POST-SOVIET POLITICS

David D. Laitin
Department of Political Science, Stanford University, Stanford, California 94305;
e-mail: dlaitin@stanford.edu

Key Words  Russia, area studies, federal, democratization, economic growth

Abstract  Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the area specialty of Soviet Politics has been transformed. Research on six themes is reviewed: state and revolution, democratization, federalism, economic growth, international relations, and institutional legacies reflecting the communist past. The review finds that post-Soviet research speaks directly to current trends in political science, and the findings of this research should impel generalists to re-specify their theories. A recommendation is offered that the study of post-Soviet politics should push political science away from a notion of institutionalization and in the direction of identifying institutional equilibria.

INTRODUCTION

This review summarizes political science research on the states of the former Soviet Union (FSU), with special emphasis on the Russian Federation. In an intellectual milieu in which area studies is under attack, it is important to ask what contributions have been made to our general understanding of politics by scholars who have specialized knowledge of the post-Soviet republics. In this review, I show the continued relevance of area expertise to a discipline with pretensions to scientific method. Area specialists in the post-Soviet field are re-examining current theories very much in line with our disciplinary standards. But I also argue that there has been insufficient boldness for area students in “thinking of our task as changing the mainstream, creating a new intellectual agenda” (McAuley 1997:7, italics in original). In this regard, I suggest two themes—one having to do with the relationship of state and democracy, the other having to do with modeling institutions—in which post-Soviet political science can play a crucial role in recasting current theory.

POST-SOVIET POLITICAL SCIENCE

The post-Soviet field has been in dynamic interaction with recent theoretical developments in political science. Unlike in the Cold War era (see Fleron & Hoffmann’s 1993 review), post-Sovietologists have clear incentives to speak directly to their disciplines, and generally they do.
LAITIN

State and Revolution

Post-Soviet research has been consumed by the Soviet collapse and the halting moves toward state reconstruction. First, the deinstitutionalization that began in the late Gorbachev period is a phenomenon that demands explanation. The super-federation [that is, the federation of the union republics of the Soviet Union, not the Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics (ASSRs) of the union republics] broke up into its constituent parts, and all-Union authority disappeared. The Communist Party’s unchallenged right to monitor state practice dissipated. Many of the prized institutions of the state—the armed forces, the health care system, the houses of culture, the academies of science—ceased providing public goods. (Other institutions, such as the metros, have maintained excellent service.) Because Huntington (1968) had persuasively argued that Leninist institutions were adaptable and strong, finding an explanation for the causes of the Soviet institutional collapse has been of compelling concern to Sovietologists. Second, as the leaders of the post-Soviet states have attempted to construct new institutions—functioning markets, property rights, electoral systems, political parties, legislatures—political scientists have had a golden opportunity to examine the formation of institutional rules and the effects of rules on individual or group behavior. Thus, the Soviet collapse has fostered research on the demise of (once thought to be) impregnable institutions and on the dynamics of institutional reconstruction.

On the issue of how to code the collapse, a debate rages among specialists as to whether events in Russia and the Soviet Union from 1989 to 1991 constitute a revolution. McAuley (1997) argues that there was no revolution, McFaul (1996:170) holds that it was a revolution of a special kind (a peaceful one), and Hough (1997) contends that it was one of the great modern revolutions. None of the area experts in this debate has coded the Soviet collapse using the eight-element Boolean scheme to characterize revolutions that was developed by Goldstone (1991). But since Goldstone does not present a theory of the processes unleashed by the different combinations of elements (of which there are 128), using his scheme—even if we got the definitions right—would not help explain the consequences of the particular form of state breakdown for Russia’s political future. Ultimately, the resolution of this debate as to whether the Soviet Union experienced a revolution depends all too much upon one’s definition of a revolution and one’s subjective evaluation as to the scope of changes that actually took place. However, in light of Skocpol’s (1979) finding that all social revolutions lead to the strengthening of the state, it is important to ask, as McFaul (1996) does: To the extent to which there was a revolution in the Soviet Union in 1991, why did it lead to the apparent emasculation of the state? An answer to this question would broaden our understanding of the paths of revolutionary development, and this would require a comparative framework that goes far beyond post-Soviet studies.

On the causes of institutional collapse, scholars divide. Suny (1993) sees collapse as caused by the emergence of national consciousnesses, seeded by the Soviet state, that could not be contained by that state; Roeder (1993) sees it
as inherent in the sclerotic institutional arrangement of Leninist states; Hough (1997) sees it as caused by the loss of will by the Soviet intelligentsia (and incredibly self-destructive policies by Gorbachev) to lead what was sure to be an extremely difficult political and economic transition; and Solnick (1998) sees it as the loss of confidence by agents of the state in the ability and will of the Soviet leadership to exert domination over government and society. The studies by Roeder (1993) (in analyzing agency problems for “selected” officials) and Solnick (1998) (in seeing the collapse in terms of a cascade) engage directly neo-institutionalist models within political science and provide clues to more general issues of institutional collapse. In fact, all of these studies merit close scrutiny by the new institutionalists in political science, as the findings should compel them to include in all models of institutional growth the possibility of rather rapid collapse.

At least as important as the questions of institutional collapse are the questions of post-Soviet reinstitutionalization of state functions. The post-Soviet Russian state (consistent with McFaul’s 1996 claim on the postrevolutionary weakening of the state) is immensely weak in the provision of property rights, the substitution of public over private enforcement of contracts, the provision of public health, the fulfillment of military missions, the control of smuggling through its borders, and macroeconomic management. To be sure, there are functions, such as the incorporation of all but one of the federal units into the organizational structure of the state, that the Russian Federation has performed well. Moreover, as the studies of Wegren (1998) and Hough (2000) illustrate, it may be an error to code the impoverishment of rural life or the nonpayment of taxes as signs of state weakness. It may well be the case that the state is pursuing its own interests (e.g. the provision of cheap food for urban areas, the maintenance of low unemployment) successfully. Analysts who disagree with these policies (or take the government’s word as to what its goals are) may see outcomes as evidence of a weak state rather than a strong state serving a particular coalition. Since state strength is partly a function of issue area and partly a function of government goals, a general scale of state strength is probably not possible.

The more interesting questions revolve around attempts to construct new state institutions, the degree of success, and the unintended consequences of such attempts. Papers are beginning to appear that give details on newly formed institutions. Adams (1996) has provided details on the workings of the Russian National Security Council. Hendley (1997) has published new material on the arbitrage courts. Woodruff (1999) has examined the “struggle for sovereignty over money” (a losing battle so far) in post-Soviet Russia, with the notion of a national currency as a key element of a strong state. The institutions of the post-Soviet state are just beginning to command careful study. Because their future is unknown, they should provide valuable data to develop theories not only of the mechanics of institutions (the degree to which they structure incentives), which is part of the political science mainstream, but in their dynamics (the degree to which they get undermined or transformed) as well, which would be far more innovative.
Democracy

Post-soviet research on the supposed transitions to democracy has focused on five questions: (a) Are the FSU states experiencing transitions to democracy at all? (b) Is there any connection between successful democratization and the existence of civil society? (c) To the extent that there is democratization, what particular democratic institutions have been selected and why? (d) What are the characteristics of the post-Soviet voter? (e) What sort of party systems are in the making?

Have There Been Transitions to Democracy? The so-called transitologists entered the post-Soviet field with gusto, sparking a vigorous debate as to whether the experience of Russia or other FSU states was comparable to that of Latin America and southern Europe in the 1970s and 1980s (Schmitter & Karl 1994). Bunce (1995) countered Schmitter & Karl by pointing to the disanalogy between democratization and communist collapse. McFaul (1996) entered the fray as well; he argues that a peaceful revolution has a different dynamic from the elite bargaining model that the transitologists so heavily relied upon, and discounts their predictions. Roeder (1994) is among those who refuse to specify a path with only a democratic outcome, and models the possibility of an autocratic and an oligarchic outcome. Democracy in some post-Soviet republics could emerge, he reasons, but more because of a deadlock between autocratic and oligarchic elements than an elite bargain posited by transitologists. On this question of a democratic outcome for Russia, Hough (2000) wisely reminds his readers that in the United States, Great Britain, and other contemporary democracies, the period from initial constitutional design to the institutionalization of democracy was quite long. From the American success in the Revolution, after eight years (the period since the collapse of the Soviet Union at the time Hough was writing), there was mostly turmoil between the states and no federal constitution. Hough suggests that it would be unreasonable to expect Russia in the late 1990s, even if it were on a path of democracy, to look very democratic. What is occurring now may be democratization or it may be a short interregnum before another period of authoritarian rule; the question remains open.

Is There a Connection Between Democratization and Civil Society? Heavily influenced by Putnam’s neo-Tocquevillian approach (1993), post-Soviet researchers have asked to what extent the existence or reemergence of civil society, despite all attempts by Soviet rule to eliminate it, facilitates democracy. Hosking (1990) sounded a journalistic clarion call awakening scholars to the realities of civil society in the Gorbachev period. Stoner-Weiss’s (1997) work is attentive to the role of business networks for the effectiveness of local governments in the early post-Soviet period. Hahn (1993) has published data on changes in Russian political culture in Yaroslavl, suggesting the existence of a civic culture. As yet, however, there is no clear measurement instrument for the development of a civil society applied to post-Soviet Russia that would provide a benchmark to assess the foundations for efficient democratic institutions. Petro (1999) examines the
growth of civic associations in Novgorod since 1991. He finds, as Putnam’s work on Italy would suggest, a clear relationship between vigorous civic associations and efficient local government. In contrast to Putnam, however, his data show (as do many reexaminations of the Putnam argument in Italy and elsewhere) that efficient government preceded the existence of these associations, and in fact played a role in their emergence. This case is in line with many critiques of Putnam’s thesis, and its evidence will stimulate a more general reformulation.

**What Democratic Institutions Have Been Selected?** A vibrant normative and empirical literature in political science compares democratic institutions based on such criteria as fairness and efficiency. Voting rules capture much attention, but the relationship of executive and legislative branches (usually portrayed as presidentialism versus parliamentarism) gets pride of place (Linz & Stepan 1996). Easter (1996), in comparing the countries in the FSU with those in Eastern Europe, finds some empirical confirmation of the Linz/Stepan thesis that parliamentarism brings more secure democratic transitions. But he detects a flaw in the normative implications that are drawn, as the factors that lead countries to “choose” parliamentarism are also factors that make democracy more stable. Easter focuses on the structure of old regime elites. To the extent that they are consolidated (and were therefore able to secure through decree property rights in the new regime) or reformed (they were weakened, but had considerable resources to reform and then marginalize new actors, as was the case with Russia), the new elites invariably chose presidentialism. To the extent that they were dispersed and internally fragmented, the new elites divided power among themselves by choosing parliamentarism. The same factor (dispersion of power) should also explain the success of democracy. If so, it is not parliamentarism but dispersion of elite power that causes success.

In a similar vein, Geddes (1996) assumes that politicians choose institutions that best maximize their hold on power. Although her focus is on Eastern Europe, her hypothesis should apply to the FSU states as well. It explains why the communists in the early period of chaos (around 1989), feeling that the opposition was disunited, pushed for strong presidentialism. Later on, when communists were ousted and the parties controlling the legislatures were unsure of their own long-term power, there was an interest among them in parliamentarism. Unlike the arguments of Shugart & Carey (1992), Geddes’ work shows that a strong presidency did not result from a cooperative solution of actors to a shared problem of uncertainty; rather, it resulted from the inability of weak parties to curtail the independent power of the presidency. Scholars who examined the democratizing processes in the FSU and Eastern Europe were less impressed with the collective search for institutions that work and more impressed with the choice of institutions as a short-term power-maximizing strategy with long-term effects.

**What Are the Characteristics of the Post-Soviet Voter?** Studies of the post-Soviet voter have become a small industry. On the one hand, scholars with experience in analyzing elections elsewhere have brought new standards to interviewing and polling (e.g. Brady & Kaplan 1998) and to the analysis of electoral data in
overcoming in part the ecological problems of making inferences about voter strategies from aggregate data (Myagkov et al 1997). Bringing new standards to surveys goes well beyond electoral concerns. The longitudinal studies associated with the “paths of a generation” project (see e.g. Titma et al 1998), conducted in Estonia, are an invaluable source of data on the generation that came of age when the Soviet Union collapsed.

On the other hand, extensive surveys have been conducted to capture the reasoning and motivations of the post-Soviet voter. Hough et al (1996), relying on an extensive network of interviewers in all the republics, have found intriguing variations in voting behavior across the federation. One finding, namely that small-town Russia votes vastly more with the communists than would be predicted by any linear function (Hough et al 1996:5), reveals previously unknown political orientations in rural Russia. Bahry & Way (1994) have found that unlike their Western counterparts, Russians with high socioeconomic status (SES) are less likely to vote than those with low SES (but those with high SES tend to engage in other forms of electoral activity at a higher rate than their lower status neighbors). Gibson’s surveys (1997) show some antiliberal propensities in the Russian population, which make them more open to antidemocratic appeals than are Western voters. This issue is by no means settled, as the debate rages on how best to interpret survey data on the democratic tendencies of Russian citizens (Finifter & Mickiewicz 1992; Miller et al 1994, 1996; Finifter 1996). Rose & Tikhomirov (1996) rely on their New Russia Barometer to isolate the characteristics of the Russian voter. Using discriminant function analysis, they identify four types of voters: “reds blamed,” “confident authoritarians,” “lumpen traditionalists” (the younger, less educated group that trusts traditional institutions but not the state), and “aspiring nationalists.” How these categories map onto a spectrum of issue space has not received attention. TJ Colton (unpublished manuscript) provides a comprehensive analysis of the Russian voter based on data from a decade of elections, and this work promises to make electoral data from Russia comparable with similar studies in other democracies.

**Is There an Emergent Party System?** Modern democracies rely on parties to screen, recruit, and process candidates for public office. The set of parties in any democracy forms a party system, which itself has implications for the mechanics of any democratic polity. Democratic theorists have therefore put much effort into the description of Russian parties and into the analysis of the emerging party system. The essays in the volume edited by Colton & Hough (1998) on the parties competing both at the center and in the regions provide an ethnographically based description of the early organizational standing of most Russian parties.

As for the party system, Fish (1994) has shown that Russian parties in the transition had been ridden by factions and defections; that they did not develop mass memberships and loyal followings; that they overlapped in ideology, without programmatic differentiation; that parties with identical goals failed to consolidate, seriously compromising their chances of maximizing seats for representatives who
shared those goals; and that those representatives who got elected failed to enact legislation along the lines of their manifestos. The result was a party system composed of a large number of weakly institutionalized parties that were not organized to capture the voters whose ideal issue points were close to their party line. Fish suggests that because of this “syndrome of ineffectiveness,” Russia did not have a party system but rather a “movement society.”

To explain the early noninstitutionalization of Russian parties, several theories have been offered. Fish suggests that the timing of the “founding election” was too sudden and did not allow parties to nominate candidates. Furthermore, the Soviet and post-Soviet states did not process demands by organizations, first because of intransigence and later because of decay, and thus there was no pay-off for organization by interested associations. Parties could not therefore aggregate the interests of well-organized groups. Moser (1999) suggests that the reason for noninstitutionalization may be that Russian elites, not connected to any clear social base, found it rational to run as independents, with no constraints coming from well-institutionalized parties that could strategically nominate candidates. Another possible explanation is that there were no enforcers among the parties that shared issue space, creating a collective-action dilemma as to how to fulfill a “power sharing contract” (J Zielinski, manuscript in preparation). Meanwhile, Smyth (1998) attributes the lack of institutionalization of the Russian party system to candidate incentives inherent in a mixed plurality and proportional representation electoral system.

There may well be some truth to all of these claims, but the value on the dependent variable is hardly stable. In 1995 Fish reported an emergent, albeit inchoate, multiparty system. McFaul earlier observed (1993) that there was indeed an emergent bipolar system of parties (reform and antireform) that had still not fully consolidated. This is consistent with Sobyanin’s (1994:Appendix 8.1) complex accounting system of 14 factions underlying two broad coalitions. Yet, even controlling for whether the country had democratic institutions in the pre-Soviet period, it may still be necessary to explain why the consolidation of a party system in the Russian Federation and most of the post-Soviet states has been so much slower than in Eastern Europe and the Baltics.

Overall, despite the new information about the voters, the electoral institutions, and the party systems, the literature on post-Soviet democratization lacks engagement with current trends concerning democracy in the wider discipline and lacks boldness to set new agendas for political science. The weak party system in Russia should allow area specialists to assess the importance of parties in conveying voter preferences to legislators. Until now, such evaluations have been difficult because virtually all the democracies examined in the standard literature have coherent party systems. Different values on key parameters, as in the Russian case today, allow for tests of robustness of new theoretical claims.

On the question of boldness, area specialists might take advantage of two opportunities. First, following Roeder (1994), the paths toward institutional breakdown should be included in studies of the mechanics of democracy. For example, models
ought to include actors with an interest in subverting the democratic process. If substantial resources of the state are being used to help fragment the party system as a strategy to enhance state power, or even to lay the groundwork for a preemptive coup, studies linking electoral rules to party fragmentation would be missing the fundamental political game driving state authorities to a new authoritarian system. Perhaps it would be more useful to think of democratization and authoritarianism as alternative equilibria, with Russia not yet tipped into either camp. Thinking this way would give a more dynamic quality to standard institutional approaches to democracy that were built from the American experience.

Second, democratic theorists of the post-Soviet experience might link their work more tightly with the literature on the state, since the fundamental question that troubles post-Soviet democracy is not the absence of rights but the absence of institutions to protect those rights (Holmes 1997). Whereas the literature in American political science focuses on legislative oversight of state agencies, post-Soviet political science has a comparative advantage in building theory on an assumption of legislative interest in the creation of autonomous state agencies.

The Nation

The uprisings of the Soviet republican nationalities in the 1980s raised a set of interlinked questions for area specialists and, more generally, for comparativists. First, did these movements significantly help undermine the Soviet system, and if so, how did they successfully confront a leviathan state? Second, what was the sequencing of the uprisings, and what does it tell us about the causes of national movements? Third, what kind of nationalism is emerging in the post-Soviet world, and will it be a threat to liberalism? Fourth, under what conditions will nationalist movements take a violent hue?

National Uprisings and the Soviet Collapse

It may well be part of popular wisdom that the nationalist movements in the Baltics (the “singing revolution,” in which popular song festivals mobilized nationalist sentiments) and related defiance of Soviet power that spread to other union republics caused the Soviet collapse. Suny (1993) certainly suggests that the Soviet nurturing of nationalities backfired on the empire, as imperial subjects mobilized as national freedom fighters. Brubaker (1996:Ch. 2) too sees in Soviet nationality policy the seeds of organized rebellion against it. But few political scientists have attributed much causal weight to nationalism and nationalist movements in accounting for the Soviet collapse.

Most political scientists realized that singing revolutions succeed only if the state elites lose the will to rule, a point that Breuilly (1994) emphasizes in his comparative work on nationalism. Motyl (1987) argues correctly that Ukrainian rebellion in the late Soviet period was impossible because the Soviet state maintained the reputation of putting down national rebellions with such fortitude that it would be irrational for any nationality to confront the state directly. It took a Soviet
leader who was unwilling to use force to maintain the reputation of the state, and a divided Russian central elite, to undermine Soviet state coherence. In line with this approach, but turning popular wisdom on its head, Snyder portrays the modern nation-state as an effective “instrument” in promoting economic and military security. Nation-states attracted loyalty due to their effectiveness, but “where they lagged in effectiveness, they stimulated an even more urgent form of nationalism, spurred by the demand to create a more effective state” (Snyder 1993:9). He therefore generalizes that “nationalism reflects a need to establish an effective state to achieve a group’s economic and security goals. The most aggressive nationalist movements arise when states fail to carry out those tasks, spurring people to create more effective states” (Snyder 1993:5). It was the failure of the Soviet state to govern effectively that enabled and encouraged the national revivals. If there is a conclusion on the relationship of nationalism to state collapse, it is that state collapse promotes nationalism.

The Significance of Sequencing Research on the sequencing of the national revivals has helped bury the idea that they were generated by feelings of cultural distance from the Moscow center. Treisman (1997) compares the constituent units of the Russian Federation on the degree to which they exhibited political-legal separatism in the period of 1990–1994. He finds that higher levels of institutional status, advanced economic development, industrial wealth, export capacity, and natural resources are significant predictors of separatism. In addition, ethnic separatism does not vary with concentration of the titular nationality (i.e. the nationality after which the republic was named), ethnic language usage, or ethnic language schooling. Gorenburg (1999) compares a set of Turkic republics inside the Russian Federation, finding that the best predictor of national mobilization is the level of institutional resources in the Soviet political structure. In a study of Ukraine, Wilson (1997) finds similarly that nationalism succeeds to the extent that there had been a “state” experience for the national cadre seeking political independence.

This research has shown that under conditions of state collapse the key to a powerful and successful national revival is the availability of a state apparatus to give reality to the national goal. This finding is not fully commensurate with studies of nationalism with a third-world focus (e.g. Horowitz 1985). It will be the task of the next generation of political scientists, when the Soviet dust has settled, to sort out the intervening variables and explain the sequences of national revival movements in different political contexts. But it is clear already that scholars such as Treisman and Gorenburg, in emphasizing the institutional basis of national revivals, have built a strong foundation for their successors.

Post-Soviet Nationalisms Much research has gone into the question of whether the content of post-Soviet nationalisms will be civic or ethnic. Snyder (1993:12) sees ethnic nationalism arising “spontaneously when an institutional vacuum occurs.” Increasingly, however (see Brubaker 1998), the ethnic/civic dichotomy
has fallen into disrepute. Consider Estonia: Its nationalism is powerful, but its state is built on the rule of law. How should one interpret its rules that effectively denied Russians (who made up about 40% of the late-Soviet population) the right to vote in its founding election? On the one hand (the civic argument), Russians did not meet residency requirements in the Estonian Republic (because Estonia had been an occupied state since 1944, and Russian migration into it was therefore illegal). On the other hand (the ethnic argument), Estonians wanted to nationalize their state so that it would be purely Estonian, and any legal argument that allowed this would suffice. All nationalism is a mix of ethnic and civil strands (Yack 1996), and a researcher’s political ideology can all too easily determine the coding of particular cases.

Instead of coding nationalism based on a rather blunt set of categories, a few political scientists have employed discourse analysis to capture trends in the content of the emerging nationalisms. Urban (1994) portrays Russian nationalism as facing a different challenge from the nationalisms of Eastern Europe. In contrast to Eastern European nationalism, in which identity could be built on a common knowledge that communism was never really “theirs,” Russia, Urban suggests, does not enjoy this luxury. “There, a discourse of identity forfeits from the outset the possibility of constructing some other nation onto which might be loaded the negative moment in the recreation of a national community” (1994:733, italics in original). Communists call their enemies fascists or lumpens; democrats suggest their enemies are not civil or normal. The nationalist card has ominous implications for Russia, Urban argues, as it would necessarily entail targeting internal enemies, those who should be excluded from public life. Thus, Eastern European nationalists can be liberals, whereas in Russia this combination is not easily sustained. Brudny (1998), however, finds a longer tradition of locating internal enemies within Russian nationalist discourse and uses a different political logic to explain its post-Soviet resurgence.

Breslauer & Dale (1997), through a search on a computerized data base of newspaper accounts, examined national discourse in Russia from the late Gorbachev period. They find that throughout this period, up through the first war in Chechnya, Yeltsin’s notion of nation-building was “de-ethnicized.” He often spoke of Rossiyanye (the citizens of the state), not Russkiye (Russian ethnics). He referred to the narod (the people), but not the natsiya (the nation). Breslauer & Dale’s data show that in Yeltsin’s political battles with a variety of opponents, he resisted ethnicization of the rhetoric and resisted terms such as spirituality, organic unity, and uniqueness, which were used by his right-wing rivals. In fact, he resisted all nationally loaded terminology and opposed a new national ideology, which he feared would be grandiose in failure like communism or fascism. Yet Yeltsin eventually called for such an ideology, and Breslauer & Dale show how the changes in the political opposition (the nationalists and communists had purged their own radicals, and were seeking support from the median voter) pushed Yeltsin toward the articulation of a new tradition that entailed the invention of a glorified Russian state history.

Laitin (1998) examined the content of the national ideology of the Russians living in the near abroad. Laitin’s content analysis of their self-references and
others’ references to them indicated that a new identity group was forming, namely the Russian-speaking population. It emerged in part because people from a variety of nontitular nationalities (Russians, Belarusans, Ukrainians, and Jews) were all thrown into the same boat when the republican language laws were passed in 1989, giving them a common cultural basis for antititular opposition. It emerged as well because Russians living in the near abroad were strong believers in the defunct Soviet identity, which itself was built on a belief that national identities were historically backward. These Russians thus felt comfortable as part of a population rather than mobilizing as a nation. In a similar vein, Skinner (1994) examines the re-creation of a Cossack (quasinational) identity in post-Soviet states.

Distinct from the literature on Russian nationalism, the literature on nationalism in the non-Russian union republics during the Soviet period was largely written by scholars with an interest in the historical fulfillment of “their” nation. With rare exceptions (Suny 1993, Motyl 1992), there was little effort to see how a particular national experience was distinct from, or similar to, other national experiences (Laitin 1991). Hough’s *Journal of Soviet Nationalities* was exemplary in its attempt to apply social science theory to the question of nationalism while including comparative data. Of especial interest was the issue devoted to Olson’s paper (1990) and Hough’s (1990) response applying his free-rider model to the question of national movements in the Soviet period. Also important was Arel’s (1990) paper comparing regional and national identities in Ukraine.

The Association for the Study of Nationalities, founded in Soviet times, has grown into a major scholarly society in the post-Soviet era, and its journal *Nationalities Papers* is lively. A few books have appeared on post-Soviet nationalism in the republics (e.g. Wilson 1997, Taagepera 1992). There is as yet no agenda-setting paper comparing the implications of nationalism of the non-Russian union republics, although Haas (1997) promises to address this area.

The key to future work will be to track nationalist ideology as it is being produced rather than classifying it along some preconceived macro set of categories. Political scientists will need to identify the mechanisms linking national ideologies as they form and political action that can be explained by differential national discourses and identities.

**Violence in Post-Soviet Nationalist Movements** Concerning inter-nationality violence in the post-Soviet period, several area experts have offered new explanations. Beissinger (1998:410), looking closely at the post-Soviet cases, asks an insightful question: “Why did those who challenged the borders of the USSR contest them nonviolently, while those who challenged the borders of republics contest them violently?” His answer rests on resources and opportunities that allow groups to contest state power. Beissinger melds work in social movement theory with that of nationalist arousals, a marriage that has long been seeking its matchmaker. Bunce (1999) compares the dismemberment of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia, also with the goal of differentiating the violent case (Yugoslavia) from those that split apart with minimal violence. She identifies two factors of
importance: the interests of the military and whether the dominant national group had its own institutions under the ancien régime. Since there were no unique Russian or Czech institutions in the communist period, post-communist leaders of these republics were compelled to minimize tensions between them and those republics that had their own institutional apparatuses. This minimized the level of violence. Laitin (1998:ch. 12) compares four post-Soviet republics to show why processes such as assimilation, consociation, and emigration set patterns of large-scale inter-nationality violence that are distinct from processes of interstate violence.

Explaining the horrid scale of violence in the post-Soviet world while at the same time accounting for its rarity remains a key test for all students of ethnic violence. Fearon & Laitin (1996), Posen (1993), and Fearon (1998) have offered theoretical suggestions for why this is so. But the careful case work made possible by the large number of ethnically mixed post-Soviet cases, with great variation in levels of nationalism and degrees of inter-nationality violence, allows students of post-Soviet politics to test standard theories and propose new theoretical alternatives.

The Political Preconditions for Economic Growth

A group of bright, powerful, and remorseless neoliberal economists has provided political science real (rather than straw) men in order to think through the political preconditions for economic growth in the post-Soviet context. Anders Åslund, Andrei Shleiffer, Maxim Boycko, Jeffrey Sachs, David Lipton, and Robert Vishny were all part of a group, most associated with the Macroeconomic and Finance Unit, that allied with young Russian economists such as Yegor Gaidar and Boris Fedorov with the goal of radically transforming the Russian economy. They wrote extensively of their goals and strategies (see Boycko et al 1995, Åslund 1995 for the iconic texts). Their tripartite program involved liberalization, stabilization, and privatization, but it self-consciously ignored the goal of production because the stimulation of production could all too easily work against stabilization. A focus on production, they feared, would give industrialists license to feed resources to favored state enterprises.

By 1998, with production (as expected) in decline but stabilization in tatters, the continued optimism of Åslund and a few of his collaborators appeared farcical and made them splendid targets for political science fire (e.g. YM Herrera, unpublished paper). But it took a fellow economist (Stiglitz 1999) to drop acid rain on them. Stiglitz accused these “market Bolsheviks” of ignoring the preexisting situation of the Russian polity—the set of institutions that was supposedly responsible for administering reforms—but building into their models the improvement of those institutions that would result from the proposed reforms. They could then blame the polity for not properly carrying out the reforms when in fact their model should have endogenized that probability. Their accusations concerning kto vinovat? (who is guilty?) were thus, according to Stiglitz, self-serveingly naive.

This opens the question of the state’s role in fostering economic growth, a concern left largely unattended by economists (but see Popov 1998). Political
scientists quickly moved into this quasi-vacuum. Przeworski and collaborators (1995) pressed for a vision of the state that enables markets to flourish and invests in human capital to insure future economic growth. But they did not specify the institutional package that, under post-communist conditions, would maximize economic growth.

It was foolhardy, as most analysts recognized by the mid-1990s, to pose the question as one of market-led shock therapy versus gradualist state-led growth. The more useful approach asks what the implications of various government/economy mixes for post-socialist economic growth are. Hellman (1998), a pioneer of this approach, has demonstrated decisively that the most successful economic reforms among the FSU states were those run by governments that were most constrained by the presence in their parliaments of representatives whose constituents would lose out if the proposed reforms were enacted.

This finding is a challenge to the authoritarian dreams of the neoliberals (in which a reform-oriented government would administer shock therapy on the country and then disappear, as the economy would then be self-regulating). It is also a challenge to many strong-state advocates, as Hellman shows that post-socialist citizenries did not vote against neoliberal reforms. Political scientists now have an opportunity to expand on Hellman’s findings, and, relying on data accumulated by Popov (1998), to bring China and other post-communist Asian states into the equation. The institutional mixes for successful reform may well be more varied than Hellman’s work suggests.

Frye (1997) introduces into the discussion of economic transformation institutions that stand somewhere in between state and economy, and his work suggests that effective regulation can be fostered at this level. He examines the growth and workings of the self-governing institution regulating the Russian equities market, demonstrating the need for quasi-state, quasi-private self-governing organizations as a foundation for economic growth. The Russian government has tended to set levels of taxation for market transactions that drive all trades underground; yet stock and commodities markets without any form of regulation would discourage risk-averse investors. Frye therefore suggests that self-governing organizations are a market-inducing level for regulation in the Russian context. The systematic investigation of the institutional foundations for modern economic growth is already one of the burgeoning areas of political science, and as Hellman’s and Frye’s work shows, data from the FSU (and, it is hoped, other post-communist states) will play an important role in sorting out the institutional requisites for such growth.

The Federation

Federal theory in political science was rejuvenated by Riker’s classic treatise in 1964, but the wind went out of its sails for a long period when few pressing empirical issues involving federalism were on area students’ agendas. Developments in neo-institutional theory in political science (Montinola et al 1995) and the
unraveling of the Soviet federation (Roeder 1991) changed that. Federalism became a major concern both in political theory and in area studies. In regard to Russia, the guiding question was whether it would tear apart as did its predecessor, the Soviet Union. The issue has three components: the stability of federations whose constituent parts are “owned” by nationalities, the stability of federations depending on the way power is shared, and the economic implications of federal as opposed to unitary institutions.

On the issue of ethnically based federations, Riker’s analysis suggested that ethnically based constituent units would be more likely to have their own political parties and would therefore better be able to subvert a federal bargain. Bednar and colleagues (J Bednar, WW Eskridge, JA Ferejohn, unpublished observations) make a somewhat different argument. They hypothesize that in decentralized power arrangements, there will inevitably be numerous opportunities for passing the buck, trying to induce other jurisdictions to pay for public goods useful to one’s own constituency. This form of cheating will invariably create tensions, as constituent governments will engage in defensive activities to protect their semi-sovereign rights. However, if the constituent units are ethnic ones, the dangers of heightened tensions are ever-present because the cheating could easily be interpreted as ethnic slights.

The logic of federal collapse with ethnically based units was certainly apparent in 1991, when the newly formed republican parties of the titular-led republics all abandoned their federal relations with the Moscow center once the opportunity presented itself. As Bednar et al (J Bednar, WW Eskridge, JA Ferejohn, unpublished observations) suggest, nearly all republics complained that they were especially slighted by the federal bargain. But anomalies such as India were always in the scopes of political scientists interested in federalism. In India, the ethnically based federation is not always stable nor its members content, but it persists. In Nigeria, after a bloody civil war in 1967–1970, in which one federal unit sought to secede, the country is immensely unstable, but the federal structure remains reasonably intact.

Since 1991, the federalism that exists within Russia, though hardly stable, has not broken apart at its seams. Two observations are in order. First, the constellation of interests is different in Russia than it was in the Soviet Union, giving decisive elites in nationally based republics an interest in the federation. Gorenburg (1999) and Giuliano (2000), for example, show that in the Turkic-speaking titular republics there is a powerful set of interests that wants to remain part of the Russian Federation. According to Gorenburg, it is largely the bilingual elites (speaking the titular language and Russian) in the major cities who have the greatest interest in maintaining political ties with Moscow; according to Giuliano, it is largely the economic elites who have left the command economy and who see commercial possibilities in the wider Russia who have the greatest interest in maintaining the Russian Federation. In either case, the internal politics of the titular republics are not uniformly pushing for greater levels of autonomy toward some new breaking point. Divisions within the federal units mean that united fronts against federal
power are not forming. Meanwhile, Hanson (1998) suggests that without a dominating ideology dictating to them, the Russian republics have no big issue to catalyze them into separatist action. A second observation is based on Herrera’s findings (1999) that the dynamics in at least one ethnically Russian federation member (Sverdlovsk) produce powerful incentives for separation. So the distinction between stable (not ethnically based) oblasts and unstable (ethnically based) republics ought not be set as starkly as theory now has it.

As for federal stability under various constitutional arrangements, Ordeshook (1996), a one-time student of Riker, issues a compelling challenge. Based on a comparative examination of the United States, Germany, Canada, Australia, and Czechoslovakia, Ordeshook finds that standard bargaining theory fails to explain federal success. Considering a federal center and its constituent units as an $N + 1$ bargaining game, Ordeshook claims that historical experience demonstrates that no bargain can remain stable, and there will always be “leave” threats by the units as part of bargaining strategy. Success, he recognizes (drawing not on Riker but on Madison and Hamilton), requires that the units of the federation be “constituent parts” of the national state and not merely separate bargaining units. For this to occur, there must be a somewhat ambiguous sharing of authority between levels and a situation in which national and regional politicians find their careers furthered by competing in elections at both the regional and national levels. Under these (and other) conditions, Ordeshook finds that “leave” threats are minimized. In his examination of Russian federalism, he notes that federal treaties reduce the ambiguity of shared authority, and that careers tend to be made at either the national or regional levels. He is therefore not sanguine about the long-term stability of the Russian Federation.

But one may question Ordeshook’s (1996) assumption that the Russian Federation is so similar to other federations that similar electoral rules could be predicted to have similar consequences. He ignores the fact that most regional representatives serve only at the mercy of the Russian president, a fact that calls into question whether Russia is a federation at all. Also, the Russian Federation’s asymmetry gives it a particular political dynamic, as emphasized by Solnick (1995). Solnick argues that federal authorities in Russia fear that they would fail in enacting any general rules that would work for all regions, and if they tried, they would lose credibility. The center therefore has preferred bilateral negotiations, more or less in the $N + 1$ design that Ordeshook fears. Lapidus (1999) takes this same factor of asymmetry, as does Solnick, but sees this as a more divisive force. Nonetheless, the results to date have been stable (with Chechnya the glaring counterexample). As a result of separate deals, the republics and the oblasts do not coordinate with each other, and the center has therefore been able to coopt regions with those separate deals (e.g. Tatarstan and Bashkortostan did not organize against the invasion of Chechnya, in part because each had its separate deal.) Thus, Moscow’s separate deals not only weakened coordination among the regions and oblasts but also brought satisfaction to restive regions. Solnick is not willing to call the federal experiment a success. The next problem Moscow will face, he admitted, “will be
avoiding a competitive frenzy of deal-making in the wake of the coming regional elections” (Solnick 1995:58). Solnick relies mostly on a rather soft bargaining model, but his rich understanding of the nature of the strategic situation (competitive bargaining reducing coordination among the regions) calls out for theorists to model the federal game as it is actually being played in today’s Russian Federation. Treisman’s (1999) findings, i.e. that Moscow’s fiscal appeasement of recalcitrant regions enhanced both the asymmetry and the stability of the federation, provide yet another empirical critique of Ordeshook’s (1996) prognosis.

As for the economic-growth consequences of federalism, a model in positive theory (Montinola et al 1995), using contemporary China as its example, deduces that under certain conditions, the competition by constituent units for growth-promoting industries would deter the imposition of unreasonable rents on investments. Thus, to the extent that federalism promotes competition among constituent federal units for investments, it should induce faster economic growth than a unitary state with a national set of industrial regulations. In a cogent analysis of the Russian case, relying on the Montinola et al model, Slider finds a “market-distorting federalism,” in which “bargaining with the center over special privileges and access to funds ... allows regional officials to avoid taking steps that might encourage market development at the price of eroding their own power” (1997:457). Slider’s study confirms the model in that certain conditions must be met for a federation to be market-preserving. But still to be addressed is the question of endogeneity, i.e. whether, for example, social groups favoring economic expansion created the conditions for Chinese regional policies, and social groups intent on collecting rents (the reformed nomenklatura) blocked those conditions in Russia. If so, the supportive federal institutions would be more the consequence than the cause of market expansion. The relationship of federal institutions to market growth is now a well-formulated research question, and Slider’s contribution shows the healthy relationship between theory and area studies that should be cultivated across the discipline.

International Relations

Perhaps more than any of the subfields of post-Soviet studies, that of international relations (IR) has been in flux. Post-Soviet IR scholars are, like Russia itself, in search of a new identity. This is largely because of the fluidity of the political context, with no stable value on a dependent variable demanding explanation. As Holloway explains (1995:270), in the post-Soviet period “there is no longer a Soviet foreign policy but a whole cluster of states seeking to consolidate their statehood and to define their interests and their policies.” Under these conditions, “the things that international relations theory tends to take for granted—states and interests, for example—are themselves problematic” (Holloway 1995:282–83). The instability in foreign policy in the early years of the Russian Federation as sovereign state is illuminated by Malcolm (1996:105–6), who notes how difficult it was to start a foreign policy from scratch, especially one centered on relations
with other states also starting from scratch. What requires explanation is therefore not clear. To add to the field’s problems, studies of post-Soviet foreign policy lost their luster, perhaps because Russia ceased to be a great power locked in bipolar conflict with the United States. An excellent new beginning was attempted by Wallander (1996). This volume is the result of a Harvard Russian Research Center seminar that brought together young scholars experimenting with new approaches to Russian security.

Without a stable value on any dependent variable, but consistent with general practice in the IR field, the subfield of post-Soviet foreign policy has focused mainly on the sources of policy. Having an interest in discounting the force of the international system, area specialists have sought to highlight the importance of ideas, interests, identities, and institutions. In focusing on ideas during the late Soviet period, Herman (1996), Mendelson (1998), and Checkel (1993) traced changes in thinking of a new breed of Soviet leaders (associated with the “new thinking” that was propagated by specialist networks) during the 1980s. These authors carefully construct case studies that show the particular political contexts in which ideas influence foreign policy. These case studies show how underdetermining were international pressures. In fact, Mendelson (1998) shows that the new thinking under Gorbachev succeeded in getting the leadership to reverse course in Afghanistan despite US pressures on the Soviet Union, which worked domestically in the opposite direction.

Zisk (1996) has tried to link interests of defense industrialists to Russian policy. No clear linkage has been established. In fact, sectors in Russia during the 1990s were insufficiently organized to exert a discernible effect on policy (see also Evangelista 1996). Nonetheless, this research provides valuable data on early manifestations of domestic pressures on Russian foreign policy makers.

**Domestic Institutions** Some attention has been given to domestic sources of foreign policy (Zimmerman 1996, Menon 1995, McFaul 1997/1998, Gow 1992, Malcolm et al 1996, Bouchkin 1995). Zimmerman argues that as Russia democratizes, we should expect greater influence of the attitudes of the attentive public in foreign policy outcomes, and he has therefore begun collecting data on these attitudes. No links between domestic attitudes and foreign policy strategies are yet apparent. On the question of whether democratic institutions have an impact on foreign policy behavior, Snyder (1996) examined early foreign policy returns and found anomalies in the literature on the democratic peace. Although he takes no firm position on democracies, he argues that democratizing states such as the post-Soviet ones are less likely to be peaceful toward one another than solidly authoritarian states would be. Menon (1995) makes a similar claim in an examination of Russia and five Central Asian states. He details how domestic instability having to do with ethnic and economic tensions could breed radical movements that imperil these regimes, which in turn could “trigger external intervention” (Menon 1995:167). Meanwhile, survey data analyzed by Braumoeller (1997) show in Ukraine, but not in Russia, a significant association between liberalism (in terms
of support of positive and negative freedoms and competition in government) and nationalism, with the attendant willingness to use force to protect fellow nationals. This is a limitation of the democratic peace literature, and suggests that liberalism is not monolithic but is subject to different emphases in different contexts. With foreign policy still in flux, all these studies on the domestic sources of foreign policy are necessarily speculative and preliminary.

**International Institutions** Wallander (1999) shows the power of international institutions in making possible the peaceful withdrawal of Russian troops from Central Europe after the demise of the Soviet state. Her study demolishes a certain brand of realist thinking that would expect a resurgence of autonomist behavior by European states in the post–Cold War environment. These realists do not consider the possibility that states could use preconstructed international institutions as resources to fulfill national interests at lower costs than through self-help. The willingness of Russian and German foreign policy makers to employ such a strategy did not always lead to success, but it was a strategy often pursued in addressing a plethora of sticky security issues. However, international institutions are not always pareto-improving. Stone (1996) examines negotiations among the member states of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, established in 1949 to promote the integration of socialist economies. His work provides both theory and data showing the conditions under which international cooperative institutions lead to pareto-deficient outcomes. Mendelson & Glenn (personal communication) have conducted a series of studies on the impact of Western nongovernmental organizations on political parties, the media, environmental policy, and conflict resolution in post-Soviet states. Wallender (1999) may be correct that some international institutions can foster cooperation that would not have been possible if they did not exist. Yet other international institutions can constrain states or their citizens from exploring new policy alternatives. Still others can put pressures on states for reform in a way that might backfire. Further work on the impact of international institutions on FSU states has the potential of sorting out these effects and thereby enriching the literature on the impact of international institutions on state behavior.

**Identity** Prior to any discussion of ideas and interests, or even institutions, we need to know how the new Russian state identifies itself. In seeking to explain foreign policy trends, and riding the wave of the new constructivist approach to international relations (Katzenstein 1996), several scholars have emphasized the uncertain identity of Russia, with implications for its role on the international stage—Great Power, Eurasian leader, or Western state. The politics of identity, as suggested by Timmerman (1992), Hopf (1998), and Light (1996), necessarily precedes the choice of strategy. The question of how closely to ally and integrate with the West arose concurrently with the question of who the Russians were, absent their Soviet identity, and who they wanted to be (Light 1996:35–41). Still lacking in this emergent literature is any refinement of constructivist or identity
theories that would explain outcomes not only in the cases under study but also in out-of-sample (and out-of-region) cases.

**Foreign Policy** Parallel to the work focusing on the potential force of a variety of independent variables, there have been explanations accounting for the overall course of Russian foreign policy. Upon taking power in the fluid time immediately following the Soviet collapse, Boris Yeltsin and Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev pursued a liberal, Atlanticist policy of security cooperation and economic integration with the West. But in the months preceding Kozyrev’s resignation, pro-Western liberals were on the defensive, both on the home and foreign fronts. Why?

To give some structure to this discussion, Dawisha & Parrott (1994) categorize five possible Russian foreign policy orientations. Checkel (1995) suggests a number of factors that are all are pressing toward the more “right-shifting” Russian foreign policy. MacFarlane (1994) suggests that there has been a rightward trend from liberalism to realism, but that it hasn’t gone toward a fully right-wing nationalist foreign policy orientation. “Liberal internationalism,” he explains, “essentially ignored or skipped over the question of identity-formation, focusing instead on world order. For a variety of reasons, this was impossible to justify for long.... But radical nationalist messianism was not a viable substitute. Its aspirations far outstripped the state’s capacities.... The solution attempted by Russian leaders is a middle ground” (MacFarlane 1994:265). He therefore sees Russia pulled more and more into a realist peacekeeping role on its borders as a principal component of its foreign policy repertoire (MacFarlane & Schnabel 1995). Alternatively, Beissinger (1995) traces the right-moving foreign policy to persistent images of “empire” embedded in the consciousnesses of the Russian foreign policy elites and the elites of the former subjugated (within the Soviet Union) republics.

McFaul’s (1997/1998) explanandum is the nonbelligerent foreign policy of Russia—more liberal than the consensus holds—which also contradicts the theoretical expectations of Snyder (1996) that weak and transitional democracies are quite war-prone. McFaul argues that “the political and economic winners in Russia’s transition are the very groups that would not benefit from war” (McFaul 1997/1998:21). The exception, McFaul acknowledges, is Chechnya, in which the so-called losers dominated; the resulting fiasco only served, at least in the short term, to discredit them. McFaul pushes adherents of Snyder’s position to explain away this anomaly within their theory or to state parameters in which their theory is likely not to hold.

**The Future of International Relations Research in Russia** The enduring contribution of IR research in the post-Soviet period is in the hard-won data from interviews and field observations. Descriptions of the policy environment in this turbulent period will surely outlast the theoretical debates that frame those descriptions. Moreover, this body of work illustrates the limits of the application of seemingly general theories. For example, Evangelista (1996) sought to apply models of international political economy to the post-Soviet energy sector. He found
that Rogowski’s model (1989) would predict a political cleavage of communists
and farmers against the owners of capital, but found it impossible to identify
the latter class in terms of real political actors. Similarly, in applying Frieden’s
(1991) model of asset specificity, Evangelista (1996) was unable to measure the
bargaining power of labor in different sectors, since wages are a weak indicator of
what workers seek to maximize. He therefore concludes that regional specialists
are needed to address specific historical contexts, even in the testing of general
theory. The works discussed in this section are therefore of importance to general
IR theorists, as the details set limits to the applicability of several theories.

Nonetheless, the post-Soviet IR field may be too constrained by its engage-
ment with standard IR theory, paying insufficient attention to the wider political
science discipline. For example, consider Wallander’s (1999) exemplary study
of Russian/German bargaining. It is true, but trivial, that states with available
resources (in this case, access to international institutions) will employ those re-
sources in their foreign policy strategies. Only in a field consumed by a war of
paradigms (what matters most: institutions or structures?) would such a finding
be important. A more analytically interesting finding, however, is that in the dis-
mantling of a particular type of nuclear reactor, the parties involved were unable
to agree on a risk-sharing strategy, if, for example, the reactor blew up and caused
damages and lawsuits worldwide. Without a risk-sharing strategy, the dangerous
acceptance of the status quo results. Wallander’s analysis speaks directly to a gen-
eral theoretical issue, namely the conditions under which institutions can work out
risk-sharing agreements. The ease of movement to superior equilibria on some
issues and the near impossibility on others, with small differences in institu-
tional framework, are outcomes that demand a positive theory of international
institutions and equilibrium selection. Wallander provides suggestive reasons for
the variation, and future research could specify those reasons so that they could
be applied to out-of-sample cases. The post-Soviet IR field, in sum, has engaged
productively with questions driving the wider IR field, but less than optimally with
parallel analyses in other subfields within political science.

Institutional Legacies

Path dependency is intuitively obvious yet extremely difficult to nail down in a
precise way. Area specialists are especially attuned to legacies, as Meyer (1994)
points out, and scholars with area expertise are in an excellent position to give
substance to a rather abstract notion. Jowitt has been the principal theorist of such
legacies. He insisted at the moment of the transition, “Whatever the results of
the current turmoil in Eastern Europe, one thing is clear: the new institutional
patterns will be shaped by the ‘inheritance’ and legacy of forty years of Leninist
rule” (1992:285). Leninist rule, according to Jowitt, reinforced salient features of
traditional culture, such as the rigid dichotomization of the official (seen negatively)
and the private (seen insularly) realms, leading to a political culture dominated
by dissimulation and rumor-mongering. It also created autarchic collectives that
fragmented rather than integrated society, such that the members of each collective have no regard for the life situation of members of other collectives—thus, there is no cultural support for sympathy with others’ plights. These Leninist legacies are likely, Jowitt contends, to confront the Civic Forums and other democratic and liberal organizations in Eastern Europe with “anti-civic, anti-secular, anti-individual forces” (Jowitt 1992:304).

Hanson (1997), following a related idea of Jowitt’s concerning the Leninist “charismatic-rational conception of time,” seeks to explain the waste of resources, shoddiness of goods, and lack of incentives that undermined the socialist experiment. There was a “final-exam economy—since an endless summer vacation (communism) was always held to be just around the corner, the most rational thing to do was to ‘cram’. Under Brezhnev this sense began to dissipate. But Gorbachev attempted, unsuccessfully, at least at first through ‘acceleration’ (uskorenie) to reestablish charismatic-rational time” (Hanson 1997:ix). This legacy, the reader surmises, must have influenced the current attempts to rationalize the post-Soviet economy.

Other political scientists have stipulated the effects of historical legacies in a less grandiose way. Hendley (1997) shows how legacies of Soviet law, in which top-down regulations were invariably decreed to fulfill the interests of those in the center, made shareholders of post-Soviet firms skeptical that the cumulative voting mechanisms required by the joint-stock law of 1995 were written to serve their interests. More broadly, Hendley finds that enterprise directors appeal to personal networks in Moscow rather than the courts for support when they face conflicts with outside firms, largely because this was their mode of operation in the Soviet period. Yet the courts have not been thoroughly ignored by business, suggesting that the Soviet legal legacies have half-lives.

Crowley (1997:187) has examined the strategic moves of Soviet and post-Soviet miners in both the Donbass and Kuzbass. Although in many arenas material interest was determinative of action, Crowley still found ideological legacies that structured choice. Seeking to explain miners’ flip-flop from an embrace of the market (even when, especially for the Donbass miners, a move toward the market was a step toward redundancy) to an embrace of the Communist Party in the mid-1990s, Crowley reexamines Soviet rhetoric. This rhetorical legacy, he argues, left the miners not only lacking an alternative to capitalism (other than communism, which they supported), but also lacking an alternative within capitalism (such as social democracy). The miners, he concludes, had “no institutional channel to express their grievances in the political realm” other than as communists. The Manichean world-view, capitalism or communism, was for the miners the whole choice set. “While miners everywhere are given to radicalism,” Crowley concludes, “the direction their radicalism takes is underdetermined” (1997:189).

Bahry & Way examine participation among the Russian electorate, and controlling for a variety of factors, they show that the old and poor are far more likely to vote than the well-to-do. They attribute this in part to the Soviet electoral legacy because “The residues of Soviet mobilization... have an impact on all forms of
conventional activity; but they seem to be especially pronounced for voting, the most ritualized form of Soviet participation. Soviet elections may have been designed as vehicles for legitimating the status quo, but they appear ultimately to have given older citizens a habit that has become a powerful political weapon” (1994:352).

Other examples of legacies abound in the literature. Beissinger (1995) suggests that the legacy of “empire” continues to drive foreign policy thinking both in Russia and in the now independent but once union republics of the USSR. Motyl (1997) argues that the legacy of an emasculated-by-totalitarianism civil society greatly weakens either the will (in Russia) or the capacity (in Ukraine) of the elites in post-Soviet states (with the Baltics being the exception) to fashion and execute radical reform measures. Luong (1996) points to differential political cleavages (ethnic versus regional) in post-Soviet Central Asia that are traced to Soviet strategies of rule. Burawoy & Krotov, based on observations of the Soviet wood industry in summer 1991 (Polar Furniture), argued that most economists were “underestimat[ing] the capacity of the Soviet economy to reproduce itself and resist transformation” (1992:17). With the opening to the market, a regional conglomerate of firms partly owned by the state, the Northern Territories’ Wood Association, emerged with the goal of connecting firms that had supply networks with each other. In a sense, Burawoy & Krotov report, it replaced the party state as the mechanism to reduce anarchy in the relations of production. The real profit within the system, however, is in controlling the barter and other intra-industry trade networks, and in having a monopoly over those networks, a clear legacy of the Soviet period.

McAuley (1997) has a keen eye for Soviet legacies and a strategy for finding them. She reports that outside of Moscow, where elites have little incentive to hide their ingrained Soviet practices, they are easy to detect. In Naberezhnye Chelny, home of KamAZ auto plant in Tatarstan, McAuley examined a by-election to the Supreme Soviet and saw the electoral material as almost a satire on Soviet-style electioneering, except that the authors of these tracts were serious. “New constitutional rules on the separation of powers and democratic electoral procedures,” she concludes, “not only failed to dislodge the incumbents but also allowed them to secure their position as patrons” (McAuley 1997:91–108). In fact, the old elite in the republics created an executive presence even stronger than before, marginalizing the legislature and the nationalists. Elsewhere (1997:Ch. 4), McCauley studied electoral dynamics in Krasnodar krai and finds the old division of reds and experts dividing the elite, as the grounds of political battle hardly changed from the Soviet period. These legacies—at least for some period—constrain the workings of newly created institutional incentives.

Despite this abundant literature pointing to Soviet legacies, the magnitude of their effects is difficult to determine. Institutions and interests weigh in to diminish the impact of such legacies. For example, a student of Jowitt (Geddes 1996) found the Leninist legacy to have little explanatory power on questions of party strategy. To take another example, the principal theme in what will become the standard source for voting in post-Soviet Russia (TJ Colton, unpublished
manuscript) shows that “variables in reasonably clear-cut categories—electors’ social traits, their appraisals of the health of the economy and polity ... leadership evaluations, and assessments of the performance and promise of incumbents and opposition ... all have a significant bearing on how post-Soviet Russians vote.” This does not sound as if the Russian voter were mired in Leninist categories; rather, democratic institutions set new incentives, to which Russian voters responded as any voting citizens would. In fact, in the decade following the Soviet collapse, what Jowitt considered “clear” has not yet been confirmed with any cross-sectional data that includes non-Leninist states.

Perhaps one should think of legacies as historical features that work to block or divert political processes from the directions predicted by general theory or influence equilibrium selection under conditions of multiple equilibria. Political science cannot ignore the extended period of transition before the values on outcome variables are commensurate with the predictions on the effects of institutional change. The institutional legacies diverting outcomes from their predicted directions need to be accounted for, and the information in area scholarship is crucial for such analysis. This would call for studies that measure the magnitude and persistence of legacies, as Kitschelt & Smyth (1997) have done in regard to comparative Russian and East European blockages to programmatic party competition, rather than just pointing to their existence. The apparently gigantic legacy of Leninism—with varying levels of impact across Soviet, Warsaw Pact, and Asian space—and the creation of democratic-like institutions in that space allow for some path-breaking research in political science, led by post-Soviet experts, on the constraints of path dependency.

AN ASSESSMENT

This review has summarized political science research on the states of the former Soviet Union with special emphasis on the Russian Federation. I have ignored much of the literature on the non-Russian republics in the post-Soviet period, and on the Soviet period itself (written by post-Soviet scholars, taking advantage of opened archives).

But the field of post-Soviet political science has been cultivated, and the early yield has been impressive. A new generation of scholars has combined field work with new theoretical concerns. Political scientists who have been credentialed in other fields have moved into Soviet studies, bringing new methods and perspectives. Senior scholars whose careers were forged during the Soviet period have played an important role in adapting new methods while speaking to theory in their countries of specialty. Whereas the field of comparative politics is portrayed as a battlefield between area studies and theory, in the post-Soviet field the tensions (combining modern methods with field observations) are usually within the framework of each particular study (and therefore productive) rather than in wars of maneuver between groups of scholars representing opposing camps (and therefore
This excursion into a terrain that is territorially defined demonstrates that portraits of the comparative field are too often caricatures. Similarly, in IR, post-Soviet scholars without great difficulty have placed their studies at the core of subfield debates.

Contributions to General Theory

The contributions of post-Soviet studies to political science are substantial. For one, as should be clear from the discussion on path dependency, deviations from expected actions as predicted by theory can sometimes be accounted for by institutional legacies that require an understanding of history to specify correctly.

Second, post-Soviet scholars have provided iconic narratives of general political processes that have been more globally theorized. This work not only gives flesh to skeletal theories but provides information on the mechanisms that translate values on independent variables to values on dependent variables. Breslauer & Dale’s (1997) assessment of how Yeltsin moved to a new nationalist discourse, as discussed above, contributed a compelling narrative to the Hobsbawm & Ranger (1983) corpus showing how traditions are invented.

Third, scholars with area expertise have often undermined the foundations of comparative analyses by showing that the structure of situations, the principal actors, or the goals of these actors are not as postulated by the generalists. For example, the notion that the Russian party system is fragmented because of the early calling of the founding election, or because of a coordination problem faced by party entrepreneurs living in the same Downsian neighborhood, may make for sharp theory. But these explanations, according to Hough (2000), are misguided. He provides evidence that Yeltsin paid for minor parties, enriching their entrepreneurs, in order to siphon off votes from any united opposition. Hough similarly seeks to discredit theories that seek reasons why Members of Parliament (MPs) in the Duma do not win elections based on the resource situation of parties, which is presumably so weak that they are unable to produce coherent candidate lists. Rather, Hough argues, MPs seek not to maximize reelection [as political scientists educated by Mayhew’s (1974) work automatically assume], but to maximize the chances of getting a job in the presidential administration, where they can sell licenses or reap benefits from graft.

Hendley (1997) too examines Russian strategic logic from the ground. General directors of enterprises often rely on privately retained “contract enforcers” rather than courts to settle interfirm conflicts, even if the latter will allow for a wider range of contracts with low transactions costs. However, reliance on the law would require the general director to cede internal authority to the firm’s legal division, whereas reliance on contract enforcers assures the director of uncompromised control over the firm. The strategic game here is not between firms seeking to lower transactions costs (as in the new institutionalism, which Hendley calls in this context the development argument), but within firms whose general directors seek to marginalize their newly created legal departments.
Woodruff (1999) has also attacked premature modeling of post-Soviet politics. In the literature on reform, Woodruff argues, analysts rely on a “rational expectations” model in which a reformist government seeks to commit to austerity, so that private actors condition their behavior on the expectation of noninflation. In actuality, Woodruff asserts, the central government is too weak to block local creation of alternative means of payment. To fill a vacuum, local governments in Russia promoted nonmonetary exchange (barter) to protect industry and maintain critical services. The central government was strategically fighting a battle for the monopoly rights to issue money, but American political scientists were interpreting that behavior as if policy makers were seeking to commit the government to austerity.

Work of this nature is crucial to keep theorists modeling what is actually going on rather than what would be theoretically interesting if it were going on. Area specialists have an eye for detail, and that, as Darwin has taught us, is where truth lies. To be sure, area specialists are sometimes too lost in detail. McAuley’s (1997) descriptions of the difficulty for Shaimiev, the governor of Tatarstan, to sleep one particular night may be excessive in detail. But without a commitment to the details of political life, our models are too easily unhooked from political reality.

Finally, data collected from the FSU have provided important amendments to partially established theory. Institutions do not spontaneously arise to protect property once traders are permitted to flourish. People who are more highly educated are not always more likely to vote than those who are less educated. The constituent units of federations that are based on nationality do not inexorably seek greater autonomy from the center until the center collapses. Revolutions do not always yield strengthened states. These findings are not so weighty as to knock established theory out of the water (but no findings, however strong, seem to have that effect on any social science theory). Rather, these findings compel students of markets, voting, federations, and revolution to narrow the parameter values in which their theories have explanatory value. Setting the limiting conditions in which relationships will hold is an important part of science, and post-Soviet area studies has performed that task well.

Opportunities for a New Agenda

The post-Soviet field could be a bit more ambitious still. Observation of the basic trends of the Soviet collapse should compel us to reorder the questions that have long stood on political science agendas. This has always been the case in political theory, as our substantive agendas reflect the world we study. What questions should the collapse of communism and the subsequent rise of ill-defined quasi-states compel us to rethink? Observing the detritus of the Soviet Union in the 1990s—in which our entire political landscape has been altered—should inspire us to pose big questions that set the agenda for the wider field of political science.

I have two conjectures. The first has to do with liberalism and rights. Holmes & Sunstein (1999) have suggested that whereas in the Cold War period Western theorists considered mostly the benefits of rights, the Soviet and Russian collapse
compel us to consider the costs of rights. If in the Soviet period citizens could not hope to be treated fairly by the law because they lacked constitutional protections, in the Russian period (as Solomon 1995:98 details) citizens may not get justice because courts lack heating oil. The institutional provision of the most basic public goods, merely a theoretic fantasy of the new institutionalists in the 1980s, has become a dominant theme in post-Soviet comparative politics. So, when the dominant other for the United States is Soviet totalitarianism, liberalism for American social scientists is equated with the benefits of rights to all citizens; but when the dominant other is Russian anarchy, liberalism becomes equated with the capacity to provide rights. The dominant other sets the agenda for the very framing of research on liberalism. As suggested at the end of the section on democracy, it would be exciting if post-Soviet political science incorporated this idea and therefore linked theoretically the literature on the state and that on democracy. Under what conditions, this literature could ask (to take just one example), will legislators vote to insulate state agencies not only from successor legislatures but from themselves?

A second paradigm-shifting perspective that has emerged from the collapse of Soviet communism challenges social science to explain both the emergence of islands of order under conditions of turbulence and a continent of chaos under conditions of stability. In the Soviet period, it was common to describe Leninist organizations as highly institutionalized and therefore stable (Huntington 1968); yet the late 1980s showed that they could disappear almost as if they had never existed (Solnick 1998). Meanwhile, under conditions of state chaos, reports from Hendley (1997), Frye (1997), and Wallander (1999) reveal islands of institutional stability. The trick will be to explain political and economic collapse without overexplaining them (thinking of comparisons to other post-communist cases such as Poland and China). Both the possibility of cascades undermining stability and the imposition of stable expectations (only in some realms) under conditions of chaos are core elements of the post-Soviet experience, opening opportunities for a richer understanding of coordination dynamics.

The ideas that institutionalized social outcomes are subject to cascades and that new patterns of coordination can rather quickly be established are not well understood in American political science. Students of Schelling (1978) applied these ideas to local processes, for example, whether ice hockey players would wear helmets, but research in cultural identification and societal institutions did not make use of them. The notion of an equilibrium suggests—and this is quite different from what is suggested in 1960s notions of institutionalization—that things are stable only because no person has an incentive to deviate from normal practice. However, under conditions in which a few people have an incentive to deviate, and others see the possibility of a better individual existence if a critical mass of their fellow citizens were to deviate, cascades to a radically different equilibrium are possible. To be sure, equilibrium analysis is not yet attuned to issues of selection under conditions of multiple equilibria or of shift from one equilibrium to another. In fact, theoretical work by Schofield (1999) suggests that the recognition of cascades in certain kinds of markets should induce us to
give up the assumption of equilibrium. But in the Soviet context, some work has already been done along these lines. Sachs (1995) has done preliminary thinking on cascades, and Allio et al (1997) have analyzed equilibrium selection on modes of privatization in post-communist societies. Equilibrium theory, far more than institutionalization, sensitizes researchers to the ever-present yet low likelihood of institutional collapse, as well as the mechanisms of coordination under conditions of uncertainty (Laitin 1999).

The collapse of the Soviet Union should help push social science away from seeking explanations for values on dependent variables thought of as institutionalized outcomes; rather, they should seek to describe equilibria in such a way that both stability and radical shift can be explained. As suggested in the reviews of the literature on the state and of the literature on democracy, not only the mechanics but the dynamics of institutional space need to be examined. Furthermore, the post-Soviet world is the ideal arena for modeling not only incentives toward equilibria but shifts across equilibria through cascades. Although it would have been folly to demand that social science predict the Soviet collapse (Remington 1995, Kuran 1991), it would be equally imprudent to continue working with a methodology of social science that does not see the fragility of coordination in political life. The brittleness of our institutions, even when they successfully condition behavior for long periods, is a major lesson of the Soviet collapse. It should help foster in social science the study of institutional equilibria rather than institutionalized outcomes.

This is not a call for economistic hegemony. Equilibrium selection is largely determined by expectations of what fellow citizens will do under new conditions, and these expectations are in part determined by cultural beliefs (Greif 1994) and historical legacies. A positive theory of historical legacies and cultural beliefs is in the offing once action is plotted on equilibrium paths. The rich combinations of legacies versus new material incentives, and of turbulence versus new institutional orders, both of which are characteristic of post-Soviet politics, make post-Soviet politics an excellent arena for theoretical agenda setting.

Visit the Annual Reviews home page at www.AnnualReviews.org

LITERATURE CITED

Beissinger MR. 1995. The persisting ambiguity


Evangelista M. 1996. From each according to its abilities: competing theoretical approaches to the post-Soviet energy sector. See Wallander 1996, pp. 173–205


Fleron FJ, Hoffmann EP. 1993. Communist studies and political science: cold war and peaceful coexistence. In *Post-Communist *
Herman RG. 1996. Identity and national security. See Katzenstein 1996, pp. 271–316
Hobsbawm EJ, Ranger T, eds. 1983. The Invention of Tradition. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press


Motyl AJ. 1997. Structural constraints and starting points: the logic of systemic change in


