Post-Imperial Democracies

Ideology and Party Formation in Third Republic France, Weimar Germany, and Post-Soviet Russia

This book examines the causal impact of ideology through a comparative-historical analysis of three cases of "post-imperial democracy": the early Third Republic in France (1870–1886), the Weimar Republic in Germany (1918–1934), and post-Soviet Russia (1992–2008). Stephen E. Hanson argues that political ideologies are typically necessary for the mobilization of enduring, independent national party organizations in uncertain democracies. Clear and consistent ideologies can artificially elongate the temporal horizons of their adherents. By presenting an explicit and desirable picture of the political future, successful ideologues induce individuals to embrace a long-run strategy of cooperation with other converts. When enough new converts cooperate in this way, it enables sustained collective action to defend and extend party power. Successful party ideologies thus have the character of self-fulfilling prophecies: by portraying the future polity as one organized to serve the interests of those loyal to specific ideological principles, they help to bring political organizations centered on these principles into being.

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Preface

As the first decade of the twenty-first century came to a close, Russia's political party system was in a parlous state. Despite repeated proclamations by top Russian leaders that building strong parties was crucial for the stability of the state and the future of Russian democracy, party organizations no longer played any independent role in Russian political decision making by the end of Putin's second term as president. The one political party with a mass membership, United Russia, clearly owed its power to the direct financial and institutional backing of the Kremlin and used its overwhelming dominance of both the central and most regional legislatures to slavishly support any and all Kremlin initiatives. Russia's erstwhile liberal parties, Yabloko and the Union of Rightist Forces, had dwindled into splinter groups of no significance. The Communist Party of the Russian Federation led by Gennadii Ziuganov, which had come close to seizing power in the turbulent 1990s, continued to voice opposition to the Putin-Medvedev regime and to sponsor occasional protests but, with public support in the low teens and only 57 seats in the 450-seat State Duma, was essentially impotent. The Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, led by theatrical nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskii, continued to combine radical rhetoric with faithful support of the Kremlin in all key parliamentary votes. And the rest of the Russian party system was made up of various "parties of power" designed to serve the temporary interests of one or another faction within Russia's ruling circles.

Few, if any, Western theorists of democratic transition and consolidation expected this outcome nearly two decades after the collapse of the USSR. Indeed, a review of the initial predictions of political scientists specializing in postcommunist democratization shows that most were quite optimistic about the future of Russian party organizations, arguing that the adoption of a new democratic constitution in 1993 and the experience of several reasonably free and fair elections were gradually solidifying the emerging links between social groups in Russia and the new parties working to mobilize them, as well as providing increasingly effective coordination of partisan factions within the

legislature.[1] Even Putin's initial consolidation of state power was seen by some analysts as potentially strengthening the party system by providing clearer institutional rules governing party activities; indeed, Putin himself said as much in arguing for the adoption of such rules during his first term in office.[2] More pessimistic analysts of post-Soviet Russia, meanwhile, tended to predict a return to an explicitly anti-Western form of dictatorship, of either the communist or nationalist variety.[3] The emergence of an explicitly anti-ideological authoritarianism in Russia in the second decade after communism's collapse in Eurasia is thus a puzzle worthy of sustained theoretical investigation.

The central thesis of this book is that these two phenomena – the decline of Russian political parties and the absence of coherent Russian ideologies – are in fact logically connected. Put simply, I argue that political ideologies, defined as clear and consistent definitions of the principles of membership in a desired political order, are typically necessary (although not sufficient) for the mobilization of enduring, independent national party organizations in uncertain democracies. In highly turbulent social environments of the sort generated by the collapse of the Soviet Union, the formation of large-scale parties requires the solution of a massive collective action problem: while everyone who belongs to or is represented by a political party might benefit from its existence, no single individual will ordinarily find it rational to contribute to the initial formation of such a party on her own. For this reason, new parties in uncertain democracies cannot emerge simply because of opportunities provided by formal political institutions or demands from particular social groups. There must also be some individualized incentives to motivate initial party builders to join in sustained, collective sacrifice for common party goals. Yet, in the absence of stable state institutions, the organization of "selective incentives" to promote such behavior seems itself individually irrational.

Clear and consistent ideologies, I argue, can have the effect of artificially elongating the time horizons of those who embrace them. By presenting an explicit and desirable picture of the political future, successful ideologues can induce at least some instrumentally rational individuals to embrace a long-run strategy of cooperation with other converts. When enough new converts cooperate in this way, sustained collective action to defend and extend party power becomes possible. Successful party ideologies thus have the character of self-fulfilling prophecies: by portraying the future polity as one organized to serve the interests of those loyal to specific ideological principles, they help

[1] M. Steven Fish, "The Advent of Multipartism in Russia, 1993–95," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 11(4, 1995): 340–383; Moshe Haspel, Thomas F. Remington, and Steven S. Smith, "Electoral Institutions and Party Cohesion in the Russian Duma," *Journal of Politics* 60(2, May 1998): 417–439.

[2] See, for example, Peter Lavelle, "The Poor Political Lexicon of Russia's Liberals," RIA-Novosti, September 26, 2005, http://en.rian.ru/analysis/20050926/41512468.html, accessed on January 15, 2006.

[3] Jerry F. Hough and Susan Goodrich Lehmann, *The 1996 Russian Presidential Election* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1996); Stephen Shenfield, *Russian Fascism: Traditions, Tendencies, Movements* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2001).

to bring political organizations centered on these principles into being. If this reasoning is correct, the failure of Russia's postcommunist political parties can be traced to the absence of successful party ideologies in the wake of the discrediting of Marxism-Leninism. In short: no ideologies, no parties.

This central argument is reasonably simple. To sustain it, however, requires an extended and complex exposition, because the claim that ideology can be seen as a crucial "independent variable" for explaining institutional outcomes directly contradicts much of mainstream social science thinking about the role of ideas in history. Despite their myriad differences, the three social science paradigms that have dominated the political science discipline over the past century – modernization, Marxism, and rational choice theory – are generally unified in their assumption that political ideologies should be understood not as causes of social outcomes but as reflections of more fundamental social forces (be these cultural, class based, or strategic). The ironic result, as Kathryn Sikkink has pointed out, is that scholars who spend their entire lives developing, disseminating, and defending their own ideas nevertheless vehemently insist that ideas have no systematic social impact.[4]

Indeed, there is a kind of methodological catch-22 facing social scientists who wish to argue for the theoretical importance of ideologies as explanatory variables in particular empirical contexts. We might term it the "suicide test." To wit: mainstream social scientists, attuned to discovering the hidden strategic or material interests lurking behind every profession of political principle, quickly conclude that ideology is irrelevant the moment they discover that so-called ideologues have acted in a self-interested manner.[5] Apparently, only those politicians who march like lemmings to their own political or personal destruction can truly be considered "true believers." Ideologues who do commit political or personal suicide, however, no longer play any role in real-world politics – and therefore they can be safely ignored. In short, the only "proof" of ideology's independent effect currently accepted by the social science mainstream automatically also proves that ideology is irrelevant.

On top of this catch-22, there is an element of intellectual "path dependence" at work in the continuing marginalization of research into political ideology. Because the dominant social science paradigms downplay the causal significance of ideas, few political scientists bother to spend much time learning the specific nuances of ideological discourses. For this reason, even leading scholars frequently possess stereotyped, inaccurate conceptions of major ideological

[4] Kathryn Sikkink, *Ideas and Institutions: Developmentalism in Brazil and Argentina* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).

[5] For example, note the way in which the alternative explanations based on "ideology" are quickly dismissed in Stathis Kalyvas's very fine book about the origins of Christian Democratic parties in Western Europe. Because the Catholic Church officially opposed the creation of such parties, Kalyvas assumes that ideological beliefs played no role in their formation, which must instead be explained by strategic factors. Left out of account in this analysis is any effort to ascertain the political beliefs of the actual founders of new Christian Democratic parties themselves. Kalyvas, *The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996).

traditions, such as Marxism-Leninism, Nazism, liberalism, and social democracy. These incorrect folk understandings of major ideologies are then compared to the political strategies pursued by their adherents to gain political power, economic resources, and international influence – with the result that the irrelevance of "ideological beliefs" for explaining political behavior *appears* obvious. This naturally reinforces the standard initial assumption that ideology is not worth sustained analytic attention – and the cycle continues.[6]

To counter both the suicide test and the resulting general inattention to ideological specifics in contemporary social science research, two analytically distinct steps are necessary. First, it must be shown theoretically that ideologically principled actors, genuinely committed to their belief systems, can under certain conditions be "selected for" in social and political competition, defeating their more pragmatic competitors – in other words, that lemming-like ideological consistency can lead actors to the pinnacle of power and not only to the bottom of the cliff. Second, it must be demonstrated that the substantive content of the ideological principles upheld by victorious ideologues can have a demonstrable empirical effect on the kinds of policies they adopt after taking power – that is, that principled ideologues do not immediately turn into stereotypical Machiavellians the moment they gain control of the state.[7]

In my first monograph, *Time and Revolution: Marxism and the Design of Soviet Institutions*, I attempted to respond to the second of these two imperatives by demonstrating the empirical importance of Marxist theoretical principles in accounting for many otherwise puzzling features of Soviet political and economic institutions from the founding of the Soviet state in 1917 through its collapse in 1991.[8] In particular, I traced the impact of Hegel's and Marx's philosophical understandings of time on the later institutional development of Leninism and Stalinism, arguing, in short, that the incentive structures of both Lenin's Bolshevik Party and Stalin's planned economy were explicitly designed to realize Marx's vision of communist society by synthesizing the "rational" time discipline of Western capitalism with incentives for "revolutionary" time transcendence by party members, managers, and workers. From this perspective, I demonstrated, political debates among Marxist theorists of the Second International after the deaths of Marx and Engels, among Bolshevik Party leaders

[6] Of course, this depiction of mainstream political science should not be taken to imply that there are no good contemporary studies of political ideology whatsoever. The works of Peter Hall and his collaborators, for example, remain seminal; see especially Peter A. Hall, ed., *The Political Power of Economic Ideals: Keynesianism across Nations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989). As discussed in Chapter 2, in the past decade or so pioneering scholarship on the role of ideas and ideologies has begun to emerge in all major subfields of political science. Still, the situation facing advocates of idea-based explanations in most leading U.S. political science departments remains largely as I have described.

[7] A similar point has been made by Mark Blyth, "Any More Bright Ideas? The Ideational Turn of Comparative Political Economy," *Comparative Politics* 29(2, January 1997): 229–250.

[8] Stephen E. Hanson, *Time and Revolution: Marxism and the Design of Soviet Institutions* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

after Lenin's death, and among Soviet leaders after Stalin's death showed a strikingly consistent pattern of division into three competing tendencies: a "left" faction promoting an immediate revolutionary leap to communism; a "right" faction arguing for an evolutionary socialism consistent with modern, rational notions of time; and an "orthodox center" faction arguing for simple fidelity to the foundational principles of Marxist and Leninist theory. I concluded by showing how Gorbachev's perestroika reforms, which ultimately destroyed the Soviet Union, were in fact designed as a last-ditch attempt to resurrect the synthesis of revolutionary and rational time use in the Soviet economy through the encouragement of "socialist enthusiasm" from below.

The arguments advanced in *Time and Revolution*, which were first developed in my doctoral dissertation in the late 1980s before the breakdown of the USSR, have stood the test of time reasonably well.[9] The evidence of previously secret Soviet archives and of countless memoirs by Soviet leaders after the collapse of communism suggests that ideology did play a far greater role in Soviet politics and society, even toward the end of the Soviet period, than had been previously acknowledged by most Western analysts.[10] Indeed, the contemporary historiography of the Soviet period has increasingly focused squarely on the question of ideological discourse, revealing the remarkable degree to which it penetrated every facet of life in the Soviet Union.[11] Stalin himself, we now know, was busy making notations in the margins of Karl Marx's works even at the end of his life, when nobody was in any position to monitor or sanction his behavior.[12] And Gorbachev tells us in his memoirs, written four years after the Soviet Union's collapse, that "the most cherished of all his awards" – more important to him, apparently, than the Nobel Peace Prize he received in 1990 – was the Order of the Red Banner of Labor he received for his heroic work as a combine operator on the collective farm at the age of seventeen![13] For scholars who expected that the collapse of the USSR

[9] In an essay written in 1990 based on my dissertation research, for example, I accurately predicted that if Gorbachev continued to pursue a strategy of "disciplined dismantling" of Leninist institutions, the Soviet system would soon cease to exist. See Stephen E. Hanson, "Gorbachev: The Last True Leninist Believer?" in Daniel Chirot, ed., *The Crisis of Leninism and the Decline of the Left: The Revolutions of 1989* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991), p. 54.

[10] See, for example, Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

[11] In addition to the works cited, see Igal Halfin, *From Darkness to Light: Class, Consciousness and Salvation in Revolutionary Russia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000); Halfin, *Communist Autobiographies on Trial* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); and Jochen Hellbeck, "Working, Struggling, Becoming: Stalin-Era Autobiographical Texts," in Igal Halfin, ed., *Language and Revolution: The Making of Modern Political Identities* (London: Frank Cass, 2002), pp. 135–159.

[12] Nigel Gould-Davies, "Rethinking the Role of Ideology in International Politics during the Cold War," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 1(1, Winter 1999): 92–93.

[13] Mikhail Gorbachev, *Memoirs* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), p. 49.

would reveal its leadership to be utterly uninterested in theory or principle, such revelations have contributed to a serious rethinking of their fundamental assumptions about politics.[14] For the small number of us who predicted such findings in advance, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that our initial theoretical assumptions have been essentially validated.

Yet, as I acknowledged in *Time and Revolution*, the study of the Soviet Union, however suggestive for the comparative study of ideology's influence elsewhere, in the end represents only a single case. With the end of the Cold War, the political science mainstream has tended to focus on topics where ideology's putative role initially seems far less clear. Indeed, even within the post-Soviet milieu, the near absence of any coherent ideological basis for politics after communism's collapse – as I argue later in this book – has been one of the most striking features of political life. Even for those who now acknowledge the importance of Marxist-Leninist ideology (and its disintegration) for explaining Soviet political behavior, the need to devote sustained attention to the analysis of ideology in comparative politics more generally is still far from clear.

Moreover, *Time and Revolution* did not address in any depth the first of my two analytical imperatives. That is, I did not endeavor to demonstrate in detail that Lenin's ideological commitment to Marxist conceptions of time was causally linked to his successful revolutionary takeover of power in 1917, explaining that a full account of the dynamics of the Russian Revolution itself would be beyond the scope of my case study. This lacuna in the argument could perhaps bolster the conclusion that, even if Lenin and his successors were genuinely committed ideologues, their victory after the fall of tsarism was an idiosyncratic event unlikely to be repeated in other social and historical contexts – and, therefore, that the rise and fall of the Soviet system contain few lessons for comparativists.

This book focuses squarely on explaining why ideologically committed elites come to power not only in very atypical situations but also quite frequently, and for predictable theoretical reasons. In doing so, I introduce a new, more precise definition of ideology. As Berman has emphasized, the social science literature on the role of "ideas" has long suffered from a conceptual fuzziness that has made empirical testing of causal claims very difficult – and the concept of ideology in particular is certainly no exception in this respect.[15] Far too frequently, scholars of ideology have seen their subject matter as an intrinsic and all-pervasive aspect of social life, insisting that practically every social phenomenon is "ideological" at some level. Meanwhile, the materialist mainstream insists that *nothing* is really ideological at its core, because ideologies are mere reflections of underlying interests. What is needed for testable causal analysis, however, is a definition of ideology that allows social scientists to distinguish

[14] See, for example, John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford: Clarendon; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[15] Sheri Berman, *The Social Democratic Moment: Ideas and Politics in the Making of Interwar Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

empirically between ideological and nonideological politics – in other words, one that allows for variation on the independent variable.

Ideologies can best be understood as proposals made by individuals to define clear and consistent criteria for membership in a proposed polity.[16] Because most people tend to understand their political affiliations in informal, fuzzy, and inconsistent ways, such proposals very rarely succeed. Indeed, genuine ideologues will often strike ordinary people as obnoxious and repugnant, precisely because demands for political consistency are usually unwelcome in everyday social interaction. Adopting a clear and consistent definition of one's own political identity can also foreclose future political options that might prove personally advantageous. From this perspective, it becomes clear that establishing a coherent new ideology is itself a collective action problem: those individuals who share a clear and consistent definition of political membership will find it easier to mobilize collectively than individuals with no ideology, but no single individual typically has an interest in sacrificing her own political flexibility for the collective success of an ideological movement.

Would-be founders of new ideologies, I argue, are typically able to overcome this collective action problem only when social uncertainty is so high and pervasive that ordinary instrumentally rational actors are unable to stick to any consistent political strategy for long. In such environments of social chaos, the clear and consistent visions of the political future set out by ideologues can artificially elongate the time horizons of those who join their cause, making it rational for them to forgo their short-term individual interests in favor of pursuing the potential long-term benefits available to early converts in the event of an ideological movement's ultimate victory. Thus, in chaotic social conditions, ideologues will usually be the only political entrepreneurs capable of mobilizing large-scale networks of committed activists, giving them a key strategic advantage over their nonideological competitors. The victory and subsequent political hegemony of ideological movements in times of social chaos is thus not anomalous but a typical outcome of social change in uncertain environments. If so, the study of ideology must be placed at the very center of political science inquiry.

To test such an argument empirically, I analyze the problem of political party formation in new, uncertain democracies. Political scientists have long understood that the creation of a viable, well-institutionalized system of competitive political parties is vital to successful democratic consolidation. Well-organized parties have also been crucial to the establishment of many of the most powerful modern dictatorships. Recently, scholars have focused on the formidable

[16] The range of possibilities for defining such criteria is, of course, vast: ideological Leninists demand a polity based on the proletariat and led by Marxist revolutionary professionals; Nazis fight for the political supremacy of racially pure "Aryans"; and ideological liberals set out a vision of politics built around rational individual citizens and property owners. All three ideologies, however, can be usefully understood as proposing clear and consistent principles of political membership.

collective action problems that would-be party builders confront in the task of building national party organizations.[17] It is fair to say, however, that the mystery of where successful, enduring parties come from is still far from resolved in the literature. The role of ideology in this puzzle has been explored to some extent: we know, for example, that most European political parties have had relatively consistent ideological platforms for most of their history; we know that ideologically "left" parties in Western Europe differ systematically from "right" parties in terms of their social welfare and taxation policies; and we have a sense that theoretically, ideologies must play a key role as "information shortcuts," allowing voters to choose rationally among the parties competing in democratic elections.[18] However, the argument that ideology can be a central independent variable causing party formation in the first place is, to my knowledge, new.

Thus, the primary dependent variable in this study is the formation or nonformation of successful national networks of party activists in times of extremely high social uncertainty. To be clear at the outset, I have no wish to argue that ideology alone can explain the type of regime, democratic or undemocratic, that emerges in any given chaotic environment. To insist on such a monocausal explanation of democracy and authoritarianism would vastly understate the complexity of political and social change. Nevertheless, focusing on ideology as an independent variable leading to party formation in uncertain democracies can still shed important new light on the crucial problem of explaining patterns of democratic consolidation and democratic breakdown.[19]

Specifically, if I am right that clear and consistent definitions of membership in the polity are necessary to mobilize committed party activists for sustained collective action in periods of great social turbulence, it follows that new democracies born in such circumstances will frequently confront at some stage a zero-sum struggle between irreconcilable ideological organizations for control over the key institutions of the polity.[20] I argue that the outcome of such struggles depends ultimately on decisions by the military, powerful state officials, and

[17] John H. Aldrich, *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Herbert Kitschelt et al., *Post-Communist Party Systems: Competition, Representation, and Inter-Party Cooperation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[18] See, among many other works on these topics, Ian Budge, David Robertson, and Derek Hearl, eds., *Ideology, Strategy, and Party Change: Spatial Analyses of Post-War Election Programmes in 19 Democracies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Harold Wilensky, *The Welfare State and Equality: Structural and Ideological Roots of Public Expenditures* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975); Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Harper, 1957); Melvin J. Hinich and Michael C. Munger, *Ideology and the Theory of Political Choice* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994).

[19] The argument here is thus consistent with that of Dankwart Rustow, who emphasized the importance of consensual definitions of the boundaries of the state for democratic consolidation. See Rustow, "Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model," *Comparative Politics* 2(3, April 1970): 337–364.

[20] A related argument has been made in Giovanni Capoccia, *Defending Democracy: Reactions to Extremism in Interwar Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).

economic elites to back one or another opposed ideological party – or, instead, to support the executive branch against all forms of partisan opposition. Once we move from explaining the formation of national party networks to examining regime outcomes, then social "structure" comes inexorably back into the analysis. However, political and economic elites obviously cannot fight for the victory of a party that is no longer on the playing field. Indeed, the success of ideologues in mobilizing effective party organizations in the initially chaotic environments created by the collapse of old regimes, and the concomitant failure of more "pragmatic" party builders, can later present bureaucrats, officers, and capitalists with very uncomfortable political choices, none of which may reflect their initial preferences. Whether economic elites support democrats or authoritarians during crucial periods of political polarization and crisis can be deeply influenced by how such elites evaluate their interests under the potential future ideological hegemony of the parties that are still available to choose among at that point.

Given the admittedly ambitious scope of my argument, this book necessarily covers a rather broad theoretical and empirical territory. Part I is devoted to a detailed examination of central conceptual and theoretical issues that are fundamental to the claims I am advancing. Fair warning: the novelty of many of these claims forces me to take the reader through a fairly extensive tour of social science theory over the past century or so. Because the major paradigms that have historically dominated the social sciences have tended to downplay the importance of ideology, I must first explain how the rather paradoxical scholarly consensus on the ineffectuality of "ideas" in politics first arose. In Chapter 1, I begin with an account of the century-long marginalization of the one great social theorist who most clearly put ideas at the center of social scientific explanation, Max Weber. I outline the key features of the Weberian theoretical approach, showing how Weber's unique combination of methodological individualism and attention to nonstrategic types of human social action sets his theory apart from Marxism, modernization theory, and rational choice theory alike.

Building on this foundation, in Chapter 2 I turn to an examination of the political science literature on ideology, showing how Marxist, modernization, and rational choice approaches have all ended up "explaining" ideology in unacceptably functionalist terms. Building in part on more recent works on the role of ideas in comparative politics, I set out and justify my new definition of ideology as *any clear and consistent definition of the criteria for membership in a desired political order*. I argue that the formation of new ideologies in this sense constitutes a previously unrecognized collective action problem whose solution requires "principled" (or, in Weberian terms, "value-rational") conduct on the part of an ideology's initial advocates.

In Chapter 3, I review current theories of political party formation, showing how my analysis of ideology and collective action contributes to, and improves upon, recent literature that focuses on the supply of – and not only the demand for – new party organizations. Again, I show how previously dominant approaches to the study of comparative political parties tend to ignore

or downplay the initial problem of party formation in environments of institutional uncertainty. Building on recent works by Aldrich and Kitschelt, I show how party ideology can play a crucial causal role in allowing partisans to sustain collective action in the initial phases of party building. I conclude Part I with a discussion of some of the methodological issues involved in testing my hypothesized relationship between ideology and party formation and justify my use of a comparative historical approach to the subject matter.

In Part II, I examine the causal impact of ideology through a comparative-historical analysis of three theoretically chosen empirical cases. Specifically, I argue that post-Soviet Russia can be analyzed as an example of a more general phenomenon I term "post-imperial democracy" – that is, a situation in which a new democratic regime is born within the core nation of a formally imperial polity immediately after its disintegration, and where reasonably fair and open democratic elections are held for at least a decade after imperial collapse. In particular, I engage in a comparative historical analysis of the first sixteen years of the Third Republic in France (1870–1886), the Weimar Republic in Germany (1918–1934), and post-Soviet Russia (1992–2008).[21] In all three of these cases, the continuation of formal democracy well after the initial period of social chaos generated by imperial defeat or collapse led to a distinct environment of prolonged uncertainty governing key institutional features of the new regime – including constitutions, electoral rules, national symbols, and even national borders – that gave rise first to political stalemate between competing parties and then to a decisive crisis, before the eventual consolidation of a new regime type. The three cases share other features that make them particularly fruitful for comparative analysis: each had experienced some degree of parliamentary liberalization in the final years of imperial rule; each saw a prolonged competition between the executive and legislative branches of government for institutional supremacy in the period after imperial collapse; each adopted a constitution that was widely seen as lacking initial legitimacy; each struggled with both institutional and cultural legacies of empire that interfered with democratic politics; and each suffered through major economic crises that had the potential to undermine the constitutional order. However, the outcomes of party formation in these three cases – the emergence of a dominant republican party in France, the establishment of Nazi dictatorship in Germany, and the systematic failure of all independent political parties in Russia – were dramatically different.[22]

[21] Mark J. Gasiorowski and Timothy J. Power have found that the rate of democratic failure drops off significantly once a new democracy has endured at least twelve years. In this respect, then, the time period examined here in each case includes the years that are most crucial for democratic consolidation. See Gasiorowski and Power, "The Structural Determinants of Democratic Consolidation," *Comparative Political Studies* 31(6, December 1998): 740–771.

[22] Other cases that could be added to the list of post-imperial democracies by my definition would be Austria and Hungary after World War I – because both were "cores" of the Austro-Hungarian Empire – and Portugal in 1974. Cases where national sovereignty was gained through the defeat and collapse of foreign empires, such as interwar Poland or the post-Soviet

If I am right that ideology is a necessary condition for political party formation in situations of intense social uncertainty, then we should expect to find in cases such as those examined here that ideologues with clear and consistent definitions of criteria for membership in the future polity are initially more successful than nonideological "pragmatists" in mobilizing activists for collective action to build national party networks – even where such pragmatists begin the process of party building with seemingly superior material and organizational resources. We should also expect that conflicts among competing ideological parties will be extremely difficult to resolve, given that each such party advocates a different, incommensurable definition of the polity itself. In the end, too, we can expect that the victory of any given ideological party – or, conversely, the failure of any ideological party to establish political hegemony – will have a profound effect on the institutions that are built and policies that are adopted after regime consolidation.

The empirical chapters present findings that are largely consistent with these theoretical predictions.[23] In Chapter 4, I analyze the early Third Republic in France, a case that has been unjustifiably neglected in most studies of comparative democratization. I show that ideological consistency allowed French republicans and legitimists to outflank the more "pragmatic" Orléanists and Bonapartists, despite the latter two parties' initial resource and personnel advantages. The emergence of the legitimist-republican partisan cleavage generated a deep political struggle between supporters of divine-right monarchy and Catholic hegemony and advocates of a secular state and radical social inclusion. Given the unpalatable choice of backing French president Patrice MacMahon, who appeared to sympathize with the ideological agenda of the legitimists, or the radical republicans led by Léon Gambetta, most of the French bourgeoisie reluctantly sided with the latter. The eventual victory of the republican party generated a consolidated democratic polity that, remarkably, endured for seven decades. Indeed, republicanism remains the ideological foundation of French democracy through the present day.

In Chapter 5, I review the better-known case of democratic breakdown in the Weimar Republic. Again, I show that parties with no clear and consistent definition of the polity – in particular, the two German liberal parties of this period – failed to overcome the collective action problems of party organization, splintering into fragments by the mid-1920s. By contrast, the most successful

Baltic states, or where empire collapsed only gradually, as in twentieth-century Britain, pose different theoretical issues, because they are not necessarily marked by systematic institutional and social uncertainty.

[23] I should note that, while the initial hypothesis of this study was developed from a comparison of the Weimar and post-Soviet Russian cases, coauthored with Jeffrey Kopstein, the case of the French Third Republic was chosen for purely theoretical reasons, with no prior knowledge of its dynamics on the part of the author. Thus, the finding that here, too, ideological parties defeated pragmatic ones is a striking confirmation of the initial hypothesis. See Stephen E. Hanson and Jeffery S. Kopstein, "The Weimar/Russia Comparison," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 13(3, July–September 1997): 252–283.

parties of Weimar – the Social Democrats, the German National People's Party, the Communists, and ultimately the Nazis – were all quite ideologically consistent, generating the political stalemate Sartori famously analyzed as "polarized pluralism."[24] In the end, this stalemate was broken by the ideologically committed activists of the Nazi Party, strongly supported by President Paul von Hindenburg and the German aristocracy – with devastating consequences for humanity.

In Chapter 6, I return to the case of post-Soviet Russia, utilizing the comparative theoretical perspective developed throughout the book. Once again, I argue, the only parties to endure in the same form over the first fifteen years after the collapse of the USSR were those that were founded with distinctive official ideologies: the Communist Party of the Russian Federation and the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia. Once again, efforts to form independent democratic parties on the basis of political "centrism" and "pragmatism" systematically failed. In comparison with the ideological elites of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, however, even the most successful post-Soviet party leaders of the 1990s did not remain clear and consistent about their ideological commitments for long; instead, they made highly public political compromises with the state that undermined the initial principled commitment of their party activists. The ultimate failure of efforts to articulate a new Russian political ideology – whether democratic or antidemocratic – thus generated a situation in which all political parties were too weak to challenge even a very weak state. Whereas in both France and Germany initially weak presidents were forced to rely on the mobilized activist networks of one or another powerful ideological party in an attempt to defend their political position, thereby marginalizing the role of the presidency itself, in Russia the absence of consistent ideological parties with effective national support allowed President Vladimir Putin to establish an independent hegemony. Powerful business elites who had previously hoped to influence Russian politics by backing one or another political party learned – particularly after the arrest and imprisonment of billionaire Mikhail Khodorkovskii in 2003 – that support for the president was the only instrumentally rational political option. Thus, Russia developed neither a consolidated democracy nor a consolidated fascism, but rather a "pragmatic" presidential authoritarianism in which the state-sponsored "party of power" simply carried out the directives of the executive branch.

Chapter 7 concludes the book with a recapitulation of the main findings of the study and an exploration of their consequences for our understandings of democratic – and autocratic – consolidation. The primary hypothesis that

[24] Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976). The Catholic Center Party provides the single disconfirming case for my hypothesis: although the party leadership never managed to decide on a clear and consistent conception of how membership in the German polity should be defined, it did hold together organizationally until Hitler's takeover of power in 1933. I discuss the implications of this observation for my argument in the Conclusion.

ideology promotes collective action by artificially elongating the time horizons of converts holds up even when subjected to some rather rigorous empirical tests. Indeed, the comparative-historical method adopted here controls for several of the most important alternative explanations for the fate of party systems in the cases examined. Neither the formal institutions of presidential-parliamentary rule, nor antidemocratic legacies of empire, nor even levels of cultural support for authoritarianism differed substantially at the outset of the Third Republic, Weimar Germany, or post-Soviet Russia, yet the outcomes of party formation and consolidation were decisively different.[25] What does seem to explain the success or failure of major political parties in these three cases – as can be demonstrated through careful process tracing – is the extent to which their founding elites were clear and consistent about their definitions of membership in their proposed versions of the political order. In conditions of high social and institutional certainty, then, ideological party builders generally win, and "pragmatists" generally lose. Moreover, ideologues do not drop their ideological commitments the moment they gain power: for good or ill, they tend to implement the most significant elements of their initial political visions.[26]

Russia is the exception that proves the rule. Although the most ideologically consistent Russian party builders were still more successful than their pragmatic competitors in forging national networks of party activists, in the end they all made obvious short-term tactical compromises that blatantly contradicted their professed principles. In part, this outcome reflects the cumulative cultural disgust with "ideology" in general in Russia, in a country where Marxism-Leninism has become farcical, fascism is associated with the horrors of the Second World War, and liberalism is seen by many as a plot hatched in the West to destroy the country. The failure of all post-Soviet ideology, as predicted by the theory advanced here, has ultimately led to the failure of the entire political party system, rendering the parliament politically powerless. Yet Putin, lacking any ideology of his own, could not find a way to forge national networks of committed activists that might ensure the consolidation of his authoritarian regime and was forced instead to rely on the personal loyalty of a small circle of longtime friends and associates. The result is the establishment of a novel form of "weak state authoritarianism" – with unpredictable consequences for the future political stability of Eurasia.

If I am right that ideological clarity and consistency are necessary but not sufficient conditions for party formation in uncertain democracies, certain

[25] Other major factors mentioned in the literature on party formation and democratic consolidation do vary among the three cases but not in ways that fit existing theoretical predictions of party or democratic success; thus, France was comparatively more agricultural in 1870 than Germany in 1918 or Russia in 1990, but no one argues that high levels of agricultural production are good for democratic party building. Electoral systems also differed widely in the three cases but also do not seem to explain persuasively differences in party formation among them. See Chapter 7 for further details.

[26] Daniel Chirot, *Modern Tyrants: The Power and Prevalence of Evil in Our Age* (New York: Free Press, 1994).

long-standing explanations in comparative politics for the empirical distribution of democracies and dictatorships must be rethought. The argument sheds new light, for example, on important political phenomena such as the initial establishment of the Taliban regime in war-torn Afghanistan, the revolutionary success of ideologues such as Khomeini in Iran and Pol Pot in Cambodia, and even the historical emergence of liberal capitalism itself. Moreover, the relationship between ideology and collective action has important implications for politics in more stable institutional and social contexts. For at least some marginalized individuals in every society, uncertainty about the future is high enough that ideological conversion may be instrumentally rational; this helps to account for the continuing influence of radical ideological parties and social movements even in the most successful, established democracies.

Finally, the argument here may potentially reshape our understanding of the relationship between "structure" and "agency" in social life. It is true that ambitious politicians eventually require the backing of moneyed interests and of military or police forces in order to rule the state; these structural factors inevitably limit political choices to a greater or lesser extent in all societies. We must reject any "great-man theory of history" that fails to reckon with these limits. Yet the argument defended here shows that in uncertain periods, when collective action problems undermine the strategic coherence and consistency of economic and coercive elites alike, principled agents with long-term visions of the political future can play a decisive historical role. Perhaps, then, if this book is convincing, social scientists may begin to take into account the potential political and social importance of ideas – including their own.

Post-Imperial Democracies

Ideology and Party Formation in Third Republic France, Weimar Germany, and Post-Soviet Russia