NOTES ON NATIONAL WEAKNESS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

My interest, conceptual in the first instance, is to answer the question: how do strong institutions get created?

That interest has a quite specific locus, the countries of the former Soviet empire. I have been struck by the voluntarist, utopian, and premature efforts to impose theoretical and political certainty that have been the signature of so much of academia’s efforts in the last five years. The following mini-articles address a set of related issues, introduce a set of complementary foci, and outline an approach to the study of political weakness in the countries of the former Soviet empire.

The overwhelming reality of these countries is that they are socially, economically, politically, and militarily weak. The first three pieces, 'Medieval' Russia, Movements of Rage, and Dizzy With Democracy, I address this reality. If nations are "trinities" of state, civic, and ethnic forces then what strikes the observer is how fragmented this trinity is throughout the former Soviet empire, and how internally fragmented each member of the trinity is. The result is institutional weakness, hybrid regimes of weak authoritarianism and weak democracy that should be studied on their own terms, and as milieux that offer varying potentials for Western liberal developments and new forms of authoritarian or totalitarian rule. In fact regions, political parties, and social forces within these countries, and countries within this region co-exist in a balance of weakness.

What are the sources of this weakness? To begin with the neo-traditional quality of Leninist regimes prior to their extinction, and the "whimpering" rather than "crunching" way in which they became extinct. What is the significance of this weakness? The corresponding experience of frustration, perplexity, cynicism, impotence, and rage that provides the potential for nihilistic rather than democratic movements in many of the countries of the former Soviet empire. What is the problem? How to create authoritative institutions from the elemental disarray of social, economic, and political practices that currently exist.
In the next two, *Pelagius or Augustine*, and *Weak States and Weak Societies*, I argue the reality and continuing significance of the Leninist Legacy for these countries, particularly for their social constitutions. These are not civil, anomic, civic, mass or atomized societies. They are privatized societies, ones in which the family and friendship groups act more as stumbling than building blocs for a democratic capitalist society.

In the final piece, *From Weak Practices to Strong Institutions*, I deal explicitly with the issue of institution-building and the centrality of charisma in relation to institution building; to the fact that even if charismatic ideologies, leaders, practices, and groups are necessary ingredients of successful institution building they are not available on demand. Nor is there any guarantee that charismatic solutions to the issue of institution building will favor democratic political institutions.
I. "MEDIEVAL" RUSSIA

Russia is a study in national weakness. Less than a decade ago it had the world's third largest economy, the world's largest conventional armed forces, was one of only two global thermonuclear powers in history, and exercised international control or influence from Cuba to China to Czechoslovakia to Congo-Brazzaville. Today Russia is politically, economically, and in most respects militarily weak.

Since the failed coup against Gorbachev and Yeltsin in August 1991, political fragmentation has been at the center of Russian political life. Initially, its most striking expression was the enduring split between President Yeltsin, and a Parliament led by his former supporters Ruslan Khasbulatov and the Afghan war hero Aleksandr Rutskoi. It took Yeltsin until October 1993 to find the occasion and support to overcome this opposition. Two years to get his military chief, General Grachev to agree to attack the opposition. Two years to find four divisions in the entire former Soviet army -- Tula, Kantemirovsky, Dzerzhinsky, and Kaman -- to attack his weak, fragmented opponents. On the Parliamentary side, the forces around Khasbulatov and Rutskoi amounted for the most part to a mob of ex-Soviet soldiers who had fought in Afghanistan, some right wing nationalists, old communists, young hoodlums, and a small number of democrats.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about the armed clash between Yeltsin and the Parliament was their respective weakness. The encounter between a Yeltsin unable to command or count on regional support, and an equally isolated Parliament had more in common with an inner city gang battle or Latin American coup than the resolution of "dual power" a la 1917, let alone the historical encounter between Parliament and King in 17th century England.

A critical question at the time was whether or not General Grachev could or would use the political leverage gained by delivering crucial military support to Yeltsin in the fall of 1993 to restore central discipline in the army, or even attempt to displace Yeltsin. Neither outcome was likely. This battle for Moscow was the opposite of those fought against Napoleon and Hitler. This was too short, too easy, and most of all too embarrassing to elevate Grachev as an independent force.
Russian military weakness parallels and interacts with Russian political weakness.\(^1\)

There is no unified, disciplined, self-confident Russian military. The Russian army resembles a feudal army whose head has to bargain with rather than order his commanders. In fact some of them, like General Lebed, former commander of the 14th Army, have acted like sovereign war-lords, in self-proclaimed mini-states like the Transdnestrian Republic.

The recent war waged by Moscow against one of its provinces, Chechnya, provides a striking example of Russia’s violent weakness. An area of less than two million people that “South Carolina like” declared its independence three years ago from Russia has successfully prevented the Russian Army -- one that fifty years ago defeated Nazi Germany -- from subduing it. In the course of Russia’s invasion of Chechnya the political and military fragmentation of Russia’s leaders and institutions has been on full display. At least seven Generals openly attacked the war, while the President of the Chuvash region allowed his region’s servicemen to refuse fighting.\(^2\)

Five years after the Soviet extinction, Russia can aptly be described as a neo-feudal state resting on a balance of weakness -- military, political, and economic -- between central and peripheral forces, all of whose power is local not general.

Russia is weak economically. There is of course the enormously difficult task of transforming a political economy into a market economy. A task complicated by the existence of "multiple economies," using different types of economic exchange: dollars, rubles, and barter. A task further complicated by the competition, confusion, and conflation of criminal, crony, and consumer capitalism: an excellent example being Prime Minister Chernomyrdin’s “godfather” status in relation to GazProm, the new governmental political party Our House -- Russia, and Oleg Boiko of the Big Eight.

These domestic political economy difficulties are further complicated by Yeltsin’s neocolonial dependence\(^3\) on international sources of capital, loans, and finance, the slew of

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1Consider Sherman Garnett’s point: “Dry statistics state that Russia has at least 1.5 million men under arms and more than 100 divisions’ worth of equipment...however, it is doubtful whether the Russian army could field a multidivisional force for large-scale offensive action in the near future.” The Washington Quarterly, vol.18, no.2 (Spring 1995), p.40. Garnett’s analysis clearly establishes the reality and dimensions of current Russian (conventional) military weakness.


3Ken Jowitt, The Leninist Response to National Dependency, Institute of International Studies, University of California 1978. I defined neocolonial dependency as “a consequence of the premature but imperative adoption of a political format for which the appropriate social base is lacking” (p. 23). In this case the format is democratic capitalism.
Western ideological and political expectations accompanying them, and the ingenious acts of official dissimulation designed to accommodate them.

The weakness of the Russian state is the core element in the syndrome of Russian weakness. As the leader of Russia's state administration, Yeltsin is unable to exercise regular personal or official authority over Russia's eighty nine regions: a situation caused in part by the very successful strategy he pursued in becoming Russia's President.

While many point correctly to Yeltsin's authoritarian, anti-constitutional and anti-democratic actions; to his cabal-like group of personal advisors (like Khorzhakov), and to the role of former party apparatchiki in the central administration; what they don't emphasize enough is how weak an authoritarian he is. It isn't simply his illness, drunkenness, slurred speech and Brezhnev-like decrepit quality; it's his inability to centralize and command. In fact the analogy with medieval feudalism may be too generous. It is not at all clear that Yeltsin's "missi dominici" are as effective today as Charlemagne's were in the 9th century.

The incidence of crime, violence, and disorder in Russian cities, at first exaggerated and now downplayed in the Western press, the murder of parliamentarians, businessmen, and journalists, all speak to the absence of stable, authoritative political, military, and economic institutions; to the prevalence of what Durkheim called political and economic exchanges, conventions, and "mutualism."

The absence of authoritative institutions eliciting legitimate support, or of powerful institutions compelling obedience explains the centrality of an hysterically vulgar figure like Vladimir Zhirinovsky. He is a classic example of the plebescitarian demagogue who, in the absence of disciplining institutions, directly taps the mass emotions of millions who are disoriented, frustrated, angry, and in many cases, desperate.

The question confronting Russia is how to create powerful authoritative institutions out of, and in opposition to, the existing set of weakly articulated political and economic exchanges. How to institutionally coagulate clots of political, social, and economic practice.

Let me use an historical analogy to analytically annotate this issue. In the eighth century there were a number of fragmented, vicious, but relatively weak Viking war bands in northern France. They had no centralized organization or authoritative leader, no clear purpose.

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4Heinrich Fichtenau's The Carolingian Empire (Harper, New York 1957) has a nice discussion of the "missi dominici."

other than raiding and looting, and no clear institutional identity. Within a relatively short period of time, 75 years, a territorially bounded, institutionally coherent, and self-confidently named entity, the Normans, emerged. They quickly became the most powerful and innovative people in all of Europe. Question: why the Normans, and not any number of other groups who disappeared? More generally, why do some societies, or groups in society "get it together", find purpose, define it practically, succeed in developing an institutional identity -- thrive; while others just survive: and still others don’t manage even that?

I will deal with the issue of institutional origination later. Here, I wish to emphasize that today there are more "Vikings" than "Normans" in Russian economic, political, and military life. Furthermore, when one examines the background quality of Russian life one finds little support for the emergence of a "creatively destructive" social group and institution. It is, for example, hard to grasp that the average life expectancy for Russian men is less than sixty years. According to published reports, Russia is the first industrial country where in the absence of war, famine, and disease, deaths now exceed births by some 800,000. Death rates are up due to suicide, alcoholism and accompanying industrial accidents. It seems there are only six districts in Russia that continue to grow demographically at historical rates. In these circumstances here are some possible Russian futures.

One possibility is the gradual success and consolidation of democratic and capitalist practices. However, if a stable democratic regime requires autonomous interest groups, a legal order, and a citizenry all rooted in cultural individualism, then Russia needs a cultural revolution more than economic growth and political stability. However, in general revolutions are rare, cultural ones are the rarest of all.

Can one find evidence in Russia of substantial practical cultural support for democratic figures, organizations, and platforms? In 1993 Grigorii Yavlinski and other democrats received 13% of the vote. There are no democratic parties with a well articulated national organization. The democratic media has a largely Muscovite and Petersburg audience. The major democratic leaders are unable to unite; they act more like notables than politicians. And should they come to power where is their democratic social constituency? Finally, what evidence is there that any of these "democratic notables" understand the organizational and

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practical implications of liberal egalitarian individualism? The point is not simply that Western democracy is a highly unlikely outcome in Russia. More troubling is the difficulty I have in discerning the base for an unstable Russian democracy.

A second possible Russian future involves more political and territorial (i.e., regional) fragmentation, until a point is reached where political and economic units with bounded membership, centralized power, and integral economies are finally delineated.

A third possibility is a successful war followed by the emergence of a stable, even legally based, authoritarian Russian regime. Sooner or later wars produce winners whose confidence is greater for having risked-fought-and-won: whose victory often speaks to their greater competence and originality; and who then have the authority to stabilize and develop their country. But some wars, like chronic illnesses, can persist for a long time without resolution. Furthermore, a victory by the weak over the weak (Russia over Chechnya) may not add significantly to Russia's resources or confidence. Plus, in the contemporary world there is a unique problem attached to wars fought by a country that has nuclear weapons. The possession of nuclear weapons may be the only strength an otherwise weak country has, but one it can't use precisely because that would threaten other genuinely powerful countries.

A fourth possibility is that Russia will become Europe's national ghetto! This Russia marked by extremes of luxury and poverty, acts of violent weakness, elites combining criminal, political, and entrepreneurial features in a regime made up of unstable, unpredictable, persistently feeble authoritarian and democratic contradictions would be a very dangerous political laboratory. Because this Russia will still be an industrial, technological, scientific, high culture society; not a North Korea, let alone Myanmar. A very dangerous Russia if enough Russians respond to Ghetto status with frustration, embarrassment, resentment, and rage.

One slightly reassuring feature, even in this scenario, is that it is nearly as difficult to construct a regime of rage from the elemental economic, political, and social realities of contemporary Russia as it is to create a capitalist democracy.

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"In this connection see, Katrina vanden Heuvel. "Yeltsin Survives; Will Democracy"? The Nation, February 27, 1995."
II. MOVEMENTS OF RAGE

Weakness as a generic condition doesn’t provide the analytic leverage necessary to outline possible futures. In this essay I will outline a possible near-term scenario and a possibly related political outcome.

The scenario consists of four assumed developments: a few additional instances of national disintegration, with at least one victim being a prominent nation (e.g. India); continued political stalemate, bitter cultural rhetoric, and job uncertainty/loss in the United States; the breakdown of several weak electoral regimes like Venezuela, the Philippines, and Hungary; a continuation of the invidious distribution of life chances and styles within the city and between it and the provinces in a country like Russia along with the perception that Russia is dependent on the West. At most these assumptions call for an imaginative step not a leap of faith.

However, the following suggestion might. If these potential developments cluster in time we are likely to see the emergence of movements of rage, very possibly in Russia or other countries of the former Soviet empire. What are movements of rage?

With one exception, these movements haven’t been of central theoretical concern for academics. In fact, their salience has depended almost entirely on whether they designated themselves or were perceived as communist. For the most part, analytical interest in them has taken the form of case studies. Furthermore, in the last fifty years there have been very few of these movements, and even fewer have come to power. Finally, they have appeared at different times and in very different areas of the world. They haven’t clustered in political time or space. For these reasons, they have not been recognized for what they are -- a distinctly new type of non- and post-communist revolutionary force. To make this claim minimally plausible let me give some examples.

• In the 1960’s Pierre Mulele led a rebellion in Kwilu province in what is now Zaire. It was a rebellion that targeted the European educated population, expatriate and indigenous; targeted

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*I realize this sounds very much like a prediction, and I don’t want to upset my colleague Ellen Comisso more than I already have by making yet another. In my defense I can only say this is not a general or banal prediction. Indeed it may be wrong. On the other hand, it may qualify as what Comisso generously refers to as a “brilliant insight.” See “Prediction versus Diagnosis: Comments on a Ken Jowitt Retrospective,” Slavic Review, Vol. 53, No.1 (Spring 1994), pp.186-192.

*I first developed this argument in “The Leninist Extinction,” in New World Disorder, pp.275-277.
those who could read and write, who wore ties: targeted them for execution. The goal was not to attack institutions but to violently eliminate persons and groups “contaminated” by European culture.  

- In the 1960’s and 1970’s, the Tupamaros appeared as a political force in the “Switzerland” of Latin America, Uruguay. They used some communist rhetoric, but as Naipaul correctly noted, the Tupamaros were first and foremost violent destroyers, kamikazes, and nihilists.

- In the 1970’s, Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge came to power in Kampuchea. They called themselves Maoists, and set about to physically liquidate any member of the Khmer people contaminated by contact with the French, American, Vietnamese, or Indian population in Kampuchea. When the Khmer Rouge entered the capital city, Phnom Penh, they completely emptied it: houses, offices, schools, and hospitals: and forced the inhabitants out of the city because they identified the city as the source of cultural degeneracy and pollution.

- In the late 1970’s one faction of the communist movement in Afghanistan, the Khalq adopted a position similar to the Khmer Rouge’s. The Khalq did not see itself primarily as the representative of the working class, but as a force to purify a corrupt Afghani people.

- And in the 1980’s a movement called Sendero Luminoso, the Shining Path, appeared in Peru, calling itself Maoist, but singing songs of death, littered with references to blood, and to a mythology of Inca identity. Like the others it is a Movement of Rage.

From Zaire in Africa, to Kampuchea in Asia, Peru in Latin America, and Afghanistan in the Middle East, one can identify a revolutionary force that to date has designated itself in Leninist terms but whose ethos, political behavior, and ideological content are not Leninist. As I noted in 1979, Movements of Rage have their own ideological source, namely, Frantz Fanon’s book THE WRETCHED OF THE EARTH, not Lenin’s WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

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These movements are not primarily motivated by the need to modernize, industrialize, or transform their class structure. They are motivated by rage against what they consider to be the insidiously polluting legacy and influence of Western culture. Movements of Rage appear as responses to failure and desperation. The perceived failure of political, economic, cultural, religious, and educational elites to create an equitable, equal, dignified, and predictable life for the "people". Desperation because no political program or ideological designation seems to work.

This ethos of angry humiliation and violent desperation typically emerges in both urban slums and the provinces. But it is in the provinces around a provincial elite of high school and provincial college teachers, doctors, pharmacists, and clergy that failure and desperation get articulated, organized, and presented as political rage. This is the rage of the educated and semi-educated who have been invited but not included in the "modern" or Western elite; of those who live not between but on the periphery of two worlds -- native and cosmopolitan, and are alienated from both. However, in the first instance their rage is directed against the West, in particular its local agent, "the City" -- the Cairo's, Delhi's, Lima's, and Beverly Hills; the envied and detested sites of luxurious display, power, and exclusion. This rage is not simply directed against the City as the source of Western pollution, but against modernity itself. It is a rage that divorces the products from the institutions of modernity accepting the former as booty and rejecting the latter as evil.

However, even if I have sketched a new revolutionary type, one might stand Holmes' question to Watson on its head and say: "...interesting.....but are they important"? Perhaps not. As I said earlier there seem to be very few of these movements. And in recent years with the exception of the Khmer Rouge and Khalq none have come to power. Third, only the Khmer Rouge practiced genocide, and for all its undeniable horror, it was "contained" in Kampuchea. Finally, except for one, all these movements have appeared in peripheral countries. But that "one" was the Nazi movement of rage.

16The leaders of these movements regard the reality of their own societies with as much disdain and contempt as the reality of the Western presence. Their idealization of the "peasant," rural life, the "village," and the native "soul," is precisely that: a mythological not sociological identity that allows for violent attacks not only against those "contaminated" by the West, but also all those who fail to meet mythological standards of native identity, i.e. the rest of the country.
17I say "sketched" deliberately. There is still the pressing need to decide which movements can be included and which excluded. The Romanian Iron Guard qualifies, but not, I think, the Ayatollah Khomeini's regime, or Stamboliiski's in inter-war Bulgaria, even though there were elements of a movement of rage in both.
It appeared in Europe not the "third world," at the center not on the periphery, and it shaped the last fifty years of global history. Hitler and the Nazis viewed the liberal capitalist democratic West as a source of national humiliation and cultural pollution. Hitler and the Nazis detested the City. Speer’s Berlin was to be a city of monuments not people. Hitler and the Nazis did indeed assign the products of modernity an odd sort of autonomy, seeing them, in Turner’s words, "largely in isolation from the social, economic, and political concomitants of the processes that made them possible." Turner’s concluding observation about Nazism is also pertinent:

"If the essence of what has hitherto been described as fascism should be found to lie in an extreme revolt against the modern industrial world and an attempt to recapture a distant mythic past, it should be kept in mind that there is no guarantee that such movements may not rise again. It would indeed be unfortunate if, in our vigilance against a rebirth of the familiar forms of what has been thought of as fascism, we should be led to overlook the emergence of new varieties of anti-modernism quite different in appearance from earlier ones."\(^9\)

In any study of movements of rage one should distinguish three types of political rage: the urban (or rural) jacquerie (from Los Angeles to Liberia); the provincially rooted movement of rage a la Sendero; and nationally based regimes of rage like the Nazi.

The latter rest on an alliance between the leaders of a Movement of Rage and leaders of major national institutions, in particular, but not only, the Army. Such an alliance is typically a response to what established national elites see as primary threats to their well being, and even more to their way of life. That was certainly the case in Germany. Regimes of Rage manipulate nationalism for revolutionary purposes. Leaders like Hitler and Pol Pot typically have nationalist credentials which in an environment of perceived threat to the nation they use to disguise their violent nihilism, their mythological commitments, and their esoteric revolutionary programs. If Movements of Rage fail to effect national alliances their primary impact will be more regional than national, more national than international.

Does Russia have the potential to generate a movement or regime of rage? The combination of elite dependency on the West, invidious contrasts between a Muscovite elite’s life style from life-chances in the provinces, a readily available mythology about the Slavic soul, a status-deprived military, and a substantial industrial-technological-scientific apparatus suggests it does.

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A remarkable consequence of the Leninist Extinction is the absence for the first time in 200 years -- since the French Revolution -- of a militarily centered, politically organized, international anti-liberal movement. There is no Islamic state with global military reach. The genuine threat of violence from Islamic states is of a quite different order. It comes from political terrorism, civil war a la Afghanistan, and regional imperialism such as a possible Egyptian colonization of oil rich Libya. And pace Huntington, no Sinic "Fu Manchu" threat to a Western "Lone Ranger" civilization exists now. One can make as good a case that China will become a giant Thailand -- wealthy, corrupt, and regionally powerful -- as that it will become a global superpower.  

In the West a powerfully routinized liberal capitalist democratic ideology does exist. What doesn’t exist anywhere in the West is a "creatively destructive" ideology appropriated by an institutionally innovative social force like the English middle class during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, or the American middle class after the Second World War.

The absence, not end, of ideology expresses itself intellectually and academically as rational choice theory, and what some call the "new institutionalism." In a world that lacks a compelling, not merely powerful, ideology created and appropriated by an innovative group -- whether it be Normans, the bourgeoisie, Bolsheviks, or Nazis -- in short, in a mundane world, a world of power, material interests, and inertia it is not surprising to see the articulation and predominance of academic theories like the "new institutionalism" and rational choice: mundane theories reflecting, and reinforcing, not simply interpreting a mundane world. In the words of one of its founders, Paul DiMaggio, the "new institutionalism" is concerned with practical consciousness (what Bourdieu calls "knowledge without concepts"), it emphasizes ad-hocing not sanctioning, scripts not norms, accounts not values, routines not roles.

Rational Choice theory has the same quality. It reflects rather than interprets a world in which the only political ideology, liberal capitalist democracy, is powerful, inertial, and routinized. Rational choice theory reflects the absence in the world of an institutionally innovative and compelling ideology, and the consequent dominance of ego and parochial self-interest as the major bases for action. Both theories focus on something real -- the role of habit

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and material self-interest. Unfortunately, they absolutize these realities of contemporary life, realities that in good measure are partial, situational, and conditional.

More important than its shaping influence on academic theory, the presence of a powerful but routinized liberal capitalist democratic reality in the West; and the absence of a clear and present political, military, or ideological challenge; powerfully distort America’s current effort to create a world in the image of “Indiana,” one of capitalist democracies. The United States continues to offer the non-Western world an idealized version of liberal capitalist democracy (this month [August 1995] to Vietnam). Evidence of this approach was most evident in the immediate aftermath of the abrupt, accelerated, and comprehensive demise of communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Democratic “utopianism” enjoyed free reign, and foundation support, in both academia and Government. The eastern parts of Europe, and to a lesser but real degree the entire non-European world, became an ersatz ideological frontier, a much grander instance of what Cuba’s conversion had meant to Khrushchev’s Soviet Union -- in this case historical and external proof of the Western way of life’s continuing vitality. In the early nineties, the United States was “dizzy with democracy.”

To date, there has been little overt political objection from the rest of the world to America’s "democratic Zhdanovism" primarily because for the moment at least there is no competing ideological or institutional reference. The West is the only ideological/institutional power in the world. The global result is a number of mimic democracies: formalistic more than formal democracies; truce rather than true democracies, based on floundering not founding elections, on ad hoc coalitions not authoritative institutions. Today the global participants in the "end of history" are an institutionally routinized, powerful, and confused West, and an institutionally disorganized, weak, even more perplexed Rest.

If the absence of an institutionally creative ideology -- liberal or illiberal -- is a central feature of the contemporary world, a second is the challenge to and disintegration of Boundaries. With the end of the Cold War, we have left a world of rigid, adversarial, but well-defined, predictable territorial, institutional and ideological boundaries and entered an ill-defined, frustrating, anxiety and perhaps rage producing a Genesis-like world: not void, but increasingly formless: a world of frontiers not boundaries.

Today the world is less threatened by aggression than by disintegration. There is no Soviet Union. Czechoslovakia has become CzechNOslovakia. Zaire doesn’t exist, nor does Afghanistan, Georgia, or Yugoslavia. And one has to recognize the potential (as well as the difficulty measuring it) for the territorial disintegration of India, Canada, Mexico, China, and Russia itself. The challenge to and disintegration of multiple boundaries -- national.
international, political, and economic -- and the absence anywhere in the world of a "creatively
destructive" liberal ideology tied to an innovative social force are not background conditions
for global efforts to marketize, privatize, and democratize. They are integral forces
(mis)shaping those efforts.

Neither of these contemporary features -- ideological or structural -- is adequately taken
into account by what was, and lingers on, as a major cottage industry in political science. I am
referring to the literature on Transition to, and Consolidation of, Democracy. I regard this
literature as much an ideological as a theoretical project, a project whose significance lies more
in the realm of the sociology and psychology of knowledge than in its analytical claims or
value. As such it can be interpreted as a political response to an increasingly unbounded
world -- partly disoriented, disorganized, and disintegrating -- not simply as an analytic
framework for studying that world.

Transition to and Consolidation of Democracy theorists are utopian democrats, though a
better term might be neo-Bolshevik democrats. When Marx and Engels described utopian
socialists as those for whom "historical action [should] yield to their personal inventive action,
historically created conditions of emancipation to fantastic ones, and the gradual...class
organization of the proletariat to an organization of society specially contrived by these
inventors," they might well have had Juan Linz, Al Stepan, and particularly Phil
Schmitter and Guiseppe di Palma in mind. I say neo-Bolshevik, not only utopian, because the
resemblance of the Transition writers to Lenin's voluntarism is remarkable. In WHAT IS TO
BE DONE? Lenin applauds this comment by Pisarev: "My dream may run ahead of the natural
march of events...[but] if man...could not from time to time run ahead...then I cannot at all
imagine what stimulus there would be to induce man to undertake and complete ..work in the
sphere of...practical endeavor....." Pisarev concludes by saying: "if there is some connection
between dreams and life then all is well." I draw your attention to the if, first, in
connection with the "transitologist and consolidologist" literature's disregard, underestimation,
or ignorance of the Leninist legacy in the former Soviet empire. In the fourth essay I phrase it
this way: "transitologists and consolidologists" view the former Soviet empire largely as a
blackboard written on with communist chalk erased by perestroika and dissidents, and ready
now to be scripted with universally generalizable democratic tactics and rules.

22Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "The Communist Manifesto," in Lewis S. Feuer, Marx & Engels: Basic
I also draw your attention to their underestimation of the colonial legacy in the Third World -- a legacy suppressed not eliminated by the Cold War; a legacy that includes artificial and unenforceable territorial boundaries, tribal-ethnic-religious irredenta, anemic civic institutions, and fragile national identities (e.g., Pakistan, Ukraine, and North Korea located closer to the centers of potential geopolitical nightmares than democratic dreams). And to their failure to examine the Cold War’s shaping impact on the organization of democracy, capitalism, and nationalism in the West itself, currently being played out from Italy to Japan.

The "transitology-consolidology" writers have a laudable political project: to put quickly in place elite legal, electoral, and constitutional agreements capable of preventing fascist or demagogic movements and leaders from taking advantage of short term social, economic, psychological, and political turbulence. Their long run hope is that currently weak or absent democratically left movements will revive and fill the new institutional space. These goals explain their adamant even dogmatic preference for parliaments over presidents -- for ever expanding political coalitions. I might point out that one of the most interesting coalitions that emerged in the aftermath of the Leninist extinction was between social democratic professors with their past ambivalence and antipathy towards liberal capitalist democracy, and political conservatives inside and outside of academia. The success of this coalition manifests itself in one genuinely successful transition: from PROBLEMS OF COMMUNISM to THE JOURNAL OF DEMOCRACY.

If neither Transition "theory" with its willful neglect of context and its political voluntarism, one that in fact resembles Blanqui more than Lenin, nor rational choice, with or without the new institutionalism, is very helpful in our effort to understand political change (of any order, democratic or otherwise) in the non-Western world, then how can we conceptually and analytically interpret current efforts to democratize, privatize, constitutionalize, and marketize?

We need a different, more conceptually generous framework to interpret what is happening in the former Soviet empire. I have suggested we begin with the highly unbounded, and fundamentally weak political and economic environments in the eastern parts of Europe:

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24 Lenin was a revolutionary "political sociologist," not a "political scientist." In this respect he was, pace Huntington, a disciple of Marx; one who never forgot that he had to deal with "the[sociological] material at hand." Huntington confuses Lenin with Blanqui. Strictly speaking today’s "transitologists-consolidologists" are more voluntaristic than Lenin; they are latter-day Blanquists. See Samuel P. Huntington's Political Order in Changing Societies, (Yale University Press, New Haven 1968), pp.334-343. And for a classic Blanquist argument, Giuseppe Di Palma's To Craft Democracies, (University of California, Berkeley 1990).
and the reality of a world marked by the absence of ideologically and institutionally innovative social groups. In studying these frontier and liminal\textsuperscript{25} political environments, analysts should on the one hand avoid the "leftist" or "catholic" error of dogmatically and scholastically homogenizing the world -- the rational choice error; and on the other, the "rightist" or "protestant" error of absolutizing the diversity of political and economic outcomes in the former Soviet Empire -- the "path dependent" error.

In a world of political breakdowns rather than breakthroughs, of real and potential disintegration, our theoretical efforts should focus on the processes of institutional origination. A strategic starting point is to conceptualize and then analyze the politics of weakness. I don't mean by this the weapons used by the weak against the powerful.\textsuperscript{26} Rather, I want to understand and explain how the weak become strong. We must address the issue of what moves a society from habitual routines and ad hoc measures to a new and coherent way of life: a gestalt made up of a new ideology, political language, power generating institution, novel strategy, and supporting social strata concentrated in a "core site."\textsuperscript{27} The implication here is not that new "ways of life" must appear because they are needed. Not at all. We may, in fact are likely, to see the persistence of anemic polities that mix weak authoritarianism with weak democracy in unnamed, novel, even bizarre ways. The point is two-fold: to understand what sustains weakness, gives it a substantial political half-life; and what makes it possible to transform weak societies, polities, and economies into strong ones.

How do clots of social, political, and economic action, e.g. shifting, fragile, instrumentally based political and economic coalitions coagulate into INSTITUTIONS -- into persistent, bounded, authoritative, and partisan patterns of leadership and membership, material and ideal interests, strategy and ethos. These questions are prior to, though not mutually exclusive with, the issues of marketization, privatization, and democratization. In a world increasingly marked by political weakness, disorientation, institutional mimicry and disintegration, the likelihood of creating stable democratic and efficient capitalist market institutions isn't very great, particularly if one operates with the idealized notions of stable

\textsuperscript{25}I have been working for five years with the distinction "boundaries and frontiers" to differentiate and juxtapose two radically different types of institutional environments. In a recent piece, "After the patronage state: a model in search of class interests," Zygmunt Bauman in a typically insightful manner analyzes the "liminal" (what I have referred to as "frontier") nature of the east European environment, in Christopher G.A. Bryant and Edmund Mokrzycki eds. \textit{The New Great Transformation} (Routledge, London 1994), pp. 14-36.

\textsuperscript{26}Which James C. Scott has done so carefully and successfully in \textit{Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance} (Yale University Press, New Haven 1985).

\textsuperscript{27}See Ken Jowitt, "The Leninist Extinction," pp. 266-268.
democracy and capitalist market that characterize the IMF, the SSRC, and the U.S. government.

In this connection, I find Harry Eckstein's comment about the "calamitously improbable combinations of circumstances which actually make democracy work." salutary. He doesn't, but I would point to the cases of Germany, Japan, Spain, Greece, South Korea, and Poland -- all of which experienced cultural and institutional trauma in war, civil war, and migration prior to the substantial development of democratic life. Along the same lines, Eckstein says that "stable democracy is immensely difficult to achieve, and has in fact been achieved only in very few cases -- that it is unstable democracy, not stable (read consolidated) democracy, which is, by any reasonable measurement, the normal case." The direct and obvious suggestion is that we should explain how some countries like Venezuela, the Philippines, Hungary... maintain the reality of unstable, intermittent, and indecisive democracy, which after all is better than no democracy at all.

Eckstein's second critical insight is that to be stable a democracy must contain authoritarian components. This observation has particular resonance given the highly disordered character of most political environments today. Undoubtedly, this argument along with Eckstein's insistence on grounding the political organization of democracy in social and cultural realities accounts for the near complete absence of any reference to his work by "transitologists and consolidologists" who prefer Machiavelian political science to Weberian political sociology.

Five years ago I argued that the Leninist Extinction was not a contained event, either in the sense that it simply "topped off" decaying alien regimes to reveal vibrant democratic and capitalist civil societies in waiting, or in the sense that its impact would be limited to former communist countries. Rather, the political and institutional collapse of Leninist regimes has been a direct cause in some settings, and a catalyst or background condition in others for the emergence of relatively unbounded institutions -- nationally and internationally, politically, militarily, economically, and ideologically. In environments of this order, after an initial period of disorientation and dissimulation, I continue to think we are likely to see political responses that emphasize hierarchy, solidary, and exclusionary political and economic (i.e., authoritarian) practices.

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The global political issue in the next decade is not the appearance of authoritarian political and economic responses, but their character and weight. Let me be more specific as to why new polities are likely to have constitutions and markets with substantial authoritarian components. In his article, "Capitalism by Design" Claus Offe argues that "any operative political system is the combined outcome of three hierarchical levels of decision-making: the nation, the constitution of a regime, and decision making; and that dealing with one imperative may obstruct dealing with another." In other words, politically reconstructing a nation may work against the creation of a democratic constitution; success in achieving the latter may obstruct the creation of a capitalist market; and creating the latter may be antagonistic in crucial respects to achieving democracy. It appears that the developmental trinity of nation-building, capitalism, and democracy, if not unholy, is at least highly contentious. This is not a new insight, but it remains valuable and pertinent. Add to it Offe's point about the absence in most of the non-Western world of an institutionally bounded middle class, or a powerful external democratic sponsor willing to enforce the demand for Liberal Capitalist Democracy, and one begins to grasp the difficulty of creating a capitalist market, a stable democracy, and an identity claiming nation.

According to Offe, the West succeeded in creating the nation-state, capitalism, and democracy because it succeeded in historically sequencing these efforts in that particular order. That helped. But the crucial development in the West, specifically England, was the early emergence and primacy of the individual: spiritually, politically, and economically. All three institutions -- the nation-state, democracy and capitalism -- require a critical degree of combinatorial freedom, i.e. they rest on the ability to standardize, relativize, and consequently interchange intrinsically diverse human resources on a regular basis. It is the role playing individual, not the stereotyped member of a corporate ethnic, racial, or social group who satisfies that requirement. Individualism is the basis of a STABLE democratic capitalist nation-state. Unfortunately, societies where individualism predominates remain the historical exception, not the norm.

30In this regard the IMF is more effective than NATO’s Partnership for Peace, but less effective than the Red Army in “imperatively coordinating” Eastern Europe.
A liberal capitalist democratic nation is not a redundant term or reality. One can be a capitalist without being a democrat, a liberal without being a democrat, and a nationalist without being any of the above. The implication is that in the near future we are unlikely to see more than a very few stable democratic and capitalist nations. We are more likely to see a larger number of unstable national capitalist democracies; and most likely to see a majority of states for whom unstable democracy would be an enormous achievement.

In the fifth century, Augustine described a world "not of absolute nothingness, [but rather] a kind of formlessness without definition."33 Ours isn't that, yet. It is a perplexing amalgamation of inertia, power, innovation, and formlessness. And it is highly doubtful that in this Genesis-like world, one in which the West is ill at ease with itself and subject to substantial challenges to and revision of its institutions, that we can operate with, let alone successfully export, an idealized version of what we were. Indeed an effort of that order will likely increase the number of failed attempts to democratize. And should such failure, resulting anger, and desperation in the "Rest" coincide with any significant difficulty or failure of democratic and capitalist institutions in the West, a la the 1930's, then we may well see the emergence of novel, but not necessarily benign, political phenomena. Significant among them will be dogmatic illiberal ideological responses, authoritarian or totalitarian efforts to create effective institutional boundaries in a world that is more mobile and intrusive than interdependent.

Some of these new political institutions may be instances of what Trotsky once termed "combined development;"34 institutions that combine some of the most advanced technologies of power with some of the least advanced emotional feelings in some of the most disordered societies. In short, we may see the emergence of a regime of rage, a nationally based internationally aggressive revolutionary regime. It happened earlier this century in both Russia and Germany.

IV. PELAGIUS OR AUGUSTINE: Leninist Legacies and Liberal Democracies

For many, in 1990 the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe were blackboards written on with Leninist script for anywhere from forty to seventy years: erased by heroic dissidents and Perestroika, and waiting tabula rasa like, to be written on with democratic capitalist chalk.\(^{35}\) A striking example of this blank slate perspective was the “transition to democracy” literature, one that generally ignored the Leninist Legacy confronting the governments in this area, and specifically ignored the particular political sociology, political economy, and political culture, of life in the former Soviet Union and Soviet bloc.

With its Machiavellian, in fact Blanquist, strictly political, elite focus, “transitologists and consolidologists”, cannot, in fact presumably don’t have to, come to grips with the socio-cultural legacy of the Leninist experience. Yet the fact is that Leninist revolutions occurred primarily in, or better, against peasant societies. Marx once described peasants as “sacks of potatoes.” Stalinist collectivization murderously “mashed” them, and in the aftermath of the Leninist extinction -- the abrupt, comprehensive, and accelerated demise of communism -- the legacy states of the former Soviet empire present us with a new type of society. Not civil, civic, anomic, mass, or atomized, they are weakly integrated privatized societies. This is the legacy of collectivization in particular and more generally of the neo-traditional conflation of society, economy, and polity within the formal and monopolistic boundaries of the Party Oikos.\(^{36}\) “Transition to and consolidation of democracy” writers dismiss the years under Leninist rule as “pre-history.” They slight or dismiss their shaping influence on current cognitive and emotional attitudes, as well as habits. Together with their rational choice allies they see self-interest as a political detergent powerful enough to break up and dissolve any remaining Leninist stains.

Rational choice theory is indeed a “contender” in the effort to make sense of this part of the world. It’s weakness is that it utterly ignores deTocqueville’s powerful distinction between egoism and individualism.\(^{37}\) It fails to recognize that in their intemperate competitiveness and

\(^{35}\)Ken Jowitt, “The Leninist Legacy,” in New World Disorder: The Leninist Extinction, University of California, Berkeley 1992. The summer issue of Comparative Political Studies (1995) is devoted to a critical appraisal of this idea.


fearful exposure the societies of the former Soviet empire are more Hobbesian than Lockeian. In fact, rational choice theory more successfully mirrors than explains the expedient calculations of people in Russia, Ukraine, Eastern Europe. The institutional gestalt of Neotraditional Leninism, one made up of a booty economy, parasitic party, and "scavenger" society has left a social psychological and practical legacy far removed from the Benjamin Franklin, Robinson Crusoe, Benthamite images informing much of rational choice theory. And the Genesis-like environments in the former Soviet empire with their confused, conflicting, diffuse incentive structures are radically different from the clear incentive structures and implicit order of institutional discipline that drive rational choice theory.

And then there is path dependency. If rational choice is "catholic" in its universal and homogenizing premises, then path dependency is decidedly "protestant," theoretically scripted to chart and appreciate a diversity of political and economic outcomes. And that's the problem. If under Leninism, replicas of the Soviet regime were the rule and therefore not much comparison was necessary; according to some path dependent adepts in the post-Soviet era we are faced with the revenge of national uniqueness, which of course makes comparison near impossible. But without comparison and generalization it isn't possible to establish what is genuinely unique. Path dependency can all too readily become a methodological dead end. However, for some it may well serve a political purpose. If one accepts a stark version of path dependency, then IMF and Jeffrey Sachs-like universal schemes for the countries of the former Soviet empire lack any rational justification. In short, path dependency can become a political argument for "third ways," for a non-Western developmental path.38

Of course one expects Hungary to develop differently than Bulgaria, and Bulgaria to develop differently than Lithuania. However, my premise is that they will vary within the parameters set by the common institutional experiences of Leninist rule and by a shared -- not identical -- Leninist legacy. This includes the experience of a dominant (not exclusive) "ghetto" political culture emphasizing avoidance and distrust of political life, dissimulation as the major means of (mis)representing oneself to the regime, and rumor as a chronic mode of semi-hysterical prepolitical speech. It also includes ethnic, political, social and economic fragmentation. A good example of the latter is the success Leninist regimes had in creating MICS -- misdeveloped industrial economies organized along semi-autarchic lines internationally and domestically -- not NICS, newly industrially developed economies.

These are all central, at times dominant, but not the only or the only important legacies of Leninist rule. To some degree a civil society and civic culture was emerging in many of these polities. However, with careful note taken of the Polish exception, these civil societies and civic cultures were socially and institutionally feeble. They had at their core ethically charismatic orientations ill suited to sustain a liberal capitalist democracy where ethics and interest must each be given their due, not invidiously juxtaposed.

In sum, two features characterize the countries of the former Soviet empire. One is the extraordinary weakness of existing social, economic, and political exchanges. The primary task confronting these governments and societies is creating authoritative institutions. Second, efforts (one can hardly speak of a process at this point) at institutional origination are not occurring in a vacuum; they are occurring in settings characterized by the presence of inertial and adaptive elements derived from the previous Leninist regime gestalt. We urgently need a theory of institutional origination, an explanation of how institutions come into being, one that makes sense of the interaction between the institutionally weak and practically powerful legacy of Leninism and the practically powerful, institutionally weak new forces in the former Soviet empire.

A point about theory. Theory construction matters less for those periods of history when authoritative institutions exist -- unless one believes in permanent revolution, or faces a tenure review in a social science department. Description, analysis, and narration are adequate for most periods of history. It is when existing institutions have more power than authority; when their power becomes less effective; when disorientation, disorganization, and disintegration become increasingly evident that theory and institutional construction go hand in hand. That is the case today vis-à-vis the countries of the former Soviet empire (and to a lesser but real degree in the rest of the world as well.) We need to construct theories about change in the former Soviet empire that on the one hand avoid absolutely pessimistic Augustinian notions of "original sin." i.e. of a non-biodegradable Leninist Legacy that completely precludes innovative, novel, benign forms of institutional growth in this area, and on the other voluntarist Pelagian notions about the near complete malleability of political life: notions that are willfully blind to the social, cultural, psychological legacy of Leninism and the inertial features of life in the "eastern parts of Europe."39

Specifically, we must study the social constitutions of these countries: not simply their presidential and parliamentary ratio. I understand why the "transition" people dwell on this latter issue. To begin with it is easier to create political organizations and legal constitutions than social constitutions. And there is also the fear that failure to focus on parliamentary power will lower the threshold for demagogic and fascist leaders.\textsuperscript{40}

But the most consistent, effective base for a stable democratic capitalism is a society based on individualism. In his at times valuable discussion of East Central Europe's future, Dahrendorf refers somewhat vaguely to the "constitution of liberty."\textsuperscript{41} Individualism is liberty practically constituted.\textsuperscript{42} In the absence of social, cultural, and psychological realities favoring the individual, the political outcomes in the former Soviet empire will include strong authoritarian regimes, hybrids of weak democracy-weak authoritarianism, and perhaps movements of rage.

Theoretically and practically, the most difficult question to answer is what types of action will contribute to an institutionalized culture of individualism in the countries of the former Soviet empire?

\textsuperscript{40}I believe that the German experience of the 1930's, especially its debilitating effect on Parliament informs the "transitologists" fixation on a strong Parliament. See Alan Bullock's \textit{Hitler: A Study in Tyranny}, Odhams Press, London Limited 1952, Book I.


\textsuperscript{42}Daniel Chirot's "Modernism Without Liberalism," \textit{Contentions}, vol.13 (Fall 1995), pp.141-16 provides an excellent argument along these lines.
I have argued that our political and conceptual marketing of democracy in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union is politically and conceptually limiting, if not self-defeating. I propose a more generous perspective, one that characterizes the nation as a partially conflictual trinity comprised of state, civic, and ethnic forces. This perspective simultaneously relativizes the civic (or democratic) dimension of national development and relates it in a problematic manner to state and ethnic developments.

In this light, the most remarkable features of national organization in the countries of the former Soviet empire are the fragmentation -- not differentiation or relativization -- of state, civic, and ethnic forces, the weakness of civic and state forces, and the relative strength of ethnic forces.

How does one explain this syndrome? One begins with the type of regime dominating this area for between a half and three-quarter's of a century. Leninist regimes politically conflated and confused state and civic elements by smothering them within the confines of a monopolistic party organization. The consequence: neither state, ethnic, nor civic forces, orientations, or institutions were able to establish themselves in anything like an autonomous manner. Only in Poland were civic forces anything more than socially and politically anemic. In the rest of the Soviet empire civic forces were understood and expressed in an ethically charismatic manner -- the exemplars being Havel and Sakharov -- rather than in a politically pragmatic fashion. Only in Poland was ethical charisma and personal heroism complemented by the creation of an experienced counter political elite underwritten by a mass social base and novel institutions.

At the time of their extinction Leninist regimes were not totalitarian, they were "lazy monopolies," a term Albert Hirschman invented to describe certain types of economic firm, but whose applicability to Brezhnev-type regimes is striking. Lazy monopolies were regimes in which the incompetent ruled the weak.43 The institutional conflation of social, economic, and political life under the auspices of a corrupt party cadre destroyed the integrity of both state and civic life. Outside of Poland there were no institutional sanctuaries where civic and state forces could articulate, associate, coagulate, and test themselves as alternative, distinct, nascent institutions, democratic or otherwise.

The truly remarkable feature of the Soviet Oikos and its replica regimes in Eastern Europe and Asia is that several significant areas of life -- social, economic, political, and

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cultural -- were compressed within the confines of a single omnivorous formal institution -- the
Party. Compressed not differentiated, isolated from one another not integrated, except
through a central point of authority, e.g. the oblast secretary, the General Secretary in each
country, or Moscow Center for the Bloc as a whole. This form of organization has a fancy
name: "pooled interdependence." But regardless of its name, its practical significance is that
when the Center fails, nothing exists to hold the parts together. Without an authoritative
center, mutual isolation becomes general fragmentation. Without a powerful center,
individually weak parts no longer add up to a powerful whole; individual weakness becomes
generalized weakness. The institutional demise of the Party OIKOS left the constituent social,
political, and economic parts of each Leninist regime without any independent state or civic
organizing principle or relevant experience. It left them weak and fragmented.

But how then explain the relative strength of ethnic orientations and forces in the
aftermath of the Leninist extinction?

First, and most generally, the destruction of neo-traditional communist institutions that
"fused" work, health, politics, vacations, and residence (which is why I use the Greek term
"oikos") placed a premium on creating-selecting a surrogate identification offering recognizable
allies, predictability, protection, and resources. Ethnicity fills those needs.

Second, and much less recognized is the fact that Communist parties were ethnic-like in
definition and character. While for the most part genuinely opposed to ethnicity as a central,
let alone primary, base of political or social identity, Party organization, like ethnic
organization, combined the formal equality of party members with corporate opposition to all
outsider groups in society. Bolshevik-corporate, in radical contrast to Menshevik-individual,
party membership and identification unintentionally and effectively sustained the idea, the
experience of, and familiarity with corporate, i.e. ethnic-like, identity throughout the Soviet
empire.

A third powerful and (again) unintentional reinforcement of ethnic identity in all Leninist
regimes was Stalin's idea of "socialism in one country." In effect, "socialism in one country"

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44 See footnote 36 in "Pelagius or Augustine."
45 See James D. Thompson, Organizations in Action (McGraw Hill Book Company, New York
1967), pp. 54...; in the same vein but with quite different references see Alexis deTocqueville, The Old Regime
and the French Revolution (Anchor Books, New York 1955); and Ken Jowitt, "Moscow Centre" in New World
Disorder.
46 This commitment obviously varied by time, e.g. the Soviet Union in 1921 and 1941; and place, e.g.
Romania vs. Hungary in the 1980's.
conflated ethnic and ideological identity. I don't mean it simply provided cover for an unreconstructed Russian ethnic identity. Rather, the idea and practice of "socialism in one country" subtly reinforced the latent strength of ethnic identity by assimilating it to an ideological one. A striking example of this was the expression in the early 1930's that "one Russian tractor is worth ten foreign communists." The fact that after 1947 East European Leninist regimes replicated the Soviet model meant that "socialism in each country" provided the same unintentional reinforcement of ethnic parochialism to be found in the Soviet Union. To be sure regimes varied significantly in the degree to which this parochialism became manifest. However, as a latent mode of identification it was unintentionally but continuously sustained by one of the Soviet Bloc's defining features.

Fourth, during the Neotraditional period of Brezhnev's rule when Party impersonalism disintegrated in favor of Party nepotism, the affinity of Party organization, membership, and policy with family and ethnic identity often became literal and explicit.

For all of this, one must balance an appreciation of the relative strength of ethnic feeling and organization with the reality of ethnic fragmentation in Georgia, Czechoslovakia, Bosnia, Macedonia, and of course Russia itself. The common denominator in the aftermath of the Leninist extinction is the fragmentation of the national trinity. State, civic, and ethnic forces confront each other as shards not as shares in an integrated nation. And the shards themselves are internally fragmented.

In the first instance then the current pattern of state, civic, and for that matter, ethnic weakness and fragmentation owes much to the way the Party regime was organized as an Oikos. A second contributing factor is the way in which the constituent nations of the former Soviet empire became independent.

Everywhere but in Poland the Leninist Extinction was the result of a political breakdown not breakthrough. Nowhere, except in Poland, did one see the creation and elaboration of a new "way of life" of what Toynbee called an "internal proletariat" challenging a "dominant minority." And even in Poland it took Soviet disorganization to create the conditions for a revived Polish breakthrough. If one wishes to explain the fragmentation of state, civic, and ethnic forces -- the pronounced weakness of the first, the fragility of the second, and the volatility of the third -- one must examine the brief duration, limited scope, and elite character of political opposition to Leninist regimes prior to their extinction.

One might approach this in a comparative vein. After World War II, a group of formally independent "third world" regimes emerged whose democratic or Leninist facades failed to either disguise or transform what in fact were ethnically, regionally, religiously, and socially weak and fragmented societies. Relatively passive decolonization produced weak states and even weaker nations.

In contrast, the longer, more intense, and comprehensive is resistance to alien rule (a) the greater the likelihood of creating a tested, mutually tolerant leadership; (b) the greater the availability of a socially mobilized base the leadership can call on; and (c) the greater the incidence of practices, institutions, and ideological tenets that resonate culturally and socially with strategic parts of the indigenous population, if not with international funding agencies. In this regard one has only to look at Communist China's Yenan, democratic Poland's Solidarity experiences, and the ANC-SACP experience in South Africa.

For most countries in the former Soviet bloc, independence came quickly, unexpectedly. This is not meant in any way to underestimate, let alone denigrate, those who fought corrupt tyrannical rule. Nor am I unaware of the different experiences in the Baltics and the Balkans, or between Romania and Czechoslovakia. It is to say that overall resistance was brief, not particularly intense, or socially comprehensive. It is to argue that the reality of near effortless independence continues to have a negative effect on the ability to create democratic, self-confident, elites, institutions, and policies in the legacy states of the former Soviet empire. It contributed to their national weakness.
VI. FROM WEAK PRACTICES TO STRONG INSTITUTIONS

In 1990 I said that the Leninist Extinction would dramatically, in some instances traumatically, challenge the national boundaries and political identities of both the Third and Western worlds, i.e. not be limited to the disintegration of Leninist regimes. I correctly foresaw the emergence of a rather unholy global trinity of political disorientation, disorganization, and disintegration.

I also suggested that evolution was a fruitful theoretical framework likely to sensitize us to the real pattern of constraint and choice, to the possibility and persistent difficulty of creating novel solutions to novel institutional predicaments around the globe.48 Parsons once said that "an evolutionary perspective implies both a criterion of evolutionary direction, and an evolutionary scheme of stages."49 I want to concentrate here on stages, and begin by identifying four: an ELEMENTAL stage of institutional fragmentation, an ORIGINAL stage of successful institutional definition, a DEVELOPMENTAL stage of institutional expansion, and a TERMINAL state of institutional disintegration.

I don't think it is possible to explain the emergence or interpret the current pattern of political weakness in the former Soviet empire without a grasp of why and how the Soviet empire disintegrated; of its terminal stage. Toynbee argues that the "repetitiveness or recurrence of challenge is ..implied [in the concepts of growth and] disintegration," "but in the case of disintegration, the responses [to that challenge] fail. In consequence, instead of a series of challenges each different in character from a predecessor which has been successfully met and relegated to past history, we have the same challenge presented again and again...When the outcome of each successive encounter is not victory, but defeat, the unanswered challenge can never be disposed of, and is bound to present itself again and again until it either receives some tardy and imperfect answer, or else brings about the destruction of the society, which has shown itself inveterately incapable of responding to it effectively."50 That is precisely what happened in all Leninist regimes from Khrushchev's time on with respect to the challenging

issue of political equality; the unresolvable conflict between the absolute status of party cadre and the role of Soviet citizen.  

All post-Stalinist leaders were implicitly sensitive to, if not explicitly aware of, Machiavelli's observation that: [in] "composite bodies, such as states...those changes make for their conservation which lead them back to their origins." But, as Tom Wolfe understood much better than theorists of totalitarianism, "you can't go home." And no communist after Stalin (and Mao) was strategically able or politically willing to "go back" to the Party's revolutionary origins. The result: a process of political disintegration that began with Khrushchev's rejection of class combat in 1956; a process whose character is as important as its cause.

In the terminology of cosmology the Nazi empire ended with a BIG CRUNCH while the Soviet empire ended with a BIG WHIMPER. This had one profoundly positive consequence -- the absence of a nuclear war; and many negative consequences for the emergence of stable democratic capitalist polities in the area of the former empire.

To change from metaphor to analogy, the disintegration of the Soviet Empire can be understood as a form of peaceful decolonization. I argued earlier that active resistance to the Soviet Union and its replica regimes in Eastern Europe was narrow in scope, low in violence, and relatively short in duration. And as might be expected after examining comparable instances of peaceful decolonization in the Third World, the absence of a Yenan-like experience, i.e. the conflictual creation of a counter elite, institution, political idiom, social base, and strategy within the overall confines of a corrupt and disintegrating empire, denied the "legacy" regimes of the former Soviet Empire the necessary base for strong institutions.

The result of the relatively anemic (though often individually courageous) challenge to Leninist power, and lazy imperial response, was the breakdown of the Soviet Empire, rather than the breakthrough of a new institutional way of life. The legacy of what by the late 1980's was more a Corrupt than Evil empire is what Timothy Garton Ash referred to early on as a Mish-Mash, and what might be described more accurately as a fragmented social order.

The terminal stage of the Soviet Empire has been followed then by an elemental stage of loosely bounded social, economic, and political clots and fragments; a loosely articulated

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51 See Ken Jowitt, "Gorbachev: Bolshevik or Menshevik," in New World Disorder.
53 In the exception to this experience, namely Poland, one has an interesting historical parallel. Semi-Catholic Solidarity's role in the Soviet empire is comparable to the role of the Catholic church in the Roman Empire -- both grew within and were primary agents in undermining their respective empires.
amalgam of elements from the previous polity, elements that opposed it, and elements now emerging -- a very different characterization than "transiting to and consolidating democracy." The point I wish to stress is that the type of institution that disintegrated, and how it disintegrated have direct and somewhat lasting effects on the character of social, cultural, economic, political, and military life after the "extinction:" and on the types of strategies likely to succeed in creating new institutions.

If as I suggested earlier one conceives of the nation-state as a trinity of partially conflictual and complementary state, civic, and ethnic orientations and organizations, then the predominant feature of the former Soviet empire is a polytheistic fragmentation, not trinitarian unity, of state, civic, and ethnic elements; the antagonistic juxtaposition and internal fragmentation of state, civic, and ethnic orientations and forces.

With obvious and important country differences the central and shared feature of life throughout the former empire is the predominance of what Durkheim called patterns of exchange, i.e. a disjointed, instrumental "mutualism;" a "pathological" not organic division of labor related in part to the inertial, and in some instances the near nonbiodegradeable persistence of clots of unproductive industrial labor, factories, and factory managers. This is a central, negative, and novel feature of the 20th century Leninist Legacy that parallels the developmentally obstructive syndrome of surplus peasants, inefficient latifundia, and unproductive landlords in the eastern parts of Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

More generally, the central feature of the Leninist Legacy is a remarkable type of social organization and orientation, privatized societies -- not atomized, anomic, civic, civil, or mass -- societies with an ethos and praxis more consistent with Stirner's egoism than Locke's individualism. Interestingly and unfortunately, privatization has succeeded most where it is needed least, in social identification and action. Privatized societies are the reality of the former Soviet empire. Societies in which family and friends are not so much building as stumbling blocs. The issue facing these societies is how to go beyond the social arithmetic of family based exchanges to the social geometry of new institutions.

Throughout Eastern Europe, and the former Soviet Union, one finds the prevalence of weakly bounded and named social practices, conventions, and fragile coalitions: of disparate, uncoagulated clots of entrepreneurial, political, criminal, and military action. Absent are stable identifying institutions: bounded, persistent, authoritative, partisan patterns of leadership and membership, material and ideal interests, strategy and ethos.
The countries of the former Soviet empire are clearly located in an **elemental** stage, in a fragmented environment where origination of new institutions is the major developmental uncertainty -- except in the minds of some social scientific **creationists**.

For "transition to democracy" writers, the peaceful disintegration of the Soviet Empire far from having left a fragmented and inertial legacy to deal with, actually produced elites whose instrumental interests when applied to an environment only minimally complicated by "remnants of communism" will sooner rather than later produce capitalist democracies. Not all these writers were (or are) equally Pelagian in their optimism; but none qualified as Augustinians. None saw or see "original sin", i.e. the Leninist Legacy(ies) as a major obstacle. For all their formal disclaimers none adequately appreciate the enormous difficulty of creating new institutions of any order, let alone stable democratic capitalist ones, within the confines of a Leninist Legacy with a significant half-life.

The "transitologists and consolidologists" seem to share the fashion designer Donna Karan's view of origination summed up in the following observation: "I do love the ability I have to create something from nothing." At first glance, there even appears to be scientific support for the "something from nothing" thesis. Scientific notions like "quantum tunneling and quantum cosmology" also seem to argue that matter emerges out of vacuums. Seem to, because the vacuums are characterized as "other than an absolute void or empty space." Even the ancient Norse mythologies such as the YOUNGER EDDA that start with the assertion that in the beginning there was nothing at all, quickly assert, "to the north and south of nothing lay regions of frost and fire." Something new is always the partial and critical result of transforming, not merely eliminating or replacing, something older. Chadwick's opening sentence in THE EARLY CHURCH captures this nicely: "The first Christians were Jews."

If not by saltation, i.e. a single miraculous leap, like uttering Shazam; and if not by the arithmetical proliferation of social, economic, cultural, religious, educational, military and political practices, conventions and exchanges, how does institutional origination occur and prevail in an environment of fragmentation, inertia, pragmatism, and opportunism?

To begin with it doesn't have to. The "need" for new authoritative institutions is no guarantee that they will develop. A more likely outcome is the persistence of weakly articulated, ad hoc, largely instrumentally based social, economic, and political agreements that

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54 San Francisco Chronicle.
sustain themselves as conventions and never become institutions. Some (in fact most) countries in the eastern part of Europe may well be in political, economic, and social Limbo not Purgatory, i.e. stuck in a gestalt of continuing weakness. One implication of this argument is that we need to think more about the possible persistence of hybrid regimes that are weakly authoritarian and democratic.

Such thinking need not, and should not, detract from theoretical efforts to specify the conditions for successful institutional origination; for overcoming the current pattern of elemental disarray by creating stable, strong, and authoritative political constitutions supported by strategic social and cultural resources.58

I suggest we begin thinking about institutional origination in terms of core, competence, contrast, combat, and charisma. And that we examine the case of the Normans.

In certain respects they resembled other Germanic peoples, and were ready to borrow institutional inventions, like the castle, from the Franks. However, they did more than resemble and borrow. They established themselves in a bounded physical locale around Rouen, i.e. they established a core site where their practices, interests and identity were densely related to one another and clearly bounded from others.

More importantly, they invented a novel kinship practice, one that favored the coagulation of Viking clots into a Norman identifying institution, what Searle calls Predatory Kinship.59 This "distinctive kinship competence" did much more than merely differentiate; it distanced and bounded Normans from Franks: acted as a contrasting marker:60 provided an internal organizing principle for mutual identification, discipline, and cooperation. It juxtaposed Norman to Frank identity and interests; it contributed to a combat relation.

Combat signifies a particular type of adaptation to one’s environment; an effort to adapt primarily on one’s own terms. Decisively successful combat in the Norman case, and in this regard the Norman experience can be seen as paradigmatic, meant the following: fewer enemies, i.e. diminishing, rather than (the) shifting coalitions (existing in the eastern parts of

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58Here also we must sooner rather than later distinguish between democratic, authoritarian, and revolutionary institutions.

59Eleanor Searle, Predatory Kinship and the Creation of Norman Power 840-1066, University of California Press, Berkeley 1988. A fruitful comparison could be made with the origins of the Ottoman Empire and in Cemal Kafadar’s Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State, University of California Press, Berkeley 1995. We have the initial basis for such.

Europe today); more centralized, fewer dispersed resources; and perhaps most critically, a belief in one's superior, not relative, political status.

Mary Douglas hints at the relation of core, competence, contrast and combat to institution building when she insists that: "To recognize a class of things is to polarize and to exclude. It involves drawing boundaries; a very different activity from grading...the one activity can never of itself lead toward the other; any more than institutions can evolve toward a complete organizing of information by beginning from spontaneous self-policing operations." She goes on to say: "Individuals as they pick and choose among the analogies from nature those they will give credence to are also picking and choosing, at the same time, their allies and opponents, and the pattern of their future relations." 61

I want to emphasize the role partisanship (polarization) and combat (exclusion) play in the creation of institutions. For institution building to reach a breakthrough point where a return to the status quo ante is near impossible, success in combat must be decisive. Indecisive successes favor the survival of existing conventions not the invention of new institutions. The Norman victory at Val-es-Dunes is an example of the former; only William's decisive victory over the French king at Mortemer established the reality of Norman identity and power. 62

Decisive success in combat provides "proof" for a group of its superior, called, chosen (political, religious, economic, military....) status. If in THE BLIND WATCHMAKER, Richard Dawkins tells us that the "basic idea of the blind watchmaker is that we don't need to postulate design in order to understand life, or anything else in the universe," 63 then Perry Anderson's "response" is crucial. "All analogies," says Anderson, "with biological evolution break down at the point of Darwinian dualism between genetic variation and natural selection..."...both the genesis and the generalization of social practices always involve the common material of conscious human agency....There is no sense in which major social innovations can be treated as "random" inputs for a plausible theory of historical development." 64

The significance of this point goes beyond the fact that conscious purpose directs and connects human action in both the origination and expansion of institutions. Purposeful, successful, partisan combat -- of any order -- not only increases the power of the successful core group, it also "proves" the unique value and power of the proposed, promising but still

fragile institution to members and opponents. Successful combat against the odds creates the base for commitment to and sacrifice for new authoritative definitions of membership and leadership. With decisive success, leaders of the new institution acquire conviction, inspire admiration, and elicit or command obedience.

Once an institutional "contender" provides proof of its distinctive strength in electoral, ideological, military...."combat", then we can expect to see a very rapid period of institutional expansion. i.e. the elaboration and adoption of the newly dominant institution's constitution throughout society. Plumb has said: "Historians too often think of rapid social change as creating conditions of turbulence; but societies can move as quickly into stability as into revolution, and between 1688 and 1725 Britain did just that. And traditions changed just as rapidly: by 1730 Englishmen were congratulating themselves on their tolerance, on their capacity for political compromise, on the preservation of their liberties."65

Clearly, this does not describe the situation in the countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. They are still located in an elemental stage; changing from, more than transiting to, something, muddling for sure, muddling through perhaps; but with little evidence of institutional origination. A striking illustration of this is the success enjoyed by what I like to think of as "recovering communists." Recently, the ECONOMIST said: "Now they are back, smelling more sweetly than they used to in their old days of power." "It began in Lithuania, when the former Communist secretary Algirdas Brazauskas became president in November 1992; Poland was next when in September 1993 the Democratic Left Alliance, the renamed PCP, won 20.4% of the seats in Parliament (and its old ally the Peasant Party another 15.4%). Of course, in Romania, Croatia, and Slovakia old communists had already become new democrats (Kucan, Meciar, and Iliescu). Then in April 1994 in the Ukrainian elections, the Communists and their allies emerged as the largest group in Parliament with 118 out of a total of 338 seats."66 Finally, and most recently, the former communist party emerged as the strongest electoral party in Hungary.

What does this mean?

In evolutionary terms its meaning is quite clear. We are witnessing a remarkable adaptation by a stratum of recovering communists, rather than a reforming communist party's successful institutional adaptation. In fact the Gorbachevian failure to adapt the Soviet party (a paradigmatic not idiosyncratic failure) created the circumstances in which recovering communists can now compete successfully as politicians not cadres. Communists have

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66Economist.
succeeded individually and practically by rejecting Lenin institutionally and ideologically. In Poland, Hungary, and Lithuania we are not seeing the appearance of a new species of communist dinosaur. Recovering communists are "birds of a different feather."

To shift from a paleontological to a political point, the ascendance of recovering communists means neither institutional restoration, nor institutional origination. A "leap of faith" is required to see in the rule of recovered communists the basis for transcending the area wide pattern of weak power, fragmented organization, and instrumental interest. Recovered communists resemble pacified Vikings more than innovative Normans.

A useful analogy to the current situation in the former Soviet empire is the period between the fall of the Roman empire and the Middle Ages, what Peter Brown has called Late Antiquity. Then, in the aftermath of the Roman empire's extinction, and now, in the aftermath of the Soviet empire's extinction, fragmentation and (often violently) weak environments were the rule. Then former Roman notables played a critical role stabilizing a weakly institutionalized world, and former Communist cadres play the same role now.

Stabilization is precisely the short run contribution of newly recovering communist politicians elected in an age and environment of ideological exhaustion. Their implicit charter is to replace idealistic civic democrats who failed to become politicians, while keeping shrill ethnic nativists out of power. Recovering communists are, perhaps, the greatest (and sole) instance of successful transition. from corrupt tyrants to pragmatic politicians. The problem: pragamatics cannot provide the leverage to breakout of the dominant pattern of state and social weakness. Recovering Communists, who recognize they are powerless in dealing with ideology have voluntarily and -- given their past -- understandably, forsaken a strategically crucial lever in the process of institution building -- ideology.

Only a charismatic force is able to transform existing weakly bounded conventional political, economic, and social practices into strongly bounded authoritative ones. All stable and viable institutions, democratic and otherwise, originate in some form of charismatic combat whether wars of national independence, civil wars, lost wars, or risk- and conflict-filled political and religious encounters. But doesn't identifying charisma as the solution to institutional building mean relying on a form of creationism not evolution. gradual or

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punctuated: on singularity, saltationism, on a miracle? Yes, but one that we can disaggregate and study.

A good starting point is Richard Dawkins' observation: "cumulative selection is the key but it had to get started, and we cannot escape the need to postulate a single step chance event in the origin of cumulative selection itself." Indeed, if we are to see a process of successful institutional development in the countries of the former Soviet empire, then the charisma(s) of a party, leader, social group, belief and/or practice must act as the single step chance event. Nor are we consigned to simply waiting for such to happen. We can scan the environments of the various parts of the former Soviet Union and bloc for potentially creative minorities (social, ethnic, regional, political, religious) with power generating competencies. We can adopt an historical sociological approach to charisma that directs us to look for the emergence of a marginal site generating novel practices and talented practitioners (like Le Bec in Normandy and Gdansk in Poland). We can be sensitive to the appearance of novel ideological idioms outlining new identities that formally incorporate historical elements from national, religious, and Leninist institutional life, i.e. link up with tradition. We can look for political actors like Madison, Lenin, and Hitler who combine theoretical, organizational, and rhetorical power.

Having said this I must restate and emphasize an earlier point. The countries of the former Soviet empire can remain loosely bounded institutionally and unclearly named politically for a significant period of time. They can remain unstable, weak, and indecisively authoritarian/democratic entities. Charisma isn't available on demand. To begin with, charismatic movements require high levels of socio-cultural anxiety. Pettazoni's observation rings true: "...the anxiety of man, perpetually in danger, leading a precarious life in a precarious world...produces a vital need for an ideological foundation capable of guaranteeing the existence of man and the universe, its stability, and permanence." But it does not appear that situations of this order are widespread in the former Soviet empire. And where they do exist we are witnessing the remarkable capacity of people to privatize rather than organize immiseration, anger and anxiety.

Still, recognizable potentials for the charismatic presentation of anxiety do exist: in Russia's apparently catastrophic demographic situation, the continuing and serious health problems of Ukraine's population, and the collective "eastern" comparison and disappointment

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\(^{69}\)Dawkins, p.140.


with West Europe. These are crucial background features for a charismatic movement: clearly they are not sufficient to produce one, or determine its specific features. Neither are they capable per se of defeating efforts to create a democracy. However, it is easier -- and perhaps even more correct -- to see them contributing more to the elimination of (weak) electoral democracy than to its consolidation.