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UNIVERSITY *of* LIMERICK  
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

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STATE, REGIME  
AND RUSSIAN  
POLITICAL  
DEVELOPMENT

2008, No. 3



Limerick Papers in Politics and Public Administration

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State, Regime and  
Russian political development

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ISBN 1-905952-09-0

ISBN 978-1-905952-10-6

### Abstract

The Russian state at the end of the Yeltsin period was supposedly so emasculated that it had no potential to revive itself. But revive itself it has in some measure and this requires some explanation. This paper tries to illustrate how we might more profitably conceptualise state and regime building in Russia and argues that Russia has far from finished either state or regime building. It argues that the problem with most past efforts at analysing the development of the Russian state is that they have not distinguished between regime and state, and the different pressures to, and possibilities for, building either. It reviews and seeks to improve on an approach to conceptualising post-communist state development and apply this to Russia. The paper analyses Russia's recent political development to show its unsettled pattern of regime and state building, and looks at how other post-Soviet states have had more settled patterns of regime and state building than Russia and what this means. The paper concludes that we should be cautious about the future of the Russian state and should recognise that the pressures of state building in Russia mean that current patterns of political development may prove as susceptible to change as those that preceded them

### Introduction

In his 1997 state of the nation address to parliament, Boris Yeltsin expressed concern that the course of political and economic change in Russia has been subverted by the failure to develop state autonomy and capacity. The state, he argued was too often at the service of a narrow set of private interests and as a consequence post-communist transformation was stymied (*Rossiiskie vesti*, 11 March 1997). Yeltsin's admission of the failings of the Russian state was soon followed by both a practical demonstration of its weakness - the 1998 economic crisis - and a raft of papers and books, which sought to analyse the failings of Russia in terms of state debility.<sup>1</sup> The importance of the state as a subject of political analysis and as an agent of change was confirmed by Vladimir Putin's rise to power and his commitment to rebuild the power of the state. Russia's 'historical experience', Putin (1999) argued, 'bears witness to the fact that a country like Russia can live and develop within its existing borders only if it is a powerful state' (see also Putin, 2003; for analysis of Putin's treatment of the state see Remington, 2000; Taylor, 2003; Hashim, 2005; Pravda, 2005, Chadaev, 2006).

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<sup>1</sup> Early attempts to deal with the Russian state as a problem in post-communist transition were made by McFaul, 1995 and Stavrakis, 1993, but the mass of the literature on the Russian state appeared after the late 1990s: McFaul, 1998; Bova, 1999; Ma, 2000; Peregrudov *et al*, 1999; Roberts and Sherlock, 1999; Robinson, 2002; Smith, 1999; Sperling, 2000a; Beissinger and Young, 2002; Colton and Holmes, 2006; Hedlund, 2006.

Unfortunately, despite the attention paid to it since the late 1990s both analytically and in Russian political discourse, the problem of the Russian state has not been solved either practically or academically. Despite the attention paid to it state construction remains a live item on Russia's political agenda and there has been little scholarly effort to look at how the issue of state building relates to the overall processes of political and economic change in Russia, and in particular to the issue of how far political power under Putin was consolidated into a stable political regime. This paper tries to illustrate how we might more profitably conceptualise the issue of state building in Russia and its relationship to the related process of regime building, and argues that Russia has far from finished either state or regime building. The overall goal is to be able to say something about the *dynamics* of Russian politics. Both state and regime building are processes and part of the dynamism of Russian politics is in their interaction. Whilst it is useful to occasionally take stock and look at how democratic or not Russia is, to engage in this type of regime analysis without looking at what creates regime and state building pressures is to miss an important aspect of political development processes.

The paper works towards an understanding of the dynamism of Russian politics by first briefly critiquing some of the ways that the state was dealt with in the Yeltsin and Putin periods. It argues that the problem with most past efforts at analysing the development of the Russian and post-communist state is that they have not distinguished between regime and state, and the different pressures and possibilities of building either. As a result, they have not been able to account for certain aspects of change, or have only been able to look at change negatively, making arguments about what will not happen (or not happen simply), rather than allowing for a wide range of possible developmental processes and outcomes. The paper goes on from this critique to argue that Russia has had a very unsettled pattern of state and regime formation. Regime building has predominated over state building, but this in turn has helped force fresh efforts at state-regime building and (so far unsuccessful) reconciliation of the two processes. Some flesh is put on this argument in the last part of the paper which analyses Russia's broad political development to show its unsettled pattern of regime and state building, and looks comparatively at how other post-Soviet states have had more settled patterns of regime and state building than Russia and what this means for the stability of the interaction between state and regime building in Russia. The paper concludes by arguing that we should be cautious about the future of the Russian state even as its power seems to have grown under Putin, and should recognise that the pressures of state building in Russia mean that current patterns of political development may prove as susceptible to change as those that preceded them.

## State, regime and the analysis of Russian politics

A basic problem for any analysis of the state is to distinguish between state and regime. This stumbling block is especially tricky in transitional systems where there is no tradition of constitutionalism and constitutional development that enables one to distinguish between state, regime and government: the locus of power, the rules and limitations governing its use, and particular constellations of political actors using power (Lawson, 1993). Moreover, in post-communist transitional systems both regime and state are in the process of reconstruction at the same time and are mutually constitutive so that distinguishing them is especially problematic (Grzymala-Busse and Jones Luong, 2002). However, the fact that state and regime are hard to separate and therefore have to be analysed together for much of the time does not mean that the two should be treated as identical. This has been a significant problem in most analysis of the Russian state. In particular emergent regime characteristics have been labelled as characteristics of the state and signs of incipient regime stabilisation have, no matter how temporary, been taken as signs that the state and state power (roughly an aggregate of its capacity, organisational integrity and autonomy) are developing a particular form.

These problems are very evident in the work that looked at the Russian state at the end of the Yeltsin period. These works, although valuable because they were among the first to recognise the importance of the state in Russia as a problem of political and economic transformation, tended to try to identify what kind of state Russia had rather than looking at what pressures and factors were influencing the evolution of the Russian state. This was because they looked at the Russian state through the lens of a democratisation paradigm. It did not matter whether these paradigms were explicitly based on transitology or if they were implicit because the research question was is Russia becoming a democracy. In either case the concept of state was undertheorised. Traditionally, the state has not been a significant and distinct analytical category in much of the literature on democracy. Instead, much of the literature has just made an implicit recognition that a particular form of state autonomy (a separation of formal decision-making from powerful social interests<sup>2</sup>)

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<sup>2</sup> Occasionally this is explicitly recognised as in the work of Rueschmeyer et al (1992), but for the most part state autonomy has been subsumed in other concepts. For example, the idea at the heart of many notions of democratic consolidation – that democratic citizenship is constructed as elites subject their interests to uncertainty and accept losses and gains derived from fluctuations in electoral fortune – is concerned with state autonomy. Democratic citizenship in this formulation is, in effect, the separation of formal decision-making from the general structure of social inequality; elites no longer insure political outcomes favourable to themselves by virtue of their possession of economic and political resources, but accept that decision-making takes place in a sphere autonomous of particular social influences (cf. O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986; Przeworski, 1986 and 1988). Alternatively, the idea that democratic consolidation is a process of institutionalising agency

and stateness (that is some degree of national unity and/or Weberian territorial monopoly over violence, cf. Rustow, 1970; Linz and Stepan, 1996) are necessary conditions for democratic consolidation. Viewing the Russian state through a democratisation paradigm did not, therefore, add much to the study of the state *per se*. It did point out the necessity of rebuilding state power and administrative capacity to sustain democracy, something that was a useful corrective to the anti-state position that had been fashionable amongst proponents of radical economic reform in the early 1990s when it was assumed that the post-Soviet state was overdeveloped and needed to be reined back (see the critiques of this position in Stavrakis, 1993; Holmes, 1996). But overall, weak democracy and weak state were presented as parallel, mutually explicable developments in post-communist Russia; democracy failed because the state failed and the factors that explained the failure of democracy also explained why the state was a failure (Bova, 1999; Hoffman, 1998; Sakwa, 1997 and 2000). For example, the list of obstacles to developing state capacity that Sperling (2000b, 7) lists in the introduction to her edited volume on the Russian state are the same faults that were commonly seen to be blocking democratisation in the Yeltsin period independently of any failing of, or by, the state: oligarchy, personalism, corruption, underdevelopment of civil society, weak economy, ambiguity in the 'citizenship boundaries of the Russian state'. etc.

The conflation of state and regime in analysis during the later Yeltsin years thus presented a bleak picture of Russian political development and its prospects. The general expectation it led to at the end of Yeltsin's term was that there would be very little change in Russia; the most powerful social groups were against change and had a monopoly over effective political action due to their economic power, or control over Russia's regions (Treisman, 1999). In the terms of one seminal article on patterns of post-communist reform, the 'winners' of Russia's transition had 'taken all' and left Russia a paradigmatic example of a system stuck in a 'partial reform equilibrium' in which political authorities - elected or bureaucratic - are unable to

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through which the rules that govern political and distributional conflicts become immune from conflict is a matter of building state autonomy. On what Elster et al. call its 'vertical' dimension, institutionalising agency requires that elites accept fundamental political rules and do not try to change them when they do not guarantee that political outcomes are in elite interests. On its 'horizontal' dimension, the institutionalisation of agency requires that institutional competencies are in large measure inviolate, insulated from influence by actors who have power by virtue of possessing resources. See Elster, et al., 1998: 28. In short, democratic consolidation requires that power is not fungible, or is only fungible within limits and with limited, and rectifiable, effect so that there are spheres of public policy where the state is able to act autonomously.

use public administration to deliver public goods through further reform (Hellman, 1998).<sup>3</sup>

The analytical conflation of state and regime in Russia at the end of the Yeltsin period was thus quite clear - and quite right - in predicting that Russia was not going to develop as a democracy at least soon or easily. However, the conflation of state and regime meant that analysis could not make any finer judgements than this. Since state and regime were so tied up with one another there was no chance of identifying pressures or possibilities for change from within, or being forced externally on, the state or regime or both, or even to imagine that there was a possibility for change. Stagnation (at least) seemed locked in by their mutual weakness. But change came very quickly after Yeltsin's departure at the end of 1999. A new Chechen war, a change in the party system in the 1999 electoral cycle that was then consolidated in the 2003 cycle and by the further weakening of the main opposition party, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, facilitated the deployment of central administrative resources in parliamentary and regional elections, and the cycling of popularity at the polls to increase presidential personal power for Putin (Smyth, 2002; March, 2004). This was then used by Putin from 2000 to assault regional power and the oligarchs (Hyde, 2001; Shlapentokh, 2004), increase central authorities' share of taxes (Easter, 2006), and to develop state power in the economy to alter the contours of the 'oligarchic capitalism' of the Yeltsin period (Mukhin, 2001; Radygin, 2004).

Quite clearly, therefore, and despite what appeared to be a mutually reinforcing debility of state and regime at the end of the Yeltsin period, there were pressures on Russian political actors that enabled or drove them to make changes. But these developments were largely a surprise because of the way that state and regime were analytically seen as intertwined under Yeltsin. These developments have not led to a re-evaluation of the relationship between state and regime, however, and in particular, it has not led to their analytical separation to see what their relationship is. Instead the assumption has often been that the strengthening of 'central' power under Putin has been both state and regime building. The problem is the inverse of that which afflicted analysis under Yeltsin: then the weak state made for a weak democratic regime, and a weak democratic regime made for a weak state. Under Putin what appears to be growing state strength is read as a sign of regime strength, or vice versa. This has not led to any more stable a sense of what the relationship is between state and regime building but to a proliferation of terms that have a short life-span to describe each. The description of Russia as a bureaucratic-authoritarian

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<sup>3</sup> On Russia as a classic case of partial reform see Roberts and Sherlock, 1999; Solnick, 1999; Bunce, 2000; Gordon, 2000; Kubicek, 2000. For a critique of the partial reform equilibrium thesis see Robinson, 2001; Colton, 2006.

system by Lilia Shevtsova and her subsequent abandonment of the concept is a case in point; the problem of conflating regime and state can affect even the most astute analyst. Shevtsova (2005, 324) used the term bureaucratic-authoritarianism, which describes a state formation, a product of structural pressures created by economic dependency that call in to existence a particular form of developmental state to manage the tensions between domestic and internationalised economic sectors, to describe features of the Putin regime, its weakening of democracy, its use of the bureaucracy as a support base, and its calls for modernisation. A conceptual definition of a state form was thus used to classify a regime based on two of its characteristics and without seeing if the causes of more authoritarianism, more reliance on bureaucracy and more modernisation (which are not exclusive to bureaucratic-authoritarian states), and the particular outcomes of bureaucratic-authoritarianism applied in Russia. Arguably they did not, or if they did they did so in a very weak and superficial form and were soon supplanted by other factors that shaped the state's management of the economy, and so Shevtsova (2007) rapidly put the label bureaucratic authoritarian to one side.

### **Separating post-communist states and regimes (and bringing them back together again)**

The problems of analysing state and regime in the Yeltsin and Putin periods show that we need to look at the interplay of state and regime building, rather than accept them as essentially identical processes. The easiest way to do this is to go back to basics and think the problem through from the bottom up. One starting point is to recognise that state building and regime building may have different criteria for success and failure, and need not be complementary even if they affect one another. Very simply, a regime may be consolidated when elites achieve a set of political rules that they cannot change without incurring a disproportionate cost to themselves. A state formation is consolidated when officials have the ability and resources to perform state functions of maintaining order and security. The consolidation of a state formation in post-communism is potentially a far more difficult thing to achieve than the consolidation of a regime since managing the classic state functions of social order and national security involves questions of borders, citizenship, and the establishment of new forms of economic exchange and rules to govern them. A regime may be consolidated before a state develops that can resolve the problems of post-communist reconstruction and fulfil the classic functions of a state easily. If this occurs, the question before a regime is can it contain and ameliorate the problems of reconstruction and maintaining social order and national security in such a way that it can survive ruling through a weak (i.e., one that cannot resolve post-communist transformation or traditional state tasks) state? If a regime cannot contain or ameliorate these pressures some other way (for example by gaining aid or security guarantees from other states) then it will come

under pressure to evolve further and to develop the state. Where this pressure exists and is not responded to the long-term viability of a regime will be open to question. The viability of a regime in these circumstances may be called to question from below or from within the state as pressure to take action grows in reaction to perceived threats to the interests of state officials and to their ability to perform basic state functions of maintaining order and security.

The essential difference between state and regime therefore, is that state formation is not *just* a matter of elite competition whereas in the short-term regime formation may be just that, a matter of elite struggle during which elites may or may not, according to circumstance, respond to or ignore state-building pressures. States as functional (albeit unconscious) structures have some interest autonomous of elites, in particular they have an interest in international competition and domestic order, and this makes them, in Skocpol's (1979, 27) classic formulation, an 'autonomous structure - a structure with a logic and interests of its own not necessarily equivalent to, or fused with, the interests of the dominant class in society or the full set of member groups in the polity'. The degree to which states are autonomous 'can come and go', as Skocpol (1984, 14) later put it, since the structural potential for autonomous action - as well as stimulus for it - can vary over time and from state sector to state sector. Seeing the state as an autonomous structure does not impose unity or intentionality on it; pressure to change can come from one, few, or all of a state's composite officials and institutions, or be brought to bear on them from society. But no matter where the pressure comes from, state formation involves first, more complex tasks of social and economic management than regime formation; keeping order generally requires organisation and resources additional to those needed to keep order among competing elites, and gathering these resources may strain elite agreements about the economic basis of a regime. And second, state formation has an international dimension to it that is structural. Traditional security concerns - real and perceived - are still an issue in many parts of the post-communist world, and states still need to develop as military and extractive structures to cope with security demands. This creates pressures for state development. Where these pressures are absent is equally telling, since if such pressures are absent, there is a possibility that a regime might develop without having to pay much attention to state development. This would mean that state and regime might be stable, despite state weakness and inability to deal with transformation tasks.

Regime stability is thus shaped by state building but in the short-run regime formation primarily involves elites and is determined by their interaction, the pressures upon them and the environment in which they interact. Regime building may overlap with state building as an elite may try to prop up its preferred regime by delivering greater state capacity and public goods. Alternately, regime building

might substitute for state building as elites capture rather than develop the state. Both strategies can be successful but over the longer term, the better developed a state the more likely there is to government stability and hence regime stability since continuity of governments, or at least their regularised replacement, is less likely to call into question the basis on which power is accessed and used. How long this 'long term' is depends on the pressures that a country has to deal with. Where pressures are great supplanting regime for state building will be dangerous, especially if the state has low capacity to begin with. A regime in a state with high capacity has more resources to deploy, better chances of extracting extra resources to deal with problems, and potentially more and broader reserves of political loyalty to fall back on because it is able to deliver a wider range of public goods through the state. Moreover, there is less chance of political fragmentation if the delivery of these goods is not directly from the regime but is filtered through a state with capacity rather than delivered through some faction of a regime. Where states deliver public goods they can be rationed in times of crisis or shortage; where delivery of goods is personalised through connection to the regime there is more chance of political contestation because power within a regime depends on the ability to deliver resources so that they become objects of struggle between regime groups or unevenly distributed so that regime legitimacy declines.

The first question that arises from this is what influences regime building in the short run if over the longer term a regime's durability will reflect its ability to construct a level of state capacity adequate to deal with the tasks it faces. Grzymala-Busse and Jones Luong (2002, 537-38) argue that elite competition over regime formation is constrained and configured in particular by the 'agents to whom the competitors are accountable and the institutional means through which competition takes place' (see also Gel'man, 2007). Accountability, or lack thereof, makes for either representative competition, in which elites act as entrepreneurial representatives of social organisations, or for competition between self-contained elites, which are isolated from society and compete with no 'reference or appeal to outside groups or constituencies and no explicit or organised social support base'. The institutional means through which elite competition takes place are via formal or informal channels, which are distinguished by the extent to which political competition is 'codified and depersonalised or discretionary and personalised' (Grzymala-Busse and Jones Luong, 2002, 538-39). Legacies from communism determine the particular type of regime formation that any post-communist country develops. These shape elites and the institutional arenas in which they compete. Regime formation processes are thus path dependent. Regime building was influenced by the extent to which, first, there was structured popular mobilisation at the onset of post-communism that could act as a check on elite behaviour and serve as a resource that could, at the cost of maintaining support, be mobilised in the course of elite struggle, and second, how far there were well-developed central

political institutions in existence at this time that could be used by elites and which created a framework for them to compete within. Where there was social mobilisation, elites would be representative; where there was none, they would be self-contained. Where there were well-developed central political institutions, elites would compete through formal institutions; where there was none, they would compete through informal channels. The rapidity of change magnified the impact of these factors. Coping with the pace and scale of change created incentives to use existing institutions, formal and informal, and to concentrate effort on competition with other elites through social organisations if such existed as a communist legacy, or without engaging society, if society was passive as a result of communism. Grzymala-Busse and Jones Luong use these variables to create four ‘ideal types’ of regime formation process (summarised in Table 1: where self-contained elites compete through formal channels, the regime formation process has been autocratic; where they compete through informal channels, it has been personalistic. Where representative elites compete through formal channels, regime formation has been democratic; where they compete through informal channels it has been fractious.

**Table 1: Grzymala-Busse and Jones Luong typology of regime formation**

		<b>Who competes</b>	
		<i>Self-contained elites</i>	<i>Representative elites</i>
<b>How they compete?</b>	<i>Primarily through formal channels</i>	<b>AUTOCRATIC</b>	<b>DEMOCRATIC</b>
	<i>Primarily through informal networks</i>	<b>PERSONALISTIC</b>	<b>FRACTIOUS</b>

Source: Adapted from Grzymala-Busse and Luong Jones, 2002, 544.

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The Grzymala-Busse and Luong Jones schema gives us a way of distinguishing between regime formation pathways that we can use to assess the stability of regime formation. No polity will fit exactly to any one of their types since they are ideal-types created to help identify real world process rather than something that exists empirically anywhere in reality (Weber, 1949: 90-2). The more a polity contains aspects of more than one of the four ideal types and the greater the tension

between them, the less stable regime formation will be since they are mutually exclusive. We can relate this to state building by looking at the relationship between unstable regime building (the degree to which Grzymala-Busse and Luong Jones's ideal types overlap and conflict in reality) and the extent to which there is pressure on a polity to develop state capacity. This pressure might be high (for example a state might be threatened or need to develop economically to forestall social order problems), low because a state has high capacity, or low because a regime is able to avoid dealing with state building issues. The basic pattern of interactions between pressure to build states and the stability of regime building are summarised in Table 2. Regime building can be either conflictive, where there is competition between elites over the means and ends of regime building because there is a conflict between different types of elite (representative versus self-contained) and/or over how the regime should work, through formal or informal institutions, or consensual, that is closer to one of the four ideal-types identified by Grzymala-Busse and Jones Luong. Pressure to state build, i.e. to change the way in which the state manages society, to improve its efficiency as a resource collector by lessening corruption or improving tax collection, to improve its ability to develop policies for economic growth and provide domestic and international security etc, can be high or low

Since all states - except those that have failed - have some measure of capacity pressure interacts with existing initial levels of capacity as well as regime building. The inherited levels of state capacity can either be sufficient or insufficient to deal with the transformational tasks of post-communism and traditional state functions. As Table 2 shows, this gives three possible combinations: low pressure to state build with sufficient or insufficient initial state capacity, and high pressure with insufficient state capacity. These are combined in Table 2 to give six different ideal-typical patterns of regime and state building. In none of the patterns in Table 2 is a build up of state capacity guaranteed to take place; that will depend on the calculation of politicians over the costs of reform to them and the benefits that may accrue to oppositional forces from reform and the disruption it causes (Geddes, 1994). Nor are efforts at building up the state guaranteed to work; that depends on a raft of factors including design and circumstance. No country will fit a pattern perfectly; they cannot as the patterns are ideal-typical. However, it is obviously best, where circumstance allows, for elites to try to move from left to right across the columns of Table 2 (from Cell A to D, B to E, C to F) both to resolve regime conflict and to preserve what capacity and resources already exist, and also to move from the bottom right cells ( E and F) of Table 2 to the top (cell D), that is to a the state further. The chances of making such movements, with whatever kind of regime that is built, democratic or despotic, will be very different according to starting point and the intensity of conflict and consensus that exists over a regime. The higher the extent of conflict the less likely a case will be to move left to right

and bottom to top, and the greater the extent of consensus the easier it will be to move closer to the ideal-type at the top right of Table 2.

**Table 2 Patterns of regime and state building**

		<b>Regime building process</b>	
		<i>Conflictive</i>	<i>Consensual</i>
<b>Pressure to build state and levels of state capacity</b>	<i>Low pressure and sufficient state capacity</i>  (relatively high state capacity at onset of post-communism, ability to deal with transformational and other state functions)	Cell A: unstable regime. Attrition of state capacity until elite resolve regime question.	Cell D: regime stability. Maintenance (at least) of inherited capacity.
	<i>High pressure and insufficient state capacity</i>  (relatively low state capacity at onset not enough to deal with transformational or other tasks, not possible to ignore them)	Cell B: unstable regime. Attrition of state capacity unless elite resolve regime question. Difficulty of simultaneous regime stabilisation and state building complicates both.	Cell E: regime stability can lead to state building but enormity of state building might impact on regime stability depending on policy mix. Ability to develop state capacity dependent on policy choices; regime stability may give time to find good policy mix.
	<i>Low pressure and insufficient state capacity</i>  (relatively low state capacity at onset of post-communism, pressure to deal with transformational and other state functions weak)	Cell C: unstable regime. Attrition of state capacity unless and until elites resolve regime question.	Cell F: regime stabilisation substitutes for state building, state capacity remains low.

## Russia's regime and state building pattern

It is, therefore, possible to think of regime and state building as related but different processes if we think about whether or not they have the same conditions for success. When we do this, and when we appreciate that different regimes may be under different amounts of pressure to state build and may or may not have problems stabilising regimes, we can identify a basic set of patterns of state and regime building and their interaction. How does Russia fit into this schema? To answer this question we need to look at two things: the extent to which Russia has been under pressure to state build and the degree to which regime building has been conflictive. Looking at the latter of these issues means reviewing Russia's recent political history and looking at the former means looking at how Russia has been subject to pressures to develop its state in comparison to other post-communist and particularly post-Soviet states. When we do this we can see that Russia has spent most of its post-communist history with high pressure to develop state capacity and has only latterly dampened down conflict over regime formation. As a result, Russia has had a highly varied pattern of state-regime formation that is different to most other post-communist polities. Roughly, Russia has been stuck for most of its post-communist history in the middle of Table 2, close to the ideal-type in Cell B, with high pressure to develop state capacity and regime instability. We can see this if we compare Russia to other post-communist states. Putin's aspiration has been to move Russia 'to the right' in Table 2, from close to the Cell B ideal-type to E ideal-type, to settle regime stability in order to create state capacity and deal with transformational problems and to deal with issues of national security in a sustainable fashion (hence reaching something like the Cell D ideal-type). The danger is that Russia will, for a variety of factors, hover between the ideal-types of cells B, E and F.

Assessing the extent to which a state is under pressure to build state capacity is a complicated and imprecise business since external perception of what constitutes pressure to state build might not actually be considered a state building pressure by actors themselves. We can, however, see whether Russia was stable in its pattern of regime development and exposed to more pressures to state build than other post-Soviet states and thus get an idea of the extent of pressure to state build through comparison. In contrast to Russia, most other post-communist countries have been able to construct state and regimes that support one another. In East Central Europe the spread of democracy has, at different speeds and with varying degrees of difficulty, created states with a degree of capacity that is derived from the legitimacy of the democratic regimes that they have created. East Central European states therefore developed the means to deal with post-communist transformation tasks and international competition, especially after the prospect of rejoining Europe began to take shape and resources began to flow from Europe. In the terms

of Table 2, much of post-communist Eastern Europe would have been closer (obviously with some great variation across the region) to the right hand column as regime building was fairly stable, or became so relatively quickly. In most of the rest of the former USSR, reform was either not a pressing issue (continuity was the pressing issue), or rapid state and regime failure through war and territorial division brought about regime change that quickly reinstated old elites or ended efforts at state formation via change.

Either way, these countries were then less subject to change than Russia has been as elites consolidated themselves as self-contained entities, undermined democratic practices and either ruled directly through the formal institutions that they inherited, or supplemented them with neo-traditional networks. The continuity pattern was most prevalent in Central Asia and Belarus, state and regime failure and reconstitution of self-contained elites has been more apparent in Georgia (although it may now be flipping back), Moldova and Azerbaijan. These differences to Russia partially explain the basis for stability in these systems relative to Russia. There is a degree of inherent stability in continuity: forming a regime based on elite continuity with weak state capacity due to lack of change is stable, at least in the short-run, because of regime autonomy from society. This autonomy can be used to constrain political development through co-option and coercion to head off calls for change, and because the very weakness of the state in these cases blocks its development as an autonomous structure; regime is all there is and it is able to rest on despotic power. Additionally, continuity prevents certain kinds of problem from emerging. Firm control over the economy prevents elites from accessing resources, whether from the global economy or from the domestic economy, independently of the regime. Firm control and relative economic isolation limits exogenous pressure to reform, or reduces it to pressure that can be dealt with by the coercive reallocation of resources from, for example, welfare to debt repayment. Problems that require state capacity - such as balancing out growth between regions and sectors that are differently tied to the international economy - do not have to be faced in the short-run.

Inherent stability is not the full story, however. There are differences in how post-Soviet states other than Russia have been able to manage resource collection without straining elite agreement about the economic basis of regimes, and in isolation from some developmental pressures that exist in Russia, and there are differences in how security has been managed and the need to develop states as military-extractive structures has been alleviated. These differences combine with and prop up the inherent stability that continuity in regime formation produces. They are also interactive; the ability to insure security rents facilitates avoidance of developing the state as a military-extractive structure, whilst inability to develop the state means that patterns of resource collection are locked in with security

dependencies. The patterns that these factors take are very different across the post-Soviet space (Robinson, 2004a and b). The first divide is between those states that have complex economies and are not reliant on one or two key imports, and those states that are more classic rentiers in their dependence on energy and primary product sales. The latter have developed patrimonial and personalistic regimes to a greater extent than the former. Energy rents have been the main source of patrimonial and personalistic power, although in some states, most notably Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, considerable rents have accrued from cotton as well, or from other forms of mineral wealth such as gold in Kyrgyzstan. There is obviously a high degree of variance between the extents that energy sales contribute rent across the CIS (Esanov, et al, 2001). In Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, energy rents have been very high as a proportion of GDP. In Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, these rents have gone to government directly and then been redistributed (sometimes). In Uzbekistan, where large rents were also available from the cotton sector, they have been used to give subsidies to consumers, rather than accumulated as direct revenue flows to the state. Kazakhstan has taken revenue less from exports, but has compensated by allowing large FDI inflows into the energy sector. This strategy, shared by Azerbaijan, was a response to political threats, particularly regional divisions, and a lack of alternative rent sources. In order to quell potential threats and stimulate a rapid inflow of some resources from the one rent source that they had, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan privatised their energy sectors to create short-term rent flows that could more immediately be used for patronage (Jones Luong and Weinthal, 2001).

No matter how rent has been taken, the effect, roughly, has been the same: personalistic regimes have developed based on patrimonial power. The extent of personalistic regime development has varied. Where there has been more state control and less privatisation, the degree of authoritarianism has been more extensive. This pattern has produced authoritarian regimes in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, whilst the partial opening up of economies and competition over resources has produced illiberal, but not fully authoritarian, regimes in Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan (cf. Ishiyama, 2002). Either way, these regimes have been relatively stable. Subsidies have sometimes provided relief from pressure to develop the extractive capacity of the state in addition to resource rents and sometimes in place of them. Subsidies have taken various forms. A one-off subsidy was the gradual Russian shouldering of the USSR's external debts. These had been shared out by CIS states in March 1992, but Russia took over responsibility for the debt to secure political goals in the CIS over the next few years. Russia's energy exports to the CIS were also heavily discounted. Energy exports consistently make up on average about 40-50 per cent of Russian exports to the post-Soviet space. In the first years after independence, they achieved only 30-40 per cent of the world market price. The net result was a loss to Russia of about 12 per cent of GDP. Russian subsidies in

total amounted (at the lowest estimate) to 50 per cent of CIS countries' GDP and cost US\$17 billion (the highest estimate was US\$67 billion). Further subsidies came through the rouble zone and bank credits from the Russian Central Bank. These were very significant, ranging from 90 per cent of GDP in the case of Tajikistan to 10 per cent of GDP in Belarus (*Ekonomika i zhizn'*. 1996, 16, 1; Åslund, 1995, 123; van Selm, 1997, 108-10). Although many of these subsidies have been cut back over time they provided a window of opportunity in many states to stabilise their regimes independently of state formation. These regimes have then been able to replace some of their lost Russian subsidies with debt build-ups (the exception here being Belarus, which has continued to receive heavy trade subsidies and which has had virtually no foreign debt build-up). These debt build-ups have not stimulated state formation, however. Rather, the burden of debt has been passed on to their populations who have experienced downturns in living standards.

Russia's role as regional hegemon in place of the USSR makes it a source of security rent. The ability to take this rent is not universal in that Russian military involvement in some parts of the CIS is far from benign (Georgia, for example). The system of security rents is not institutionalised in the same way that it was for the Warsaw Pact. The CIS collective security arrangements have been far less successful or extensive than the old alliance system with the outer empire. However, post-Soviet states have benefited from, first, guarantees about the stability of borders made as the USSR collapsed between the new partner states of the CIS, and second, from security cover and bilateral treaties with Moscow. Sometimes these arrangements have been explicit, as with the Russian presence in Tajikistan, the CIS agreements on collective security and peacekeeping, or the bilateral agreements with Belarus or Kyrgyzstan enabling Russian military use of facilities. However, even where there were no formal agreements, many post-Soviet states rested under Russia's security cover because Russia has continued to be a regional hegemon sufficiently strong to prevent threats from other states, if not from small-scale insurgency. The extent of security rents, and what their removal might mean, is hard to gauge. However, elsewhere in the world the *de jure* recognition of statehood independent of a state's ability to defend its sovereign status has clearly been related to a decline in economic regulation by elites. Where there is no military imperative to accumulate resources, elites are able to deploy rents that they control to private ends and need not involve themselves in developing other resource streams (Bates, 2001). Security rents therefore magnify the effect of rentierism and make its demise less likely.

Economic and security factors have therefore served to shelter regime continuity and enabled weak states in the post-Soviet space, but not in Russia. Russia is a security provider and guarantor, rather than the recipient of security rents. Although the reach of its military power has contracted over the last decade, it still

has overseas bases and military commitments, and has not been able to restructure its armed forces or security profile to the extent that reform has called for (Barany, 2001). The military budget has fallen but it remains a major expenditure and there is a gap between the monies allocated to the armed forces and their fiscal requirements if it is to restructure and play roles that Russian politicians want it too (Herspring, 2003). The Russian military thus exerts a dual fiscal pressure on the regime, a current one and a future one that will not diminish. Nor, for most of the 1990s, was Russia able to avoid reform because of rent. Russia bore the brunt of the collapse of Soviet state revenues, a problem that was recognised even before the USSR collapsed and was one of the key issues that reform strategy and post-Soviet state building through economic reform was designed to deal with in its first stages (Birman, 1990, 25; Woodruff, 1999). Energy rents were small because private firms have replaced the state as the first beneficiary of export rents. This was a result of Russia's initial reform policies and of Soviet policies in the energy sector. As Kim (2003) has argued, Soviet policies in the energy sector had created high transaction costs for state administrators that the Russian state could not afford in the early 1990s; the Russian state therefore had to forego direct appropriation of rent. Initial reform policies both further diminished state capacity to administer the economy and created greater pressure on budgets so that selling of the oil industry, or at least parts of the production side of it, was a way of raising revenue at low administrative cost. It is only since the rise in oil prices post-1998 that Russia has been able to take levels of tax from the energy industry sufficient to relieve its budget deficit. Prior to 1999 Russia ran a budget deficit in the post-communist period of just under 5% of GDP a year (Tikhomirov, 2000, 51-2).

In comparison with other post-communist and particularly post-Soviet states, we can see, therefore, that there has been a high and fairly consistent pressure in Russia to state build. The consequence of this has been that Russia has always been under pressure to reform from within itself as impending fiscal collapse has, until the last few years, been exacerbated by geopolitics and its relations with other states. Unlike them Russia neither had the degree of elite continuity nor the wherewithal to avoid efforts at building state capacity. The degree of fragmentation of its elite and the fact that it was under pressure to develop state capacity meant that state building projects and regime instability were both high in Russia. In Grzymala-Busse and Jones Luong's terms, Russia has had neither a self-contained nor representative elite, and elite competition has taken place through both formal and informal channels. The elite is neither self-contained nor representative because it has been forced, since Gorbachev's reforms, to compete for power by making claims to be representative, but has not managed to give these claims any sociological or organisational depth. In the 1990s the signs of this were the weakness and transience of political parties on the one hand, which showed the shallowness of elite claims to deep popular support, and on the other hand, Yeltsin's shoring up of

his rule by the incorporation of a broad cross-section of Russian elites. This demonstrated Yeltsin's inability to construct a stable basis of support. The best that he could hope for and achieve was a temporary 'relatively stable equilibrium' between Russian political elites in the mid-1990s after the chaos of the early and later 1990s (Kuvaldin, 1998; Huskey, 1999, 218; Breslauer, 2002). Elites contested regime formation through formal and informal channels. There was a formal electoral contest over the character of the regime through referenda in the early 1990s (over parliamentary/presidential powers), and elections ('reform' versus 'communism'). These contests were repeated down through the federal system to decide local regime characteristics. However, within the political system access to power was highly personalised and dependent on connections. The degree to which Yeltsin was able to isolate and control elite conflict varied so that he was never able to develop an efficient autocratic or personalistic regime. However, the limited purchase that parliament had on the presidency after 1993 meant that a democratic regime was also impossible to secure. Policy was made within the government and presidential apparatus and was shaped by personal interaction and Yeltsin's dual goals of balancing factions within the government and presidential apparatus and giving himself room for manoeuvre.

Not surprisingly, therefore, Russia has experienced a series of attempts to build up state capacity and has used a range of different strategies to try to achieve its ends. In each case effort and strategy have been associated with a part of the state, in other words with a set of particular institutions controlled by a segment of the elite. The upshot of this is that state reform projects have been weakened by infighting and that there has been no satisfactory resolution to state formation. The first wave of state formation was economic, focussing on fiscal collapse, which was addressed by marketisation and attendant liberalisation. This failed because, *inter alia*, the section of the elite promoting it did not have the political capacity to make reform policies stick. Failure led to changes in the pattern of state building (which declined) and regime formation (which became more personalistic), but these changes brought no progress in developing the capacity of the state to fulfil its functions or of the Yeltsin regime to isolate itself from state building pressures. As a result, in the later Yeltsin period, the state sought to develop its revenue base by asset sales, short-term loans, by accessing international credit, and finally by enforcing tax collection (Robinson, 1999; Treisman, 1998). None of these policies worked, or worked well beyond a very short-term, because the state did not have the administrative capacity to control powerful economic groups from taking advantage of policy. The failure of these policies was behind the 1998 financial crisis. This crisis was then responsible for the turnover of governments in 1998 and 1999, and the emergence of Vladimir Putin. The Putin regime has been able to raise revenue thanks to high oil prices globally and the collapse of imports and stimulation of domestic production following the rouble devaluation of 1998. It has

also taken actions to try to gather the resources necessary to enable the state to deal with some of its basic functions. Some of these have been political, such as the attempts to curtail regional autonomy. Some have been matters of economic policy, such as the introduction of low flat-rate taxes, which have attempted to circumvent the state's weak administrative capacity by simplifying economic administration. Some have been both economic and political, such as the actions against Yukos and Khodorkovsky that combine the extension of political control over both political activity and over resources.

The basis for these actions has been the retained power of the state to organise coercion and use the judicial system, plus the power of the executive to organise a legislative agenda due to Putin's popularity and the changes wrought by the 1999-2000 and 2003-2004 electoral cycles. But this is not the same as having resolved the problem of the economic basis of the state nor is it the same as having resolved questions of regime building. There has obviously and undeniably been some shift in how power is divided between institutions and elites in Russia, and hence a change in the rules of the political game. Certainly, some of the characteristics of the regime have changed; 'monocentric' power has replaced multiple, overlapping and competing centres of power and influence at the apex of the political system (Zudin, 2002); the 'power vertical' linking central and regional administrations has been re-established (Gel'man, 2006a); 'oligarchisation' has been replaced with supposed 'equidistance' (*ravnoudalennost'*) from economic elites (Rutland, 2003, 139; Kolesnikov, 2005); arguably, the influence of the old 'party of power' has declined and it has been replaced with a 'new' establishment drawn in particular from the power ministries (the *silovki*) (Kryshtanovskaya and White, 2003; Renz, 2006; Rivera and Rivera, 2006; Treisman, 2006). These changes have variously been labelled moves to authoritarianism, autocracy, or some form of hybrid regime such as 'guided' or 'managed' democracy, or 'competitive authoritarianism' (Brown, 2001; Colton and McFaul, 2003; Levitsky and Way, 2002). But how different is this to the hybridization that occurred under Yeltsin? The difference is perhaps quantitative rather than qualitative.

What has happened under Putin has been an accentuation of the pattern of regime development rather than anything new. Putin's style of rule, as Stoner-Weiss (2006, 114) has pointed out, is the same as Yeltsin's: like 'Yeltsin before him, Putin has assiduously avoided official affiliation with any national political party, preferring instead to rule in a nontransparent fashion through a group of family members and longtime friends.' Putin's ability to accentuate the pattern of development has been a matter of luck, for example the good economic fortune that has come his way since 1999, the fragmentation of the Russian elite after 1999 that meant that opposition has been easier to pick off, and beneficial external political circumstances, for example the 'Orange', 'Rose' and 'Tulip' revolutions that helped

Putin convince parts of the elite that managing political processes more tightly is in their interest (Ambrosio, 2007). The result – the authoritarianism of ‘managed’ democracy – reduces democracy even more since it has led to heightened control over effective media, and reduced much oppositional activity to what is at best a shell (Gel’man, 2005, 2006b), but it was not replacing a functioning democracy. Moreover, it is far from clear that these regime changes translate into changes in the state (Holmes, 2002). Empirically, change has been more rhetorical than actual as far as the state is concerned (Hashim, 2005). What developed during Putin’s first term was the idea of the state and of a need for its ‘purpose and unity’ rather than an autonomous state (Sakwa, 2004: 237). The Russian state does not appear any better at providing public goods under Putin than it did under Yeltsin, is not any smaller and more efficient, is not any less corrupt, and its chief ‘achievement’, economic growth, is not the result of administrative change since the economic upturn predates Putin’s reforms, but of good fortune (Robinson, 2007; McFaul and Stoner-Weiss, 2008; Nemtsov and Milov, 2008). Arguably Russia has moved from a situation close to the ideal-type of Cell B to one that resembles Cell F in Table 2: Putin has achieved some degree of consensus over the contours of Russia’s regime but so far this consensus has not lead to any great development of the state. This leaves open more questions about Russia’s development than it answers: if pressure to state build becomes high again (because, for example declining demand for oil due to recession brings lower energy prices) can the regime that Putin has constructed move up from Cell F to E?

## Conclusion

Russia still has a long way to go before state and regime are aligned and still has much to do to generate a state with both the capacity and organisational integrity to deal with the tasks both of transformation and of providing security and order. The reasons that Russia has had greater difficulty in consolidating regime and state are that it has not been able to dodge state formation in the same way that many of its fellow post-Soviet states have but has not had the advantages that East European states enjoyed. The changes under Vladimir Putin have primarily been changes in regime and have not yet reached a point where they can be said to have laid the political or economic basis for dealing with problems posed to the Russian state with a degree of certainty. Since the Russian state is still weak there may still be developments at both regime level and in future state formation because there is no capacity as yet to resolve problems and the regime is not able to completely avoid responding to crises that require state-level responses. The changes under Putin are therefore a weak response to the dual problems of regime instability and state building pressure. Pressure has eased because of the fiscal windfall from hydrocarbons and some of this money may be pumped in to beefing up the military and dealing with (hard) security issues. This leaves the prospects for further

development in Russia very open-ended. It remains to be seen if Putin's efforts to stabilise regime building can endure his succession so that we can say that the regime has stabilised to some degree. It is clearly Putin's hope that regime stability can, over time, be translated into state capacity so that Russia can develop a state that can deal with the high level of pressure for state development. The simplest development – indeed in many ways the one that was expected at the end of the Yeltsin era – would be for Russia to lapse back into regime instability and with continued strong pressure to state build that it cannot meet (back to Cell B). The largesse of Russia's booming hydrocarbon economy complicates this, however, since it raises the possibility of a lowering of state building pressure with or without the continued level of control over the regime that Putin has achieved. The ability to sustain this situation over the long term depends, however, on either the continued flow of high energy revenues or the use of energy revenues to fund a Russian developmental state so that these revenues might eventually be offset. Which of these outcomes eventually transpires depends on the succession to Putin in the first instance, and the extent to which the succession allows the contradictions in the regime to interact with state building pressures and reshape Russian politics again. To allow for the various ways in which this might happen we should not think that Putin's control is in anyway equivalent a build up of Russian state capacity nor that the development of authoritarian regime features means that the regime Putin has built is stable whilst pressure for state development remains.

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