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Structural Constraints and Starting Points

The Logic of Systemic Change in Ukraine and Russia

Alexander J. Motyl

It may be highly desirable for the Soviet Union's successor states to construct markets, democratic regimes, the rule of law, and civil societies as quickly as possible, but is the desirable possible?¹ For those former Soviet republics that were an integral and thoroughly communized part of the USSR since the 1920s, the answer is no.² Rapid, fundamental, and comprehensive change, in a word, revolution, is impossible because the structural legacy of the USSR's collapse effectively precludes the successful pursuit of revolutionary change.³ *Faute de mieux*, protracted and sequential or simply evolutionary change however unspectacular and dull is the only alternative.⁴

My case rests on the proposition that the Soviet Union's collapse failed to generate two (of doubtless many) necessary conditions of revolutionary change. One such condition, absent in all the non-Russian successor states under consideration, was a revolutionary elite. Another, absent in all the states, including Russia, was the requisite capacity to pursue revolutionary policies. It follows logically that, in the absence of conditions that make attempted revolution possible, attempted revolution and thus revolution is impossible.

I support my argument with a conceptually grounded analysis of the post-Soviet legacy in Ukraine and Russia. Although they are but two of twelve comparable successor states, Ukraine and Russia are especially vivid and, arguably, paradigmatic examples of the diametrically opposed paths that the USSR's successor states can follow. Post-Soviet Ukraine is a case of evolutionary change; post-Soviet Russia, of attempted revolutionary change. Until 1994 Ukraine appeared merely to stagnate, perhaps even to teeter on the edge of collapse, while Russia seemed destined to rush to democracy and the market.⁵ By 1995–1996 the tables appeared to have turned. Ukraine seemed stable and committed to reform, while Russia came across as fractious, polarized, and increasingly hostile to reform.

This reversal of roles was not accidental, nor was it the consequence of elite choice, except perhaps in a trivial sense. Rather, the structural legacy of the USSR's collapse, in particular, the kinds of elites Ukraine and Russia inherited and the resource endowments of those elites, kept Ukraine on the path of evolutionary change and propelled Russia down the path of revolutionary change. Ukraine inherited an impoverished elite with an existential interest in evolutionary change. Russia inherited a revolutionary elite too weak to impose its will on an antirevolutionary

state. These structural legacies permitted antireformist Ukrainian elites to succeed at unspectacular reform and condemned radical Russian elites to spectacular failure.

Three methodological points are in order. First, structural arguments are usually criticized for neglecting human behavior. The charge is accurate, but the criticism is unpersuasive. Arthur Danto has shown that “methodologically socialist” approaches are no less true than methodologically individualist ones. His proof is simple. If structural statements can be translated into and therefore reduced to individualist ones, then so, too, the latter can be translated into the former. And if structural statements can not be translated downward, then neither can individualist ones be translated upward. In sum, there are no obvious grounds for claiming that one approach is more basic than and therefore preferable to the other.⁶

A more persuasive criticism of structural approaches is conceptual. Because only concepts can delineate the boundaries of structures and make an argument employing them coherent, and because no concepts are definitive, a structural analysis will always be open to dispute.⁷ Just as structural arguments will not persuade methodological individualists, they may not even persuade all structuralists.

The philosophical limitations of a structural-conditional analysis, while less obvious, may be greatest. Philosophers of science have proffered extensive critiques of the putative relationship between causation and necessary and sufficient conditions, and it would be disingenuous to ignore their dispiriting implications for social science.⁸ Even so, conditional analysis retains substantial utility, if we recognize what it can and can not do. Causes may not be reducible to a definable set of necessary and sufficient conditions, but necessary conditions can, by narrowing the range of the possible, reduce the number of persuasive casual outcomes under consideration and thereby contribute to the explanatory enterprise.

The Legacy of Empire and Totalitarianism

The starting point of my argument is conceptual: the Soviet Union was both an empire and a totalitarian state. Empires are peculiar kinds of multinational dictatorial states in which culturally distinct cores rule culturally distinct peripheries.⁹ Totalitarianism is a type of state in which state institutions supervise society deeply and broadly.¹⁰ Although there have been many empires in history, and there have been some totalitarian states, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics shared the defining characteristics of both empire and totalitarianism and thus had the distinction of being the world’s only totalitarian empire.

The Russian core, consisting of state and Communist Party institutions centered in Moscow, ruled the non-Russian peripheries. The core not only determined foreign and defense policies in the manner of all state elites, but it also appointed republican elites and set their budgets. However, the configuration of the entire Soviet state in

both core and periphery was totalitarian. State agencies effectively controlled all nonstate activity in the society, economy, and culture, obviously with declining effectiveness by the 1970s and 1980s.¹¹

The associated characteristics of totalitarian empire were several. Totalitarianism entailed the presence of an overwhelmingly extensive and intrusive state apparatus and hence the absence, not of individual religious activists, black marketeers, and dissidents, but of the institutional clusters known as civil society, a market economy, the rule of law, democracy, and an autonomous culture. In turn, empire privileged the core, which controlled the state, ran the economy, developed a legitimating ideology, and supported the culture of the core population over that of the peripheral populations.

This last point deserves underlining. Despite the fact that the populations of Russia and the non-Russian republics had survived decades of totalitarianism, their relative positions within the Soviet Union had been as different as an imperial setting would lead us to expect. War, repression, and privation notwithstanding, Russians enjoyed the privilege of being the USSR's imperial population.¹² Russia served as the hub of the centrally planned economy, and Russian language and culture, even if in somewhat Sovietized versions, enjoyed virtually unchallenged hegemony within the entire USSR.

Like other empires that collapsed, the Soviet Union broke up into successor states that retained many of the features defining their status within the totalitarian empire. Both Russia and its neighbors emerged from totalitarianism without the autonomous institutions that characterize civil society, a market economy, democracy, the rule of law, and an independent culture, as well as without functioning and stable totalitarian institutions. Central planning collapsed; Communist ideology and culture were in tatters; and party-state institutions fragmented along republican, regional, and functional lines. Posttotalitarian political elites — Communists, nationalists, and democrats alike — therefore lacked the coercive, normative, and material resources to compel, persuade, or pay off potential constituencies to do their bidding.

In contrast to the non-Russian republics, however, Russia inherited the bulk of the imperial-totalitarian state — in particular, the central ministries, the army, and the secret police — and the legacy of the Soviet core's cultural domination. To put the difference in especially stark but not inaccurate terms, Ukraine and the other non-Baltic republics emerged from Soviet collapse without bona fide states, powerful elites, civil societies, markets, democracy, rule of law, and genuine cultures and hence without genuine nations. Russia had a state, and it possessed a sense of cultural superiority and historical destiny that underpinned both nationhood and empire.

The real question was not whether Russians would become a nation, but whether Russians would remain an imperial nation.¹³ Although the loss of Ukraine negated their ordinary myths and the presence of twenty-six million "abandoned brethren"

in the non-Russian states cast doubt on the fixedness of their borders, the Russian identity crisis was premised on an identity. In contrast, Ukrainians and many other non-Russians lacked a clear sense of who they were and where they came from.¹⁴ A small group of nationalists claimed to know, but most ethnic Ukrainians would have been hard-pressed to describe the characteristics they supposedly shared.

One final difference between Russia and the non-Russian states deserves attention. The process of collapse mobilized Soviet elites against the state bureaucracies that exerted totalitarian and imperial control in Moscow. In the Russian case elites led first by Mikhail Gorbachev and then by Boris Yeltsin turned against the totalitarian "side" of the state. In the non-Russian republics Communist elites either entered into de facto coalitions with nationalists or, as in most of the Central Asian states, simply expropriated their language, effectively rejecting Russian rule in their bailiwicks and turning against the imperial "side" of the state. Post-Soviet Russia's resource-poor antitotalitarian elites thus confronted a resource-rich state inherited more or less intact from the USSR, while the impoverished non-Russian elites, freed of the imperial state after the USSR collapsed, suddenly found themselves on their own, without any post-Soviet states worthy of the Weberian designation to confront.

State building, nation building, democratization, marketization, and the development of civil society and rule of law necessarily assumed different forms in Russia and Ukraine. Russia's project was, above all, to transform and build upon existing entities; Ukraine's was to create heretofore nonexistent entities. Because the initial conditions in the two countries were so unlike, no theory could have argued that processes and outcomes would be similar in both.¹⁵

The Impossibility of Revolution

Revolution, as I noted at the outset, was impossible in the post-Soviet setting because the necessary conditions for the effective pursuit of revolution were missing. Revolutionary policies presuppose revolutionaries willing and able to pursue them. Revolutionaries are individuals committed to revolution — rapid, fundamental, and comprehensive change — while the ability to pursue revolution is a function of resources, in particular, of the balance between the resources possessed by revolutionaries and those possessed by their opponents, be they states or other political groups.¹⁶ Resources are especially important in revolutionary settings, because people do not willingly expend their lives unless some combination of coercion, ideology, and material incentives persuades them to do so. Revolutions, in this sense, are profoundly nondemocratic enterprises, inasmuch as the abandonment of one set of institutions for another, however free or freer, always entails a large measure of compulsion.

It should be obvious that nonrevolutionary elites, such as the Communists-turned-

nationalists in the non-Russian states, could not be expected to subvert their own collective interests by embarking on revolutionary change. By the same token, while rapid, comprehensive, and fundamental change might be within reach of well-endowed revolutionaries, it can not be pursued by elites who lack the requisite capacity.¹⁷ Although it is impossible to say just how many coercive, normative, and material resources in what combination are enough for revolutionary success, it is surely, and not quite trivially, true that more is preferable to less and that none is not enough. And next to none is, in essence, what post-Soviet elites, Russians and non-Russians alike, possessed.

The formerly peripheral non-Russian states were in possession of neither necessary condition and thus could not pursue revolution. Russia's misfortune was to be in possession of the first, a revolutionary elite, but not the second, a powerful revolutionary elite. As the postimperial, posttotalitarian state was too conservative to promote revolution from above and too strong to succumb to revolution from below, Yeltsin's attempted revolution had to fail, but not without distorting Russia's emerging posttotalitarian institutions.

As attempted revolution was inconceivable in the non-Russian states, their only alternative was evolution, all the more so as two of the necessary conditions of such change — weak, antirevolutionary elites — were present. But evolution was not the open-ended proposition that the notion of slower, less fundamental, and less comprehensive change implied. Because change had to take place in the absence of a state, civil society, the rule of law, democracy, and the market, and because some desired institutional ends were necessary conditions of others, a "logic of systemic change" dictated the optimal sequence that weak nonrevolutionary elites should follow and would in all likelihood follow, if only to preserve their status as elites.¹⁸

This argument and hence its persuasiveness rest on several concepts. Democracy is a set of institutions involving the division and balance of governmental powers and a specified procedure for electing elites through popular participation and does not merely consist of self-styled democrats. The market is a set of regularized procedures for exchanging capital, labor, and land, and not simply the prevalence of enterprising individuals.¹⁹ The rule of law is a set of predictable and transparent rules and regulations governing the internal workings of the state and its relations with society and the economy. And the state is the administrative and coercive apparatus that enforces laws and regulates economic relations. It follows from these conceptualizations that democracy and the market presuppose the rule of law to specify how powers should be divided and balanced, elites should be elected, people should participate, and economic relations should be structured and conducted and that the rule of law presupposes the state.

Significantly, not all ends are preconditions of others. If they were, then Ukraine and other post-Soviet republics would be caught in a vicious circle from which there could be no escape without the massive intervention of external forces willing and

able, like Bonn, to impose revolution from outside. States, as elaborate kinds of political organizations, nations, as collections of culturally related people, and civil societies, as sets of nonstate institutions situated between the political authorities and the individual, do not require the prior existence of democracies, markets, and rule of law. By not presupposing one another, therefore, states, civil societies, and nations are equally possible projects under post-Soviet conditions. But they are not equally probable. Although it is impossible to estimate their relative probabilities, we are justified in expecting weak nonrevolutionary elites to give priority to the state, nurture the nation, and be more or less indifferent to civil society. A functioning state is a precondition of their ability to retain elite status and a facilitating condition of their policy goals; a nation enhances and legitimates their power; while civil society has no direct bearing on them or their immediate ends.

These considerations lead to the conclusion that, other things being equal, change in the non-Russian states would have to be sequential, a conclusion that has been borne out by events since 1991. Revolutionary rhetoric notwithstanding, revolutionary transformations and attempted revolutions have been noticeably absent. All non-Russian elites have assiduously pursued state consolidation and nation building; many have cultivated civil society; only some have begun to transform their economies; and virtually none can be said to have established democratic regimes and rule of law.²⁰ Indeed, even Czech free-marketeers seem to have appreciated that the dismembering of Czechoslovakia and building of a Czech state were necessary conditions of radical economic measures. I am not arguing that it is either desirable or logically imperative to do virtually nothing about economic reform, like Ukraine in 1992–1993. But the full-scale introduction of market institutions must await its structural turn. The counterfactual moral for Russia is that, had its elite not been revolutionary, the logic of sequencing would have supported the amelioration of the Russian state's more egregious imperial-totalitarian features by, on the one hand, selectively "downsizing" its bloated bureaucracies and, on the other, establishing the rule of law as the logical precondition of both a market economy and democracy.

Muddling Through in Ukraine

In addition to the logical imperatives of sequential change, three conditions peculiar to Ukraine argue for the primacy of state building. Tensions with postimperial Russia, which broke out within days of the Ukrainian declaration of independence, were one. Negotiations required negotiators with staffs; the potential for conflict required an army and generals to go with it; the necessity of delineating interests and boundaries required analysts and border guards.²¹

Ukraine's sudden entrance onto the world stage also necessitated a state, for reasons of both prestige and effectiveness. Embassies had to be manned; represen-

tations and delegations had to be formed; and treaties had to be signed. In particular, Ukraine's possession of nuclear weapons, and Washington's fetishization of this issue, had the unintended effect of encouraging Kiev to fetishize the state and its accoutrements, such as weapons, militaries, and diplomatic fanfare.

Finally, the ethnic composition of Ukraine's population underlined the primacy of state building. Because the people inhabiting Ukraine possessed a variety of ethnic characteristics, Kiev's nation-building strategy had to emphasize civic and territorial loyalty and downplay ethnic allegiance. Therefore, despite some zig-zags, all Ukrainian governments consistently pursued policies that promoted, more or less equally, Ukrainian, Russian, and other languages and cultures and aspired to a "people of Ukraine" (*narod Ukrainy*) that would owe its loyalty to the country and its state, not to any particular language, culture, or nation.²²

Inevitably, state building proceeded slowly and fitfully, as Ukraine's administrative agencies were woefully understaffed and underfunded, their functionaries were undertrained, and their relations with one another were undefined. Worse still, as the civil service was anything but prestigious or lucrative, Ukraine's "best and brightest" preferred to enter business and other private pursuits. Not surprisingly, the incipient state was immediately seized by the *nomenklatura*, former Communist Party functionaries who retained their positions of central, regional, and local dominance.²³ By presiding over the state-controlled economy, they were able to pursue untrammelled rent seeking, acquire fortunes, and accelerate the economy's decline. Because the proto-state lived off itself, it seemed easy to predict that it could not be viable in the long, if indeed short, run.

A closer look at the Ukrainian proto-state implied a very different outcome. Although the state appeared monolithic to outsiders, it was actually rent by severe divisions within. The "party of power" was anything but unified, because the Ukrainian proto-state was, from the start, an "arena" of elite contestation. Elite factions based on regional loyalties, personal ties, functional roles, and generational differences struggled continually over power, resources, and policy.²⁴ State building per se concerned the definition of power, setting of its parameters, creation of institutions and organizations, and allocation of them and the power they held to contending elites. Specifically, posttotalitarian state building also involved a fierce struggle over the economic resources controlled by the proto-state and slated for privatization. Finally, elite contestation might have resembled that found in Soviet times if the system had been stable; policy goals, while not unimportant, would have taken a back seat to struggles over power and wealth. But because the economy was visibly collapsing and because the imperatives of state building were clear to all, policy had to figure in the forefront of elite infighting. Small wonder, then, that the *nomenklatura*-owned proto-state generated its own reformers. With the election of Leonid Kuchma as president in 1994, they even gained the upper hand but still faced the opposition of elites with other policy agendas.

The central struggle within the proto-state involved the president and the parliament, whose relationship was institutionally undefined and hence deadlocked. In Ukraine as elsewhere, the deadlock contributed to an incapacity to adopt meaningful reform measures. This failing was not fatal, however, as the imperatives of sequencing would have ruled out premature marketization anyway. And it was even desirable, because it contributed to the consolidation within the state of desperately fragile post-Soviet institutions, the executive and legislature, and to the emergence of an elite consensus that approximated an elite culture.

Because institution building involves the establishment of stable and regularized rules and procedures, deadlock can contribute to institutionalization when and where the rules of the game are undefined and unclear. Deadlock, after all, is a game of sorts that has to be played by certain rules, the central one being the recognition by both sides of the existence, if not quite legitimacy, of the other. Government deadlock, somewhat like a game of baseball that goes into seemingly endless extra innings, is frustrating, but it is also testimony to the fact that a game is being played, that rules are being learned, and that both sides recognize the indispensability of each other to the very act of playing the game within a defined setting, the arena of the state.²⁵

Although the socioeconomic consequences of a devastating drop in industrial and agricultural production were everywhere to be seen, most of Ukraine's bickering elites still managed to occupy the center of the political spectrum. Right-wing radicals were confined to fringe groups in western Ukraine, while the fire-breathing Communists proved strikingly conciliatory in their confrontations with Kuchma's reform program. Extremism was rare, because the inertia of the political process created a sense of moderation that facilitated cooperation and the formation of genuine rules of the game. The parliamentary and presidential elections of 1994 and the smooth transfer of power from Kravchuk to Kuchma testified to the growth of real, if far from sturdy, institutions within the Ukrainian state.

As an arena of struggle with no fixed institutional identity and little authority outside of Kiev, the proto-state also became a vehicle for the circulation and self-promotion of regional elites. In 1992–1994 west Ukrainians and Kievites dominated the game, only to be supplanted by east Ukrainians from the Donbas in 1995–1996. The central state's "permeability" enhanced the *nomenklatura's* ability to feed off the economy and accelerate its decline, but it also had several salutary consequences. One was to promote elite loyalty to the state, if only as a feeding ground. Another was to endow the elite with a corporate interest that worked against radicalization and polarization. A third was to undercut centralized political control of the economy and thus to remove one of the major obstacles to entrepreneurship and the introduction of market reforms.

Last but not least, state building, deadlock, and the subsequent economic decline had the seemingly paradoxical effect of facilitating marketization by immiserating

the population. The fact that immiseration progressed in a slow and inexorable manner resulted, not in feelings of relative deprivation and outrage, but in physical enervation, political apathy, social demobilization, and a progressive appreciation that only forceful solutions could address the hopelessness of everyday life.²⁶ Polls showed that few Ukrainians supported a market economy, but they failed to show that the population had also become less capable of opposing it.²⁷

By mid 1994 Ukraine was poised to address the next stage of reform, marketization. President Kuchma's ability to adopt a radical program should have come as no surprise in light of the policy-driven vicissitudes within the Ukrainian party of power. Inasmuch as Kravchuk had stood for little or no economic reform, and inasmuch as the economy was indeed a mess, it was highly probable that his opponents, whoever they might be, would be advocates either of marketization or of centralization. By the same token, it should come as no surprise that Kuchma's reforms proceeded unevenly, both because the weakness of the Ukrainian proto-state undermined his ability to pursue excessively radical change and because the pervasiveness of elite contestation permitted Communist forces with a more centralized vision of economic change to mobilize in opposition.

Leaping Forward in Russia

In contrast to Ukraine, Russia inherited a state, but one afflicted with two Soviet era deformations. First, the bureaucracies that manned central ministries were too large and not matched for scaled-down postimperial, posttotalitarian purposes. Second, the two institutions that stood out within the panoply of state agencies inherited from the Soviet period were the still powerful secret police and army, which were assured a disproportionately influential position in the state by virtue of the comparative weakness and disorganization of other political institutions.²⁸ Small wonder that bloated bureaucracies and two of the USSR's most reactionary institutions had a vested interest in resisting change in general and the kind that threatened to bring about their demise in particular.

To borrow an image from Antonio Gramsci, we can describe Russia's central state apparatus as resembling a fortress surrounded by an elaborate system of defenses, situated within a posttotalitarian environment of institutional disarray and intraelite infighting very similar to that in other republics. As in Ukraine, posttotalitarian chaos generated a variety of elite struggles based on region, function, personality, and policy. And as in Ukraine, the manifest imperative need to stem economic collapse and state decay required that policy figure importantly in elite contestations. But the postimperial, posttotalitarian nature of the Russian state and the prominence within it of the "structures of force" set the state on a collision course with radical elites.

The Ukrainian quasi-state serves as an arena of elite struggle because it lacked an identity and structure of its own. The Russian state figured as one of the contestants in the struggle between conservatives and radicals. As Russia's revolutionaries were too weak to storm the state, their great leap forward necessarily fell short. Yegor Gaidar's pursuit of economic shock therapy encountered massive bureaucratic resistance and had to be abandoned, but not before it embroiled President Yeltsin in a self-defeating struggle with the main source of governmental resistance to radical economic change, the parliament. Yeltsin prevailed, but his victory was Pyrrhic. It undermined the democratic aspirations of the great leap.²⁹ Exhausted by the failed assault, he signaled the radicals' retreat from revolution by appointing Viktor Chernomyrdin as prime minister in 1994 and their willingness to pursue a rapprochement with the state by purging the remaining radicals in the course of 1995–1996.

Although revolutionary policies failed, they nevertheless promoted forms of market-oriented, democratic, and civil behavior. Entrepreneurship flourished, as did manifold parties, a dynamic press, and a variety of social groupings.³⁰ However, these developments did not amount to the coherent sets of interconnected institutions that constitute a market, democracy, and civil society, but their emergence in the shadow of a postimperial, posttotalitarian state engaged in a struggle with a revolutionary elite produced several pathologies that set back Russia's development of market, democratic, and civil institutions.

The leading consequence of attempted economic revolution was the emergence of a parasitical, crime-ridden state on the order of those in many parts of the Third World. Privatization could assume mass forms only if it involved the wholesale expropriation of assets by state elites.³¹ In the absence of rule of law, elite infighting over the division and redivision of spoils translated into virtually universal official corruption, permitting organized crime to penetrate the state, forge alliances with its agencies, and in essence transform Russia into a vast criminal undertaking.³²

Ukraine's state was equally corrupt; its officials were no less inclined to thievery; and the Ukrainian "mafia" also flourished. Nevertheless, the difference between Ukraine and Russia was both quantitative and qualitative. The Ukrainian version of a corrupt posttotalitarian quasi-state was inherently circumscribed by its lack of "staleness." The more corrupt it became, the less it resembled a state. In contrast, the postimperial, posttotalitarian Russian state could enter into a symbiotic relationship with crime and produce a state-dominated version of gangster capitalism.

Attempted revolution was just as deleterious for Russia's democratic project. Although parties multiplied, countless public opinion polls were taken, and elections were held, the institutional *conditio sine qua non* of democracy — a division and balance of governmental powers — had been dealt a possibly fatal blow in 1993. By destroying the parliament as an institution and establishing a presidency with virtually unlimited powers enshrined in a constitution tailored to his own needs, President

Yeltsin accomplished exactly the opposite of what deadlock had achieved in Ukraine. Yeltsin upset the delicate balance between executive and legislature, nullified the emerging rules of the game, and promoted deinstitutionalization.

An all-powerful presidency was subversive of democracy directly, by negating the division and balance of powers, and indirectly, by setting back the rule of law. Once the presidential apparatus was set apart from and against other state agencies, self-preservation, not coordination or cooperation, became the bureaucratic *Leitmotiv*, resulting, as in Soviet times, in resource hoarding and personnel growth. Individual agencies consolidated themselves and the state as a whole fragmented.³³ Since multiple sovereignty characterized the state, rule of law became a chimera. Each organization might have been able to implement regularized internal procedures, but interagency rules could not take hold in a neofeudal setting of competing duchies and princedoms.

Finally, attempted revolution also set back the cause of civil society. Yeltsin's assault on the parliament played a critical role in destroying the political center, polarizing the elite into radical Communist and fascist wings, and thereby assuring that whatever elite consensus emerged would rest on a sense of nationhood rooted in Russia's imperial grandeur. The feudalized agencies of the great state could utilize the imperial discourse of the great nation as an ideological substitute for weak or absent rules of the game, while imperial nationhood became the one thing on which polarized Russian elites could agree.³⁴ Under constraining conditions such as these, civil society, as a coherent social space populated by autonomous institutions, could not thrive. Elite polarization, in combination with the hegemony of the great power national discourse, compelled emerging social institutions to choose sides in extremist politics and avoid a whole range of nonimperial ideological alternatives.

All in all, attempted revolution produced a weaker state. Corruption, deinstitutionalization, and polarization left Russia with competing state agencies incapable of asserting their collective authority outside of Moscow. A sufficient cause for concern on its own terms, this flaw was aggravated by Russia's ethnofederal structure. The problem was not multinationality as such, but the fact that political and economic power was assigned to administrative regions organized around designated nations. By providing them with resources, institutions, elites, and affective appeal, ethnofederalism placed the Russian Federation's ethnically organized administrative units in structural opposition to the central state. Multinational states without an ethnofederal structure, such as Ukraine, Kazakstan, and Estonia, suffered from regional and ethnic tensions, but only ethnofederations, such as Russia and Georgia, faced the prospect of possible disintegration on the order of the USSR and its two sister ethnic federations, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia.³⁵

While Russia's ethnofederal structure kept the specter of Chechen-like secession alive, the postimperial, posttotalitarian nature of the state guaranteed that state elites would respond to emergent Chechnyas, not as problems, but as existential threats.

Regardless of the particular reasons for Moscow's decision to invade the republic in December 1994, the structural contradiction between a fragmented central state and a rebellious republic may have made a clash inevitable.³⁶ The outcome of such a clash may also have been inevitable. Russia would attempt to crush Chechnya, but the act of crushing would be inefficient and, possibly, unsuccessful. The failure of the Russian ethnofederation and thus the failure of the Russian state became a distinct possibility as well.

What Next?

The structural argument developed in this article suggests how, *ceteris paribus*, Ukraine and Russia might develop in the years ahead. Ukraine seems destined to muddle along. Its elites are still averse to revolution; their resource endowment is only marginally higher now than in 1991; and their commitment to state building has placed Ukraine firmly on the evolutionary path dictated by the logic of post-communist systemic change. In the absence of disruptive exogenous factors such as wars or internationally induced economic depressions, unspectacular progress with respect to state building, political institutionalization, and economic reform should translate into the halting introduction of the rule of law and a gradual improvement in the standard of living. By the same token, unspectacular change also means that Ukraine is unlikely to develop a vigorous democracy, civil society, sense of nationhood, and full-scale market anytime soon and thus will remain vulnerable to a variety of internal tensions associated with their underdevelopment.

Russia's future should be substantially more dramatic, as two sets of forces may pull it in opposite directions. On the one hand, Russia may soon possess the defining characteristics of an authoritarian state.³⁷ The constitution already grants the president dictatorial powers. The growing ineffectiveness of the state almost demands that the president forge an alliance with the fragmented state agencies currently arrayed against him and thereby promote the interests of both partners. And Russian elites already share the hyperbolic language of national grandeur and neoimperial destiny.

On the other hand, at least two systemic forces work against this scenario. First, a turn to the right is likely to provoke ethnofederal units to assert their authority and thus to act as a brake on authoritarianism. Second, whichever extremist elite ultimately wins the upper hand — Gennady Zyuganov's Communist Party and Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's Liberal Democratic Party appear to be the leading contenders — another confrontation with the state seems likely. Such an encounter should, like ethnofederalism's promotion of centrifugal tendencies, also temper the authoritarian features of the state. While authoritarianism may therefore be avoidable, recurrent clashes between the central state and outside elites could be the

destabilizing price of such an outcome. Unfortunately, a prolonged “time of troubles” will not encourage institutionalized forms of democracy, the rule of law, the market, and civil society.

The limitations of structural arguments should remind us that, while they may point to long-term developments, they can hardly predict them. Nevertheless, a structural perspective on Ukraine and Russia suggests two theoretical conclusions. First, despite contemporary claims to the contrary, it is simply not true that rapid, fundamental, and comprehensive change is necessarily superior to evolution, a point that Karl Polanyi might have endorsed.³⁸ Much, if not everything, depends on the context of change — on the conditions, constraints, and opportunities that structure change. Second, and perhaps, more important, there may be grounds for thinking that revolution is intrinsically inferior to evolution, precisely because the massive transformation it proposes presupposes an ability to control, supervise, and plan that, almost by definition, is beyond the scope of revolutionaries engaged in upsetting established institutions and existing structures. If so, then reformers, no matter how unimaginative and unspectacular, may always be preferable to revolutionaries, not because they are reformers and hence likely to be right, but because, as Karl Popper reminded us many years ago, they are not utopians and hence doomed to be wrong.³⁹

NOTES

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1. In essence, the argument for pursuing radical economic reforms at the same time as democracy, civil society, and the rule of law advocates rapid, fundamental, and comprehensive change, that is, revolution. It hardly matters that contemporary proponents of revolution do not call themselves revolutionaries. For examples, see Jeffrey Sachs, *Poland's Jump to the Market Economy* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1994); David Kennett and Marc Lieberman, eds., *The Road to Capitalism* (Forth Worth: The Dryden Press, 1992); Anders Aslund, ed., *Economic Transformation in Russia* (New York: St. Martin's 1994).

2. Having enjoyed independence in the interwar period, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are not comparable to the other post-Soviet states and thus do not figure in my analysis. Unlike Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kazakstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, the Balts possessed states, civil societies, market economies, and the rule of law and, thanks to their Soviet-era status as laboratories for various social and economic experiments, managed to retain some of these institutional features into the 1980s. The Baltic states therefore deserve to be compared with the East Central European states. The definitive work on the Baltic states is Romuald J. Misiunas and Rein Taagepera, *The Baltic States: Years of Dependence, 1940–1980* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

3. Revolution as rapid, fundamental, and comprehensive change is only one possible definition. For a discussion of others, see Christoph M. Kotowski, “Revolution,” in Giovanni Sartori, ed., *Social Science*

Concepts (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1984), pp. 404–51; Alexander J. Motyl, “Concepts and Skocpol: Ambiguity and Vagueness in the Study of Revolution,” *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 4 (January 1992), 93–112.

4. Also arguing variants of this position are Kazimierz Poznanski, ed., *The Evolutionary Transition to Capitalism* (Boulder: Westview, 1995); Peter Murrell, “Conservative Political Philosophy and the Strategy of Economic Transition,” *East European Politics and Societies*, 6 (Winter 1992), 3–16; and Stephen E. Hanson, “The Utopia of Market Society in the Post-Soviet Context,” in Stephen E. Hanson and Willfried Spohn, eds., *Can Europe Work?* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), pp. 206–30. See also Beverly Crawford, ed., *Markets, States, and Democracy* (Boulder: Westview, 1995).

5. Eugene B. Rumer, “Will Ukraine Return to Russia?,” *Foreign Policy* (Fall 1994), 129–44; and “Ukraine: The Birth and Possible Death of a Country,” *The Economist*, May 7, 1994, offer especially alarmist readings.

6. Arthur C. Danto, *Narration and Knowledge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), pp. 257–84.

7. John Wilson, *Thinking with Concepts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963).

8. Ernest Sosa and Michael Tooley, “Introduction,” in Ernest Sosa and Michael Tooley, eds., *Causation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 5–8.

9. This understanding of empire reflects Michael W. Doyle, *Empires* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986). See also Alexander J. Motyl, “Thinking about Empire: A Conceptual Inquiry with Some Implications for Theory,” in Karen Barkey and Mark von Hagen, eds., *Imperial Collapse: Causes and Consequences* (Boulder: Westview, forthcoming).

10. On totalitarianism as a type of regime, see Giovanni Sartori, “Totalitarianism, Model Mania and Learning from Error,” *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 5 (January 1993), 5–22. On totalitarianism as a type of state, see Alexander J. Motyl, “The End of Sovietology: From Soviet Studies to Post-Soviet Studies,” in Alexander J. Motyl, ed., *The Post-Soviet Nations: Perspectives on the Demise of the USSR* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), pp. 309–11.

11. On the dynamics of totalitarian decay, see Alexander J. Motyl, *Sovietology, Rationality, Nationality: Coming to Grips with Nationalism in the USSR* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), pp. 59–71. For a brilliantly prescient discussion, see Karl Deutsch, “Cracks in the Monolith: Possibilities and Patterns of Disintegration in Totalitarian Systems,” in Harry Eckstein and David Apter, eds., *Comparative Politics: A Reader* (New York: Free Press, 1963), pp. 497–507.

12. See Motyl, *Sovietology, Rationality, Nationality*, pp. 161–73; and Alexander J. Motyl, *Will the Non-Russians Rebel? State, Ethnicity, and Stability in the USSR* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), pp. 36–52.

13. On the Russians, see Roman Szporluk, “The National Question,” in Timothy Colton and Robert Legvold, eds., *After the Soviet Union* (New York: Norton, 1992), pp. 94–100; John Dunlop, “Russia: Confronting a Loss of Empire,” in Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras, eds., *Nations and Politics in the Soviet Successor States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 43–72; Neil Melvin, *Forging the New Russian Nation* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1994).

14. Yaroslav Hrytsak, “Shifting Identities in Western and Eastern Ukraine,” *The East and Central Europe Program Bulletin*, 5 (February 1995), 1, 3, 5, 7.

15. On the theoretical import of initial conditions, see Ernest Nagel, *The Structure of Science*, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1979), pp. 30–32.

16. On resources, see Amitai Etzioni, *A Comparative Analysis of Complex Organizations* (New York: Free Press, 1975).

17. For an examination of these issues, see Alexander J. Motyl, “Reform, Transition, or Revolution? The Limits to Change in the Postcommunist States,” *Contention*, 4 (Fall 1994), 141–60.

18. See Alexander J. Motyl, *Dilemmas of Independence: Ukraine after Totalitarianism* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1993), pp. 51–75.

19. In contrast to the view that, "if two people meet to exchange anything, a market exists." Anders Aslund, "The Russian Road to the Market," *Current History*, 94 (October 1995), 314.
20. *Nations in Transit: Civil Society, Democracy and Markets in East Central Europe and the Newly Independent States* (New York: Freedom House, 1995).
21. See Ole Diehl, *Kiew und Moskau* (Bonn: Europa Union Verlag, 1994).
22. Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: Back from the Brink* (London: Institute for European Defence and Strategic Studies, 1995), pp. 20–23. For a contrary view, see Dominique Arel, "Ukraine: A Country Report," unpublished ms., prepared for the Minority Rights Group, USA, January 31, 1996.
23. Volodymyr Polokhaol, "Vid Ukrainy komunistychno-totalitarnoi do Ukrainy neototalitarnoi?" [From a Communist-Totalitarian Ukraine to a Neototalitarian Ukraine?], *Politychna dumka*, 2 (1994), 19, calls the Ukraine state "neototalitarian."
24. Dmitrii Vydrin, "Ukrainskaia politicheskaia elita" [The Ukrainian Political Elite], *Kievskie Vedomosti*, Sept. 3, 1994, p. 4.
25. See Dmitri Furman, "Ukraina i my" [Ukraine and We], *Svobodnaia mysl'*, (1995), 69–83.
26. I draw these conclusions from the vast social science literature on revolutions and rebellions. For an excellent overview, see Ekkart Zimmermann, *Political Violence, Crises, and Revolutions* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1983).
27. *A Political Portrait of Ukraine: The Results of Four Polls Conducted during the 1994 Election Campaign in Ukraine* (Kiev: Democratic Initiatives Research and Educational Center, 1994), pp. 10–13.
28. Jewgenija Albaz, *Geheimimperium KGB* (Munich: DTV, 1992), pp. 239–70; Stephen M. Meyer, "The Military," in Colton and Legvold, eds., pp. 113–46; Eugene B. Rumer, *The Ideological Crisis in the Russian Military* (Santa Monica: RAND, 1994); Renee de Nevers, *Russia's Strategic Renovation* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1994).
29. See Lynn D. Nelson and Irina Y. Kuzes, *Radical Reform in Yeltsin's Russia* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1995).
30. Consider the impressive political diversity documented by Michael McFaul and Nikolai Petrov, eds., *Previewing Russia's 1995 Parliamentary Elections* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment, 1995).
31. Padma Desai, "Russian Privatization: A Comparative Perspective," *The Harriman Review*, 8 (August 1995), 1–34.
32. Stephen Handelman, *Comrade Criminal* (London: Michael Joseph, 1994).
33. Anders Aslund, "The Politics of the Economic Reform: Remaining Tasks," in Anders Aslund, ed., *Russian Economic Reform at Risk* (London: Pinter, 1995), pp. 194–201.
34. Michael Urban, "Politics of Identity in Russia's Transition," *Slavic Review*, 53 (Fall 1994), 733–65.
35. Motyl, *Sovietology, Rationality, Nationality*, pp. 72–99.
36. Fiona Hill, "*Russia's Tinderbox*": *Conflict in the North Caucasus and Its Implications for the Future of the Russian Federation* (Cambridge, Mass.: John F. Kennedy School of Government, 1995).
37. Peter Reddaway, "Russia on the Brink?," *The New York Review of Books*, Jan. 28, 1993, pp. 30–35, and "Desperation Time for Yeltsin's Clique," *The New York Times*, Jan. 13, 1995, p. A31, makes a similar point.
38. Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1944).
39. Karl Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964).