Introduction

> The quality of policing is the quality of ruling.
>
> Otwin Marenin, 1985[1]

> Russia needs strong state power and must have it.
>
> Vladimir Putin, December 1999[2]

The Soviet Union has been characterized as "the world's largest-ever police state."[3] But why is "police state" a pejorative, a synonym for brutal dictatorship? After all, if we expect the state to do anything, policing is surely one of those things. Although policing is a function that can and often is carried out by private actors, all modern states create "an organization authorized by a collectivity to regulate social relations within itself by utilizing, if need be, physical force."[4] Try living in a community of any significant size that does not have an authorized organization capable of policing it, and one will quickly see the virtues of such a force. Anarchists aside, most citizens in the modern world would rather live with police than without them. But the term "police state" resonates because state power, as Max Weber recognized, ultimately rests on the ability to coerce. The behavior of its coercive organizations, such as the military, the police, and the secret police, tells us much about the character of a state, as the Marenin epigraph emphasizes.

The collapse of "the world's largest-ever police state" introduced a period of remarkable political and economic change in Russia. Although the Soviet

[1] Otwin Marenin, "Police Performance and State Rule: Control and Autonomy in the Exercise of Coercion" (Review Article), *Comparative Politics*, 18 (1985), p. 101.

[2] Vladimir Putin, "Rossiya na rubezhe tysyacheletiy," *Nez. Gaz.*, December 30, 1999. A key to abbreviations for newspapers and magazines is in Appendix A.

[3] Stephen Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse 1970–2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 173.

[4] David H. Bayley, "The Police and Political Development in Europe," in Charles Tilly, ed., *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975) p. 328.

collapse is conventionally referred to as peaceful, and by comparative standards perhaps it was, it was not entirely so, with multiple wars and violent conflicts. Moreover, in the view of many Russians, the collapse ushered in not just a period of turmoil and uncertainty, but also a period in which the risk of becoming a victim of crime or violence significantly increased. The need for competent policing was obvious. Russia did indeed need strong state power. Vladimir Putin made building this strong state the central goal of his presidency, and he relied heavily on coercive organizations in this endeavor. Unlike *state formation* in early-modern Europe, in which states emerged unintentionally out of violent struggles for domination and power, *state building* in the contemporary world, including in Russia, is very much an intentional project. The modern European state has become a model for the world.[5]

The goal of building a strong state, however, leaves open the question of what *kind* of state is to be built. The Soviet Union, after all, was a strong state, but most Russian politicians, including Boris Yeltsin and Putin, rejected the goal of building a Soviet-type state. In the programmatic statement cited in the epigraph above, Putin explicitly repudiated a totalitarian state, writing, "strong state power in Russia is a democratic, law-based, capable, federal state." To put it in the terminology used in this book, Putin asserted an intention to build not just a high *capacity* state that can adopt and implement policies, but also a high *quality* one that serves the public interest in an impartial manner.

This book is about Russian state building under Yeltsin and Putin. I am interested in both the degree of stateness and the kind of state that Russia is. To explain the trajectory of state building under Yeltsin and Putin, I distinguish between the capacity and the quality of the state, arguing that these are analytically and empirically separate categories. To make the abstract notion of the state more concrete, I focus on state coercive agencies, especially law enforcement ones, based on a Weberian understanding of the centrality of controlling violence to stateness. I investigate both their role in the state building process and what their behavior tells us about the capacity and quality of the state. Further, states do not just exist in the capital, but throughout the territory of a country. I therefore examine the central, regional, and street-level components of these coercive organizations' activities.

In Russia, state coercive agencies are known as "the power ministries," and officials who come from the power ministries are known as "*siloviki*." The siloviki and their role in Russian politics have been the subject of considerable commentary, especially in Russia but also in the West, but they have received

[5] On this difference between state formation and state building, see, for example: Charles Tilly, "Western State-Making and Theories of Political Transformation," in Tilly 1975, pp. 601–638; Mohammed Ayoob, *The Third World Security Predicament: State Making, Regional Conflict, and the International System* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1995), pp. 21–45; Vadim Volkov, *Violent Entrepreneurs: The Use of Force in the Making of Russian Capitalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), pp. 155–157.

much less sustained academic study. In Chapter 2, I set out three different lenses for thinking about the influence of the siloviki in Russian politics, which I label the cohort, clan, and corporate (organizational) approaches. These different lenses focus on different issues and yield different conclusions both about how united and how powerful the siloviki were under Putin. Overall, the siloviki were an important cohort of officials under Putin, but they were not a united team, and the Federal Security Service (FSB) and the Procuracy were much more politically powerful than the police or the armed forces.

Despite Putin's claim to have restored the Russian state, I conclude that serious deficiencies remained in both the capacity and especially the quality of the state, and in particular its force-wielding organs, at the time he left the presidency in 2008. The coercive capacity of the state did increase in some respects under Putin, most significantly in the rebuilding of a "regime of repression" that was used to weaken actual and potential opponents of the Kremlin, such as the so-called oligarchs and opposition parties and movements. The fiscal capacity of the state also improved under Putin. On the other hand, the ability to accomplish core law enforcement tasks, such as fighting crime and terrorism, was little different under Putin when compared to the Yeltsin era, although the situation improved in Putin's final years as president. Finally, no progress was made in the key state function of securing property rights. I explain this mixed performance by distinguishing between "routine" and "exceptional" law enforcement tasks. Routine ones are those that are the core functions of an organization as set out in laws and regulations, whereas exceptional ones are set by superiors but are extralegal or even illegal. Examples include allowing some organizations to hold street rallies while prohibiting others based on the political tendencies of the groups, or investigating some cases of tax evasion while ignoring others based on a person's standing with the authorities. Russian law enforcement agencies were much better at implementing exceptional tasks than the routine ones established by law.

A key piece of Putin's state building strategy was to strengthen the central government vis-à-vis Russia's regions. His first major reform as president was a series of changes to Russian federalism, including the creation of seven "federal districts" to impose centralized control over executive bodies in the regions, including law enforcement ones. These changes, although combating a real problem of regional disregard for federal laws, culminated in the abolition of direct elections for governors and serious damage to the development of Russian federalism. The use of the power ministries to decisively alter the federal bargain showed that in hybrid regimes (combining democratic and authoritarian elements), the institutions that structure center-region relations in established democracies, such as courts and political parties, are often too weak to play this role, giving greater weight to the control of coercion. Putin's ability to shift the balance toward the center did not, however, greatly increase state capacity, because centralized law enforcement agencies were no more effective at carrying out their lawful responsibilities than decentralized ones. In the critical case of the North Caucasus, there was some evidence that Putin's

repressive approach was successful in reducing terrorist violence in Chechnya, but the situation in neighboring Ingushetia and Dagestan was worse than at the beginning of his presidency, and power ministry officials in the region exhibited similar pathologies to those in the rest of the country.

The modest improvements in state capacity under Putin were directly linked to lack of attention to the equally important issue of state quality. The concept of state quality will be developed further in Chapter 1, but the idea speaks to a key facet often neglected in the literature on states and state strength – not just *what* states do, but *how* they do it. Specifically, state quality asks to what extent state officials are true civil servants, working for the public good in a fair way, rather than pursuing primarily personal or elite interests. In post-Soviet Russia, law enforcement officials too often have engaged in corrupt practices, flouted the law, and preyed on rather than worked for the citizenry. Further, the professional characteristics and behavior of law enforcement personnel remain deficient, despite an infusion of resources due to the economic boom under Putin.

Low state quality in the coercive realm translated into a lack of trust on the part of the citizenry. Efforts by civil society organizations to engage law enforcement structures and promote liberal and professional norms had some success under Yeltsin and in Putin's first term, but ran into increasing obstacles after 2004 because of Kremlin concerns about international influences on domestic politics in the aftermath of the "Orange Revolution" in Ukraine.

What explains the modest improvements in state capacity and absence of change in state quality during Putin's presidency? After all, state building was Putin's top priority, and very high approval ratings and nine years of economic growth provided considerable political and economic resources to push his agenda. I trace these deficiencies in state capacity and quality to three fundamental aspects of organizational practice and public administration: bureaucratic type, monitoring strategy, and organizational mission. Specifically, I highlight:

- the dominance of patrimonialism in bureaucratic practices;
- a faulty monitoring strategy overly reliant on internal state oversight;
- failure to give state agencies and agents a new sense of mission.

Patrimonialism refers to the use of informal and personalistic criteria in personnel decisions (hiring, promotion, etc.) rather than more professional or rational-legal standards. Second, oversight was housed within the executive branch, with the presidential administration and competing power ministries monitoring each other, rather than empowering the legislature, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), or the media to serve as watchdogs; this approach proved ineffective. Third, for most of the Putin presidency, there was too little attention to shaping the values of state officials by giving them something meaningful to work for beyond their own self-interests. Toward the end of Putin's presidency, a more coherent ideological narrative that sought to

mobilize power ministry personnel against internal and external enemies took hold, and this project may have helped bolster state capacity, but it was not designed to improve state quality. Moreover, this mission statement regarding "fortress Russia" was not fully embraced by the leadership itself, which made it harder to instill values that would divert officials from short-term self-interested behavior.

In this book, I focus on the practices and norms that guide bureaucratic behavior to explain the disappointing results of Putin's state-building project. Clearly many factors influence the capacity and quality of a state, and in the final chapter, I bring more structural factors, such as wealth, resource dependence, and post-communist legacies, into the story. Primarily, though, I show how the beliefs of those state officials who wear uniforms and carry guns, and the constraints under which they operate, affect their actions, and what these actions mean for Russian political development.

The book investigates state building in the Yeltsin and Putin eras in Russia, with special attention to the 2000–2007 years of Putin's presidency. Of course, it is a bit of a fiction to pretend that the Putin era ended in 2008 when Dmitriy Medvedev became president. Putin carried on as prime minister in the two-headed system that came to be known as "tandemocracy," with every indication that he still called many of the shots and may return as president by 2012, and stay in that role for some time. Still, for our purposes, the end of his second term as president in early 2008 represents a convenient break point. The year 2008 also marked the end of the remarkable economic boom that coincided with Putin's presidency and fueled – quite literally – Russia's growing international ambitions. Thus, for the most part, this book covers the period up to 2007–2008, although in the final chapter, I discuss developments in Medvedev's first two years as president.

RESEARCH APPROACH

Scholars have debated extensively how we should properly assess and measure "stateness." A range of approaches have been in evidence, from quantitative studies of varying sophistication to more detailed, qualitative case studies of one or more states. To place the Russian case in context, in different chapters of the book, I rely on a variety of cross-national data. Most centrally, I use World Bank World Governance Indicators (WGI) to provide a rough indication both of Russia's standing relative to other countries and of changes over time, from 1996 to 2007. Governance scores are based on aggregates of individual indicators produced by a range of organizations, including NGOs, international organizations, and business consulting firms. Although these scores are not flawless, they represent the state of the art in terms of rigorous, comparative data on the performance of governments around the world. The five indicators I use, all of which capture different aspects of state capacity or quality, are: Political Stability and Absence of Violence, Government Effectiveness,

Voice and Accountability, Rule of Law, and Control of Corruption. The first two I treat primarily as indicators of capacity, the latter three of quality.[6] More specific data on Russia are also used to evaluate stateness. Examples include information on budgets, size of forces, murder rates, incidents of terrorism, and survey data on public trust in various institutions.

Much of the research is of a qualitative nature, particularly relying on a wide reading of the Russian press over the last decade and more than 100 interviews conducted over a nine-year period (see Appendix B).[7] This in-depth research serves several important goals in uncovering evidence about the capacity and quality of Russia's coercive agencies. Most importantly, it provides the fullest picture available of the dynamics transforming these agencies, their practices at multiple levels, and their relationships with each other and federal and regional officials. In a certain sense, I hope to provide a "thick description" of the power ministries in post-Soviet Russia, although the level of ethnographic detail present in the work of anthropologists such as Clifford Geertz is obviously absent. Rather, to quote Geertz, I have endeavored to be responsive to both the "need to grasp and the need to analyze."[8] The strength of a single-country study in general, and particularly one of specific government agencies, is to explore in depth the microprocesses that connect state-building strategies with actual outcomes.

The story as it unfolds generally moves in two directions: from the center to the regions to the street level, and from an attention mainly to capacity to a growing focus on quality. I aim to trace the who, where, and how of state building in the coercive realm. In this way, I hope to provide as complete a picture as possible of the Russian power ministries, especially law enforcement structures, and their role in Russian state building from the Soviet collapse in 1991 to the end of the Putin presidency in 2008.

The book is organized as follows. Chapter 1 discusses the key concepts from the statist literature that inform the rest of the book, and develops the core theoretical arguments. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the Russian power ministries and the siloviki. Chapters 3 and 4 examine Russian state capacity in the coercive realm, first at the national level and then at the regional level. Chapters 5 and 6 are about state quality, dealing with bureaucratic practices in the power ministries and how these agencies relate to society. Chapter 7 focuses on the North Caucasus, a particularly difficult area for state building

[6] For a positive assessment of the project and its data, see: Carlos Gervasoni, "Data Set Review: The World Bank's Governance Indicators (1996–2004)," *APSA-CP*, 17, 1 (2006), pp. 17–20. A more negative assessment and a response from the directors of the project are in: Marcus J. Kurtz and Andrew Schrank, "Growth and Governance: Models, Measures, and Mechanisms" and "Growth and Governance: A Defense," *Journal of Politics*, 69, 2 (May 2007), pp. 538–554, 563–569; Daniel Kaufmann, Aart Kraay, and Massimo Mastruzzi, "Growth and Governance: A Reply" and "Growth and Governance: A Rejoinder," *Journal of Politics*, 69, 2 (May 2007), pp. 555–562, 570–572.

[7] References to interviews in the footnotes follow the key used in Appendix B.

[8] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 24.

and one in which state coercion has been especially prominent. In Chapter 8, I summarize the results of Russian state building under Yeltsin and Putin, assess Russian performance in comparative perspective, and consider further the relationship between state capacity and state quality. I also take up the issue of future prospects for the Russian state. Russia still needs strong state power, with a higher quality of policing and ruling.

1

Bringing the Gun Back In

Coercion and the State

> A standing army and police are the chief instruments of state power.
>
> Vladimir Lenin[1]

Lenin's blunt emphasis on control over organized coercion as central to what states are and do fits nicely with the dominant social science definition of the state provided by his German contemporary, Max Weber. Weber, we recall, defines the state in the following way: "[A] compulsory political organization will be called 'a state' insofar as its administrative staff successfully upholds the claim to be the *monopoly* of the *legitimate* use of physical force in the enforcement of its order." Alternatively, in a different work, Weber uses a slightly different formulation: "[A] state is a human community that (successfully) claims the *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force* within a given territory."[2] The minor differences, although potentially interesting, seem less central than the focus on the effort to claim a monopoly on the legitimate use of force.

Although many scholars have criticized Weber's definition and provided alternatives, his approach is still the most widely accepted one and represents the pivot around which most definitional debates turn. For example, Joel Migdal, who pioneered the influential "state-in-society" approach, asserts that Weber's definition of the state "has led scholars down sterile paths." He proposes a "new definition" of the state that will reorient further research. The key to Migdal's definition involves separating "the image of a coherent, controlling organization in a territory" from "the actual practices of its multiple parts."[3]

[1] V.I. Lenin, "The State and Revolution," in *Lenin: Selected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1968), p. 268.

[2] Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978), p. 54; Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," in H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds., *Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 78. Emphasis in originals.

[3] Joel Migdal, *State in Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 3, 15–16.

Similarly, Margaret Levi objects to Weber's definition on the grounds that both the monopoly on the use of force and its legitimacy are variables.[4] However, there is nothing in Weber's ideal-type definition of the state that impedes the study of actual practices, or from taking account of and attempting to explain variance across countries and across time in the extent to which the monopoly of force is legitimate and successfully claimed. Indeed, Migdal's earlier classic, *Strong Societies and Weak States*, takes the Weberian definition as given and then proceeds to show how and why many real states "vary considerably in how they fit the ideal-type." Weber's definition, far from deflecting attention away from the gap between the ideal and the real, arguably helped inspire the investigation of this gap in the work of Migdal, Levi, and others.[5]

This is not to say that Weber's definition is without difficulties. Theda Skocpol rightly emphasizes the "Janus-faced" (both internally and externally oriented) nature of states, something Weber's approach largely neglects, although his reference to "a given territory" at least nods in that direction.[6] Still, the social science's near-consensus on the dominant status of Weber's definition is a good thing and a step forward from the debate of the 1970s and 1980s that contrasted Weberian approaches with Marxist and pluralist ones.

The more important difficulty in studying the state is not defining it, but operationalizing it. Although it may be possible to see "like a state," it is impossible to see a state.[7] The pitfalls of reification in the study of the state have been noted by many,[8] but at least in principle, there is no obvious reason why this is more true in studies of the state than it is in research that looks at other collectives, such as nations, firms, and societies. And, as Charles Tilly notes, without some form of casual reification when writing about the state, we would sacrifice both succinctness and significance.[9]

[4] Margaret Levi, "The State of the Study of the State," in Ira Katznelson and Helen V. Milner, eds., *Political Science: The State of the Discipline*, Centennial Edition (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002), p. 4.

[5] Joel Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations in the Third World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 19. For more on the state-in-society approach, see: Joel S. Migdal, Atul Kohli, and Vivienne Shue, eds., *State Power and Social Forces: Domination and Transformation in the Thirld World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Atul Kohli, "State, Society, and Development," in Katznelson and Milner 2002, pp. 84–117. For Levi's work on the state explaining variation in revenue extraction systems and the success of conscription, see, respectively: Margaret Levi, *Of Rule and Revenue* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988); Margaret Levi, *Consent, Dissent, and Patriotism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[6] Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 32.

[7] James Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).

[8] E.g., Robert W. Jackman, *Power Without Force: The Political Capacity of Nation-States* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1993), p. 64; Eric A. Nordlinger, *On the Autonomy of the Democratic State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 9.

[9] Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990–1992* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992), p. 34.

Still, undoubtedly some of the statist literature is overly abstract. In this vein, Levi correctly argues for a shift from general theories of the state to more detailed studies of "the organizations and individuals who establish and administer public policies and laws."[10] Taking Weber's approach seriously implies a particular focus on the state organizations that wield coercion. As Weber puts it, "organized domination requires the control of those material goods which in any given case are necessary for the use of physical violence. Thus, organized domination requires control of the personal executive staff and the material implements of administration."[11]

The executive staff primarily responsible for what Samuel Huntington calls "the management of violence" are military and police officers.[12] Yet despite the enormous literature on the state produced in recent decades, and the prominence of neo-Weberian perspectives in this work, detailed studies of state coercive organs remain a distinctly niche affair in comparative politics. Gerardo Munck's and Richard Snyder's content analysis of fifteen years' worth of articles in the top three comparative politics journals – *Comparative Politics*, *Comparative Political Studies*, and *World Politics* – showed that only 2.5 percent of these articles were on the military and police – a total of 8 out of 319 articles. Although articles on political violence and order, such as civil wars and revolutions, were relatively frequent (17.9 percent of all articles), most comparativists eschewed detailed analysis of the actual state organizations that control the means of violence.[13]

There is, of course, a large civil-military relations literature that deals with the state's foremost coercive agency.[14] In *Political Order in Changing Societies*, Huntington directly connects military coups to state weakness in his argument about praetorian governments.[15] However, little of the civil-military relations literature, particularly on coups, self-consciously situated itself in the statist literature, partially because the centrality of the state may have seemed obvious and partially because any connection between state incapacity and coups at least flirted with the danger of tautology.[16] In the 1980s and 1990s, the civil-military relations literature shifted to the study of democratization. Much of

[10] Margaret Levi, "Why We Need a New Theory of Government," *Perspectives on Politics*, 4, 1 (March 2006), p. 6.
[11] Weber 1946, p. 80.
[12] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press/Harvard University Press, 1957), pp. 11–14.
[13] Gerardo L. Munck and Richard Snyder, "Debating the Direction of Comparative Politics: An Analysis of Leading Journals," *Comparative Political Studies*, 40, 1 (January 2007), p. 9.
[14] Overviews include: Martin Edmonds, *Armed Services and Society* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990); Peter D. Feaver, "Civil-Military Relations," *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2 (1999), pp. 211–241.
[15] Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968).
[16] My attempt to systematize the large coup literature is in: Brian D. Taylor, *Politics and the Russian Army: Civil-Military Relations, 1689–2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 6–37.