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The Weimar/Russia Comparison

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The analogy between Weimar Germany and post-Soviet Russia has been made by countless observers in Eastern Europe and in the West. Both in academic journals and in the popular press, one finds numerous passing references to "Weimar Russia" that are meant to signify a humiliated, unstable giant, capable of easily casting off the political and moral restraints of domestic and international liberalism. Strangely, however, despite the widespread attention given to the possible scenario of post-imperial democratic breakdown in Russia, neither those analysts skeptical of the Weimar analogy nor those more intrigued by it have explored it in much detail.[2] The comparison is usually left at the level of an interesting remark; it has not yet been systematically and comprehensively developed.[3]

Those who reject the Weimar analogy tend simply to assume that the dissimilarities between the two cases outweigh the evident similarities. Walter Lacqueur, for example, agrees that Russia faces "the old Weimar dilemma of how to run a democracy in the absence of a sufficient number of democrats," and that its leadership is "repeating the mistake committed by Weimar—giving absolute freedom to the enemies of democracy." None-

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[2] An exception to this rule is the enlightening comparative discussion of "homeland nationalisms" in Weimar Germany and postcommunist Russia provided by Rogers Brubaker (1996, pp. 107–47), from which we have benefited greatly.

[3] Even a special issue of the journal *German Politics and Society*, devoted specifically to exploring the "Weimar Russia" analogy, and despite many fascinating insights contained within it, did not include any single piece that directly compared the two cases; the essay by Janos (1996) comparing the "militarism" of Imperial Germany with Stalinism comes closest, but stops short of providing an analysis of post-Soviet Russian politics. For brief but insightful comments on the issue, see the contributions of Gerald Feldman, Harold James, and George Breslauer in "Weimar and Russia" (1994).

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theless, he concludes rather unconvincingly, "a full-fledged fascism still seems unlikely in Russia—if only because in contrast to widespread belief history never repeats itself" (Lacqueur, 1993, p. 294). Stephen Sestanovich notes that Russian elites, like those of Weimar, have struggled with problems concerning "the politics of force, the politics of money, and the politics of patriotism," but insists that Russia's democracy by the end of 1993 had become comparatively stable—despite his seemingly contradictory admission that "the failure of Weimar democracy is an important reminder that a regime can collapse even after a period of seeming stability" (Sestanovich, 1994, pp. 84, 97). Richard Sakwa, too, argues that despite the apparent parallels between the two cases, references to the "'Weimar scenario' . . . should be tempered by the fact that the world of the 1990s was a very different one from that of the 1920s or 1930s":

> The growth of economic interdependence, a dense network of human rights legislation and international organisations, all raised the threshold of tolerance that extremist reaction would have to negotiate. In addition, for all its faults the Soviet regime had appealed to a form of democratic legitimacy and values that were supportive of democracy, whereas the Wilhelmine Reich had espoused militaristic and elitist values. Neither was it clear what the social basis for fascism in Russia would be. . . . The analogy with inter-war Germany is instructive but not wholly appropriate. A society that had just freed itself from 74 years of dictatorship was hardly likely to embrace another so soon . . . (Sakwa, 1996, pp. 371–72).

However, Sakwa's enumeration of putative differences between the two cases fails to specify which variables in the international and social environment matter most to the prevention of fascist takeover—and why. Indeed, during the 1920s, growing economic interdependence may actually have facilitated fascism, while prominent international organizations such as the League of Nations did little or nothing to prevent it; the Wilhelmine Reich *did* sponsor a kind of ersatz democratization that had a direct effect on the party organizations of the Weimar period; and the society that had "just freed itself" from the autocratic and militaristic German empire did indeed embrace "another dictatorship" 15 years later!

Perhaps more surprisingly, even analysts who generally accept the validity of the Weimar metaphor have failed to undertake a detailed theoretical comparison and contrast of post-Soviet Russia and post-imperial Germany. Roman Szporluk, for example, has noted that "The similarities in the old German and current Russian national problems are indeed striking. . . . The current Russian discussions regarding the status of Russians in Ukraine, Kazakstan, or Belarus bring to mind Germany's relations with Czechoslovakia and Austria after 1918" (Szporluk in Colton and Legvold, 1992, p. 100); he does not, however, draw out the implications of this observation. Aleksandr Yanov (1995, pp. 11–12) simply postulates a

"Weimar scenario" that confronts all collapsing empires facing economic competition from Western capitalism; the bulk of his study then consists of an examination of the ideological positions of a wide range of neo-imperialist thinkers and politicians in contemporary Russia. But the specific social conditions under which such figures could gain significant political power are left largely implicit in Yanov's analysis.

In this essay we attempt to develop the analogy between Weimar Germany and post-Soviet Russia more rigorously and thus fill this gap in the literature. Our purpose in doing so is not to generate a complete and parsimonious theory of democratic breakdown or of the development of fascism.[4] Clearly in this case there are too many factors at work and too few cases (two) to establish unambiguous causal relationships among variables. Rather, our purpose is first of all taxonomical. By developing the theoretical category of the "Weimar syndrome" more fully, we hope to state with greater analytic precision where the analogy of Weimar Germany and post-Soviet Russia is theoretically useful, and where it breaks down. Having established theoretically-specified similarities and differences between the two cases, it becomes possible to undertake a "structured, focused comparison" to generate novel causal hypotheses that may then be tested in other cases of post-imperial democracy (George, 1979).[5] Identifying the conditions under which Weimar Germany became likely to return to anti-liberal statism should thus facilitate a more balanced assessment of the probability of such an outcome at some point in the future in postcommunist Russia as well.

In order to make the Weimar-Russia comparison manageable, we group the myriad factors mentioned by various scholars employing the Weimar analogy into three main categories: those connected to the *institutional and cultural legacies* inherited from the former empire, those relating to the *international environment* constraining policy makers, and those reflecting the *nature of the political system* organizing social interests in the two cases. Simplifying further, these three broader issue-areas can be reformulated as variables that can be used to distinguish various post-imperial democracies: (1) the degree of completeness of the revolutionary break with the prior imperial regime; (2) the degree of international pressure to marketize the economy; and (3) the degree of institutionalization of a system of programmatic and representative political parties.[6]

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[4]Nor do we attempt to enter the complex terminological debate about the definition of "fascism" itself. In what follows, we use the term simply as a synonym for any explicitly anti-liberal statism; we do not mean to deny that various sub-types of anti-liberal statism can be distinguished through more fine-grained analysis. For an extended discussion of the problem of defining "fascism," see Griffin (1993).

[5]Categorizing both Weimar and contemporary Russia as "post-imperial democracies" does, however, imply an acceptance of the idea that the USSR was indeed an "empire." For an interesting debate about the implications of this designation, see Beissinger (1995) and Suny (1995).

All these variables play important roles in existing theories of democratic breakdown. Theorists focusing on the institutional legacies of the old regime have argued that fascist or radical nationalist outcomes will be more likely in new democracies where the break from feudal patterns of rule and/or imperial definitions of state boundaries remains incomplete (Moore, 1966; Brubaker, 1996). Theorists of international capitalism have suggested that where the pressure to create a "market society" based on the commoditization of land, labor and money is very high, the potential social base for an anti-liberal backlash is strengthened (Polanyi, 1944). Finally, analysts of democratic consolidation have claimed that democracy tends to be undermined by the absence of programmatic parties allowing for the articulation and organization of social interests (Kitschelt, 1992b, 1995a).

Empirically, we find that post-Soviet Russia faces environmental obstacles to democratic consolidation—both domestically and internationally—that are remarkably similar to those faced by Weimar Germany. Both democracies were highly constrained by the institutional and cultural legacies of the preceding imperial regime; both were under very high pressure to marketize as rapidly as possible. However, Russia confronts these various pressures with a party system that is at this point far less stably institutionalized and representative than that of Weimar. A careful comparison of the two cases thus appears to contradict the argument of Kitschelt and others that the presence of a system of "programmatic parties" necessarily tends to facilitate the process of democratic consolidation. Weimar collapsed into fascism, we argue, partly *because* strong parties promoted the organization of anti-liberal social movements; in the short run, at least, the absence of a highly structured civil society and party system, paradoxically, may have made fascist takeover in post-Soviet Russia less likely. We explore the implications of our analysis for the *long run* future of Russian democracy in the concluding section of the article.[7]

THE WEIMAR SYNDROME

We begin with an analysis of these three features of politics in Weimar Germany.

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[6] Of course, there is a potentially infinite number of factors that might be deemed important in making the Weimar/Russia comparison; the list of variables chosen reflects the general theoretical importance assigned to them in the literature, as well as the fact that each of them can indeed be restated as a variable in comparative terms. Arguments that Weimar's collapse was due to peculiarly "German" cultural factors or to Hitler's unique personality, for example, are disregarded here on the grounds that they have no direct implications for analysis of the Russian case—unless restated in terms of a more general and testable theory of cultural effects on macropolitical outcomes. We do not mean by this to deny the importance of ideological or cultural factors *a priori*; in fact, as will become clear below, these factors play an important role in our discussion of party systems in Weimar and post-Soviet Russia.

The Incomplete Revolution

The Weimar republic was born of a weak revolution in the sense that it never broke decisively with its prerevolutionary past either sociologically or culturally (Haffner, 1969; Winkler, 1993, pp. 10–33; Peukert, 1987, pp. 21–51; Mommsen, 1989, pp. 25–89). The circumstances of its birth are generally well known. In 1918, with events on the battlefield going poorly, elements of the Kaiser Wilhelm's own staff and political supporters campaigned for his removal. Events moved quickly, however, and the Social Democrats combined with a significant part of the left liberals seized control of the major urban centers and ultimately forced the ruling military-agricultural-industrial elites in Germany to acquiesce in the construction of a new republican order. Unsurprisingly, the commitment of the old imperial elites to the new democratic order was far from enthusiastic. In fact, from the very outset they mobilized against the existing order by sponsoring organizations of those who benefited from the imperial order or otherwise felt betrayed and humiliated by the conditions under which the empire collapsed (Carsten, 1966).

The simple fact of the matter, and one that the Social Democrats could never live down, was that the "transition to democracy" in Germany was caused by the loss of a war in a nation that lived in a cult of victory. As Thomas Mann warned a group of students in Frankfurt in 1922, "The State has become our business; a situation profoundly hated by considerable sections of citizens and young people who will simply have none of it because, forsooth, it did not come to birth in triumph and the exercise of free choice but in defeat and collapse, making it seem bound up forever with weakness, shame, and foreign domination" (Mann, 1922). Although Mann and others tried their best to reconcile their compatriots to democracy and defeat, the political beneficiaries of the new order were bound to be tarred with the image of having betrayed the nation in the name of cynical power or for a dubious idea (liberal democracy). This "stab in the back myth" (*Dolchstosslegende*), propounded by Hindenburg himself, hung like a pall over the young republic and provided the political backdrop to the conditions imposed on Germany by England, France, and the USA at the end of the Great War, the most humiliating of which were the reparations burden and creation of Poland and Czechoslovakia (Fink, 1997).

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[7] We do not attempt in this essay to compare the foreign policies of Weimar Germany and post-Soviet Russia, as in our judgment foreign policy plays only a subsidiary role in determining the consolidation or breakdown of post-imperial democracies. Nor do we assess the potential foreign policy consequences of the establishment of a fascist regime in Moscow. To do so would require the examination of a host of additional variables connected to the changed strategic environment of the 1990s versus the 1930s, such as the effect of nuclear weapons, the increased military power of the United States, and the existence of more powerful intelligence-gathering capabilities. In any case, since the institutionalization of a fascist regime domestically would seem to be the prerequisite for fascist foreign policy, analysis of the probability of the former is logically prior to analysis of the latter. We would like to thank George Breslauer for bringing this point to our attention.

The most common explanation for Weimar's unstable democracy, then, is the an incomplete cultural break with a feudal past. Military officers and large agrarian interests still had undue influence on political discourse, while the social guarantors of democracy, the bourgeoisie, remained hopelessly weak and not very committed to constitutionalism (Dahrendorf, 1967). The result was an anti-modern utopian backlash that captured the state at the earliest possible convenience (Turner, 1975). It should be noted that this explanation for Weimar's crisis has sustained much criticism in the last several decades. In the most forceful of the critiques, Blackbourn and Eley (1984) maintain that this image of a semi-modern Germany is really based on a model of modernization in England that British historians have long rejected. Not only was the German bourgeoisie not as weak as we might think, but the English bourgeoisie was historically never as committed to democracy as the cultural explanation implies.

Yet one need not accept some larger theory of a German *Sonderweg* (special path) in order to accept the more modest claim that the social groups that dominated imperial Germany (large industrialists, agrarian elites, military officers, and civil servants) had very little objective interest in supporting the institutions of the young republic (Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens, 1992). In fact, one finds ample evidence to show, in the case of large industrialists, not only that many did not support the institutions of the republic, but that a large number actually benefited from the instability surrounding the effects of the hyperinflation of 1923 (Feldman, 1994). On the agrarian side, the large estate owners effectively prohibited any land reform that might divide up their large holdings in the East. The military, while remaining nominally under civilian command, always made it clear that this control was not absolute; it depended, rather, on the continued indulgence of the high command, who, like the civil servants, considered themselves above politics, while simultaneously meddling in decisions taken by duly elected officials at almost every turn.

Why is it that the German revolution of 1918 failed so miserably to displace decisively the very elements that most threatened its stabilization as a liberal democracy? Historians have offered various reasons for this, but the most convincing is that the Weimar coalition had to rely on the military and its backers to maintain order not only against the communists, who continued to foster uprisings well into the 1920s, but also against the radical right whose members stood poised to grab state power during coup attempts in 1920 and 1923 (Carsten, 1966). Unable to wrap themselves in the flag of patriotic nationalism for the very simple reason that their rise to power coincided so closely with Germany's humiliating surrender at the end of the war (even if they did not, as the right claimed, cause it), the groups that supported Weimar had to make common cause with nationalist opinion that opposed it. In addition to these proximate political factors, a further explanation of the relative moderation of the revolutionaries in 1918 is that, despite the hardships of the final days of the war and the great poverty of the early 1920s, Germany was a highly developed, industrial-

ized country. Its structure of corporate governance, agricultural output, and financial backing could not be altered overnight without worsening an already difficult economic situation. Any restructuring could be easily seen by the victorious allies to be evidence that nationalized properties and confiscated capital were prime material for reparations, an argument used time and again with a good measure of success by industrialists and Junkers alike (Krüger, 1973; Trachtenberg, 1980).

For the purposes of the present analysis, however, the most important impact of the German revolution of 1918 was its failure as far as socioeconomic "marketization" is concerned. Germany's model of "organized capitalism," in which significant portions of the industrial economy were not subject to internal competition or were otherwise protected from external markets with extensive cartelization and high tariffs, was affected by the events of 1918 only to the extent that part of its former internal market was now part of newly independent Poland. Socioeconomically, however, little had changed. Indeed, this fact was celebrated by the grandees of the socialist left such as Rudolf Hilferding. Industrial protection and cartelization, agricultural subsidies to large estates in the East (Osthilfe), and subsidies to the armed forces (secret or otherwise) and to a conservative professoriate continued unabated (Krekeler, 1973; Pohl, 1979; von Riekhoff, 1971). From a political standpoint, the main impact of the revolution was to bring the working class into this game as one more player, a game in which the state was viewed primarily an instrument for shaping the material outcomes to the benefit of particular groups—whether the working class, the iron and rye coalition, or the army—rather than the creator of a set of conditions in which all individuals could be "paid off" through economic growth.

One final legacy of imperial rule for Weimar democracy must be mentioned: the incomplete break with a "Great German" definition of the boundaries of the nation-state. The fact that Germany's rise to the first rank of industrial powers had been carried out under the auspices of a traditional monarchy and justified in terms of the need to defend national sovereignty had inhibited the creation of a fully "civic" form of national identity (Greenfeld, 1992). Unlike the situation in England or France, the tendency to define "Germanness" in terms of blood rather than legal procedures for attaining citizenship endured well into the twentieth century; indeed, it has endured until this day. Under the conditions of national humiliation and territorial losses in the wake of defeat in World War I, such ambiguity about national boundaries was a potential political powderkeg, and a continual problem for the legitimation of the new "small-German" democratic regime (Brubaker, 1996).

The International Dimension

Scholars continue to debate the impact of the Versailles treaty. Although there is little evidence that the treaty threatened Germany's interests, or, in the end, even punished it unduly, within Germany it was universally perceived to have done so because of the conditions under which it was signed—the threat of a continuing blockade (Fink, 1997, p. 266). Apart from the territorial losses, the "war-guilt-clause" in the treaty attached a moral stigma to the country as a whole, all of which contributed to the general sentiment in Germany that Europe had become decidedly anti-German. Moreover, whatever the actual burden of reparations, the *fact* of reparations paved the way for an anti-Versailles consensus that spanned the political spectrum from the far right to the communists.

The generally hostile international political climate coincided with a new stringent economic environment. The failure of the Weimar government fully to reform Germany's heavily statist and protectionist economy might not have been sufficient to undermine democratic consolidation in the absence of significant and simultaneous pressures from the international market. In fact, most observers agree that the period between 1924, when the Dawes plan laid out a schedule of reparations and a mechanism for stabilizing the German currency, and 1929, when the world financial crisis hit, was generally one of stability for the republic. With the onset of the Great Depression, all this quickly changed. The latest research on the international aspects of the crisis of Weimar reaffirms Polanyi's fifty-year-old thesis that, after 1929, the commitment of political leaders to the gold standard effectively restricted their room for maneuver, much more so than if they had not been bound by "golden fetters" (Polanyi, 1944; Eichengreen, 1992). As did leaders in other countries, the German chancellor, Brüning, stood before a stark choice in 1930: either defend the gold standard with a deflationary policy or undertake some sort of fiscal expansion and give up on parity or convertibility of the currency (Borchardt, 1982). German economic historians continue to debate whether in fact Brüning had more room to move than has been previously thought (Holtfrerich, 1982), but whatever the objective economic constraints faced by politicians, the German leadership did not believe it had the power to do otherwise. International financial culture required a credible commitment to the gold standard, and, in the absence of a genuine political crisis or civil war, none saw the need to move away from this orthodoxy.

This was especially true in Germany, where, due to its poor balance of trade, its external debt, internal political threats (especially after the September 1930 elections, when the Nazis and the Communists collectively won 31.5 percent of the vote), and the memories of the hyperinflation of 1923, any strategy of devaluation and movement away from the gold standard would have destroyed international confidence in the Reichsmark and led to massive capital flight and domestic inflation. Whether in fact democratic German politicians could have attained sufficient room for maneuver within the gold system, or could have gone off the gold standard

altogether while retaining at least formal liberal democratic institutions, remains unclear. What is certain is that the burden of reparations payments and the strains of maintaining currency parity after 1929 reinforced the credibility of the extreme right, who claimed that the international financial and military system, as it was being played, was in fact a sucker's game.

The Party System and Presidentialism

The revolution may not have altered the social structure to any significant extent, but it did create an entirely new set of political institutions in Germany that would channel these social interests in a new way. Although the Reich had possessed a parliament, it did not have parliamentary government. Parties in the Reichstag did not actually determine national policy. Moreover, even within the weak parliament, representatives were not always elected by numerical majorities in their areas, which provided landed estates in the East, for example, representation disproportionate to their numbers. All this now had changed. Notwithstanding their essential hostility to the republic, groups opposed to the new order had exhausted the possibility of an extra-legal path to power by 1923. From then on, the path taken would have to be electoral and legal.

The institutions of the Weimar democracy were a direct response to the situation in which the Weimar parties found themselves in 1918. Representation was strictly proportional. Federalism was entrenched and deepened. The head of state was a president, elected for a seven-year term by the entire electorate. If no candidate obtained a majority in the first round, a mere plurality was sufficient to secure office in the second round, and in this round new candidates could be introduced, precisely the route by which Hindenburg became president in 1925. Yet there certainly was a discrepancy "between the formidable electoral process from which the president emerged and the fairly limited tasks required of him" (Feuchtwanger, 1994, p. 41). Although elections granted him a very large degree of legitimacy by European standards of the time, the president could only exercise his powers with the consent of the chancellor and his cabinet. One exception, however, was article 48 of the constitution, which allowed the president to intervene militarily in any *Land* that refused to fulfil its obligations to the Reich. It also empowered him to restore public law and order and suspend some of the civil liberties and basic stipulations of the constitution, as long as the Reichstag did not invalidate his decrees by expressly voting against them.

Except in cases of emergency, then, the president had few formal powers. The article on presidential powers generated little discussion at the time it was adopted in 1919. On the contrary, since most Germans already knew what it was like to live under a strong executive, most jurists and publicists of the day were more concerned with the potential excesses of parliamentary sovereignty than with the hypothetical emergency powers of the president. Yet such powers were bound to provide the temptation to resort to a form of presidentialism by decree, especially in a highly

unstable and polarized party system such as Weimar's. Friedrich Ebert, the first president of the Republic from 1919–1925, issued over 130 emergency decrees under article 48, many addressing urgent economic matters rather than law-and-order issues. Only when the Reichstag became deadlocked in 1930, however, did article 48 evolve into a permanent form of extra constitutional governance. "It then acquired its quasi-dictatorial significance because it was used by Hindenburg in conjunction with the presidential power of dissolving the Reichstag" (Feuchtwanger, 1994, p. 42; Peukert, 1987, pp. 247–255).

Notwithstanding these new electoral rules and institutional powers, the Weimar party system displayed striking continuities with the party system that it had replaced (lending credence to the assertion that the social revolutionary aspects of 1918 were minimal). It was essentially a five-party system composed of conservatives, national liberals, the Catholic Center Party, the Progressives or left liberals, and the socialist left. The initial Weimar coalition of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the Catholic Center, and the left liberal German Democratic Party (DDP) eventually collapsed but was replaced by coalitions of the remaining parties (except for the SPD, which remained out of power, largely by its own choice, throughout the 1920s) that initially cast themselves as anti-system, but eventually entered government—always navigating a careful course between their activists who mistrusted the Republic altogether and their coalition partners who had a vested interest in the republic's continuity.

From the standpoint of contemporary theories of democratization, it is noteworthy that Weimar had a highly articulated party system in which the dimensions of party competition were clear to the citizenry at large. Yet this did little to stabilize the institutional order as a whole. This observation suggests that, rather than use the formal structure and dimensions of party competition as an indicator of democratic consolidation (Kitschelt, 1995b), we need to shift the focus to the connections between parties and their constituencies and the substantive nature of this relationship. In Weimar, although the parties had hammered out elaborate political programs that were recognized by each other and most of the electorate, they were also tied to very specific social groups, and at no time did they move beyond the interest groups that were their primary constituencies. It is for this reason that Kirchheimer spoke of the development of catch-all parties as a watershed in European political development in the post-war era (Kirchheimer, 1969). In the Weimar republic, parties were programmatic to the point of fault. Although they did conform to Kitschelt's (1995a) definition of programmatic parties in that they attempted to articulate and act upon competing visions of the public good, they did not stabilize the Weimar democracy. On the contrary, programmatic party competition in a weakly commoditized post-imperial democracy ensured that programs articulated quite narrow interests—which were nonetheless in each case identified with those of the nation as a whole. Each party ended up standing fast

for its own principled, particularistic version of the public good and refused to compromise. This was a recipe for gridlock.

The institutional arrangements of the Weimar republic not only fostered a narrow conception of "constituency," but also prevented fundamental value conflicts from being transformed into distributional conflicts that might be subject to negotiation. Presidentialism, in this regard, was also important. The specter of creeping presidentialism over the course of the 1920s in no way attenuated the ideological purity of parties or their commitment to their clients. On the contrary, by remaining out of power for significant periods, parties could remain true to their creeds. The classic, though by no means unique, case of this tendency is the SPD. Having been forced to choose between a strict stabilization package and suppression of working-class protest on the one hand, and handing power over to a center right coalition that denied them a place in government, the SPD chose the principled stand at every turn, and remained outside of the Weimar cabinets for the better part of the 1920s rather than preside over the increased unemployment that monetary and fiscal stabilization were bound to cause. As real wages as a portion of national income rose throughout the 1920s (coming to a peak in 1932), the German economy was quickly reaching its structural limits. Most historians maintain that in the second half of the decade flexibility could have been increased only through lower wage levels (Borchardt, 1982, pp. 165–224). But at every turn the SPD refused to abandon its social constituency.

The SPD was by no means alone in this behavior. One need only mention the destructive stances taken by the German People's Party in foreign affairs, the Catholic Center Party in education reform, and the more extreme Bavarian People's Party and the German National People's Party on a whole range of international, military, and social issues (Wittwer, 1968; Turner, 1963). In short, presidentialism allowed parties to be principled rather than negotiate with each other over policies that all could live with. This left the door open to the "ideological/charismatic" parties of the far left and, more crucially, the far right, which could craft appeals to larger constituencies than the narrow interest groups of the dominant Weimar parties.

Weimar's creeping presidentialism thus resulted from the interests of party elites operating in a well-institutionalized system of party competition in a less than fully commoditized economy under a high degree of international pressure. After 1930, cabinets were essentially presidential in nature (that is, they were the product of presidential choice rather than coalition agreements) and such an arrangement ensured that parties continued to be superior articulators, but extremely poor arbiters, of social interests. Key ministries increasingly evaded party control (and, indeed, parties had little desire to be associated with unpopular policies coming out of the economics and justice ministries) and parties could easily avoid responsibility, reaping the benefits of a nominally democratic order while allowing the country to slip into a semi-dictatorship of presidential decrees (Becker, 1966; Stürmer, 1973).

Of course, none of this political decay guaranteed that Hitler would gain a plurality in the 1932 Reichstag elections; nor did it ensure that elements of the political right would gamble (in retrospect very unwisely) that the Nazis could be used as a hammer to destroy the left while remaining under the control of the traditional reactionaries who had granted them access to power in the first place. In the interstices of structure does, after all, lie history. What the overly structured German party system and civil society did ensure, however, is that any sustained attempt to destroy it altogether or render it politically harmless would have to be carried out with a ruthlessness that only someone prepared to make a total break with the norms of liberalism could have possessed.

Hitler was just the man to do this. As Mommsen and others have shown, Nazi ideology was hardly original, but it did combine pan-German national sentiments and anti-Semitic currents that had been present in German culture since the second half of the nineteenth century with a cult of action, violence, and leader-worship (Mommsen, 1989). Given the genuine problems raised by Germany's domestic and international structural environment, romantic visions of casting aside the restraints of international capitalism and the niceties of gentlemanly diplomatic negotiations as facades for bourgeois/Jewish/Bolshevik domination could reasonably be proffered and discussed as political programs, rather than being dismissed as the bizarre fantasies of half-crazed lunatics. Furthermore, given that a large number of Germans now lived in the newly independent countries of Poland and Czechoslovakia, the entire debate about whether Germany should be "small" or "large" was not merely an issue of national aggrandizement but could reasonably be cast in terms of securing the cultural survival of Germans who might otherwise be doomed to live in a sea of Slavdom. Thus, the surface plausibility of certain key aspects of Nazi ideology under the conditions of a semi-marketized economy in a weak post-imperial democracy, combined with the political deadlock produced by highly programmatic parties that facilitated creeping presidentialism, produced the conditions under which Hitler's party could move rapidly to destroy liberal capitalist institutions—eventually on a global scale.[8]

[8] On the issue of presidentialism, then, it should be clear that we only partially agree with Juan Linz (1994). Presidential rule undermined democracy in Weimar Germany only in combination with the gridlock produced by programmatic, zero-sum parties. By contrast, presidentialism appears to work quite well in countries such as the United States or France, where the domestic and international structures of liberal capitalism have encouraged the creation of non-zero-sum programmatic parties that act as a brake on unbridled presidential power. In such a political context, parties prefer to compete *for* the presidency in the long run, rather than remain "principled" in the short run, by letting the executive make the difficult decisions.

WEIMAR RUSSIA?

As stated earlier, our comparison of the German and Russian cases is designed to pinpoint more precisely where the Weimar analogy has theoretical significance and where it appears to break down. Specifically, in this section we will show that two of the three variables that seem to have the greatest significance in explaining the rise of Hitler—the low degree of revolutionary reconstruction after imperial breakdown and the high level of international pressure for economic marketization—appear to be operating in post-Soviet Russia much as in the Weimar case, in some respects perhaps even *more* powerfully. However, the remaining factor—the institutionalization of a system of programmatic and representative political parties—is thus far absent. Indeed, from 1991 through 1996, Russian politicians have jumped from one party to another so often and so quickly that party-building as an enterprise has been widely discredited.[9] To be sure, even in the absence of a stable party system, there has been no shortage in post-Soviet Russia of would-be fascist dictators. However, the absence of broadly representative party structures in today's Russia may actually diminish the chances of a Hitler-style "legal" takeover of the state—due to the ease with which even seemingly committed politicians can be bought off with promises of power and/or wealth.

The Incomplete Revolution

As in the case of Weimar, the Russian Republic was born as the result of imperial collapse, leaving behind institutional and cultural legacies that have severely constrained the options of postcommunist elites (Jowitt, 1992; Hanson, 1995a). These legacies were particularly severe given the nature of Stalinist development, which had created a massive military-industrial complex oriented toward gross output rather than efficiency or innovation (Gaddy, 1996). Agriculture, too, remained almost wholly unreformed (Wegren, 1992); the Soviet collective farm system resembled in many ways the organization of the feudal estates of East Prussia and Western Pomerania, with the Communist Party itself playing the role of the Junker nobility. Despite its ability to produce enough military hardware (at enormous social expense) to reach effective parity with the United States in the 1960s and 1970s, the Soviet economy proved incapable of adapting to basic consumer demands or changing technological standards (Hewett, 1988). And while informally black markets played an increasingly crucial role in the distribution of scarce goods, formally no true market for land, labor, or money existed in Russia under Soviet rule (Hanson, 1995b).

[9] For example, Aleksandr Lebed dropped his affiliation with the Congress of Russian Communities after that party fared poorly in the December 1995 parliamentary elections; after considering various alternative alliances, first with the Communist Party and later with the so-called "Third Force" of Yavlinskiy and Fyodorov, he ran on his own in the 1996 presidential campaign, placing third. He then quickly joined Yel'tsin's team—again, temporarily! For a good basic account of Lebed's political career, see Kipp (1996).

Gorbachev's *perestroyka* reforms, while effecting genuinely radical changes in the degree of openness and pluralism in Soviet society, in retrospect did very little to change the formal institutional rules or disrupt the informal personal networks governing the Soviet economic system. Besides the emergence of small-scale cooperatives often dominated by the mafia, the primary result of Gorbachev's decentralization of economic decision making was not true marketization, but simply the disintegration of the planning system; most enterprises and farms underwent minimal or no restructuring (Goldman, 1992). Politically, too, *glasnost'* and *demokratizatsiya* quickly led to elite dissensus, bureaucratic breakdown, and national secession movements in every Soviet republic, while regional party bosses remained in control of substantial power and resources throughout Soviet territory (Helf and Hahn, 1992). Only after the partially-competitive elections for the USSR Congress of People's Deputies in 1989, and especially after the 1990 elections to the Supreme Soviets of the republics, did the disorganized "movement society" catalyzed by Gorbachev's reforms begin to coalesce into more stable forms of civil society interest representation (Fish, 1995a). But this process had barely gotten underway before the final collapse of the formal facade of Soviet power; thus the degree to which alternative modes of social organization had become institutionalized before Gorbachev's fall in 1991 was slight.

The swift delegitimation and dissolution of the Soviet regime created a political vacuum that was quickly filled by the pro-Western Russian populism of Boris Yel'tsin (Colton, 1995). Yel'tsin's skillful welding of anti-communist sentiment, moderate Russian nationalism, and promises of immediate prosperity made him an extremely popular politician during his first few months in power. However, Yel'tsin's political vision was based on wildly over-optimistic assessments of the time span necessary to implement comprehensive market reforms: in October 1991, for instance, Yel'tsin declared that "[b]y the autumn of 1992 . . . the economy will have stabilized and people's lives will gradually get better" (quoted in Colton, 1995, p. 63). As the extent of the backwardness of the Russian economy became clearer, neo-liberal Western and Russian economists began to admit that the outright destruction of much of the old Stalinist sector—as painful as that might be in social terms—might be the precondition for sustained economic growth in the long run (Boycko, Shleifer, and Vishny, 1995, pp. 128–144). However, such a path toward Westernization necessarily entailed not only diminished power and privileges for state bureaucrats, but mass joblessness and poverty among the most vulnerable sectors of the Russian population—an outcome that did not dovetail neatly with Yel'tsin's early promises of national revival.

Not surprisingly, then, it soon became apparent that Yel'tsin's vision of "democracy" and Westernization was not shared by a large majority of politicians in the Russian Supreme Soviet, a body that had been elected in 1990 under political conditions still favoring Communist Party candidates. Although most Supreme Soviet deputies hated Gorbachev so much that

after the August coup they were willing initially to throw their support behind Yel'tsin in his battle against the former General Secretary, many were at heart still "national Bolsheviks" who envisioned some form of continuing Russian control over the entire territory of the USSR and a strong role for the state in economic life.[10] Thus, Yel'tsin's signing in December 1991 of the Belovezhskaya Pushcha agreement that declared the creation by Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the formal dissolution of the Soviet Union, followed by his implementation of price liberalization and currency convertibility in January 1992, quickly drove the majority of Supreme Soviet deputies into opposition to the president (Brudny, 1995). As in Weimar, a belief that the homeland had been "betrayed" by a coalition of Western financial interests and domestic traitors—including both Gorbachev and Yel'tsin, according to some commentators—began to take root among important sectors of the political elite.[11]

Such attitudes were reinforced—again, as during the Weimar period—by the fact that the new post-Soviet "Russia" excluded approximately 25 million self-identified Russians, now subject to new citizenship laws that limited their political influence vis-à-vis titular ethnic populations of the Newly Independent States (Barrington, 1995; Zevelev, 1996). Given that the boundaries of the RSFSR and the other former Soviet republics had been originally drawn up by Stalin to reflect the interests of the Communist Party rather than to reflect local ethnic preferences, the legitimacy of the internationally recognized legal boundaries of the post-Soviet states could be, and was, plausibly challenged. Unfortunately, every alternative definition of "Russia"—whether based on Slavic ethnicity and Orthodoxy as in Solzhenitsyn's works, Soviet power as national Bolsheviks preferred, or dreams of renewed territorial expansion as in Zhirinovskiy's manifesto—inevitably raised the specter of Russian military revanchism in explicit opposition to the liberal international order (Solzhenitsyn, 1991; Zhirinovskiy, 1993; Zyuganov, 1994).

Similarly, on an economic level, the initial impact of price liberalization was a sustained period of very high inflation that wiped out most people's

[10]For example, Yel'tsin's vice-president, Aleksandr Rutskoy, argued that while the Soviet Union probably could not be restored in its old form, "Russia" must still be defined as a continental, multi-national great power: "Imperial, revolutionary Russia will probably never come back. And the communist empire is probably also a thing of the past. But I do stand for a great and unitary Russia. And I have long proposed that our statehood be defined as indicated by history, not by today's whims. Europe cannot be only German, British or French. The same goes for our future great Russia. It cannot be just Russian" (Rutskoy, interviewed in *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, Dec. 13, 1991; translated in *FBIS-SOV-92-002*, January 3, 1992). For an excellent study of national Bolshevism and its role in the events of 1991, see Dunlop (1993).

[11]In interviews with members of the Russian elite conducted in 1993, Zimmerman found that a full 65 percent of his repondents could be classified as "market democrats," only 14 percent of whom considered the United States to be a "threat to Russia." However, among the 19 percent who expressed an anti-market ideological position, the proportion considering the U.S. a "threat" rose to 68 percent; figures calculated from Zimmerman (1994, pp. 108, 117).

savings and impoverished a significant percentage of the Russian population (Mikhalev, 1996). On the positive side, scarce goods almost immediately began to reappear on formerly bare store shelves, and new entrepreneurs took advantage of the opportunity to go into private business at a far greater rate than had been possible during the Gorbachev era (Åslund, 1995). However, the percentage of the population that saw the early benefits of economic liberalization was necessarily quite small in comparison with those who suffered from it. When the government launched its campaign to privatize state assets in the summer of 1992—again, closely following the advice of Western economists—Yel'tsin's opponents became even more outraged at what they saw as the selling of Russia's wealth to speculators and foreigners on the cheap. Consider, for instance, the verdict on the first year of Yel'tsin's reforms offered by archnationalist Supreme Soviet deputy Yuriy Vlasov in November 1992:

> A host of profiteers and alien scum is reaching out for Russia. There is no choice: it's either them or us. . . . I cannot pass over in silence the mass betrayal in favor of the West—I never dared to think that we had so many traitors. Well, we will remember their names. . . . When the hour strikes, we will call them to account (Vlasov, *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, Nov. 14, 1992, p. 1).

As in Weimar, then, the new Russian democratic regime had to face serious threats from both "right-wing" nationalists and "left-wing" ex-communists in the first few years of its existence.[12] The ex-communist resistance, spearheaded by the parliamentary speaker Ruslan Khasbulatov and Yel'tsin's vice-president Aleksandr Rutskoy, was temporarily crushed in October 1993 after Yel'tsin's assault on the Russian "White House." However, in elections to the new State Duma held two months later, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation still did quite well, receiving 12.4 percent of the vote for party lists and an additional 16 seats in single-member districts, while the ultranationalist "Liberal Democratic Party of Russia" led by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy won a full 23 percent of the party vote (White, Rose, and McAllister, 1997, p. 123). Faced with such threats, Yel'tsin began increasingly to rely on the support of unpopular allies within the military and the security services, such as Defense Minister Pavel Grachev, Federal Security Service chief Mikhail Barsukov, and Yel'tsin's personal security chief and drinking buddy, Aleksandr Korzhakov. Formally, economic reforms continued, but few enterprises or farms actually went bankrupt, owing to the toleration of mounting interenterprise debts, funding by increasingly shaky semi-private banks, and the accumulation of enormous wage arrears throughout the economy (Woodruff, 1996).

As Yel'tsin approached the end of his first term in office in 1996, then, the ways in which the imperial and statist legacies of Leninism constrained Russian politics, economics, and culture appeared remarkably similar to

[12]The two oppositions even collaborated on occasion; see, for example, "Deklaratsiya" (1992).

the dynamics of incomplete revolution in the first half-decade of the Weimar Republic. In both cases, as we have seen, the commitment of old, powerful elites to the new democracy—born of imperial defeat—was suspect. Socioeconomic marketization of the old state sector in post-imperial Germany and post-Soviet Russia was limited, and large portions of society thus continued to have a material stake in the preservation of the former state structures. Both regimes inherited contested international borders that excluded a large diaspora population; both were weakened by a widespread myth that the old empire had been lost due to a "stab in the back" by hidden enemies at home and abroad. Finally, both the Weimar regime and the Russian Federation, threatened simultaneously by anti-liberal movements from both the "right" and the "left," began to rely dangerously on the support of various representatives of the "forces of order."

The International Dimension

Much had obviously changed in the world economy of the 1990s as compared to the interwar period. Most importantly, the sustained dynamic growth of the core capitalist economies after World War II, combined with the emergence of powerful new industrial countries in East Asia, had created a truly global market system affecting domestic social arrangements in every part of the world (Milner and Keohane, 1996). In this sense, complete "exit" from the liberal capitalist economy was far more difficult than it had been during the Great Depression. The possibility of justifying non-market paths of development ideologically, too, was much lower in the wake of the total collapse of the Stalinist planning system in the USSR. Finally, the gold standard, after having been reimposed as the basis for the global trading system by the United States at Bretton Woods, had been irrevocably abandoned in 1971 in favor of an international system of floating exchange rates.

However, despite all of these important changes, the international situation facing elites in the former Soviet republics after 1991 was in many respects remarkably similar to that facing East Europeans after 1918. Indeed, the very success of global liberal capitalism by the 1990s had made it possible for investors to move their capital almost instantaneously from one part of the world to another in response to political and economic circumstances, meaning that domestic politicians would be quickly punished by the market for any real or perceived departures from strict economic liberalism (Frieden and Rogowski, 1996). Efforts to protect inefficient industries, to subsidize domestic agricultural interests, to implement tariffs to shelter favored sectors, or to attack private property rights in any way could lead to a rapid decline in "business confidence" that would deprive one's country of crucial investment funds—which might then flow directly to one's international competitors. Thus, the room for economic maneuver left to domestic politicians in the postcommunist world, as elsewhere outside the rich capitalist core, was quite small.

In addition, despite the end of the gold standard, international lending institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank played a similar role in coordinating global investors' interpretations about the economic performance of various countries. Elites who relied on "populist" strategies of gaining social support—and who therefore tended to fall short of international standards of fiscal and monetary discipline, except in sparsely populated oil-producing countries—were thus threatened not only with the direct loss of aid and low-interest loans from these international agencies, but also indirectly by the signal that IMF or World Bank disapproval sent to private investors (Przeworski, 1991). The international coordination of Western financial interests, originally set up to encourage global market integration, thus had the unintended consequence of dividing the developing world into a few model states that attracted the bulk of international investment, and a large number of "laggards" that fell further and further behind.[13]

Within this environment, the former Soviet republics (excluding the Baltic states) inherited the worst possible position among postcommunist countries in almost every important respect. Compared to the new market democracies of East-Central Europe or China, the ex-Soviet republics were geographically far from Western export markets and from Western investors, their huge territorial size and absence of developed ports exacerbated their lack of any significant market infrastructure, their great ethnic diversity tended to call existing geopolitical arrangements into constant question, and the remarkable degree to which they had been fully industrialized and collectivized along Stalinist lines made the breakup of these inefficient sectors especially painful socially. None of these factors, however, were initially emphasized either by Yel'tsin or by the Western-trained economists who advised him after 1990. Assuming that macroeconomic stabilization would spark a rapid process of market adjustment—and perhaps overly optimistic about the potential competitiveness of Stalinist enterprises in the global market—the advocates of "shock therapy" for the former Soviet Union tended at first to envision a much quicker transformation of the post-Soviet economy than was in fact feasible.[14]

Given the lack of Western appreciation for structural constraints on post-Soviet economic policy, Boris Yel'tsin in 1991 had little choice but to adopt a strategy of rapid marketization in Russia if he wanted a genuine rapprochement with the capitalist world. However, as in the case of Weimar Germany, given the Russian Federation's similarly burdensome inheritance of state subsidies for quasi-feudal, uncompetitive socioeco-

[13]As a proportion of GDP, by 1994 Hungary had the largest share of foreign direct investment among postcommunist countries, just over 30 percent, followed by Poland, Estonia, Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Slovenia. Russia, along with many of the other former Soviet Republics, had less than 3 percent. Even accounting for differences in the size of their respective economies, the absolute figures are also revealing. Between 1989 and 1995, Hungary accumulated 10.6 billion dollars of foreign investment, whereas Russia managed to attract a mere 3.9 billion (World Bank, 1996, p. 64).

nomic structures, price liberalization had the initial effect of producing hyperinflation until a credible government program of monetary and fiscal austerity could be adopted. Finally, however, after the adoption of the new "Yel'tsin constitution" in December 1993, a sort of "Dawes plan" for macroeconomic stabilization in Russia was worked out with the International Monetary Fund. Inflation was gradually brought under control primarily by cutting state support for the most vulnerable sectors of the economy. The subsequent revival of market activity in the informal sector—especially in the big cities of Moscow and St. Petersburg—was therefore accompanied by continued massive economic dislocation in the uncompetitive industrial and agricultural regions most profoundly affected by the Stalinist legacy (Rutland, 1996a).

To be sure, the intentions behind Western policies toward Russia after 1991 were far more benign than those motivating the treatment of defeated Germany at Versailles (McFaul, 1992, pp. 6–7). Russia was not asked to pay reparations for expenses incurred during the Cold War, nor were parts of its territory occupied by Western troops. Certainly, the unprecedented efforts of a wide range of international agencies—both private and public—to help fund Russian small businesses, build grass-roots support for civil society, and facilitate the free flow of information in the Newly Independent States should be acknowledged. Nonetheless, a comparison of the international environment facing post-imperial democratic elites in Weimar Germany and contemporary Russia again reveals many striking structural parallels. In both cases, a highly-coordinated international financial system put enormous pressure on peripheral countries to marketize formerly state-owned and/or state-protected economic sectors in order to establish a reputation for creditworthiness. In both cases, initial high inflation created by post-imperial budget deficits and loose monetary policy was curtailed only with the help of a stabilization program overseen by international advisors—one that necessarily threatened those whose livelihoods depended directly or indirectly on the state. Finally, although as of 1996 there had been no parallel collapse of world trade on the scale of the Great Depression, the breakdown of the former Soviet trading bloc in East Europe and the disintegration of supply and distribution networks within the CIS, as in Germany during the 1930s, threatened a large proportion of the Russian work force with long-term unemployment, boosting the credibility of anti-market politicians who blamed the West for plunging Russia into economic crisis.

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[14]For example, note the advice to Soviet policy makers given in a 1990 report jointly issued by the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development: "The authorities face an enormous task, involving reforms of the legal, financial, and trade systems and also of vital sectors of the economy, especially agriculture, distribution, energy, and manufacturing. *These changes cannot be made in a matter of weeks*" (World Bank *et al.*, 1990, pp. 1–2, emphasis added). The choice of the word "weeks" here, rather than years or even decades, is telling.

The Party System and Presidentialism

Despite the turbulence of the early postcommunist period, the creation of new formal democratic institutions had a significant effect on political behavior in the Russian Federation. As in Weimar Germany after the failure of the "Beer Hall Putsch" of 1923, the violent destruction of the old Russian Supreme Soviet and the adoption of the new Russian Constitution in the fall of 1993 convinced even the leaders of bitterly anti-liberal parties that it was at least prudent to pursue their goals within the context of constitutional proceduralism. From 1993 to 1996, two elections for the State Duma and one for the Russian presidency took place with only limited reports of irregularities and with little or no violence. Moreover, in each of these campaigns, a plethora of parties and politicians genuinely competed for the support of ordinary Russian voters.[15]

The Russian Constitution of 1993 also resembled that of Weimar Germany in the potentially authoritarian powers it granted to the executive. However, in the Russian case strong presidentialism was not so much "creeping" as overt, since Yel'tsin specifically designed his new constitution to eliminate any renewed threat from parliament to his rule. It is telling that the only other prominent party leader to endorse a "yes" vote on the adoption of this document in the December 1993 elections was Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, who declared: "if I had my way, I would expand [the president's] power further still" (Zhirinovskiy, interviewed in *Izvestiya*, Nov. 30, 1993, p. 4). As it turned out, this support from the fascist fringe was crucial to the constitution's adoption, since turnout was just over the required minimum 50 percent of the voters—at least according to the widely disputed official figures. Article 90 granted the president the right to issue legally binding decrees at any time, and not only under states of emergency as in the Weimar Constitution; Yel'tsin utilized this power continually from 1994 onward. In addition, the president was given the option to dissolve Parliament and call new elections if it failed three times to confirm his choice for prime minister or voted no confidence in the government twice. The president also now nominated the head of the Central Bank and the members of the Constitutional Court (which functioned only sporadically after its first leader, Valeriy Zor'kin, sided with Ruslan Khasbulatov in the 1993 events and was subsequently dismissed), and chaired the shadowy Security Council, which claimed a wide range of powers to formulate both domestic and foreign security policy.[16]

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[15]In this sense we agree with M. Steven Fish (1995b) that the new formal rules of democratic contestation in the post-1993 Russian Federation have had an important effect on the ways in which Russian elites have organized themselves, making the creation of new political parties much more likely. We would take issue, however, with his assumption that the existence of several Moscow-based parties implies the emergence of a stable party *system*, as the latter would require a much greater degree of party representativeness of social interests than is presently evident.

[16] See "The Russian Constitution," as reprinted in Sakwa (1996, pp. 395–429).

In many respects, then, one might think the stage was set in Russia for the same sort of abuse of the constitutional prerogatives of the executive, leading ultimately to the breakdown of democracy altogether, that occurred in Weimar Germany. Indeed, as we have seen, both countries inherited similar imperial legacies combined with similar international economic pressures, and adopted constitutions with a similarly strong potential for direct presidential rule. Moreover, there was certainly no shortage of fascist and quasi-fascist ideologues proposing dictatorship as the only possible remedy for postcommunist Russia's ills (Lacqueur, 1993; Yanov, 1995). However, for the time being, there appeared to be no powerful political organization with enough social support to carry out a successful change of regime.

Here a number of striking discontinuities with the "Weimar syndrome" become manifest. Unlike in Weimar Germany, when the most important political parties maintained their ideological and organizational integrity despite the fall of the Reich and defeat in the war, very few of the prominent fledgling parties of the late Gorbachev era were able to survive the turbulence of the postcommunist era. Umbrella organizations such as "Democratic Russia," which had been a crucial vehicle of Yel'tsin's rise to power, crumbled into innumerable warring factions after the Soviet collapse (Brudny, 1993). So, too, did the most notorious fascist groups of the *perestroyka* period, such as *Pamyat'*, which was similarly destroyed by political infighting among its key leaders, Dmitriy Vasiliyev, Aleksandr Barkashov, and Aleksandr Dugin. In addition, Yel'tsin himself played a significant role in the destruction of Soviet-era party organizations, banning the CPSU after the August Coup while refusing to associate himself with any specific anti-communist party.

Indeed, the only party to survive from 1990 to 1996 in more or less the same institutional form was Zhirinovskiy's so-called Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR). No doubt, Zhirinovskiy's racist and xenophobic rhetoric, his calls for the restoration of the lost empire (including Alaska and Finland) and for Russian *Lebensraum* in the Middle East, and his constant railing about Western conspiracies to destroy Russia were all directly inspired by Hitler's example; given the parallels between the Weimar and postcommunist Russian situations we have outlined above, the emergence of this political tendency should not have been surprising (Zhirinovskiy, 1993).[17] It is worth noting, however, that Zhirinovskiy, despite his determined efforts, as of 1996 had not created a grass-roots network comparable to that of the German National People's Party

[17]Numerous examples of Zhirinovskiy's xenophobia and imperialism can be found in his semiautobiography (Zhirinovskiy, 1993). Although scholarly attention has been focused primarily on the anti-Semitic tone of some of Zhirinovskiy's pronouncements, the primary target of his racism are the Turkic peoples. Indeed, he declares openly that "nothing will happen to the world, even if the entire Turkic nation perishes"; elsewhere he says that to "cleanse these scabs, this filth that has accumulated during the twentieth century" will "sometimes . . . call for blood" (Zhirinovskiy, 1993, pp. 130, 117).

(DNVP) before 1924 or that of the Nazi party after 1925. Even in the 1993 parliamentary elections, when the LDPR secured over 23 percent of the party-list vote, thus becoming the single most popular party in Russia by that indicator, Zhirinovskiy's supporters won only five seats in the single-member districts—a graphic demonstration of the limits of its regional political base. Moreover, as other political figures such as Lebed, Zyuganov, and even Yel'tsin himself moved to adopt some of the nationalist rhetoric initially monopolized by Zhirinovskiy, the popularity of the LDPR waned, falling to around 12 percent in the 1995 elections to the State Duma, and to just below 6 percent in Zhirinovskiy's 1996 presidential campaign (White, Rose, and McAllister, 1997).

After the adoption of the new Russian Constitution, with its provisions for selecting half the seats in the State Duma by means of party-list voting with proportional representation for all parties attaining over 5 percent of the vote, dozens of new political parties were formed—and almost as many quickly broke apart again. On the liberal capitalist side of the rather amorphous and shifting political spectrum, Gaidar's Russia's Democratic Choice dropped below the 5 percent threshold in the 1995 parliamentary elections, while Yavlinskiy's more corporatist "Yabloko" party appeared unable to attain much more than the approximately 8 percent of the vote it received in the 1993 campaign. More uncompromising democrats, such as the human rights campaigners Yelena Bonner and Sergey Kovalyov, were simply unable to organize any significant national support. In the so-called center, "Our Home is Russia"—the "party of power" set up by Prime Minister Chernomyrdin in 1995 to support Yel'tsin's administration—gained a little over 10 percent in the 1995 Duma elections, but its future prospects as an independent political force were murky at best. Attempts to set up other "moderate" parties, such as the ill-fated Bloc of Ivan Rybkin, went nowhere. Parties that played a crucial role in the political polarization of Weimar Germany, such as the left liberals, the Catholic Center, and the Social Democrats, simply had no effective counterparts in the postcommunist Russian Federation.

The one party that had a degree of effective local organization, a functioning bureaucracy, and something like a coherent program was the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF), led by Gennadiy Zyuganov. Like Zhirinovskiy, Zyuganov openly called for the reestablishment of the Soviet empire and considered Yel'tsin and his team to be essentially acting as Western "agents of influence" (Zyuganov, 1994, p. 37). Yet while Zyuganov's mixture of paranoid nationalism and nostalgia for Stalinism allowed him to grab a large proportion of the vote of pensioners, former apparatchiki, and collective farmers, his alternative economic program appeared both vague and unworkable, and his denunciations of the breakup of the USSR worried even many opponents of Yel'tsin and shock therapy (*Vek*, March 29–April 4, 1996, p. 12; *Segodnya*, April 18, 1996, p. 3).[18] After his defeat by Yel'tsin in the 1996 presidential campaign, it appeared doubtful that his "red-brown" coalition, now officially renamed the "Pop-

ular-Patriotic Bloc," would endure in the long run. Indeed, Zyuganov's seemingly opportunistic behavior throughout the fall of 1996 and early 1997—his support for the reconfirmation of Viktor Chernomyrdin as prime minister, his decision to instruct the KPRF to support Yel'tsin's 1997 budget, and his initial refusal to go forward with a Duma resolution to impeach the president on health grounds—appeared to indicate deep ambivalence on his part about pursuing an unswerving course of opposition to the regime after having established a position of power within it. While Zyuganov continued to prophesy a coming social crisis—even rhetorically comparing the situation in January 1997 to that facing the Provisional Government in the months before the October 1917 Leninist revolution (*OMRI Daily Digest*, January 2, 1997)—certain members of his own coalition were becoming skeptical of his commitment to revolutionary deeds, and as a result the unity of Zyuganov's parliamentary faction appeared increasingly shaky.

In sum, by comparison with the Weimar period, postcommunist Russia's party system was, despite its adoption of formal democratic proceduralism, strikingly ineffectual. To a large extent, as Fish has emphasized, the weakness of representative party organizations was the predictable effect of seven decades of monopolization of political life and economic resources by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Fish, 1995a). Beyond this, however, it appeared that an additional obstacle to the formation of programmatic, representative parties was the absence in the 1990s of any compelling ideological visions upon which to construct plausible programs that might inspire genuine grass-roots support (Rutland, 1996b). Long exposure to the ultimately empty rhetoric of Marxism-Leninism, combined with the general global exhaustion of other once-powerful forms of anti-liberal discourse, had arguably engendered a post-Soviet public too (understandably) cynical to be inspired by apocalyptic missions or Utopian visions of any sort. Certainly, explicit "fascism" is likely to remain ideologically unacceptable to a society that suffered so greatly under the Nazi occupation within recent historical memory; the very fact that Russians know intimately the past results of democratic breakdown in Germany works against any simple repetition of the "Weimar scenario." For these reasons, the Russian Federation appeared less likely than Weimar Germany to develop genuinely autonomous grass-roots movements advocating the institutionalization of anti-liberal statism. However, in the absence of any alternative ideological vision, Russia might also fail to generate effective national organizations promoting the consolidation of civil society.

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[18]Examples of Zyuganov's paranoid nationalism can be found throughout his writings. In his essay "Derzhava," for instance, Zyuganov claims that a "transnational cosmopolitan ruling class" is aiming to dominate the entire world through the establishment of modern bureaucratic structures: "The direction of humanity from a single center is impossible without the utmost unification and standardization of this process. . . . In plain language this means that the distinctiveness of nations and cultures, their spiritual, historical and religious character, have become threatened with complete annihilation." Zyuganov proposes to counter this global conspiracy by rebuilding the Russian "great power" in the image of the "Third Rome" (Zyuganov, 1994, pp. 31, 40). See also Vujacic (1996).

The future development of Russian democracy, then, depended upon how the breakup of a non-commoditized, post-imperial economy under severe international pressure to marketize would unfold in the absence of effective programmatic parties for representing the social interests most affected by these changes. In this respect, what appeared most striking in the wake of Yel'tsin's reelection in July 1996 was that despite the truly catastrophic and extended collapse of the Soviet socioeconomic system in Russia and the other former Soviet republics, daunting collective action problems continued to make it extremely difficult for would-be Hitlers to mobilize the "losers" from marketization policies (Crowley, 1994). Without any equivalent of the conservative coalition of Junkers, military officers, and coherent political parties that served as the foundation for Nazism, opponents of Westernization as diverse as Barkashov, Zhirinovskiy, and Zyuganov found themselves with no way to institutionalize anti-liberal statism. Nor did overt fascists appear capable of gaining a majority in openly contested elections.[19] Instead of the Weimar stalemate generated by Germany's well-established party system, broken by a devil's bargain between well-organized reactionary traditionalists and Nazis, postcommunist Russia simply witnessed continuing general chaos in administration in every sphere of political life. The key problem for Russia's development after 1996, then, seemed not so much the possibility of takeover by a new totalitarian elite, but the near-total absence of effective state control over Russian territory.

CONCLUSION

A structured, focused comparison of Weimar Germany and post-Soviet Russia yields, at a minimum, two theoretically interesting dividends. First, it suggests the continuing relevance of the venerable tradition in macrosociology that includes such figures as Lipset and Rokkan (1967), Barrington Moore (1966), and Gregory Luebbert (1991), a research tradition that attempts to trace political outcomes (fascism, communism, and liberalism) to social structure, intraclass cleavages, and interclass alliances and the expression of these social forces by party systems. The preceding narratives have, indeed, highlighted the importance of understanding the structural factors that constrain (and facilitate) political behavior. The fact that the domestic and international environments facing Russian elites today parallel in so many ways those facing German elites in the early 1930s explains the intuitive relevance of the Weimar analogy to post-Soviet politics.

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[19]In the December 1995 Duma elections, for instance, Nikolay Lysenko's National Republican Party of Russia, which ran on the slogan "Russia for the Russians," polled only 0.49 percent of the popular vote; two of Barkashov's supporters running in Moscow districts—whose campaigns apparently relied primarily on the tactic of stuffing mailboxes full of pamphlets covered with swastikas—received just 2.46 percent and 0.6 percent. Meanwhile, Vasilyev, the founder of *Pamyat'*, obtained only 3.35 percent of the vote for a seat won by human rights activist Sergey Kovalyov; see Polivanov, in *Moscow News* (March 12, 1996).

In addition, however, our account has emphasized the central importance of elites and political entrepreneurs who attempt to organize and mobilize social interests. Without their presence, social interests may remain "latent" and therefore have little political effect; thus, structuralist theories of democratic breakdown are incomplete. In this respect, we fully agree with the research direction that Kitschelt and others have taken, one that attempts to supplement "structural" theories with "process-driven" explanations of the microprocesses by which political parties serving as intermediaries between society and the state first emerge (Kitschelt, 1989, 1992a). From this perspective, the development of stable party systems *may* indeed be an indicator of democratic consolidation. But it is not always or necessarily so, and this is where we part ways with much recent scholarship on the subject. The case of Weimar Germany shows that a highly developed party system and civil society may, under the structural conditions of post-imperial democracy in a highly competitive global market economy, just as easily facilitate fascism as stable democracy.[20] Cast in terms of social theory, sociopolitical complexity and economic scarcity do not mix well.[21]

The paradox of the Russian case, then, is that in the short run formal democratic procedures may have endured at least partly *because of* the

[20]Kitschelt, too, recognizes that "[t]he fact that party systems are structured programmatically, by itself, is insufficient to yield a consolidated democracy, as long as we do not take into account the actual relationship between voters and the leaders of the parties." We wholeheartedly agree. However, Kitschelt concludes that "[i]n the final analysis, the clinching point is the emergence of elite-voter linkages that express a relationship of substantive political representation" (Kitschelt, 1995b, p. 99). Left aside here is the possibility that the *framing* of these elite-voter representative linkages, and not simply their existence, may also be a crucial variable for democratic consolidation. After all, the Nazi party did, in a sense, represent its constituency—even if most Nazi voters in 1932 did not foresee the nightmarish conclusion to which Hitler's ideology would lead them (and the rest of humanity).

Although a detailed critique of Kitschelt's pioneering and monumental work on party formation would require a lengthy separate essay—or series of essays—it is worth noting here that in his reliance on a typology of "programmatic," "clientelistic," and "charismatic" parties (Kitschelt, 1995a, p. 449), he misses the important role of parties with *charismatic programs*—or, in Sartori's terminology, "anti-system parties" (Sartori, 1976, pp. 132–133). Parties such as Lenin's Bolsheviks and Hitler's National Socialists were clearly based on "miraculous" claims to transcend existing social reality, yet they were also genuinely programmatic in the sense that they provided well-articulated (if perverse) visions of the "public good" and made genuine efforts to develop grass-roots support. They also possessed a far greater degree of rational bureaucratic organization than would be typical of purely personalistic or clientelistic parties. Party competition that includes one or more "charismatic-programmatic" parties (as in the Weimar case) is, we would argue, far less stable than party competition in which decisively "rational-legal" programmatic parties compete with clientelistic and personalistic parties (as in much of postcommunist East Europe)—a distinction absent from Kitschelt's analytic framework, which implicitly assumes that moves toward programmatic structuring are always beneficial for liberalism. This point is crucial, for while we clearly agree with Kitschelt that Russia's legacy of "patrimonial communism" (Kitschelt, 1995a, p. 453) makes the development of *rational-legal* programmatic parties unlikely in the near term, the potential for the emergence of *charismatic programmatic* parties there is much higher.

relative weakness or even absence of truly programmatic and representative political parties. The legacy of Stalinist socioeconomic institutions and of mass terror has been a remarkable degree of atomization of social forces, so that while individual mines and enterprises may increasingly engage in collective action, it has thus far been remarkably difficult to mobilize a mass movement against the center in Russia today (Crowley, 1994). This is very different from the situation in post-imperial Germany, where significant economic resources remained largely under private control, and political interests had been organizing at least since the 1880s. Contrary to what many scholars have argued, then, while the legacy of totalitarianism indeed poses significant obstacles to the formation of a postcommunist "civil society," social atomization may also simultaneously pose obstacles to the creation of a workable authoritarianism. What little anti-systemic collective action does exist can be bought off with what little social surplus can be generated. By the same token, while programmatic parties representing civil society may be crucial for democratic stabilization in successfully marketizing countries like Poland or the Czech Republic, genuinely representative parties might play an anti-democratic role in Russia—where economic collapse has been slow and painful, where popular distress at the loss of empire has continued to grow each year since 1991, and where social interests are therefore not so likely to be "civil."[22]

In sum, this preliminary analysis suggests that Russia is unlikely to repeat the experience of the Weimar Republic, despite the many evident similarities in their structural positions. Although the parallels between Weimar's history from 1918 to 1924 and the first half-decade of post-Soviet Russian democracy are certainly disturbing, the further development of German politics in the years leading up to the rise of Hitler can be shown to have been decisively influenced—in an anti-democratic direction—by its remarkably well-developed and representative system of programmatic parties. By contrast, contemporary Russian parties, based primarily upon the instrumental interests of Moscow elites possessing few ties to Russian

[21]A single structured, focused comparison of two cases is not adequate to determine theoretically whether burdensome imperial/statist legacies, high international pressure to marketize, and a highly-structured system of programmatic parties constitute *necessary* conditions for the emergence of fascism out of post-imperial democracy, although this is the implication of our analysis. To explore this question further, we would have to examine a series of cases of post-imperial democracy with one or another of these variables absent. However, we want to emphasize that we do *not* consider the three variables we have identified to be *sufficient* conditions for fascism; even given all of these elements in Weimar Germany, specific decisions by domestic and international elites at key historical turning points might have produced different outcomes. We certainly do not mean to conclude, therefore, that the presence of programmatic parties in Russia today would automatically lead to fascism; only that, in the absence of other changes in Russia's domestic and international environment, they might make fascism more, rather than less, likely.

[22]In a recent poll carried out in Russia by the Public Opinion Foundation, a full 54 percent of respondents claimed that they "regret very much" the collapse of the USSR—up from only 33 percent in 1992—while an additional 30 percent of those polled said that they regret the Soviet breakup "to some extent" (Interfax in English, January 22, 1997).

society at large, appear far too ineffective and amorphous to serve as a potential political base for anti-liberal statism.[23] Nor, with the presidential administration, the army, and the security services all racked with corruption and disorganization, does any alternative institutional basis for anti-liberal statism in Russia appear to exist at present.[24]

Of course, history is not deterministically predictable, given the difficulty of establishing robust causal "laws" without any ability to do macro-sociological laboratory experiments testing the importance of discrete independent variables on social outcomes. Democratic breakdown of some sort in Russia is, obviously, still possible; the large popular votes for Zhirinovskiy's party in the December 1993 elections, the credible showing of the "great power" advocate Zyuganov in July 1996, and the frequent reliance of Yel'tsin's administration on various "strongmen" all appear to demonstrate the potential for a renewed authoritarianism quite clearly.

However, given the difficulties in creating effective political institutions in the post-Soviet context, we would expect any new Russian proto-fascism at this stage to be at least as unstable and ineffective as the current democratic regime—if not more so. An anti-liberal statism as powerful as Hitler's would likely become feasible in Russia only after a relatively protracted period of internal institution-building, catalyzed by genuinely mobilizational charismatic leadership. The long-run outcome of the continuing chaos in most of the former Soviet republics would therefore appear to depend at least in part upon trends in the world capitalist system as a whole. Given enough global economic growth and a smooth process of further European integration extending to the Commonwealth of Independent States, islands of prosperity in the contemporary postcommunist sea of despair may in time provide the initial social basis for a genuine consolidation of formal market democracy—albeit one no doubt characterized by continuing widespread informal compromises with legal proceduralism. Given the onset of a new global recession or a halt to the broader process of European integration, however, the present difficulties in liberal

[23]We agree with Ordeshook (1996) that without a party system or a comparable integrative mechanism the collective action problems for Russia are probably too formidable to allow for a workable federation. Ironically, however, this may be one reason why Russia has not developed an *anti-liberal* form of integration. The normative implication here is that not all integration is "good" from a liberal perspective, which is easily forgotten in functionalist or quasi-functionalist analyses.

[24]As this comment indicates, our third variable could perhaps be reformulated as the degree of coherence of political institutions *in general*, and not just of political parties. To do so would not contradict the thrust of our argument, since the contrast between Weimar Germany and post-Soviet Russia on this expanded indicator would be the same as that explored here. We leave for future study the problem of hypothetical outcomes in post-imperial democracies highly constrained by statist institutional and cultural legacies, under high international pressure to marketize, but with weak or nonexistent programmatic parties and a well-organized military—or, conversely, with strong parties and a thoroughly disorganized military. Our suspicion is that strong political parties can mobilize paramilitary forces more easily than strong militaries can develop effective mass parties, and that our theoretical emphasis on the role of programmatic parties in the development of fascism is therefore justified.

state-building in Russia will certainly be exacerbated, and even the eventual triumph of more virulent and ideologically anti-Western political movements cannot be ruled out. A careful comparison of Weimar Germany and postcommunist Russia should therefore produce not complacency, but instead a renewed effort by the core liberal powers to respond to the enormous structural dislocations ripping apart Russian society while the formal democratic order there remains in place.

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