The large revenues arising from the oil windfall enabled the state to increase its direct involvement in the economy. Beginning in the 1970s, the government created a number of state-owned enterprises, including large shares in major banks and other financial institutions, manufacturing, construction, agriculture, public utilities, and various services. Although the government has since sold many of its companies, the state remains the biggest employer, as well as the most important source of revenue, even for the private sector.

Privatization, a central feature of Nigeria's adjustment program, intended that state-owned businesses would be sold to private investors to generate revenue and improve efficiency. For many years, however, domestic and foreign investors were hesitant to enter the Nigerian market, in light of persistent political instability, unpredictable economic policies, and endemic corruption. More recently, attractive areas such as telecommunications, utilities, and oil and gas are drawing significant foreign capital.

President Obasanjo utilized the post-2003 oil boom to focus on economic reform and development. Nigeria stabilized its macroeconomic policy, restructured the banking sector, and established a new anticorruption agency, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). Unfortunately, many of these ambitious goals were followed by lackluster implementation, and President Jonathan continued this trend. President Buhari reinvigorated the EFCC, although his efforts have been directed primarily against members of the Jonathan government and the PDP, and he has yet to implement a consistent economic policy. Buoyant oil revenues helped to spur the economy from 2003 to 2014, including a modest reduction in poverty.

Perhaps Obasanjo's greatest economic achievement was paying off most of Nigeria's large foreign debt (see Table 12.2). Upon taking office in 1999, he urged governments in Europe, Asia, and the United States to forgive most of Nigeria's obligations. After persistent international lobbying, along with progress on economic reforms during Obasanjo's second term, Nigeria secured an agreement in June 2005 with its creditors. The package included debt repayments, discounted buybacks, and write-offs that reduced Nigeria's external debt by 90 percent.

In the early 1990s, a number of larger Nigerian businesses and multinational corporations that were concerned with the nation's economic decline supported the first Economic Summit, a high-profile conference that advocated numerous policies to move Nigeria toward becoming an emerging market that could attract foreign investment along the lines of the high-performing states in Asia.

Through the subsequent Vision 2010 initiative, the government outlined a package of business-friendly economic reforms, while businesses pledged to work toward certain growth targets consistent with governmental priorities in employment, taxation, community investment, and the like. Along with government and business leaders, key figures participated from nearly all sectors of society, including the press, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), youth groups, market women's associations, and others. Although Vision 2010 was promoted by the Abacha military regime, which generated skepticism, many themes of the plan have persisted. Vision 2010's final report called for the following:

- Restoring democratic rule
- Restructuring and professionalizing the military
- Lowering the population growth rate
- Raising the standard of living
- Rebuilding education
- Meaningful privatization
- Diversifying the export base beyond oil
- Central bank autonomy

international financial institutions (IFIs)

This term generally refers to the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (the World Bank) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), but can also include other international lending institutions.

balance of payments

An indicator of international flow of funds that shows the excess or deficit in total payments of all kinds between or among countries. Included in the calculation are exports and imports, grants, and international debt payments.

Table 12.2 Nigeria's External Debt

Years	Total Debt (as % of GDP)	Total Debt Payments (as % of Exports)
1977	8.73	1.04
1986	109.9	38.04
1995	129.5	14.0
1996	88.97	14.75
1997	78.54	8.71
1999	83.76	7.61
2000	80.45	8.76
2003	66.43	5.93
2005	28.64	15.4
2006	11.79	10.98
2010	9.45	1.50
2011	10.23	0.52
2012	10.42	1.34
2013	10.50	0.49
2014	10.6	0.31
2015	6.23	2.88

Source: World Bank

In 2003–2007, the government of President Obasanjo implemented a National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS), that echoed many of the core goals of Vision 2010. In 2009, President Jonathan proposed his own plan, Vision 20:2020. Yet these programs have repeatedly fallen short of implementation. Two intractable problems that have been binding constraints on growth have been privatization and restructuring of the energy sector. A Petroleum Industry Bill to reform and restructure the critical oil and gas industry languished in the legislature for over a decade, as different interests and factions squabble over key provisions. A segment of the bill passed in May 2017.

Although President Buhari has vowed to restructure the oil industry and tame massive corruption, his administration has made little progress owing to his poor health, a weak strategy, and legislative neglect. Nonetheless, Nigeria's modest private sector has been quietly expanding. While political leaders have left much of the

GLOBAL CONNECTION

Oil Wealth: Blessing or Curse?

Shortly after the 1973–1974 global oil crisis drove up the price of petroleum, Nigeria's petroleum wealth was perceived by the Nigerian elite as a source of strength. By the 1980s, however, petroleum had become a global buyers' market. Thereafter, it became clear that Nigerian dependence on oil was a source of vulnerability because of the sharp fluctuations in petroleum prices (see Figure 12.2). The depth of Nigeria's international weakness became more evident with the adoption of structural adjustment in the mid-1980s. Given the enormity of the economic crisis, Nigeria was compelled to seek IMF/World Bank support to improve its balance of payments and facilitate economic restructuring and debt rescheduling, and it has had to accept direction from foreign agencies ever since.

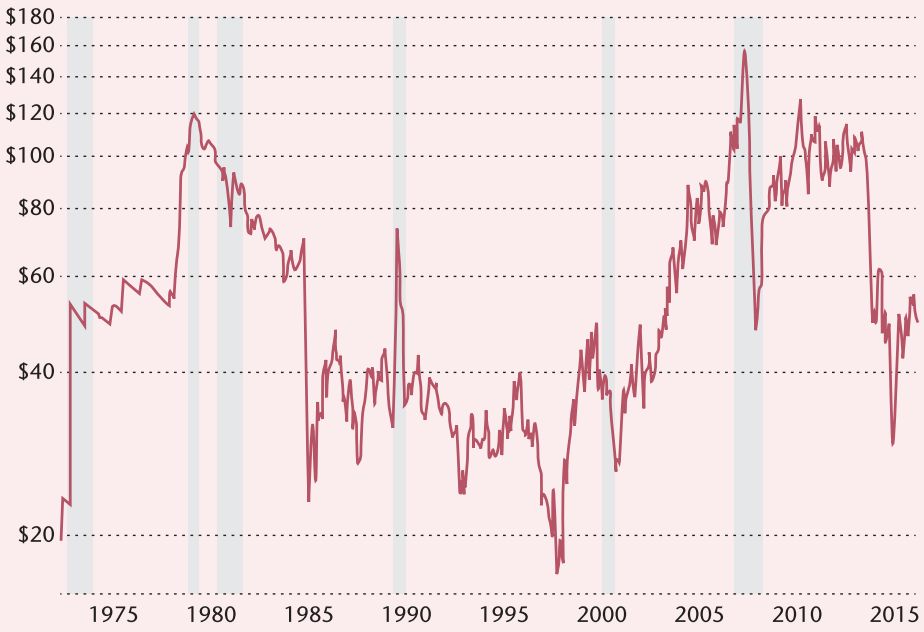

FIGURE 12.2 Crude Oil Prices 1970–2017

As in Venezuela, Russia, and Iran, oil has been a **resource curse** for Nigeria, in the sense that reliance on income from oil has made it possible for the government to ignore promoting the development of other sectors of the economy that are less vulnerable to global price fluctuations.

Nigeria remains a highly visible and influential member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), selling on average more than 1.4 million barrels of petroleum daily on world markets. Nigeria's oil wealth and its great economic potential sometimes have tempered the resolve of Western nations to challenge human rights and other abuses, notably during the Abacha period from 1993 to 1998.

Nigeria's oil-dependent economy has mirrored the rise and fall of global oil prices—booming during periods of high prices and tipping into recession when they fall drastically, as they did in 2014. (The numbers shown here have been adjusted for inflation.)

Source: http://www.macrotrends.net/.

MAKING CONNECTIONS How does Nigeria's reliance on oil income affect both its economy and its politics?

private sector to its own devices, there has been a boom in innovative segments of the economy, including telecommunications, media, and finance, along with significant government-supported infrastructure development.

resource curse

A paradoxical situation that affects some countries rich in natural resources, wherein other sectors of the economy are neglected and a high concentration of wealth and power exists, thus impairing sustainable economic development and encouraging authoritarianism.

Society and Economy

Despite its considerable oil resources, Nigeria's economic development profile is discouraging. Nigeria is listed very close to the bottom of the UN's Human Development Index (HDI), 152 out of 174, behind India (131), the other lower-middle-income country included in this book. GDP per capita has been rising rapidly; in 2016, it was

at $2,823 ($6,432 purchasing power parity), but wealth is very unequally distributed, and less than 1 percent of GDP was recorded as public expenditures on education and health each. Look at the data in Figure 12.3 and Table 12.3 to get a sense of how the Nigerian economy has developed over the last three decades.

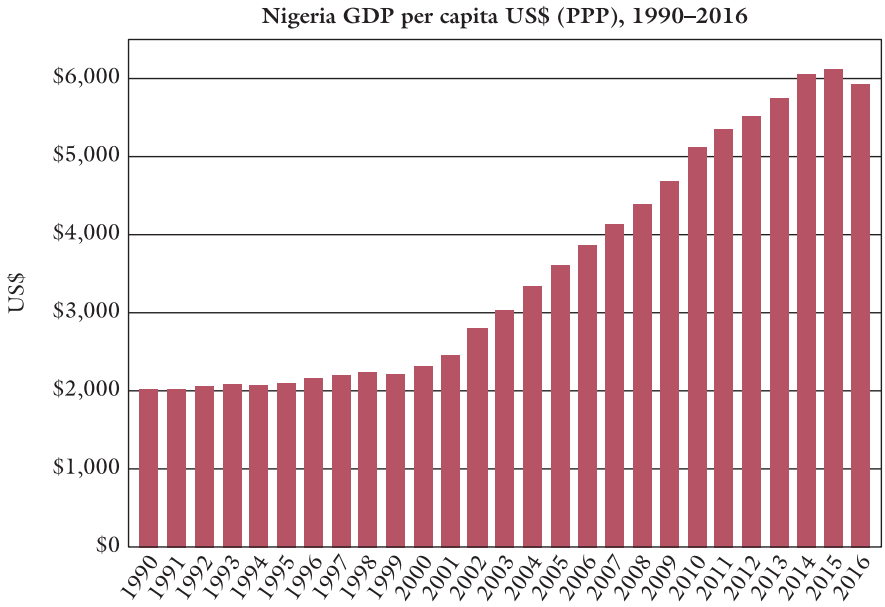

FIGURE 12.3 Nigeria GDP Per Capita US$ (PPP) 1990–2016

Sources: International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook

Table 12.3 Selected Socioeconomic Indicators, 1967–2016

Year	GDP Annual Growth (%)	GDP Per Capita Annual Growth (%)*	Life Expectancy at Birth (Years)	Mortality Rates per 1,000 Live Births	
				Infant	Under-5
1967	–15.7	–17.6	39.3	182.6	307.0
1975	–5.2	–7.8	43.4	144.4	244.3
1980	4.2	1.3	45.5	127.0	214.4
1985	8.3	5.6	46.3	124.3	209.5
1990	12.8	9.9	46.1	125.9	212.5
1995	–0.3	–2.8	46.1	123.4	207.8
2000	5.3	2.7	46.6	112.0	186.8
2005	3.4	0.8	48.7	96.6	158.1
2010	7.8	5	51.3	81.5	130.3
2016	–1.7	–2.7	53.4	71.2	108.8**

**GDP annual growth % – annual population growth %*

*** 2015*

Sources: World Bank World Development Indicators; IMF World Economic Outlook; CIA World Factbook. Some data compiled by Hannah Brown.

In terms of social welfare, Nigeria's overall weak economic performance since the early 1980s has caused great suffering, and recent economic gains have yet to alleviate poverty for the majority of Nigerians. Since 1986, there has been a marked deterioration in the scope of social services, paralleled by declining household incomes, at least through the mid-2000s. The SAP agenda and subsequent austerity measures emphasizing the reduction of state expenditures forced cutbacks in spending on social welfare. Consequently, Nigeria's provision of basic education, health care, and other social services—water, education, food, and shelter—remains woefully inadequate. In addition to the needless loss of countless lives to preventable and curable maladies, the nation is fighting to keep AIDS in check.

Because the central government controls access to most resources and economic opportunities, the state has become the major focus for competition among ethnic, regional, religious, and class groups. Nigeria's ethnic relations have generated tensions that undermine economic advancement. The dominance of the Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba in the country's national life, as well as the conflicts among ethnic elites, impede a common economic agenda and aggravate the diversion of resources through distributive politics.

Growing assertion by Christian and Muslim communities also have heightened conflicts. Christians have perceived previous northern-dominated governments as being pro-Muslim in their management and distribution of scarce resources, some of which jeopardized the secular nature of the state. These fears have increased since 1999, when several northern states instituted expanded versions of the Islamic legal code, ***shari'a***. For their part, Muslims feared that Presidents Obasanjo and Jonathan, both Christians, tilted the balance of power and thus the distribution of economic benefits against the north. Economic decline has contributed to the rise of fundamentalism among both Christians and Muslims, which have spread among unemployed youths and others in a society suffering under economic stagnation.

shari'a

Islamic law derived mostly from the Qur'an and the examples set by the Prophet Muhammad in the Sunnah.

Although the Land Use Act of 1978 stated that all land in Nigeria is ultimately owned by the government, land tenure in the country is still governed by traditional practice, which is largely patriarchal. Despite the fact that women, especially from the south and Middle Belt areas, have traditionally dominated agricultural production and form the bulk of agricultural producers, they are generally prevented from owning land, which remains the major means of production. Trading, in which women feature prominently, is also controlled in many areas by traditional chiefs and local government councilors, who are overwhelmingly male.

Women's associations in the past tended to be elitist, urban based, and mainly concerned with issues of trade, children, household welfare, and religion.[5] Although these groups initially focused generally on nonpolitical issues surrounding women's health and children's welfare, they are now also focusing on explicit political goals, such as getting more women into government and increasing funds available for education. Women are grossly underrepresented at all levels of the governmental system; only 27 of 469 national legislators (or about 5.75 percent) are women.

Environmental Issues

Northern Nigeria is located on the edge of the Sahel, the vast, semiarid region just south of the Sahara Desert that is arable, yet fragile. Although much of the north enjoys seasonal rains that come from the tropical southern part of Nigeria, the

northern edges of the country have been suffering the growing effects of climate change as water supplies diminish.

Most dramatic has been the drying of Lake Chad in the northeast, which has shrunk to roughly a fifth of its size in the 1960s. As desertification pressures spread in the north, nomadic Fulani herdsman have been forced to move their cattle toward the more temperate south, increasingly causing violent local conflicts with farmers. These disputes can take on religious tones when the Fulani, who are predominantly Muslim, move into lands settled by Christian farmers.

The environment is also a major issue in the Niger Delta, but for a different reason. Here, years of pollution from the oil industry has killed off much of the local fish stock that communities in the region have depended upon for their livelihoods, and gas flaring from the oil wells lights up the night and makes the air toxic. A small ethnic group in one of the oil-producing communities, the Ogoni, formed an environmental rights organization in 1990 that pushed for peaceful action to clean up the damage and give the Ogoni greater control over the oil wealth. The military, however, clamped down on the movement and executed its key leaders. Thereafter, protests across the region increased, and many turned violent, devolving into the militant insurgency that plagues the Niger Delta today.

Finally, Nigeria's environment faces growing pressures from the nation's population explosion. Sprawling megacities stretch across Nigeria's urban areas, especially from the commercial hub of Lagos, whose expanse has absorbed as far as Ibadan to the north and is estimated to include over 20 million people. At the same time, Lagos is rapidly losing its coastline to the rising sea levels, putting increased pressure on limited space.

Nigeria in the Global Economy

The Nigerian state has remained substantially dependent on foreign industrial and financial interests. The country's acute debt burden was dramatically reduced in 2005, but started growing again by 2014, and Nigeria is still reliant on more advanced industrial economies for finance capital, production and information technologies, basic consumer items, and raw materials. Mismanagement, endemic corruption, and the vagaries of international commodity markets have squandered the country's economic potential. Apart from its standing in global energy markets, Nigeria receded to the margins of the global economy. The recent economic boom centered in Lagos has attracted growing international investment, but this regional hub has not been complemented by effective development initiatives from the federal government or most states, nor has there been a serious effort to attack the grand corruption that depletes resources and undermines investment.

Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

A West African regional organization, including fifteen member countries from Cape Verde in the west to Nigeria and Niger in the east.

Nigeria's aspirations to be a regional leader in Africa have not been dampened by its declining position in the global political economy. The country was a major actor in the formation of the **Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)** in 1975 and has carried a disproportionately high financial and administrative burden for keeping the organization afloat. Under President Obasanjo's initiative, ECOWAS voted in 2000 to create a parliament and a single currency for the region as the next step toward an integration similar to the European Union. The currency was never implemented, but ECOWAS citizens are able to travel and trade across member-state borders relatively freely.

U.S. CONNECTION

Much in Common

Since the 1970s, Nigeria has had a strong relationship with the United States. Most of Nigeria's military governments during the Cold War aligned their foreign policies with the West, although they differed over South Africa, with Nigeria taking a strong anti-apartheid stance. Beginning with the 1979 Second Republic constitution, Nigeria closely modeled its presidential and federal systems on those of the United States, and Nigerian courts will occasionally turn to American jurisprudence for legal precedents. Since the 1970s, Washington has supported Nigerian efforts to liberalize and deepen democratic development.

Overwhelmingly, however, the key issue in U.S.–Nigerian relations has been oil. The United States currently sources only 2.6 percent of its petroleum imports from Nigeria, though as recently as 2010, Nigeria supplied close to 10 percent of U.S. imports. Washington traditionally pushed the Nigerian government to increase production of its "sweet crude," the high-quality oil that Nigeria offers. Nigeria also discovered massive gas reserves off its coasts. Nigeria's military governments sometimes used American oil dependence to moderate its pressure on Nigeria's leaders to democratize. Civilian governments since 1999 have often ignored U.S. complaints over declining election quality, and the Yar'Adua administration cultivated ties with China after the United States downgraded diplomatic relations over the farcical 2007 elections in Nigeria.

Shortly thereafter, the George W. Bush administration welcomed President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua to Washington. President Jonathan initially benefited from U.S. insistence on constitutionalism and election reform. Ironically, he also accepted his 2015 loss to President Buhari in part due to quiet diplomacy from the Barack Obama administration for a peaceful transition of power.

Nigeria and the United States share strong societal ties. Since the 1960s, Christian Nigerians have been attracted to American Pentecostalism, sprouting thousands of new churches over the years and infusing them with a uniquely Nigerian flair; many of these churches are now opening satellites in the United States and around the globe. In addition, a growing number of Nigerians have migrated to the United States, and nearly 300,000 are now U.S. citizens. Since 2000, this diaspora has begun to exercise some influence over U.S. policy, and they also have used their financial resources to support development projects and exercise political influence in Nigeria.

MAKING CONNECTIONS Does the U.S. oil addiction give Nigeria an important influence on U.S. foreign policy?

Nigeria was also the largest contributor of troops to the West African peacekeeping force to Liberia from 1990 to 1997, for the purpose of restoring order and preventing the Liberian civil war from destabilizing the subregion. Nigeria under President Obasanjo also sought to mediate crises in Guinea-Bissau, Togo, and the Ivory Coast, and outside the ECOWAS region in Darfur (Sudan), Congo, and Zimbabwe. President Jonathan continued to support Nigerian peacekeeping commitments abroad, taking a particularly strong stand against the 2012 coup and Islamist rebellion in Mali through ECOWAS. The growing Boko Haram insurgency within Nigeria, however, has absorbed much of the country's military resources since 2011, leaving less for its international commitments. President Buhari, however, led West African leaders in pressuring Gambia's military president to respect his election loss and hand power over to the opposition in 2016.

Where Do You Stand?

Has oil been a blessing or curse for the Nigerian economy?

Many Nigerians feel they have ample natural resources to develop the nation, but that they have been plagued with poor leadership to make it happen. Do you see evidence of this?

SECTION 3

GOVERNANCE AND POLICY-MAKING

Focus Questions

- What is the "National Question," and how have Nigerians tried to resolve it?
- What is prebendalism, and how has the "Big Man" problem played out in the civilian governments since 1999?

The rough edges of what has been called the "unfinished Nigerian state" appears in its institutions of governance and policy-making. President Obasanjo inherited a government after decades of military rule that was close to collapse, riddled with corruption, unable to perform basic tasks of governance, and yet facing high public expectations to deliver rapid progress. He delivered some important economic reforms over his eight years as president, but he gradually succumbed to the "Big Man" style of corrupt clientelist networks of the military years, and he tried to change the Constitution to extend his stay in power. The Nigerian public, however, rejected his ambitions, providing his political opponents, civil society, and the media with political leverage to compel his departure in May 2007. Presidents Yar'Adua and Jonathan, like Obasanjo, came to power without extensive client networks of their own and immediately set out to build them. President Buhari, interestingly, does not appear to be doing the same himself, but his government and the ruling APC party are suffused with patronage relations.

Organization of the State

The National Question and Constitutional Governance

After almost six decades as an independent nation, Nigerians are still debating basic political structures, the geographic balance of leadership, and in some quarters, if the country should even remain united. This fundamental governance issue is the National Question, and includes the following issues: How is the country to be governed given its great diversity? What should be the institutional form of government? How can all sections of the country work in harmony and none feel excluded or dominated by the others? Without clear answers to these questions, Nigeria has struggled since independence between democracy and constitutionalism, on the one hand, and military control on the other. The May 2006 rejection of President Obasanjo's third-term gambit, the fact that most elites insisted on a constitutional solution to the crisis over President Yar'Adua's demise, and President Jonathan's acceptance of his electoral defeat in 2015 are notable examples suggesting that Nigeria may have turned a corner toward growing respect for constitutional rule.

The Nigerian military in power, and even some civilian leaders, have often been unwilling to observe legal and constitutional constraints. Governance and policy-making in this context are swamped by personal and partisan considerations, and institutions are fragile.

Federalism and State Structure

Nigeria's First Republic experimented with the British-style parliamentary model, in which the prime minister is the chief executive and chosen directly from the legislative

ranks. The First Republic was relatively decentralized, with more political power vested in the federal units: the Northern, Eastern, and Western Regions. The Second Republic constitution, which went into effect in 1979, adopted a U.S.-style presidential model. The Fourth Republic continues with the presidential model: a system with a strong executive who is constrained by a system of formal checks and balances on authority, a bicameral legislature, and an independent judicial branch charged with matters of law and constitutional interpretation.

Like the United States, Nigeria also features a federal structure comprising 36 states and 774 local government units empowered, within limits, to enact their own laws. The judicial system also resembles that of the United States, with a network of local and appellate courts, as well as state-level courts. Unlike the United States, however, Nigeria also allows customary law courts to function alongside the secular system, including *shari'a* courts in Muslim communities. Nigerian citizens have the right to choose which of these court systems that they wish to use, but if the disputants cannot agree, then the case goes to the secular courts by default.

In practice, however, military rule left an authoritarian political culture that remains despite the formal democratization of state structures. The control of oil wealth by this centralized command structure has further cemented economic and political control in the center, resulting in a skewed federalism in which states enjoy nominal powers, but in reality, most are highly dependent on the central government. Another aspect of federalism in Nigeria has been the effort to arrive at some form of elite accommodation to moderate some of the more divisive aspects of cultural pluralism. The domination of federal governments from 1960 to 1999 by northern Nigerians led southern Nigerians, particularly Yoruba leaders, to demand a "power shift" of the presidency to the south in 1999, leading to the election of Olusegun Obasanjo. Northerners then demanded a shift back to the north in 2007 and 2015, propelling Umaru Yar'Adua, a northern governor, and later Muhammadu Buhari into office. This ethnic rotation principle is not found formally in the constitution, but all the major political parties recognize it as a necessity. Most parties practice ethnic rotation at the state and local levels as well.[6]

The ethnic rotation principle was interrupted due to political developments in 2010–2011. President Yar'Adua, a northerner, died in May 2010 and was succeeded by Vice President Goodluck Jonathan, a southerner from the Niger Delta. Jonathan was then elected to a full four-year presidential term in April 2011. Northern political factions argued that under the ethnic rotation rule, the presidency should have stayed with them for two terms until 2015. These factions were, however, unable to unite and block Jonathan from winning the PDP nomination and election in 2011, and public anger over this break with rotation was partly responsible for election riots that killed 800 people. Consequently, northern groups tried to wrest control of the PDP in 2012 from the president, and when they failed, they turned to the opposition APC in order to bring the presidency back to their region in 2015.

This informal norm of ethnic rotation has built upon an older, formal practice, known as *federal character*. Federal character, which calls for ethnic quotas in government hiring practices, was introduced into public service by the 1979 constitution. Although this principle is regarded by some as a positive Nigerian contribution to governance in a plural society, its application has also intensified some intergroup rivalries and conflicts. Critics have argued that it is antidemocratic, encouraging elite bargaining at the expense of public voting.

The Executive

President Obasanjo's early months in office were marked by initiatives to reform the armed forces, revitalize the economy, address public welfare, and improve standards of governance. The president sought to root out misconduct and inefficiency in the public sector. Soon, however, familiar patterns of clientelism and financial kickbacks for oil licenses resurfaced. Obasanjo proposed a new anticorruption body, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), which since its founding in 2003 has generally had an impressive record of indictments.

Nonetheless, a major impediment to reform came from the ruling party itself. The PDP was initially run by a collection of powerful politicians from Nigeria's early governments, many of whom grew rich from their complicity with the Babangida and Abacha juntas. With a difficult reelection bid in 2003, these fixers again delivered a victory for the president and the PDP, accomplished through massive fraud in a third of Nigeria's states and questionable practices in at least another third of the country.

After the 2003 election, President Obasanjo appeared convinced that he needed to build his own clientelist network if he were to govern and extend his tenure in office. He and his supporters soon moved to gain control of the PDP, offering benefits for loyalty, and removing allies of rival Big Men in the party. The EFCC then focused on investigating presidential opponents, arresting some and forcing others into compliance. When Obasanjo's attempted constitutional amendment for a third term was quashed by the National Assembly in May 2006, the president then had himself named "Chairman for Life" of the PDP, with the power to eject anyone from the party.

Not surprisingly, President Yar'Adua spent his first year in office trying to gain control over the PDP. He halted many of the last-minute privatizations of state assets to Obasanjo loyalists and replaced the chairman of the EFCC. The Yar'Adua administration did not impede the National Assembly from a series of investigations into the Obasanjo administration that unearthed massive corruption. By 2009, Yar'Adua had greater leverage over the PDP and Obasanjo was on the decline. Yar'Adua's incapacitation later that year shifted Obasanjo's fortunes, as he supported Jonathan's ascent to acting president against obstruction from Yar'Adua loyalists.

With Obasanjo's support, Jonathan moved to build other alliances to gain influence in the PDP, particularly with the powerful state governors. Their support, bought with the massive resources of the presidency, won him the PDP nomination and swept him to victory in April 2011. As President Jonathan moved to take control of the ruling party, however, his relationship soured with President Obasanjo, who then turned his support to Jonathan's opponents in the PDP. Within months, the party had divided, as six governors defected in 2013 to the newly formed opposition party, the APC, which broke the PDP's lock on power in 2015. The politicians of the APC either come from the PDP or from old opposition parties that functioned in the same fashion. Upon taking office in 2015 as the majority party in the National Assembly, the APC immediately fell to infighting over control of the Senate presidency and other leadership positions and was rocked by several major corruption scandals. Only a handful of bills (mostly budgets) were passed into law in the APC's first two years in power.

These developments demonstrated the continuing deficits of legitimacy for the government. As Nigeria's political elites continue to flout the rules of the democratic system, it is inevitable that patronage, coercion, and personal interest will drive policy more than the interests of the public. President Jonathan followed this pattern of

"Big Man" prebendal politics, but with one important exception—he appointed a credible chairman of the nation's electoral commission, Professor Attahiru Jega, in 2010. Jega moved quickly to implement reforms, assuring a more credible outcome in the 2011 elections, and charted a path for the momentous change of the 2015 polls. In the most recent national elections, not only was the incumbent (Jonathan) defeated, but also the opposition APC ousted the PDP, which had won every election since the start of the Fourth Republic in 1999.

Muhammadu Buhari's electoral victory in 2015, after three previous attempts, was a watershed in Nigerian politics. The former military ruler achieved a peaceful party turnover, raising hopes of a reform-minded government that would attack corruption and stem the raging northeastern Boko Haram insurgency. His presidency to date has produced mixed results. On one side, a new offensive and sharply reduced corruption in the military has produced significant battlefield successes against Boko Haram, though they are hardly a spent force. Additional anticorruption measures have stemmed some of the excesses of the political class.

However, Buhari's managerial capacity has also been lacking. He delayed months in selecting a cabinet, at a time when the economy was in steep economic decline. His administration has been equally slow to address the deepening recession, with severe consequences for social welfare. Despite Buhari's personal restraint, his APC party is riven with factionalism and patronage struggles. In addition, President Buhari is evidently burdened by declining health, and the public has little information on his

PROFILE

Drew Angerer/Getty Images

Muhammadu Buhari: From General to President

President Muhammadu Buhari was born into a Muslim Fulani family in the far northern state of Katsina in 1942, and lost his father at 4 years old. He enrolled in a military academy at age 18 and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Nigerian army in 1964. He was a junior participant in the July 1966 northern officers' coup that overthrew the Igbo-led military government of General Aguiyi Ironsi. He then commanded several brigades during the 1967–1970 Biafran Civil War and was instrumental in the 1975 coup that overthrew General Yakubu Gowon. Buhari then served as Petroleum Minister in General Olusegun Obasanjo's military government and commanded several divisions during the Second Republic. At various stages of his career, he received military training in England, India, and the United States, where he attended the Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, from which he received a master's degree in strategic studies.

Buhari helped to lead the December 1983 coup that ended the Second Republic, and he became military head of state, justifying his takeover based on the massive corruption of the former civilian government. His anticorruption policies won many admirers, but they were conducted amid heavy human rights violations under decrees that gave the military vast, arbitrary powers. These abuses, and his inability to deal with an economic recession produced by low oil prices, enabled General Ibrahim Babangida to remove him in a palace coup in 1985.

After years on the margins of national politics, Buhari reemerged to run for president four times beginning in 2003, labeling himself a "converted democrat" and banking upon his reputation as a foe of corruption. In March 2015, he was elected president of Nigeria as the candidate of the opposition APC party, winning about 54 percent of the vote. In November 2016, his administration launched a "Change Begins with Me" campaign that was aimed not only at social and economic reform, but also at mobilizing and motivating individual citizens to bring about much-needed changes. It remains to be seen how much real change will happen, especially as the president's health deteriorates.

MAKING CONNECTIONS What impediments to major reform in Nigeria might inhibit the "Change Begins with Me" campaign from having an important effect?

condition. Only his willingness to delegate authority to Vice President Yemi Osinbajo has preserved some continuity of government.

The Bureaucracy

As the Nigerian colonial government was increasingly "Africanized" before independence, the bureaucracy became a way to reward individuals in the clientelist system. Individuals were appointed on the basis of patronage, ethnic group, and regional origin rather than on merit.

It is conservatively estimated that the number of federal and state government personnel increased from 72,000 at independence to well over 1 million by the mid-1980s. The salaries of these bureaucrats presently consume roughly half of government expenditures. Progressive ministers have at times implemented extensive reforms within their ministries, but bureaucratic resistance is pervasive. President Buhari initiated some civil service reforms in 2015–2016 that removed "ghost workers"—fake names on the payroll so that individuals can collect multiple salaries—that helped to save roughly $70 million annually.

prebendalism

Patterns of political behavior that rest on the justification that official state offices should be utilized for the personal benefit of officeholders, as well as of their support group or clients, particularly of the same ethnicity or religion.

Corruption and inefficacy in Nigeria's immense bureaucracy is largely the result of the pervasive influence of **prebendalism**, a form of clientelism that involves the disbursing of public offices and government revenues to one's supporters from the same ethnic group.[7] Prebendalism is an established pattern of political behavior in Nigeria that justifies the pursuit of and the use of public office for the personal benefit of officeholders and their clients. The official public purpose of the office becomes a secondary concern. As with all types of clientelism, the officeholders' clients comprise a specific set of elites to which they are linked, typically by ethnic or religious ties. Thus, clients or supporters perpetuate the prebendal system in a pyramid fashion, with a "Big Man" or "godfather" at the top and echelons of intermediate Big Men and clients below.

Other State Institutions

The Military

Leadership styles among Nigeria's seven military heads of state varied widely, though generally under military administrations, the president or head of state made appointments to most senior government positions.[8] Because the legislature was disbanded, major executive decisions (typically passed by decrees) were subject to the approval of a ruling council of high-level military officers, although by Abacha's time in the 1990s, this council had become largely a rubber stamp for the ruler. Regardless of the degree of autocracy, nearly all juntas spoke of moving to democracy in order to gain legitimacy.

Given the highly personalistic character of military politics, patron-client relationships flourished. The military pattern of organization, with one strongman at the top and echelons of subordinates below in a pyramid of top-down relationships, spread throughout Nigerian political culture.

Having been politicized and divided by these patron–client relationships, the military itself was structurally weakened during its long years in power. While there have been reports of coup plots on a number of occasions during the current Fourth Republic, especially during President Yar'Adua's final days, the military establishment has so far remained loyal and generally within its constitutional security role.

President Obasanjo paid close attention to keeping the military professionally oriented—and in the barracks. U.S. military advisers and technical assistance were invited to redirect the Nigerian military toward regional peacekeeping expertise and to keep them busy outside of politics. So far, this strategy has been effective, but the military remains a concern. Junior and senior officers threatened coups over the farcical 2007 elections and the refusal of Yar'Adua's advisors to hand power to Jonathan in 2009–2010, and they could do so again in future political crises. Importantly, however, the military refused overtures from rogue PDP leaders in the Jonathan government to step in after his election defeat in 2015.

The Judiciary

At one time, the Nigerian judiciary enjoyed relative autonomy from the executive arm. Aggrieved individuals and organizations could take the government to court and expect a judgment based on the merits of their case. This situation changed as successive military governments demonstrated a profound disdain for judicial practices, eventually undermining not only the autonomy, but also the integrity of the judiciary as a third branch of government.

The Buhari, Babangida, and Abacha military regimes, in particular, issued a spate of repressive decrees disallowing judicial review. Through the executive's power of appointment of judicial officers to the high bench, as well as control of judicial budgets, the government came to dominate the courts. In addition, the once highly competent judiciary was undermined by declining standards of legal training and by bribery. The decline of court independence reached a low in 1993, when the Supreme Court placed all actions of the military executive beyond judicial review. The detention and hanging of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni activists in 1995 underscored the politicization and compromised state of the judicial system.

With the return of civilian rule in 1999, however, the courts slowly regained some independence and credibility. In early 2002, for instance, the Supreme Court passed two landmark judgments on election law and control of the vast offshore gas reserves. After the compromised 2007 elections, the courts overturned twelve gubernatorial races and a host of legislative contests, and the Supreme Court reviewed the 2007 and 2011 presidential elections as well.

Judiciaries at the state level are subordinate to the Federal Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court. Some of the states in the northern part of the country with large Muslim populations maintain a parallel court system based on the Islamic system of *shari'a* (religious law). Similarly, some states in the Middle Belt and southern part of the country have subsidiary courts based on customary law. Each of these maintains an appellate division. Otherwise, all courts of record in the country are based on the English common law tradition, and all courts are ultimately bound by decisions handed down by the Supreme Court.

How to apply *shari'a* law has been a source of continuing debate in Nigerian politics. For several years, some northern groups have participated in a movement to expand the application of *shari'a* in predominantly Muslim areas of Nigeria, and some even have advocated that it be made the supreme law of the land. Prior to the establishment of the Fourth Republic, *shari'a* courts had jurisdiction only among Muslims in civil proceedings and in questions of Islamic personal law. In November 1999, however, the northern state of Zamfara instituted a version of the *shari'a* criminal code that included cutting off hands for stealing and stoning to death for those (especially women) who committed adultery. Eleven other northern states adopted the criminal code by 2001, prompting fears among Christian minorities in these

states that the code might be applied to them. A total of 2,000 people were killed in communal strife in Kaduna state in 2000, when the government installed the *shari'a* criminal code despite a population that is half Christian.

Since then, however, northern political and legal systems time have largely adjusted. In fact, the *shari'a* systems in these states have opened up new avenues for public action to press government for accountability and reform. In addition, women's groups mobilized against several questionable local *shari'a* court decisions to challenge them at the appellate level, winning landmark decisions that helped to extend women's legal protections under the code.

Subnational Government

Nigeria's centralization of oil revenues has fostered intense competition among states and local communities for access to federal patronage. Most states would be insolvent without substantial support from the central government. About 90 percent of state incomes are received directly from the federal government, which includes a lump sum based on oil revenues, plus a percentage of oil income based on population. In all likelihood, only the states of Lagos, Rivers, and Kano could survive on their own. Despite attempted reforms, most local governments have degenerated into patronage outposts for the governors to dole out to loyalists. For the most part, they do little to address their governance responsibilities.

The federal, state, and local governments have constitutional and legal powers to raise funds through taxes. However, Nigerians share an understandable reluctance to pay taxes and fees to a government with such a poor record of delivering basic services. The result is a vicious circle: government is sapped of resources and legitimacy and cannot adequately serve the people. Communities, in turn, are compelled to resort to self-help measures to protect their welfare and thus withdraw further from the reach of the state. Few individuals and organizations pay taxes, which means that the most basic government functions are starved of resources.

The Policy-Making Process

Nigeria's prolonged experience with military rule left indelible marks on policy-making in Nigeria. This is reflected in a policy process based more on top-down directives than on consultation, political debate, and legislation. Democratic government has seen important changes, as the legislatures, courts, and states have begun to force the president to negotiate his policy agenda and work within a constitutional framework. Nevertheless, prebendalism and corruption undermine the working of government at all levels of the political system and distort all stages of the policy-making process from formulation to implementation.

Where Do You Stand?

While Nigeria's presidents since 1999 have all promised reform, they have typically succumbed to prevalent patterns of corruption and clientelism, or they have been unable to stem corruption in their parties. Is corruption just too ingrained in Nigeria for any politician to resist its lure?

Does Nigeria's parallel system of *shari'a* and customary courts alongside its secular ones seem like a good idea to accommodate the nation's diversity, or does it perpetuate ethnic and religious differences that divide the country?

REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION

SECTION 4

Representation and participation are two vital components of modern democracies. Nigerian legislatures have commonly been sidelined or reduced to subservience by the powerful executive, while fraud, elite manipulation, and military interference have marred the formal party and electoral systems. Thus, we also emphasize unofficial, informal methods of representation and participation through the institutions of civil society.

Focus Questions

- What have been the benefits and costs of the move from ethnic parties under the early republics to the multiethnic parties of the Fourth Republic?
- What role has civil society played in resisting military rule and voicing the public interest under civilian governments?

The Legislature

Nigeria's legislature has been buffeted by political instability. Legislative structures and processes historically were manipulated, neglected, or suspended outright by the executive. Until the first coup in 1966, Nigeria operated its legislature along the lines of the British Westminster model, with an elected lower house and a smaller upper house composed of individuals selected by the executive. For the next thirteen years of military rule, a Supreme Military Council performed legislative functions by initiating and passing decrees at will. During the second period of civilian rule, 1979–1983, the bicameral legislature was introduced similar to the U.S. system, with a Senate and House of Representatives (together known as the National Assembly) consisting of elected members, which is the model still in use.

Election to the Senate is on the basis of equal state representation, with three senators from each of the thirty-six states, plus one senator from the federal capital territory, Abuja. The practice of equal representation in the Senate is identical to that of the United States, with a slightly different senate formula. Election to Nigeria's House of Representatives is also based on state representation, but weighted to reflect the relative size of each state's population, again after the U.S. model. Only eight women were elected in 1999 to sit in the Fourth Republic's National Assembly; by 2015, this number rose slightly to twenty-seven, yet still constituting only 6 percent of the legislature's membership.

Political Parties and the Party System

An unfortunate legacy of the party and electoral systems after independence was that political parties were associated with particular ethnic groups. The three-region federation created by the British, with one region for each of the three biggest ethnic groups (Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo), created strong incentives for three ethnoregional parties to gain dominance. This in turn fostered a strong perception of politics as an ethnically zero-sum (or winner-take-all) struggle for access to scarce state resources. The ensuing political and social fragmentation ultimately destroyed the First Republic (1963–1966) and the Second Republic (1979–1983), both of which were overthrown by military coups.

In addition to the original three-region structure of the federation, Nigeria's use of a first-past-the-post plurality electoral system produced legislative majorities for the regional, ethnically identified parties. During subsequent democratic experiments, many of the newer parties could trace their roots to their predecessors in the first civilian regime. Consequently, parties were more attentive to the welfare of their ethnic groups than to the development of Nigeria as a whole. In a polity as volatile as Nigeria, these tendencies intensified political polarization and resentment among the losers.

In the Second Republic, the leading parties shared the same ethnic and sectional support, and often the same leadership, as the parties that were prominent in the first civilian regime. In his steps toward creating the civilian Third Republic, General Babangida announced a landmark decision in 1989 to establish only two political parties by decree.[9] The state provided start-up funds, wrote the manifestos of the parties, and designed them to be, as Babangida described them, "a little to the right and a little to the left," respectively, on the political–ideological spectrum. Interestingly, the elections that took place under these rules from 1990 to 1993 indicated that the two parties cut across the cleavages of ethnicity, regionalism, and religion, demonstrating the potential to move beyond ethnicity.[10] The center-left Social Democratic Party (SDP), which emerged victorious in the 1993 national elections, was an impressive coalition of politicians from several Second Republic parties. The opposing conservative National Republican Convention (NRC) drew on elites from the former NPN, which had dominated the Second Republic.

Nigerians generally reacted with anger to General Abacha's 1993 coup, which overthrew the very short-lived Third Republic, and his subsequent banning of the SDP and NRC. With the unions crushed and President Abiola in jail, the Abacha government registered only five parties,[11] all of which endorsed Abacha as president shortly before his death in July 1998.

The G-34, a prominent group of civilian leaders who had condemned Abacha's plans to remain in power, created the PDP in late August 1998, minus most of their Yoruba members, who joined the Alliance for Democracy (AD). At least twenty more parties applied for certification to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC); many of them were truly grassroots movements, including a human rights organization and a trade union party.

To escape the ethnic-based parties of the First and Second Republics, INEC required that parties earn at least 5 percent of the votes in twenty-four of the thirty-six states in local government elections in order to advance to the later state and federal levels. This turned out to be an ingenious way of reducing the number of parties while obliging viable parties to broaden their appeal. The only parties to meet INEC's requirements were the PDP, AD, and the All People's Party (APP).

The parties of the Fourth Republic are primarily alliances of convenience among Big Men from across Nigeria. Their agenda has been to gain power and control over resources. They have few differences in ideology or policy platforms, and politicians who lose in one party will frequently shift to another.

Yet these contemporary parties do feature an important innovation that distinguishes them from those of earlier Republics: they are multiethnic rather than parochial associations based on different collective identities. They rely on elite-centered structures established during previous civilian governments, reflecting cross-ethnic alliances that developed over the last thirty years. The PDP includes core members of the northern establishment NPN, the northern progressive PRP, and the Igbo-dominated NPP of the Second Republic, as well as prominent politicians from the Niger Delta. The APP, later the All Nigerian People's Party (ANPP), was

also a multiethnic collection, drawing from the Second Republic's Great Nigeria People's Party (GNPP), a party dominated by the northeastern-based Kanuri and groups from the Middle Belt. The party featured other politicians who had prominent roles in the Abacha-sponsored parties from the northwest, the Igbo southeast, and southern minority leaders. The AD was as Yoruba-centered as its predecessors, the UPN in the Second Republic and the AG in the First Republic. The party would later pay at the polls for its lack of national appeal, however, and joined with breakaway factions of the PDP to form the Action Congress (AC, later the Action Congress of Nigeria, ACN; see the following discussion). In 2013, the ANPP and ACN would join two other opposition parties and six defecting governors from the PDP to form the All Progressives Congress (APC), a truly multiethnic, national party to rival the PDP.

This rise of multiethnic political parties is one of the most significant democratic developments of the Fourth Republic. There is a strong incentive for politicians to bargain and bridge their ethnic differences *within* the party so that they may then compete with the other parties in the system, which would preferably be multiethnic as well. In Nigeria, ethnic divisions—supported by prebendal networks—still dominate national politics, but diversified parties have done fairly well at bridging these many divides during election periods and fostering a climate of compromise amid divisive national debates.

Elections

Historical electoral trends since 1960 show that northern-based parties dominated the first and second experiments with civilian rule. Given this background, it is significant that Moshood Abiola was able to win the presidency in 1993, the first time in Nigeria's history that a southerner electorally defeated a northerner. Abiola, a Yoruba Muslim, won a number of key states in the north, including the hometown of his opponent. Southerners therefore perceived the decision by the northern-dominated Babangida military regime to annul the June 12 election as a deliberate attempt by the military and northern interests to maintain their decades-long domination of the highest levels of government.

In other African countries, like Ghana, the path away from political oligarchy and toward democracy is through the rise of a unified, viable political opposition. This has been slow to happen in Nigeria. For most of the years of the Fourth Republic, the main opposition parties never organized a working relationship or a serious policy challenge to the dominant PDP, except just prior to elections, which didn't translate into enough votes to win.

The PDP was reelected to power in 2011 with a massive majority across Nigeria, controlling the presidency, twenty-three governorships and twenty-six state assemblies, as well as more than half of the seats of the National Assembly. Yet it was also a party in disarray, with its northern segments outraged over President Jonathan's break with the ethnic rotation principle, and southern leaders like former PDP President Obasanjo angered by Jonathan's efforts to seize control of the PDP. Sensing both the limits of their small parties and opportunity in the growing rebellion within the PDP, leaders of the major opposition parties agreed in 2013 to merge to form the APC. The historic 2015 elections looked like the reverse of 2011, with the APC winning the presidency and a majority in both houses of the National Assembly (see Table 12.4). Yet the APC, like the PDP, is largely an alliance of convenience among the powerful personal networks of its "Big Men" politicians, and it will likely hold

Table 12.4 Election Results in Nigeria, 2011 and 2015

Presidential Elections (% of Popular Vote)		
2011	Goodluck Jonathan, PDP (58.9%)	Mohammadu Buhari, CDC (32.0%)
2015	Muhammadu Buhari, APC (53.9%)	Goodluck Jonathan, PDP (44.9%)

Other Federal and State Elections						
Party	House Votes (%)	House Seats (No.)	Senate Votes (%)	Senate Seats (No.)	Governorships	State Assemblies Controlled (No.)
2011						
PDP	54.4	152	62.4	53	23	26
ACN	19.0	53	21.2	18	6	5
CDC	11.1	31	7.1	6	1	0
Others	15.4	43	9.4	8	6	5
2015						
PDP	34.7	125	45.0	49	11	12
APC	62.5	225	55.0	60	24	24
Others	2.8	10	0	0	1	0

ACN–Action Congress of Nigeria; APC–All Progressives Congress; CDC–Congress for Democratic Change; PDP–People's Democratic Party

together only so long as it serves the interests of these power brokers. Already by 2017, the APC has faced intense internal conflicts that President Buhari refused to mediate, and elders voiced fears that the party could collapse. Nonetheless, the PDP faced similar internal struggles prior to 2003, 2007, and 2011, and, yet in the end, leaders papered over their differences to win elections and maintain national dominance. APC leaders may well do the same.

Political Culture, Citizenship, and Identity

Military regimes left Nigeria with strong authoritarian influences in its political culture. Most of the younger politicians of the Fourth Republic came of age during military rule and learned the business of politics from Abacha and Babangida and their military governors. Still, Nigeria's deep democratic traditions remain vibrant among the larger polity, but they are in constant tension with the values imbibed during years of authoritarian governance when political problems were often solved by military dictate, power, and violence rather than by negotiation and respect for law. Nearly twenty years of civilian rule, however, have seen a growing shift in Nigerian political culture away from its authoritarian past toward a culture of negotiation and law, though corruption patterns continue to flourish.

Modernity Versus Traditionalism

The interaction of Western (colonial) elements with traditional (precolonial, African) practices created the conundrum of a modern sociopolitical system that rests uneasily

on traditional foundations. Nigerians straddle two worlds, each undergoing constant evolution. On the one hand, the strong elements in communal societies that promoted accountability have been weakened by the intrusion of Western culture, oriented toward individuality, and exacerbated by urbanization. On the other hand, the modern state has been unable to free itself fully from rival ethnic claims organized around narrow collective identities.

As a result, exclusivist identities continue to dominate Nigerian political culture and to define the nature of citizenship.[12] Individuals tend to identify with their immediate ethnic, regional, and religious groups rather than with state institutions, especially during moments of crisis. Entirely missing from the relationship between state and citizen in Nigeria is a fundamental reciprocity—a working social contract—based on the belief that a common interest binds them together.

Religion

Religion has been a persistent source of community and a basis for conflict throughout Nigerian history. Islam began to filter into northeast Nigeria in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and greatly expanded in subsequent centuries. In the north, Islam first coexisted with, then gradually supplanted, indigenous religions. Christianity arrived in the early nineteenth century and spread rapidly through missionary activity in the south. The amalgamation of northern and southern Nigeria in 1914 brought together the two regions and their belief systems.

These religious cultures have consistently clashed over political issues such as the secular character of the state. The application of the *shari'a* criminal code in the northern states has been a focal point for these tensions. For many Muslims, *shari'a* represents a way of life and supreme law that transcends secular and state law; for many Christians, the expansion of *shari'a* law threatens the secular nature of the Nigerian state and their position within it. The pull of religious versus national identity becomes even stronger in times of economic hardship.

The nation is now evenly divided between Muslims and Christians, and the Middle Belt states where the fault line runs have often been particularly volatile. Communal conflicts frequently erupt in these areas, often between Fulani herdsmen, who are Muslim, and farmers, who in some instances may be Christian, or between farmers of the two religions over control of land or access to public funds. In most of these instances, religion is not the source of the conflict, but once disputes ignite, they can quickly involve religious identity.

A handful of violent Islamist and Christian fundamentalist groups, however, have become active in recent years, particularly in the northeast and the Middle Belt. The most violent of these has been the *Congregation of the People of Tradition for Proselytization and Jihad*, dubbed "Boko Haram" by the media, meaning "Western education is sinful" in Hausa, for the movement's rejection of the Western pedigrees of the Nigerian elite and the Western-created Nigerian state, manifest in its secular education system that it views as corrupt and immoral.

Boko Haram seeks to establish its idiosyncratic vision of an Islamist state in Nigeria and in 2015 pledged its allegiance to the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Much of its activities were focused in Borno and Yobe states in the northeast until 2011, at which point it received technical assistance from Al-Qaeda's Algerian affiliate and expanded its scope of operations across the northeast and north-central region, attacking police stations and setting off bombs, including at the UN headquarters in Abuja. Boko Haram gained world attention when it kidnapped more than 250 schoolgirls from Chibok in Borno state in 2014—in May

2017, 81 of the abducted girls were released, but the other two-thirds remain in captivity. Counteroffensives by the Nigerian military in 2015–2017 reduced Boko Haram to small pockets in Borno, and the group split into two factions, although it has continued to launch suicide attacks in Nigeria and neighboring countries.

Interest Groups, Social Movements, and Protest

Historically, labor has played a significant role in Nigerian politics, as have student groups, women's organizations, professional associations, and various radical and populist organizations. Business groups have frequently supported and colluded with corrupt civilian and military regimes. In the last year of the Abacha regime, however, even the business class began to suggest an end to such arbitrary rule through mechanisms like Vision 2010. Civil society groups flourished across Nigeria after the end of military rule in 1999.

Organized labor has played an important role in challenging governments during both the colonial and postcolonial eras in several African countries, Nigeria among them. Continuous military pressure throughout the 1980s and 1990s forced a decline in the independence and strength of organized labor in Nigerian politics. The Babangida military regime implemented strategies of state corporatism designed to control and coopt various social forces such as labor. When the leadership of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), the umbrella confederation, took a vigorous stand against the government, the regime deposed its leaders and appointed conservative replacements. Petroleum unions launched prodemocracy strikes in the 1990s and income-focused strikes after 1999, which significantly reduced oil production and nearly brought the country to a halt on multiple occasions.

The Nigerian labor movement has been vulnerable to reprisals by the state and private employers. The government has always been the biggest single employer of labor in Nigeria, as well as the recognized arbiter of industrial relations between employers and employees. Efforts by military regimes to centralize and coopt the unions caused their militancy and impact to wane. Moreover, ethnic, regional, and religious divisions have often hampered labor solidarity, and these differences have been periodically manipulated by the state. Nevertheless, labor unions still claim an estimated 5 million members across Nigeria and remains one of the most potent forces in civil society. The unions have a great stake in the consolidation of constitutional rule in the Fourth Republic and the protections that allow them to organize and act freely on behalf of their members. The NLC has called national strikes on a number of occasions since 2000, typically over wages and fuel price hikes, including the Occupy Nigeria demonstrations of 2012 (discussed next).

Nigeria has a long history of entrepreneurialism and business development. This spirit is compromised by corruption both within the government and business. Members of the Nigerian business class have been sometimes characterized as "pirate capitalists" because of their corrupt practices and collusion with state officials.[13] Many wealthy individuals have served in the military or civilian governments, while others protect their access to state resources by sponsoring politicians they see as favorable to their interests or entering into business arrangements with bureaucrats.

Private business associations have proven surprisingly resilient as an important element of civil society. Organized groups have emerged to represent the interests of the business class and to promote general economic development. There are

numerous associations throughout Nigeria representing a broad variety of business activities and sectoral interests. National business associations, such as the Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines, and Agriculture (NACCIMA), the largest in the country, have taken an increasingly political stance, expressing their determination to protect their interests by advocating for better governance.

Student activism also continues to be an important feature of Nigerian political life, and student unions have been major players in Nigerian politics since the 1960s. Since the 1990s, however, many universities have seen the rise of what are called "cults"—gangs of young men, typically armed, who use rituals associated with their groups. Many of these cultists "graduated" to join the militias that became political thugs and the cults are also often employed by elites for their power plays. In partial response to the cult phenomenon, religious movements have proliferated across Nigerian universities, providing students with an alternative to these violent groups as a way of life. Yet religious groups on campus have also provided vehicles for encouraging and recruiting both Christian and Muslim fundamentalists.

Overall, civil society groups are making substantial contributions to consolidating democracy in Nigeria. In particular, many groups have built good working relationships with the National Assembly and state legislatures, from which both sides have benefited. Their relationships with the political parties, however, remain distant. Nigeria's prospects for building a sustainable democracy during the Fourth Republic will depend, in part, on the willingness of many of these advocacy groups to increase their collaboration with the political parties, while avoiding cooptation and maintaining a high level of vigilance and activism in support of democracy.

The Political Impact of Technology and the Media

The Nigerian press has long been one of the liveliest and most irreverent in Africa. The Abacha and Babangida military regimes moved to stifle its independence, with limited success. Some democratic presidents sought to constrain the press but were generally blocked by the courts. Significantly, much of the Nigerian press is based in a Lagos-Ibadan axis in the southwestern part of Nigeria and has frequently been labeled "southern." Recently, however, independent television and radio stations have proliferated around the country, and after 2000, Nigeria grew rapidly in cellular and Internet connectivity. Internet-based investigative journalists such as SaharaReporters.com have utilized the uncensored medium of the Internet to print stories that the mainstream newspapers have been afraid to publish, exposing the corrupt activities of some of Nigeria's biggest politicians. New technologies are affecting politics, as cellular phones are now everywhere, including the latest models, and intense competition among service providers has produced ample coverage and one of the most efficient and lucrative industries in the country. The doubling of Nigeria's service sector during roughly the same period, as the nation's GDP grew on average over 6 percent annually since 2003, signals that the small but rapidly rising middle class is using this technology extensively.

Although middle-class professionals were using new technologies to monitor elections as early as 2003, the 2011 and 2015 elections saw civil society activists use social media extensively to track and report election violations across the country. Most

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Christians and Muslims protest together, and protect each other at prayer times, during Occupy Nigeria in 2012.

impressive, however, were the protests that followed President Jonathan's removal of fuel subsidies in January 2012. In a movement inspired by the Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street, thousands of Nigerians took to the streets for two weeks in what became known as "Occupy Nigeria." Largely and loosely organized by concerned professionals working through social media sites like Facebook and Twitter, Occupy Nigeria generated peaceful demonstrations in cities across the nation, with the largest in Lagos, Abuja, and Kano, and within days attracted the attention of the NLC, which in solidarity called for a general strike that brought economic activity to a halt.

Most impressively, the movement showed none of the ethnic, religious, or sectional elements so present in Nigerian politics. In fact, interfaith cooperation was evident throughout, with breathtaking pictures of Christians forming a human shield around Muslims while they performed their required daily prayers, and Muslims escorting Christians to church. What united the protesters was a common frustration with the massive corruption throughout the Nigerian establishment—a progressive agenda that seeks sweeping reform and broad-based development. The demonstrations collapsed after the NLC called off the strike as it reached a bargain with the Jonathan administration that restored half of the fuel subsidy. Many of these same organizers, however, turned their skills and virtual networks to mobilize again in support of the opposition APC in the 2015 elections.

Where Do You Stand?

What can the United States or other foreign nations do to support civil society groups and social media-based movements like Occupy Nigeria so they can transform Nigeria?

Do you agree that multiethnic parties are a good idea for political development? Can you think of examples from other countries that prove or disprove the point?

NIGERIAN POLITICS IN TRANSITION

SECTION 5

Despite the slow progress of the Fourth Republic, Nigerians overwhelmingly favor democratic government over military rule. About 70 percent of respondents in a recent survey said that they still prefer democracy to any other alternative, although popular frustration is growing with the slow pace of reform and continued corruption in politics. This growing anger with massive, rampant corruption is the one constant across the nation, featuring strongly in the motives of groups as widely variant as Boko Haram, the Niger Delta militias, and the peaceful Occupy Nigeria. Will democracy in Nigeria be consolidated sufficiently to meet minimal levels of public satisfaction, or could the nation again succumb to authoritarian rule?

Nigerian politics must change in fundamental ways for democracy to become more stable and legitimate. First and foremost, the nation must turn away from a system of politics dominated by Big Men—for all intents and purposes, a competitive oligarchy—to a more representative mode of politics that addresses the fundamental interests of the public. Second, Nigerians must conclusively settle the National Question and commit to political arrangements that accommodate the nation's diversity. In short, Nigeria's Fourth Republic must find ways of moving beyond prebendal politics and develop a truly national political process in which mobilization and conflicts along ethnic, regional, and religious lines gradually diminish, and which can address Nigeria's true national crises: poverty and underdevelopment.

Focus Questions

- What role can political opposition and civil society play in reversing prebendalism and the politics of the "Big Men"?
- What other reforms can help to settle the National Question and harness the strong democratic yearnings of the Nigerian public?

Political Challenges and Changing Agendas

Nigeria's fitful transition to democratic rule between 1985 and 1999 was inconclusive, largely because it was planned and directed from above. This approach contrasts sharply with the popular-based movements that unseated autocracies in Central and Eastern Europe or South Africa. The Nigerian military periodically made promises for democratic transition as a ploy to stabilize and legitimate their governments. General Abubakar dutifully handed power to civilian leaders in 1999, but only after ensuring that the military's interests would be protected under civilian rule and creating an overly powerful executive that reinforces prebendalism and its patronage system. The military's rapid transition program produced a tenuous, conflicted democratic government that faces daunting tasks of revitalizing key institutions, securing social stability, and reforming the economy. The continuing strength and influence of collective identities, defined on the basis of religion or ethnicity, are often more binding than national allegiances. The parasitic nature of the Nigerian economy is a further source of instability. Rent-seeking and other unproductive, often corrupt, business activities remain accepted norms of wealth accumulation.

Nonetheless, Nigerians are sowing seeds of change in all these areas. Attitudes toward the military in government have shifted dramatically. Military attitudes themselves have changed significantly as well, as evidenced by the restraint shown by the armed forces during President Yar'Adua's incapacitation and the 2015 election transition in power from the PDP to the APC. The appeal of military rule declined markedly after the abysmal performances of the Babangida and Abacha regimes. Nonetheless,

growing frustrations with corruption and poor governance under nearly twenty years of civilian rule have fostered pockets of renewed interest in the military as a possible solution, which could have serious consequences. With the nation's massive youth demographics—two-thirds of Nigerians are under the age of 25—fewer now have any living memory of military rule and its abuses. If, however, the armed forces remain in their barracks, as still seems more likely than not, then the struggles among civilian political elites will decide the direction of political and economic change. Thus, democratic development may be advanced in the long run if stable coalitions appear over time in a manner that balances the power among contending groups, and if these key elites adapt to essential norms and rules of the political game.

Under the Fourth Republic, members of the political class have sometimes pursued their struggles within the constraints of the democratic system: using the courts, media, legislative struggles, and even legal expediencies such as impeachment. Progress has been made when political actors work through formal institutions, contending openly and offsetting the power of a single group or faction. Frequently, however, the political elite have also shown a willingness to use extra-systemic measures to forward their interests through election rigging, corruption, and militia-led violence. The Niger Delta has been particularly violent, with increasingly well-armed militias that in some cases have shown a measure of independence from their political patrons. The rise of Boko Haram in the northeast created an additional threat for the Nigerian state, which politicians have also been using for political gain.

The next critical step down the long road of democratic development for Nigeria is the creation of a viable, multiethnic opposition party that is committed to peaceful political competition. Opposition parties can help to reduce corruption in the system because they have an interest in exposing the misconduct of the ruling party, which in turn pressures them to restrain their own behavior. Furthermore, in order to unseat the ruling party and win elections, opposition parties need to engage the public to win their votes. In this manner, issues of interest to the public are engaged by the parties. This is the basis of the social contract: elites gain the privilege of power, but only so long as they use it to promote the public interest.

The introduction of so many new parties after 2002 slowed the development of a viable, unified opposition, with the result that the PDP was able to govern largely unchecked for more than a decade and to absorb or coopt opposition leaders when possible. The rise of the APC in 2013 presented a chance for Nigeria to develop two national, multiethnic parties that can check and balance each other and offer the Nigerian public a serious alternative at the ballot box. If the two parties actually reach out to civil society for support and vie for the public's attention by offering truly competitive development policies, then Nigeria might turn the corner toward stability and growth, joining Ghana and other regional democratic states. The 2015 elections that brought the APC to power were some of the most credible in Nigerian history, precisely because the two parties checked and balanced each other and the APC reached out to civil society and the public for support to offset the PDP's incumbency advantages and massive war chest.

Yet the political bargains holding the APC together remain tenuous and have come under tremendous strain as factions have contended over control of the spoils of office. If the APC falls apart into ethnic blocs, and if the PDP is unable to expand from its stronghold in the southeast, then Nigeria runs the risk of a return to the ethnic-based parties of the First and Second Republics and the tragedies that they produced. On the other hand, if the APC holds together or even strengthens its advantage, then Nigeria could return to the problem of an unchecked dominant party, with the APC substituting for the PDP. Nigeria will be better served with a vibrant APC and PDP in relative balance, competing vigorously—and legally—for the public's support.

PIUS UTOMI EKPEI/Getty Images

Protests over federal exploitation of the oil-producing Niger Delta sparked a regionwide insurgency by 2003, with heavily armed militias engaged in both political disputes and criminal activities, cutting Nigeria's oil production by more than a quarter.

In addition, the project of building a coherent nation-state out of competing nationalities remains unfinished. Ironically, because the parties of the Fourth Republic generally do not represent any particular ethnic interest—indeed, they do not represent anyone's interests except those of the leaders and their clients—ethnic associations and militias have risen to articulate ethnic-based grievances. While ethnic consciousness will remain significant, ethnicity should not be the main basis for political competition. If current ethnic mobilization can be contained within ethnic associations arguing over the agenda of the parties, then it can be managed. If, however, any of the ethnic associations captures one of the political parties or joins with the militias to foment separatism, instability will result. The same is true if the PDP comes to be seen as the Christian party of the south and the APC the Muslim party of the north, which happened in both 2011 and 2015 in the election contests between Jonathan and Buhari. Meanwhile, the Niger Delta militias and Boko Haram have both threatened to divide the country, and Igbo separatists have begun to organize demonstrations calling for the restoration of an independent Biafra in the southeast, a claim that previously had led to the 1967–1970 civil war.

Democratic development also requires further decentralization of power structures in Nigeria. The struggle on the part of the National Assembly and the state governors to wrest power from the presidency has advanced this process, as have the growing competence and role of the judiciary. A larger, diversified private sector could also reduce the power of the presidency over time by diminishing government control over important sectors of the economy. A more decentralized system allows local problems to be solved within communities rather than involving national institutions and the accompanying interethnic competition. Decentralization also lowers the stakes for holding national offices, thereby reducing destructive pressures on political competition and political office. The devolution of power and resources

to smaller units, closer to their constituents, can substantially enhance the accountability of leaders and the transparency of government operations.

Civil society groups are the final link in democratic consolidation in Nigeria. These groups are critical players in connecting the Nigerian state to the Nigerian people. They aggregate and articulate popular interests into the policy realm, and they advocate on behalf of their members. If the political parties are to reflect anything more than elite interests and clientelist rule, they must reach out and build alliances with the institutions of civil society. For opposition parties to become a viable movement capable of checking the power of ruling parties, they will have to build alliances with diverse elements of civil society in order to mobilize large portions of the population, particularly labor unions.

Foreign pressure also plays an important role in maintaining the quest for democracy and sustainable development. In recent years, major external forces have been more forthright in supporting civil society and democratization in Nigeria. The United States, Britain, and some member-states of the European Union quite visibly exerted pressure on Babangida and Abacha to give up power and applied modest sanctions in support of true democracy. These same governments pressed Nigerian leaders to smooth the transition of power after Yar'Adua's incapacitation and then pressed Jonathan to respect the will of the voters in 2015. Nevertheless, the Western commitment to development and democracy in Africa has been limited by the industrial powers' petroleum interests, which blunted the impact of such pressure on Nigeria, and is exacerbated by growing competition from China for energy resources.

Much of the initiative for Africa's growth, therefore, needs to emerge from within. In Nigeria, such initiatives will depend on substantial changes in the way that Nigerians do business. It will be necessary to develop a more sophisticated and far less corrupt form of capitalism and the promotion of an entrepreneurial middle class within Nigeria who will see their interests tied to the principles of democratic politics and economic initiative. Occupy Nigeria and the 2015 election offer hope in this regard, signifying a rising progressive, multiethnic movement of professionals seeking to change the corrupt system fundamentally.

Nigerian politics has been characterized by turmoil and periodic crises ever since the British relinquished colonial power. Nearly sixty years later, the country is still trying to piece together a fragile democracy, and yet key signs of economic growth and political reform are at last on the horizon. Despite these positive trends, the nation continues to wrestle with overdependence of its economy on oil, enfeebled infrastructure and institutions, heightened sociopolitical tensions, an irresponsible elite, and an expanding mass culture of despondency and rage. Only responsible government combined with sustained civil society action can reverse this decline and restore the nation to what former president Obasanjo called "the path to greatness."

Is Demography Destiny?

Much of this momentous choice between development or collapse may well be decided by Nigeria's youth. With women averaging over five births each and yet a life expectancy of only 53 years, Nigeria's population is widely skewed toward the younger age groups, such that nearly 65 percent of Nigerians are under the age of 25 and over half are under the age of 19. At current growth rates, Nigeria's population is predicted to top 400 million by 2050, making it the fourth-largest nation in the world, with approximately 280 million or more youths under age 30.

The vast majority of these youths are extremely poor, with more than half trying to eke out a living on less than a dollar per day. At least a fifth of them are officially

unemployed, but the real unemployment statistics are much worse, especially in the northern half of the country. A few are, however, wired into the global economy through cellular and Internet technology, and their numbers are growing alongside their political sophistication and organizing skills, which they demonstrated during Occupy Nigeria and the 2015 election.

Yet the fact that Nigeria is a youth-majority country underlines another massive political divide: the domination of its elders. Septuagenarian politicians still play powerful roles in both the PDP and APC, and wealthy men in their 50s and 60s dominate the presidency, National Assembly, and governorships. On the other hand, Boko Haram, the Niger Delta militias, and other antistate actors are dominated by the young. Which way will Nigeria's younger faces turn? Much will depend upon the ability of the political parties to engage youth in their ranks and to produce serious policies that foster broad-based development offering opportunity and hope to the massive younger generation that is now rising.

Nigerian Politics in Comparative Perspective

The study of Nigeria has important implications for the study of African politics and, more broadly, of comparative politics. The Nigerian case embodies a number of key themes and issues that can be generalized. We can learn much about how democratic regimes are established and consolidated by understanding Nigeria's pitfalls and travails. Analysis of the historical dynamics of Nigeria's ethnic conflict helps to identify institutional mechanisms that may be effective in reducing such conflict in other states. We can also learn much about the necessary and sufficient conditions for economic development, and the particular liabilities of oil-dependent states.

The future of democracy, political stability, and economic renewal in other parts of Africa, and certainly in West Africa, will be greatly influenced (for good or ill) by unfolding events in Nigeria, the giant of the continent. Beyond the obvious demonstration effects, the economy of the West African subregion could be buoyed by substantial growth in the Nigerian economy. In addition, President Obasanjo conducted active public diplomacy across Africa, seeking to resolve major conflicts, promote democracy, and improve trade. His successors have been less active but still have taken generally strong stances to support democracy and combat terror groups across the region.

Nigeria provides important insights into the political economy of underdevelopment. At independence in 1960, Nigeria was stronger economically than its Southeast Asian counterparts, Indonesia and Malaysia. Independent Nigeria appeared poised for growth, with a wealth of natural resources, a large population, and the presence of highly entrepreneurial groups in many regions of the country. Today, Nigeria is among the poorest countries in the world in terms of human development indicators, while many of its Asian counterparts have joined the ranks of the wealthy countries. One critical lesson that Nigeria teaches is that a rich endowment of resources is not enough to ensure economic development. In fact, it may encourage rent-seeking behavior that undermines more productive activities.[14] Sound political and institutional development must come first.

Other variables are critically important—notably, democratic stability and a capable **developmental state**. A developmentalist ethic, as well as an institutional structure to enforce it, can set limits on corrupt behavior and constrain the pursuit of short-term personal gain at the expense of national economic growth. Institutions vital to the pursuit of these objectives include a professional civil service, an independent judiciary, and a free press. Nigeria has had each of these, but they were gradually

developmental state

A nation-state in which the government carries out policies that effectively promote national economic growth.

undermined and corrupted under military rule. The public "ethic" that has come to dominate Nigerian political economy has been prebendalism. Where corruption is unchecked, economic development suffers accordingly.

Nigeria also demonstrates that sustained development requires sound economic policy. Without export diversification, commodity-exporting countries are buffeted by the price fluctuations of one or two main products. Nigeria, by contrast, has substituted one form of commodity dependence for another, and it has allowed its petroleum industry to overwhelm all other sectors of the economy, and only recently has the nonoil sector begun to revive. Nigeria even became a net importer of products (e.g., palm oil and palm nuts) for which it was once a leading world producer. The country is in the absurd position of being unable to feed its people, despite its rich agricultural lands.

Many African countries have experienced full or partial transitions toward democracy. But decades of authoritarian, single-party, and military rule in Africa left a dismal record of political repression, human rights abuses, inequality, deteriorating governance, and failed economies. A handful of elites acquired large fortunes through wanton corruption. The exercise of postcolonial authoritarian rule in Africa has contributed to economic stagnation and decline. The difficulties of such countries as Cameroon, Togo, and Zimbabwe in achieving political transitions reflects, in large part, the ruling elites' unwillingness to cede control of the political instruments that made possible their self-enrichment.

Nigeria's history exemplifies the harsh reality of unaccountable, authoritarian governance. Nigerians endured six military regimes, countless attempted coups, and a bloody civil war that claimed more than a million lives. They have also seen a once-prospering economy reduced to a near shambles and then partially rebuilt. Today, democracy has become a greater imperative because only such a system provides the mechanisms to limit abuses of power and render governments accountable.

Nigeria also presents an important case in which to study the dangers of communal competition in a society with deep cultural divisions. How can multiethnic countries manage diversity? What institutional mechanisms can be employed to avert collective identity–based tragedies such as the 1967–1970 civil war or the conflicts that have brought great suffering to Rwanda and Syria? This chapter has suggested institutional reforms such as multiethnic political parties, decentralization, and a strengthened federal system that can contribute to reducing tensions and minimizing conflict.

Insights from the Nigerian experience may explain why some federations persist, while identifying factors that can undermine them. Nigeria's complex social map, as well as its varied attempts to create a nation out of its highly diverse population, enhance our understanding of the politics of cultural pluralism and the difficulties of accommodating sectional interests under conditions of political and economic insecurity. Federal character and ethnic rotation in Nigeria have become important, but controversial tools for ethnic conflict management and the creation of state and local governments have given people in different regions a sense of being stakeholders in the entity called Nigeria.

Where Do You Stand?

Are you convinced that a viable political opposition supported by civil society could put Nigeria on the path to development, or do you think that Boko Haram, the Niger Delta militias, and prebendal Big Man politics will eventually push Nigeria to collapse?

Should the United States and other countries be pushing for more and deeper democracy in Africa, or does the example of Nigeria suggest that it is too difficult?

Chapter Summary

Nigeria is a creation of British colonialism, which brought many previously independent nations under one political roof and forced them to live together. Thus, when the British left in 1960, Nigerians continued to struggle with the National Question: who will govern, and how can Nigeria be governed in a manner that makes its many ethnic groups wish to belong to a single entity? Nigerians have struggled to answer this question in two ways: through democracy and through authoritarianism. At independence, Nigeria began as a three-state federation under a parliamentary system dominated by ethnic-based parties reflecting the three largest ethnic groups: Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo. As each group sought to control the system, it deadlocked, prompting two military coups that escalated into civil war from 1967 to 1970.

After the war, the military broke the federation into more states—eventually, thirty-six of them—which gave more voice to ethnic minorities and broke the unitary nature of political leadership of the Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo. Military rule, however, grew increasingly corrupt and predatory, especially after the 1970s oil boom brought in massive revenues to the government. Coups in the 1980s and 1990s ended two more experiments with democracy and ushered in military governments under two generals, Babangida and Abacha, which solidified prebendelism—a form of corrupt ethnic clientelism—as the predominant political culture in Nigeria.

The military at last exited power in 1999, handing power to the People's Democratic Party (PDP), a diverse coalition of prebendel "Big Men" and their networks, who came to dominate the politics of the Fourth Republic for sixteen years and swept subsequent elections in 2003, 2007, and 2011. PDP governance was characterized by massive corruption and election rigging in 1999, 2003, and especially 2007. President Jonathan, however, did install a reformist election chief who delivered more credible elections in 2011 and 2015, the latter resulting in a historic transfer of power to the opposition All Progressives Congress (APC).

In addition, skyrocketing oil prices from 2003 to 2014 fueled an average GDP growth rate of 6 percent, spurring modest growth in the small middle class, who took advantage of the cell phone revolution and vibrant civil society groups to push for more progressive politics in Occupy Nigeria in 2012 and the 2015 elections. The PDP era also saw other institutions begin to exercise more power and begin to check and balance the overly dominant presidency: the Supreme Court and elements of the judiciary demonstrated increased independence, the National Assembly showed occasional signs of leadership, and many state governors charted their own courses.

Despite these gains, the PDP never implemented a sustained, comprehensive development strategy that affected the nation's poor majority—the 80 to 90 percent of Nigerians living on less than two dollars per day. Outrage over this poverty and the massive corruption of the ruling elites spurred growing religious and ethnic conflicts nationwide, and the rise of insurgencies in the Niger Delta and the northeast under Boko Haram. Muhammadu Buhari and the opposition APC rode this wave of public frustration to power in the 2015 elections, but President Buhari's slow pace in policy-making and health problems have left little of his reform agenda implemented by 2017.

To reach democratic consolidation and answer Nigeria's National Question, the country needs to develop viable political opposition, supported by clean elections and anticorruption efforts, and a sustained, broad-based development policy from government that lifts a majority of Nigerians out of poverty. If Nigeria cannot reverse the corrupt, prebendal status quo, however, then the specter will remain of the military or ethnic and religious extremists plunging Nigeria into another cycle of coups, decline, and possibly collapse.

Key Terms

accountability
acephalous societies
authoritarian
autocracy
balance of payments
clientelism
developmental state
Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)
indirect rule
international financial institutions (IFIs)
jihad
legitimacy
oligarchy
prebendalism
rents
resource curse
shari'a
structural adjustment program (SAP)
unfinished state
warrant chiefs

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http://www.nigeriaembassyusa.org/

Freedom House Reports on Nigeria
https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2017/nigeria

Gamji: A collection of news stories from Nigerian newspapers, as well as opinion pieces and other news links
www.gamji.com

The Guardian, Nigeria's leading daily newspaper
www.ngrguardiannews.com

13 The Russian Federation

Joan DeBardeleben

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© Cengage

Official Name: Russian Federation (Rossiiskaia Federatsiia)

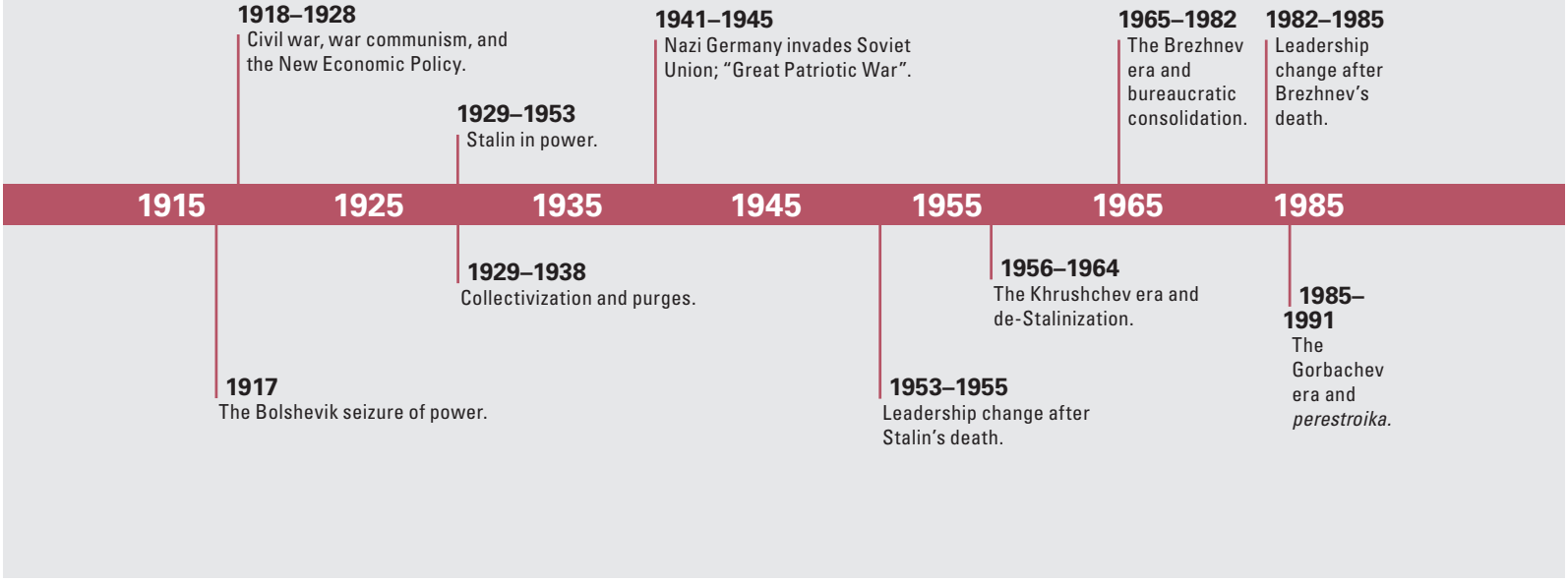
Location: Eastern Europe/Northern Asia

Capital City: Moscow

Population (2016): 144.2 million (without Crimea)

Size: 17,098,242 sq. km. (excluding Crimea); approximately 1.8 times the size of the United States

CHRONOLOGY of Soviet and Russian Political Development



SECTION 1

THE MAKING OF THE MODERN RUSSIAN STATE

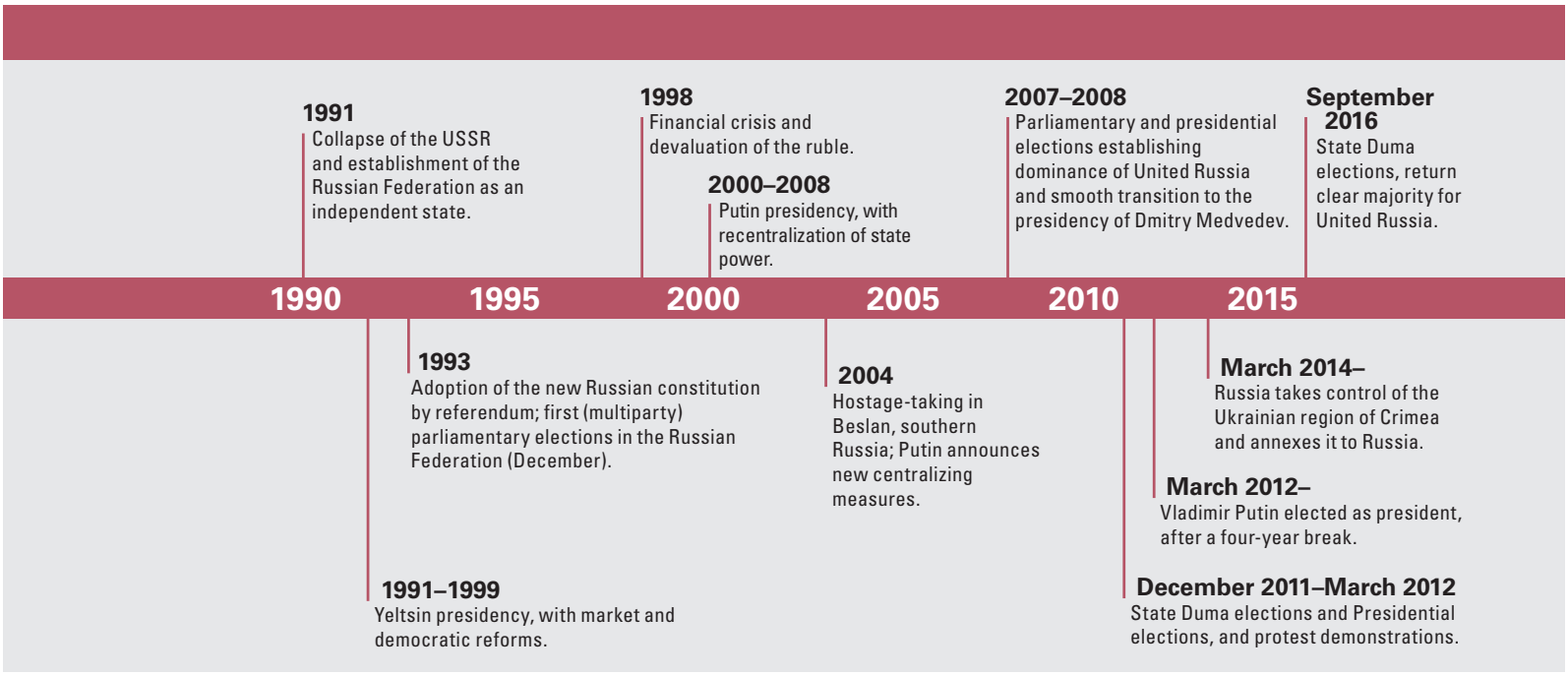
Focus Questions

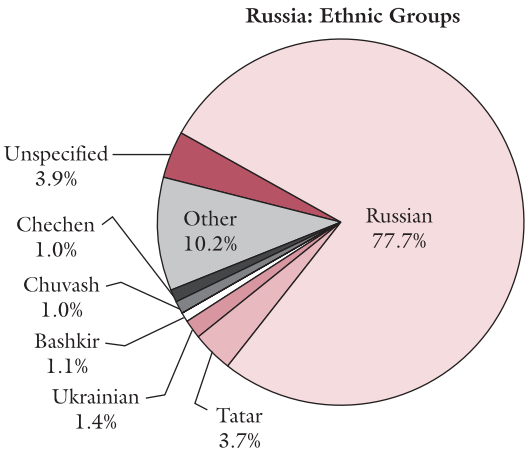
- What are the most important critical junctures in recent Russian history? In what ways was each juncture a reaction to a recurring problem in Russian history?
- What were Russia's principal challenges in the 1990s and how have they changed since the year 2000?

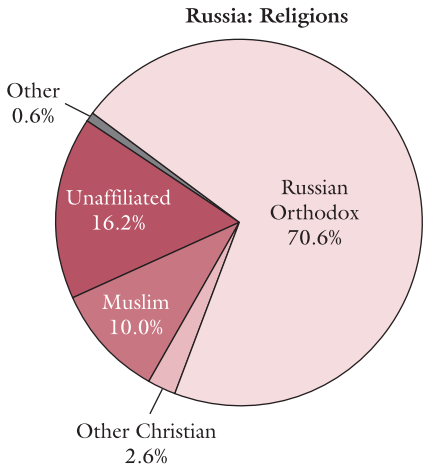
Politics in Action

A court decision in February 2017, in the city of Kirov, Russia, made international headlines because of its potential impact on the Russian presidential election scheduled for March 2018. In that decision, 40-year-old Alexei Navalny, an outspoken critic of Russian president Vladimir Putin and his structure of power, was convicted of having defrauded a state company four years earlier. The decision, upheld by a higher court in May 2017, could block Navalny's intended run for the presidency because Russian law excludes those with criminal convictions.

Navalny gained visibility first as an anticorruption critic, whose internet blogs became well-known in the context of mass demonstrations that occurred in Russian cities during the 2011–2012 election cycle; his depiction of the dominant United Russia party as a "party of crooks and thieves" became an opposition rallying call. He was then arrested and convicted in 2013 on the same charges as in the 2017 case and sentenced to five years in prison. Surprisingly, Navalny was released pending an appeal and permitted to stand on the ballot in the Moscow mayoral race in October 2013, where he won 27 percent of the vote. Navalny appealed the 2013 conviction to the European Court of Human Rights, which concluded that his right to a fair trial had been violated. The retrial in Kirov, in 2017, was in response to that judgment, but the outcome was similar. Navalny vowed to fight







Russian Currency: Ruble (₽)
International Designation: RUB
Exchange Rate (2017):
- 1 US$ = 56.98 ₽
- 1 ₽ = 0.018 US$

100 Ruble Note Design: Sculpture on the portico of Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre

FIGURE 13.1 The Russian Nation at a Glance

the decision and stated his intention of standing in the presidential vote the next year. Shortly thereafter, in March 2017, Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation demanded an inquiry into alleged corruption involving Russian prime minister Dmitry Medvedev, triggering public demonstrations across the country. Navalny himself was

Table 13.1	Political Organization
Political system	Constitutionally a semi-presidential republic.
Regime history	Re-formed as an independent state with the collapse of communist rule in December 1991; current constitution since December 1993.
Administrative structure	Constitutionally a federal system, with eighty-three subnational governments, plus two regions annexed from neighboring Ukraine in 2014 that are not recognized by most Western countries as being part of Russia; politically centralized.
Executive	Dual executive (president and prime minister). Direct election of president; prime minister appointed by the president with the approval of the lower house of the parliament (State Duma).
Legislature	Bicameral. Upper house (Federation Council) appointed by heads of regional executive and representative organs. Lower house (*State Duma*) chosen by direct election, with mixed electoral system involving single-member districts and proportional representation for a total of 450 deputies. Powers include proposal and approval of legislation, approval of presidential appointees.
Judiciary	Independent constitutional court with nineteen justices, nominated by the president and approved by the Federation Council, holding 12-year terms with possible renewal.
Party system	Dominant establishment party (United Russia) within a multiparty system.

detained in Moscow for participation in an unauthorized "walk" in central Moscow, after authorities refused to approve the downtown rally location; he was arrested again in June 2017 for his role in organizing an unauthorized rally.

Observers interpreted the authorities' continued harassment of Navalny as a preemptive move to block any real opposition forces from challenging the current power structure. (See Table 13.1.) Notably, Navalny is not linked to any of the 'loyal' opposition parties that hold seats in the Russian legislature. Navalny's ability to mobilize public support against alleged leadership corruption in 2017 suggested that the extra-parliamentary opposition might be hard to silence.

Geographic Setting

After the Soviet Union broke up in 1991, fifteen newly independent states emerged on its territory. This section focuses on the Russian Federation, in area the largest country in the world, spanning eleven time zones. Russian official sources gave a population figure of 146.5 million for 2016, due to the inclusion of the recently annexed territory of Crimea. Without Crimea, Russia's population would be 144.2 million.[1] (See Figure 13.1.)

Russia underwent rapid industrialization and urbanization under Soviet rule. Only 18 percent of Russians lived in urban areas in 1917, at the time of the Russian Revolution; this has now increased to 74 percent. Less than 8 percent of Russia's land is arable, while 45 percent is forested. Russia is rich in natural resources, concentrated in western Siberia and northern Russia. These include minerals (even gold and diamonds), timber, oil, and natural gas, which now form the basis of Russia's economic wealth.

Before the communists took power in 1917, Russia's czarist empire extended east to the Pacific, south to the Caucasus Mountains and the Muslim areas of Central Asia, north to the Arctic Circle, and west into present-day Ukraine, eastern Poland, and the

Baltic states. In the Soviet Union, the Russian Republic formed the core of a multiethnic state. Russia's ethnic diversity and geographic scope have made it a hard country to govern. Currently, Russia faces pockets of instability on several of its borders, most notably in eastern Ukraine (since early 2014), in Tajikistan and Afghanistan in Central Asia, and in Georgia and Azerbaijan in the south. Besides Ukraine, Russia's western neighbors include Belarus, and several member states of the European Union (EU), namely Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland. Located between Europe, the Islamic world, and Asia, Russia's regional sphere of influence is now disputed.

Critical Junctures

The Decline of the Russian Tsarist State and the Founding of the Soviet Union

Until 1917, an autocratic system headed by the czar ruled Russia. Russia had a **patrimonial state** where the majority of the peasant population was tied to the nobles, the state, or the church (through serfdom). The serfs were emancipated in 1861 as a part of the czar's effort to modernize Russia and to make it militarily competitive with the West.

patrimonial state

A system of governance in which the ruler treats the state as personal property (patrimony).

The key impetus for industrialization came from the state and from foreign capital. Despite some reforms, workers became increasingly discontented, as did liberal intellectuals, students, and, later, peasants, in the face of Russia's defeat in the Russo-Japanese war and continued czarist repression. Revolution broke out in 1905. The regime maintained control through repression and economic reform until March 1917, during the height of World War I, when revolution deposed the czar and installed a moderate provisional government. In November, the Bolsheviks, led by Vladimir Lenin, overthrew that government.

The Bolshevik Revolution and the Establishment of Soviet Power (1917–1929)

The Bolsheviks, which, in 1918, became the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks), were Marxists who believed their revolution reflected the political interests of the proletariat (working class). Most revolutionary leaders, however, were not workers, but came from a more educated and privileged stratum, the intelligentsia. Their slogan, "Land, Peace, and Bread," appealed to both the working class and the discontented peasantry—over 80 percent of Russia's population.

The Bolshevik strategy was based on two key ideas: democratic centralism and vanguardism. **Democratic centralism** mandated a hierarchical party structure in which leaders were, at least formally, elected from below, but strict discipline was required in implementing party decisions once they were made. The centralizing elements of democratic centralism took precedence over the democratic elements, as the party tried to insulate itself from informers of the czarist forces and later from real and imagined threats to the new regime. The concept of a **vanguard party** governed the Bolsheviks' relations with broader social forces. Party leaders claimed to understand the interests of working people better than the people did themselves. Over time, this philosophy was used to justify virtually all actions of the party and the state it dominated.

democratic centralism

A system of political organization developed by Vladimir Lenin and practiced, with modifications, by most communist party-states. Its principles include a hierarchical party structure.

vanguard party

A political party that claims to operate in the "true" interests of the group or class that it purports to represent, even if this understanding doesn't correspond to the expressed interests of the group itself.

In 1922, the Bolsheviks formed the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), which was the formal name of the Soviet Union; they were the first communist party to take state power. Prior to this, the Bolsheviks had faced an extended civil war (1918–1921), when they introduced war communism, which involved state control of key economic sectors and forcible requisitioning of grain from the peasants.

The *Cheka*, the security arm of the regime, was strengthened, and restrictions were placed on other political groups. By 1921, the leadership had recognized the political costs of war communism. In an effort to accommodate the peasantry, the New Economic Policy (NEP) was introduced in 1921 and lasted until 1928. Under NEP, state control over the economy was loosened so that private enterprise and trade were revived. The state, however, retained control of large-scale industry.

Gradually, throughout the 1920s, the authoritarian strains of Bolshevik thinking eclipsed the democratic elements. Lacking a democratic tradition and bolstered by the vanguard ideology of the party, the Bolshevik leaders were plagued by internal struggles following Lenin's death in 1924. These conflicts culminated in the rise of Joseph Stalin and the demotion or exile of other prominent figures such as Leon Trotsky and Nikolai Bukharin. By 1929, all open opposition, even within the party itself, had been silenced.

The Bolshevik revolution also initiated a period of international isolation. Western countries were hardly pleased with the revolutionary developments, which led to expropriation of foreign holdings, and which represented the first successful challenge to the international capitalist order. Some of Russia's former Western allies from World War I sent material aid and troops to oppose the new Bolshevik government during the civil war of 1917 to 1922.

The Stalin Revolution (1929–1953)

From 1929 until his death in 1953, Joseph Stalin consolidated his power as Soviet leader. He brought changes to every aspect of Soviet life. The state became the engine for rapid economic development, with state ownership of virtually all economic assets. By 1935, over 90 percent of agricultural land had been taken from the peasants and made into state or collective farms. **Collectivization** was rationalized as a means of preventing the emergence of a new capitalist class in the countryside. It actually targeted the peasantry as a whole, leading to widespread famine and the death of millions. Rapid industrialization favored heavy industries, and consumer goods were neglected. Economic control operated through a complex but inefficient system of central economic planning, in which the state planning committee (Gosplan) set production targets for every enterprise in the country. People were uprooted from their traditional lives in the countryside and catapulted into the rhythm of urban industrial life. Media censorship and state control of the arts strangled creativity as well as political opposition. The party-state became the authoritative source of truth; anyone deviating from the authorized interpretation could be charged with treason.

collectivization

A process undertaken in the Soviet Union under Stalin from 1929 into the early 1930s, and in China under Mao in the 1950s, by which agricultural land was removed from private ownership and organized into large state and collective farms.

Gradually, the communist party became subject to the personal whims of Stalin and his secret police. Overall, an estimated 5 percent of the Soviet population was arrested at one point or another under the Stalinist system, usually for no apparent cause. Forms of resistance were evasive rather than active. For example, some peasants killed livestock to avoid giving it over to collective farms.

Isolation from the outside world was a key tool of the Stalinist system of power. But the policy had costs. While it shielded Soviet society from the Great Depression of the 1930s, the Soviet economy, protected from foreign competition, also failed to keep up with the rapid economic and technological transformation in the West.

In 1941, Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union, and Stalin joined the Allied powers. Casualties in the war were staggering, about 27 million people, including 19 million civilians. War sacrifices and heroism have remained powerful symbols of pride and unity for Russians up to the present day. After the war, the other Allied powers allowed the Soviet Union to absorb new territories into the USSR itself (these became the Soviet republics of Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Moldavia, and

portions of western Ukraine). The Allies also implicitly granted the USSR free rein to shape the postwar governments and economies in East Germany, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Romania. Western offers to include parts of the region in the Marshall Plan were rejected under pressure from the USSR. Local communist parties gained control in each country. Only in Yugoslavia were indigenous Communist forces sufficiently strong to hold power largely on their own and thus later to assert their independence from Moscow.

The USSR emerged as a global superpower as the Soviet sphere of influence encompassed large parts of Central and Eastern Europe. In 1947, the U.S. president Harry Truman proclaimed a policy to contain further Soviet expansion (later known as the Truman Doctrine). In 1949, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was formed involving several West European countries, the United States, and Canada, to protect against potential Soviet aggression. In 1955, the Soviet Union initiated the Warsaw Pact in response. These events marked the beginning of the Cold War, characterized by tension and military competition between the two superpowers, leading to an escalating arms race that was particularly costly to the Soviet Union.

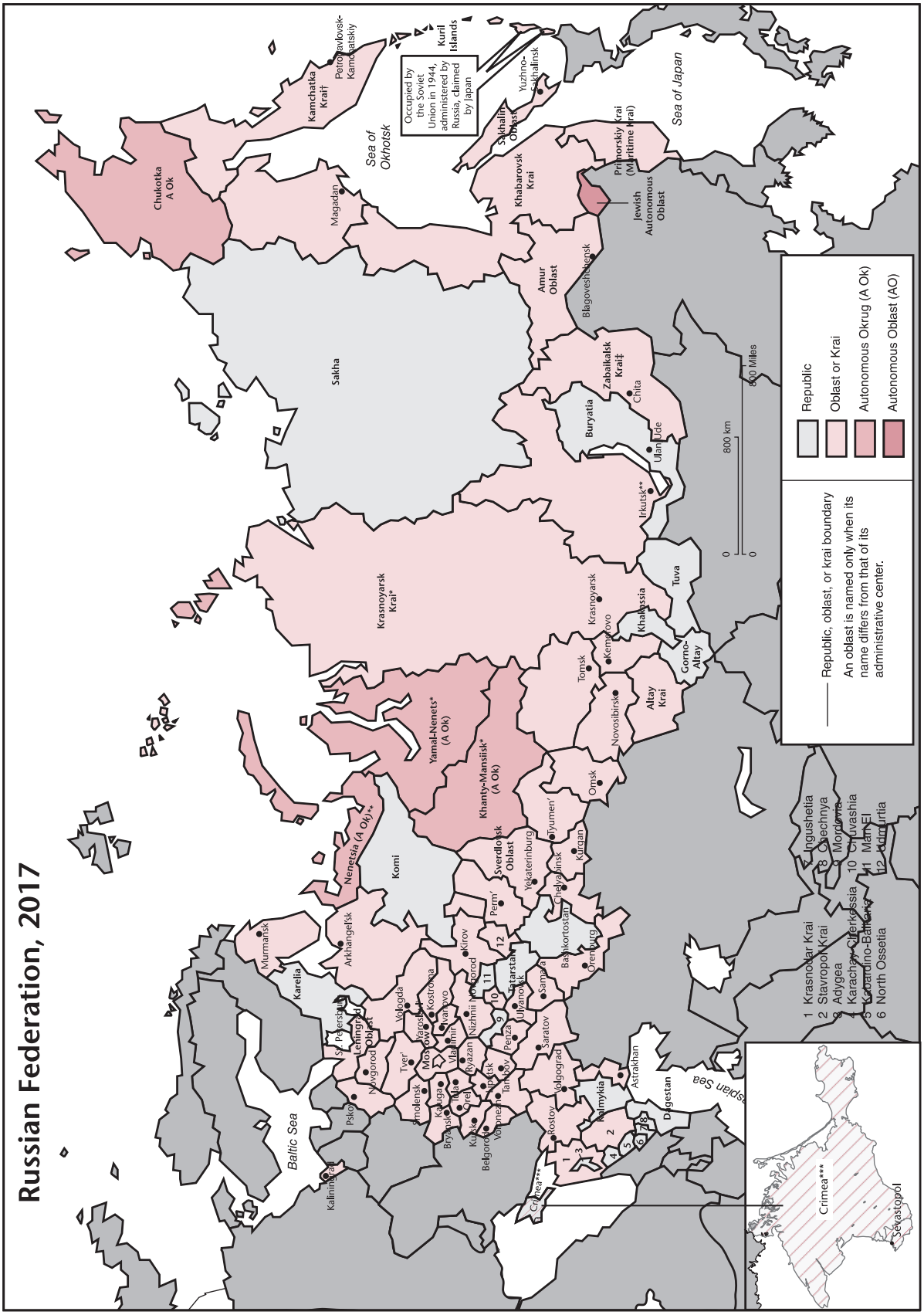
The Soviet Union isolated its satellite countries in Central and Eastern Europe from the West and tightened their economic and political integration with the USSR. Some countries within the Soviet bloc, however, had strong historic links to Western Europe (especially Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary). Over time, these countries served not only as geographic buffers to direct Western contacts but also as conduits for Western influence.

Attempts at De-Stalinization (1953–1985)

Even the Soviet elite realized that Stalin's terror could be sustained only at great cost. The terror destroyed initiative and participation, and the unpredictability of Stalinist rule inhibited the rational formulation of policy. From Stalin's death in 1953 until the mid-1980s, Soviet politics became more regularized and stable. Terror abated, but political controls remained in place, and efforts to isolate Soviet citizens from foreign influences continued.

In 1956, Nikita Khrushchev, the new party leader, embarked on a bold policy of de-Stalinization, rejecting terror as an instrument of political control. The secret police (KGB) was subordinated to the authority of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), which became the name of the ruling party in 1952, and party meetings resumed on a regular basis. However, internal party structures remained highly centralized, and elections were uncontested. Khrushchev's successor, Leonid Brezhnev (party head 1964–1982) partially reversed Khrushchev's de-Stalinization efforts. Controls were tightened again in the cultural sphere. Individuals who expressed dissenting views through underground publishing or publication abroad were harassed, arrested, or exiled. However, unlike in the Stalinist period, the political repression was predictable. People generally knew when they were transgressing permitted limits of criticism.

From the late 1970s onward, an aging political leadership was increasingly ineffective at addressing mounting problems. Economic growth rates fell, living standards improved only minimally, and opportunities for upward career mobility declined. To maintain the Soviet Union's superpower status, resources were diverted to the military sector, gutting the consumer and agricultural spheres. High pollution levels and alcoholism contributed to health problems. At the same time, liberalization in some Eastern European states and the telecommunications revolution made it increasingly difficult to shield the Soviet population from exposure to Western lifestyles and ideas. Among a certain critical portion of the population, aspirations were rising just as the capacity of the system to fulfill them was declining.



*Yamal-Nenets (A Ok) and Khanty-Mansiisk (A Ok) are also part of Tyumen oblast.
**Nenetsia (A Ok) is also part of Arkhangel'sk oblast.
***Note: Hatching indicates that these regions are contested, as their inclusion in Russia is not recognized by large parts of the international community.
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Perestroika and Glasnost (1985–1991)

Mikhail Gorbachev took office as the leader of the CPSU in March 1985. He endorsed a reform program that centered around four important concepts intended to spur economic growth and bring political renewal. These were *perestroika* (economic restructuring), ***glasnost*** (openness), *demokratizatsiia* (a type of limited democratization), and "New Thinking" in foreign policy. Gorbachev's reform program was designed to adapt the communist system to new conditions rather than to usher in its demise.

glasnost

Gorbachev's policy of "openness," which involved an easing of controls on the media, arts, and public discussion.

The most divisive issues were economic policy and demands for republic autonomy. Only about half of the Soviet population was ethnically Russian in 1989. Once Gorbachev opened the door to dissenting views, demands for national autonomy arose in some of the USSR's fifteen union republics. This occurred first in the three Baltic republics (Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia), then in Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, and Moldova, and finally in the Russian Republic itself. Gorbachev's efforts failed to bring consensus on a new **federal system** that could hold the country together.

federal system

A political structure in which subnational units have significant independent powers; the powers of each level are usually specified in the federal constitution

Gorbachev's economic policies failed as well. Half-measures sent contradictory messages to enterprise directors, producing a drop in output and undermining established patterns that had kept the Soviet economy functioning, although inefficiently. To protect themselves, regions and union republics began to restrict exports to other regions, despite planning mandates. In "the war of laws," regional officials openly defied central directives.

Just as his domestic support was plummeting, Gorbachev was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, in 1991. Under his New Thinking, the military buildup in the USSR was halted, important arms control agreements were ratified, and many controls on international contacts were lifted. In 1989, Gorbachev refused to prop up unpopular communist governments in Hungary, Poland, the German Democratic Republic (East Germany), and Czechoslovakia; pressure from below pushed the communist parties out of power. To Gorbachev's dismay, the liberation of these countries fed the process of disintegration of the Soviet Union itself.

Collapse of the USSR and the Emergence of the Russian Federation (1991 to the Present)

In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev drafted Boris Yeltsin into the leadership team as a nonvoting member of the USSR's top party organ, the Politburo. Ironically, Yeltsin later played a key role in the final demise of the Soviet Union. In June 1991, a popular election confirmed Yeltsin as president of the Russian Republic of the USSR (a post he had held since May of the previous year). In August, a coalition of conservative figures attempted a coup d'état to halt Gorbachev's program to reform the Soviet system. While Gorbachev was held captive at his summer house (*dacha*), Boris Yeltsin climbed atop a tank loyal to the reform leadership and rallied opposition to the attempted coup. In December 1991, Yeltsin and the leaders of Ukrainian and Belorussian Republics declared the end of the Soviet Union, proposing to replace it by a loosely structured entity, the Commonwealth of Independent States.

As leader of the newly independent Russian Federation, Yeltsin took a more radical approach to reform than Gorbachev had done. He quickly proclaimed his commitment to Western-style democracy and market economic reform. However, that program was controversial and proved hard to implement. The executive and legislative branches of the government also failed to reach consensus on the nature of a new Russian constitution; the result was a bloody showdown in October 1993, after Yeltsin disbanded what he considered to be an obstructive parliament and laid siege

to its premises, the Russian White House. The president mandated new parliamentary elections and a referendum on a new constitution, which passed by a narrow margin in December 1993.

Yeltsin's radical economic reforms confronted Russians with an increasingly uncertain future marked by declining real wages, high inflation, and rising crime. Yeltsin's initial popularity was also marred by an extended military conflict to prevent Chechnya, a southern republic of Russia, from seceding from the country. Concern that separatism could spread to other regions was an important motivation for the military intervention. Despite these problems, with the help of an active public relations effort, Yeltsin was reelected president in 1996, winning 54 percent of the vote against the candidate of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, Gennady Zyuganov. During his second term in office, Yeltsin was plagued by poor health and continuing failed policies. In 1998, a major financial crisis added to his problems.

In 1999, Yeltsin appointed Vladimir Putin prime minister and when Yeltsin resigned as president in December 1999, Putin became acting president. In presidential elections that followed in March 2000, Putin won a resounding victory. Putin benefited from auspicious conditions. In 1999, the economy began a period of sustained economic growth that lasted until the 2008–2009 global financial crisis. High international gas and oil prices fed tax dollars into the state's coffers.

Just as economic growth revived, worries about security increased. Instability associated with the Chechnya problem underlay a string of terrorist attacks, beginning in 1999. One particularly tragic event involved a hostage-taking on the first day of school (September 1, 2004) in the town of Beslan in southern Russia, which ended in tragedy, with more than 300 hostages killed—the majority children. Meanwhile, in March 2003, Russian authorities tried to set Chechnya on a track of normalization, holding a referendum that would confirm Chechnya's status within the Russian Federation. However, intermittent violence continued.

Despite these problems, Putin has recorded consistently high levels of popular support throughout his tenure. His position as president was only briefly interrupted by the 4-year term of Dmitry Medvedev (2008–2012), as the Russian constitution

YURI KADOBNOV/Getty Images

Opposition supporters stand in front of the stage during the "March of Millions" protest rally in Moscow, September 15, 2012.

includes a limit of two consecutive presidential terms. However, during Medvedev's presidency, Putin served as prime minister and remained the de facto leader of the government.

Elections in March 2012 reinstated Putin as president, and legislative elections in 2011 and 2016 reinforced the position of the United Russia party. Charges of election fraud and unfair electoral conditions led to mass protests in 2011–2012 in major Russian cities throughout the country, but Russia's annexation of the Ukrainian region of Crimea in 2014 reinforced popular support for Putin's leadership, as he was seen by many Russians to be effectively representing Russia's international interests.

Beginning in 2004, and continuing upon his return to office in 2012, Putin's leadership produced a drift to **soft authoritarianism**, involving increased political centralization, restrictions on the political opposition, and reinforcement of the dominance of the United Russia party. However, from 2014, Russia also saw an economic downturn, spurred by a fall in global gas and oil prices and by Western economic sanctions put in place in response to the Crimean annexation. In the lead-up to the Russian presidential election scheduled for March 2018, observers wondered whether economic problems might begin to undermine Putin's popular support.

soft authoritarianism

A system of political control in which a combination of formal and informal mechanisms ensure the dominance of a ruling group or dominant party, despite the existence of some forms of political competition and expressions of political opposition.

The Four Themes and Russia

Russia in a Globalized World of States

Following the collapse of the USSR in 1991, international support for the new reform-oriented government in Russia surged, with the proliferation of aid programs and international financial credits. However, in the 1990s, Russia's status as a world power waned, and the expansion of Western organizations (NATO, EU) to Russia's western border undermined its sphere of influence in Central and Eastern Europe. However, Russia's economic recovery following 1998, the rise of energy prices, and Europe's dependence on imports of Russian energy resources fuelled Russia's renewed international influence. Over time, tensions have reasserted themselves between Russia and the West. These have included differing positions on the Syrian crisis, U.S. intentions to install a missile shield in Central Europe to guard against a potential Iranian attack, the eastward expansion of NATO, and policies toward Russia's neighbors such as Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia.

Shortly after the Winter Olympics were held in Sochi, Russia, in February 2014, a political crisis in neighboring Ukraine led to the removal of the Russian-leaning president, Victor Yanukovych, and put in place a pro-Western interim government; these changes elicited a Russian military takeover and quick annexation of Ukraine's southern region of Crimea, undoing much of the goodwill that Russia had won in hosting the Olympics. Western governments refused to recognize Russia's annexation of Crimea, and instituted sanctions to deter Russia from further violations of Ukraine's territorial sovereignty. In August 2014, Russia announced countersanctions that would restrict imports of some Western food products. The annexation of Crimea and continuing tensions in Ukraine have proven to be intractable obstacles to an improvement in relations between Russia and the West. In an effort to assert Russia's regional influence, in 2015, Russia and neighboring Kazakhstan and Belarus officially launched a new regional integration scheme, the Eurasian Economic Union, as a counterpoint to the EU; Russia's efforts to reinforce cooperation with other rising powers such as China also increased.

Governing the Economy

For nearly a decade after the collapse of the Soviet system, the Russian Federation was mired in a downward spiral of economic decline. After 1998, however, growth rates recovered, budget surpluses became routine, and the population experienced a marked increase in economic confidence. As revealed during the 2008 global financial crisis and ensuing recession, Russia's economic strategy, which relies heavily on the export of natural resources to support the state budget, makes the country vulnerable to fluctuations in the international economy, with declining growth rates since 2014. Although many important policy problems have been addressed, others remain unresolved, including inadequate levels of foreign investment, capital flight, and continuing high levels of inequality.

The Democratic Idea

Concerns about the fate of Russian democracy have also become widespread in the West and have elicited intermittent public protests within Russia. While the constitution adopted in 1993 has gained a surprising level of public acceptance, domestic opponents express intensified concern that increasing centralization of power and institutional changes adopted after 2004 have undermined real political competition. The regime justifies these changes as necessary to ensure state capacity to govern and to secure continuing economic growth, but critics see Russia as moving in the direction of electoral authoritarianism, where political competition is "managed" by the president's office through a dominant political party, United Russia. High levels of corruption still pervade the Russian political and economic system, despite the proclaimed commitment of the political leadership to curtail them.

The Politics of Collective Identity

Finally, Russians continue to seek new forms of collective identity. The loss of superpower status, doubts about the appropriateness of Western economic and political models, and the absence of a widely accepted ideology all have contributed to uncertainty about what it means to be Russian. Differing visions of collective identity emerged in some of Russia's ethnic republics, particularly in Chechnya and other Muslim areas. Since 2013, a new narrative of national identity has emerged, strongly pushed by Russian state elites. Russia is increasingly depicted as representing traditional European cultural values and as a bridge between Europe and Asia. This narrative challenges Western understandings of terms such as democracy, human rights, and rule of law, as well as tolerance toward diverse definitions of sexual identity and orientation. A particular focus of international criticism relates to a Russian law passed in 2013 that imposes fines for "propagandizing" minors about nontraditional sexual relations.

Comparisons

Many countries have attempted a transition from authoritarian rule to democratic governance. In Russia's case, one of the most important factors affecting this process is the tradition of strong state control, stretching from czarist times through the Soviet period, and now influencing present developments. In addition, the intertwined character of politics, economics, and ideology in the Soviet Union has made reform difficult. In effect, four transition processes were initiated simultaneously in

the early 1990s: democratization, market reform, a redefinition of national identity, and integration into the world economy. Whereas other democratizing countries may have undergone one or two of these transitions simultaneously, Russia initially tried to tackle all four at once. Because the former communist elites had no private wealth to fall back on, corrupt or illegal methods were sometimes used by Russia's emerging capitalist class to maintain former privileges. Citizens, confronted with economic decline and an ideological vacuum, have been susceptible to appeals to nationalism and for strong state control. No doubt, past economic and political uncertainty has made the Russian public willing to accept strong leadership and limits on political expression that would be resisted in many Western countries. Russia's current "backsliding" from democratic development may, in part, reflect the difficulties of pursuing so many transitions at once.

Some countries rich in natural resources, such as Norway, have achieved sustained economic growth and stable democratic systems. In other cases, and this perhaps applies to Russia, such dependence on natural resource wealth has produced a "resource curse" that leaves other economic sectors underdeveloped and uncompetitive, with the country highly vulnerable to global economic fluctuations. In the Russian case, the concentration of economic power associated with the natural resource sector has also fed high levels of inequality and corruption.

Where Do You Stand?

Mikhail Gorbachev was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991, and is credited in the West with having brought a peaceful end to Soviet rule. However, most Russians today hold Gorbachev in low regard. How do you evaluate the historical significance of Gorbachev?

Is the centralization of power that has occurred under President Vladimir Putin justified in order to foster economic stability and stable government?

POLITICAL ECONOMY AND DEVELOPMENT

SECTION 2

The collapse of the Soviet Union in late 1991 ushered in a sea change, radically reducing the state's traditionally strong role in economic development and opening the Russian economy to foreign influence. However, the process of market reform that the Russian government pursued after 1991 brought with it an immediate dramatic decline in economic performance as well as fundamental changes in social relationships. After experiencing an unprecedented period of economic depression from 1991 to 1998, Russia experienced renewed economic growth, but this growth was built largely on the country's wealth of energy and natural resources. With the economic/financial crisis of 2008–2009, a decline in oil prices since 2013, Western economic sanctions, and Russian counter-sanctions, the Russian economy has not been able to sustain continued economic growth. Russia's dependence on natural resource exports introduces long-term economic risks because of exposure to global price fluctuations. Under Vladimir Putin, the role of the state in key government sectors has been strengthened so that Russia's market economic system has distinctive features compared to Western systems. Extreme levels of social inequality and corruption also characterize the system.

Focus Questions

- What were Russia's most difficult problems in moving from the Soviet command economy to a market economy?
- What challenges does the Russian economy face now if it is to meet the expectations of its citizens?

State and Economy

In the Soviet period, land, factories, and all other important economic assets belonged to the state. Short- and long-term economic plans defined production goals, but these were frequently too ambitious. Except in the illegal black market and parts of the rural economy, prices were controlled by the state and production was unresponsive to demand.

The Soviet economic model registered some remarkable achievements: rapid industrialization, provision of social welfare and mass education, relatively low levels of inequality, and advances in key economic sectors such as the military and space industries. Nonetheless, over time, top-heavy Soviet planning could neither sustain rising prosperity at home nor deliver competitive products for export. Gorbachev's efforts to adapt Soviet economic structures to meet these challenges were largely unsuccessful.

market reform

A strategy of economic transformation that involves reducing the role of the state in managing the economy and increasing the role of market forces.

Following the collapse of the USSR, Russian president Boris Yeltsin endorsed a more radical policy of **market reform**. Four main pillars of his program were (1) lifting price controls, (2) encouraging small private businesses and entrepreneurs, (3) privatizing most state-owned enterprises, and (4) opening the economy to international influences. In January 1992, price controls on most goods were loosened or removed entirely. As a result, the consumer price index increased by about 2,500 percent between December 1991 and December 1992. Real wages declined by 50 percent. Economic troubles continued throughout most of the 1990s.

insider privatization

The transformation of formerly state-owned enterprises into private enterprises or other types of business entities in which majority control is in the hands of employees and/or managers.

Privatization in Russia was rapid compared to most other post-communist countries. By early 1994, 80 percent of medium-sized and large state enterprises in designated sectors of the economy had been privatized; however, they often did not achieve the desired result of improving efficiency and competitiveness. The most widely adopted method, called **insider privatization**, hampered reform of business operations and reduced the expected gains of privatization. Managers, many of whom did not have the skills needed to operate in a market environment, were reluctant to lay off excess labor or resisted overtures by outside investors who might gain control of the enterprise. Some managers extracted personal profit from enterprise operations rather than investing available funds to improve production. Productivity and efficiency did not increase significantly; unprofitable firms continued to operate. When the sale of shares was opened to outside investors, many firms were unattractive because backward technology would require massive infusions of capital. Some of the more attractive enterprises fell into the hands of developing financial–industrial conglomerates that had acquired their wealth through positions of power or connections in the government. At the same time, new ventures, which were generally more efficient than former state firms, faced obstacles: confusing regulations, high taxes, lack of capital, and poor infrastructure (transport, banking, and communications).

Reform of agriculture was even less satisfactory. Large companies and associations of individual households were created on the basis of former state and collective farms. These privatized companies operated inefficiently, and agricultural output declined. Foreign food imports also undercut domestic producers, contributing to a downward spiral in agricultural investment and production.

A key obstacle to the success of the market reform agenda, in the 1990s, was the weakness of the early post-Soviet state institutions. Without an effective tax collection system, for instance, the government could not acquire revenues necessary to pay its own bills on time, provide essential services to the population, and ensure a well-functioning economic infrastructure (such as transportation, energy, and public utilities). A weak state meant inadequate regulation of the banking sector and poor

enforcement of health, safety, and labor standards. As the state failed to carry out these functions, businesses took matters into their own hands, for example, by hiring private security services for protection, or by paying bribes. Ineffective government fed corruption and criminality.

The central government in Moscow also had difficulty exerting its authority in relation to regional officials and in the face of increasing power of business **oligarchs**. These wealthy individuals benefited from privatization and often wielded significant political influence. Diverse methods of laundering money to avoid taxes became widespread. Corruption involving government officials, the police, and operators abroad fed a rising crime rate. Rich foreigners, Russian bankers, and outspoken journalists became targets of the Russian mafia.

oligarchs

A small group of powerful and wealthy individuals who gained ownership and control of important sectors of Russia's economy in the context of privatization of state assets in the 1990s.

A financial crisis in August 1998 brought the situation to a head. Following a sharp upturn in 1996 and 1997, the Russian stock market lost over 90 percent of its value in August 1998. The government defaulted on its bonds. Many Russian banks, holders of the government's short-term bonds, faced imminent bankruptcy. The government began to print more of the increasingly valueless rubles, threatening to undermine the ruble's value further and thus intensify the underlying financial crisis.

The government finally allowed a radical devaluation of the ruble. Within a 2-week period, the ruble lost two-thirds of its value against the U.S. dollar, banks closed or allowed only limited withdrawals, supplies of imported goods decreased, and business accounts were frozen—forcing some firms to lay off employees and others to close their doors. However, despite these effects, the 1998 financial crisis ushered in positive changes. First, the devalued ruble made Russian products more competitive with foreign imports. Firms were able to improve their products, put underused labor back to work, and thus increase productivity. The state budget benefited from improved tax revenues, and economic growth revived, beginning in 1999 (See Figure 13.2.)

When Vladimir Putin became president, in 2000, he set about strengthening the capacity of the state to maintain the growth impetus. He introduced a set of

FIGURE 13.2 Russia: Economic Decline and Recovery, 1996–2016 (Gross domestic product percent change over previous year)

Source: Data is from the Russian State Statistics Service.

legislative reforms to spur recovery. A 13 percent flat income tax, deemed easier to enforce, was one very visible aspect of the package. A budget surplus replaced a deficit. By 2007, the Russian government had lowered its debt burden to 3 percent of GDP. Foreign reserves grew from just $12 billion (U.S.) in 1998, to above $500 billion (U.S.) in 2012, and down to just above $325 billion in 2015.[2]

Putin also took measures to limit the power of economic oligarchs who used their financial positions to criticize the government or to affect political outcomes. A prominent case involved Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the chief executive officer and major shareholder of the giant Russian oil company, Yukos. In 2003, Khodorkovsky was placed under arrest for fraud and tax evasion, and in May 2005, he was sentenced by a Russian court to nine years in prison. In December 2013, Khodorkovsky was pardoned and released from prison, a move that many observers interpreted as attempt to gain Western approval in the lead up to the February 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia. Since that time, Khodorkovsky has promoted oppositional activity from abroad.

Despite Putin's successes in securing a revival of economic growth, corruption has remained a major obstacle to effective economic management. Transparency International's annual Corruption Perceptions index, based on a compilation of independent surveys, ranked Russia 131th out of the 177 countries surveyed in 2016,[3] indicating continuing high levels of corruption.

Society and Economy

The communist party's social goals also produced some of the most marked achievements of the Soviet system. Benefits to the population in the Soviet period included free health care, low-cost access to essential goods and services, maternity leave (partially paid), child benefits, disability pensions, and mass education. In a short period of time, universal access to primary and secondary schooling led to nearly universal literacy under Soviet rule. Postsecondary education was free of charge, with state stipends provided to university students. Guaranteed employment and job security were other priorities. Almost all able-bodied adults, men and women alike, worked outside the home. Citizens received many social benefits through the workplace, and modest pensions were guaranteed by the state, ensuring a stable but minimal standard of living for retirement.

The Soviet system, however, was plagued by shortages and low-quality service. For example, advanced medical equipment was in limited supply. Sometimes under-the-table payments were required to prompt better quality service. Many goods and services were scarce. Housing shortages restricted mobility and forced young families to share small apartments with parents. Productivity was low by international standards, and work discipline was weak.

As a matter of state policy, wage differentials between the best and worst paid were lower than in Western countries. While this approach had social benefits, it also reduced the incentive for outstanding achievements and innovation. Due to state ownership, individuals could not accumulate wealth in real estate, stocks, or businesses. Although political elites had access to scarce goods, higher quality health care, travel, and vacation homes, these privileges were largely hidden from public view.

The Soviet experience led Russians to expect the state to ensure a social welfare network, but in the 1990s budget constraints necessitated cutbacks, just when social needs were greatest. Although universal health care remained, higher quality care and access to medicine depended more obviously on ability to pay. Benefits provided

through the workplace were cut back, as businesses faced pressures to reduce costs. At the same time, some groups benefited from market reforms, including those with Western language skills and those employed in the natural resources, banking, and financial sectors. At the top of the scale are the super-wealthy, including people who appropriated benefits during the privatization process or engaged in successful business activity afterwards. However, losers have been more numerous. Poverty is highest among rural residents, the unemployed, children, the less educated, pensioners, and the disabled. As a result of low wage levels, the majority of those in poverty are the working poor.

Following the economic upturn that began in 1999, large differentials in income and wealth have persisted. While the portion of the population living below the subsistence level declined after 1999, it has risen again since 2014. In the first half of 2016, 14.6 percent of the population was recorded as being below the poverty line; overall, real incomes fell as well, particularly for the less well-off.[4] Many individuals still hold two to three jobs just to make ends meet. Social indicators of economic stress (such as a declining birthrate, suicide rate, and murder rate) began to correct themselves after 2002, but only slowly. The economic-financial crisis of 2008–2009 introduced new economic uncertainties just when many Russians were beginning to feel that life was returning to normal.

In recent years, maintenance of existing levels of state support for social programs has been a contentious issue. Massive street demonstrations occurred in several Russian cities in early 2005 to protest changes to social welfare policy. Called "monetization of social benefits," the reforms involved replacing certain services (such as public transport) that had been provided free to certain groups (pensioners, veterans, and the disabled) with a modest monetary payment to the individual. Many Russians viewed the measures as involving direct reductions in social welfare benefits. After large-scale demonstrations, the government agreed to accompany the reforms by a modest increase in pensions and to restore subsidized transport. Learning from this experience, the government has attempted to avoid cuts in social welfare measures and pensions since, including during the economic-financial crisis of 2008 and the economic downturn since 2014.

Russia saw a steady decline in population until 2009, mitigated to some extent by a positive inflow of immigrants, particularly from other former Soviet republics. Life expectancy in 2016 was estimated at 65 years for Russian men and 77 years for women, an improvement over the 1990s, but still lower than in Western societies. Primary factors contributing to the high mortality rates include stress related to social and economic dislocation and unnatural causes of death (accidents, murders, and suicides).

The government has introduced policies to encourage a rising birthrate, such as higher child support payments, and monetary and other benefits for women having two or more children. Birthrates had begun to rise already in 1999, so it is hard to know how much of the continuing increase is due to government policy. Although declining birthrates often accompany economic modernization, the extraordinary economic stresses of the 1990s exacerbated this tendency; the restoration of economic growth in the late l990s may have reduced the reluctance of many couples to have children, but the birthrate is still well below the levels of the 1980s. Women continue to carry the bulk of domestic responsibilities while also working outside the home to boost family income. Many women take advantage of the permitted three-year maternity leave, which is only partially paid, but difficulties in reconciling home and work duties no doubt contribute to low birthrates as well.

Russia's ethnic and regional diversity also has economic implications. Levels of development vary greatly across the country's federal units, with major cities (such as Moscow and St. Petersburg), as well as regions rich in natural resources, being the most affluent.

Environmental Issues

In the Soviet period, an emphasis on economic growth at the expense of environmental protection resulted in high levels of air and water pollution, with associated health problems. Inadequate technological safeguards and an insufficient regulatory structure led to the disastrous nuclear accident at Chernobyl (now in Ukraine) in 1986, which produced long-lasting contamination of immense areas of agricultural land in Ukraine and neighboring Belarus, as well as in some areas of Russia. Following the Chernobyl accident, under Gorbachev's *glasnost* policy, citizen environmental awareness and activism increased, often associated with assertions of national identity in the various republics of the USSR, including Russia. In 1988, under Gorbachev's leadership, a specific environmental protection agency was created.

Following the collapse of the USSR, the newly independent Russian state was preoccupied with other problems, in the face of the major economic downturn of the 1990s. The country's heavy economic reliance on resource-extraction industries brought with it higher than average environmental impacts. In May 2000, the State Committee for Environmental Protection (the successor to the environmental agency created in 1988) was abolished with most of its responsibilities moved to a new ministry (now called the Ministry of Natural Resources and Ecology). This model of mixing oversight of use and protection of nature in a single agency may be an indicator of the low priority assigned to environmental protection, as compared to resource use.

A particular priority for the EU was to gain Russian ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, an international agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to address the dangers of climate change. Given the failure of the United States to support the agreement, Russia's signature was needed to put the agreement into effect. Russia ratified the Kyoto Protocol in 2004. However, this involved minimal commitment since Russia's greenhouse gas emission levels had decreased as a result of production downturns of the 1990s. In 2015, Russia submitted its nationally determined contribution related to the Paris Agreement of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; the commitment involved a reduction to 70 to 75 percent of 1990 levels by 2030, which, in light of the economic recession of the 1990s, is modest.[5] However, like countries such as China, the proportion of global carbon emissions from Russia (4.53 percent) exceeds it relative share of the global population (1.98 percent) and GDP (3.18 percent), based on 2016 data.[6] The relatively low utilization of renewable energy sources and highly inefficient use of energy in Russia suggest that the country's environmental performance has clear avenues for improvement, and the Russian government has expressed support for such measures, even if their implementation has so far been weak.

Russia in the Global Economy

During the Soviet period, the economy was largely isolated from outside influences, as foreign trade was channeled through central state organs. However, things

changed after 1991. Over time, the ruble was allowed to respond to market conditions, and firms were permitted to conclude agreements directly with foreign partners. Western governments and international organizations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the European Union (EU) contributed substantial amounts of economic assistance, often in the form of repayable credits. After the August 1998 crisis, the Russian government defaulted, first on the ruble-denominated short-term debt, and then on the former Soviet debt. Since then, debt repayments have been made on time. In 2001, the government decided to forgo additional IMF credits. By 2005, it had paid off its IMF debt.

Russia has also become more open to foreign investment. However, levels still remain low compared to many other East European countries, despite improvements since 2004. The inflow of West European investment capital was negatively affected by the financial and economic crisis of 2008, and by Western sanctions against Russia associated with the annexation of Crimea. Major sources of foreign direct investment, since 2000, have been Germany, the United States, and Cyprus (mainly recycled Russian capital, previously exported for tax reasons), but foreign investors are, since 2006, prevented from gaining a majority share in certain sectors of the economy that are identified as of strategic importance. After an extended accession process, involving compliance with rules regarding free trade, in 2012 Russia was admitted to the World Trade Organization (WTO). Initial adaptation costs have included difficulties in some sectors, such as the agricultural and food industries, due to increased competition, as well as lost tariff revenue. However, it is expected that in the medium to long run, WTO membership will contribute significantly to economic growth in Russia. Several trade disputes between the EU and Russia have been taken to the WTO by one or the other of the parties for adjudication since Russia joined the organization.

The geographic focus of Russia's foreign trade activity has shifted markedly since the Soviet period. Whereas in 1994 neighboring Ukraine was Russia's most important trading partner, in 2014 the top spots were filled by China (17.7 percent of imports to Russia and 7.5 percent of exports), the Netherlands (receiving 13.7 percent of Russian exports), and Germany (providing 11.5 percent of imports and 7.5 percent of exports).[7] Overall, in 2016, the EU was Russia's largest trading partner, making up 42.8 percent of the total (down from 44.8 percent in 2015)[8]; meanwhile, Russia was the EU's fourth-largest trading partner, with imports from Russia constituting only 7 percent of the EU's total, and exports to Russia making up 4.1 percent. A substantial portion (about two-thirds) of Russia's export commodities to Europe are mineral resources (including energy resources), while about two-thirds of the EU's exports to Russia are manufactured goods, machinery, and transport equipment, resulting in an asymmetrical trade relationship.[9] In the face of increased tensions with the West, Russia is seeking to increase energy exports to China.

Russia's position in the international political economy remains uncertain. With a highly skilled workforce, high levels of educational and scientific achievement, and a rich base of natural resources, Russia has many of the ingredients necessary to become a competitive and powerful force in the global economy. However, Russia's natural resource and energy wealth has proven to be a mixed blessing. If the country's industrial capacity is not restored, Russia will continue to be vulnerable to shifts in world energy prices and to fluctuations in supply and demand. Since the hydrocarbon sector provides a significant portion of trade (see Figure 13.3) and of revenue for the Russian state budget, any threat to profits in this sector can reverberate through the economy and society at large. Accordingly, in 2004, during the economic upturn, the Russian government established a Stabilization Fund to hold a portion of revenues from export duties generated from the energy sector and from federal budget

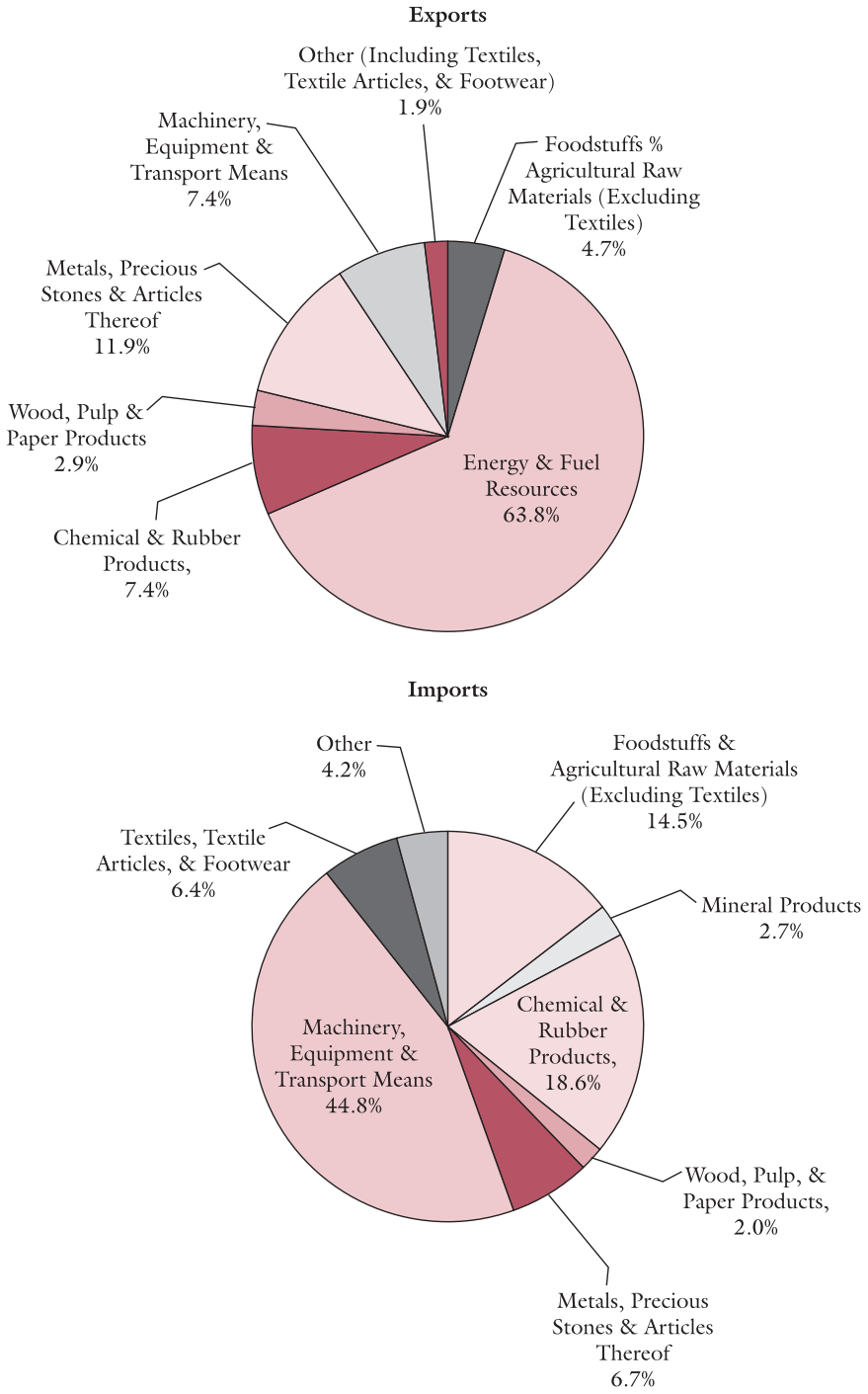


FIGURE 13.3 Structure of Russian Foreign Trade, 2015

Source: Adapted from *Russia in Figures: Statistical Handbook* (Moscow, Federal State Statistics Services of the Russian Federation, 2016), p. 506.

surpluses. In 2008, the fund was split into two parts, a Reserve Fund and National Welfare Fund. The decline in global oil and gas prices, which began in 2014, contributed to a fall in the value of the ruble and threatened state budget revenues, forcing the Russian government to dip into the Reserve Fund to ensure fiscal resources for

the state. This led to a dramatic decline in its size, as well as to a lesser decline in the size of the National Welfare Fund, which is, in part, intended to cover future pension obligations.

Levels of capital investment and technological innovation also have not been adequate to fuel increased productivity; even in the lucrative energy sector, experts doubt whether, without significant foreign involvement, Russian firms will be able to develop new reserves adequate to meet both domestic needs and contractual obligations to foreign (at this point mainly European) consumers. At the same time, its wealth in natural resources has given Russia advantages compared to its neighbors, since these expensive materials do not need to be imported. Ultimately, Russia's position in the global economy will depend on the ability of the country's leadership to address domestic economic challenges and to facilitate differentiation of the country's export base.

GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

Russia and International Organizations

Russia has achieved membership in many international organizations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization. In other cases, Russia has forged partnerships with organizations for which membership is currently not foreseen. Relations with three regional organizations are profiled here:

The European Union (*EU*). In 1999, the EU and Russia established a "strategic partnership," and in 2003 agreed on four "Common Spaces" of cooperation, relating to economic relations, borders, external security, and research, education, and culture. In 2007, the EU and Russia initiated a process to simplify the issuance of visas by both sides, with an eventual goal of lifting visa requirements for short-term visits. In 2010, they announced a Modernization Partnership. The conflict over Ukraine in 2014 introduced a setback as many aspects of the relations were frozen by the EU, placing in question the strategic partnership itself.

The Council of Europe (which is distinct from the EU) is the major vehicle in Europe for the defense of human rights, enforced through the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in Strasbourg, France. Russia acceded to the organization in 1996, and ratified the European Convention on Human Rights in 1998. Thousands of human rights cases involving Russia have been brought to the ECtHR, many related to the Chechnya conflict, and most judgments have gone against Russia. In 2015, Vladimir Putin signed a law allowing the Russian Constitutional Court to block enforcement of an ECtHR decision if it is deemed unconstitutional; the power was first applied in January 2017.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (*NATO*) was formed after World War II to safeguard its members on both sides of the Atlantic from the Soviet threat. Following the collapse of the communist system, NATO redefined its mandate to include crisis management, peacekeeping, combatting international terrorism, and prevention of nuclear proliferation. Since 1999, Russia has consistently objected to the expansion of NATO as it took in several new members, specifically countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Nonetheless, the NATO-Russia Founding Act on Mutual Relations of 1997, and the formation of the NATO-Russia Council in 2002, provided a basis for cooperation. In reaction to Russian actions in Crimea and Ukraine in 2014, NATO suspended cooperation with Russia and reemphasized its commitment to collective defense of its members, including those bordering Russia. At the same time, meetings of the NATO-Russia Council recommenced in 2016.

MAKING CONNECTIONS How has NATO enlargement affected Russia's relations with the West?

Where Do You Stand?

Do you think that a strong role for the state in economic affairs makes sense in Russia, given the country's history?

What measures do you think could be taken to bring corruption under control in Russia?

SECTION 3

GOVERNANCE AND POLICY-MAKING

Focus Questions

- Why has the Russian leadership viewed political centralization as necessary and what centralizing measures have been taken since 2000?
- What is the relationship between the prime minister and the president in Russia? How have the particular individuals who have filled these posts helped to shape this relationship?

In the 1990s, the Russian leadership, under Boris Yeltsin, endorsed liberal democratic principles, and subsequent Russian presidents, both Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev, have reaffirmed their commitment to democracy. However, over time, the manner in which democratic governance should be interpreted to make it compatible with Russia's unique political tradition has become contested. Skeptics see Putin's measures to strengthen presidential power as moving Russia in an authoritarian direction. Protests reached a high point in late 2011 and early 2012, when large public demonstrations in Moscow, and other major cities, questioned the fairness of the legislative and presidential elections. In response, Vladimir Putin, reelected as president in March 2012 after a four-year interlude, endorsed a mix of concessions and heightened controls that elicited continuing debate about the fate of Russia's democratic experiment. Unlike 2011, in 2016 legislative elections occurred without major protests; commentators wondered whether this reflected support for the system or hopelessness about changing it.

Organization of the State

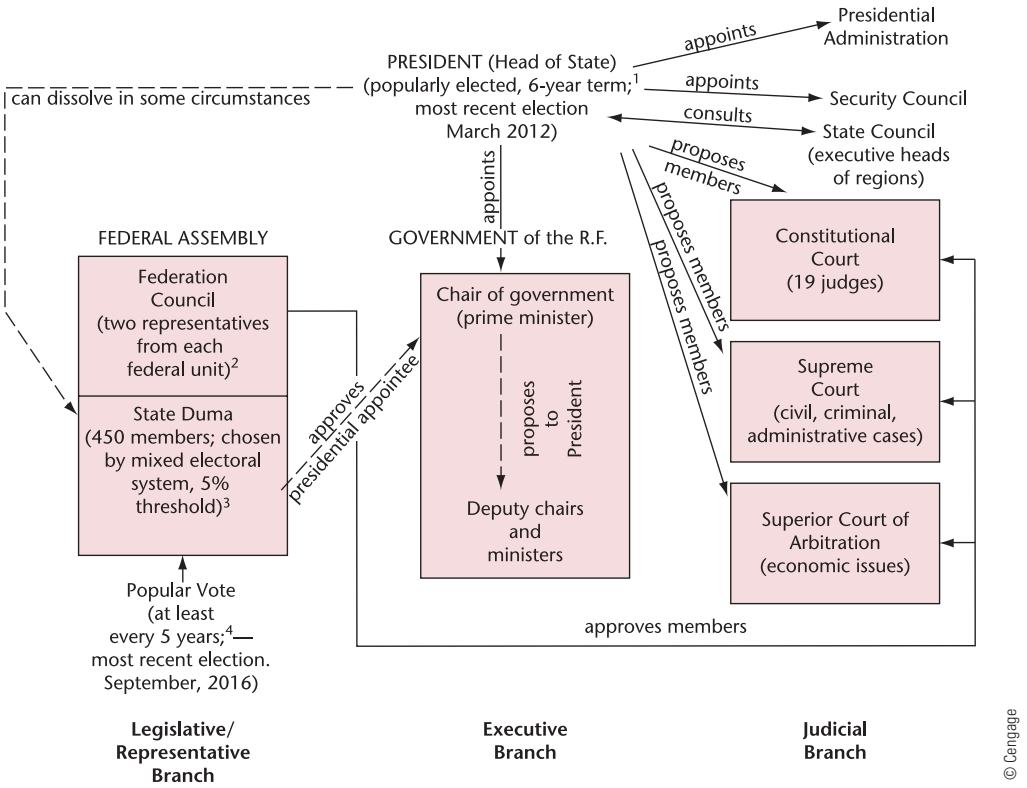
In the Soviet period, before Gorbachev's reforms, top organs of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) dominated the state. The CPSU was hierarchical. Lower party bodies elected delegates to higher party organs, but elections were uncontested, and top organs determined candidates for lower party posts. The Politburo, the top party organ, was the real decision-making center. A larger body, the Central Committee, represented the broader political elite, including regional party leaders and representatives of various economic sectors. Alongside the CPSU were Soviet state structures, which formally resembled Western parliamentary systems but had little decision-making authority. The state bureaucracy had day-to-day responsibility in both the economic and political spheres but followed the party's directives in all matters. The Supreme Soviet, the parliament, was a rubber-stamp body, meaning it only passed legislation that had been approved by the CPSU.

The Soviet constitution was primarily symbolic, since many of its principles were ignored in practice. The constitution provided for legislative, executive, and judicial organs, but separation of powers was considered unnecessary because the CPSU claimed to represent the interests of society as a whole. When the constitution was violated (frequently), the courts had no independent authority to enforce or protect its provisions. Likewise, the Soviet federal system was phony, since all aspects of life were overseen by a highly centralized communist party. Nonetheless, the various subunits that existed within the Russian Republic of the USSR were carried over into the Russian Federation in an altered form.

Gorbachev introduced innovations into the Soviet political system: competitive elections, increased political pluralism, reduced communist party dominance, a revitalized legislative branch of government, and renegotiated terms for Soviet federalism. He also tried to bring the constitution into harmony with political reality. Likewise, even before the collapse of the USSR in December 1991, political institutions began

to change in the Russian Republic, which was only one of fifteen federal units that made up the Soviet Union. A new post of president was created, and on June 12, 1991, Boris Yeltsin was elected by direct popular vote as its first incumbent. Once the Russian Federation became independent in December 1991, a crucial turning point in its development was the adoption by referendum of a new Russian constitution in December 1993. This constitution provides the legal foundation for current state institutions (see Figure 13.4) and by now seems to have acquired broad-based popular legitimacy.

The document affirms many established principles of liberal democratic governance—competitive multiparty elections, separation of powers, an independent judiciary, federalism, and protection of individual civil liberties. At the same time, the president and executive branch are granted strong powers. Despite this, in the 1990s, the state demonstrated only a weak capacity to govern, involving dysfunctional conflict between major institutions of government. Subnational governments demanded increased autonomy, even sovereignty, generating a process of negotiation and political conflict between the center and the regions that sometimes led to contradictions between regional and federal laws. The constitution made the executive dominant but still dependent on the agreement of the legislative branch to realize its programs. Under President Yeltsin, tension between the two branches of government was a persistent obstacle to effective governance. In addition, establishing real judicial independence remained a significant political challenge.



[1]Before 2012 the term was 4 years.
[2]One representative appointed by the regional legislature and one by the regional excutive.
[3]Was a nationwide proportional representation system from 2007–2013, with 7% threshold. Until 2007 half of seats were chosen in single-member-districts and half by proportional representation with a 5% threshold.
[4]Prior to 2011–2012 the term was 4 years.

FIGURE 13.4 Political Institutions of the Russian Federation (R.F.) 2017

During Vladimir Putin's first term (2000–2008) the power of the presidency was augmented further in an effort to address the weakness of central state authority. Many observers feel, however, that Putin's centralizing measures have undermined the very checks and balances that were supposed to protect against reestablishment of authoritarian control.

The Executive

The constitution establishes a semi-presidential system, formally resembling the French system but with stronger executive power. As in France, the executive itself has two heads (the president and the prime minister), introducing a potential context for intrastate tension. The president is also the head of state and holds primary power, except for the periods between 1998 to 2000, and 2008 to 2012. The prime minister, appointed by the president but approved by the lower house of the parliament (the State Duma, hereafter Duma), is the head of government. As a rule of thumb, the president has overseen foreign policy, relations with the regions, and the organs of state security, while the prime minister has focused his attention on the economy and related issues. However, with Yeltsin's continuing health problems in 1998 and 1999, operative power shifted in the direction of the prime minister. In December 1999, Yeltsin resigned from office, making the prime minister, Vladimir Putin, acting president until he was himself elected president in March 2000. Between 2008 and 2012, Dmitry Medvedev served as president, with Putin as prime minister. In the view of most observers, Putin had more effective power than Medvedev, though their relationship was a cooperative one.

One of the president's most important powers is the authority to issue decrees, which Yeltsin used frequently for contentious issues. Although presidential decrees may not violate the constitution or specific legislation passed by the bicameral legislature, policy-making by decree allows the president to ignore an uncooperative or divided parliament. Yeltsin's decision in 1994, and again in 1999, to launch the offensive in Chechnya was not approved by either house of parliament. Under Putin and Medvedev, the power of decree has been used more sparingly, partly because both leaders have had strong support in the legislature.

The president can also call a state of emergency, impose martial law, grant pardons, call referendums, and temporarily suspend actions of other state organs if he deems them to contradict the constitution or federal laws. Some of these actions must be confirmed by other state organs (such as the upper house of the parliament, the Federation Council). The president is commander-in-chief of the armed forces and conducts affairs of state with other nations. Impeachment of the president involves the two houses of the legislative body (the Duma and the Federation Council), the Supreme Court, and the Constitutional Court. If the president dies in office or becomes incapacitated, the prime minister fills the post until new presidential elections can be held.

The Russian government is headed by the prime minister, flanked by varying numbers of deputy prime ministers. The president's choice of prime minister must be approved by the Duma. During his first two full terms in office (2000–2004 and 2004–2008), Putin had three prime ministers (and one acting prime minister). The first of these, Mikhail Kasyanov (May 2000–February 2004) later became an outspoken opposition figure. As noted above, following his election as president in 2008, Medvedev selected Putin as his prime minister, with the roles reversed when Putin returned as president in 2012.

The prime minister can be removed by the Duma through two repeat votes of no confidence passed within a 3-month period. Even in the 1990s, when there was tension with President Yeltsin, the Duma was unable or unwilling to exercise this power, presumably in part because this action could lead to dissolution of the Duma itself. Until 2008, the prime minister was never the leader of the dominant party or coalition in the Duma. This changed when Putin became prime minister in 2008 because he was also elected as chairperson of the dominant party, United Russia, in that year and Dmitry Medvedev, the Russian prime minister, is the current chairman of the party.

The National Bureaucracy

The state's administrative structure includes twenty-one ministries, and some sixteen federal services and agencies (as of March 2017). Based on an administrative reform adopted in 2004, ministries are concerned with policy functions, such as economic development, energy, agriculture, sport, or education and science, whereas other state organs undertake monitoring functions or implementation, as well as providing services to the public. Many observers agree that these administrative reforms have not improved bureaucratic efficiency or government responsiveness.

Some government bodies (such as the Foreign Affairs Ministry, the Federal Security Service, and the Defense Ministry) report directly to the president. The president has created various advisory bodies that solicit input from important political and economic actors and also co-opt them into supporting government policies. The most important are the Security Council and the State Council. Formed in 1992, the Security Council, chaired by the president, provides input in areas related to foreign policy and security (broadly conceived); its membership and size have varied over time, but the body has generally included heads of the so-called power ministries such as Defense and the Federal Security Service, as well as other key ministers and government officials. The State Council, also chaired by the president, was formed in September 2000 as part of Putin's attempt to redefine the role of regional leaders in federal decision making (see below) and includes the heads of Russia's constituent federal units. A smaller presidium of the State Council meets monthly.

Ministers other than the prime minister do not require parliamentary approval. The prime minister makes recommendations to the president, who appoints these officials. Ministers and other agency heads are generally career bureaucrats who have risen through an appropriate ministry, although sometimes more clearly political appointments are made. Many agencies have been reorganized, often more than once. Sometimes restructuring signals particular leadership priorities. For example, in May 2008, Putin created a new Ministry of Energy, splitting off these functions from those of the Ministry of Industry and Trade. This move reflected the growing importance of this sector to Russia's economy.

Top leaders have also used restructuring to place their clients and allies in key positions. For example, Putin drew heavily on colleagues with whom he worked earlier in St. Petersburg or in the security establishment, referred to as ***siloviki***, in staffing a variety of posts in his administration. **Clientelistic networks** continue to play a key role in both the presidential administration and other state organs. These linkages are similar to "old-boys' networks" in the West; they underscore the importance of personal loyalty and career ties between individuals as they rise in bureaucratic or political structures. While instituting a merit-based civil service system has been a state goal, it has not yet been achieved in reality. The Russian state bureaucracy continues to suffer low levels of public respect and continuing problems with corruption.

siloviki

Derived from the Russian word *sila*, meaning "force," this refers to Russian politicians and governmental officials drawn from the security and intelligence agencies, special forces, or the military, many of whom were recruited to important political posts under Vladimir Putin.

clientelistic networks

Informal systems of asymmetrical power in which a powerful patron (e.g., the president, prime minister, or governor) offers less powerful clients resources, benefits, or career advantages in return for support, loyalty, or services.

PROFILES

Vladimir Putin

President Vladimir Putin (right) with Prime Minister (and former president) Dmitry Medvedev (left).

AP Images/ITAR-TASS, Presidential Press Service, Vladimir Rodionov

Vladimir Putin is no doubt the most powerful person in Russia. He has enjoyed a consistently high level of public support since his first election as president in March 2000, but he is also reviled by his critics for moving Russia in an authoritarian direction. For many ordinary Russians, Putin represents a reassertion of Russia's potential after painful years of economic decline and loss of international stature in the 1990s. Projecting an image of masculine prowess, Putin has been captured in numerous alluring poses that contribute to his image of strength, for example while executing impressive judo moves, driving a three-wheeled Harley Davidson, and fishing topless in one of Russia's far-flung regions.

Putin was born in October 1952 in what is now St. Petersburg, Russia's second largest city. In the Soviet period, Putin pursued a career in the security services (the KGB), in East Germany, where he remained until 1990 when the communist state there collapsed. While in political office, Putin has drawn many of his staff from the security forces.

Upon returning to his home city of St. Petersburg in 1990, Putin became involved in municipal government before moving to take up a political post in Moscow in 1996. In 1999, Russian president Boris Yeltsin appointed Putin prime minister; shortly afterwards Putin became acting president when Yeltsin resigned from the post for health reasons. In 2000 and 2004 Putin won the presidential election with 56.7 and 71 percent of the vote, respectively. Since the constitution limits the president to two consecutive terms, Putin hand-picked Dmitry Medvedev as the presidential candidate to succeed him for a four-year term from 2008 until 2012. In September 2011, Putin and Medvedev announced that Putin, with Medvedev's support, would again seek the presidency in 2012. While parts of the Russian public did not react well to this preplanned "leadership swap," Putin was again elected president, this time for a six-year term, winning 63.6 percent of the vote.

Putin's domestic public approval rating has remained above 60 percent since the 2012 election, rising to around 80 percent since April 2014 following the Russian annexation of Crimea. Some consider Putin to be a master tactician, who has managed to achieve a pragmatic mix of control and flexibility, weaving a political narrative that is contentious but persuasive to large parts of his domestic audience.

MAKING CONNECTIONS Why is Putin so popular with large parts of the Russian population?

Efforts to reduce the size of the state bureaucracy during Putin's terms of office have had mixed results, with some reduction evident since 2008, following previous increases. In December 2010, as an apparent cost cutting measure, Medvedev issued a presidential decree mandating further cuts in the size of the federal bureaucracy, which apparently led to some further reductions until 2013, but subsequent data make the results hard to assess. However, it appears that the size of Russia's federal bureaucracy is not excessive on a comparative basis.[10]

Public and Semipublic Institutions

In limited sectors of the economy, partial or complete state ownership has remained intact or even been restored after earlier privatization was carried out. Public or quasi-public ownership may take the form of direct state or municipal ownership of assets or majority control of shares in a "privatized" firm. Economic sectors more likely to involve public or semipublic ownership include telecommunications (the nonmobile telephone industry in particular), public transport (railways, municipal transport), the electronic media (television), and the energy sector. Prime examples from the energy sector are Gazprom, a giant natural gas company, and Rosneft, an oil company, in which the federal government, directly or indirectly, controls just over 50 percent of

the shares. Several television channels are publicly owned. Indirect state influence is also realized through the dominant ownership share in many regional TV channels by Gazprom-Media, a subsidiary of the state-controlled natural gas company.

In other areas, such as education and health care, while some private facilities and institutions have emerged in recent years, these services are still primarily provided through tax-supported agencies. Some prestigious new private universities, often with Western economic support, have cropped up in major urban areas, but Russia's large historic universities remain public institutions. Likewise, a state-run medical care system assures basic care to all citizens, although private clinics and hospitals are increasingly servicing the more affluent parts of the population. In public transport, smaller private companies that provide shuttle and bus services have grown up alongside publicly owned transport networks. In general, public or semipublic agencies offer services at a lower price, but often also with lower quality.

Significant parts of the social infrastructure remain under public or semipublic control. In the Soviet period, many social services were administered to citizens through the workplace. These services included daycare, housing, medical care, and vacation facilities, as well as food services and some retail outlets. During the 1990s a process of divestiture resulted in the transfer of most of these assets and responsibilities to other institutions, either to private owners or, often, to municipalities. For example, while many state- or enterprise-owned apartments were turned over to private ownership by their occupants, an important part of the country's housing stock was placed in municipal ownership.

Political authorities, including the president, are responsible for appointing executive officials in many public and semipublic institutions. This situation indicates a continuing close relationship between major economic institutions and the state, likely to remain in the future due to the Russian tradition of a strong state and also due to the dismal economic results associated with privatization in the 1990s. Indicative of this trend, the overall share of GDP created in the nonstate sector increased from 5 percent in 1991 to 70 percent in 1997, then fell from 70 percent in 1997 down to 65 percent during 2005 to 2006.[11]

Other State Institutions

The Judiciary

Concepts such as judicial independence and the rule of law were poorly understood in both pre-revolutionary Russia and the Soviet era. These concepts have, however, been embedded in the new Russian constitution and are, in principle, accepted both by the public and political elites. However, their implementation has been difficult and not wholly successful.

A Constitutional Court was formed in 1991. Its decisions were binding, and in several cases even the president had to bow to its authority. After several controversial decisions, Yeltsin suspended the operations of the court in late 1993. However, the 1993 Russian constitution provided for a Constitutional Court again, with the power to adjudicate disputes on the constitutionality of federal and regional laws, as well as jurisdictional disputes between various political institutions.

Judges are nominated by the president and approved by the Federation Council, a procedure that produced a political stalemate after the new constitution was adopted, so that the new court became functional only in 1995. Since 1995, the court has established itself as a vehicle for resolving conflicts involving the protection of individual rights and conformity of regional laws with constitutional requirements.

The court has, however, been cautious in confronting the executive branch, and questions have been raised not only by critics but also by some justices themselves about the independence of the court from presidential influence.

Alongside the Constitutional Court is an extensive system of lower and appellate courts, with the Supreme Court at the pinnacle. These courts hear ordinary civil and criminal cases. In 1995, a system of commercial courts was also formed to hear cases dealing with issues related to privatization, taxes, and other commercial activities. The Federation Council must approve nominees for Supreme Court judgeships, and the constitution also grants the president power to appoint judges at other levels. Measures to shield judges from political pressures include criminal prosecution for attempting to influence a judge, protections from arbitrary dismissal, and improved salaries for judges. One innovation in the legal system has been the introduction of jury trials for some types of criminal offenses.

Subnational Governments

The collapse of the Soviet Union was precipitated by the demands of some union republics for more autonomy within the Soviet federal system, and then for independence. After the Russian Federation became an independent state, the problem of constructing a viable federal structure resurfaced within Russia itself. (See the box feature, "The US Connection".) Some of Russia's sub-national units, especially those that had a distinct ethnic population, were very assertive in putting forth claims for autonomy or even sovereignty within the newly independent Russian Federation. The most extreme example is Muslim-majority Chechnya, whose demand for independence led to a protracted civil war. The ethnic dimension complicates political relations with some other republics as well, particularly Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, which occupy relatively large territories in the center of the country and are of Islamic cultural background.

power vertical

A term used by Vladimir Putin to describe a unified and hierarchical structure of executive power ranging from the national to the local level.

Putin's most controversial initiatives relating to Russia's regions were part of his attempt to strengthen what he termed the **power vertical**. This concept refers to an integrated structure of executive power from the presidential level down through to the local level. Critics have questioned whether this idea is consistent with federal principles, and others see it as undermining Russia's fledgling democratic system. A first step in creating the power vertical was the creation of seven, now nine, federal districts on top of the existing federal units. Although not designed to replace regional governments, the districts were intended to oversee the work of federal offices operating in these regions and to ensure compliance with federal laws and the constitution.

A second set of changes to create the power vertical involved a weakening of the independence of governors and republic heads (hereafter called governors). Beginning in 1996, the governors, along with the heads of each regional legislative body, sat as members of the upper house of the Russian parliament, the Federation Council. This arrangement gave the governors a direct voice in national legislative discussions and a presence in Moscow. In 2001, Putin gained approval for a revision to the composition of the Federation Council, removing regional executives. The State Council was formed to try to assure the governors that they would retain some role in the federal policy-making arena.

Following the Beslan terrorist attack in 2004, Putin identified corruption and ineffective leadership at the regional level as culprits in allowing terrorists to carry out the devastating school hostage taking. Accordingly, Putin proposed an additional reform that created the decisive element of central control over regional politics. This change eliminated the popular election of governors; rather, the president nominated them for approval by the regional legislature. The president's nominees were approved by the regional legislature in every case, usually with an overwhelming

U.S. CONNECTION

Federalism Compared

Russia is a *federal system* according to its constitution. This means that, at least in theory, powers are divided between the central government and Russia's constituent units. Russia claims to have eighty-five regions, including two regions in Crimea (Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol), forcibly annexed from Ukraine in March 2014. However, most Western countries do not recognize the validity of the annexation.

In comparison to the U.S. federal system, the Russian structure seems complicated. Russia's federal units include twenty-one republics, (twenty-two including the Republic of Crimea), forty-nine *oblasts* (regions), six *krais* (territories), one autonomous republic, four autonomous *okrugs* and two cities of federal status (Moscow and St. Petersburg, or three with Sevastopol). Russia's size and multiethnic population underlie this complexity. Because many ethnic groups are regionally concentrated in Russia, unlike in the U.S., these groups form the basis for some federal units.

In the 1990s, Russia's federal government had difficulty controlling what happened in the regions. Regional laws sometimes deviated from federal law. Bilateral treaties with the federal government granted some regional governments special privileges. During his term as president, Vladimir Putin put measures in place to ensure a greater degree of legal and political uniformity throughout the country.

Russia's federal units are represented in the upper house of the national legislature, the Federation Council. Just as the U.S. Senate includes two representatives from each state, in Russia each region also has two delegates in this body; however, their method of selection has varied over time. In 1993, they were elected directly. From the mid-1990s, the governor and the head of each regional legislature themselves sat on the Federation Council. Now the members of the Federation Council are appointed, one by the region's governor and the other by the region's legislature.

Russia's federal units depend on funding from the central government to carry out many of their functions, especially regarding social welfare. Other informal mechanisms, such as use of political patronage through the dominant United Russia party, reduce the independence of the regional executives. Although Russia does have a constitutional court to resolve disputes over the jurisdictions of the federal government and the regions, unlike in the U.S. the constitution does not provide a strong basis for regional power, since it places many powers in the hands of the central government while most others are considered "shared" jurisdictions.

MAKING CONNECTIONS Have centralizing measures in Russia undermined the federal nature of Russia's political system?

majority or even unanimously. Following the public protests against alleged fraud in the 2011 and 2012 national elections, Medvedev proposed legislation reinstating gubernatorial elections, but with a "municipal filter" that requires a candidate's nomination to be supported by a certain number of local deputies or officials. Elections held since October 2012, under this law, have resulted in victories for the candidates of the dominant party, United Russia, in almost all cases. This outcome reflects restrictive features of the new law, informal mechanisms of influence exercised by the incumbent, and the failure of opposition forces to unite in support of viable candidates.

The distribution of tax revenues among the various levels of government has been another contentious issue. The Soviet state pursued a considerable degree of regional equalization, but regional differences have increased in the Russian Federation. Putin created a more regularized system for determining the distribution of revenues, taking account of both the regional tax base and differences in the needs of various regions (for instance, northern regions have higher expenses to maintain basic services). However, in fact, an increasing proportion of tax revenues are now controlled by Moscow, and regional governments are constantly faced with shortfalls in carrying out their major responsibilities, for example, in social policy. Economic disparities between rich and poor regions have reached dramatic proportions, with Moscow and areas abundant in natural resources being the best off. Transfers from the federal budget to regions reduce these disparities to a limited degree.

The Military and Security Organs

Because of Vladimir Putin's career background in the KGB, he drew many of his staff from this arena. Thus, while the formal status of the Federal Security Service (the successor to the KGB) has not changed, the security establishment has acquired increasing importance under Putin. A justification for the increasing role for security forces was a series of terrorist attacks, with targets including apartment buildings, schools, a popular Moscow theatre, public transport, and a Moscow airport. Attacks in Russia initially had indigenous roots in the separatist region of Chechnya, as terrorism was used by Chechen militants to counter Russian military efforts to defeat separatist forces. Over time, linkages between Russian terrorist groups and international Islamic fundamentalist organizations have become increasingly important.

Because many Russians are alarmed by the crime rate and terrorist bombings in the country, restrictions on civil liberties justified as guarding against the terrorist threat have not elicited strong popular concern. At the same time, there is widespread public cynicism about the honesty of the ordinary police. Many believe that payoffs can buy police cooperation in overlooking crimes or ordinary legal infractions such as traffic tickets.

The Soviet military once ranked second only to that of the United States. Russian defense spending declined in the 1990s, then increased again after 2000, but is still below Soviet levels. In 2016, military spending represented about 5.3 percent of GDP, the highest level in the post-Soviet period. This compares to 3.3 percent for the United States and 1.9 percent for China.[12] The Soviet and Russian military have never usurped civilian power. The communist party controlled military appointments and, during the August 1991 coup attempt, troops remained loyal to Yeltsin and Gorbachev, even though the Minister of Defense was among the coup plotters. Likewise, in October 1993, despite some apparent hesitancy in military circles, military units defended the government's position, this time firing on civilian protesters and shocking the country.

The political power and prestige of the military suffered as a result of its failure to deal effectively with Chechnya, however in recent years, public confidence in the ability of the Russian military to protect the nation has increased.[13] The Russian Federation still maintains universal male conscription, but noncompliance and draftees rejected for health reasons have been persistent problems. In 2008, mandatory service was reduced from two years to one year; women have never been subject to the military draft. A law to permit alternative military service for conscientious objectors took effect in 2004. The Defense Minister has indicated that a military draft will remain necessary, alongside a professional army. In 2014, sporadic criticism surfaced from relatives of soldiers suspected of being secretly sent to Ukraine and killed.

High crime rates indicate a low capacity of the state to provide legal security to its citizens. Thus, in addition to state security agencies, sometimes businesses and individuals turn to private security firms to provide protection. A network of intrigue and hidden relationships can make it hard to determine the boundaries of state involvement in the security sector, and the government's inability to enforce laws or to apprehend violators may create an impression of state involvement even where there may be none. A prominent example is the case of a former agent of the Russian Federal Security Service, Alexander Litvinenko, an outspoken critic of the Russian government, who took political asylum in the United Kingdom. In November 2006, Litvinenko was fatally poisoned in London with a rare radioactive isotope. On his deathbed, Litvinenko accused the Kremlin of being responsible for

his death, an undocumented accusation. The United Kingdom's efforts to extradite Andrei Lugovoi, an ex-KGB agent and Russian politician, to stand trial for the murder were refused by the Russian government, citing a constitutional prohibition. The issue sparked tension between the two countries, including expulsion of diplomats on both sides. These kinds of incidents have generated an atmosphere reminiscent of Cold War spy novels.

The Policy-Making Process

Policy-making in Russia occurs both formally and informally. According to the constitution, the federal government, the president and his administration, regional legislatures, individual deputies, and some judicial bodies may propose legislation. In the Yeltsin era, conflict between the president and State Duma made policy-making contentious and fractious; under Putin and Medvedev, the State Duma has generally gone along with proposals made by the president and the government, and the proportion of legislation initiated by the executive branch has increased significantly.

In order for a bill to become law, it must be approved by both houses of the parliament in three readings and signed by the president. If the president vetoes the bill, it must be passed again in the same wording by a two-thirds majority of both houses in order to override the veto. Many policy proclamations have been made through presidential or governmental decrees, without formal consultation with the legislative branch. This decision-making process is much less visible and may involve closed-door bargaining rather than an open process of debate and consultation.

Informal groupings also have an important indirect impact on policy-making. During the Yeltsin period, business magnates were able to exert behind-the-scenes influence to gain benefits from the privatization of lucrative firms in sectors such as oil, media, and transport. Putin has attempted to reduce the direct political influence of these powerful economic figures, but at the cost of also reducing political competition.

A continuing problem is weak policy implementation. Under communist rule, the party's control over political appointments enforced at least some degree of conformity to central mandates. Under Yeltsin, fragmented and decentralized political power gave the executive branch few resources to ensure compliance. Pervasive corruption, including bribery and selective enforcement, hindered enforcement of policy decisions. Although Putin and Medvedev both have stated their commitment to restrict these types of irregularities, they continue to persist. However, the commitment to reestablishing order and a rule of law has been an important justification for the centralization of power.

Where Do You Stand?

Do you think a strong presidency, such as exists in Russia, is compatible with democracy? If the public supports such an arrangement, does that itself give it democratic legitimacy?

In a country as wide and diverse as Russia, is federalism a good idea, or is it likely to increase the risk of separatism and disunity?

SECTION 4

REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION

Focus Questions

- To what extent are elections and political parties effective tools for holding leaders accountable in Russia?
- What kinds of social movements have emerged in Russia and what influence do they have?

As the last leader of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev implemented policies in the 1980s that brought a dramatic change in relations between state and society when *glasnost* sparked new public and private initiatives. Most restrictions on the formation of social organizations were lifted, and a large number of independent groups appeared. Hopes rose for the emergence of **civil society**. However, in post-Soviet Russia, only a small stratum of Russian society has been actively engaged; the demands of everyday life, cynicism about politics, and increasing controls on political opposition have led many people to withdraw into private life. Following a spike in public protests between 2011 and 2012, citizen engagement again decreased. However, a new outburst of protest against government corruption erupted in March 2017, with high youth participation. This raised questions about possibilities for renewed activism in the lead up to the presidential election, scheduled for 2018.

civil society

A term that refers to the space occupied by voluntary associations outside the state, for example, professional associations, trade unions, and student groups.

mixed electoral system

A system of electoral representation in which a portion of the seats are selected in winner-take-all single-member districts, and a portion are allocated according to parties within multimember constituencies, roughly in proportion to the votes each party receives in a popular election.

The Legislature

The Federal Assembly came into being after the parliamentary elections of December 12, 1993, when the referendum ratifying the new Russian constitution was also approved. The upper house, the Federation Council, represents Russia's constituent federal units. The lower house, the State Duma (hereafter the Duma), has 450 members and involves a **mixed electoral system**.

Within the Duma, factions unite deputies from the same party. The most recent Duma elections, in September 2016, resulted in four party factions gaining representation; 343 of 449 deputies (76.4 percent) were in the faction of the dominant party, United Russia, compared to 53 percent previously. The remaining representation was made up of forty-two Communist Party of the Russian Federation deputies, thirty-nine Liberal Democratic Party of Russia deputies, and twenty-three deputies from A Just Russia. Two deputies were unaffiliated. Compared to the communist period, deputies reflect less fully the demographic characteristics of the population. For example, in 1984, 33 percent were women, but only 16 percent in early 2017. The underrepresentation of women, as well as of workers, in the present Duma indicates the extent to which Russian politics is primarily the domain of male elites.

The upper house of the Federal Assembly, the Federation Council, has two members from each of Russia's federal regions and republics, for a total of 170 members This includes many prominent businessmen; in some cases, the posts may be granted in exchange for political loyalty. Party factions do not play a significant role in the Federation Council. Deputies to the Federation Council, as well as to the Duma, are granted immunity from criminal prosecution.

The constitution grants the Federal Assembly powers in the legislative and budgetary arenas, but if there is conflict with the president or government, these powers can be exercised effectively only if the legislative branch operates with a high degree of unity. In practice, the president can often override or bypass the legislature through the veto of legislation or use of decrees. Each house of parliament has the authority to confirm certain presidential appointees. The Federation Council must

also approve presidential decrees relating to martial law and state emergencies, as well as to deploying troops abroad.

Following electoral rebuffs in the 1993 and 1995 legislative elections, Yeltsin confronted a body that obstructed many of his proposed policies; but the legislature did not have the power or unity to offer a constructive alternative. Since 2003, however, the Duma has cooperated with the president, since a majority of the deputies have been tied to the United Russia faction, closest to the president, and deputies from other parties have also often supported the president's initiatives. In general, the process of gaining Duma acceptance of government proposals has depended more on the authority of the president than on the presence of disciplined party accountability such as exists in some European countries.

Society's ability to affect particular policy decisions through the legislative process is minimal. Political parties are isolated from the public at large, suffer low levels of popular respect, and the internal decision-making structures of parties are generally elite-dominated.

Political Parties and the Party System

One of the most important political changes following the collapse of communism was the shift from a single-party to a multiparty system. In the USSR, the Communist Party (CPSU) not only dominated state organs but also oversaw social institutions, such as the mass media, trade unions, youth groups, educational institutions, and professional associations. It defined the official ideology for the country and ensured that loyal supporters occupied all important offices. Approximately 10 percent of adults in the Soviet Union were party members, but there were no effective mechanisms to ensure accountability of the party leadership to its members.

As part of Gorbachev's reforms, national competitive elections were held in 1989, but new political parties were not formal participants until 1993. Since then, a confusing array of political organizations has emerged. For the December 2011 Duma elections, seven parties met conditions of legal registration. A change in the law governing political parties was adopted as a concession to popular protests after those elections; this change loosened requirements for party registration. In the 2016 Duma elections, 22 parties took part, resulting in a fragmentation of opposition to United Russia.

In the 1990s, many parties formed around prominent individuals, making politics very personalistic. Most parties were newly established, so deeply rooted political identifications have not been built easily or quickly. Also, many citizens do not have a clear conception of how parties might represent their interests. Image making is often as important as programmatic positions, so parties appeal to transient voter sentiments. Nonetheless, there has been a relative stabilization of competition among major contenders in the most recent decade.

While individual leaders play an important role in political life in Russia, some key issues have divided opinions in the post-1991 period. One such issue is economic policy. Nearly all political parties have mouthed support for creation of a market economy. However, communist and socialist parties have argued for a stronger state role in providing social protection for vulnerable parts of the population. The liberal parties, on the other hand, have advocated more rapid market reform, while United Russia charts a middle ground, appealing to voters from a wide ideological spectrum.

Another dividing line relates to national identity. Nationalist parties emphasize the defense of Russian interests: a strong military establishment and protection from foreign economic influence. Liberal parties, on the other hand, have favored adoption

of Western economic and political principles, but they have lost public support and are no longer represented in the Duma. Despite its name, the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia is an ultra-conservative nationalist organization.

The United Russia party has articulated an intriguing combination of these viewpoints. Although traditionally identifying Europe as the primary identity point for Russia, more recently the party's leaders have advocated Russia's pursuit of its own unique path of development, based in a conservative interpretation of European values and emphasizing Russia's role as a bridge between Europe and Asia.

Because nationalist sentiments cut across economic ideologies, Russian political parties do not fit neatly on a left–right spectrum, but produce the following tendencies:

- The traditional left, critical of market reform and often mildly nationalistic
- Centrist "parties of power"
- Nationalistic forces, primarily concerned with identity issues, patriotism, and national self-assertion
- Liberal forces, supporting Western-type reforms and values

The most important parties in the first three groupings have been able to work within the existing structure of power. Since 2000, liberal parties have lost influence in mainstream political institutions, with key figures emerging as prominent oppositionists outside of the legislative party system. Of the four parties represented in the State Duma, two are centrist (United Russia and A Just Russia), one is traditional leftist (the Communist Party of the Russian Federation), and a fourth (Liberal Democratic Party of Russia) is nationalist.

The Dominant Party: United Russia

dominant party

A political party that manages to maintain consistent control of a political system through formal and informal mechanisms of power, with or without strong support from the population.

Since 2003, United Russia has clearly been the **dominant party** in Russian politics. Its predecessor, the Unity Party, rose to prominence, together with Vladimir Putin, in the elections of 1999 and 2000. United Russia's vote total rose from 23.3 percent in the 1999 Duma elections up to 64 percent in 2007. In 2016, the party got 54.2 percent of the Duma party vote, and its membership was over 2 million.[14] In April 2008, at a party congress, United Russia's delegates unanimously approved creation of a custom-made post for Vladimir Putin as party chairman, but with his return to the presidency in 2012, Dmitry Medvedev, who became prime minister, took over that position, keeping the presidency formally distinct from the party leadership. In fact, United Russia has served as a major source of political support for Putin. (See Table 13.2.)

What explains United Russia's success? An important factor is the association with Putin, but the party has also built a political machine to generate persuasive incentives for regional elites. The party is focused on winning to its side prominent people, including heads of Russia's regions, who then use their influence to further bolster the party's votes. The party program emphasizes the uniqueness of the Russian approach to governance, a strong state role within a market economy, improvement in socio-economic conditions for the population, law and order, and conservative social values. An important question is to what degree the party would be able to maintain its dominant role without Vladimir Putin in power.

Other Parties Represented in the State Duma

Many consider the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) to be the only party in the Duma that could be a real opposition force. The CPRF was by far the strongest parliamentary party after the 1995 elections, winning over one-third

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Campaign poster of the dominant political party in Russia, United Russia.

of the Duma seats. Its strength declined, however, to just 11.6 percent of the Duma vote in 2007, before rising slightly to 13.4 percent in the 2016 elections. The party defines its goals as democracy, justice, equality, patriotism and internationalism, a combination of civic rights and duties, and socialist renewal. Primary among the party's concerns are the social costs of the market reform process.

The CPRF represents people who have adapted less successfully to the radical changes of recent years, as well as some individuals committed to socialist ideals. Support is especially strong among older Russians, the economically disadvantaged, and rural residents. The party has failed to adapt its public position to attract significant numbers of new adherents, particularly among the young, and its leader since the early 1990s, Gennady Zyuganov (now in his 70s), has not been able to give the party an attractive new face. Although one might expect Russia to offer fertile ground for social democratic sentiments like those that are evident in the Scandinavian countries of Western Europe, the CPRF has neither expanded its base of support, nor has it made room for a new social democratic party that could be more successful.

Two other parties are represented in the State Duma. Like the CPRF, the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) has won seats in every election since 1993. The LDPR is neither liberal nor particularly democratic; as noted above, it is conservative, nationalist, and populist. Its leadership openly appeals to anti-Western sentiments, which are now closer to the mainstream position since the eruption of the Ukraine crisis in 2014 and the imposition of sanctions on Russia by the United States and the EU. Concern with the breakdown of law and order seems to rank high among

Table 13.2 Election Results and Seats in the Russian State Duma, 2007–2017 (in percent)

Party	Percent of 2007 Party List Vote*	Percent of Party List Vote 2011*	Percent of Party List Vote 2016*	Percent of Duma Seats, March 2017*	Current Party Leader
Centrist					
United Russia	64.3	49.3	54.2	76.4	Dmitri Medvedev (since 2012) Vladimir Putin (2007–2012)
A Just Russia	7.7	13.3	6.2	5.1	Sergey Mironov
Communist					
Communist Party of the Russian Federation	11.6	19.2	13.3	9.4	Gennady Zyuganov
Communists of Russia (formed 2012)			2.3	0	Maksim Suraikin
Nationalist					
Liberal Democratic Party of Russia	8.1	11.7	13.1	8.7	Vladimir Zhirinovksy
Patriots of Russia	0.9	1.0	.6	0	Gennady Semigin
Liberal					
Yabloko	1.6	3.4	2.0	0	Sergey Mitrokhin

*Column percentages may not add up to 100 percent because some smaller parties are not listed or due to rounding.

its priorities. The party's leader, Vladimir Zhirinovsky, has garnered support among working-class men and military personnel. However, most often this party has not challenged the political establishment on important issues.

Finally, A Just Russia, founded in 2006, espouses moderate support for socialist principles, placing it to the left of United Russia on the political spectrum and offering a political magnet for dissatisfied supporters of the CPRF. Many observers consider that A Just Russia was formed with the Kremlin's support to demonstrate the competitive nature of Russia's electoral system, while undermining opposition parties that might pose a real threat to United Russia. In highly exceptional cases, A Just Russia has been able to win mayoral elections in smaller cities; however, the party does not pose a real challenge to the political establishment and has generally supported the president and government.

While these three parties, singly or combined, cannot challenge the power of United Russia, they have on occasion issued protests over what they consider to be unfair electoral procedures. For example, in October 2009, deputies from all three factions abandoned a session of the Duma as a sign of protest against the results of regional elections, accusing United Russia of infringement of proper electoral procedures and demanding that the results be nullified. After consultations with the president, the demands were withdrawn.

Western-Oriented Liberal Parties and Kremlin Critics: Marginalized

The liberal/reform parties have become marginalized since 2003, when they won a handful of seats in the Duma. Prominent figures, such as Boris Nemstov and Grigory Yavlinksy, were influential advocates of reform policies in the 1990s, but they have not been able to build a stable and unified electoral base since. These groups have organized under a variety of transient party names since 1993, including the Union of Rightist Forces, Democratic Choice, and, most recently, Just Cause. The Yabloko party (formed by Yavlinksy) has endured throughout the entire period, but last won seats on the Duma's party list ballot in 2004; in the 2016 elections it won only 2% of the vote, putting it below the threshhold for representation. The liberal/reform parties have espoused a commitment to traditional liberal values, such as a limited economic role for the state, free-market principles, and the protection of individual rights and liberties. Many Russians hold their policies, such as rapid privatization and associated price increases, as responsible for Russia's economic decline in the 1990s. Their support has generally has been stronger among the young, the more highly educated, urban dwellers, and the well-off. Thus, ironically, those with the best prospects for succeeding in the new market economy have been the least successful in fashioning an effective political party to represent themselves.

In recent years, Boris Nemstov emerged as an outspoken critic of Putin's leadership, helping to organize protest marches and issuing reports revealing corruption and, most recently, providing evidence of Russian support for separatist fighters in eastern Ukraine. In February 2015, Nemtsov was assassinated on a street in central Moscow. Based on the official investigation, five Chechen men were placed on trial for the murder, but speculation about who was behind this and other political murders (such as the death of former Duma deputy and Kremlin critic Dennis Voronenkov, in Kiev in March 2017) has been rife.

Kremlin critics have continued to try to gain support through the electoral process. Mikhail Prokhorov, a Russian businessman and billionaire owner of the Brooklyn Nets basketball team, won support from a part of the liberal electorate in his bid for the presidency in 2012 (winning about 8 percent of the vote). He

SERGEI SUPINSKY/Getty Images

Memorial to opposition figure, Boris Nemstov.

subsequently formed the party Civic Platform, which won less than 1 percent (.22 percent) of the Duma party list vote in 2016. The attempt of Alexei Navalny, another opposition figure (although not in the liberal camp), to gain inclusion of his newly created Progress Party in the 2016 Duma elections was denied, on technical grounds.

Elections

Under the Russian constitution, presidential elections were initially held every four years, but beginning with the 2012 election the term is six years; the Duma mandate was extended from four to five years. Turnout in federal elections remains respectable, but declining. It stood at 60 percent in the 2011 Duma election, dropping to about 48 percent in 2016. Turnout in the presidential vote, although somewhat higher than in Duma elections, fell from about 70 percent in 2008 to close to 65 percent in 2012. Particularly for presidential votes, the political leadership has actively encouraged voter turnout, to give elections an appearance of legitimacy. From 1991 until 2003, national elections were generally considered to be reasonably fair and free. Since then, international observers have expressed serious concerns about electoral fairness, pointing to slanted media coverage as well as electoral irregularities.

Until 2007, the electoral system for selecting the Duma combined proportional representation (with a 5 percent threshold) with winner-take-all districts (somewhat similar to the German system for Bundestag elections). In addition, voters were given the explicit option of voting against all candidates or parties; 4.7 percent chose this in 2003. In an interlude from 2007 until 2014, the single-member districts were abolished, so that all 450 deputies were elected on the basis of one national proportional representation district, with a minimum threshold for party representation raised to 7 percent.

In February 2014, the electoral system was revised again, returning to a system similar to that in place prior to 2007; however, there are some additional requirements for registration of candidates in the winner-take-all contests. Parties are required to include regional representatives on their lists from across the country. A 2001 law on political parties created difficult thresholds for party participation in elections, but these were relaxed in April 2012, so that now only 500 members are needed to register a party, but with branches in half of Russia's federal regions. In 2006, national legislation removed the "against all" option from the ballot; it is now available only in municipal elections.[15]

With the rapid ascent of United Russia since 1999, opposition parties have had difficulty offering an effective challenge to the dominant party. Reasons include genuine popular support for Putin and the failure of the opposition parties to develop appealing programs or field attractive candidates. Media coverage has also strongly favored United Russia and the president. Administrative control measures and selective enforcement of laws have provided pretexts to disqualify opposition forces. In addition, the carrot-and-stick method has wooed regional elites, producing a bandwagon effect that builds on rewards for political loyalty. Russia has yet to experience a real transfer of power from one political grouping to another, which some scholars consider a critical step in consolidating democratic governance.

Political Culture, Citizenship, and Identity

Political culture can be a source of great continuity in the face of radical political upheavals. Some attitudes prevalent in the Soviet period have endured with remarkable tenacity. These include acceptance of strong political leadership and centralized power, as well as a belief in science and technology as key national priorities. When communism collapsed, other aspects of Soviet ideology, such as guaranteed employment, were discredited, and in the early 1990s, the government embraced Western political and economic values. However, over time, many citizens and political leaders have become skeptical of this "imported" culture, which conflicts, in some regards, with traditional civic values such as egalitarianism, collectivism, traditional gender roles, and a broad scope for state activity. During Putin's presidency, the leadership espoused the concept of **sovereign democracy**, emphasizing the importance of adapting democratic principles to the Russian context.

Political culture

Fundamental values, beliefs, and orientations that are held by the population of a country and that can affect the manner in which citizens view their government, participate in politics, or assess policies.

sovereign democracy

A concept of democracy articulated by President Putin's political advisor, Vladimir Surkov, to communicate the idea that democracy in Russia should be adapted to Russian traditions and conditions rather than based on Western models.

In 1989, just over 50 percent of the population of the USSR was ethnically Russian, but now many ethnic minorities reside in other Soviet successor states. According to the 2010 census, Russians now make up 77.7 percent of the population of the Russian Federation. The largest minority group is the Tatars (3.7 percent), a traditionally Muslim group residing primarily in Tatarstan, one of Russia's republics. Other significant minorities are the neighboring Bashkirs (1.1 percent), various indigenous peoples of the Russian north, the many Muslim groups in the northern Caucasus region, and ethnic groups (such as Ukrainians and Armenians) of other former Soviet republics. There are over fifty languages spoken in the Russian Federation, although Russian is clearly the lingua franca. Some 25 million ethnic Russians reside outside of the Russian Federation in other former Soviet republics, which at times has provided a pretext for Russian intervention in regions adjacent to the country, including in Crimea, where nearly 70 percent of the population is ethnically Russian.

Because Russia is a multiethnic state, one important aspect of the state's search for identity relates to what it means to be Russian. The Russian language itself has two distinct words for Russian people: *russkii*, which refers to an ethnicity, and *rossiianin*,

a broader civic concept referring to people of various ethnic backgrounds who make up the Russian citizenry. While the political foundation of the Russian Federation is based on a civic rather than ethnic definition of "Russianness," both anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim sentiments surface in everyday life. In recent years, there have been increasing concerns about the rise of an exclusionary form of Russian nationalism. Official state policy, while explicitly opposing ethnic stereotypes, may, in some cases, have implicitly fed them.

At the same time, Putin has acknowledged the difficulty Russia faces in finding a clear sense of national identity that encompasses the country's diversity. In 2013, Putin appealed to traditional Russian values as a basis of national unity, contrasting this with "Euro-Atlantic countries" that are "denying moral principles and all traditional identities: national, cultural, religious, and even sexual."[16] The Russian Orthodox Church appeals to citizens who are looking to replace the discredited values of the communist system. However, religion has not emerged as a significant basis of political cleavage for ethnic Russians.

Attitudes toward gender relations in Russia largely reflect traditional family values. Women carry the primary responsibility for child care and a certain standard of "femininity" is expected of women both inside and outside the workplace. Feminism is not popular in Russia, as many women consider it inconsistent with traditional notions of femininity or with accepted social roles for women.

At the same time, a number of civil society organizations have sprung up to represent the interests of women. Some of them advocate traditional policies to provide better social support for mothers and families, while others challenge traditional gender roles. A law enacted in 2017 decriminalizes some forms of domestic violence that do not cause serious bodily harm (making them subject only to fines or minor penalties); the law has been sharply criticized abroad and by Russian activists. Equally contentious was a 2013 law that imposes fines for promoting ideas about nontraditional sexual relations to youth. The measure was condemned by human rights advocates inside and outside Russia, and elicited strong international protests in the lead up to the 2014 Olympic Games in Sochi, Russia.

Social class was a major theme of collective identity in the Soviet period. The Bolshevik revolution was justified in the name of the working class, and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union claimed to be a working-class party. Because social class was a major part of the discredited Soviet ideology, in the post-communist period many Russians remain skeptical of claims made by politicians to represent the working class, and trade unions are weakly supported. Even the Communist Party of the Russian Federation does not explicitly identify itself as a working-class party.

Interest Groups, Social Movements, and Protest

After the collapse of the USSR, numerous political and social organizations sprang up, representing the interests of groups such as children, veterans, women, environmental advocates, pensioners, and the disabled. Many observers saw such blossoming activism as the foundation for a fledgling civil society that would nurture the new democratic institutions established after 1991. However, there have been many obstacles to realizing this potential, including inadequate resources and restrictions on their activities.

In January 2006, Putin signed legislation amending laws on public associations and noncommercial organizations. These controversial changes, protested widely by Western governments, created new grounds for denying registration to such

organizations, established additional reporting requirements (particularly for organizations receiving funds from foreign sources), and increased government supervisory functions. The law reflects concern that foreign influence may spur political activism in the country that could challenge stability or the current structure of power.

A 2012 law requires nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that engage in political activity on the basis of foreign financing to register as "foreign agents" and submit to strict reporting requirements, as well as public stigma. Several Russian organizations have refused to comply; some NGOs also filed a complaint with the European Court of Human Rights, including the Levada Center, a leading Russian independent public opinion polling organization, which the government declared to be a foreign agent just before the 2016 Russian Duma elections.

At the same time, the government has attempted to channel public activism through official forums. These have included the Civic Forum, organized with government support in 2001, and more recently, the Public Chamber, created in 2005 by legislation proposed by the president. Based on voluntary participation by presidential appointees and representatives recommended by national and regional societal organizations, these bodies are presented as a mechanism for public consultation and input, as well as a vehicle for creating public support for government policy. This likely involves an effort to co-opt public activists from more disruptive forms of self-expression, and also to mobilize the assistance of citizens' groups in delivering social services.

A variety of mass-based political organizations protest the current political direction of the government, but since 2007 the authorities have periodically tried to restrict the use of public demonstrations and protests. The widespread protests that followed the 2011 Duma elections represented the most dramatic evidence of significant opposition sentiment in major urban centers. On December 10, 2011, an estimated 50,000 protesters participated, followed by equally large demonstrations leading up to the presidential election in March 2012. Just before a planned demonstration on June 12, 2012 (named the "march of millions"), Putin signed a new law that imposed high fines for participating in demonstrations that undermine public order or destroy public property; the homes of leading opposition figures were also searched. The law was used to charge hundreds of protesters in March and June 2017, including the sentencing of anti-corruption activist Alexei Navalny to 15 days detention.

An earlier high prolife protest occurred on February 21, 2012, when an unusual performance occurred in Christ the Savior Church in central Moscow. The female punk rock group known as Pussy Riot displayed what it called a "punk prayer," protesting the Russian Orthodox Church's support for Vladimir Putin in the upcoming presidential election. Formed in 2011, the group's 2012 performance elicited particular objection from the authorities, leading to the arrest and 2-year sentencing of some members for "hooliganism, motivated by religious hatred." The ruling became a cause célèbre, interpreted as symbolic of the Kremlin's lack of tolerance of political opposition.

In December 2013, in a well-publicized move, the Russian State Duma passed an amnesty law, supported by President Putin, widely interpreted as an effort to bolster the government's tarnished human rights reputation in the lead up to the Sochi Winter Olympics the following February. Since then, former members of Pussy Riot have taken up various protest causes including prisoner rights in Russia, using songs and a website called MediaZona to counter the Kremlin "misinformation."

More traditional public organizations also continue to exist in Russia. The official trade unions established under Soviet rule have survived under the title of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions (FITU). However, FITU has lost the confidence of large parts of the workforce. In some sectors, such as the coal industry,

Aleshkovsky Mitya/Newscom/Abaca Press/Moscow/Russia

The feminist rock group, Pussy Riot, undertakes a protest performance in Christ the Saviour Church, Moscow, in February 2012.

new independent trade unions have formed, mainly at the local level. Labor actions have included spontaneous strikes, transport blockages, and even hunger strikes. Immediate concessions are often offered in response to such protests, but the underlying problems are rarely addressed. Protest actions, especially in times of economic downturn, have most often focused on nonpayment of wages or low wage levels. Official statistics indicated overall unpaid wages of 2,725 million rubles (or about US$48 million) at the beginning of 2017,[17] concentrated in construction and manufacturing. However, local protests over such issues seem to be only weakly linked to the national political protests, referred to above.

Unemployment, low wages, and the breakdown in traditional social linkages have also intensified some social problems. Increasing numbers of young women have turned to prostitution to make a living. HIV/AIDS rates are also increasing at a rapid rate, fueled by intravenous drug use, prostitution, and low levels of sexual health information. Alcohol abuse continues to be a cause of premature death, especially among Russian men, which is one reason why the gap between male life expectancy in Russia (65 years) and female life expectancy (77 years) is high compared to almost any country in the world.

The Political Impact of Technology and the Media

In the post-Soviet period, television has been the main source of news and political information for Russian citizens. Article 29 of the Russian constitution guarantees "freedom of the mass media" and prohibits censorship. However, Russia ranked 148th out of 179 countries in 2016 in terms of press freedom, according to *Reporters without Borders*.[18] A 2014 recent survey, by a respected Russian independent public

opinion agency, revealed that 69 percent of respondents acknowledged government censorship in the main Russian TV channels and 77 percent felt that a greater diversity of views in TV media would be desirable. However, suspicion of the media seems to have decreased since 2014 when the Ukraine crisis erupted. In 2016, 35 percent of those polled indicated that TV, radio, and newspaper very or rather often provide obviously false information, compared to 45 percent in 2012.[19] While much of the television coverage is subject to more or less direct influence by the government, some newspapers and independent journalists, as well as Internet sources, do offer a critical perspective on political developments.

As in other countries, Internet usage has increased rapidly in the Russian Federation. In fall 2015, about 67 percent of Russians over age eighteen used the internet at least once a month and about 54 percent daily.[20] However, the major uses of the Internet are social media and entertainment; the Russian corollary of Facebook, called vk.com, is particularly popular with young people. Internet use, as in other countries, is more widespread among the young. Contacts through social media and other Internet sources were important in mobilizing participation in demonstrations surrounding the 2011 and 2012 elections and in March 2017. However, the Internet has not provided a medium for creation of a sustained and unified opposition movement. Furthermore, the state has apparently made effective use of both television and Internet communications to disseminate its interpretations of the news, as well as creating relatively effective e-portals for government services.

The Russian government has also effectively used electronic media to project a positive image abroad through vehicles such as the global TV channel, RT (formerly Russia Today), and its associated Internet site (rt.com). In August 2013, Russian authorities granted asylum to Edward Snowden, for whom the United States sought extradition in connection with his alleged release of classified security documents. Nongovernmental sources in Russia have launched successful cyberattacks; it is often difficult for foreign intelligence agencies to determine whether such attacks are connected to government authorities. Possible Russian state support for the hacking of emails of the U.S. Democratic National Committee, preceding the U.S. presidential election in 2016, was the subject of U.S. congressional and FBI investigations following the election. Russian leaders have rejected any connection with the attacks. Russian hackers were also suspected of being behind a cyberattack against the German national parliament in 2015.

Until recently, government restrictions on domestic Internet usage have been minimal. In early 2014, new legislation created instruments for closer monitoring of bloggers with large followings. Reinforced by a 2016 amendment to previous antiterrorism legislation, Russian law grants security services the authority to access citizens' online activities and requires Internet service providers to facilitate the collection and 6-month storage of email and text messaging. As yet, this capacity has not been utilized in a systematic way to control opposition activities. The Internet still provides the attentive Russian public with access to a broad range of domestic and foreign opinion, even if most citizens do not utilize this opportunity to its full potential.

Where Do You Stand?

Is the Russian government justified in trying to limit the influence of foreign governments or international organizations on Russian domestic politics?

In a country with a history of radical political ruptures, is it reasonable for the government to put limits on opposition protests in the name of stable government?

SECTION 5

RUSSIAN POLITICS IN TRANSITION

Focus Questions

- What types of strategies has Russia pursued in trying to reestablish itself as a regional and global power? How effective have these strategies been?
- What are the main challenges to political stability in Russia?

On March 1, 2014, the Russian Duma authorized President Putin to deploy military forces in Crimea, an autonomous region of the neighboring independent state of Ukraine, justified in order to protect the rights of ethnic Russians residing there. In the preceding days, Crimea had already effectively been brought under Russian military control due to the mobilization of personnel of Russia's Black Sea Fleet based in Crimea under a long-term lease agreement with Ukraine. Russian control of the region was reinforced by the introduction of additional troops. A self-appointed pro-Russian regional government in Crimea held a contested referendum on March 16, with Russia's blessing, proposing that Crimea be annexed to Russia. Russia accepted Crimea into the Russian Federation the same week.

The Russian intervention was in response to a power turnover in Ukraine in late February 2014, which resulted from 3 months of massive popular demonstrations in Ukraine's capital, Kiev, against the incumbent president, Victor Yanukovych. Those protests were triggered by Yanukovych's decision, under heavy Russian pressure, to back away from signing long-awaited free trade and association agreements with the EU. When violence erupted, the crisis culminated in the collapse of Yanukovych's government as he fled Ukraine. Moscow said it was a coup d'état by pro-European Ukrainian political forces. In fact, the new interim Ukrainian government made a sharp turn towards Europe, and presidential elections in May 2014 produced a clear victory for Petro Poroshenko, a pro-Western businessman.

The United States and the EU reacted strongly to Russia's annexation of Crimea, which they said was a violation of Ukraine's territorial sovereignty and a breach of international law. In March 2014, Western governments and the EU instituted sanctions against Russia, not only for the takeover of Crimea, but also because, they claimed, Russia was continuing to foment unrest in eastern Ukraine by covertly encouraging seizures of public buildings by armed separatist forces. Shortly thereafter, Russia implemented counter-sanctions involving a ban on certain food imports from countries that had instituted sanctions against Russia. In February 2015, a compromise to solve the crisis was thrashed out between the leaders of Ukraine, Russia, Germany, and France, called the Minsk II agreement; however, it has not been implemented, with Ukraine and Russia both attributing blame to the other. As of August 2017, Western sanctions against Russia and Russian counter-sanctions remained in place, marking the lowest point in relations between Russia and the West since the end of the Cold War.

Political Challenges and Changing Agendas

Russia's future path continues to remain unclear. While recent years have seen Russia move in an authoritarian direction, some analysts believe that, in the face of economic challenges and continuing high levels of corruption, the current structure of

power is vulnerable. When the first edition of this book was published in 1996, five possible scenarios for Russia's future were presented:

1. A stable progression toward democratization
2. The gradual introduction of "soft authoritarianism"
3. A return to a more extreme authoritarianism of a quasi-fascist or communist variety
4. The disintegration of Russia into regional fiefdoms
5. Economic decline, civil war, and military expansionism

At the time of this writing, the "soft authoritarian" scenario seems to have taken hold; however, there are still significant forces that may move Russia back to a more democratic trajectory. Major questions also linger over Russia's regional and international aspirations in the wake of the 2014 events in Ukraine.

In the international sphere, post-Soviet Russia's flirtation with Westernization in the early 1990s produced ambiguous results, leading to a severe recession and placing Russia in the position of a supplicant state requesting international credits and assistance from the West. Russia's protests against unpalatable international developments, such as NATO enlargement and NATO's bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999 during the Kosovo War, revealed Moscow's underlying resentment against Western dominance, as well as the country's sense of powerlessness in affecting global developments. The events of September 11, 2001, however, provided an impetus for cooperative efforts in the battle against international terrorism, and Russia's economic revival imparted to the country a sense of greater power. Evidence of warmer relations included the formation of a NATO-Russia Council in May 2002. But new tensions arose around the U.S. withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 2002, Russian objections to the U.S. incursion into Iraq in March 2003, U.S. proposals to erect a missile defense system in Central Europe, a 2008 Russian incursion into the neighboring nation of Georgia, Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, and most recently, accusations of Russian meddling in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

One of Russia's main challenges has been to reestablish itself as a respected regional leader, particularly among those states that were formerly part of the Soviet Union. The relationship to Ukraine has been fraught with particular difficulties. Ukraine's own internal political divisions between pro-European and pro-Russian groups have provided Russia with an opportunity to exert political leverage. After the Russian annexation of Crimea in February 2014, Ukraine signed an Association Agreement and comprehensive free trade agreement with the EU, which placed Ukraine more clearly on a Western trajectory. Accordingly, trade with Russia has declined and Ukraine's leaders continue to espouse a desire to join NATO, an objective unlikely to be achieved, but highly offensive to Russia. While the events in Ukraine bolstered the domestic popularity of Vladimir Putin inside Russia, by reigniting a sense of national identity and pride, they also have imposed considerable costs in terms of the rupture with the West, a consequent decline in foreign direct investment and economic ties, and the economic burden associated with integrating Crimea into the Russian Federation.

Russia has struggled to establish itself as a positive role model in the region. Efforts to form regional organizations to strengthen ties between these countries and Russia have taken a variety of forms. The largely ineffective Commonwealth of Independent States, formed in 1991 when the Soviet Union collapsed, was joined later by the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Eurasian Economic Forum, and

the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), including China and the post-Soviet Central Asian states. Each of these organizations included a subset of countries from the former Soviet space as members, but without Ukraine or Georgia. In 2011, Vladimir Putin announced the formation of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), building on the Eurasian Customs Union formed in 2010. Launched in 2015, and initially involving only Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, the Eurasian Economic Union has since acquired two new members—Kyrgyzstan and Armenia. Putin's vision is for the EEU to lead to more comprehensive regional integration, uniting several of the non-EU countries in the post-Soviet space under Russian leadership. However, concerns about Russian dominance create hesitancy both among current and potential member countries.

Driving Russia's self-assertion is a sense of failure in realizing a primary goal of Russian foreign policy in the post-Soviet period, namely achieving the status of an equal partner with the United States and Europe. At the same time, popular attitudes toward Western countries remain ambivalent. (See Table 13.3). Russia has joined a number of international organizations such as the Council of Europe, the International Monetary Fund, the G7 (renamed the G8 when Russia was added) and the World Trade Organization, while inheriting the Soviet Union's permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council. Other achievements include negotiation of a new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty with the United States, which took effect in January 2011. However, the decision of the United States to pursue installation of a missile defense system in Central Europe (in response to a potential Iranian attack) irritated Russia. Compared to U.S.-Russian relations, progress in relations between Russia and the EU was more substantial, with a broad range of negotiating platforms, and movement toward eased visa regulations and enhanced trade; however, this process was largely halted in 2014, when the crisis erupted over Crimea and eastern Ukraine.

Russia remains the most important source of Europe's gas imports. However, experts believe that without increased Western investment and technological know-how, Russia will not be able to develop untapped deposits quickly enough to meet both domestic demands and export commitments. A major agreement regarding future Russian gas exports to China, signed in May 2014, is an indicator of Russia's intention of reducing its dependence on exports to Europe.

The 2008–2009 global financial-economic crisis sent a warning to Russia about the dangers of an economy dependent on energy exports. A sharp drop in gas and oil prices temporarily undercut the foundation of Russia's economic motor. From positive growth rates in the previous ten years, Russia moved to a dramatic fall by the first quarter of 2009. Because energy prices recovered fairly quickly and Russia had reserve funds to fall back on, the crisis did not push Russia back to the disastrous economic situation of the 1990s, but the dramatic shift in economic performance may have reminded both the Russian public and its leaders of the potential fragility of the economic recovery.

In November 2009, President Medvedev published a much-discussed article entitled "Go Russia" in which he called for a modernization program, primarily through the development of high-technology sectors. However, with Putin's return to the presidency in 2012, the modernization program proved to be stillborn. Furthermore, hopes that political liberalization might accompany efforts to diversify the economy were also dashed. The continuing disjuncture between a high level of public support for Putin, alongside a continuing lack of confidence in the ability of government institutions to address the country's problems, suggests that the legitimacy of Russia's political system is still on thin ice. The more positive working relationship between the executive and legislative branches that emerged under the Medvedev-Putin tandem has been at the cost of permitting a real parliamentary opposition to function.

Table 13.3 Russian Attitudes Toward Relations with Foreign Countries

	Jan. 2008	Jan. 2011	Jan. 2014	May 2014	Jan. 2017	Mar. 2017
With the United States						
Very good/good	51.0%	60.0%	43.0%	18.0%	28.0%	37.0%
Negative/very negative	39.0%	27.0%	44.0%	71.0%	56.0%	51.0%
Hard to say	11.0%	13.0%	13.0%	11.0%	16.0%	12.0%
With the EU						
Very good/good	70.0%	69.0%	51.0%	25.0%	40.0%	35.0%
Negative/very negative	17.0%	16.0%	34.0%	60.0%	47.0%	53.0%
Hard to say	13.0%	15.0%	15.0%	15.0%	14.0%	12.0%
With Ukraine						
Very good/good	59.0%	72.0%	65.0%	35.0%	34.0%	33.0%
Negative/very negative	30.0%	19.0%	26.0%	49.0%	54.0%	56.0%
Hard to say	11.0%	9.0%	9.0%	17.0%	13.0%	11.0%

Source: Levada Center, http://www.levada.ru/2017/04/10/rossiya-i-mir-3/. Columns may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Failed efforts to contain corruption, mechanisms to exert control over the newly reinstated gubernatorial elections, and efforts to dissuade political opposition already show signs of producing poor policy choices that may themselves reinforce public cynicism about the motives of politicians and the trustworthiness of institutions.

Despite changes in social consciousness, the formation of new political identities in Russia also remains unfinished business. (See Table 13.4.) Many people are still preoccupied by challenges of everyday life, with little time or energy to engage in new forms of collective action to address underlying problems. Under such circumstances, the appeal to nationalism and other basic sentiments can be powerful. The weakness of Russian intermediary organizations (interest groups, political parties, or citizen associations) means that politicians can more easily appeal directly

Table 13.4 Russian Views of Different Types of Political Systems

	Nov. 1997	Mar. 2000	Mar. 2003	Dec. 2006	Feb. 2008	Feb. 2010	Jan. 2012	Jan. 2014	Jan. 2016
The Soviet one, which we had until the 1990s	38%	42%	48%	35%	24%	34%	29%	39%	37%
The current system	11%	11%	18%	26%	36%	28%	20%	19%	23%
Democracy like Western countries	28%	26%	22%	16%	15%	20%	29%	21%	13%
Other	8%	4%	6%	7%	7%	7%	7%	8%	8%
Hard to say	16%	17%	7%	16%	18%	12%	15%	13%	19%

"What type of political system seems the best to you: The Soviet, the present system, or democracy of the type in Western countries?"

Source: http://www.levada.ru/2016/02/17/predpochtitelnye-modeli-ekonomicheskoj-i-politicheskoj-sistem/. Columns may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

to emotions because people are not members of groups that help them to evaluate the claims made by those in power or seeking power. These conditions reduce safeguards against authoritarian outcomes.

Nevertheless, the high level of education and increasing exposure to international media and the Internet may work in the opposite direction. Many Russians identify their country as part of Europe and its culture, an attitude echoed by the government, despite current tensions. Exposure to alternative political systems and cultures may make people more critical of their own political system and seek opportunities to change it. Russia remains in what seems to be an extended period of transition. In the early 1990s, Russians frequently hoped for "normal conditions," that is, an escape from the shortages, insecurity, and political controls of the past. Now, "normality" has been redefined in less glowing terms than those conceived in the initial post-Soviet period, as some political freedoms have been restricted and economic conditions have fluctuated, the standard of living still lags behind most Western countries, and Russia's relations with the United States and the EU have soured. Russians seem to have a capability to adapt to change and uncertainty that North Americans find at once alluring, puzzling, and disturbing.

Is Demographic Destiny?

Young people in Russia have grown up in political circumstances that differ dramatically from those that affected their parents. Whereas individuals born before 1970 (now middle-aged or older) were socialized during the period of communist rule, Russians between the ages of 18 and 30 had their formative experiences during a period of rapid political change following the collapse of the USSR. Whereas their

elders were drawn into communist youth organizations and influenced by the dominance of a single party-state ideology, young people today are exposed to a wider range of political views, have greater freedom to travel abroad, and also have freer access to international contacts and viewpoints. These tendencies are reinforced even further by increased access to information through the Internet.

Generational experience also affects the ability to adapt. In the Soviet period, the weak material incentives of the socialist system encouraged risk avoidance, low productivity, poor punctuality, absenteeism, lack of personal initiative, and a preference for security over achievement. However, young people in Russia are adapting to a new work environment. They are more flexible, in part due to their age, and also because of differing socialization experiences that have resulted in altered expectations. Consequently, they are more oriented toward maximizing self-interest and demonstrating initiative. Nevertheless, many Russians of all age groups still question values underlying market reform, preferring an economy that is less profit driven and more oriented to equality and the collective good.

Despite generational differences, young people represent a wide range of political views in Russia, as elsewhere. On one side of the spectrum is the controversial youth group, Nashi (Ours), formed in 2005. While Nashi claims to oppose fascism in Russia, some observers see the group as nurturing intolerance and extremist sentiments. Nashi's goals include educating youth in Russian history and values, and forming volunteer groups to help maintain law and order. The group has been highly supportive of Putin, seeing him as a defender of Russia's national sovereignty. On the other end of the spectrum, those who initially participated in anti-government demonstrations in 2011 and 2012, and more recently in March and June 2017, have been disproportionately young; in 2011 and 2012, young activists were, over time, joined by many middle-aged protesters. While support for Putin in the lead-up to the presidential election of 2012 was relatively similar across age groups, those older than 40 were more likely to support the Communist Party, and more young people supported the nonestablishment candidate, Mikhail Prokhorov. These indicators suggest that age does affect political orientations, but not strongly or reliably enough to predict a generational shift in voting patterns and widespread political protest in the foreseeable future.

Demographic factors can also affect Russia's future. Following the collapse of the USSR, birthrates declined, as did the size of the Russian population. Only since 2009 has the population decline been reversed, but the level (144.2 million in 2016, without Crimea) has still not returned to that of 1991 (148.7 million). Only inward migration has prevented a further fall in Russia's overall population. As in other European countries, this demographic pattern can herald future problems for the social security system, as the population ages. By far the largest number of immigrants to Russia have come from former republics of the Soviet Union, especially the Central Asian states and, most recently, Ukraine. Russia has accepted a relatively small number of refugees in recent years, mainly from Afghanistan and Ukraine, but a large number of people have received temporary asylum from Ukraine since 2015 (over 300,000 in 2016) and a smaller number from Syria (about 1,300 in 2016).

Russian Politics in Comparative Perspective

The way in which politics, economics, and ideology were intertwined in the Soviet period has profoundly affected the nature of political change in all of the former Soviet republics and generally has made the democratization process more difficult.

How has Russia fared compared to some of the other post-communist systems that faced many of these same challenges? The countries of Central Europe that were outside the USSR (Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, and Slovakia), as well as the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania), were able to accede to the EU in 2004, with Bulgaria and Romania also joining in 2007; joining the EU produced a strong motivation to embark on fundamental political and economic reform. This illustrates the potentially powerful impact of international forces on domestic political developments, if domestic actors are receptive. These countries were also under communist rule for a shorter period of time. In addition, most had a history of closer ties and greater cultural exposure to Western Europe; ideas of liberalism, private property, and individualism were less foreign to citizens there than in regions farther east, including Russia. Historical legacies and cultural differences do matter.

Russia's experience demonstrates the importance of strong political institutions if democracy is to be secured. Institutional weakness in the 1990s contributed to high levels of social dislocation, corruption, and personal stress, as well as to demographic decline and poor economic adaptation to the market. However, Russia's rich deposits of natural resources have sheltered it from difficulties facing some neighboring countries like Ukraine. However, this natural resource wealth has made it difficult to untangle economic and political power, reducing political accountability to the public. Heavy reliance on income from natural resource exports has also made Russia vulnerable to global economic trends.

In all of the post-Soviet states (except the Baltic states), the attempt to construct democratic political institutions has been characterized by repeated political crises, ineffective representation of popular interests, corruption, and faltering efforts at civil service and administrative reform. In Russia, terrorist attacks persist, reinforcing a sense of insecurity and producing fertile ground for nationalist sentiments and a strong role for the security forces. Nonetheless, with the exception of the Chechnya conflict and its spillover into the neighboring areas in Russia's European south, Russia has escaped major domestic violence and civil war, unlike parts of the former Yugoslavia, Georgia, Moldova, the Central Asian state of Tajikistan, and, most recently, eastern Ukraine.

Will Russia be able to find a place for itself in the world of states that meets the expectations of its educated and sophisticated population? Prospects are still unclear. One thing is certain: Russia will continue to be a key regional force in Europe and Asia by virtue of its size, its rich energy and resource base, its large and highly skilled population, and its nuclear arsenal. However, Russia's leaders have had an ambivalent attitude toward accepting crucial international norms that would underlie an effective and enduring partnership with the West.

If the Russian leadership gradually moves Russia on a path closer to liberal democratic development, then this may provide an example to other semi-authoritarian countries in Russia's neighborhood. But, if the continuation of existing authoritarian trends is associated with renewed economic growth and stability that benefits the majority of the population, then Russia may settle into an extended period of soft authoritarianism that reinforces the East–West divide. And, then there is the possibility that the Russian leadership's insulation from public accountability could generate unpopular and ineffective policy outcomes, or that the continuation of low world energy prices could trigger a further economic downslide. Such a turn of events could stimulate a new process of reflection on Russia's future path and offer an opportunity for democratic forces to reassert themselves and find resonance among the Russian people.

Where Do You Stand?

Is Russia justified in taking strong action to assure that a neighboring country, such as Ukraine, stays within its "sphere of influence"?

Should Western countries make greater efforts to promote liberal democratic opposition groups in Russia?

Chapter Summary

Russian history has been characterized by a series of upheavals and changes that have often made life unpredictable and difficult for the citizen. The revolutions of 1917 replaced czarist rule with a political system dominated by the communist party in the Soviet Union. In the Stalinist period, communist rule involved a process of rapid industrialization, collectivization of agriculture, and purges of the party, followed by large losses of population associated with World War II. With the death of Stalin in 1952 came another important transition, as Soviet politics was transformed into a more predictable system of bureaucratic authoritarianism, characterized by relative stability but without political competition or democratic control. The most recent transition, ushered in by the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, resulted in the emergence of the Russian Federation as an independent state. When the Russian Federation was formed, new political structures needed to be constructed. A constitution was adopted in 1993, which involves a directly elected president with strong political powers.

Russia's political course since 1991 has been profoundly influenced by the fact that the country underwent simultaneous and radical transformations in four spheres: politics, economics, ideology, and geopolitical position in the world. Managing so much change in a short time has been difficult and has produced mixed results. Efforts to democratize the political system have been only partially successful, and experts disagree both about whether the political controls initiated by Putin were needed to ensure stability and under what conditions they might be reversed.

In the economic sphere, after recovering from a period of deep economic decline in the 1990s, Russia's renewed growth depends largely on exports of energy and natural resources, making the country vulnerable to external shocks such as the 2008–2009 global financial crisis and the downturn in world energy prices since 2014. The country faces the challenge of effectively using its natural resource wealth to rebuild other sectors of the economy.

In terms of ideology, nationalism threatens to reinforce intolerance and undermine social unity. Continuing high levels of corruption also undermine popular confidence in state institutions. Whereas most former communist countries that have joined the EU have enjoyed greater success in establishing viable democratic systems with functioning market economies, other post-Soviet states in Eastern Europe and Central Asia face similar challenges to Russia's in consolidating democracy and market reform. Russia has sought to reassert its role as a regional and global force, but a revival of tension with the West in the face of Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea and conflict over Ukraine threatens stability in Russia's neighborhood, which could affect Russia itself.

Key Terms

civil society
clientelistic networks
collectivization
democratic centralism
dominant party
federal system
glasnost
insider privatization
market reform
mixed electoral system
oligarchs
patrimonial state
political culture
power vertical
siloviki
soft authoritarianism
sovereign democracy
vanguard party

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http://www.russialist.org/

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty
http://www.rferl.org/p/5547.html

The Moscow Times
https://themoscowtimes.com/

Center on Global Interests
http://globalinterests.org/

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rt.com