenting voices within their core ethnic groups and to show greater intolerance toward minority groups.

Fifth, the crisis of stateness and the resulting crises of governability blocked the formulation and implementation of economic policy. The cataclysmic political collapse of any central or coordinating authority in the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia preceded and intensified the economic crisis, not vice versa.[46]

Let us conclude our discussion of the consequences of electoral sequence with the prophetic words of a Soviet social scientist writing before the coup attempt and before the de jure disintegration of the Soviet state. He captured the degree to which regional elections had already contributed to de facto state disintegration: "Local elections contributed to the process of the shift of the rhetoric of nationalist movements from 'civic' to 'ethnic'. . . . The 'war of laws' and 'parade of sovereignties' followed inevitably after republic and local elections. . . . The crisis of power in the center of the Union and the process of ungovernability increased enormously."[47]

We will not go into the details of the endgame of the Soviet state because it has been so extensively documented by others. Suffice it to say that the elections in the republics led to the famous "parade of sovereignties" and intensified the "war of laws." This led to a search for a new law of the union, which would feature greater devolution of power to the republics. Gorbachev attempted to shore up the union by holding a referendum on March 17, 1991, on the question, "Do you consider necessary the preservation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as a renewed federation of equal sovereign republics, in which the rights and freedoms of an individual of any nationality will be fully guaranteed?" Of those who voted, 76 percent said yes on this question, so Gorbachev claimed victory. However, a full analysis of the referendum reveals much more equivocal and damaging results. Only three of the union's fifteen republics (Belorussia, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan) held the referendum exactly the way Gorbachev wanted it to be held. Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Georgia, Armenia, and Moldova boycotted Gorbachev's referendum. The remaining six republics, in addition to asking Gorbachev's question, added their own question or questions. The results of the ques-

46. In Yugoslavia the federal prime minister, Arte Marković, had been supervising a relatively successful stabilization policy and had reduced the four-digit inflation rate to two digits in the first half of 1990. However, after the stateness crisis exploded, the inflation rate soared to over a trillion by 1993. The Ukraine had positive GNP growth of 4.1 in 1989, but its best performance in 1991–94, after the stateness crisis became full blown, was -12 in 1991. In 1994 Ukrainian GNP growth was -23. Russia, despite all its problems, still had flat growth in industrial production in 1990. For 1992 the figure was -18.8. For 1994, -21. For these economic data see table 21.1.

47. Andranik Migranian, "The End of Perestroika's Romantic Stage" (Moscow, July 1991, unpublished manuscript), 7.

tions framed by the republics gave renewed legitimacy to republic-based decision making. For example, the extra question in Russia successfully turned into a referendum on whether to hold a direct election for a president of Russia. The positive response to this Russian referendum question was another major step in the building of an alternative power center to the union and Gorbachev. A draft treaty was eventually signed with the union and nine republics on April 23, 1991. This in turn set into motion increasing conspiracy activities. The new Union Treaty was due to be signed on August 21, 1991. The coup attempt began on August 18, 1991. The failure of the coup radically accelerated the disintegration of the USSR. All of the major organizations and mechanisms that were holding the USSR together, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the KGB, the military, the police, and the office of the presidency, were weakened. In contrast, the position of Boris Yeltsin, who had the legitimacy of having won a directly contested election for the presidency of Russia in June 1991, who had led the resistance against the coup, and who was fighting for more sovereignty for Russia, was greatly strengthened. The red flag came down from the Kremlin on December 25, 1991. The speed and nature of this process of state disintegration left numerous difficult legacies.[48]

The Disintegration of the USSR: Legacies for Democratic Transition and Consolidation

In part 1 we discussed at length the simultaneity problem that all European former Communist countries face. In addition to these problems, the prior nature of the territorially based ethnofederalism in the USSR and the speed and manner of the state's disintegration left additional difficult problems for democratic transition and consolidation. Each of these problems deserves book-length analysis by specialists who are better equipped than we. However, from the perspective of the comparative analysis of democratic theory and practice, let us briefly mention three general problems found in most of the fifteen successor states of the former Soviet Union: the privileging of independence over democratization, the privileging of collective rights over individual rights, and the privileging of economic restructuring over state restructuring.

48. For a detailed discussion of the final disintegration of the Soviet state, see John B. Dunlop, *The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). For valuable documents see Alexander Dallin and Gail W. Lapidus, eds., *The Soviet System: From Crisis to Collapse*, rev. ed. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1995), esp. part 7, "From Coup to Collapse," 565–647. Also see Alexander Dallin, "Causes of the Collapse of the USSR," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 8, no. 4 (1992): 279–302; Suny, *Revenge of the Past*, 145–54; and Graeme Gill, *The Collapse of a Single Party System: The Disintegration of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), esp. 144–85. Virtually all accounts stress that the failed coup attempt weakened further all the statewide institutions that were still holding the USSR together. For invaluable detail on Gorbachev's referendum and how the newly legitimated leaders in the republic made it backfire, see the chapter, "Reports on the Referendum on the Future of the Soviet Union: March 17, 1991," in *Presidential Elections and Independence Referendums in the Baltic States, the Soviet Union and Successor States: A Compendium of Reports, 1991–1992*, compiled by the Staff of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Washington, D.C. (August 1992), 15–63. The wording of Gorbachev's question is on p. 20.

The Privileging of Independence over Democratization

In most of the polities that make a completed democratic transition and eventually manage to consolidate democracy, democratic goals are normally a prominent part of the aspiration of important parts of the opposition in the period we call *liberalization*. Also, the oppositional forces, when they come to power, must then proceed to craft democratic practices and institutions so that democracy becomes "the only game in town" even for many groups who initially were ambivalent or even opposed to democracy.

In the Soviet Union the speed and manner in which the state disintegrated foreshortened (or precluded) liberalization, gave a plebiscitary "national liberation" quality to the transition path, and almost pushed matters of democracy crafting off the normative and institutional agenda of politics. In some of the fifteen successor states of the USSR, liberalization, much less democratization, had hardly begun before the failed August 1991 coup led to their independence by January 1992. In many republics, even those whose leaders supported the coup, the unraveling of the USSR led to a hectic search for a new basis of power by incumbents. Anatoly Khazanov, the distinguished anthropologist from the former Soviet Union, has graphically captured this phenomenon: "Ethnic and regional elites, either old ones who only changed their ideological garments, or newly emerged ones, defeated the center-oriented elites. These elites considered *independence* the best guarantee of their positions. However, they are paying only lip service to liberal democratic principles and do not consider them their top priority."[49]

Ronald Grigor Suny likewise underscores how the speed of the disintegration left little time for new democratically structured organizations to acquire political, social, or economic presence, much less power:

> [I]n most republics, nationalism was accompanied by a desperate grab for local power by entrenched native elites. In Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan, the old elites dressed up in national garb to preserve their domination and *suppress democratic* movements. Even in those southern republics, like Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, and to a lesser extent, Kazakhstan, where popular democrats were able to remove or reduce the power of the Communists, the deep infrastructure of clan politics remained in place. In Ukraine, Belorussia, and even Russia, former Communists held top political positions and kept their hands firmly on the levers of economic power.[50]

Jonathan Aves, in his review of the new Soviet successor states, makes a similar point.

49. Anatoly Khazanov, "The Collapse of the Soviet Union: Nationalism during Perestroika and Afterwards," *Nationalities Papers* 22, no. 1 (1994), 168. Emphasis added.
50. Suny, *Revenge of the Past*, 156. Emphasis added.

Republican elites were able to adapt to the nationalist agenda not only to free themselves from central control but also to *outmaneuver putative popular movements*. . . . In view of the dramatic nature of these processes, their rapidity and scale, elements of continuity are remarkably numerous. . . . Few of the successor regimes have yet adopted a new constitution and the legislatures of the new states are all recognizably the former Supreme Soviets. . . . The presidents of all the Central Asian republics, with the exception of Askar Akaev in Kyrgyzstan, are former first secretaries of the former republican Supreme Soviets.[51]

The Privileging of Collective Rights over Individual Rights

At the level of both theory and practice, consolidated democracies must respect individual rights. The more inclusive and equal access is to the rights of citizenship, the better the quality of democracy. We argued in chapter 2 that we differ from most liberal theorists of rights, who insist that all rights be individual *and* universal. All rights do not seem to us necessarily to be universal. Theory and practice in consociational democracies in fact accords some form of collective rights (such as linguistic, educational, or religious rights) to groups.[52] However, with all democratic theorists we do accept the injunction that such collective rights—which we believe may be prudentially called for in some multicultural or multinational polities—must *never* violate individual rights or create a category of second-class citizens.

As we have documented, the Soviet Union was one of the world's first ethno-territorially based federal states. Even before the disintegration of the state, there were frequent tensions in the USSR over special collective privileges given to "titular nationalities" in the republics. Victor Zaslavsky captures these tensions succinctly.

The whole federal political-administrative system served as an elaborate structure of ethnic inequality. It divided ethnic groups into those with recognized territory and certain rank in the hierarchy of the state formations and those without such territory. It organized the former groups into a four-rank hierarchy which determined corresponding amounts of ethnic rights and privileges. Moreover, the borders between ethnic territories were drawn arbitrarily, often in accordance with a divide-and-conquer policy in obvious conflict with historical traditions and existing ethnodemographic conditions. . . . The twin policies of nationality registration in the internal passports and preferential treatment of indigenous nationalities within their administrative units became especially counterproductive. These policies proved to be essentially antimeritocratic. . . . They created strong dissatisfaction among minorities. . . . In many cases it led to the emergence of a potentially explosive ethnic division of labor. . . . The situation became particularly tense in republics where titular nationalities had been transformed into numerical minorities.[53]

51. See his "Assessing the Prospects of the New Soviet Successor States," *Nationalities Papers* 22, no. 1 (1994), 211, 212. Emphasis added.

52. For a review of consociational style group-rights practices that *do not* violate democratic norms, see Arend Lijphart, "Consociational Democracy," *World Politics* 21 (1969): 44–59, and Kenneth D. McRae, ed., *Consociational Democracy: Political Accomodation in Segmented Societies* (Toronto: McCelland and Stewart, 1974).

Obviously, even with most careful democratic political crafting, this legacy of state-structured and state-sanctioned inequality would have been a difficult legacy to transcend. However, as we have just seen, in a situation where independence for the titular nationality was privileged over democratization, independence for most of the leaders of the Soviet successor states meant deepening, codifying, and realizing the collective rights of their "titular" nationality.

In Russia the above problem was exacerbated because Yeltsin, in his struggles against Gorbachev and the Soviet center, frequently told local titular elites in the autonomous republics of Russia to "take all the sovereignty you can swallow."[54] Thus, within months of the Russian republics' declaration of sovereignty, "every one of the autonomous republics within the Russian federation" had followed suit.[55] The situation in Russia was further complicated by the fact that "the titular nationality was a majority in only five of the twenty-one" ethnically defined autonomous republics.[56] The Gorbachev-Yeltsin struggle had two aspects. One aspect was Yeltsin's effort to undermine the union through his insistence on carrying out the Russian Declaration of Sovereignty. Gorbachev, on the other hand, was undermining Yeltsin by encouraging the heads of Russia's autonomous (i.e., non-Russian) regions (who also happened to be very conservative Communists) to negotiate directly with him, Gorbachev, on the New Union Treaty. In fact, Gorbachev insisted that Russian autonomous regions would be a part of the New Union Treaty. Yeltsin resisted Gorbachev's argument on the grounds that it was an attempt to undermine the Russian Federation. Yeltsin's famous statement to the autonomous regions to "take as much sovereignty as you can" ought to be considered in this context.

Ian Bremmer argues that independence, throughout the Soviet Union, came as a "manifestation of nationalism as *liberation*" and of the desire of groups to "claim independence for themselves."[57] He goes on to argue that "the relationship between titular nationalities and lower order titular and non-titular nationalities is one of *domination*. . . . First-order titular nationalities may employ the rhetoric of liberation when dealing with the center, while at the same time rejecting such

53. Victor Zaslavsky, "Success and Collapse: Traditional Soviet Nationality Policy," in Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras, eds., *Nations and Politics in the Soviet Successor States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 35, 39.

54. See Gail W. Lapidus and Edward W. Walker, "Nationalism, Regionalism and Federalism: Center-Periphery Relations in Post-Communist Russia," in Gail W. Lapidus, ed., *The New Russia: Troubled Transformation* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1995), 83.

55. Ibid.

56. Ibid., 87.

57. Ian Bremmer, "Reassessing Soviet Nationalities Theory," in Bremmer and Taras, *Nations in Soviet Successor States*, 15. Emphasis in the original.

claims (and exerting domination) when they are made by lower order titular or non-titular nationalities within their borders."[58]

This situation, particularly in Russia, often gives rise to two types of actions by the nontitular nationalities which create problems for stateness and/or democratization. The nontitular nationalities are motivated to secede and create their own titular nationality regions. Or they collude with the center to impose forms of nondemocratic direct administrative rule on the titular nationalities.[59]

This problem of collective rights over individual rights acquires added magnitude when we take into consideration the fact that in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) sixty million people are living outside their nation-state or their titular nationality regions. Indeed, after the disintegration of the Soviet state, twenty-five million Russians were living outside of Russia.[60] This new situation has given rise to difficulties in the triadic relationships in the successor states between the elites of the aspirant nation-states, the minorities in these polities, and the homeland states of these minorities.[61] These international tensions in turn present new dangers for would-be consociational democracy crafters because of the fertile soil that is created for nationalists to delegitimize the state for "not protecting their co-nationals abroad" or for authoritarians inside the state, who do not want equal citizenship to be given to "fifth columnist foreigners."[62]

The Privileging of Economic Restructuring over Democratic State Restructuring (the Case of Russia)

A reasonably strong state with a clear hierarchy of laws and the capacity to extract a surplus and to implement the policies of the new democratic government is crucial for democratic consolidation. Indeed, many of the rights of democratic citizenship can only be obtained if there is a coherent state, an enforceable rule of law, and a usable state apparatus. Even market-oriented schemes such as privatization are more effective if done by a state that can formulate and install a clear regulatory framework so that a law-based economic society can emerge.[63] If these

58. Ibid., 16–17.

59. See the excellent formal modeling of these relationships of "domination" and "collusion," with numerous empirical referents, in ibid., 11–21.

60. See Khazanov, "Collapse of the Soviet Union," 171.

61. See Rogers Brubaker, "National Minorities, Nationalizing States, and External Homelands in the New Europe," in *Daedalus* (Spring 1995): 107–32. We will explore such a triadic relationship in our next chapter, which examines problems of Russian citizenship in Estonia and Latvia.

62. Would-be democrats are buffered by both these demands. In response to nationalist demands, Russia has military units guarding part of all the CIS "outer borders" in Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan and is trying to negotiate similar arrangements with Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. Russia has also proposed integration of their troops with the border troops of Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan. This information was obtained from an interesting paper by Eric Schmelling, "The Near Abroad: Being Too Close" (Central European University, Budapest, January 1995, unpublished paper), based on *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Daily Report*, November 15, 1994, and December 2, 1994.

63. All these arguments are developed in part 1.

capacities do not exist, they must be built by the new democratic forces or democracy cannot be consolidated. This is why we argued that democratization often must begin with the political restructuring of the state so as to give it new consensually and constitutionally based power. This is particularly so where stateness problems exist, as we documented in our analysis of Spain. Statewide elections and the crafting of a consensual constitution are forms of building legitimate state power. Such power can then be brought to bear in the restructuring of federal relations or in restructuring the economy.

In the area of vertical relations within the federation, Russia faced, as we have seen, extraordinary tasks that needed to be addressed before it could become a coherent democratic polity. The implementation of the much needed economic restructuring, in the post–party-state context, also called for the creation of new forms of democratic power. The combination of the old structures of governance and the way the USSR disintegrated also left the state in Russia particularly prone to horizontal power conflicts between the executive and the legislative. Furthermore, the existing Brezhnev era constitution spelled out few conflict regulation devices in the case of legislative/executive disputes over powers. The constitution, for example, did not assign a significant role to the judiciary. As in Czechoslovakia the absence of a framework for democratic government was not a problem when the party-state governed. However, under more democratic conditions in Russia, the absence of democratic procedures for governance led to intrastate impasse and power deflation.

In these circumstances, in our judgment, the first order of business should have been the democratic restructuring of the state so as to create structures of democratic power. What in fact was the first order of business?

Boris Yeltsin's first major policy address to the Congress of People's Deputies and to the citizens of Russia after the coup was on October 28, 1991. He told the congress and the nation that "the present time is one of the most critical moments in Russian history. It is now that the future of Russia and of the country as a whole in the years and decades to come is being decided. We must unreservedly embark on a path of thoroughgoing reforms, in which the support of all strata of the population is needed. The time has come to adopt the main decision and to begin to act."[64]

Thus far we agree, and Yeltsin's appeal to Congress and to the people is similar to the address of Adolfo Suárez to the Cortes and the citizens which we analyzed at length in our chapter on Spain. But Yeltsin's specification of what actions he should privilege contrasted radically with those of Suárez, who emphasized the democratic restructuring of politics and the state as the first priority. In contrast, for Boris Yeltsin "the most important, most decisive actions will have to be taken

64. See Boris Yeltsin, "Speech to the RSFSR Congress of the People's Deputies and to the Citizens of Russia, October 28, 1991," in Dallin and Lapidus, eds., *The Soviet System*, 632.

in the sphere of the economy. The first area is economic stabilization. . . . The second area is privatization and the creation of a healthy mixed economy with a powerful private sector."[65]

Almost in passing, toward the end of the speech Yeltsin mentioned structures of governance.

The time has come to say clearly and precisely that there is one source of power in Russia: the Russian Republic's Congress and Supreme Soviet, the Russian Republic's government, and the Russian Republic's President. A dynamic process of extracting the institutions of power from under the heel of the CPSU is under way. We are not afraid of accusations of being undemocratic, and we will act decisively in this respect . . . In conducting the reforms, the principle burden rests with the Russian government. This burden is too heavy for the government's present make-up and cumbersome structure. It can be borne only by a government of popular confidence, one that people will trust, one that will convince them that its actions are correct.[66]

What is significant is that Yeltsin was absolutely silent about how to create such a government. He did not mention calling new elections for the newly independent state. He did not mention the possibility of a newly elected parliament crafting a new democratic constitution, which would create a framework for the orderly exercise of democratic power.

Yeltsin in October 1991 still commanded great power and prestige. He had been democratically elected in June 1991. He had led the resistence to the coup in August 1991. He was soon to lead Russia to complete independence. In this context (despite the fact that the vast majority of the parliament had been elected with Communist Party support in March 1990), the Congress of People's Deputies voted overwhelmingly to support, by 876 to 16, President Yeltsin's "big bang" free market reforms, his first and second priorities.[67] In November 1991, this same Soviet-era congress voted to give Yeltsin decree power for one year to implement economic reform.

In our judgment, Yeltsin's choice to privilege economic restructuring over democratic state restructuring weakened the state, weakened democracy, and weakened the economy. Timing is crucial in all politics, but especially in democratization processes. Yeltsin and his core advisors in the critical fall months of 1991 took the effort to craft an economic plan and to argue its merits before the parliament and the citizens. We believe he should have made a prior effort to have amplified his party base and, like Adolfo Suárez in Spain, convinced the parliament of the old regime to hold early free elections. Absolutely nothing of this sort was attempted. Let us quote at length from a perceptive eyewitness observer.

65. Ibid.
66. Ibid., 636–37.
67. The vote was taken one week after Yeltsin's address to the Congress and the citizens. For the atmosphere surrounding the vote, see Dunlop, *Rise of Russia and Fall of Soviet Empire*, 265.

[Yeltsin] and his advisors chose not to undertake fundamental political reforms and instead relied on Yeltsin's own personal charisma and authority to sustain the state in carrying out its program of economic transformation. . . . More striking to contemplate, however, are the decisions and actions Yeltsin did not take. He did not push to adopt a new constitution. . . . The new regime did little to institutionalize its popular support in society. Yeltsin did not establish a political party; nor did he call for elections to stimulate party development. And despite repeated cries from Democratic Russia, he refused to call new elections in the Fall of 1991.[68]

More research must be done, and historical counterfactuals are never certain. But if Yeltsin, in the immediate aftermath of his anti-coup triumph, with the charismatic aura and authority this gave him, had called in September 1991 for new parliamentary and presidential elections to be held in, say, December 1991, a strong case could be made that he could have convinced the Russian parliament to accede to his proposal. This would have required a lot of politicking, maneuvering, and coalition-building as well as appeals to public opinion. In October 1991 Yeltsin's approval rating was still 61 percent (down from 71 percent in July). His ability to convince parliament to go along with his initiatives in September and October 1991 was still very high, as the overwhelming vote of support this Soviet-era body gave to his economic plan demonstrates.[69] Given the experience Democratic Russia had acquired during Yeltsin's victorious presidential campaign in June 1991, Yeltsin, acting as a leader of Democratic Russia, incorporating in a broad coalition diverse forces, and building a political instrument to support him, might have done well in an election.[70] The self-image of a president above party made such a political strategy unlikely, but if he *had* commited himself to such a strategy, and if elections *had* been held in December 1991, a newly legitimated, in-

68. See the excellent article by Michael McFaul, "State Power, Institutional Change, and the Politics of Privatization in Russia," *World Politics* 47, no. 2 (1995), 226. McFaul was in Moscow in October 1991 and interviewed many Democratic Russia leaders. For a very similar critique by a Russian social scientist, see Lilia Shevtsova, "Russia's Post-Communist Politics: Revolution or Continuity?" in Lapidus, ed., *The New Russia*, 5–37, esp. 8–10. Also see the convincing section entitled "The political mismanagement of economic reform" in Timothy J. Colton, "Boris Yeltsin, Russia's All-Thumbs Democrat," in Timothy J. Colton and Robert C. Tucker, eds., *Patterns in Post-Soviet Leadership* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995) 49–74, esp. 60–65.

69. On counterfactual analyses see James D. Fearon, "Counterfactuals and Hypothesis Testing in Political Science," *World Politics* 43 (Jan. 1991): 169–95. For Yeltsin's high public opinion ratings in July and October 1991, see the valuable article by Archie Brown, "Political Leadership in Post-Communist Russia," in Amin Saikal and William Maley, eds., *Russia in Search of Its Future* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 36. Brown also argues that Yeltsin "should have made a serious effort to have a new constitution adoped and a date for fresh elections agreed in late 1991 or early 1992 when his public standing was still sufficiently high for him to have persuaded the Congress of People's Deputies to vote for its own dissolution" (p. 33).

70. McFaul argues that "polling by Democratic Russia indicated that with Yeltsin's backing the organization would win a majority within the Congress of People's Deputies. At the time, Democratic Russia was the only legal party or social movement of national status. Having just organized Yeltsin's electoral victory in June 1991 and then spearheaded the popular resistance to the coup in August, leaders of Democratic Russia were quite certain of victory." See McFaul, "State Power, Institutional Change, and Privatization," 226. Shevtsova argues that, in the fall of 1991, "the only political movement with significant influence at the time was Democratic Russia, the mass-based movement that had helped bring Yeltsin to power in 1990 and 1991." Shevtsova, "Russia's Post-Communist Politics," 18.

dependence-era Russian parliament could have voted support for the economic plan and made some quick but consensual constitutional amendments before undertaking the task of completely rewriting the Soviet-era constitution. This new parliament could have provided the government with a constitutional foundation for political, economic, and social reform. There would have been some short-term costs. The launching of the "big bang" economic reform would possibly have been delayed by a few months. But the long-term gains might have been substantial.

Boris Yeltsin, in his book *The Struggle for Russia,* in retrospect also believes that he missed an opportunity. "I believe the most important opportunity missed after the coup was the radical restructuring of the parliamentary system. I have a sneaking suspicion, though, that society might not have been ready to nominate any decent candidates to a new legislature. The idea of dissolving the Congress and scheduling new elections was in the air (as well as a Constitution for the new country), although we did not take advantage of it."[71] The Yeltsin memoir is particularly revealing in two inter-related respects. First, Yeltsin virtually does not mention the possibility that he could have helped contribute to making Democratic Russia—or any other political party—a powerful instrument of democratic change. Democratic parties were not part of his cognitive or reform world. Second, as the above quote makes clear, Yelstsin was reluctant to take a chance with elections. But, as Adam Przeworski and other democratic theorists insist, democracy building is precisely a process in which political leaders have to accept the risk of the uncertainty of elections. It is the task of democratic politicians and parties to get the voters to support their program by campaigning and coalition building. But Yeltsin's conception of the president as being above parties, rather than the leader of a party or a coalition, and his style of rule would have made such an effort difficult.

In the absence of constitutional restructuring of democratic state power, the Soviet-era legislature and the pro-market, anti-Soviet executive entered into a deadly struggle. This struggle ebbed and flowed but never stopped until Yelstin used armed force to prevail in October 1993. This power struggle hurt the very economic reform in whose name democratic state building had been postponed. The Soviet-era congress that Yeltsin decided to live with actually had interests in the economy and the polity that were distinctly different from those espoused by the "big bang" reformers in Yeltsin's government. In fact, only six months after Gaidar's program had been overwhelmingly approved by the Fifth Congress of the People's Deputies, his program was defeated 632 votes to 231.[72]

71. Boris Yeltsin, *The Struggle for Russia* (New York: Times Books, Random House, 1994), 126.

72. A very clear and documented analysis of the multiple conflicts between the legislative power and the executive power in Russia in this period is found in Yitzhak M. Brudny's article, "Ruslan Khasbulatov, Aleksandr Rutskoi and Intra-elite Conflict in Post-Communist Russia, 1991–1994," in Timothy J. Colton and Robert C. Tucker, eds., *Patterns in Post Soviet Leadership* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1995), 75–101.

Moreover, the constitution gave the congress an extraordinary number of prerogatives they could call upon to check the executive. A policy conflict between the parliament and the executive was thus predictable. Furthermore, the existing constitutional structures of government were not crafted so as to facilitate and channel democratic contestation.

Yitzhak M. Brudny in a perceptive study makes this clear:

> Features of the Russian constitutional structure made the conflict between the president and the parliament virtually impossible to resolve. First, the Russian presidential system, as it was established in 1991, clearly belonged to the "president-parliamentary" type. In this system both the parliament and the president enjoy some control over the cabinet of ministers but precise division of power between the two is not defined clearly. . . . The law on the presidency effectively created two competing heads of the state, the president and the chairman of the Supreme Soviet.
>
> Second, the Russian law on the presidency failed to provide a mechanism for resolving potential conflicts between the two branches of government. . . . The Russian parliamentarians denied the president the right to call referenda or new parliamentary or presidential elections preferring to keep these rights as their exclusive prerogative.[73]

The chairman of the Russian Supreme Soviet, Ruslan Khasbulatov, was able to use his Soviet-era constitutional prerogatives to issue direct orders to government ministries and agencies. His orders often conflicted with decrees issued by Yeltsin. In 1992 Khasbulatov issued 66 such orders. In the first six months of 1993 he issued more than 630.[74]

A core part of the economic reform was dismantled only four months after its initiation. The parliament prevailed in their claim that they had the right to appoint and supervise the president of the central bank. Their nominee followed policies fundamentally at odds with the Yeltsin-Gaidar stabilization policy. The weakness of the government in the congress also meant that state managers, via their allies in the congress, were able to structure legislative outcomes that resulted in "insiders" controlling the vast majority of privatized state enterprises. This same alliance meant that the state continued to give massive subsidies to these structurally unreformed enterprises.[75]

Both parties to the horizontal struggle for state power (the legislature and the executive) claimed democratic legitimacy. Semipresidentialism in Russia manifested even more dangerous tendencies for democracy than it did in the Polish case we have analyzed.[76] Indeed, as the struggle intensified in Russia, both parties

73. Ibid., 85–86.

74. Ibid., 86.

75. See the previously cited article by McFaul for documentation. For additional convincing empirical studies of insider control during and after privatization in Russia, see Katherina Pistor, Roman Frydman, and Andrzej Rapaczynski, "Investing in Insider-dominated Firms: A Study of Russian Voucher Privatization Funds," and Joseph R. Blasi, "Corporate Governance in Russia." Both papers were delivered at a joint conference of the World Bank and the Central European University Privatization Project, December 15–16, 1994, Washington, DC.

76. See chapter 16 for our excursus on semipresidentialism and our analysis of it in the Polish context.

claimed prerogatives of the sort not found in any modern consolidated democracy in the world.

During their conflict with the president, the parliament managed to reinsert into the Russian constitution the classic Soviet-era description of the Soviets as the "highest state organs."[77] This phrase and a series of amendments advocated by Khasbulatov implied a form of an "assembly regime" rather than a semipresidential or even a parliamentary regime.[78] That is, the Soviets would directly select, monitor, and even manage the executive and officials of the state apparatus. This assembly regime would also act as judiciary because whenever the Supreme Soviet met they would act as a permanent constituent assembly.[79] From this "all power to the Soviets," Paris Commune perspective, Khasbulatov and the parliament argued their superior legitimacy and periodically tried to impeach Yeltsin. By October 1992 it was also revealed that Khasbulatov had built up a five-thousand-member parliamentary armed guard subordinate through him to the Soviets alone.[80]

Yeltsin for his part appealed to his superior democratic legitimacy based on his direct presidential election. He went further: he frequently made dark warnings that he would appeal directly to the people. In our discussion of Brazil and Argentina, we analyzed the extreme plebiscitary, anti-institutional style of presiden-

77. Ibid., 228. This phrase, of course, had roots in Marx's analysis of the Paris Commune in his *The Civil War in France* and Lenin's praise of the Commune in his *State and Revolution.* In a famous section of *State and Revolution* subtitled "The Eradication of Parliamentarianism," Lenin argued that "the Commune replaces the venal and rotten parliamentarianism of bourgeois society." It did this, Lenin argued, by "the conversion of the representative institutions from talking shops into 'working' institutions." The key examples given by Marx and later by Lenin of the Paris Commune as a working institution are those of the commune directly establishing and running the courts and most administration. In this way, direct democracy could lead not only to the eradication of parliamentarianism but eventually to the "withering away of the state." All careful historical studies show, however, that when it actually came to creating structures of power in the Soviet Union, Lenin almost immediately marginalized the "Soviets" or any form of Paris Commune-like direct democracy and built instead the hyperstatism of the centralized party-state. Notwithstanding this historical fact, antiparliamentary, direct democracy discourse of the "all power to the Soviets" sort remained a significant part of post-Soviet political argument. The democratically ambivalent effects of this strand of populist, direct democracy, antiparliamentary legacy of Soviet political culture and philosophy is discussed in the previously cited book by two Russian social scientists, Sergeyev and Biryukov, *Russia's Road to Democracy.*

78. The best discussion of Khasbulatov's program is found in Brudny, "Khasbulatov, Rutskoi and Intra-elite Conflict."

79. The 1977 Constitution [Fundamental Law] of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (much of the spirit of which was still in the Russian Constitution in 1991–93) formally gave the Soviets control of virtually all state powers. Article 2 stated "all power in the USSR belongs to the people. The people exercise state power through the Soviets of the People's Deputies, which constitute the political foundation of the USSR. All other state bodies are under the control of, and accountable to, the Soviets of the People's Deputies."

Article 108 gave the Soviets control over executive and constitutional power. "The highest body of state authority of the USSR shall be the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. The Supreme Soviet of the USSR is empowered to deal with all matters within the jurisdiction of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The adoption and amendment of the Constitution of the USSR . . . are the exclusive prerogative of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR." See John N. Hazard, ed., *The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics,* in the series edited by Albert P. Blaustein and Gisbert H. Flanz, *Constitutions of the Countries of the World* (Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.: Oceana Publications, Oct. 1990).

80. Brudny, "Khasbulatov, Rutskoi and Intra-elite Conflict."

tialism that Guillermo O'Donnell has called "delegative democracy."[81] Yeltsin in his struggle against parliament approximated O'Donnell's description, with the added twist that he denounced the legitimacy of the legislature because of its Soviet origins. The Russian social scientist, Shevtsova, implicitly agrees. She argues that Yeltsin "embarked on a course of 'revolutionary liberalism' from above," which was characterized by "the use of charisma to personalize the political process, [and] reliance on a vertical system of presidential power to implement his policies."[82]

Dwight Semler, in his review of constitutional developments in Russia in the first six months of 1993, captured graphically how, in the absence of constitutional change, one branch of a potential democracy (the executive) had taken to routinely questioning the legitimacy of another branch of a potential democracy (the legislature). For example, in February 1993,

> Yeltsin repeated his contention that the current political situation made Russia impossible to govern. . . . Yeltsin asserted that he was not compelled to adhere to the constitution because it was nothing more than a Soviet-era document repeatedly and opportunistically amended by a short sighted congress. He warned that failure to hammer out a sensible power-sharing agreement would spell either "dictatorship or anarchy for Russia"—the sort of pronouncement that fuelled widespread rumors of 'emergency rule' by Yeltsin. . . .
>
> The tension came to a head on March 20 when Yeltsin made a nationally televised address 'declaring' that Congress had violated the separation of powers and blasting the Constitutional Court for not having stopped them. Yeltsin announced that he had signed a decree establishing a special presidential regime necessary for the preservation of the country. While not attempting to dissolve Congress, Yeltsin made it clear that the new "regime" nullified any legislative acts that ran counter to the President's own directives.[83]

In September and October 1993, the constitutional crisis was resolved by force. Yeltsin unilaterally dissolved the parliament. The icon of August 1991 was Yeltsin on top of a tank defending the White House. The symbol of October 1993 was Yeltsin's tanks shattering the White House.

We reiterate our prior assertion, which we believe we now have documented. Yeltsin's choice in the fall of 1991 to privilege economic restructuring and completely to neglect democratic restructuring of the parliament, the constitution, and the state further weakened an already weak state, deprived the proposed economic reform program of the minimal degree of political and state coherence necessary for its successful implementation, and contributed to the mutual delegitimitation of the three democratic branches of the government.[84]

81. Guillermo O'Donnell, "Delegative Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 5, no. 1 (Jan. 1994): 55–69, esp. 64.

82. Shevtsova, "Russia's Post-Communist Politics," 9.

83. Dwight Semler, "Special Reports: Crisis in Russia," *East European Constitutional Review* 2, no. 3 (1993): 15–19, quotations from 15 and 17. The March 1993 crisis was defused when Yeltsin softened his written text after strong protests by the Constitutional Court and the legislature.

84. While most of the West supported Yeltsin in his confrontation with the parliament, it should also be noted that the democratic tissue of Russia was hurt in numerous other ways in September 1993. As Archie

Post-Soviet Semipresidentialism: A Concluding Excursus

Soviet and Russian political developments during the transition underscore some of the themes we have stressed in this book. Books can and should be written on the subject of the problems for democracy created by semipresidentialism in the (non-Baltic) post-Soviet and post-Yugoslavian states.[85] As comparativists who have long written on such problems, let us briefly identify some of the features that made semipresidentialism an especially complicated and crisis-prone form of government in Russia and many of the other states of the former Soviet Union.

1. The prolonged cohabitation of a new and vaguely spelled out model of the presidency with the old nondemocratic and partly delegitimated Soviet-era institutions greatly complicated the Russian transition.

2. The creation of a presidency in the case of Russia with Yeltsin democratically legitimated by his election in June 1991, initiated the dynamics of the dual legitimacy of all presidential regimes that coexist with a legislature that is also democratically legitimated and has its own independent mandate. This classic problem of dual legitimacy was further complicated in Russia by the lack of a constitution that defined clearly the powers and roles of the different actors.

3. To the common structural problems of presidential and semipresidential democracies, we have to add the distinctive Soviet "all power to the Soviets" tradition that gave to the legislature and its chairman extraordinary powers, basically incompatible with a model based on a division of powers.

4. To complicate things further, both Gorbachev and Yeltsin supported, for temporary pragmatic reasons, the election of vice presidents who did not share their policy views and who ended by supporting plots against them. This is a pattern well known from crises in other presidential systems.[86]

5. In Matthew S. Shugart's analysis, the most unstable semipresidential variant is one he calls "president-parliamentary." A key aspect of this model is that the assembly may vote no confidence against the cabinet. Shugart argues that, "if the constitution permits [both] the parliamentary majority [and] the president acting unilaterally to dismiss cabinet ministers, there is no institutionally defined authority over the cabinet; executive-legislative conflict is likely. This institutional design has bred instability whenever it has been used . . . most ominously, in Weimar."[87] This precarious model is the norm in the non-Baltic countries of the former Soviet Union. It is true that the removable prime ministers provide a "fuse" protecting the president, but the situation can also lead to constant crises in policy leadership.This affects particularly the economic reform process. Indeed, in the Ukraine in 1991–94 semipresidential institutions led to a triarchy: president, prime minister, and the legislature and its chairman, leading to incertitude and conflict.[88]

6. The availability of the referendum to presumably resolve conflicts between the political actors by turning to the people has been useful in some cases, but it has frequently led to populist mobilization rather than to party politics. It has also led to conflicts about the calling and wording of the referendum, thus complicating the entire bargaining and party-building process that is so crucial to building an institutionalized political society with some degree of autonomy and predictability.

7. Presidentialism and strong semipresidentialism, as we and others have argued elsewhere, in the absence of a long historically structured party system do not encourage the formation of parties. Presidents like to be above party, not to identify with a party, and Yeltsin certainly did not use the opportunity to transform the movement-type formation, Democratic Russia, into a party. This tendency toward presidents being above party politics has been exacerbated by the post-Soviet constitutional practice that presidents, unlike in the French Fifth Republic, cannot lead or even belong to parties.

8. Not all the presidential-parliamentary conflicts in the former USSR have led to such a violent crisis as the shelling of the Parliament by the president in

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Brown observes, the violent resolution of the crisis also meant "the suspension of the Constitutional Court, the temporary barring of some twenty newspapers and the tightening of governmental control over, and censorship of, television." See Brown, "Political Leadership in Post-Communist Russia," 33.

For a strong counterfactual analysis that a fall 1991 democratic political strategy by Yeltsin would have contributed to a stronger state and a more successful economic reform in Russia in 1992–93, see McFaul, "State Power, Institutional Change, and Privatization," esp. 238–43.

85. One such book in progress is an edited volume by Ray Taras, tentatively entitled *Presidential Systems in Communist States: A Comparative Analysis.*

86. To cite but a few examples, in Brazil, Vice President João Goulart fundamentally opposed President Janio Quadros' policies. In the Philippines, Vice President Salvador Laurel was at best what we would call "semiloyal" during a major coup attempt against President Corazon Aquino.

87. See Matthew S. Shugart, "Of Presidents and Parliaments," *East European Constitutional Review* 2, no. 1 (1993), 30–32. Quotation from p. 30 and p. 32. For the full development of his analytic approach, see Matthew Soberg Shugart and John M. Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

88. An important study on semipresidentialism in the Ukraine is Andrew Wilson, "Post-Communist Presidents. Ukraine: Two Presidents, but No Settled Powers" (paper presented to the American Association for Advanced Slavic Studies, Philadelphia, November 1994). A revised version will appear in the previously cited edited volume by Ray Taras. Also see the excellent work by a Ukrainian political scientist, Oleg Protsyk, "Do Institutions Matter? Semi-presidentialism in Ukraine and France" (Master's thesis, Central European University, Budapest, June 1995). Post-Soviet presidents caught in this dyarchy or tryarchy constantly try to expand their powers well beyond the already substantial powers of the president in the French Fifth Republic. For example, Shugart and Carey in their *Presidents and Assemblies,* 148–58, develop an index of presidential powers. They give a total score of 7 for the president of the Fifth Republic. In late 1994 a frustrated President Kuchma in the Ukraine proposed a new law of presidential powers. According to Protsyk's estimation, Kuchma's proposal, if implemented, would have yielded an index of presidential power on the Shugart-Carey scale of 19.5, which is even higher than the 14.5 he accords to the "superpresidential" office of the Russian president in the new (1993) Russian constitution. For the Russian presidency, see Stephen Holmes, "Superpresidentialism and Its Problems," *East European Constitutional Review* 2, no. 4 (1993): 123–26.

Russia. But in some post-Soviet republics there is an increasing tendency for non-democratic resolution of presidential/legislative tension. With increasing frequency presidents prorogue parliaments, rule by decree, and call democratically dubious snap referenda to extend their mandates.[89]

Many factors account for the difficulties of democracy in the new states of the former USSR, but one of them, and not the least important, is the lack of early agreement on how to channel institutionally the democratic aspirations of people in decision-making structures. Institutions do matter.

89. In Turkmenistan a truly Soviet-era 99.9 percent of the population voted in a referendum to extend the president's mandate until the year 2000. In Kazakhstan the president, after proroguing the parliament, unilaterally formulated the referendum question and called a quick referendum, the result of which extended his mandate.