

# Addressing the Challenges of Russia's "Failing State": The Legacy of Gorbachev and the Promise of Putin

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**Abstract:** Concerns about the prospects for democratic consolidation in Putin's Russia have been heightened with the further expansion of the hegemonic presidency and the strengthened position of the federal authorities vis-à-vis the regions. Such developments, mirroring earlier institutional reforms of the Gorbachev period, are strongly tied with late Soviet and post-Soviet political regime efforts to address the challenges of Russia's "failing state." The authors focus on the political dimension of Russia's "failing state," illuminating Putin's and Gorbachev's efforts to reinforce the state capacity for implementing those structural reforms necessary to sustain democratization. They contend that Putin's efforts to control federal-level institutional rivals and to rein in regional elites are designed not to recreate an authoritarian system but to bring balance among powerful political interests and to raise policy-making efficiency through "managed democracy." A strong parallel can be drawn with the objectives of Gorbachevian reformism, intended to bolster the "failing state" by enhancing the accountability and effectiveness of political executives throughout the country. They assert a sort of organic link between Putin's and Gorbachev's political-institutional reforms, albeit granting significant contextual differences between the ossified Soviet system of the 1980s and the corruption and post-Soviet system weaknesses of the early 2000s. The authors conclude that many judgments offered by Western (especially American) observers about the weakening of democracy have been more guided by a projection of those observers' own conceptions of democracy than by an understanding of Russia's traditions or thinking in establishing the necessary conditions for democratic consolidation.

**Key words:** democratization, dictatorship of the law, failing state, Gorbachev, managed democracy, Putin, Russian and Soviet state

"Perestroika is a pressing necessity that has arisen out of the profound processes taking place in the course of the development of our socialist society. That soci-

ety is ripe for change—one might say it has suffered enough. Any delay in pursuing Perestroika could lead in the very near future to a deterioration in the situation in Russia.”<sup>1</sup>

“For Russians a strong state is not an anomaly that should be gotten rid of. Quite the contrary, they see it as a source and guarantor of order, and the initiator and main driving force of any change. . . . I am not calling for totalitarianism. . . . A strong state power in Russia is a democratic, law-based, workable federative state.”

Vladimir Putin, “Russia on the Threshold of the Millennium,” December 1999.<sup>2</sup>

**W**hen Mikhail Gorbachev succeeded Konstantin Chernenko in March 1985, informed Soviet observers were positive about the prospects for reform, with even their Western counterparts guardedly optimistic. The former protégé of Yuri Andropov did not disappoint them, launching what was arguably the most important set of system and policy changes since Stalin’s building of the command economy. However haphazard and disconnected in their creation and implementation, perestroika, glasnost, and demokratizatsiya were ultimately intended to breathe new life into an ossified Soviet polity and economy, although their greatest consequence was to generate the implosion of the Soviet state. Despite the overwhelmingly positive post-facto assessments of Western observers regarding these reforms’ original intent, they have subsequently been dismissed by many in the wake of the failure both to increase economic efficiency and to salvage the crippled institutions of the Soviet state.

In contrast, the agenda and reforms put forward by Vladimir Putin have been received with almost universal skepticism in the West, being widely perceived as measures against democratic consolidation and an overall setback from the democratic market transformation of the Yeltsin regime.<sup>3</sup> The massive reinforcing of the presidency vis-à-vis the parliament and local government, assaults on the media and political opponents, and bolstering of the security apparatus have all been considered indicators of a dangerous “antidemocratic” tendency and even as stepping stones to a new authoritarianism. We wonder, however, whether Putin’s initiatives are so different in their ultimate intent from those designed by

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Gorbachev and his associates in the latter 1980s.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, as we reflect on the evolution of the late Soviet and post-Soviet Russian polity over the period from 1985 to 2005, we are struck by the similarities between the two regimes in their thinking and broad institutional-policy prescriptions intended to address the challenges of Russia's "failing state."

Both Gorbachev and Putin were confronted by a similar domestic political reality: a weak economy and highly bureaucratized state, increasingly unable to efficiently implement policy and ensure economic productivity. On the one hand, Gorbachev had to cope with serious problems of corruption and with the resistance of both central and local political institutions and elites to needed political and economic change. His set of reforms was designed to overcome these obstacles through guided political decentralization and openness, with an expectation that central political executive policymaking prerogatives would be reinforced. One seasoned Russian observer, Alexander Zinoviev, described perestroika as centered on four objectives: (1) creating a new superpower structure that would stand above the communist party apparatus, (2) establishing order in the country by harnessing the masses and compelling them to cooperate with the leadership, (3) overcoming economic difficulties, and (4) modernizing Soviet industry, especially its military component.<sup>5</sup> The overriding end was to restore political and economic order, with such order designed to infuse dynamism to the economy and society. Meanwhile, Russia's second post-Soviet president, Vladimir Putin, faced a fledgling democratic—but collapsing—state which was even less able than its deteriorating Soviet predecessor to ensure political and economic order. Much like Gorbachev, Putin embarked on a "reformist" road to strengthen the state by reinforcing the power of the federal executive (i.e., the presidency and its numerous agencies). In contrast to mainstream Western thinking about the desirability of a decentralization of power for democracy building, this consolidation of the executive came at the expense of rival legislative actors, and regional and other political, social, and economic actors—actors whose behavior was perceived by most Russians as undercutting the restoration of order in the Russian Federation. If Gorbachev was seeking a reformed communism that brought together moderate democratic elements with a strong and dominant political executive in the hands of the Communist Party (CPSU), Putin has followed a similar strategy, but from the opposite direction: a decentralized liberal market economy guided via the "dictatorship of the law" by a streamlined federal government led by a "policy-efficient" executive. The term "dictatorship of conscience," which assumed the need for a society based on moral sense, was broadly used during the perestroika years. A little more than a decade later, Putin has repeatedly called for a "dictatorship of the law," while insisting that he does not want an authoritarian state. During his presidential election campaign, he defined a law-based state as one marked by the "uniform application of rules," where there would be "no preferences or privileges for any individuals, groups, or firms."

We compare and link the perestroika legacy with the ongoing institutional-policy initiatives of Vladimir Putin, but this discussion necessitates one impor-

tant caveat. The institutional-policy contexts for the initiatives and reforms of the two leaders and their regimes are quite different, albeit granting our contention that the two regimes were oriented toward the shoring up of a decisive federal executive as key to successful long-term system change. In the USSR of the mid-1980s, Gorbachev needed to strengthen his own institutional and power base by challenging and weakening the powerful but hidebound CPSU-state establishment. Vladimir Putin of the early 2000s needed to reassert the Russian federal executive's inherent power vis-à-vis competing federal actors while concomitantly bolstering Moscow's power vis-à-vis the locales. A failing Soviet authoritarian political system needed to be loosened up, its guiding cadres transformed, with reform of the decision-making process permitting greater maneuverability and guidance from a change-oriented leader and his team. Likewise, the decentralization of power and relatively fluid decision-making environment of the first post-Soviet decade required a strong leader and attached supportive team that could reassert the traditional decision-making primacy of the Moscow-based central authorities. We do not claim that Putin has been building a new authoritarian regime, but rather that he is bridging the market economy imperatives with the political necessity of erecting efficient political institutions, thus reaching back to the Gorbachevian ideal of reformed communism sans communist ideological imperatives.

### **Political Decay, "State Failure," and Regeneration of State Capacity in Russia**

Our interest in illuminating an organic linkage between Gorbachevian reformism and Putin's institutional consolidation efforts draws on the contention that both cases represent radical attempts to address the growing decay of state institutions and the erosion of the state's legitimacy. We argue that Putin's attempts to prevent state failure and to regenerate state institutions demonstrate a striking similarity to the pattern of reformism attempted by the Gorbachev team in its perestroika-demokratizatsiya policy thrust. We do not use the term "state failure" in the common way it is employed: for example, that a state is on the brink of absolute collapse.<sup>6</sup> In such a common understanding, failed states usually have an ineffectual bureaucracy controlled by a corrupt elite, with the state having lost its monopoly of coercion and control over territory.<sup>7</sup> The Soviet Union of 1985 and Russian Federation of 2000 were not close to this general definition because they were states with complex decisionmaking institutions, functioning bureaucracies, relatively efficient armed forces, and they possessed a monopoly of coercion. However, all these critical elements of the state were in various stages of long-term and profound decay, with both states failing to various degrees in one of the basic functions of the state: the provision of primary public goods (e.g., security, law, health care, educational instruction, pensions, critical infrastructure, and regulation of the environmental commons). These mounting systemic weaknesses were especially telling for the USSR because, for decades, the legitimacy of the Soviet state was based on its ability to deliver goods and services as well as to provide fundamental security to its population. As Habermas noted, "the

State can try to buy loyalty, but runs the risk of raising expectations. However, it is only the most rigid systems that are particularly at risk from crisis."<sup>8</sup> The Soviet Union may not have been an example of a failing state in a conventional sense, but the processes of degeneration of state capacity were visible in both domestic and international aspects.<sup>9</sup>

Policy effectiveness and system-regime legitimacy are critical in determining the long-term success or failure of a state, with two major theoretical perspectives explaining state failure. A systemic perspective explains the weakening of states as a result of global pressures, with this perspective looking at macro-processes that are associated with system-structure transformations and explaining the emergence of weak

states.<sup>10</sup> A domestic perspective emphasizes the weakening of the state in the face of internal pressures, concentrating on the mechanisms associated with institutional viability.<sup>11</sup>

Although some scholars see the convergence of the internal and external dynamics as the ultimate basis for evaluating state performance, we see what

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some might call state decay and what we refer to as a failing state as especially related to the failure of prevailing societal values to legitimize existing economic structures, social relations, and political order. In such circumstances, the state is highly unlikely to be effective in the performance of its duties, and the situation may even arise where the state becomes a threat to its citizenry.<sup>12</sup>

Failing states experience the crisis of legitimacy when existing ideologies are no longer capable of maintaining existing social structure.<sup>13</sup> Failing states are in transitional stages in which existing ideologies no longer legitimize the positions of various actors and to mobilize elite consensus over the institutional process. Resulting political crises arise from the apparent ineffectiveness of policies, the failure of rational control of the economy, and the withdrawal of mass loyalty. A fully collapsed state is one that has lost legitimacy, has few working institutions, offers little or no public service to its citizens, and is unable to contain societal fragmentation.<sup>14</sup> In this context, loyalties shift from the state to traditional communities that seem to offer better protection. In a sequence of developments that fundamentally erode the state's position, institutions fail to provide adequate services to their population. Improperly handled ethnic relations, combined with domestic social and ideological competition, further limit the effectiveness of increasingly weak political institutions.

Although there are no easily identified thresholds, a failing state has both internal and external implications.<sup>15</sup> It has a limited ability to implement reasonable public and foreign policy and to act authoritatively either within the domestic setting or the international community. These and related problematic conditions,

reinforcing one another and constituting a syndrome of political challenges, cumulatively weaken the state to the point of near collapse. The possible resultant breakdown flows from the political “center” as hierarchical patterns of authority give way to decentralized, regional, ethnic, and informal forms of political and economic organization. Consequently, states fail when “public authorities are either unable or unwilling to carry out their end of what Hobbes called the social contract, but which now includes more than maintaining the peace among society’s many factions and interests.”<sup>16</sup>

### **Gorbachev’s USSR and Putin’s Russia as “Failing States”**

The Soviet polity and society that languished during the second half of the Brezhnev regime and the successor interregnum of Andropov and Chernenko were characterized as in the *period zastoya* by perestroika-period officials and observers. Whether viewing this “period of stagnation” as a certain type of permanent structural crisis or as an example of a polity and society barnacled by temporary problems derived from a problematic leadership in the wake of a global economic recession, few then or now would disagree with the conclusion that the USSR was experiencing serious problems in almost every sphere of political and societal life. Yet Gorbachev-era officials were careful and precise in using terminology that differentiated this problematic set of conditions from an explicitly named “crisis.” Even if cumulated to entail a formidable array of systemic and policy challenges, few officials and observers either inside or outside the Soviet Union foresaw these problems as challenging the very existence of the state in the short run, although the “logic” for perestroika revealed a deepening crisis of state legitimacy.

Soviet officials were increasingly aware of troubling evidence of potential state failure during the late Brezhnev and interregnum periods.<sup>17</sup> Indicators included mounting challenges to the legitimacy of state borders, to state institutions, and to governing elites, and such challenges were especially acute in the non-Russian periphery, where central control tended to be thinner and thus more vulnerable to erosion. Studies of the USSR in the late 1970s and 1980s show the increasing inability of the state to meet societal demands and to successfully mediate and aggregate important societal interests. As a result, the state, instead of enjoying “embedded autonomy” within society—that is, “insulation from, and simultaneous cooperation with, society”—was likely to be either overwhelmed by societal demands or isolated from society as it regularly engaged in the exercise of its power.<sup>18</sup>

If, as Huntington contends, political decay entails “the lag in the development of political institutions behind social and economic change,” then the Soviet polity was well on its way into profound systemic crisis.<sup>19</sup> A broader definition would describe political decay as including the declining capacity of the state to: (1) maintain a stable political order, (2) provide a substantial measure of security (including economic security) to its citizens, (3) enjoy a monopoly over the means of coercion, and (4) act as the protector of norms of political behavior that are accepted by most important political actors and by the citizenry in general. All of these conditions were true as the Gorbachev team initiated its program of reforms.

The complex and multifaceted nature of the Gorbachevian perestroika-demokratizatsiya reform program signifies that many essential features cannot be assessed here as we consider regime reactions to a failing state. We do not examine the economic and societal dimensions but, rather, focus on changes that were central to the transformation of federal-level political institutions and to the conduct of center-periphery relations. We believe the condition of the polity—of the political institutions and elites that direct it—is central to the state of the society and economy and to their possible transformation. We consider political proposals and outcomes, but we understand that many articulated decisions were never implemented, or were delayed.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, we are often dealing here with what Sakwa described as “revolutionary reformism,” in the sense that Gorbachev had only very generalized ideas of his reforms before they were put in practice.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, reforms often failed to take into account Soviet realities and seemed to reflect domestic struggles or confused thinking on the part of top Gorbachev regime members.<sup>22</sup>

Meanwhile, when Putin was put in charge of the Russian government, he faced an equally daunting task of regenerating a failing state caught in difficult economic and political conditions. Since the 1991 Soviet collapse, gross domestic product had roughly halved and industrial production had dropped even further. With gross fixed investment in the production sectors only a fraction of what it had been in the late Soviet period (remaining at approximately 15 percent), the country's capital stock was rapidly becoming obsolete. At the same time, a growing part of the population—variously estimated at between one-half and two-thirds of the total—dropped below the official poverty line, with the 1998 financial crisis bringing the country into the club of “failed states” (e.g., Afghanistan, Liberia, and Somalia) that were unable even to service their International Monetary Fund (IMF) debt.<sup>23</sup> It was at this time that one British weekly characterized the Russian state as consisting of “a few shallowly rooted institutions—a presidency, a parliament, a central bank, and so on—which have yet to earn public trust, and which are dwarfed by an impenetrable and antique hinterland of cynicism, incompetence, racketeering and bureaucratic dead-weight.”<sup>24</sup> Putin assumed the reins of office just as the postcommunist transition appeared to have led Russia to the brink of total collapse.

The Yeltsin regime had overseen Russia's transformation from a command economy and authoritarian political system to a fledgling democratic polity with a regulated market, but the forces of corruption and decentralization overwhelmed much of the country's economic and political reality. The prevalence of corruption and the routine presence of crime in economic life were powerful indicators of a failing state, as was the evident trend toward the demonetization of Russia's economy. Meanwhile, the Yeltsin government had taken a number of steps to reassert central governmental control, but the profound divergences in regional economic, demographic, and political circumstances suggested that these measures were not sufficient.<sup>25</sup> Although early twenty-first-century indicators of Russian economic growth were positive, their basis in high oil prices and a weak ruble suggested that without comprehensive reform they would not be sustained. As Gorbachev and

allies had found fifteen years earlier, tackling such profound socioeconomic problems necessitated serious institutional-personnel-policy changes.

### **The Federal Executive and the Power Vertical**

It is not surprising that a new Russian leader, facing the challenge of a failing state, would build on a longstanding Russian tradition and resort to federal-level executive institutional reform. Whether addressing the complex constellation of political and business forces that surrounded a weak Boris Yeltsin, or—some fifteen years earlier—attempting to harness the powerful but stagnating Soviet Party–state bureaucracy, both Putin and Gorbachev were compelled to devote most of their political capital in the formative years of their tenures to their own power consolidation and authority building. In both late Soviet and post-Soviet settings, crafting meaningful institutional-policy change necessitated not only the emergence of a strong guiding leader, but the construction of a powerful supportive team and the presentation of a viable, legitimating program geared toward economic and political rejuvenation. Moreover, profound policy change could not be accomplished without making the federal executive and other subordinate bodies more amenable to top-down initiatives. In this regard, the political-institutional-policy choices of Gorbachev and Putin bear remarkable similarity, albeit the respective Soviet and post-Soviet regime arrangements within which the two leaders operated varied greatly.

Vladimir Putin inherited a powerful Russian federal executive reconstructed during the Yeltsin period and legitimated by the 1993 constitution. The federal presidency was provided a vast array of organizational and decision-making prerogatives that permitted the country's chief executive formal powers unseen in the post-Stalinist USSR.<sup>26</sup> Putin's predecessor, especially in his second term, lacked the authority and public approval that would have permitted him to dominate the political system and effectively promote his policy program. Indeed, Yeltsin's eight-year term mostly entailed the chief executive and his cronies struggling to maintain their own power position while the transforming changes they had helped unleash often continued subject to other forces.<sup>27</sup> Putin, however, with a reputation for decisive action that arose during his brief tenure as prime minister, accommodated the political establishment and projected an image of professionalism and competence that only bolstered his public and elite approval.<sup>28</sup> From the onset of his presidency, Putin moved unilaterally and in a seemingly uninhibited fashion in advancing both his power and policy agenda.<sup>29</sup>

Central to Putin's early power and policy advances was the careful construction of a new team of decision makers (i.e., senior presidential administration and top governmental ministers), with the president accommodating entrenched interests while elevating trusted associates. Putin exhibited considerable finesse in influencing personnel matters, achieving coalition-building success across competing elite and institutional interests. He worked with associates of Yeltsin (and the "Family"), steadily recruited new cohorts of nonideological professionals spanning the St. Petersburg liberal economists and lawyers and security-intelligence elements (*siloviki*). These senior officials shared Putin's programmat-

ic agenda, and they were often individuals with whom the president had past career experience.<sup>30</sup> Trusted protégés such as Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov assumed senior governmental slots overseeing important policy tasks (e.g., the modernization of the Russian armed forces), while troubleshooters such as Dmitry Kozak handled timely priority matters (in Kozak's case, judicial-administrative reform and, after the September 2004 Beslan school attack, guiding the Southern Federal District and Federal Commission on the Northern Caucasus). The smooth departures of the last high-profile "Family" members (presidential administration head Aleksandr Voloshin and prime minister Mikhail Kasyanov) late in Putin's first term signaled the full power consolidation of a Putin cohort committed to the following: (1) advancing a reformist socioeconomic policy agenda (e.g., ending most state social services subsidies) while (2) restoring state order and attacking corruption. Moreover, the eventual ascent of a Putin loyalist and *silovik*, Boris Gryzlov, as State Duma Speaker (late 2003) indicated the president's complete lock on the federal decision-making process.

Successful governance by this Putin-led cohort in Russia's failing state necessitated a streamlined federal political infrastructure. The need for a democratic "rule of law" required a centralized control system and more efficient security-intelligence forces that would be critical in tackling the corruption and cronyism inherited from the 1990s.<sup>31</sup> The institutional strategy was to concomitantly reinforce the powers of the "hegemonic presidency" that were legally set out in the Yeltsin constitution while consolidating and downsizing the federal bureaucracy. A core task, realized by both personnel and organizational change, was better coordination of the presidential administration and the government. We do not detail specific presidential-governmental organizational changes that streamlined the federal executive decisionmaking process, but when combined with the Putin group's dominance of the parliament, a federal executive-legislative decision process emerged that was conducive to speedier policy outcomes.<sup>32</sup> Complex policy reform was also facilitated by the increased use of research centers and working groups (policy planning and implementation) of officials and experts. Ultimately, such planning groups, essentially grounded in the executive and "guided" by Putin loyalists, bridged the presidential administration, parliamentary factions and committees, and organized socioeconomic interests (e.g., Arkady Volsky's Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs).

The first five years of the Putin regime also entailed related legislative reforms and political party initiatives intended to enhance decision-making efficiency while the federal executive remained at the helm.<sup>33</sup> Interfactional negotiations, with Putin's Unity at the heart of majority coalitions, enabled nearly all executive proposals to move through the legislature. Comparable efforts to bridge institutional divides between Moscow and the locales, as overviewed in the next section, were intended to yield similar results.<sup>34</sup> The overall intent of all of these power, personnel, institutional, and policy measures was to restore political accountability, enhance governmental accountability, and provide the bases suitable for effective decision making. In sum, to reverse the political illnesses of a failing state, the Putin team endeavored to restore a decisive guiding executive and strong federal government.

So much of this post-1999 Putin regime experience finds resonance in the perestroika efforts of the later 1980s, when innovative reformism was tied with an increased concentration of power among a limited number of federal actors also committed to the top leader's programmatic agenda. Central to addressing the ills of the failing Soviet state was a redistribution of power, with the consolidation of the decision-making position of Gorbachev and top reformers. Compared with the past, Gorbachev moved expeditiously in forming a new team, with officials such as Georgy Razumovsky (personnel), Eduard Shevardnadze (foreign policy), and Aleksandr Yakovlev (ideology) among the most prominent of those impatiently pressing for personnel-institutional-policy changes. In the face of predictable and massive establishment-bureaucratic

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resistance, Gorbachev reformers concentrated on the creation of alternative bases of power and authority, redistributed assignments, and shifted responsibilities. A series of institutional and policy changes simultaneously strengthened both top-down and bottom-up pressures, but institutionally it was the federal executive—

with Gorbachev at the helm—that most benefited by the reconfiguring of organizational power.<sup>35</sup> Not unlike Putin some fifteen years later, Gorbachev would advance the position of the security apparatus (i.e., KGB) as a core element in his effort to bolster the federal executive even as he promoted his reformist agenda. Despite dissidents' and democrats' mounting criticisms of the KGB's past and present activities, Gorbachev would continuously defend the necessity of ensuring a capable KGB up until the appointment of Vadim Bakatin, shortly after the August 1991 coup.<sup>36</sup>

Gorbachev articulated the basic outline for political and institutional reform at the January 1987 CC Plenum and June 1988 fourteenth party conference. With the careful but continual elevation of Gorbachev allies and protégés, reformers harnessed the all-important CPSU Central Committee apparatus, while consolidating and streamlining the institutions of the Council of Ministers.<sup>37</sup> There was a strong need for officials' accountability, pluralism, and policy reformism, but the strong resistance of the conservative party-state establishment necessitated more radical changes with profound long-term consequences: e.g., the upgrading of the system of soviets, creating a strong federal presidency, and using more competitive elections (commencing in 1989) with resultant informal groups and mass movements eventually forming political parties.<sup>38</sup> Especially important in these institutional changes was the commitment to a powerful presidency and to the principle of the strong executive. There might well be new deliberative and advisory bodies,<sup>39</sup> some governmental-managerial autonomy, and limited pluralism, but dynamic adminis-

tration would be assured by decisive leadership, starting with the federal president. Gorbachev's 1989 call for a "socialist law-governed state" revealed that the personnel and institutional changes already accomplished would be legitimated by and nested in a broader reform agenda: an agenda that would transform the federal polity and ultimately destroy the rigid Stalinist system.<sup>40</sup> In a similar vein, Vladimir Putin's references to a "managed democracy" and "dictatorship of the law" would also be invoked to legitimate a comprehensive set of reforms, although in this case the intent would be to give substance to, rather than to transform, the central institutions and rules of a failing state.<sup>41</sup>

### **The Ongoing Challenge of Managing Center-periphery Relations**

The effective management of Russia's vast periphery has always been central to the country's political stability, and this has been especially true when the federal government promotes fundamental institutional-policy change. When Gorbachev attempted to regenerate the socialist system, he focused on mobilizing Soviet citizens and increasing the local autonomy of subfederal actors even as he concentrated federal-level power with a new set of executive institutions. The assumption was that by diminishing the federal center's almost complete control over republics and regions and by making local elites democratically accountable, local economic efficiency and productivity would increase and help to bring much needed dynamism to the Soviet economy and simultaneously strengthen the decaying state institutions; established, resistant regional elites would be replaced by new officials sharing the perestroika vision.<sup>42</sup> Convinced initially that the formation of national fronts in the republics and the growing nationalist mobilization were signs of perestroika's success, Gorbachev would seriously underestimate the strength of local nationalist sentiments and the ferocity of their opposition to local elites still committed to the Soviet regime; consequences that would rapidly lead to the implosion of the USSR.<sup>43</sup> The intentions of the Soviet president in launching the federal reforms may have been to rescue the system from a growing institutional ossification, but they played a central role in its demise.

Not unlike Gorbachev, Putin's reforms were primarily designed to strengthen failing federal state institutions, especially reconstructed executive bodies, which had been unable in the 1990s to insure a strong economic and constitutional order in the Russian Federation. Confronted with a central government possessing greatly diminished control over the eighty-nine regions and a growing constitutional crisis, Putin did not wait long before engaging in reform of Russian federalism. Presidential decrees and legislative action combined both to restructure the federal government's institutionalized ties with the regions and to weaken regional elites' power in Moscow. Acting within weeks of his spring 2000 election, Putin sent a powerful message to the locales that the liberties they had taken during the 1991–99 Yeltsin period would no longer be tolerated. The Putin federal government retook the initiative in crafting Russian federal arrangements, not only targeting the composition and functioning of the federal legislature, but the institutions linking Moscow to the periphery and the very composition of the regional elite itself.

Putin had to contend with the legacy of the Gorbachev-Yeltsin 1990s: a decade marked by the difficulty—or sometimes unwillingness—of the central government in reestablishing its preeminence. These circumstances resulted not only from Gorbachev's failed federal reforms bolstered by glasnost, which allowed the expression of nationalist and autonomist sentiments, but also from the 1990–91 power struggle between Gorbachev and powerful regional leaders, most notably, Boris Yeltsin. Yeltsin's remarkable 1990 declaration in Tatarstan urging republics and regions to “take as much sovereignty” as they could handle contributed to the creation of powerful nationalist movements in many republics and further opened the door for local elites to distance themselves from Moscow. Yeltsin, upon assuming power with the 1991 Soviet collapse, might well have promoted the 1992 Federation Treaty as a way to reestablish some form of order in the fragmented federation, but this treaty strengthened much of the republics' newly gained regional autonomy, including their all-important financial autonomy.<sup>44</sup>

Federal-level executive-legislative political struggles of the first post-Soviet years severely weakened Moscow's hold on the locales, with many regional leaderships effectively expanding their autonomy. The resolution of the federal-level power crisis in October 1993 led to a moderate reinforcement of the federal center's authority over the regions, a new balancing of power (albeit advantageous to the central government) that would be embedded in the new Russian constitution and in a modified Federation Treaty. However, Moscow remained vulnerable to regional pressures, being forced, through bilateral treaties and “informal agreements,” to grant special privileges to the regions (e.g., tax benefits and symbolic and partial recognition of sovereignty) in exchange for regional recognition of Yeltsin's constitution and adherence to the Federation Treaty (and eventually for support for the embattled Yeltsin as he sought reelection in 1996). Regions, especially republics, were consequently able to preserve most of the gains they acquired in the early 1990s in exchange for a commitment to be bound legally and politically to Russian federal institutions. For the federal center, these arrangements were only partly beneficial, removing some of the urgency created by autonomous and nationalist movements and insuring some predictability to center-periphery relations, but at the price of institutionalizing an extremely complex and asymmetric federal structure. Moscow's decision-making capacity would be limited both by genuine regional autonomy and by administrative and constitutional complexity.

The “generous” agreements between the Yeltsin regime and the regions were more designed to address short-term preoccupations, such as the integrity of the federation and the reelection of Yeltsin in 1996, than to reinforce the decaying Russian state. Among the many problems that resulted from these arrangements were the lack of coordination between the federal center and the regions on legal issues (e.g., with upwards of 20 percent of republican laws said to contradict the federal constitution), economic disputes (e.g., the regions, still in 2000, collecting more taxes than the federal state) and political issues (e.g., regions' disregard for federal authority and the personal profit motivations of regional officials).<sup>45</sup> Such circumstances prevailed until Putin's accession to the Russian presidency in 2000.<sup>46</sup>

### **Putin's Ambitious Federal Agenda**

Consolidating Moscow's influence over the diverse and sometimes restive periphery was essential if the Putin team was to apply its economic and political agenda. The objective was not, as some Western analysts claimed, to put an end to regional autonomy so as to eventually recreate an authoritarian regime, but rather to bring order back to Russian federalism: to realize a dictatorship of law through the reinforcement both of the presidency and of vertical power in the federation.<sup>47</sup> Confronted with a decaying state, as Gorbachev had been in 1985, Putin chose to recapture the much-needed control over regional executives and their bailiwicks lost during the Yeltsin years. Unlike Gorbachev, who strove for state effectiveness by decentralizing power from Moscow to local authorities, Putin maneuvered for state effectiveness by bolstering federal power. Such divergent power strategies were understandable given the different requirements of attacking a bureaucratized Soviet system versus compensating for the consequences of a decade of centrifugal forces. Yet, we should not lose sight of the fact that the ultimate intentions of both leaders were rather similar: the reconstruction of a center-periphery power balance in which the federal center has primacy in broad orientations and policy-making prerogatives, with republics and regions providing significant economic, administrative, and political autonomy to apply central preferences in an efficient, "locally sensible" way. Finding the right balance—and in light of recent past arrangements either favoring the federal center or the locales—would be difficult. Where Gorbachev was increasingly challenged by nationalistic and autonomist regional impulses he himself helped to create, Putin's policy successes required accommodation with regional interests that his regime could only control with constant vigilance.<sup>48</sup>

Putin's first task was to resolve coordination problems between the Russian and local constitutions to bring legal uniformity throughout the federation. The task of "bringing back into line" the local constitutions was given to the newly appointed presidential representatives of the newly created seven federal districts. Weeks after his 2000 election, Putin issued a decree increasing the functions of presidential representatives in charge of these districts, the intention to bring de facto regional fiefdoms back in line with the Russian constitution. The reform predictably generated opposition from regional executives, and the most autonomous republics were able to significantly delay and even limit the impact of the reform.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, the federal center was able to make significant gains through this reform, although not through the expected channels. With the full implementation incomplete well into Putin's second term, the reform highlights the limited impact of the federal districts. Most negotiations were conducted bilaterally between regional officials and ministry of justice representatives, with little participation of the presidential representatives (representatives who had to rely greatly on regional administrations for material support and who lacked legitimacy, being nonelected representatives).<sup>50</sup> Even if most of the conflicting articles of local constitutions were eventually brought into line with the federal constitution, the consequences for regional

power were moderate and did not significantly affect the power structure in the Russian Federation. Most discrepancies from the Russian constitution revolved around technical or administrative matters and were only occasionally about the power distribution between regions and the federal center. However, the still-ongoing reforms improved the Federation's legal order and facilitated the conduct of administrative and economic relations. Meanwhile, they increased Putin's prerogatives in dismissing regional executives and disbanding regional legislatures that violate the constitution. Overall, then, these reforms helped to reinforce the failing state through enhanced legal uniformity, but they did not fully challenge regional power.

Ultimately, reassertion of the federal government's primacy entailed creating more direct means by which central authorities could channel both regional elites' mobility and their ability to influence federal decision making. The May 2000 reform of the Federation Council forbidding regional executives and legislative heads from sitting on the council (with the related loss of parliamentary immunity) was one major step by which the federal executive asserted its pre-eminence. The resultant transformation of the Federation Council's membership was certainly to Putin's advantage, as evidenced not only in the subsequent emergence of a pro-presidential majority coalition, but in the successes in passing major federal legislation. Yet, reflective of the complexities in the conduct of Russian center-periphery relations, while most of Putin's proposed legislation has been adopted, much has been modified by amendments often beneficial to regional interests.<sup>51</sup>

Until Putin's second term, the president's direct power over the governors' rule within their own bailiwicks was limited to a controversial and seldom-used presidential prerogative to remove governors who violated the Russian constitution.<sup>52</sup> It was very difficult for a president to remove a governor, not only because regional subordinates could easily collude with their boss, but because any "illegal" law or decree signed at the regional level could be repealed by regional authorities within the specified time period (two months), well before federal authorities would be allowed to take action. Moreover, the lengthy and complex legal process necessary before a governor could actually be removed necessitated ministry of justice sanctioning that the decree or law in question was unconstitutional. A December 2004 federal law establishing presidential appointments of governors will, however, radically alter direct presidential power over the governors, perhaps facilitating the departure of high-profile adversaries of the Putin team, but certainly "encouraging" regional elites to factor Moscow's thinking and preferences into their choices for senior regional leadership positions. Yet, even given the possession of this new power, it is unlikely that a president would go so far as to appoint regional leaders without consideration of regional preferences, as politically and legally expressed by the regional legislature's approval of the president's candidate. Such an action would represent a direct negation of regional autonomy, and as such would not be welcomed by regional executives and elites, and most especially not by the most autonomist (and troublesome) ethnic republics.

Some Western analysts have interpreted Putin's initiatives regarding Russian federalism as constituting major steps backward toward authoritarianism, and especially as violations of regional democracy. But the impact of these reforms has generally been exaggerated by these analysts, with the full implementation of the reforms often tempered by technical and administrative difficulties as well as by regional resistance. For all the fanfare by regime officials and criticism by opponents, we contend that these reforms have had only a moderate impact on center-periphery relations. Although regional leaders initially were unable to seriously challenge Putin, they generally maneuvered around him and were often able to avoid what they perceived as the most negative impacts of

federal reforms on their regional autonomy. Even after the important December 2004 federal government measures, which ended the localized election of governors, regional autonomy was still considerable. When asked during a December 2004 State Council meeting whether Putin's reforms would have an impor-

tant impact on his rule, Tatarstan's powerful president, Mintimer Shaimiev responded that they would have no effect at all, going so far as to comment that "I should have the power to run my republic, and the federal president and government should *relax*" (emphasis added).<sup>53</sup>

Overall, even if some recentralization of federal relations has occurred, it has mostly reflected the interest of Moscow to keep the republics and regions in line with broad federal orientations and to develop a more efficient federal arrangement in which the central authorities would have the upper hand. The objective of Vladimir Putin, at least through the beginning of his second term, was much in line with Gorbachev's intentions of nearly twenty years earlier: reinforcing the failing state by reasserting the leadership of the central government over semiautonomous—but highly integrated—regions and republics with federal reforms focused on legal harmonization and the reinforcement of executive-presidential authority.<sup>54</sup>

### **Regenerating the Failing Russian State**

Twenty years after the elevation of Mikhail Gorbachev to the position of CPSU general secretary, Russian politicians continue to wrestle with the challenges of a failing state. The domestic reforms, turbulence, and altered world conditions of the past two decades have had their impact, with Vladimir Putin and his power-consolidated regime fine tuning a political-institutional program substantively embedded in the logic of the perestroika-demokratizatsiya past. Indeed, the second term Putin regime's preference for a strong executive and fed-

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***“Twenty years after the elevation of Mikhail Gorbachev to the position of CPSU general secretary, Russian politicians continue to wrestle with the challenges of a failing state.”***

eral government politically empowered to direct the Russian periphery is in consonance with longstanding Russian tradition. Some would claim that the success or failure of reform efforts depends greatly on the extent to which policy makers accurately take into account political, socioeconomic, cultural, and other imperatives of a geographically expansive and ethnically diverse Russia.<sup>55</sup> Putin, and Gorbachev before him, seem to have understood that the construction of a stable, decisive, and functioning polity—guided by a strong federal center, effectively connected to the varied locales—is a primary precondition for achieving transformational policy advance. Only time will tell whether the particulars of the Putin reform program, especially as articulated and implemented in the second term, will yield the desired policy outcomes.

Decades of Russian decline, spanning both the Soviet and post-Soviet periods, have taken their long-term toll. But state decay is not irreversible; it is a process that can be stopped and reversed. For such a reversal (or regeneration), not simply remedial, but preemptive, strategies are needed, and although the necessary actions will be primarily internal and largely self-generated, they must be grounded in system and regime legitimacy and bolstered state capacity. Prevailing societal values emphasizing economic growth, with social justice (*qua* equality), and political stability are critical to maintaining contemporary regime and system legitimacy. Measures must entail more than simply a reconstitution of the failing past, and they must draw in significant (and growing) numbers of elite and societal elements. As James Manor contends, “Political regeneration is the reverse of political decay. It means the restoration of the capacity of state institutions and political parties to respond minimally or perhaps even creatively to the needs and desires of social groups. . . . Political regeneration tends to improve relations between political institutions and social groups, between state and society.”<sup>56</sup> Accomplishing this regeneration is the political challenge confronting the Putin team, as it uses the considerable powers it has consolidated to advance an ambitious programmatic agenda.

Looking back to Gorbachevian reformism through the prism of twenty years of system transformation and root-and-branch change leaves the observer wary of drawing any firm conclusions about Gorbachev’s lasting legacy. The twenty-first-century Russian domestic scene continues to be dynamic and subject to change, while the retired leader himself is still active in reconsidering and reinterpreting his regime’s actions and intentions. The institutional-political reforms intended to facilitate Soviet economic and political revitalization clearly failed either to reconsolidate an authoritarian state or to institute a fledgling democratic polity. Rather, the cumulative impact of Gorbachev’s root-and-branch political and economic reforms was to fatally weaken the ossified Soviet system and prepare the way for the system transformation that would come in the wake of the failed August 1991 coup.

Meanwhile, our judgment about the accomplishments, dilemmas, and future “promise” of Putin’s “managed democracy” and “dictatorship of the law” remains uncertain. Scholars and politicians who have a negative and overly pessimistic assessment of Putin’s intentions and actions should recall the fact that twenty

years ago there was a similar high level of suspicion regarding Gorbachev's real intentions. As one critical observer wrote at the time, "The Gorbachevites came to power not at all with the aim of liberalizing and democratizing Soviet society and not to make life in the West any easier, but in order to occupy a specific personal position in the Soviet social hierarchy; to strengthen that position and to use it for their own personal interests."<sup>57</sup> Regarding Putin, we agree with Khlebnikov when he comments that "by dismissing Putin's policies as a return to a Soviet-style dictatorship, Western analysts and policy makers risk repeating the same simplistic mischaracterization they made in the 1990s, when they naively praised Boris Yeltsin for being a 'democrat' and 'reformer.'"<sup>58</sup> Consistently exaggerated and unduly pessimistic Western readings of the Putin record have done little to illuminate the complex processes of political change that are still underway in Russia more than a decade after the Soviet collapse.<sup>59</sup>

As we reflect on Russia's 1985–2005 political odyssey, we should also consider critical Western evaluations of Russia's complex and troubled democratization efforts. Much of this Western thinking has been grounded in certain (generally American) democratic ideas and assumptions that are not relevant to Russian political history or needs. Emphasizing deconcentration of political power, weaker national (federal) governments, checks and balances arrangements, among others, such "democratic preconditions" are often assumed to be essential to any serious Russian democracy building. U.S. triumphalism in the wake of the cold war has only bolstered the tendency of many (especially American) observers to employ such thinking. The related strong tendency for judging poorly most all post-Soviet Russian democratic efforts has been the predictable result.<sup>60</sup>

We contend that the diversity of Western democratic experiences—spanning numerous polities in "Old Europe" and elsewhere—suggests many possible institutional arrangements and concomitants to democracy building. Indeed, recalling Samuel Huntington's prescient juxtaposing of American and European democratic institutions and practices as set out more than thirty years ago, we question both the utility and appropriateness of applying the American democratic experience to late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century Russian practice.<sup>61</sup> To the extent that European democratic experience has favored the strong state and more unified national government, with more (rather than less) concentration of power with the national executive, we find European values and arrangements to be the more useful point of comparison for appreciating contemporary Putin institutional initiatives. Meanwhile, the contemporary Russian preference for institutional arrangements favoring decisive and streamlined change—rather than the incrementalist, status quo-protecting proclivities of the American democracy—also auger well for nesting Russian institutional-policy thinking in a European context. In this light, we wonder if Putin's institutional-programmatic push for a strong federal government and strong political executive is not better compared with Charles De Gaulle's preferences and initiatives as he and Michel Debré crafted the French Fifth Republic. Our comparative Russian-French observation opens up numerous lines of argument that we cannot pursue given the limits of this article. But our suggestion indicates a

more valuable, crossnational comparative framework for evaluating Russian democracy-building efforts: a comparative framework more useful than the tired, highly ideological U.S.-Russian comparative approach that has been so often applied.<sup>62</sup>

We conclude that the revitalization of Russia's troubled economy and "inefficient" political system is core to the logic of addressing Russia's "failing state," whether in the Soviet or post-Soviet context. Gorbachev and Putin both came to power with expectations of institutional-policy change, and although Gorbachev's March 1985 succession entailed his reputation as a likely mover and shaker within the party establishment, Yeltsin himself characterized Putin in similar terms when tapping him as prime minister and then, four months later, as his successor in the Kremlin. Upon coming to power, both leaders devoted a considerable part of their tenures to power consolidation and to the establishment of their leadership legitimacy, but both concomitantly advanced profound reform agendas. Comparison of these two leaders and their policy preferences might lead one to accent certain leadership similarities: e.g., both men's impatience in countenancing personnel and policy change. Yet perceived leadership differences (e.g., Gorbachev's reformist caution compared with Putin's projected power-policy confidence) help obscure what we have argued are commonalities in institutional-programmatic intention. Serious observers, both inside and outside Russia, can draw very different assessments of the long-term systemic consequences of these two regimes' initiatives. Ultimately, our understanding of both the "perestroika phenomenon" and Putin's "managed democracy" will be most influenced by our own perspectives on democracy and the best institutional and policy means for its refinement.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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### NOTES

1. Mikhail Gorbachev, *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World*, (Moscow: Izdatel'stro Politicheskoi literatury, 1987), 11.

2. As quoted by Stephen Hendelman, "Can Putin Strengthen the State while Attacking Corrupt Officials? Shadows on the Wall: Putin's Law-and-Order Dilemma," *East European Constitutional Review* 9, nos. 1–2 (Spring 2000).

3. This universal Western skepticism is in marked distinction from the perception of Russian elites and masses, who have continually—and in large majorities—supported Putin and his proposals. Putin's easy March 2004 reelection, with more than 70 percent of the recorded vote, corresponded to the 70 percent plus approval rating he enjoyed for most of his first term.

4. For a discussion of the tendency of some Western observers to misunderstand Putin's intentions, see John Squier, "Civil Society and Challenge of Russian *gosudarstvennost*," *Demokratizatsiya* 10, no. 2 (Spring 2002): 166–83.

5. Alexander Zinoviev, *Katastroika: Legend and Reality of Gorbachevism* (London: Claridge Press, 1989), 15.

6. See Michael Ignatieff, *The Warrior's Honour: Ethnic War and the Modern Con-*

*science* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1998), *passim*; and Robert I. Rotberg, *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

7. Mary Kaldor, "Beyond Militarism, Arms Races and Arms Control," in *War and Peace in the 20th Century and Beyond: The Nobel Centennial Symposium*, ed. G. Lundestad, and O. Njølstad, 120 (River Edge, NJ: World Scientific Publishing, 2003), 120.

8. Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis* (London: Heinemann Education Books, 1976), 45.

9. For one of the earliest and most incisive illuminations of this degeneration, see Seweryn Bialer, *Stalin's Successors: Leadership, Stability, and Change in the Soviet Union* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), *passim*.

10. See Jeffrey Herbst, "Responding to State Failure in Africa," *International Security*, no. 21 (1996–97): 423; and Ted Robert Gurr and Raymond Duvall, "Civil Conflict in the 1960s: A Reciprocal Theoretical System with Parameter Estimates," *Comparative Political Studies*, no. 6 (1973): 160.

11. See William Zartman, "Introduction: Posing the Problem of State Collapse," in *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority*, ed. William Zartman, 1–11 (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1995).

12. See Peter Wallensteen, "State Failure, Ethnocracy and Democracy: New Conceptions of Governance" (paper, Failed States Conference, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN, February 25–27, 1998).

13. William Zartman, ed., *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1995).

14. Douglas H. Dearth, "Failed States: An International Conundrum," *Defense Intelligence Journal*, no. 5, (1996): 119–30.

15. Robert I. Rotberg, ed., *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror* (Cambridge, MA: World Peace Foundation Book, 2003).

16. Jean-Germain Gros, "Towards a Taxonomy of Failed states in the New World Order: Decaying Somalia, Liberia, Rwanda, and Haiti," *Third World Quarterly*, no. 17 (1996): 456.

17. Even the CIA's national intelligence estimate in 1982 indicated that "popular discontent over a perceived decline in the quality of life represents, in our judgment, the most serious and immediate challenge for the Politburo. . . . Popular dissatisfaction and dynamism seem to be growing. This popular mood has a negative impact on economic productivity and could gradually undermine the regime's credibility." "Soviet Society in the 1980s: Problems and Prospects," *National Intelligence Estimate* (December 10, 1982): 24.

18. Peter Evans, *Embedded Autonomy: States and Industrial Transformation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995): 43–74.

19. Samuel Huntington, "Political Development and Political Decay," *World Politics*, no. 17 (April 1965): 386–430.

20. See Vladimir K. Yegorov, *Out of a Dead End into the Unknown: Notes on Gorbachev's Perestroika* (Chicago: Edition Q., 1993).

21. Richard Sakwa, *Gorbachev and His Reforms* (Hemel Hempstead, UK: Philip Allan, 1990). Also see Archie Brown, ed., *New Thinking in Soviet Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1992).

22. See Boris Kagarlitsky, *The Disintegration of the Monolith* (New York: Verso, 1992); and Yegor Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin* (New York: Pantheon, 1993).

23. Boris Kagarlitsky, *Restoration in Russia: Why Capitalism Failed* (New York: Verso, 1996), 83–92.

24. "End of the Road for Russia," *Economist*, September 5, 1998, 45–47.

25. "Survey of Russia," *Economist*, July 12, 1997. <http://www.economist.com/surveys/>.

26. See John P. Willerton, "The Presidency: From Yeltsin to Putin," in *Developments in Russian Politics 5*, ed. Stephen White, Alex Pravda, and Zvi Gitelman, 21–41 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001).

27. Lilia Shevtsova, *Yeltsin's Russia: Myths and Reality* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999), esp. chaps. 7–11.

28. This reputation emerged during Putin's late Soviet and post-Soviet service in St. Petersburg, with post-hoc assessments of others further reinforcing it once Putin was Russian president.

29. Lilia Shevtsova, *Putin's Russia* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003), esp. chaps. 5–8.

30. John P. Willerton, "Uncertainties of the Putin Hegemonic Presidency," in *The Uncertainties of Putin's Democracy*, ed. Geir Flikke, 21–40 (Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2004).

31. See Richard Sakwa, *Putin: Russia's Choice* (London: Routledge, 2004), 78–82.

32. See John P. Willerton, "Putin and the Hegemonic Presidency," in *Developments in Russian Politics 6*, ed. Stephen White, Richard Sakwa, and Zvi Gitelman (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), forthcoming.

33. Note, for instance, the summer 2000 reforms altering the Federation Council's membership to replace powerful regional governors with more pliable regional representatives, although a July 2001 law heightened the conditions for parties to be able to run candidates in elections.

34. For example, the creation of the State Council as a consultative body drawing on regional leaders' input.

35. George W. Breslauer, *Gorbachev and Yeltsin as Leaders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), esp. pp. 59–107.

36. See J. Michael Waller, *Secret Empire: The KGB in Russia Today* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994); and J. Michael Waller, "Russia: The Death and Resurrection of the KGB," *Demokratizatsiya* 12, no. 3 (2004): 333–56.

37. For example, note that the twenty-four Central Committee departments were consolidated into ten supradepartments, with six top-level CPSU commissions formed, while the nearly one hundred government ministries and state committees were consolidated into fifty-seven ministries by early 1990.

38. See Geir Flikke, *The Failure of Movement: The Rise and Decline of Democratic Russia, 1989–1992* (Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2005).

39. For example, such post-1988 federal center institutions as the Presidential Council, Council of the Federation, and the State Council.

40. Address to the USSR Supreme Soviet, *Pravda*, August 5, 1989.

41. Putin's notion of "dictatorship of law" resonated positively with many Russians: a 2000 VTsIOM (All-Russian Public Opinion Research Center) survey revealed a solid majority of respondents held favorable views of this notion, while only around one-third exhibited a negative attitude; *Segodnya*, February 24, 2000.

42. For a comprehensive account of Gorbachev's intentions and realizations on regional reforms, see Graeme Gill, *The Collapse of a Single-party System: The Disintegration of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), chaps. 3–4; Richard Sakwa, *Gorbachev and His Reforms, 1985–1990* (Engelwood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1990), 148–51, 256–67.

43. Stephen E. Hanson, "Ideology, Interests, and Identity: Comparing the Soviet and Russian Secession Crisis," in *Center-periphery Conflicts in Post-Soviet Russia*, ed. Mikhail A. Alexseev, 31 (New York: St. Martin's, 1999).

44. Martin Nicholson, "Characterizing Center-periphery Relations in the Yeltsin era," in *Russian Regions and Regionalism*, ed. Graeme P. Herd and Anne Aldis, 7–8 (New York: Routledge-Curzon, 2003).

45. Lynn D. Nelson and Irina Y. Kuzes, "Regional Variations in the Implementation of Russia's Federal District Reform," *Demokratizatsiya* 10, no. 1 (2002): 12.

46. Mark A. Smith, "Putin," in *Russian Regions and Regionalism*, ed. Graeme P. Herd and Anne Aldis, 19–20 (New York: Routledge-Curzon, 2003).

47. See, for instance, Eugene Huskey, "On the Future of the Russian State," *Demokratizatsiya* 11, no. 1 (2003): 115–21; and Gordon M. Hahn, "The Past, Present, and Future of the Russian Federal State," *Demokratizatsiya* 11, no. 3 (2003): 343–62.

48. Matthew Hyde, "Putin's Federal Reforms and Their Implications for Presidential Power in Russia," *Europe-Asia Studies* 53, no. 5 (2001): 729.

49. Nelson and Kuzes, "Regional Variations," 9.

50. Hyde, "Putin's Federal Reforms," 728–29.

51. See Thomas F. Remington, "Majorities without Mandates: The Russian Federation Council since 2000," *Europe-Asia Studies* 55, no. 5 (2003): 667–91; Lilia Shevtsova, *Putin's Russia* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003), 182.

52. The presidential prerogative to remove a governor was used only once against the controversial Primorskyi governor, Yevgeny Nazdratenko, who was issued a warning, but which never resulted in his dismissal. The inefficiency of the prerogative under Yeltsin has been widely attributed to the opposition of the Federation Council. See Eugene Huskey, *Presidential Power in Russia* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1999), 196–99.

53. "Governors have their say with Putin at State Council session," *BBC Monitoring International Reports*, December 25, 2004.

54. On the logic of the congruence of federal and regional elites' attitudes, see Anton Steen, *Political Elites and the New Russia: The Power Basis of Yeltsin's and Putin's Regimes* (London: Routledge-Curzon, 2003), chap. 10.

55. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn himself argued as much when he observed, "The thing is, for a given people with its particular geography, historical experience, traditions and psychological makeup, to devise a system that will not lead to its decline but to its prosperity" ("How We Can Reorganize Russia: Tentative Ideas," *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, special ed. 9, 1990).

56. James Manor, "Political regeneration in India," in *The Multiverse of Politics*, ed. A. Nandy, 230–41 (New Delhi: Sage, 1994).

57. Alexander Zinoviev, *Katastroika: Legend and Reality of Gorbachevism* (London: Claridge, 1989), 237.

58. Paul Khlebnikov, "First Law and Order, then Democracy," *Moscow Times*, March 23, 2001.

59. See the work of Michael McFaul, for example, "Vladimir Putin's Grand Strategy. . . for Antidemocratic Regime Change in Russia," *Weekly Standard*, November 17, 2003.

60. Thus, Michael McFaul writes of Putin's Russia that "there is no analytical or empirical reason to assume that electoral democracy is a stage of political development on the way to liberal democracy. Russia could be stuck with its flawed political system for a long time. Because these illiberal institutions and norms exist, Russian democracy is more susceptible to collapse than are liberal democracies." Michael McFaul, *Russia's Unfinished Revolution: Political Change from Gorbachev to Putin* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 356.

61. Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968), chap. 2.

62. It could also be noted that continental Europe's relative emphasis on "social justice" as core to its democratic values is another dimension that makes its experience more relevant to contemporary Russian democracy building than that of the United States, where more emphasis is placed on "property rights." Limitations of space preclude our consideration of this important set of issues.