

# The Fate of the Russian State

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**T**he key to the resurrection and development of Russia lies today in the state-political sphere. Russia needs a strong state and it must have one," Russian president Vladimir Putin wrote in an essay entitled "Russia at the Turn of the Millennium," released in the last week of December 1999, before he was elected president.<sup>1</sup> In a television interview shortly after he became acting president, he reiterated that point: "I am absolutely convinced that we will not solve any problems, any economic or social problems, while the state is disintegrating."<sup>2</sup>

Putin has it right, for the defining feature of Russian developments for the past decade or more has not been progress or setbacks on the path of reform, the focus of so much Western commentary, but the fragmentation, degeneration, and erosion of state power. During that time, a fragile Russian state of uncertain legitimacy has grown even weaker as a consequence of deliberate, if misguided, policies, bitter and debilitating struggles for political power, and simple theft of state assets. The erosion of the state has reached such depths that the central state apparatus, or the center, as it is commonly called in Russia, has little remaining capacity to mobilize resources for national purposes, either at home or abroad, while most regional and local governments lack the resources—and in some cases the desire—to govern effectively. The obvious weakness of the state has, not surprisingly, fueled fears about Russia's stability, integrity, and for some Russians, its survival.

Whether and how Russia rebuilds the state will have far-reaching consequences for Russia and the world. A review of the development of the Russian state over the past fifteen years, the structure of power in Russia today, and the international setting suggests that the country is not on the verge of breakup, but it also underscores how stiff a challenge rebuilding poses. Moreover, it indicates that success will require that more thought be given to reconstituting the state than was given to securing Russia's independence nearly a decade ago.

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### The Emergence of the Post-Soviet Russian State

The emergence of an independent Russian state was in many ways a historical accident, the unintended by-product of the struggle for power within the Soviet Union and not the end product of a detailed strategy. For most of the Soviet period, Russians conflated Russia and the Soviet Union; the union subsumed the Russian Federation but not the other fourteen union republics. Unlike them, Russia had few of the trappings of sovereignty. It lacked its own Ministry of Internal Affairs and KGB, its own Academy of Sciences, and its own television network. Ukraine and Belarus, not Russia, received seats in the United Nations along with the Soviet Union as a whole. Most important, Russia lacked its own subdivision of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU); the regional party committees in Russia were directly subordinated to the CPSU Central Committee.

The reason for this arrangement was obvious and, not surprisingly, based on power considerations. Russia, simply put, was too important to be treated as just another union republic. At the end of the Soviet period, it accounted for three-quarters of the territory, 60 percent of the economy, and half of the population of the Soviet Union. The overwhelming share of the Soviet Union's vast natural resources, including 90 percent of oil and gas production, was located in Russia. A full-fledged Russian republic could have provided a formidable base for challenging the Soviet leadership. Indeed, two axioms of Soviet politics were (a) he who controls Russia controls the Soviet Union, and (b) there can be a Russia without the union, but there is no union without Russia.<sup>3</sup>

Understanding this logic, the opponents of Soviet leader Gorbachev began in the late 1980s to press for the enhancement of Russia's status as a way of mounting a challenge to him and his policies. Hard-line conservative rivals pressed for the creation of a Russian Federation Communist Party to circumvent Gorbachev's hold over the leading organs of the CPSU.<sup>4</sup> The radical democrats, after they had allied with Boris Yeltsin, turned their attention to the Russian Congress of People's Deputies. Neither group, however, was interested in an independent Russia. The hard-liners hoped to turn a Russian Communist Party into a nationalist organization dedicated to preserving the Soviet empire.<sup>5</sup> The democrats sought to build a noncommunist but Russian-dominated federation or confederation out of the Soviet Union.

In the push to enhance Russia's status, the elites reflected the growing popular mood in Russia. Increasingly, Russians saw themselves as the stepchildren of the Soviet Union. Even though Russia produced some 60 percent of Soviet GDP, it had one of the lowest standards of living in the entire Soviet Union. By spring 1990, over one-third of Russians thought that Russia should have expanded political and economic rights, even if it remained subordinate to the Soviet Union, according to a poll by a respected polling agency, the All-Union Center for Public Opinion Research (VTsIOM). The same poll revealed that over 40 percent of Russians believed Russia should have full political and economic autonomy, which could entail secession from the Soviet Union.<sup>6</sup>

Yeltsin's allies had more success in playing the Russia card than the conservative forces, in part because power was slowly flowing away from the party to

state institutions, in part because they proved adept at harnessing the conservatives' dissatisfaction with Gorbachev to their own purposes. Although Yeltsin supporters and opponents were about evenly split in the Russian Congress of People's Deputies elected in March 1990, and although Gorbachev ardently opposed it, Yeltsin was able to cobble together a coalition that elected him to the then-highest office in Russia, chairman of the Supreme Soviet. In his new capacity, Yeltsin quickly proposed a declaration of Russian sovereignty, which garnered the support of conservatives because they too were opposed to Gorbachev's leadership. As a result, on 12 June, the Congress overwhelmingly adopted that declaration, which, among other things, asserted the primacy of the Russian constitution and laws over their all-union counterparts on Russian territory.<sup>7</sup>

In spring 1991, Yeltsin pressed for the creation of the post of Russian president, as part of the struggle against Gorbachev, who had been named USSR president a year earlier by the USSR Congress of People's Deputies. A close Yeltsin adviser has written that the Russian presidency was conceived for a state within the Soviet Union, not for an independent state, and it was believed that Russia would remain a part of the Soviet Union for a prolonged period.<sup>8</sup> And the post was clearly intended to enhance Yeltsin's status vis-à-vis Gorbachev, to transform him into a coleader of the Soviet Union, not simply into the sole leader of Russia.<sup>9</sup>

For that reason, much thought was given to how the Russian president would be selected, but little was given to how the institution would be structured and relate to other Russian institutions. Yeltsin was to be elected Russian president by direct popular vote (there was never much concern that he might lose) so that he could legitimately claim to represent the popular will, unlike Gorbachev, who had refused to stand for popular election. But the amendment to the Russian constitution creating the presidency left both the president and the Congress of People's Deputies with claims to being the highest political authority in Russia. This was of little import as long as Russia remained part of the Soviet Union, but became an explosive issue after the union's demise (see below).

After the failed August putsch, Yeltsin wavered over whether to push for the breakup of the Soviet Union.<sup>10</sup> While Gorbachev claims that Yeltsin consciously used the Russian Federation to dismantle the Soviet Union, he argues that Yeltsin did not finally decide on that course of action until the end of October, despite strong pressure from a group of advisers, including Gennady Burbulis, to adopt a "Russia first" policy from the first days after the putsch.<sup>11</sup> But a closer look at the record suggests that even then Yeltsin was not determined to create an independent Russian state outside the framework of a reorganized Soviet Union. Nor did he abandon Gorbachev's Soviet Union simply because, as one study of the Gorbachev period argues, "the all-union authorities, and Gorbachev in particular, stood between him and full power and authority in Russia, including the symbolically important occupancy of the Kremlin."<sup>12</sup>

Just as important, if not more so, was Yeltsin and his allies' belief that only by forsaking the Soviet Union could they commence with the radical economic reform they thought was key to Russia's renewal. They understood that the necessary reform would never be undertaken if they tried to harmonize their program

with the other, more conservative non-Russian republics or had to rely on the disintegrating institutions of the Soviet government.<sup>13</sup> Yeltsin articulated that position in a key address before the Russian parliament in October 1991:

We do not have the possibility of linking the reform timetable with the achievement of all-embracing interrepublican agreement on this issue. Russia recognizes the right of each republic to determine its own strategy and tactics in economic policy, but we are not going to go out of our way to fit in with others. For us, the time of marking time has passed. An economically strong Russia will have substantially greater possibilities for supporting her neighbors than a Russia standing on the verge of economic collapse.<sup>14</sup>

Yeltsin, moreover, clearly thought that this stronger Russia would act like a magnet to the other, soon-to-be-former Soviet republics, eventually drawing them back into a Russia-dominated entity of some sort. Speaking before the Russian Supreme Soviet in December 1991, he justified the accords dissolving the Soviet Union and creating the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) as the only alternative to “further uncontrolled decay of the union.” The CIS, he noted, would have “a unified economic space, open internal borders, and a harmonized political line and harmonized reforms.”<sup>15</sup> Later, Yeltsin argued that these accords had been necessary “to strengthen sharply centripetal tendencies in the decaying union, to stimulate a treaty process.” They were not, he continued, intended to break up the union; on the contrary, the “CIS offered at the time the only chance of preserving a unified geopolitical space,” particularly after Ukrainians had overwhelmingly supported independence in a referendum at the beginning of December.<sup>16</sup> Foreign Minister Andrey Kozyrev made similar points to the Congress of People’s Deputies in April 1992, noting that “in line with the logic of attempts to recreate a renewed union in one shape or another, our priority is of course centered on multilateral institutions, not bilateral relations [with the other former Soviet republics].”<sup>17</sup>

Concrete actions gave life to this rhetoric, underscoring that Yeltsin and the Russian leadership intended to dominate the former Soviet Union and, at the extreme, even harbored visions of rebuilding a Russia-dominated federation or confederation out of it. As the Soviet Union decayed in fall 1991, Russia worked to establish itself as *the* successor state—not simply one of fifteen—to the Soviet Union. Russia was the only former Soviet republic that did not formally declare its independence from the Soviet Union. With widespread international support and the concurrence of the other former Soviet republics, it was given the Soviet Union’s seat in international organizations, including, most importantly, the permanent seat on the UN Security Council. It assumed the entire Soviet debt in exchange for the right to all Soviet assets abroad.

More important, the Russian leadership initially tried to maintain key structures that would have bolstered a Russian presence and influence across the former Soviet Union. Although he said in December 1991 that he supported the formation of a Russian Defense Ministry, Yeltsin set one up only several months later in May 1992. In the interim, he explored whether the CIS Armed Forces—dominated by Russia—could be used to retard the breakup of the former Soviet

space.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, Russian troops remained stationed outside of Russia in several other former Soviet republics. At the same time, the Russian leadership supported the maintenance of a ruble zone, which they hoped to dominate by establishing a single monetary authority with technical control of issuing money throughout the zone (an idea the other former Soviet republics rejected).<sup>19</sup> That the CIS did not live up to Russian expectations as a unifying structure was not for lack of effort on Russia's part. Rather, the failure was primarily due to the resistance of other former Soviet republics, especially Ukraine, to anything that smacked of Russian hegemony over them.

Finally, the Russian leadership had difficulty articulating a set of Russian foreign policy objectives. Yeltsin

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and Kozyrev both believed that building good relations with the West had to be a top priority, because they saw its moral and financial support as critical to the success of reform in Russia itself. In presenting its face to the West, the Russian leadership stressed its commitment to “universal values.”

Kozyrev even admitted in a conversation with former president Nixon in spring 1992 that the Russian government had not yet had time to focus on specifically Russian interests.<sup>20</sup>

### **Fragile Statehood**

As a consequence of the struggle between the Soviet center and Russia, the attitudes and goals of the Russian leadership, and Gorbachev's policies, Russia emerged at the end of 1991 as a state of uncertain legitimacy suffering from institutional disarray and confronted by mounting centrifugal forces and socioeconomic problems.

Although radical democrats and Yeltsin had spoken eloquently of “the rebirth of Russia,” their actions indicated they were concerned more about power and reform than Russian statehood. After its formation under Yeltsin in summer 1990, the new Russian government sought to seize assets of the Soviet government located on Russian territory. Scant attention was given to legitimizing Russia as a sovereign republic or independent state.

Indeed, radical democrats presented their vision of a new Russia—within a reformed Soviet Union—not only as a radical break with seventy years of Soviet totalitarianism but, more important, as a departure from a thousand years of Russian authoritarianism. That was the overwhelming message of Yeltsin's address at his inauguration as the first Russian president, even though the Russian Orthodox patriarch was present and the national hymn was the “Glory Chorus” of Glinka's “A Life for the Tsar.”<sup>21</sup> Yeltsin's address focused on creating a new beginning for Russia, on altering the relationship between state and society

that had existed “for centuries,” on building democracy “for the first time.” He devoted one short paragraph to Russia’s “most rich and original” culture.<sup>22</sup> In short, Yeltsin and his allies cut the historical ties that would have lent their Russian state a modicum of legitimacy. (Yeltsin’s appeal to a “democratic Russia” proved inadequate because democratic norms alone cannot create the sense of shared identity and destiny necessary to create a political community or nation.)<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, the Russia that emerged from the breakup of the Soviet Union bore little geographic resemblance to any historical Russian state, nor did it follow the pattern of ethnic settlement. Some twenty-five million ethnic Russians found themselves living outside Russia in former Soviet republics. Most Russians believed that Russia encompassed more territory than the Russian Federation. Tellingly, Yeltsin’s government sought to prevent the foreclosure of the border issue while casting itself as the protector of the rights of Russians living outside Russia. Yeltsin, however, realized that border disputes would take time and energy from economic reform measures. By maintaining some kind of union with open borders, Yeltsin hoped to play down border issues.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, Yeltsin wanted to protect ethnic Russians where they lived, because a flood of refugees into Russia would have overwhelmed the already fragile socioeconomic infrastructure. He avoided the use of force in protecting them because that would have sapped critical resources from the reform effort and severely strained relations with the West. A union dominated by Russia would have increased Yeltsin’s options, at least in part because no ethnic Russians would have been living outside a Russian political entity.

The weak legitimacy of the Russian state was exacerbated by the institutional disarray in Moscow, in particular by the situation of “dual power” that pitted Yeltsin against the Congress of People’s Deputies. According to the Russian constitution, the president was “the highest official of the RSFSR<sup>25</sup> and the head of the executive branch of the RSFSR” (Article 121). At the same time, the Congress of People’s Deputies was “the highest organ of state power,” with the right to “review and decide any question relating to the jurisdiction of the Russian Federation” (Article 104).<sup>26</sup> Beginning in spring 1992, Yeltsin and the congress competed for political primacy, and little progress was made on the policy front as the competition escalated into a life-and-death struggle that ended with Yeltsin’s victory in October 1993.

Weak state legitimacy and conflict in Moscow accelerated regional efforts to enhance their autonomy from the center. The process had already begun in the late Soviet period, as Gorbachev and Yeltsin sought the support of Russia’s regional leaders in their battle with one another.<sup>27</sup> Following a number of union republics, the North Ossetian Autonomous Republic in Russia declared sovereignty in July 1990. The “parade of sovereignties” within Russia gathered momentum after Yeltsin, on a tour of Russia after his election as chairman of the Russian Supreme Soviet, told audiences in Tatarstan and Bashkortostan to “take as much sovereignty as you can swallow.” Autonomous oblasts unilaterally raised their status to that of republics and declared sovereignty, as did several autonomous districts, such as Chukotia, Nenets, and Yamalo-Nenets. By the end

of 1991, all the autonomous republics and oblasts and half the national districts had declared sovereignty, while Chechnya had gone even further by declaring independence (from Russia, while remaining in the Soviet Union).

During this period, the autonomous republics began to challenge the Russian leadership in other ways as well. Four of them, for example, refused to participate in the March 1991 referendum creating the post of Russian president. In June, Tatarstan did not participate in the election of a Russian president; instead, it elected its own republic president (Shaymiyev). By spring 1992, six other republics had elected their own presidents. Unlike the other regions of Russia, the republics also successfully resisted Yeltsin's efforts to appoint presidential representatives to their regions to monitor their activities.

Finally, several autonomous republics, including Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, and Chechnya-Ingushetia, sought to raise themselves to the status of union republics within the Soviet Union. This was particularly important for Tatarstan, which was larger in territory and population—and potentially richer—than many of the union republics. Gorbachev encouraged these republics as a way of undermining Yeltsin's position within Russia and invited several of them to participate in the negotiation of a new union treaty. The new treaty would have given autonomous republics the status of cofounders of the Union of Sovereign States (which was to replace the Soviet Union), but without violating the integrity of the union.<sup>28</sup>

The treaty was never signed because the August putsch intervened. That action, undertaken to preserve the Soviet Union, failed miserably and only accelerated the country's disintegration. It demonstrated the essential hollowness of the all-union structures, while fueling the Russian leadership's efforts to seize key parts of the remaining all-union structures. Moreover, after the putsch, Yeltsin moved quickly to disband the CPSU on the territory of the Russian Federation, thus eliminating the structure that had lain at the base of the federation's administrative network. That step not only furthered the breakup of the Soviet Union but also—unintentionally—strengthened centrifugal forces within Russia.

As a result, independent Russia's territorial integrity was under threat from the moment the Soviet Union ceased to exist at the end of December 1991. Yeltsin moved quickly to secure it. On 31 March 1992, Moscow signed the Federation Treaty with all the regions, save Tatarstan and Chechnya. The treaty comprised three agreements, one for each of the three types of administrative districts with the federation: the twenty ethnically based republics; forty-nine oblasts, six krais, and the cities of Moscow and St. Petersburg; and the ten national districts and one autonomous oblast.<sup>29</sup>

The treaty may have gone some way toward securing Russia's integrity, but it did not by any means end the acrimony between the center and the regions. Many ethnic Russian regions were disturbed that the republics received a privileged position; in their agreements, the resources in their territories were declared the property of the people living in the republics—a clause missing from the other two agreements. In addition, many of the republics, such as Sakha, signed protocols with Moscow that dramatically lessened their tax obligations to the center.

To right these perceived wrongs, several ethnic Russian regions contemplated declaring themselves republics.

Moreover, the treaty failed to end tensions between the center and regions because it was signed when the conflict between Yeltsin and the congress began to escalate. The congress was concerned that Yeltsin's steps to build a presidential pyramid—which included appointing presidential representatives in all the regions—threatened its own authority. In addition, the presidential and congressional bureaucracies were increasingly locked in a bitter struggle to control the process of divesting Soviet assets. While most regional elites sought to stay out of the struggle in Moscow, they sought to exploit it to enhance their own autonomy. Except for Chechnya, Tatarstan went the farthest. In March 1992, over 60 percent of the voters in a referendum held in Tatarstan supported independence. In November, Tatarstan adopted a new constitution declaring itself “a sovereign state, a subject of international law . . . associated with the Russian Federation–Russia on the basis of a Treaty on the mutual delegation of powers and spheres of authority.”<sup>30</sup>

The conflicts in Moscow, between Moscow and the regions, and among regions reached their apogee in 1993. The struggle for primacy between Yeltsin and the Congress of People's Deputies passed through a failed attempt to impeach Yeltsin, followed by a popular referendum on Yeltsin's policies, which he won convincingly. Yeltsin then convened a Constitutional Conference, with the goal of drafting a new constitution that would clearly delineate the responsibilities of the executive and legislative branches, among other things. The conference proceeded surprisingly smoothly on that score but reached an impasse on federal structure that would ultimately undermine the entire process. The ethnically based republics were intent on maintaining their hard-won status as “sovereign states” with corresponding privileges. The ethnic Russian regions, however, resented what they saw as discrimination and sought to create equal conditions for all of Russia's regions. By late summer, it was clear that the conference would not resolve conflict among Russia's competing power centers.<sup>31</sup>

There quickly followed a series of events in fall 1993–winter 1994 that appeared to put an end to this period of drift in Russian state building. In September, Yeltsin unilaterally disbanded the Congress of People's Deputies. A two-week standoff ended in violence in the streets of Moscow, as Yeltsin used force to put down a rebellion by those loyal to the congress. Yeltsin then had drafted a new constitution providing for a strong presidency, which was adopted by popular referendum in December 1993. The constitution eliminated the problem of dual power and bolstered recentralizing forces. In February 1994, Moscow and Tatarstan signed a bilateral treaty in which Tatarstan recognized itself to be part of Russia. Contrary to expectations, however, the period of drift was far from over.

### **The Virtual “Superpresidency”**

By many accounts, the new constitution created a “superpresidency.” The presidency was indeed invested with significantly greater power and authority than it had under the old constitution. The president was no longer simply the “highest



official of the RSFSR." He was now the head of state and guarantor of the constitution and the rights and freedoms of Russian citizens. He was to defend the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of Russia, ensure the coordinated functioning of the organs of state power, and determine the main directions of foreign and domestic policy (Article 80). He was made the commander in chief (Article 87). He now had the right to dismiss the Duma (Article 84). Removing him from office was no longer a matter of majority vote by the parliament but a long process involving both the upper and lower houses of the Federal Assembly, the Constitutional Court, and the Supreme Court (Article 93). Overriding his veto no longer required a simple majority, but a two-thirds majority in both houses of the parliament (Article 107). At the same time, the president retained his extensive power of appointment of executive and judicial branch officials.<sup>32</sup>

But the president's power is much greater on paper than in practice; at least, that was the case for as long as Yeltsin was president. As one constitutional scholar commented, "We have a Presidency with extremely hypertrophied powers . . . but it does not have sufficient possibilities (legal or political or in the regions) to fully exercise those powers."<sup>33</sup> Two Russian analysts have described this combination of great inherent power and practical weakness as "Impotent Omnipotence."<sup>34</sup> Three factors have limited the power of the presidency in practice: Yeltsin's health, the general fragmentation and erosion of power, and steep socioeconomic decline. Only one—the health problem—can be dealt with easily by any successor.

Yeltsin was never a hands-on president. From the very beginning, his prolonged absences at critical moments were noted—for example, for several weeks in the fall after the failed August putsch, when the structure of the new Russian government was being decided. The absences grew longer as his health deteriorated, especially after his re-election in July 1996. By the time he resigned on 31 December 1999, he was largely an absentee president.

As one Kremlin insider once put it, "Yeltsin is incredibly tenacious in holding on to power and incredibly disinclined to use it."<sup>35</sup> Rather than become absorbed with the arcane details of governing, Yeltsin sought to give policy direction—and expand his own room for maneuver—through his personnel appointments. That did not require much time or energy from the ailing Yeltsin. Governmental shake-ups were common, particularly during Yeltsin's last year and a half in office, as he sought a loyal successor who would both protect him from retribution and in broad terms continue his policies (which probably meant little more than not returning to the communist past). The constant shuffling and battling for position around Yeltsin eroded the government's coherence and discipline and thereby its capacity to govern effectively and to translate Yeltsin's policy preferences into concrete actions.

Yeltsin's health and style contributed to the fragmentation of power at the center of the political system, although that process had roots in the late Soviet period, and other factors also played a role. Gorbachev and Yeltsin had both pursued policies aimed at dismantling the hypercentralized, suffocating Soviet state in the belief that that was necessary to unleashing the country's potential, modernizing

the country, and retaining its status as a major world power. Power flowed out of the central state apparatus to regional elites and commercial entities. The spontaneous, unregulated privatization of state property began under Gorbachev and accelerated—and was given a legal veneer—under Yeltsin. Ultimately, the state itself was privatized and ceased to function as a unified, autonomous entity within the Russian political system.

As the system crystallized after Yeltsin put an end to the period of dual power in 1993, power was fragmented among numerous competing political/economic coalitions, or oligarchic groups.<sup>36</sup> A typical coalition controlled key positions in government, financial and industrial capital, information-gathering agencies and media outlets, and instruments of coercion (both private and nominally state). The most powerful coalitions were based in Moscow, and their leaders came to be known as “the oligarchs.” The focus on the Moscow-based oligarchs often blinded observers to the crucial fact that the system replicated itself to a greater or lesser extent across the country, with

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variations arising from the specifics of each region. Across the country, the rise and fall of these coalitions and the competition among them for power and property provided whatever political dynamism there was during the Yeltsin period. Formal government institutions became facades masking the real political struggle and decision-making process. Private concerns masqueraded as national interests, as the decisions of formal state institutions. These coalitions had little interest in rebuilding the state, for they prospered by preying on the weak state.

The acute competition of the Moscow-based coalitions for power and position eroded the capacity and will of the center to control political and economic processes elsewhere in the country. Ambitious regional leaders quickly exploited the disarray to seize key regional economic assets and to consolidate their autonomy vis-à-vis Moscow; the more timid leaders were compelled to assume more responsibility simply to survive.<sup>37</sup> Moscow elites facilitated this development, as they repeatedly made concessions to regional elites in an effort to obtain their support in the battles in Moscow. This was particularly true during the 1996 presidential campaign, when active support from regional leaders was critical to Yeltsin’s come-from-behind victory. Yeltsin’s most consequential decision was to relinquish his power to appoint the heads of regional governments and allow them to be popularly elected. The legitimacy that elections conferred on regional leaders vastly strengthened their independence vis-à-vis the center.

The extent of this regional autonomy is all the more remarkable because, with rare exception, the regions remained dependent on the center for budget support. Part of the explanation lies in the incoherence of the central government. Region-

al leaders did not have to approach a unified government for money. Rather, they could deal with multiple sources of financing in Moscow, some technically state, some technically private, and play on their contradictions to obtain the best deal for themselves. Back in their home regions, political leaders and enterprise managers formed protection circles to advance their common interests against the center and to subvert many of the center's economic reform initiatives. In addition, regional leaders used their control over local resources to suborn local representatives of federal agencies, who found themselves at the mercy of local authorities for housing, conveniences, and other amenities. Even military commanders have found it necessary to cut deals with the local authorities to ensure themselves continued flows of food, energy, and other provisions.

The center has periodically made efforts to reassert its authority in the regions, but without much success. After the signing of the bilateral treaty with Tatarstan, Moscow concluded that it was more promising to deal with regions individually rather than treat them as larger groups, such as ethnically based republics or ethnic Russian regions. The approach gave Moscow some flexibility, because it was under less pressure to extend concessions to the group as a whole. In 1994 and 1995, Moscow negotiated bilateral agreements with most of the ethnically based republics; in 1996, it extended this practice to the most important ethnic Russian regions. By the middle of 1998, it had signed such agreements with over half of the country's eighty-nine regions. Many of these agreements, however, contradicted the Russian constitution, and most gave the regions control over federal properties located on their territory. Thus, while the approach might have undermined cooperation among regions—something Moscow saw as positive—it had the additional consequence of enhancing the regions' individual autonomy and eroding respect for the constitution. Whether Moscow on balance gained from this approach is an open question.<sup>38</sup>

In another attempt to reassert the center's prerogatives, Anatoly Chubais, named head of the presidential administration after Yeltsin's re-election, moved in 1996 to enhance the power and authority of the presidential representatives in the regions. His effort came to naught, largely because the center lacked the money to give the representatives the resources they needed and because the Chubais coalition was diverted by challenges to its position in Moscow from rival coalitions. The most graphic example of Chubais's weakness was his failure to remove one of his nemeses, Yevgeny Nazdratenko, as head of the Maritime Province despite a concerted effort over several months to do so. Nazdratenko survived not only because he had strong support from the provincial elite, but also because he could draw on support from allies in Moscow who were intent on undermining Chubais.

The financial meltdown of August 1998, by exposing the weakness of the central government, fueled centrifugal forces. Many regional leaders acted unilaterally in setting price controls and forbidding the export of certain products, primarily foodstuffs, from their regions (although in both cases the implementation was not always effective). Some spoke of creating local currencies or gold reserves. Yevgeny Primakov, at the time of his confirmation as prime minister in

September, warned that there was a growing danger of Russia's splitting up and vowed to take tough steps to avert it.<sup>39</sup> In particular, he advocated discontinuing the election of regional governors in favor of their appointment by the president. But little came of these efforts as Primakov became bogged down in a struggle with the Kremlin that ultimately led to his dismissal in May 1999.

While intense infighting was a major reason for Moscow's failure to reassert its authority over the regions, just as important was the steep drop in resources available to Moscow for governing the country. In the 1990s, Russia suffered a socioeconomic collapse unprecedented for a great power not defeated in a major war. In the course of a little more than a decade, the economy controlled by Moscow fell in absolute size from third in the world (behind the United States and Japan) to sixteenth (behind, for example, India, Mexico, and South Korea, and just ahead of Argentina). In 1987, Soviet GNP was about 30 percent of U.S. GNP; in 1999, Russia's GNP was roughly 7 percent that of the United States. Russian GNP in 1999 was roughly a third of Soviet GNP at its peak (1989). During the same period, Russia was transformed from a "misindustrialized economy" (a consequence of the Soviet leadership's excessive focus on military-industrial complex) to a "deindustrialized economy" (the result of misguided reform policies). Between 1990 and 1996, the share of the natural resources sector in industrial production rose from 24 percent to 51 percent, while that of the machine-building sector fell from 31 percent to 16 percent and that of light industry fell from 12 percent to 2 percent.<sup>40</sup>

Demographic and public health figures have been no better. Over the past decade Russia's population has not grown, despite a considerable influx from other CIS members. Public health is in a shambles. The life expectancy of Russian males has declined from the mid-sixties to sixty-one. Contagious diseases, such as tuberculosis and diphtheria, are making comebacks. According to Harvard demographer Nicholas Eberstadt, "Russia's health profile no longer remotely resembles that of a developed country; in fact, it is worse in a variety of respects than those of many Third World countries."<sup>41</sup>

As a result of the socioeconomic decline and fragmentation of the political space, the center has continuously diminishing resources to draw on and a dangerously low capacity to mobilize even the scarce resources it has for national purposes at home or abroad. The plight of two key symbols of state power—the military and finances—illustrates this point.

The Red Army, once the pride of the country, is on the verge of ruin, according to a leading Duma expert, as a consequence of slashed budgets, neglect, corruption, political infighting, and failed reform.<sup>42</sup> Not only must regional commanders turn to local officials and entrepreneurs for material support, but thousands of officers are compelled to moonlight to make up for unpaid wages. Tens of thousands of officers remain with inadequate housing. Training has been cut to a minimum. More worrisome to the leadership are Russia's formidable financial and technological challenges in maintaining the long-term credibility of its strategic nuclear deterrent, which could be its sole claim to great power status.<sup>43</sup>

The extent of the decline was all too visible in the Chechen debacle of

1994–96, when the military and security forces proved woefully incapable of putting down an insurrection in the small republic. In the current Chechnya conflict, Moscow initially had more success, in part because it proceeded more cautiously and laid siege to key towns and villages, rather than storm them as it had in the earlier conflict. But setbacks that began as the Russian military laid siege to Grozny, the Chechen capital, have now taken the luster off the earlier success and threaten to turn Chechnya into a quagmire for Russia once again.<sup>44</sup>

As for finances, Moscow does not manage a reliable countrywide financial and monetary system. In August 1998, the financial system finally collapsed, as a consequence of the center's inability to collect taxes and its effort to cover the budget deficit through foreign borrowing and the issuance of various domestic debt instruments that amounted to little more than a massive pyramid scheme.<sup>45</sup> The banking system remains in shambles. The ruble may be the national currency, but a large share of commercial transactions, now some 40 to 50 percent, take place outside the monetized sector in the form of barter or currency surrogates.<sup>46</sup> Experts estimate the gray economy could account for up to 40 percent of GNP, and this economy by definition lies beyond the reach of the government.

### **Weak Center, Weak Regions**

The common view—at least before Putin's election as president on 26 March—was that regional barons and oligarchs had replaced the weak central state as the real holders of power. That view always tended to exaggerate their role and overlooked the great disparities in power relationships across Russia. Governors and republic presidents may be the most powerful figures at the regional level, but their power is limited by local elites, much as the president is constrained by national and regional elites. The mayors of administrative centers, especially if popularly elected, and the heads of major enterprises, particularly if they provide the bulk of funds to the regional budget, often act as effective counterweights. Gubernatorial and republic presidential elections have provided graphic evidence of these limits. In the electoral cycle from September 1996 through February 1997, incumbents won only twenty-four of fifty elections. In 1998, they won five of eleven contests.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, the oligarchs have been facing growing competition from regional businessmen for at least two to three years. The financial meltdown of August 1998 and the ensuing economic turmoil further undermined their positions, in part because their banks, unlike most regional banks, were heavily invested in federal government securities.<sup>48</sup> All the oligarchs were initially compelled to downsize their empires and retrench, and a few even went bankrupt, although predictions of the demise, not of individual oligarchs, but of the oligarchy as such proved wide of the mark.

Moreover, regional leaders have not capitalized on their newfound possibilities by developing joint positions vis-à-vis the center. The eight interregional associations have been noteworthy primarily for their lack of concrete actions.<sup>49</sup> The Federation Council, where the regional leaders sit *ex officio*, has not developed the corporate identity the State Duma has. It meets infrequently—once or twice a month for two to three days. Regional leaders prefer to spend their few

days in Moscow each month not debating legislation but individually lobbying government officials for funds. Although dozens of agreements have been signed between regions, the preferred channel of communication is the vertical one with Moscow. Regional leaders have focused on signing bilateral treaties with the center that delineate powers suited to their own situations rather than on developing a uniform set of rules governing federal relations.

Finally, the regions have grown increasingly isolated from one another over the past decade. The breakdown of the countrywide production processes of the Soviet period and the accompanying sharp economic decline have given regions less reason and capacity to deal with one another. On average, only a quarter of a region's products is sent to

other Russian regions, slightly less is exported abroad, and the rest is consumed locally.<sup>50</sup>

Housing shortages, the close link between the workplace and social services, and other constraints on labor mobility have tied most workers to their place of employment and impeded the development of national labor markets.<sup>51</sup> Sharp

increases in fares and the general deterioration of infrastructure have sharply reduced interregional travel.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, regional media, which are now successfully competing with Moscow-based national media for local audiences, are extremely difficult to obtain outside of the area where they are published, while regional television generally has quite limited coverage.<sup>53</sup> As a result, Russians know—and care—less and less about what is happening outside their home regions.

In short, contrary to prevailing opinion, the crumbling of the central state apparatus has not created strong regions. Regions suffer from the same range of disabilities as the country as a whole, and the overall economic decline has deprived them of the resources they need to address those ills. “Weak center—weak regions” aptly describes the current situation. That is, the striking feature of the Russian political and economic system is the near total absence of concentrations of power anywhere in the country capable of governing effectively over large territories. Effective government, to the extent that it exists, is found at the local level, built around a tight relationship between political authority and industrial, agricultural, and construction enterprises.<sup>54</sup>

### **Why Hasn't Russia Disintegrated?**

In the absence of strong, organized centers of power, with the central state growing ever weaker, the mystery for many is why the country has not yet disintegrated.<sup>55</sup> Several factors, however, continue to bind it together.

At one level, the country's basic infrastructure, economic and political, mili-

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***“In the absence of strong, organized centers of power, with the central state growing ever weaker, the mystery for many is why the country has not yet disintegrated.”***

tates against breakup. The so-called “natural monopolies,” Gazprom (the giant gas monopoly), ROA YeES (the United Power Grid), and the railroads all have networks that link the country together, as does the river transport system. Those areas not served by these networks are isolated regions in the Far North.<sup>56</sup> In addition, most of Russia’s regions depend on transfers from the federal government to fund their activities. In 1997, only eight regions did not receive money from the federal Fund for the Financial Support of Subjects of the Federation, although even they received funds for federal programs carried out on their territory.<sup>57</sup> Finally, the constitution provides a framework for governing the country, even if most bilateral agreements between the center and individual regions, many regional charters, and much local legislation violate constitutional provisions. These violations are better seen not as challenges to the country’s unity but as part of a multifaceted negotiation on building federal structures. Regional leaders speak primarily of the proper balance of power between the center and the regions, not of independence.

But infrastructure is hardly a sufficient glue for a country, as the demise of the Soviet Union demonstrated. The more compelling reasons for Russia’s continued existence as a state lie precisely in the ways Russia differs from the Soviet Union.

*Geography.* Simply put, Russia is located a long way from any place that matters outside the former Soviet Union. Only twelve of eighty-nine regions border a country that was not once part of the Soviet Union, and one—Sakhalin Oblast, an island—lies close to Japan. As a result, the overwhelming majority of regions, should they declare themselves independent, would find themselves isolated within Russia or the former Soviet Union. This acts as a major disincentive to secession. By contrast, all fifteen of the constituent republics of the Soviet Union bordered on foreign states or open seas, and all felt the inevitable tug of neighboring, non-Soviet regions, particularly after the demise of Russia’s East European empire.

*Dispersal and Fragmentation of Power.* Unlike the Soviet Union and other countries that have broken up, Russia lacks two or more major organized centers of power vying for control of the country (which at the extreme could lead to civil war) or seeking to set up independent states. In Russia today, there are no analogues to the Soviet and Russian leaderships, whose competition ultimately brought down the Soviet Union. (Those who are advocating a reduction in the number of Russian regions through their amalgamation as a way of building a more rational federal system could, if they succeed, ironically wind up creating major competing centers of power that would put the country’s integrity at greater risk.) Likewise, there are no significant separatist forces outside of Chechnya and perhaps Dagestan, but even the formal independence of either of those regions would not tear the country apart.

In addition, the fragmentation and dispersal of power tend to localize unrest and minimize the consequences of governmental crises in Moscow for the country as a whole, even if they do not preclude unrest and governmental crises (in

fact, both have occurred frequently over the past decade). The best example is perhaps the North Caucasus, where long-standing instability in several ethnically based republics, including Chechnya, has surprisingly not yet become a region-wide conflagration.

*Ethnic Homogeneity.* Over the past two centuries, the breakup of ethnically homogenous countries has been rare; the only major country to come close was the United States during the mid-nineteenth century. Russia, however, is much more ethnically homogenous than the Soviet Union was. According to the last census (1989), ethnic Russians accounted for just over 50 percent of the Soviet population; they account for over 80 percent of the Russian population. Muslims accounted for about 18 percent of the Soviet population but only 8 percent of Russia's population.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, ethnic Russians are the largest ethnic group in all but eleven of the thirty-two ethnically based subjects of the federation. They form an absolute majority in eighteen.

Moreover, as polls consistently demonstrate, both the elites and the population generally in Russia overwhelmingly prefer to live in a Russian state. To the extent that Russians do not recognize the Russian Federation as their country, the reason is that they believe Russia is something larger, including much, if not all, of the former Soviet Union, not because they want to see the federation collapse.<sup>59</sup> In large part, that sentiment is a consequence of a common history, culture, and customs.

*The International Environment.* No major power sees Russia as a strategic rival, as countries once did the Soviet Union. No major power considers the breakup of Russia in its interest, even if many may see benefits from a weak Russia. The United States and Europe are already concerned about the implications of Russia's weakness for the security of weapons of mass destruction and their building materials and for the proliferation of such weapons. They are concerned about potential spillover effects of major instability in Russia, and Russia's breakup would only heighten those concerns. For its part, China is seeking to build partnerlike relations with Russia because of the technology transfers it hopes to receive and because it believes it can use Russia to help counter U.S. ambitions in East Asia.

By sharp contrast, the United States did have a major interest in the weakening of the Soviet Union and devised and implemented strategies in pursuit of that goal. Although officially the United States had no stated interest in the breakup of the Soviet Union, its policies often worked in that direction. The United States refused to recognize the incorporation of the Baltic states into the Soviet Union, and its support for human rights, and by extension nationalist movements, especially in Ukraine, wittingly or not encouraged separatist tendencies. Moreover, separatist movements could turn to influential diaspora groups in the United States and elsewhere for political and material support.

There are, of course, threats to Russia, but none appears unmanageable at the moment. No outside power is prepared to exploit Russia's weakness and inter-



ferre aggressively inside the country for two reasons: First, perceptions of Russia's weakness lag behind realities, and the conventional wisdom is that Russia will eventually regain sufficient power to back its great power pretensions. In the meantime, Russia's large nuclear arsenal, although deteriorating, still serves as a symbol of power sufficient to deter major outside intervention. Second, most of Russia's immediate neighbors are focused on their own domestic agendas rather than external expansion (e.g., Iran, China) or on rivalries with states other than Russia (e.g., Pakistan and India). Some states (e.g., Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia) are undoubtedly fishing in the muddy waters of the Caucasus, including territories within the Russian Federation, but their strategic goals are limited to the Caspian region and Central Asia. More to the point, none has the capacity to project substantial power further into Russia.

### Conclusion

Significant changes in the factors affecting Russia's territorial integrity are unlikely over the next few years. Consequently, the chances of Russia's disintegrating, collapsing, or being torn apart by outside powers remain low. This does not, however, mean that Russia's leaders will not continue to be deeply concerned about those dangers. They will continue to be concerned in large part because Russians continue to see a strong state as critical to the country's long-term survival. Indeed, many Russians believe that the Russian people can define themselves only through the state.<sup>60</sup> That belief accounts, in part, for the popularity of *derzhavnost'*, or a strong, paternalistic state, as a legitimizing principle for the new Russia.<sup>61</sup>

The questions for the immediate future are not so much about Russia's integrity as about two related matters: First, will Russia be able to halt and reverse the steep socioeconomic decline? Second, how will the state be reconstituted? It is unthinkable that Russia can stem the decline without rebuilding the state.

There is nothing inevitable about the stemming of decline. Russia has been on a downward track since the early 1970s, and the rate of decline has accelerated since the breakup of the Soviet Union.<sup>62</sup> Even though the economy grew by over 3 percent in 1999, and forecasts for this year's growth range as high as 5 percent, there is still much anguished talk of the dangers of continued decline. Widespread hopes that Putin can provide the energetic leadership needed to reverse the country's recent fortunes have done little to abate capital flight—estimated at \$1–2 billion a month. That indicates that a considerable portion of the elite is still voting “no confidence” in Russia's future.

The danger remains that Russia will be transformed from a failing state into a failed state, without the capacity to provide the services that all modern states must, including defense, minimal standards of law and order and social welfare, and an effective monetary system. If that happens, it will not inevitably entail the breakup of Russia—failed states do not break up in the absence of outside intervention—but it will certainly heighten the risk as outside powers compete for Russia's vast natural resources.

The more likely outcome is that Russia will finally begin to rebuild itself, as

it has for the past thousand years after periods of degeneration, drift, and anarchy. And the important question is how Russians will decide to reconstitute the state. For the past four hundred years, Russia has existed as a highly centralized state exploiting a weak society. Many Russians believe that their country can exist only with a strong centralized state capable of maintaining order across Russia's vast expanses and defending Russian territory against outside threats.<sup>63</sup> Such a state has invariably seemed menacing to Russia's neighbors and to the world's leading powers. As a result, efforts to recentralize Russia have tended to reinforce the very reasons Russians believe they need to recentralize and strengthen the state in the first place. That is unfortunate, for the loser in the process is not the Russian state but Russians, in standards of living and well-being. As the eminent Russian historian Vasily Klyuchevsky wrote of nineteenth-century Russia, "The state swelled, as the people grew poor."

With Putin's ascendancy, there is growing evidence that Russia's leadership is set on repeating that historical pattern. Putin's essay on Russia at the turn of the millennium invokes traditional Russian ideas of a strong paternalistic state that guides society and defends it from its enemies. The words about democracy offer only a faint counterpoint. Putin has also warned that Russia has forgotten that it has enemies and called for the strengthening of both the military and internal security forces. The national security concept approved earlier this year warns of the threats to Russia posed by the eastward expansion of NATO and criticizes the West for wanting to create a world it could dominate through the use of military force. The concept states, however, that the gravest threat to Russia's future is internal decay, and it notes the importance of Russia's integration into the global economy for reversing its fortunes. That suggests that Putin and the Russian elites recognize that they cannot afford to move into confrontation with the West.<sup>64</sup>

Large questions remain as to whether Putin can succeed. At a minimum, he must find money to finance the recentralization he is proposing. That is no mean task, given the overall decline in Russia's economic performance and Moscow's uneven record in tax collection. But it is not an impossible task. Much power, both political and economic, resides in Moscow, even if for the past several years it has been used to undermine rather than support the national government. If Putin can discipline the federal bureaucracy and some of the oligarchs, he can begin to accumulate the resources he needs to extend the center's writ across the country. Even then, it will take several years of concerted effort to reassert the center's control, and Putin would have to prove exceedingly deft in exploiting the contradictions among the other competing centers of power—the oligarchic groups and regional barons—to expand the center's room for maneuver.

There is another way, one more in tune with the political and economic processes of the early twenty-first century: Russia could be built from the bottom up in the form of a genuine federation. Such a state need not be weak, as the United States demonstrates, and it can create the conditions for both a strong state and a strong, prosperous society. Putin and the Russian elite have the chance to take such a path at the moment, but to do so, they would have to see the currently

weakened condition of the Russian state as an opportunity and not a calamity. There are, however, few signs that they are in that frame of mind. That could change if the effort to recentralize power eventually runs into formidable obstacles, particularly in regions key to the country's long-term economic health. Nevertheless, for the moment, Putin appears determined to force history to repeat itself in Russia.

#### NOTES

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2. Interview with Acting President Vladimir Putin, ORT, 4 January 2000. The transcript can be found in the Kremlin Package, Federal News Service, 5 January 2000.

3. On the relationship between the Soviet Union and Russia, see John B. Dunlop, *The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Union* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 54–58.

4. See Mikhail Gorbachev, *Zhizn' i reformy*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Novosti, 1995), 530.

5. See Yitzhak M. Brudny, *Reinventing Russia: Russian Nationalism and the Soviet State, 1953–1991* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 250–56.

6. The polling data can be found in John B. Dunlop, "Russia: In Search of an Identity?" in *New States, New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations*, ed. Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 42.

7. See "O gosudarstvennom suverenitete Rossiyskoy Sovetskoy Federativnoy Sotsialisticheskoy Respubliki," in *Khrestomatiya po konstitutsionnomu pravu Rossiyskoy Federatsii*, ed. Yu. L. Shul'zhenko (Moscow: Yurist, 1997), 748–50.

8. See Gennady Burbulis, et al., *Stanovleniye novoy rossiyskoy gosudarstvennosti: real'nost' i perspektivy (Otkrytyy doklad)* (Moscow: URSS, 1996), 36; and A. I. Kovler, "Kakoye prezidentstvo legitimno v Rossii?" *Etika uspekha* 5 (1995): 240–51. Yeltsin, however, does not focus on the creation of the Russian presidency as an element in the struggle against Gorbachev. See Boris Yeltsin, *Zapiski prezidenta* (Moscow: Ogonek, 1994), 31–56.

9. See Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 285–305.

10. On Yeltsin's wavering, see Liliya Shevtsova, *Rezhim Borisa Yel'tsina* (Moscow: POSSPEN, 1999), 7–39.

11. Gorbachev, *Zhizn' i reformy*, vol. 1, 520–25, and vol. 2, 582–602.

12. Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor*, 287.

13. See Yegor Gaydar, *Dni porazheniy i pobed* (Moscow: Vagrius, 1997), 71–87.

14. Boris Yeltsin, "Speech to the Congress of People's Deputies of the Russian Federation," *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, 29 October 1991.

15. See "Yeltsin Addresses Russian Parliament on 25th December," BBC, SU/1264/C3/1, 28 December 1991.

16. Yeltsin, *Zapiski prezidenta*, 150–53.

17. "Speech by Kozyrev," BBC, SU/1359/C1/1, 20 April 1992.

18. On the military, see William E. Odom, *The Collapse of the Soviet Military* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 347–404. A Russian defense ministry was set up only in May 1992.

19. On the ruble zone, see Anders Aslund, *How Russia Became a Market Economy* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1995), 109–36. The ruble zone finally vanished in fall 1993.

20. See Dimitri K. Simes, *After the Collapse: Russia Seeks Its Place as a Great Power* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999), 19–20.

21. See "Yeltsin Sworn in as Russia's Leader," *New York Times*, 11 July 1991.

22. See "Speech by Yeltsin at his Inauguration as RSFSR President," BBC, SU/1121/C2/1, 11 July 1991.

23. On this break with Russian history, see Alexei Salmin, "Poka ne...", *NG-Stsenarii*, 12 April 2000.

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25. Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic.

26. See "Konstitutsiya (osnovnoy zakon) Rossiyskoy Federatsii—Rossii," in *Khrestomatiya po konstitutsionnomu pravu Rossiyskoy Federatsii*, ed. Yu. L. Shul'zhenko (Moscow: Yurist, 1997), 758.

27. For more detailed treatment of developments between the Russian leadership and Russia's regions, see Gail W. Lapidus and Edward W. Walker, "Nationalism, Regionalism, and Federalism: Center-Periphery Relations in Post-Communist Russia," in *The New Russia: Troubled Transformation*, by Gail W. Lapidus (Boulder: Westview, 1995), 79–113.

28. For Gorbachev's views on the new Union Treaty, see Gorbachev, *Zhizn' i reformy*, vol. 2, 513–54.

29. The text of the treaty can be found in Yu. L. Shul'zhenko, ed., *Khrestomatiya po konstitutsionnomu pravu Rossiyskoy Federatsii* (Moscow: Yurist, 1997), 73–95.

30. On events in Tatarstan, see Mary McAuley, *Russia's Politics of Uncertainty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 54–64.

31. See Shevtsova, *Rezhim Yel'tsina*, 87–129, and McAuley, *Russia's Politics of Uncertainty*, 75–77.

32. The text of the constitution can be found in Shul'zhenko, *Khrestomatiya po konstitutsionnomu*, document 1.

33. Kovler, "Kakoye prezidentstvo legitimno v Rossii," 250. See also A. M. Salmin, "Rossiyskoye prezidentstva: priroda i problemy," *Etika uspekha* 5 (1995): 192–201.

34. See Igor Klyamkin and Lilia Shevtsova, *This Omnipotent and Impotent Government: The Evolution of the Political System of Post-Communist Russia* (Moscow: Carnegie Moscow Center, 1999), 16.

35. Senior YuKOS officer, private conversation with author, Moscow, 26 February 1998.

36. On the structure and development of the oligarchy, see my "From Oligarchy to Oligarchy: The Structure of Russia's Ruling Elite," *Demokratizatsiya* 7 (summer 1999): 325–40. See also Liliya Shevtsova, *Politicheskiye zigzagi postkommunisticheskoy Rossii* (Moscow: Carnegie Moscow Center, 1997), 25–38; and Vladimir Shlapentokh, "Russia: Privatization and Illegalization of Social and Political Life," *Washington Quarterly* 19 (winter 1996): 65–85.

37. On developments between the center and regions, see Nikolay Petrov, "Otnosheniya 'Tsentr—regiony' i perspektivy territorial'no-gosudarstvennogo pereustroystva strany," in *Regiony Rossii v 1998g. Yezhegodnoye prilozheniye k 'Politicheskomu al'manakhu Rossii'*, ed. Nikolay Petrov (Moscow: Gendal'f, 1999), 58–60.

38. For commentary on these bilateral treaties, see the essays by M. N. Guboglo, S. M. Shakhrai, and V. N. Lysenko in *Federalizm vlasti i vlast' federalizma*, ed. M. N. Guboglo (Moscow: IntelTekh, 1997), 108–93.

39. See *RFE/RL Newline*, 14 September 1998.

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43. See comments by then–minister of defense Rodionov as reported in *Krasnaya zvezda*, 25 February 1997, 1, FBIS-SOV-97-038, and *Interfax*, 7 February 1997, FBIS-SOV-97-026.

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47. See Michael McFaul and Nikolay Petrov, eds., *Politicheskii al'manakh Rossii 1997*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Moscow Carnegie Center, 1998), 117–18, 271, 279–81; and Alexei Titkov, "Izmeneniya v sostave organov vlasti i deputatov Gosudarstvennoy dumy po regionam s dekabrya 1997g po mart 1999g," in *Regiony Rossii v 1998g.*, 41–48.

48. Gleb Baranov, "Banki iz pervoy desyatki popali vo vtoruyu tsysyachu," *Kommersant-Daily*, 12 December 1998.

49. See Vladimir Lysenko, *Razvitiye federativnykh otnosheniy v sovremennoy Rossii* (Moscow: Institute of Contemporary Politics, 1995), 61–65. See also Vladimir Shlapentokh, Roman Levita, and Mikhail Loiberg, *From Submission to Rebellion: The Provinces Versus the Center in Russia* (Boulder: Westview, 1997), 197–200.

50. A. Lavrov, L. Polishchuk, and A. Treyvish, "Ekonomicheskiye problemy stanovleniya federalizma v Rossii" (paper presented at the "Contemporary Russian Federalism: Problems and Prospects" conference, Moscow Carnegie Center, December 1997), 4 and attached map.

51. Mikhail Dmitriyev, "Roossiyskiy rynek truda silen neispolneniyem zakonov," *Ekspert*, 5 February 1998, 14–16.

52. See Gavriil Popov, "Transport," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 15 March 2000.

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56. See the maps in *USSR Energy Atlas* (Washington, D.C.: Central Intelligence Agency, 1985), 32, 55, and 59, and in *Atlas SSSR* (Moscow: The Main Administration of Geodesy and Cartography under the USSR Council of Ministers, 1996), 166–67.

57. See A. Lavrov, V. Shuvalov, A. Neshchadin, and E. Vasilishen, eds., *Predprinimatel'skiy klimat regionov Rossii: Geografiya Rossii dlya investorov i predprinimateley* (Moscow: Nachala, 1997), 126. See also Daniel Treisman, *After the Deluge: Regional Crises and Political Consolidation in Russia* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), who argues that Moscow's deft redistribution of fiscal resources has prevented the

bandwagoning of local protest and helped preserve its influence across Russia.

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59. See *Massovoye soznaniye rossiyan v period obshchestvennoy transformatsii: real'nost' protiv mifov* (Moscow: Russian Independent Institute for Social and National Problems, 1996), 11–14. The survey on which this analysis is based was conducted in October 1995. See also N. A. Zorkaya, "Vlast' i obshchestvo," 26. The survey on which this analysis is based was conducted in February/March 1998.

60. See, for example, Andranik Migranyan, *Moya gazeta*, 22 March 1995.

61. Note that Putin, "Rossiya na rubezhe tysyacheletiy," lists *derzhavnost'* as one of the four key elements of the Russian idea.

62. On Russia's secular decline, see my essay "A World without Russia?" paper presented at the Jamestown Foundation Conference on Russia, Washington, D.C., June 1999. An abridged version was published in Russian in *NG-Stsenarii*, 8 December 1999.

63. See Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974), 19–24.

64. See "Kontsepsiya natsional'noy bezopasnosti Rossiyskoy Federatsii," *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye*, 14 January 2000.