

# An Uninstitutionalized Civil Society in Post-Soviet Russia, 1994-99

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*This paper argues that there was an uninstitutionalized civil society in post-Soviet Russia from 1994 to 1999 according to the criteria of the institutionalization of civil society. The development of Russian civil society was shaped by the broader set of political opportunities and constraints unique to the national context in which this society was embedded. Despite large increases in the number of such organizations in post-Soviet Russia, civil society has in other respects been weak. There have been low levels of organizational membership and participation, and the associations and groups constituting civil society have had only a marginal influence on policymaking. There have been three major constraints (external, internal, and the public's attitudes) on the development of civil society. The paper concludes that the conditions for building the cohesive and connective infrastructure of a civil society and making it work can be constructed on three interrelated foundations: a supporting and self-limiting state, the assistance of international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and foreign aid donors, and the efforts of autonomous civic initiatives.*

**KEYWORDS:** civil society; Russia; institutionalization; political opportunities and constraints; state-society relations

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Democratic theorists and advocates have indicated that a capable

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state is an important condition for sustaining democracy.<sup>1</sup> Recent contributions to the study of civil society have criticized social capital theory for downplaying the influence of government and politics on the formation of civil society,<sup>2</sup> and have emphasized the important role of a supporting state in strengthening civil society.<sup>3</sup> To understand the potential role and functions of civil society, one must examine the political context that structures its development.

In post-Soviet Russia there has been mutual suspicion between a weak central state and a weak civil society. An appropriate way of making democracy work is through the mechanism of mutual empowerment between the state and civil society: an effective and supporting state is necessary for the vibrancy of civil society, while a vigorous and robust civil society can play an active role in helping the state to reinvigorate its public institutions.<sup>4</sup> If social capital produced by civil society is the key to making

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<sup>1</sup>Adam Przeworski et al., *Sustainable Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

<sup>2</sup>See, for instance, Sidney Tarrow, "Making Social Science Work across Space and Time: A Critical Reflection on Robert Putnam's *Making Democracy Work*," *American Political Science Review* 90, no. 2 (June 1996): 389-97; Margaret Levi, "Social and Unsocial Capital: A Review Essay of Robert Putnam's *Making Democracy Work*," *Politics and Society* 24, no. 1 (March 1996): 45-55; Sheri Berman, "Civil Society and Political Institutionalization," *American Behavioral Scientist* 40 (March/April 1997): 562-74; and Theda Skocpol, Marshall Ganz, and Ziad Munson, "A Nation of Organizers: The Institutional Origins of Civic Voluntarism in the United States," *American Political Science Review* 94, no. 3 (September 2000): 527-46.

<sup>3</sup>John Gray, "From Post-Communism to Civil Society: The Reemergence of History and the Decline of the Western Model," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 10 (Summer 1993): 26-50; Jonah D. Levy, *Tocqueville's Revenge: State, Society, and Economy in Contemporary France* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999); Theda Skocpol, "How Americans Became Civic," in *Civic Engagement in American Democracy*, ed. Theda Skocpol and Morris P. Fiorina (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1999), 27-80; and Peter A. Hall, "Social Capital in Britain," *British Journal of Political Science* 29, no. 3 (July 1999): 417-61.

<sup>4</sup>For a review article exploring the intellectual background and surveying some empirical works on the issue of mutually empowering interactions between the state and social forces, see Xu Wang, "Mutual Empowerment of State and Society: Its Nature, Conditions, Mechanisms, and Limits," *Comparative Politics* 31, no. 2 (January 1999): 231-49. For the empirical works, see Joel S. Migdal, Atul Kohli, and Vivienne Shue, eds., *State Power and Social Forces: Domination and Transformation in the Third World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); and Peter Evans, ed., *State-Society Synergy: Government and Social Capital in Development* (Berkeley: International and Area Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1997).

democracy work as neo-Tocquevilleans suggest,<sup>5</sup> then in the case of Russia the question that needs to be asked in the first place is how to strengthen civil society in order to increase social capital.

Based on the criteria of the institutionalization of civil society, this paper follows an analytical framework of political opportunities and constraints in the context of state-society relations to analyze the development of Russian civil society from 1994 (soon after the dissolution of the Soviet-era parliament and the adoption of a presidential constitution) to December 1999 (when Boris Yeltsin stepped down as president).<sup>6</sup> In the first section, the paper reveals the reality of a weak civil society despite a growing number of social groups. The second section sets up the criteria for the institutionalization of civil society. The third then explains the constraints on the development of civil society, while the final section explores the approaches to making civil society work.

### **Declining Membership and Participation of Countless Social Organizations**

There has been a dramatic increase in the number of various types of organizations since the late 1980s,<sup>7</sup> though there is some discrepancy over

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<sup>5</sup>See Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993).

<sup>6</sup>For the concept of political opportunity structure, see Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, second edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 71-90. For using a framework of opportunities and constraints, which consists of three explanatory factors—elite choice, institutional design, and political culture—to explain and analyze the dynamic pattern of three types of civil society during three critical junctures within the context of changing state-society relations: (1) 1985-88: a regime-initiated civil society; (2) 1989-93: a society-mobilized civil society; and (3) 1994-99: an uninstitutionalized civil society, see Yung-fang Lin, "The Development of Civil Society in the Former Soviet Union and Russia, 1985-1999" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oxford, 2001).

<sup>7</sup>For the various types of civil society organizations in Russia, see M. Holt Ruffin et al., *The Post-Soviet Handbook: A Guide to Grassroots Organizations and Internet Resources*, revised edition (Seattle: Center for Civil Society International, 1999); M. Slobodskaya et al., *Rossiyskie nekommercheskie organizatsii* (Russia's noncommercial organizations), two volumes (Moscow: Institut problem grazhdanskogo obshchestva, 1998/1999); N. I. Abubikirova et al., *Directory of Women's Non-Governmental Organizations in Russia & the*



the actual number due to the absence of centrally held information about local registration of social organizations.<sup>8</sup> Even registration (with the Russian Ministry of Justice) itself does not automatically mean that the registered organizations are active or really exist. In 1988 informal groups numbered approximately 30,000 and reached 60,000 in 1989.<sup>9</sup> Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) registered before 1995 were required to re-register before July 1999. According to the data compiled by the State Committee on Statistics cited by the Agency for Social Information, there were in total 150,000 nonprofit organizations in Russia at the beginning of 1998.<sup>10</sup> The total number of registered NGOs in January 1999 was 286,000 according to the annual review by the Charities Aid Foundation Russia.<sup>11</sup> By January 1, 2000, the total number of officially registered noncommercial organizations was 484,989, which did not include the informal social groups and associations actively existing in the regions, according to the State Committee on Statistics.<sup>12</sup>

Despite large increases in the number of civil society organizations in post-Soviet Russia, however, politically influential groups have been much smaller and much less representative throughout most of the 1990s.<sup>13</sup>

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*NIS* (Moscow: Aslan Publishers, 1998); *Politicheskie partii i dvizheniya Rossii* (Russia's political parties and movements) (Moscow: Biznes-Press, 1999); and Oleg N. Yanitskiy, *Ekologicheskoe dvizhenie v Rossii* (The environmental movement in Russia) (Moscow: Rossiyskaya Akademiya Nauk, 1996).

<sup>8</sup>Anne White, *Democratization in Russia under Gorbachev, 1985-91: The Birth of a Voluntary Sector* (London: Macmillan, 1999), 12; and Christopher Marsh, "Social Capital and Democracy in Russia," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 33 (2000): 189.

<sup>9</sup>Vera Tolz, *The USSR's Emerging Multiparty System* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1990), 10-11.

<sup>10</sup>Agentstvo sotsial'noy informatsii, *Vypusk 7* (February 20-26, 1998): 168.

<sup>11</sup>Charities Aid Foundation Russia, *Annual Review 1998/99*, 7. In early 1999, according to Oleg Sestrenskiy, editor-in-chief of *Vestnik Bragotvoritel'nosti*, in Russia there were more than 60,000 NGOs excluding political parties, trade unions, and religious associations. See Oleg Sestrenskiy: "O chyom ne znayut timurovtsy na gryadke u soldatskoi vdovy," *Novye izvestiya*, January 29, 1999, 7 and "Chem otlichaetsya ruka pravatelya ot ruki daritelya?" *Kul'tura*, March 4-10, 1999.

<sup>12</sup>Data cited in a document of State Duma hearings, March 21, 2000, Moscow.

<sup>13</sup>Archie Brown, "Russia and Democratization," *Problems of Post-Communism* 46, no. 5 (September/October 1999): 4. For his expanded and updated article, see Archie Brown, "Evaluating Russia's Democratization," in *Contemporary Russian Politics: A Reader*, ed. Archie Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 546-68.

Lyudmila Alekseeva, head of the Moscow Helsinki Group, has observed that Russian civil society is weak not because of its size but because of the fragile ties within it and among its separate parts.<sup>14</sup> A survey found that 80 to 90 percent of Russians did not belong to any voluntary association.<sup>15</sup> Membership in political parties in Russia has remained among the lowest per capita in the post-communist region.<sup>16</sup> The enormous space between the disintegrating state and the individual was full of "the remnants of the old Soviet order—fragments of the old party-state, as well as outgrowths of private interpersonal networks."<sup>17</sup> As Archie Brown points out, "the heyday of civil society in Russia was in the last years of the Soviet Union."<sup>18</sup> According to research by Marc Morje Howard, the levels of organizational membership and participation in post-communist countries have declined significantly. Emphasizing the similarities of the communist experience and its lasting legacy (rather than elite and institutional differences between countries), his findings show that prior communist experience and people's ongoing reinterpretations of prior and present experiences are the most powerful and significant factors in the weakness of civil society in today's post-communist countries.<sup>19</sup> The current mood of withdrawal from politics and organizations may also partly result from people's preoccupation with economic survival and social stability, and partly from disbelief in the efficacy of popular movements.<sup>20</sup> James L. Gibson also explains the reasons

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<sup>14</sup>Valerii P. Liubin and Joan Barth Urban, "Government and Civil Society in Contemporary Russia: Prospects for Mutual Cooperation," *Johnson's Russia List*, no. 5324 (June 27, 2001).

<sup>15</sup>Richard Rose, "Getting Things Done in an Anti-Modern Society: Social Capital Networks in Russia," *Studies in Public Policy*, no. 304 (Glasgow: Centre for the Study of Public Policy, University of Strathclyde, 1998): 11.

<sup>16</sup>M. Steven Fish, "When More Is Less: Superexecutive Power and Political Underdevelopment in Russia," in *Russia in the New Century: Stability or Disorder?* ed. Victoria E. Bonnell and George W. Breslauer (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 2001), 20.

<sup>17</sup>M. Steven Fish, "Russia's Fourth Transition," in *The Global Resurgence of Democracy*, second edition, ed. Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 266.

<sup>18</sup>Brown, "Russia and Democratization," 4.

<sup>19</sup>Marc Morje Howard, "Demobilized Societies: Understanding the Weakness of Civil Society in Post-Communist Europe" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1999).

<sup>20</sup>Brown, "Russia and Democratization," 4; and Timothy J. Colton, *Moscow: Governing the Socialist Metropolis* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 748.

why organizational life is so barren in Russia. He notes that in addition to economic necessity, which has consumed most of the people's time and energy, "social networks may have enabled Russians to accomplish many of their goals without resorting to formal organization."<sup>21</sup>

Post-communist societies, therefore, are "path-dependent," built not on a political *tabula rasa* but on the ruins of their communist predecessors, as these peoples have been forced to wrestle with the communist legacy. On the other hand, the direction of post-Soviet state policy and institutional designs can have a profound impact on the resilience and density of civil society. Thus, if civil society appears to be weak and listless, "a proper explanation must look not simply to the legacies of the past but also to the politics of the present."<sup>22</sup> As Theda Skocpol asserts: "An institutional approach to civic life suggests that state, politics, and society are—for better or worse—inevitably intertwined."<sup>23</sup>

### **The Criteria and Principles of the Institutionalization of Civil Society**

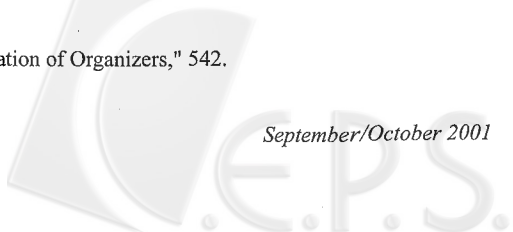
Drawing on recent research about civil society, we can define the level of the institutionalization of civil society in a modern liberal democracy with the following interrelated principles and criteria in terms of: (1) internal structure (such as autonomy, adaptability, solidarity, financial independence, non-usurpation, and civility); (2) external structure (such as independent communication media, networks of consultation, rights and constitutionalism, and the effective ally of international NGOs); and (3) the mediating fields (such as the interactions among civil society, political society, the state, and business). Note that the subjective features of civil society are politically mediated and changeable. As Jonah Levy has argued:

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<sup>21</sup>James L. Gibson, "Social Networks, Civil Society, and the Prospects for Consolidating Russia's Democratic Transition," *American Journal of Political Science* 45, no. 1 (January 2001): 66.

<sup>22</sup>Levy, *Tocqueville's Revenge*, 9.

<sup>23</sup>Skocpol, Ganz, and Munson, "A Nation of Organizers," 542.



Civic associationalism is an essentially political construction, fashioned by state strategies that frame the associational environment, by relations between associations, and by internal conflicts and adjustments within associations. What is more, the relative virtue or performance of civil society can evolve over time, as new challenges emerge and the political and economic context shifts.<sup>24</sup>

The prospects for civic community and democratic consolidation can be observed in three specific areas: urban mass communications, the organizational framework for participation, and attitudes toward civic life.<sup>25</sup>

The above criteria and principles can also be seen as the building blocks or infrastructure of an institutionalized civil society that cultivates stocks of social capital contributing to the consolidation of democracy. They provide us with the reference points and insights to answer the following two questions concerning the constraints on and opportunities for the development of civil society: (1) Why is Russian civil society weak and uninstitutionalized? (2) How can Russian civil society be made to work? To answer the first question, we single out a few major factors to explain an uninstitutionalized and weak civil society in Russia: (1) external constraints: the structural impediments of the state, the problems of rights and constitutionalism, the consequences of economic reforms, a weak political society, and an oligarchical and manipulated mass media; (2) internal constraints: the problems of adaptation and solidarity, and scarce financial resources; and (3) the public's alienated attitudes toward civic life. Regarding the second question, three approaches to strengthening civil society stand out as the antidotes to the above constraints: (1) a supporting state, (2) the assistance of international NGOs and foreign aid donors, and (3) the efforts of autonomous civic initiatives.

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<sup>24</sup>Levy, *Tocqueville's Revenge*, 9.

<sup>25</sup>Colton, *Moscow*, 744. Linz and Stepan maintain that democratic consolidation takes place in three major dimensions: behavioral, attitudinal, and constitutional. By the same token, Diamond points out two dimensions of democratic consolidation: norms and behavior. See Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), and Larry Diamond, *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

**Constraints:  
External, Internal, and the Public's Attitudes**

*The Structural Impediments of the State*

In the process of post-Soviet civil society building, state weakness or withdrawal has negative consequences. As Steven Fish notes, "The enfeeblement and fragmentation [decay, corruption, and disorganization] of state institutions in Russia pose formidable barriers to the development of civil society."<sup>26</sup> The new Russian state tended to be weak in all three dimensions of state capacity: institutional, political, and administrative.<sup>27</sup> In the words of Russian sociologist Tat'yana Zaslavskaya: "Instead of a strong and rule-of-law state, in Russia a weak and criminalized state has arisen, where legal chaos and the total corruption of the regime's structure prevail."<sup>28</sup> The post-Soviet Russian state did not have the ability to govern effectively. For example, the state failed to collect taxes, enforce the rule of law, fight crime, prevent the sale of natural resources at bargain prices, forestall the concentration and massive flight of capital, and rebuild the social welfare system.<sup>29</sup> Valerie Sperling laid out seven major obstacles to the formation of a strong state in Russia: the presence of "strongmen" (regional officials and the leaders of certain businesses and industries) who challenged central authority; the underdevelopment of civil society; widespread reliance on personalism in Russian politics; failure to create strong state institutions; rampant corruption within state institutions; lack of clarity about the citizenship boundaries of the Russian state; and Russia's dis-

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<sup>26</sup>Fish, "Russia's Fourth Transition," 265.

<sup>27</sup>These three are the requisites of an effective and legitimate state. See Cynthia Roberts and Thomas Sherlock, "Bringing the Russian State Back In: Explanations of the Derailed Transition to Market Democracy," *Comparative Politics* 31, no. 4 (July 1999): 480-81.

<sup>28</sup>Tat'yana Zaslavskaya, "O sotsial'no-transformatsionnoy strukture rossiyskogo obshchestva," *Monitoring obshchestvennogo mneniya: ekonomicheskie i sotsial'nye peremeny* (VTsIOM), January-February 2000, 15. According to Alla Varlamova, lecturer in law at Moscow State University and head of the Legal Department at "EES Russia," "The Mafia and money are above the law. The low salaries of civil servants compel many of them to take bribes." Author's interview, September 25, 1999, Moscow.

<sup>29</sup>Valerie Sperling, "Introduction: The Domestic and International Obstacles to State-Building in Russia," in *Building the Russian State: Institutional Crisis and the Quest for Democratic Governance*, ed. Valerie Sperling (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 2000), 28.



advantaged location in the global political and economic system.<sup>30</sup>

Many had assumed that the empowerment of regional administrations would provide local associations with access to the decision-making process because centralization of politics serves as a constraint on citizen involvement in the policy process. In Russia, however, central power has deteriorated vis-à-vis powerful regional baronies thanks to "a poorly orchestrated, largely anarchic decentralization-by-default."<sup>31</sup> As Stephen Padgett has argued, the misconception of the character of associational activity in post-communist society—i.e., the illusion of democratization accompanied or even driven by the forces of a dynamic civil society—"arises from an underestimation of continuity amidst change, and the capacity of old elites to reconstitute themselves in the post-communist environment."<sup>32</sup> At the local level, the horizontal ties and autonomous participation of democratic citizenship have been blocked by the vertical dependence of clientelism. Particularly, in Russia's regions the staff of NGOs know little about management and therefore often rely on local political authorities for everything from office space to administrative support.<sup>33</sup>

### *The Problems of Rights and Constitutionalism*

Art. 30 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation of 1993 guarantees the freedom of activity of social associations and citizens' right of association. The year 1995 witnessed the most active growth in the registration of noncommercial organizations (more than 40,000).<sup>34</sup> That increase occurred because during 1995 the first part of the Civil Code came

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 7-18. Of course, the goal of enhancing a high level of state capacity is not to create an abusive and predatory state as in the Soviet case but "to achieve an accountable set of state institutions that follow transparent and established rules." Ibid., 13.

<sup>31</sup>Fish, "Russia's Fourth Transition," 182.

<sup>32</sup>Stephen Padgett, *Organizing Democracy in Eastern Germany: Interest Groups in Post-Communist Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 36-37.

<sup>33</sup>Katherine Young, "Growing a Democracy: Russia's Non-Profit Sector Takes Root," *Russian Life*, September 1996, 13.

<sup>34</sup>Galina Bodrenkova, "Razvitie tret'ego sektora kak instrument sotsial'noi adaptatsii nasele-niya," in *Sotsial'no-psikhologicheskoi adaptatsii naseleniya v period transformatsii obshchestva: Materialy vtorykh Mil'nerovskikh chteniy Problemy*, ed. E. B. Gilinskaya and S. N. Smimov (Moscow: VSHE, 1999), 209.

into force and the State Duma passed a number of specific federal laws.<sup>35</sup> These laws established the most important legal basis for the existence and development of independent activism and for the construction of a post-communist Russian civil society.

However, legislation guaranteeing the status of the third sector is only a first step. The next and necessary step of the state's recognition of the third sector is the formation of infrastructure, i.e., a mechanism of interaction between them, and the creation by the state of conditions conducive to the effective work of the third sector.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, the laws still need to be implemented, improved, or complemented by economic mechanisms.<sup>37</sup> The renewed code of laws would force social organizations to obey common rules applied to businesses: pay the state's three basic taxes—the income tax, value-added tax (VAT), and profits tax.<sup>38</sup> Vareriy Borshchev, vice-chairman of the State Duma Committee on Affairs of Social Associations and Religious Organizations, complained: "Such government actions are just like the state's aggressive acts against Russia's noncommercial sector." Borshchev described some members of the government staff as "incompetent" because they could not even tell the difference between commercial and noncommercial organizations.<sup>39</sup>

Giving tax benefits to donors could seemingly increase the incentive for businesses to make donations to NGOs. Even under the existing rules, however, businesses could deduct 3-5 percent of their profits from their taxable incomes for "charitable giving." Few businesses have claimed tax exemption from their donations because little tax is saved, and such a move would draw the attention of tax authorities to their income, poten-

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<sup>35</sup>These include the Law on Public Associations (passed on April 14, 1995), the Law on State Support of the Youth and Children's Social Associations (passed on May 26, 1995), the Law on Philanthropic Activities and Charity Organizations (passed on July 7, 1995), and the Law on Trade Unions, Their Rights and Guarantees of Activity as well as the Law on Noncommercial Organizations (both passed on December 8, 1995).

<sup>36</sup>See "State and Society: Organization and Life," in *People Help People*, ed. Galina Bodrenkova, (Moscow: Moscow Charity House/Volunteer Center, 1995).

<sup>37</sup>Irina Khakamada, "Krizis ne podavil, a stimuliroval sotsial'nyuyu initsiativu," *Den'gi i blagotvoritel'nost'* 6, no. 24 (December 1998): 5.

<sup>38</sup>Sestrenskiy, "O chyom ne znayut timurovtsy na gryadke u soldatskoy vdovy," 7.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

tially leaving the company open to more tax liabilities.<sup>40</sup>

### *The Consequences of Economic Reforms*

In the Soviet period, the absence of a market economy strongly affected the emergence of independent associations and restricted the ability of groups to obtain resources without reliance on political authorities.<sup>41</sup> Market reforms brought about socioeconomic changes that shifted the balance of power between state and society and reduced the capacity of the state to control and manipulate society. Privatization and the transformation of property rights and relations promoted interest group formation, caused stratification among societal groups in terms of property ownership, stimulated the rise of a middle class, and increased the resource mobilization ability of the institutions of civil society. However, privatization also had negative effects on the interest formation and associational activity that reflected the legacy of the past. For example, privatization benefited the former *nomenklatura*, caused corruption and the rise of criminal organizations, and stimulated the emergence of economic oligarchs based on the traditional parasitic pattern of patron-client relations. The sectoral lobbies and the oligarchs were the most potent economic power. The military-industrial complex, the fuel and energy complex, the agro-industrial complex, and the banking industries dominated the sectoral lobbies. The oligarchs were a well-connected group of financiers, bankers, and managers of industrial enterprises who ruled over the banking, industrial, and natural resource monopolies that drove the Russian economy in the immediate post-communist years. The leading oligarchs were the so-called "Moscow's Group of Seven": Boris Berezovskiy (Logovaz/Sibneft Group), Vladimir Gusinskiy (Most Group), Mikhail Khodorkovskiy (Menatep/Yukos Group), Pyotr Aven (Al'fa Group), Mikhail Friedman (Al'fa Group), Aleksandr Smolenskiy (Stolichniy/SBS Agro Group), and Vladimir Potanin (Oneximbank/Interros Group). By 1996 these oligarchs had extended the web of their financial conglomerates to the independent

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<sup>40</sup>Charities Aid Foundation Russia, *Annual Review 1998/99*, 11.

<sup>41</sup>M. Steven Fish, *Democracy from Scratch: Opposition and Regime in the New Russian Revolution* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), 76.

and state-owned print and electronic media. The oligarchs were backed by the former *nomenklatura* who became the new economic elites through economic "reforms."<sup>42</sup> The same Soviet-style bureaucratic management of the directors of privatized enterprises retarded economic efficiency and innovation.<sup>43</sup>

To cement political support, Yeltsin and his reformers used state assets as political resources in order to obtain allies. The regime's inability to restrain the beneficiaries of its political strategy allowed the winners of initial reforms to enhance their political leverage in policy change and thereby block any attempts at market reform.<sup>44</sup> Strong economic interest groups in society and a weak Russian state interacted to retard the formation of such market-supporting institutions as a social safety net—including an effective retirement system, a welfare agency, a plan for job training, or unemployment compensation. Workers still depended on their enterprise directors to provide all social services.<sup>45</sup> The absence of independent trade unions that assertively and capably acted to represent labor interests provided evidence that civil society was still weakly formed.<sup>46</sup> An effective institutional framework for allowing worker input into government decision-making had not been constructed.

In 1987 the deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR finally officially revealed the devastating conditions of pensioners and disabled people. In 1995 the first federal law "On Social Service of the Older and Disabled Citizens" was adopted.<sup>47</sup> However, the impoverished central and

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<sup>42</sup>See Marcia A. Weigle, *Russia's Liberal Project: State-Society Relations in the Transition from Communism* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 255, 261.

<sup>43</sup>Author's interview with Alla Varlamova, September 25, 1999, Moscow.

<sup>44</sup>Joel Hellman, "Winners Take All: The Politics of Partial Reform in Postcommunist Transitions," *World Politics* 50, no. 2 (January 1998): 203-34.

<sup>45</sup>Michael McFaul, "State Power, Institutional Change, and the Politics of Privatization in Russia," *ibid.* 47, no. 2 (January 1995): 212, 236-37.

<sup>46</sup>Rather than organized for long-term gain, the workers remained generally atomized, struggling among themselves for limited resources. The working class had not coalesced into a stable formation and proved unable to engage in effective and sustained collective action. See Victor Zaslavsky, "The Russian Working Class in Times of Transition," in Bonnell and Breslauer, *Russia in the New Century*, 201-30.

<sup>47</sup>By the end of the year 2000, there were about 10 million registered disabled people in

local authorities contributed little to social services. According to research by Russian academics and civil society activists:

In order to bring forward services to citizens to the maximum, there should be at least one social service center in every municipal *okrug* [district] or municipal *raion* [region]. However, far from having these institutions deployed in every region, today the whole country has a total of 1,680 social service centers, while there are more than 12,000 municipalities. Therefore, the centers have not yet completely answered citizens' requirements for social services. Municipal social service centers are financed by local budgets.<sup>48</sup>

Meanwhile, dissatisfaction with governmental social policy did not automatically lead to the search for independent solutions through self-organization and independent initiatives, as shown by the current difficulties faced by the creative unions (artists, writers, and architects).<sup>49</sup>

Economic relations need to be sufficiently developed in order to generate the complex patterns of social differentiation and interdependence that lie at the heart of civil society in sociological discourse. As Galkin and Krasin argued, the stable economic base of civil society "requires a decisive transition to market relationships and varied forms of property, on which depends an economic framework of horizontal social structure and connections."<sup>50</sup> The majority of Russians did not successfully cope with the task of economic adaptation to the market, and therefore the channels of social mobility were blocked, slowing down the process of social transformation.<sup>51</sup> The absence of structural differentiation and concomitant patterns of interest formation accounted for the weakness of Russian civil

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Russia; the number has increased two and a half times during the past six years. See "Invalidy ostanutsya pri l'gotakh," at <<http://www.nns.ru/chronicle>>, December 4, 2000.

<sup>48</sup>Ol'ga Zdravomyslova et al., *Starshee pokolenie v sovremennoy Rossii: statistika, issledovaniya, obshchestvennye organizatsii* (Moscow: Agentstvo sotsial'noy informatsii, 1999), 45.

<sup>49</sup>V. G. Khoros and D. Kuklina, "Neformal'nye organizatsii," in *Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo: mirovoy opyt i problemy Rossii*, ed. V. G. Khoros (Moscow: Editorial URSS, 1998), 188-89.

<sup>50</sup>A. Galkin and Yu. Krasin, *Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo: put' k politicheskoy stabil'nosti* (Moscow: Fond sotsial'no-politicheskikh issledovaniy, 1992), 8.

<sup>51</sup>See Elena Avraamova, "Vliyaniye sotsial'no-ekonomicheskikh faktorov na formirovaniye politicheskogo soznaniya," in *Rossiyskoe obshchestvo: stanovleniye demokraticheskikh tsennostey?* ed. Michael McFaul and Andrey Ryabov (Moscow: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999), 9-42.

society.<sup>52</sup> A feeble middle class, which was seriously damaged by the financial crash of August 1998, and the huge gap between the rich and the poor made the future of civil society bleak.

### *A Weak Political Society*

Yeltsin's personalistic and patriarchal leadership style, as well as his contingent policy choices, reinforced constraints inherited from the Soviet legacy (i.e., cultural, institutional, and circumstantial), and in many respects created new institution-building problems in post-Soviet Russia. As George W. Breslauer has observed, "His style emphasized personalistic considerations and political rationality at the expense of procedural development and systemic legitimacy, thereby contributing to the institutional fragility that plagues Russia today."<sup>53</sup>

After the zero-sum conflict between the executive and the parliament in 1993, Yeltsin installed a superpresidential system that reflected the personalization of power and thus further undermined state capacity. The pernicious effects of superpresidentialism can be summarized as damaging the legitimacy of the regime, undermining the accountability of officialdom, and retarding the growth and development of political and civil society.<sup>54</sup> A superpresidential system reduces the incentives for political and economic actors to invest in autonomous societal organizations due to the

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<sup>52</sup>Michael Urban points out a tacit Western bias in the application of association theory to the Soviet case. The bias is obvious in assuming that "associations have more or less ready-made interests—generated by a civil society—that they would articulate, aggregate, and represent." In his view, "it is precisely the relative absence of such structures that accounts for the still primitive and confused state of what could be called 'interest formulation,' the generation of interests in the first place." See Michael E. Urban, "State, Property, and Political Society in Postcommunist Russia: In Search of a Political Center," in *In Search of Pluralism: Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics*, ed. Carol R. Saivetz and Anthony Jones (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1994), 125-50 at 144.

<sup>53</sup>George W. Breslauer, "Personalism Versus Proceduralism: Boris Yeltsin and the Institutional Fragility of the Russian System," in Bonnell and Breslauer, *Russia in the New Century*, 37-38. See also Eugene Huskey, *Presidential Power in Russia* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1999), 9.

<sup>54</sup>See M. Steven Fish, "The Executive Deception: Superpresidentialism and the Degradation of Russian Politics," in Sperling, *Building the Russian State*, 187-91 and "When More Is Less," 15-34. See also Lilia Shevtsova, *Yeltsin's Russia: Myths and Reality* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999), 279-80.

weakness of the legislature compared to the executive branch. In the words of V. B. Pastukhov: "The formation of a self-sufficient regime is due to the absence of a real economic and legal basis of federalism as well as the lack of a genuine separation of powers. It also arises by virtue of the decorative role of parliament and court, which are subordinate to the executive power, causing legal nihilism."<sup>55</sup>

A growing gap and mutual dislike between Russia's underdeveloped political parties and isolated civil society inhibited the latter's abilities to influence the state. Without a stable political party system mediating interaction between the state and civil society, rampant lobbying was the alternative way of influencing policy. Semenenko explains that:

The major channel for advancing the interests of groups is lobbying activities. Under conditions marked by the ineffectiveness of civilized forms of interaction with the authorities, lobbying appears to be "wild." Under the conditions of weak rule-of-law as well as the merging of influential interest groups with the authorities, the possibility to establish control over lobbying activities is extremely small.<sup>56</sup>

Accordingly, rent-seeking cooperation between individual officials and interest-driven social groups is unavoidable. To a considerable extent, lobbying and corporatistic relations in Russia were based on the interests of the prevailing groups, which became the breeding ground of corruption and criminal activity. The state's autonomy from penetrated interests was very low. This kind of "corporate-bureaucratic symbiosis" did not benefit socioeconomic interests or the development of democracy and civil society.<sup>57</sup> As Semenenko has argued, "In contemporary Russia the percentage of lobbying in the adoption of major economic and political decisions has hypertrophied, which leads to the neglect of national priorities and the granting of concessions toward those groups which possess the

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<sup>55</sup>V. B. Pastukhov, "Vlast' i obshchestvo na pole vyborov, ili igry s nulevoy summy," *Polis*, 1999, no. 5:7.

<sup>56</sup>I. S. Semenenko, "Gruppy interesov i grazhdanskoe obshchestvo: faktor stanovleniya ili tormozheniya," in *Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo v Rossii: struktury i soznanie*, ed. K. G. Kholodkovskiy (Moscow: Nauka, 1998), 53.

<sup>57</sup>Sergey Peregodov, Natal'ya Lapina, and Irina Semenenko, *Gruppy interesov i Rossiyskoe gosudarstvo* (Moscow: Editorial URSS, 1999), 345, 348-49.

most influence over the regime."<sup>58</sup> A weak and divided Russian state provided the opportunity for directors of state enterprises, which constituted the most important and mobilized special interest groups, to control the Congress of People's Deputies and thereby amend and influence implementation of state policy regarding private property rights under the privatization program.<sup>59</sup>

### *An Oligarchical and Manipulated Mass Media*

Autonomous, independent, and pluralistic mass media can provide the public with news and alternative perspectives. The free and independent flow of information is an indispensable foundation for civil society's checks against the abuse of state power.<sup>60</sup> The media in Russia, however, has been heavily politicized. State officials and private business interests manipulated the media with the goal of shaping public opinion. After the violent conflict between the executive and the parliament in 1993, political struggles occurred mainly in governmental cabals, and the people were left as the objects of the manipulation of information. Ivan Zasurskiy, a Russian researcher of post-Soviet media, described the above situation as the "medialization of politics."<sup>61</sup>

According to a 1999 media report entitled "Power and Capital: Concentration and Transparency in the Russian Media" issued by the Moscow Media Law and Policy Institute and authored by Anna Kachkayeva, a media expert with Moscow State University, "a particular type of concentration is taking place in Russia—an ideological or political concentration in which the authorities (primarily local authorities) are creating their own media holdings using money from the federal or municipal budgets."<sup>62</sup> In the words of Igor Yakovenko, secretary general of the Russian Journalists

<sup>58</sup>I. S. Semenenko, cited in S. Khenkin, "Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo v postsovetском inter'ere," *MEiMO*, 1998, no. 2:148.

<sup>59</sup>McFaul, "State Power, Institutional Change, and the Politics of Privatization," 210-43.

<sup>60</sup>Diamond, *Developing Democracy*, 240.

<sup>61</sup>Ivan Zasurskiy, *Mass-media vtoroy respubliki* (Moscow: MGU, 1999), 81, cited in Boris Kagarlitskiy, *Restavratsiya v Rossii* (Moscow: Editorial URSS, 2000), 8.

<sup>62</sup>Cited in Robert Coalson, "Taxpayers Should Call Tune," *The Moscow Times*, August 20, 1999, 9.



Union, "Russia has no real media market because the media are supported more by sponsors and the government than by sales and advertising. The media are mainly political tools."<sup>63</sup> Mikhail Fedotov, secretary of the Russian Journalists Union, expressed the same worries, "Russia has not successfully built a normal market economy, which to a considerable extent has become a 'marketized society' (*rynochnoe obshchestvo*) where everything is for sale. The mass media are no exception. The media, however, is not like a normal commercial enterprise but is rather an instrument of political influence."<sup>64</sup>

Among the common forms of harassment of press freedom, according to the Glasnost' Defense Foundation, are punitive raids by Russia's annoyingly troublesome tax inspectors, cancellation of leases, denial of access to printing plants, disruption of distribution of various publications, drugs searches, the arrest of reporters, and the denial of accreditation to journalists.<sup>65</sup> Since the state, oligarchies, political parties, and local elites dominate most of the mass media, only a few are left independent. The biggest and most troubling problem of the Russian mass media as a whole, according to Aleksei Simonov, president of the Glasnost' Defense Foundation, is "the absence of real professional solidarity."<sup>66</sup> The belief of the Soviet and post-Soviet elites in the overwhelming power of television never changed. As Ellen Mickiewicz has pointed out: "Wars, elections, and vying bureaucracies (governmental or private) all made television a prize of inestimable value."<sup>67</sup> By the end of the 1990s, the Russian media were obviously less free than they had been in the early 1990s, and the prospects for their independence were gloomy.

### *The Problems of Adaptation and Solidarity*

The broad-based opposition movements of the late 1980s reflected

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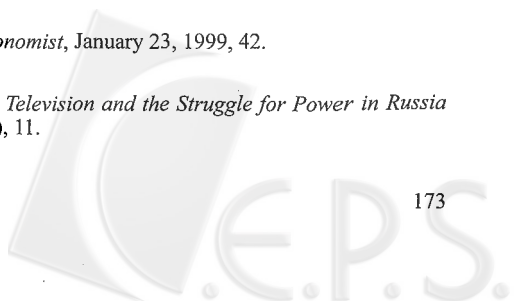
<sup>63</sup>*Segodnya*, August 12, 1999, 2.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup>"Old Russian Habits Die Hard," *The Economist*, January 23, 1999, 42.

<sup>66</sup>*Segodnya*, August 12, 1999, 2.

<sup>67</sup>Ellen Mickiewicz, *Changing Channels: Television and the Struggle for Power in Russia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 11.



the amorphous character of communist society and proved to be no more than transient actors united by the common anti-communist cause. Instead of evolving into more coherent and better-organized formations in the post-Soviet setting, many groups of the late-Soviet democratic movements weakened and fragmented, or even disappeared altogether.<sup>68</sup> The character of post-Soviet popular opposition was observed by Boris Kagarlitskiy: "In the Russia of the 1990s [in contrast to the Soviet Union from 1988 to 1991], the public neither participated in nor actively resisted processes of transformation. All they did was storm the television center 'Ostankino' in 1993, strike in 1994, and sit on the rails to block the railways in 1998. The public resistance was flabby and sporadic, completely unlike the previous—and perhaps future—waves of revolution."<sup>69</sup> Within Moscow's nonprofit community in particular, clashing personalities and political affiliations kept these organizations from forming alliances around ideas, programs, and lobbying activities. True, a major exception to this generalization occurred in 1996 with the weekly demonstrations on Pushkin Square against the war in Chechnya. The unique characteristic of this event, however, was its leadership: a loose and ever-changing coalition of representatives from Moscow's nonprofit sector. In the words of Zaslavskaya:

True, large-scale social commonalities (categories, groups, and strata) that are united by similar opinions, interests, and mainly aspirations to collective action are just beginning to form: that is, they have very indistinct outlines, poorly articulated interests, and unrealized common goals. These are the forerunners of the solidarity and identity that just have to take shape in the process of the forming of civil society.<sup>70</sup>

Following the renewed elections at the end of 1993 and newly-established parliament at the beginning of 1994, emerging political parties or movements provided career opportunities that met the aspirations of individuals looking for influence and recognition. Thus, part of civil society was "looted" by the formation of a political society. In the 1993 Duma elections, for example, the Union of Women of Russia joined forces with the

<sup>68</sup>Fish, "Russia's Fourth Transition," 265.

<sup>69</sup>Kagarlitskiy, *Restavratsiya v Rossii*, 4.

<sup>70</sup>Zaslavskaya, "O sotsial'no-transformatsionnoy strukture rossiyskogo obshchestva," 16.

Association of Women Entrepreneurs of Russia and Women of the Navy to form the umbrella movement "the Women of Russia," which fielded thirty-six candidates.<sup>71</sup> The Women of Russia won twenty-one seats on the party list, amounting to 8.13 percent of the vote, and placed fourth on the party list after the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (sixty-five seats), Zhirinovskiy's Liberal Democratic Party (fifty-nine seats), and Gaydar's Russia's Choice (forty seats).<sup>72</sup> In the 1995 Duma elections, the Women of Russia failed to clear the 5 percent threshold for entering the Duma as a political faction. Despite the growing number of women's organizations in Russia (nearly 2,000 in 1998), most of these bodies wanted to be independent rather than to join alliances.<sup>73</sup> Veterans also had participated in the 1993 Duma elections through the "Dignity and Charity" movement, which included fifty-eight candidates for deputies on the list; this movement also failed to cross the 5 percent hurdle. In the 1995 Duma elections, several pro-veteran organizations also failed to surmount the 5 percent barrier.<sup>74</sup>

#### *Scarce Financial Resources*

The greatest constraint on the development and efficacy of civil society associations throughout the entire post-communist period was the absence of sufficient levels of funding either from the state, private donations, or from international foundations. In the past, many Russian NGOs used to survive without money. State assistance might, in principle, be financially advantageous in this new period but would endanger the independence of the associations of civil society. In any event, such assistance has not been forthcoming. Russian civil society and the state have tended to distance themselves from each other. As Galina Bodrenkova points out:

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<sup>71</sup>Svetlana Polenina, "Zhenshchiny, vlast', demokratiya," *Rossiiskaya Federatsiya* 5 (1994): 44-45.

<sup>72</sup>Mary Buckley, "Adaptation of the Soviet Women's Committee: Deputies' Voices from 'Women of Russia,'" in *Post-Soviet Women: From the Baltic to Central Asia*, ed. Mary Buckley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 163.

<sup>73</sup>Author's interview with Tat'yana Troinova, director of the Women's Information Network, March 27, 2000, Moscow.

<sup>74</sup>S. A. Avak'yan, *Politicheskij pyuralizm i obshchestvennye obyedineniya v Rossiyskoy Federatsii: Konstitutsionno-pravovye osnovy* (Moscow: Rossiyskiy yuridicheskiy izdatel'skiy dom, 1996), 83.

The noncommercial sector does not perceive the political regime as the necessary component of the state's economic system. In actuality, the real interactive mechanisms of partnership among the government, commercial sector, and noncommercial sector are absent. The potential and possibilities of the third sector are not taken into account as a solution of the state's social tasks, and the government of the Russian Federation is not considered as the way out of social crisis.<sup>75</sup>

In the absence of sufficient levels of indigenous private support and a lack of adequate state funding, most civil society organizations have been heavily reliant on donations from foreign philanthropic foundations. Such availability of external sources of funding provided disincentives to the building of domestic alliances and to the development of internal sources of financial support.<sup>76</sup> As Lisa VeneKlase, an expert on NGOs' grant-making and training programs, has indicated: "Donor dependence has generated competition among NGOs, and made them reluctant to build alliances."<sup>77</sup> Moreover, many activists of civil society organizations were more beholden to their external donors than to the people they serve due to the reality of difficult fund-raising in deteriorating economic conditions. As a result, many organizations formed ad hoc projects in response to shifting funding regardless of strategic plans or actual needs.

### *The Public's Alienated Attitude toward Civic Life*

Like many Russian scholars, Diligenskiy holds: "The absence of a democratic tradition in the national political culture is a particularly powerful obstacle to the development of civil society in Russia."<sup>78</sup> There was the traditional legacy of tsarist and communist hierarchical systems, in which

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<sup>75</sup>Bodrenkova, "Razvitie tret'ego sektora kak instrument sotsial'noy adaptatsii naseleniya," 209-10.

<sup>76</sup>Some problems can also be created by the Western donors, whose strategies of engagement are being viewed as naive and open to manipulation and abuse. See Janine R. Wedel, *Collusion and Collision: The Strange Case of Western Aid to Eastern Europe, 1989-1998* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).

<sup>77</sup>Lisa VeneKlase, "The Challenge of Democracy-Building: Practical Lessons on NGO Advocacy and Political Change," in *NGOs, Civil Society and the State: Building Democracy in Transitional Societies*, ed. Andrew Clayton (Oxford: INTRAC, 1996), 222.

<sup>78</sup>See German Diligenskiy, "Chto my znaem o demokratii i grazhdanskom obshchestve?" *Pro et Contra* 2, no. 4 (October 1997): 7. For Russian perspectives on applying the concept of civic culture to contemporary Russia, see Elena Shestopal, ed., *Grazhdanskaya kul'tura v sovremennoy Rossii* (Moscow: Moskovskiy obshchestvennyy nauchnyy fond, 1999).

patron-client relationships were the norm, and reciprocity, cooperation, and mutual trust were the exception. Russia seemed to lack the stocks of social capital generated by civic community to make democracy work.<sup>79</sup> In this transitional period, anti-democratic attitudes still prevailed both within and outside the government, and institutional constraints on anti-democratic behavior did not develop. The Russian political system lacked the deeper institutional and normative attributes of a liberal democracy.<sup>80</sup> As Diligenskiy points out, "Being the product of a relatively brief social mood, these (democratic) movements did not lead to the rise of stable civil socio-psychological orientations nor to the formation of such a system of public social notions that could underlie the development of civil society."<sup>81</sup>

Vainshtein asserts: "The specific character of the development of civil society in today's Russia as well as its potential possibilities of influence on the process of post-Soviet transformations are, to a great degree, conditioned by the peculiarity of public consciousness and the public's basic values."<sup>82</sup> The Soviet origins of *blat* (the use of personal networks and informal contacts to obtain goods and services in short supply and to use "pull" to find a way around formal procedures) also had a far-reaching impact on post-Soviet social order.<sup>83</sup> Russians were distrustful of organizations imposed on them from the top.<sup>84</sup> The majority of the Russian people thus do not have confidence in the new political institutions, including

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<sup>79</sup>"Civic community" is defined as a community characterized by active participation in public affairs, vigorous associational life, horizontal relations of reciprocity and cooperation, and mutual trust. Putnam concluded: "The more civic a region, the more effective its government." See Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, 98. For applying Putnam's concept of social capital to the case of Russia, see Kathryn Stoner-Weiss, *Local Heroes: The Political Economy of Russian Regional Governance* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997); and Marsh, "Social Capital and Democracy in Russia," 183-99.

<sup>80</sup>Michael McFaul, "Authoritarian and Democratic Responses to the Financial Meltdown in Russia," *Problems of Post-Communism* 46, no. 4 (July/August 1999): 30.

<sup>81</sup>Diligenskiy, "Chto my znaem o demokratii i grazhdanskom obshchestve?" 7.

<sup>82</sup>See G. I. Vainshtein, "Formirovanie grazhdanskogo obshchestva: ozhidaniya i sotsial'no-psikhologicheskaya real'nost'," in Kholodkovskiy, *Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo v Rossii*, 205; and "Formirovanie grazhdanskogo obshchestva v Rossii: nadezhdy i real'nost'," *MeiMO*, 1998, no. 5:23.

<sup>83</sup>See Alena Ledeneva, *Russia's Economy of Favors: Blat, Networking and Informal Exchange* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>84</sup>See Gibson, "Social Networks, Civil Society," 66.

parliaments and political parties.<sup>85</sup> While there were differences in the degree of distrust between the institutions of Russian civil society, there was a substantial degree of generalized distrust in institutions.<sup>86</sup> The main trade union federation, and unions in general, have been among the least trusted institutions in society and had proven themselves incapable of mobilizing a credible strike threat to defend their members' interests.<sup>87</sup>

By 1998 there were more than 60,000 independent charities in Russia.<sup>88</sup> Many of the so-called "public" charity associations had connections with the criminal establishment.<sup>89</sup> In the early 1990s, moreover, a series of financial scandals involved supposedly "charitable" organizations.<sup>90</sup> Many charities found getting donations from wealthy Russians to be difficult because of the legacy of Soviet mistrust and the very bad reputation that many charities had in the immediate post-Soviet period of being connected to some army veterans' groups, the Russian Orthodox Church, and sport clubs.<sup>91</sup> Their activities discredited the cause of charity organizations, especially since society was not ready to accept assistance from the nongovernmental establishment. In a transitional society NGOs are often fledgling organizations that need not only to be understood by the public but also to be accountable to their own members and the communities they serve.

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<sup>85</sup>According to a survey conducted by the Russian Independent Institute of Social and National Problems, during the period of 1996-97 more than half of Russians felt that there was no effective way of truly influencing the regime. See M. K. Gorshkov, *Rossiyskoe obshchestvo v usloviyakh transformatsii (sotsiologicheskii analiz)* (Moscow: Rossiyskaya politicheskaya entsiklopediya, 2000), 358.

<sup>86</sup>Stephen White, Richard Rose, and Ian McAllister, *How Russia Votes* (Chatham: Chatham House, 1997), 50-54. See also William Mishler and Richard Rose, "Trust, Distrust and Skepticism: Popular Evaluations of Civil and Political Institutions in Post-Communist Societies," *Journal of Politics* 59, no. 2 (May 1997): 418-51.

<sup>87</sup>Stephen Crowley, "Liberal Transformation: Labor and the Russian State," in Sperling, *Building the Russian State*, 165-68.

<sup>88</sup>"Russian Love in a Cold Climate," *The Economist*, August 15, 1998, 33.

<sup>89</sup>Khoros and Kuklina, "Neformal'nye organizatsii," 188. *The Economist* also reported the problem of Russian charity organizations: "Many were purely commercial outfits seeking to benefit from privileged tax and customs status, and were often run by organised-crime groups. Most have now shut down." See "Good Works," *The Economist*, March 24, 2001, 54.

<sup>90</sup>Young, "Growing a Democracy," 14.

<sup>91</sup>See note 88 above and "Good Works" (cited in note 89 above).

Since most Russians avoid sharing money with other people, as shown by the low level of charitable activity, very important is to cultivate a humanitarian mentality.

### **Three Approaches to Strengthening Civil Society**

The above constraints on the institutionalization of Russian civil society can be seen as the absence of a supportive and connective infrastructure for the development of civil society. This author argues that the conditions for making civil society work can be constructed. The following three approaches to strengthening civil society can be seen as "the efforts to build the capacity of civic organizations, both in terms of organizational effectiveness and an ability to engage with the external environment."<sup>92</sup>

#### *A Supporting State*

The relationship between the state and civil society is reciprocal and can be mutually empowering. Just as societal and local institutions can enhance the capacities of the state, a supporting state can enhance the capacities of civil society.<sup>93</sup> Necessary is for the state to play a more active role in contributing to the construction of civil society and to the establishment of an associational sector capable of channeling societal interests in the post-Soviet period.<sup>94</sup> The supporting role of the state and politics (political calculations) are critical for making civil society work.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup>R. C. Riddell and A. J. Bebbington, *Developing Country NGOs and Donor Governments*, Report to the Overseas Development Administration (London: Overseas Development Institute, 1995), 25, cited in Mark Robinson, "The Role of Aid Donors in Strengthening Civil Society," in Clayton, *NGOs, Civil Society and the State*, 210.

<sup>93</sup>Levy, *Tocqueville's Revenge*, 9.

<sup>94</sup>Adam Fagin, "The Development of Civil Society in the Czech Republic: The Environmental Sector as a Measure of Associational Activity," *Journal of European Area Studies* 7, no. 1 (1999): 108.

<sup>95</sup>Levy indicated that post-communist civil society has received little support from the state partly due to "the nature of the regime transition: civil society was mobilized against the totalitarian state. From this perspective the state appeared not as a partner but as a diabolical adversary. Thus, post-communist elites have been slow to seize upon the paradoxical notion that state intervention could serve as the midwife of a rejuvenated civil society." Levy, *Tocqueville's Revenge*, 316.

In a city like Moscow that is woefully short of cooperative endeavors, useful may be to promote citizen participation through a selective revival of aspects of mobilized participation that had been abused by the communists. For example, since April 1992 Moscow city hall has sponsored a Spring Beautification Day, a replacement for the Leninist Communist Subbotnik carried away with the CPSU, and Moscow mayor Luzhkov has authorized *druzhiny*, citizen street patrols, in high-crime areas.<sup>96</sup>

Another way of strengthening organizational capacity and institutional links for the purpose of policy influence is through consultative organs that are attached to different levels of the regime. At the national level, for example, representatives of 155 social organizations are members of the consultative organs of the President of Russia. This kind of consultation between NGOs and the regime has occurred in the regions and at other levels as well. For example, 23 councils were created and attached to various departments and committees of the Moscow city government. Moreover, every department collaborates with many corresponding civil associations that do not enter the councils.<sup>97</sup>

Public associations have the possibility of bringing in bills by themselves and of promoting the bills by their own deputies through entry into the working groups of the various State Duma committees, councils, and other consultative organs of the President of Russia, and local legislative organs. They can also conduct public examination of the bills by means of joint conferences, seminars, and participating in parliamentary hearings.<sup>98</sup>

#### *The Assistance of International NGOs and Foreign Aid Donors*

"Democracy and governance" has emerged as a sector in the field of international development due to political changes in many countries that have created new opportunities to expand the activities of international

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<sup>96</sup>Colton, *Moscow*, 749-50.

<sup>97</sup>M. Slobodskaya, "Gosudarstvo i obshchestvennyy sektor: ot konfrontatsii k sotrudnichestvu," in *Kruglyy stol: vlast', biznes, SMI, NPO: problemy vzaimootnosheniy, perspektivy vzaimodeystviya*, ed. M. Slobodskaya (Moscow: Institut problem grazhdanskogo obshchestva, 1999), 6, 7; author's interview with Natal'ya E. Taubina, director of the Human Rights Foundation for Civil Society, September 23, 1999, Moscow.

<sup>98</sup>Slobodskaya, "Gosudarstvo i obshchestvennyy sektor," 5.



NGOs from the areas of economic and social development to the realm of political reform. Initially, foreign aid donors provided assistance for strengthening the institutions of government and political society rather than "building constituencies for reform from within civil society."<sup>99</sup> In the early 1990s, however, the concept of participatory development, premised on an expanded role of civic associations in decision-making processes over policy matters, became prominent among donors.<sup>100</sup> According to the World Bank, an increasing amount—about 14 percent in 1996—of global development aid had been channeled via civil society agents, which are perceived to be harbingers of democracy.<sup>101</sup> As Mark Robinson notes: "[I]t was acknowledged that an emphasis on the supply side of institutional and political reform cannot be sustained without complementary measures to stimulate the demand side, i.e., by promoting the involvement of organizations representing grass-roots interests in the process of reform."<sup>102</sup>

In a country like Russia where experience with democratic forms of government is limited and financial resources are scarce, assistance from international NGOs and foreign aid donors can play an important role in strengthening civil society. Foreign donors are belatedly beginning to use local NGOs to discover the locus of that intersection between the supply and demand sides, where institutionalized reform takes place.<sup>103</sup> According to the data gathered by Yuriy Dzhibladze, president of the Center for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights, Russian NGOs have helped more than 20 million people.<sup>104</sup> Despite the limitations of donor dependence as mentioned earlier, the growing density of linkages to inter-

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<sup>99</sup>Robinson, "The Role of Aid Donors in Strengthening Civil Society," 206.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid.

<sup>101</sup>The World Bank, *The World Bank's Partnership with Non-Governmental Organizations* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 1996), 1.

<sup>102</sup>Robinson, "The Role of Aid Donors in Strengthening Civil Society," 206-7.

<sup>103</sup>Gorbin B. Lyday, "Stability from Without? International Donors and 'Good Governance' Strategies in Russia," in Sperling, *Building the Russian State*, 222-23.

<sup>104</sup>Yuriy Dzhibladze, "We Demand Fair Taxation: Russian NGOs Join Forces in a Nationwide Campaign," at <<http://www.isar.org/isar/forum/Dzhibladze.html>>; and Sestrenskiy, "O chyom ne znayut timurovtsy na gryadke u soldatskoi vdovy," 7.

national NGOs has significantly strengthened the ability of marginalized groups to defend their interests and identities. Major Western foundations have opened offices or built partnerships with local organizations in Russia, including the Soros Foundation, MacArthur Foundation, Eurasia Foundation, Ford Foundation, Mott Foundation, Charity Aid Foundation, United Way International, and Know-How Foundation. These NGOs provide civil society organizations with an array of services including direct financial support; legal advice; developing research and management capacity; political skills; fund-raising training; various workshops, seminars, and conferences; exchanges of personnel and visits; effective use of the media; and promoting publication and providing access to electronic data networks. Thus, the long-term goal of foreign support to civil society organizations is to make civil society more engaged and resilient and the state more responsive and accountable.

### *The Efforts of Autonomous Civic Initiatives*

Civil society cannot be sustained without the simultaneous "bottom-up" efforts of autonomous civic initiatives that operate within the context of "top-down" state support and external foreign assistance. To build institutional linkages and enhance political leverage in policy and political change, civil society needs to strengthen its own capacity: learning internal financial management, seeking legal advice, effectively using the mass media, and improving the political strategies of alliance and citizen participation. The autonomous initiatives of Russian civil society organizations include the following: volunteer activity and petition letters to the authorities (Moscow Charity House/Volunteer Center); round tables between NGOs, government, business, and the mass media (Institute of Problems of Civil Society); election monitoring and voter education (Civil Society and Elections 1999); defending freedom of speech (Glasnost' Defense Foundation); campaigning for fair taxation of NGOs (Center for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights); and civic education (Center for Civic Education).

The Moscow Charity House/Volunteer Center (MCH/VC) sees voluntary activity as the basis of both democracy and civil society development, and also as the key element of life in future Russian society. This

organization aims to initiate and develop voluntary citizen service to help people in need and to solve common social problems. Russians are beginning to talk about the charity movement because they have come to realize that, despite Russia's current reforms, the government is unable to solve social problems.<sup>105</sup> The Second Russian Volunteers Forum in 1996 created the Russian Volunteers Association—the first instance of voluntarism at the national level. In 1998, the National Volunteer Development Center was established. The financial crash of August 1998, however, resulted in increasing public alienation from the state and subsequently led to an increase in individual initiatives.<sup>106</sup>

By the end of 1999, voluntary civic initiatives in Russia remained unclaimed by the state—that is, volunteer activity had no official recognition.<sup>107</sup> In order to capture the government's attention and support, an open letter signed by sixty leaders and representatives of noncommercial organizations based in Moscow and other regions of Russia was sent on December 31, 1999 to the then Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, with the demand that the government "support the development of the volunteer and noncommercial sectors as the necessary component of a national strategy of development."<sup>108</sup>

One highly effective method of dialogue between NGOs and the government is the round table, in which the representatives of governments and public associations discuss the problems of cooperation and direction. Currently, this kind of measure for improving relations between NGOs and the government is a practice initiated by the former. For example, the problems of interrelations and perspectives of interactions among NGOs, the regime, business, and the mass media were the subject of discussion in round tables organized by the Institute of Problems of Civil Society and its regional partners in the cities of Smolensk (November 6, 1998), Belgorod

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<sup>105</sup>Regarding the nature and origins of the charity movement in Russia, see *People Help People*, published in 1995 by the Moscow Charity House/Volunteer Center. Part of the material was provided by Galina Bodrenkova, president of the Moscow Charity House/Volunteer Center.

<sup>106</sup>Khakamada, "Krizis ne podavil, a stimuliroval sotsial'nuyu initsiativu," 4-8.

<sup>107</sup>*Mir dobrovol'tsev* 11 (November-December 1999): 3, 5.

<sup>108</sup>*Ibid.*, 5-6.

(November 13, 1998), Orel (January 18, 1999), Kursk (January 22, 1999), and Lipetsk (January 29, 1999) in the framework of the project "methodological and informational assistance to regional NGOs." A total of about two hundred representatives from executive and legislative regimes, independent organizations, business, and the mass media participated in the round tables in the above regions. During the discussions, the participants recognized the need—and obstacles—to further expanding cooperation. Problems included a weak exchange of information between the participants in the process, insufficient coordination, and the lack of a normative-legal basis including the mechanism of state support for independent organizations as well as for benefits to businesses that support social projects.<sup>109</sup>

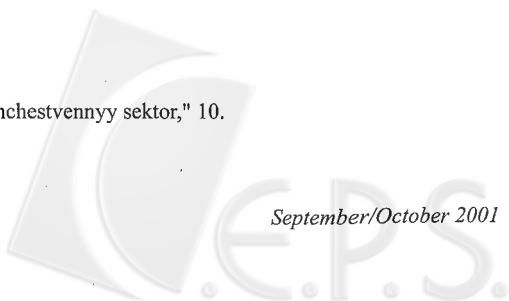
As Maria Slobodskaya, president of the Institute of Problems of Civil Society in Moscow, points out: "One way for the state to recognize the significance of social organizations is by granting to the latter benefits, a social mandate, and assistance through direct budgetary finance including state grant."<sup>110</sup> However, due to the nonprofit sector's lack of financial and logistical resources for disseminating information about itself in society as well as bureaucrats' lack of understanding of the functions and goals of public associations, the regime's efforts at supporting public organizations only focus on individual events and short-term public projects rather than on long-term and stable work.<sup>111</sup>

Recognizing the significance for the future of Russia of the upcoming 1999 State Duma elections and the necessity of civic organizations' participation to guarantee thorough voter expression of opinion, a coalition of social associations "Civil Society and Elections 1999" was established on April 28, 1999 at Moscow's Sakharov Public Center to ensure the elections were honest and open. To achieve the above goals, the participants in the coalition conducted campaigns and actions. The coalition's declaration emphasizes its nonpartisan principle and asks its constituent members

<sup>109</sup>Slobodskaya, *Kruglyy stol*, 4.

<sup>110</sup>Slobodskaya, "Gosudarstvo i obshchestvennyy sektor," 10.

<sup>111</sup>*Ibid.*, 13.



voluntarily to decline from campaigning for any block or candidate. In accordance with the rule of political neutrality, the coalition is prepared to interact with all electoral blocks and candidates who accept the basic rules.<sup>112</sup> The coalition's first congress was held on June 18-20, 1999 in Moscow; a total of eighty-seven deputies from actively functioning associations representing youth, women, human rights, journalists, and jurists from fifty-one regions of Russia attended the congress.

As civic organizations grow beyond election monitoring and voter education, they conduct training programs based on nonpartisan principles for nationally and locally elected officials and candidates. The training programs, which are normally supported by international foundations, emphasize "not only technical and administrative skills but also normative standards of public accountability and transparency."<sup>113</sup> Recruiting and training new political leaders in civil society may play a crucial role in revitalizing democracy and renewing its legitimacy at a time when the recruitment of new political leaders within the established political parties has become narrow or stagnant.<sup>114</sup> Larry Diamond argues that "because of the traditional dominance by men of the corridors of power, civil society is a particularly important base for the training and recruitment of women (and members of other marginalized groups) into positions of formal political power."<sup>115</sup> Elections provide opportunities for ambitious political entrepreneurs and marginalized groups to become involved in the policy-making process. Due to the success of women's organizations in the 1993 State Duma election, many of the parties and electoral blocs in 1995 included more women candidates and ranked them higher on party lists, which was not the case in 1993.<sup>116</sup> There was a trend away from all-male dominated party lists, despite the fact that women party-members num-

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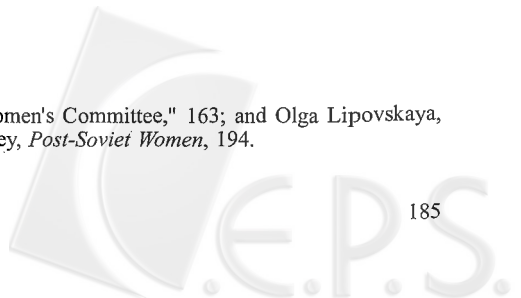
<sup>112</sup>See Civil Society and Elections 1999, "Deklaratsiya uchastnikov obshchestvennoy koalitsii"; "Civil Society and Elections 1999" Press Release; author's notes, September 17, 1999, Moscow.

<sup>113</sup>Diamond, *Developing Democracy*, 245.

<sup>114</sup>*Ibid.*, 246.

<sup>115</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup>Buckley, "Adaptation of the Soviet Women's Committee," 163; and Olga Lipovskaya, "Women's Groups in Russia," in Buckley, *Post-Soviet Women*, 194.



bered far less than their male counterparts.<sup>117</sup> The figure for women candidates rose from 7 percent in the 1993 elections to 14 percent in the 1995 elections.<sup>118</sup>

A free and independent mass media is an essential component of a strong civil society. A manipulated and oligarchical mass media is a major obstacle to the development of Russian civil society, as noted earlier. As a result, people do not believe the information published in the newspapers because journalists do not report the reality of daily life. To gain respect and trust from the public, journalists must turn their attention to the interests and problems of the ordinary people.<sup>119</sup> The Glasnost' Defense Foundation (GDF) provides education programs for journalists, disseminates information to the public, and monitors the violations of media rights during elections. Beginning with the August coup of 1991 during a crackdown on the press, GDF has since coordinated with newspapers and other media to produce *Obshchaya Gazeta* (Joint Newspaper) whenever they perceive a threat to the freedom of the press.<sup>120</sup> The Agency for Social Information provides daily news and information for NGOs through e-mail subscription. Their information comes from an established communication network of about twenty local resource centers through their correspondents in Moscow and the regions of Russia, the Internet, and other organizations and networks such as the Women's Information Network.<sup>121</sup>

In 1998 a new draft tax law affecting NGOs stimulated a grass-roots campaign to oppose the law.<sup>122</sup> The issue involved four pieces of legislation affecting personal income taxes, payroll tax, VAT, and foreign aid regulations. Donations to NGOs in the form of cash or material supplies would, for example, be taxed as income (at the rate of 33 percent) and

<sup>117</sup>Buckley, "Adaptation of the Soviet Women's Committee," 163.

<sup>118</sup>Lipovskaya, "Women's Groups in Russia," 194.

<sup>119</sup>Author's interview with Victoria V. Kozlova, executive director of the Glasnost' Defense Foundation, March 17, 2000, Moscow.

<sup>120</sup>See Sarah Karush, "2,000 Demonstrate for Free Speech," at <<http://www.themoscow-times.com/stories/2000/05/18/011.html>>.

<sup>121</sup>Author's interview with Andrey Topolev, co-director of the Agency for Social Information, March 28, 2000, Moscow.

<sup>122</sup>The source of the following discussion is Dzhibladze, "We Demand Fair Taxation" (cited in note 104 above).

levied with VAT (15 percent) to be paid by the contributor. Money, goods, and services provided by NGOs to other organizations or the general public would be taxed as income (from 12 to 35 percent) and levied with VAT (15 percent) to be paid by the NGO providing these services or distributing aid. The root of the problem was that neither existing nor proposed tax legislation made the distinction between commercial and noncommercial organizations. The main argument used by the governmental officials and the Duma deputies to support the draft tax law was that NGOs were nothing more than phony fronts used by businesses to avoid taxes (in many cases this was indeed the situation.). A grass-roots campaign under the slogan "We do not ask for special benefits, we demand fair taxation!" was launched and coordinated by the Moscow-based Center for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights. From September 1998 the campaign became a nationwide effort, joined by various NGOs in more than thirty-five Russian provinces, with opposition to the new legislation for the taxation of NGOs taking the form of writing to and meeting with Duma deputies and proposing NGO-sponsored amendments. This campaign provided Russian grass-roots activists with a chance to experience public policy activism and brought the issue of NGOs' role in society into the mainstream of public discourse.

During the Soviet period two strongly ideology-oriented social organizations—the Komsomol and the Pioneers—were aimed at socializing the youth and children with a communist world outlook. Specific attention was given, especially in the Komsomol, to cultivating the skills of participating in social life and to managing social affairs, since the communist party viewed members of the Komsomol as the future state leaders.<sup>123</sup> Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the education system has been in chaos. There are about one hundred institutions in Russia that concern themselves with civic education about human rights and democracy, but there is still a lack of a definite concept of civic education and a stable program.<sup>124</sup> Most

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<sup>123</sup>Avak'yan, *Politicheskii plyuralizm i obshchestvennye obyedineniya v Rossiyskoy Federatsii*, 81.

<sup>124</sup>Author's interview with Tat'yana V. Bolotina, director of the Center for Civic Education, March 17, 2000, Moscow.

teachers were educated under Soviet rule; therefore, there is a need for qualified teachers who have modern knowledge about civic education, especially about human rights and democracy.<sup>125</sup> To make things worse, many teachers were not being paid their salaries due to the country's deteriorating economic conditions. From 1992 to 1996, fully 87 percent of the 24,185 reported strikes in Russia took place in the education sector and were led by teachers; these trends have persisted.<sup>126</sup> In addition to reversing the teachers' dire situation, how to construct a sustainable system of civic education for a democratic society has become an important issue in Russia's education sector. According to some research, education has a strong correlation with the extent of civic engagement.<sup>127</sup> Education can foster not only shared political values, but also social capital.

### Conclusion

The constraints on the development of Russian civil society are significant: a combination of the communist legacy and current politics. The state must play a decisive and supporting role in the development of civil society since Western funding and technical assistance are being phased out, few Russian businesses are willing or able to engage in long-term commitments to charity, there exist only limited public-sector resources, and the public has become alienated from or suspicious of the nonprofit sector. Meanwhile, a major contribution that civil society makes to democratic governance is by checking the state. A vigorous and institutionalized civil society is the best monitor and counterweight to the state and serves as a major bulwark against the possible tendency toward tyranny.

Russian civil society remains weak and fragmented. "If one regards

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<sup>125</sup>Ibid.

<sup>126</sup>Crowley, "Liberal Transformation," 161.

<sup>127</sup>See, for example, Robert D. Putnam, "Turning In, Turning Out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 28, no. 4 (December 1995): 664-83; and Mark Schneider et al., "Institutional Arrangements and the Creation of Social Capital: The Effects of Public School Choice," *American Political Science Review* 91, no. 1 (March 1997): 82-93.



strong, stable, autonomous associations, capable of checking state power, as crucial components of civil society," as Fish reported in his research, "a genuine civil society had not been realized in Russia by the end of the Gorbachev period."<sup>128</sup> This situation had not changed even by the end of Yeltsin's years in power. The infrastructure of civil society had not yet been constructed. The institutionalization of a civil society in post-Soviet Russia still has a long way to go. A cohesive and connective infrastructure of a robust and institutionalized civil society, which will increase accountability and legitimacy of state institutions through a long-term mechanism of instilling democratic values and practices, can be constructed by the combined efforts of a supporting and self-limiting state, international foundations, and grass-roots civic initiatives. Just as democracy requires time to consolidate, civil society requires time to take root and develop.

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<sup>128</sup>Fish, *Democracy from Scratch*, 60.