1 The Puzzle of Russian Civil Society

An Introduction

On Saturday, July 15, 2006, as the leaders of the Group of Eight industrialized democracies gathered in St. Petersburg for their annual summit, attended by aides and throngs of journalists, the city itself was disturbingly quiet. Along the city's elegant main avenue, Nevsky Prospekt, squadrons of riot police in full battle gear stood on every second street corner. Police buses and armored personnel carriers idled on the side streets. There was not a hint of the antiglobalization riots that had plagued other cities unlucky enough to host G8 summits, but the police were ready nonetheless.

On that same morning, three metro stops to the north of Nevsky Prospekt, Petersburgers lazily spilled out of the underground onto Krestovsky Island, one of the city's most beloved parks, occupying almost an entire island in the delta where the Neva River flows into the Gulf of Finland. Jugglers, clowns, and balloon twisters amused children; a small marching band played Strauss; teenagers lounged on benches or skated down the alleyways; and everyone went about the business of enjoying St. Petersburg's short but glorious summer.

Some of those leaving the metro, however, walked straight through the park, the entire length of the island, until they reached the city's old football stadium at the far end. They made their way into a small tent, received a green name tag, and filed through a metal detector to get into the stadium complex. There, they joined several hundred protestors—almost all Russian—who had gathered to show the world that they were not part of the show the Kremlin was putting on for the G8. They wanted nothing to do with a regime that fixed elections, shuttered independent media outlets, jailed political opponents, and continued to call itself a democracy. The Russia that President Vladimir Putin was showing his colleagues from the vantage of a lavishly restored tsarist palace was not their Russia. Theirs was an "Other Russia," a concept born only days earlier at a

meeting in an equally lavish Moscow hotel, bringing together opposition leaders from across the political spectrum.

Of those who had been present in Moscow, only one—the longtime human rights activist Lev Ponomarev—came to St. Petersburg. Many of the activists from around the country who had planned to come never made it, having been pulled from planes, trains, and buses along the way. Some had their internal passports confiscated. Others were barricaded in their apartments. Those who did make it to the stadium found themselves surrounded by the Gulf of Finland on three sides and a long, high fence guarded by riot police on the other, with only one gate. The city authorities had banned a planned march from the stadium through the city to the cruiser *Aurora*, the ship that had launched the 1917 Revolution when it fired on the Winter Palace. Small groups of participants attempted to stage running protests in the city center but were followed by the police as they left the stadium and detained as soon as they emerged from the metro anywhere near Nevsky Prospekt. They would not be a part of the Kremlin's show, but the Kremlin ensured there would be no other.

As the day wore on, the organizers in the stadium gathered the remaining participants to discuss what to do. A few television cameras—all of them foreign—were present and ready to report on whatever the protestors did, if only they could decide on a plan of action. Holding an unsanctioned march was clearly impossible; the police would never let them out of the stadium. Eventually, two proposals were put up for a vote. The first was to march in circles around the stadium track ten times, in a symbolic show of futility. The second was to stage a sit-in at the gates of the stadium in the hopes that the image of sitting protestors behind the iron bars of the fence and surrounded by police would garner at least some publicity. In the end, the protestors selected the second option, climbed out of the stadium, and made their way to the fence. There, they sat down, placards in hand, and began shouting, "Rights aren't given; rights are taken!" and "We need another Russia!"[1]

Bit by bit, the crowd began to dissipate, protestors filing back through the metal detector, pulling off their green name tags, and heading back through the park to the metro. Many of those who forgot to remove the name tags were detained when they reemerged elsewhere in the city, just as a precaution. Pictures of the protest were broadcast in Germany, France, and Italy. In Russia, however, no one noticed. In the park on Krestovsky Island, where the band was still playing Strauss when the last protesters left, a boy asked his father why there were so many police down by the stadium.

"Must be a football game," the father answered. "The police have to keep an eye on the hooligans."[2]

Until tens and then hundreds of thousands of Russians poured onto the streets of Moscow in December 2011 to protest what they perceived to be a rigged parliamentary election, the foregoing picture was the predominant view of Russian social and political mobilization. Indeed, the idea of the weakness of Russian civil society remains well established and widely accepted. Russians, on the whole, do not organize and are difficult to mobilize, and they do not tend to join movements or participate in public protests (see, for example, Fish 1995; Domrin 2003; McFaul and Treyger 2004). Understanding why something does not occur, however, is perhaps the most difficult task in the social sciences. Some attempts have been made to explain the void of civic mobilization in Russia, predominantly by pointing either to macrolevel social phenomena (low levels of trust and social capital, for example) or macrolevel political phenomena (the resource curse or repression).

When nonlinear events occur—events that our prior conceptions did not allow us to predict, events that seem to be "out of the blue"—the natural tendency is to focus our analysis entirely on the future, to assume that at the moment of the departure from the norm something inherently unforeseeable happened to shift the narrative, and to seek to understand the "new world" in which we have evidently arrived. Indeed, much of what has been written about the Russian protest wave of 2011 and 2012 pointed to purportedly new phenomena—new communication media, new leaders, new wealth, a new global context—as the proximate cause of what prior wisdom had failed to envisage.

Truly understanding where we are, however, requires correcting our understanding of where we were. Even as we look to the future and try to understand what it holds in store, we must ask what recent events tell us about the past. Before we accept the idea that the present condition is entirely novel, we should at least consider the notion that it has roots in what came before, roots which we, for whatever reason, failed as social scientists to notice, or at least to deem important. Such a reevalutation may, we can hope, reduce the magnitude of the analytical mistakes we will make in the future.

As with all rules, there are and always were exceptions to the blanket explanations put forward for the failure of civil society in Russia. Along the margins, in unexpected corners and pockets of society, there has been throughout Putin's rule activism and engagement, and it was often sustained and sometimes

fruitful. These exceptions are the focus of this volume, which asks whether the rare instances in which Russian civil society does succeed can shed some light on the question of why, in the vast majority of cases, it does not.

Russia, by most accounts, has spent most of the twenty-first century to date institutionalizing the middle ground between democratic and authoritarian governance. In that respect, Russia resembles what Marina Ottaway (2003) termed a "semi-authoritarian regime," or what Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way (2010) called "competitive authoritarianism" and a "hybrid regime." There is a large degree of individual freedom in Russia, as well as significant (though diminishing) freedom of speech, association, and assembly—all of which are typically cited as the prerequisites of a "democratic" civil society. There has also been significant (though diminishing) funding available for a large (though shrinking) number of initiatives, likewise a widely recognized pillar of organized civic activity. However, whereas Soviet dissident groups relied on networks of dedicated volunteers, who were able to exert pinpointed pressure on the government and frequently achieved their goals (whether freedom of emigration, tighter ecological controls, or the clandestine distribution of articles), civil society in twenty-first-century Russia has broadly failed to match up in all of these categories. Thus, if we judge by the ability to mobilize public opinion and support and achieve defined goals (other than the attraction of grant money), civil society in Putin's Russia has in some ways been *less* effective at achieving its aims than it was during the Soviet Union, when none of the previously mentioned freedoms existed. That, surely, appears to be a paradox.

From the perspective of the social scientist, this paradox is exacerbated by the lack of useful theory. The broadest studies of democracy, in order to achieve generalized relevance, take their definitions and categorizations to a level of abstraction that is scarcely useful to someone trying to understand why a particular country falters. Given its narrower focus and emphasis on dynamic processes, the specific study of democratic transition is often more useful. Transitology, however, also has its limits, a common criticism being that it "may be too 'political' a framework, in the sense that it ignores how underlying economic and social structures may persist despite 'democratic change' and thus subvert political outcomes" (Kubicek 2000). And yet even the most recent political economy studies of democratization have been unable to identify causal variables that go beyond the traditional triumvirate of economic modernization, political history, and culture/religion, none of which is particularly

helpful in applied analysis of country cases or small-N comparisons (Borooah and Paldam 2007).

The even narrower field of postcommunist studies has yielded some valuable insights, particularly regarding the development of formal institutions, including political parties and infrastructure underpinning privatized economies. It is argued with increasing force and frequency that Russian citizens suffer from a postcommunist syndrome, of which all of the previously mentioned pathologies are common symptoms. Public initiative of the kind generally associated with civil society is seen to be considerably lower in the former Soviet Union and Central and Eastern Europe than in other regions of the world (see, most prominently, Howard 2003). More broadly put, the entire postcommunist space—even in those countries that have created the most open political systems—appears to suffer from a deficit of democratic participation (see, for example, Anderson, Fish, et al. 2001; Grzymala-Busse and Luong 2002; Innes 2002). The most common explanation put forward for this generally centers on the problem of trust: Russians and other postcommunist denizens are inclined to distrust both their neighbors and themselves (Rose 1994; Sztompka 1998; Lovell 2001).

But the identification of postcommunist commonalities also has the unfortunate effect of obscuring important differences. And nowhere has this been more the case than in the study of civil society, where supposedly low levels of trust and social capital are cited as a blanket explanation for the regionwide weakness of civic initiative (Howard 2003). The issue of trust notwithstanding, there is significant variation in the level and nature of civil–societal activity both within countries and from one postcommunist country to another that cannot be easily accounted for by discrepancies in the degree of trust.

While the bulk of the literature on civil society tends to focus on broad, society-based explanations such as trust, some of the literature on transition—both within and outside the transitology tradition—has begun to focus more attention on the behavior of elites as the source of civic weakness and atomization, with particular reference to Russia. Thus, both McFaul and Treyger (2004) and Kitschelt and Smyth (2002)[3] suggest that the withdrawn and self-centered nature of elite competition in many postcommunist countries, driven by the peculiarities of their political economies, effectively pulls the rug out from under potential civic initiatives. Indeed, while contemporary civil society theory tends to look in other directions, there is significant support for such considerations in social movement theory, where Tarrow places the behavior of elites

as a central element in forming the opportunity structure of potential civic initiative (Tarrow 1998). What is missing from these arguments, however, is a detailed study of the specific processes and mechanisms that link one to the other.[4]

What We Know about Russian Civil Society

Beyond the general categorizations mentioned earlier of Russian civil society as weak, what do we really know about the processes that weaken it? By now, most analysts have abandoned notions that the political changes occurring since 1991 have constituted a democratizing revolution. The views on why democratization has failed are varied, and although they are dealt with more fully in Chapter 3, they can be generally summed up as follows. In one camp, Peter Reddaway and Dmitri Glinski, joined by Marshall Goldman, blame undemocratic elites for capturing and perverting a process of reform, subjugating political democratization to economic liberalization (Reddaway and Glinski 2001; Goldman 2003a). To this, others add structural elements, such as the "resource curse" of oil, gas, and mineral wealth, which stymied true economic liberalization and discouraged the development of parliamentary democracy (Fish 2005). Still others blame Russia's democrats themselves for being insufficiently determined, organized, and unified (Garcelon 2005).

All regimes need a power base, which is simultaneously the source of its support, the object of its control, and the group with which it will most intensely interact. In a Soviet Communist regime, although the classical conception has been that the regime's power base was the Party, the desire of the regime to maintain comprehensive control over all aspects of economic, political, and social life means effectively that its power base was the entire population. Support for the regime did not have to be active; the way things were arranged, the mundane acts of participation in everyday life were all that was required. In the words of Vaclav Havel, the Soviet state "occupies and swallows everyone, so that all should become integrated within it, at least through their silence" (Havel 1988: 390). As the Kadarists said in Hungary, *if you're not against us, you're with us.* This engagement with the whole of the population—which is the hallmark of any truly totalitarian regime—leaves open the possibility that the population at large can become a source of opposition, embodied in civil society; this is, arguably, what occurred in 1989 throughout much of Central and Eastern Europe.

In Putin's Russia, political competition exists, but it is closed, not so much in the sense of barriers to entry (though these obtain) as in the sense that the state organizes politics in such a way as to prevent competitors from creating a power base that draws support from outside the limited sphere of "administrative resources." Thus, in a limited authoritarian regime like post-Soviet Russia, the regime's power base is considerably narrower than it was during the Soviet period. It derives its support not from the broad participation of the population in a highly centralized economic system but from the subordination (through regulatory, forceful, or clientelistic relations) of crucial groups, such as the oligarchy, regional strongmen, or the security establishment. The population remains a resource, but one on which the state depends only indirectly, insofar as the oligarchy, for example, may depend on it for labor. One result is a dispersal of the potential targets of blame and protest for mass dissatisfaction. In the Russian context, this arrangement is particularly effective at insulating elites from the public and thus creating room for state autonomy, because the primary resources on which the oligarchy depends are natural, and thus even they depend on the population only indirectly. Civil society, then, finds itself doubly removed from access to power. A fundamental result of this arrangement is that the contemporary Russian state does not engage society at large. Indeed, it actively works to exclude the public from the processes of government, not so much to control the public as to prevent uncontrollable elements—such as a mass-based movement—from entering the political arena. Thus, if we conceive of civil society as a mediator between state and individual, the almost total disregard of one for the other might seem to obviate this function.

The result has been the dismantling of layers upon layers of institutions governing much of social life in Russia, including the ways people work, study, communicate, participate in political and economic life, procreate, and die. This has been replaced primarily by pervasive uncertainty—uncertainty as to the future of the country, as to how much a ruble will be worth tomorrow, as to whether the rights a citizen had yesterday will be respected today. As constantly changing rules of the game prevent the consolidation of the formal institutions that constitute the state, so do the intermediary institutions fall away. There has been a general devolution—what Michael Burawoy, Pavel Krotov, and Tatyana Lytkina call "involution"—of the center of life activity from collective institutions to the family. As Burawoy and coauthors write, "As industry and agriculture have disintegrated, the fulcrum of production and redistribution

has moved from factory to household" (Burawoy, Krotov, et al. 2000: 43). They point to two "involuted" strategies, one defensive and the other entrepreneurial; in either case, however, the strategy is individualistic and highly suspicious of the collective.

This is borne out, meanwhile, by what we know about various sectors of civil society. The environmental "movement," for example, is dominated by particularistic interests. As a whole, "green" groups fail to serve as state–society intermediaries in the classic civil–society sense. As Laura Henry writes: "Instead, [their] activities represent efforts to provide services related to environmental protection or recreation that were once the responsibility of the state. Grassroots groups in particular have leapt in to fill the loss of recreation opportunities for children and public maintenance of city parks" (Henry 2006: 223). Likewise, migrants' evident preference for informal networks instead of formal organizations suggests a similar particularistic logic:

> Many migrants choose not to engage with nongovernmental organizations at the site of settlement. This choice may well be rooted in a mistrust of formal organization inherited from the Soviet period. However, the choice is also a positive one and a rational one, made in favor of a better option at the time. The trust and support offered by more informal networks of family and friends points to a thriving, responsible, and moral community that provides very real assistance to its members, rather than to isolated, atomized individuals and households, which would more likely impede the building of civil society. (Flynn 2006: 260)

Stephen Wegren (2003) suggests that this increase in self-reliance, rather than contributing to the sort of atomization that is seen as the antithesis of civil society, creates new assets for the development of civil society. He writes:

> Increased independence by rural households limits future state incursions against individuals' rights. For example, expanded land holdings, land lease relations, and the utilization of market-based channels of food trade create significant political, economic, legal and psychological barriers that the political leadership most likely would be reluctant to breach. (Wegren 2003: 24)

Likewise, James Gibson follows a similar notion to dispute the widespread argument that Russians suffer from a deficit of trust and are atomized:

> Russian social networks may well have emerged primarily as a response to the repressive state. Unable to organize publicly, Russians have substituted private social networks for formal organizations. But Russians are not atomized, and as a con-

> sequence, Russian social networks have a variety of characteristics that may allow them to serve as important building blocks for the development of a vibrant civil society. In addition to carrying considerable political content, these networks are characterized by a relatively high degree of trust. Because the networks are not closed (strong), they link Russians together to an extent not often recognized by most analysts. (Gibson 2001: 60)

It would be easy to accept this as the end of the story—the state divorces itself from the public, the public say "good riddance," and the two go their separate ways—were it not for the fact that states and societies cannot simply go their separate ways. They are bound to share a common territory and common resources, and although they may do their best not to notice each other, they will inevitably come into contact and, thus, conflict. If we accept that broad-spectrum political engagement and civic activism are effectively suppressed by the state's disengagement from society, then we should be particularly interested in the content and meaning of the exceptions, the points at which conflict occurs and engagement ensues.

Two of the most remarkable recent works on Russian politics and society—Andrew Wilson's *Virtual Politics* (2005) and Ellen Mickiewicz's *Television, Power, and the Public in Russia* (2008)—frame this situation quite clearly. Wilson describes the Russian regime as an "edifice kept standing . . . [by] . . . four key conditions . . . : a powerful but amoral elite; a passive electorate; a culture of information control; and the lack of an external counterpoint, i.e., foreign intervention" (2005: 43). In later chapters we will examine how this is achieved; suffice it for now to confirm that it is achieved, though with Wilson's own caveat: "The post-Soviet states are not totalitarian. Other versions of reality creep in at the margins. The main priority of the powers-that-be is that their version of reality should predominate—they know that it can never exclusively dominate. They want the majority to believe something like their version of events. . . . But more crudely, they are happy simply to get away with it; not every loose end needs to be tied up" (2005: 45).

Loose ends do accumulate, however, and therein lies the potential for the sorts of cases this volume examines. In her study of Russians' reception of television news, Mickiewicz finds not only that viewers are deeply dissatisfied with what they receive but that the ruling elite should be equally dissatisfied with the work of its media proxies. Particularly when it comes to political news and election coverage, she writes,

> The Kremlin's appropriation and suppression of televised diversity has not resulted in the expected acceptance of the broadcasters' desired frame. The election story has become an expensive article of faith for its producers; for viewers, it is a confusing phenomenon that occurs with considerable regularity (since such stories form a single genre) and exists outside their own lives—lives from which under other circumstances they derive the cognitive shortcuts so necessary for processing information." (2008: 87–88)

The issue Mickiewicz identified is not one of cognitive dissonance; Russians are perfectly able to interpret political information. The problem is that coverage of elections is unsatisfactory and off-putting because elections are deeply irrelevant to Russian citizens. They very clearly understand all of the virtuality of politics Wilson describes. What they do not understand is why so many in the West expect them to take part in political actions that are so obviously and thoroughly virtual. Faced with a disengaged elite, civic disengagement is a rational response. But we should understand that disengagement to be circumstantial and contingent, rather than cultural and absolute. Exceptions can and do occur, presenting themselves as instances in which citizenship and participation take on real content and meaning. It is important that we understand why.

In seeking to determine why Russian workers put up with privations in the 1990s, amid the almost total collapse of heavy industry, Sarah Ashwin argued that the key to understanding Russians' "endless patience" is in "linking the political behaviour of workers to the form and content of their lives"; in particular, "workers' reaction to the pressures of reform has exhibited both an attachment to the collective institutions of the past, and the active development of individual survival strategies" (Ashwin 1998: 195). Given that the collective institutions have been deprived of any useful function, the individual strategies naturally gain in preeminence. If we look into the example of the Soldiers' Mothers' committees, one of Russia's strongest grassroots movements (see, for example, Sundstrom 2006b), we might thus hypothesize that collective action reemerges in those instances, when individual strategies can be channeled through "involved" groups such as traditional familial and gender networks into effective modes of interaction with the state. To find these instances, though, it is not simply enough to run down the list of standard "causes" and look for the relevant nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). This is a highly specific process, contingent, as Ashwin writes, on the "content of people's lives." It requires a careful and unprejudiced approach.

The Morphology of Governance

The Place of Civil Society

In their seminal text on democratization, Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan identified "five arenas of a consolidated democracy": (1) civil society (defined as "that arena of the polity where self-organizing groups, movements, and individuals, relatively autonomous from the state, attempt to articulate values . . . and advance their interests"); (2) political society (defined as "that arena in which the polity specifically arranges itself to contest the legitimate right to exercise control over public power and the state apparatus"); (3) rule of law; (4) a usable state bureaucracy; and (5) a stable economic structure (Linz and Stepan 1996: 7). Bucking the dominant tendency to place civil and political society in inherent opposition to one another, Linz and Stepan wrote: "For modern democratic theory, especially for questions about how to consolidate democracy, it is important to stress not only the *distinctiveness* of civil society and political society, but also their *complementarity*. This complementarity is not always recognized" (Linz and Stepan 1996: 7–8; italics in the original).

Some points of view, largely hinging on differences of definition, would no doubt dispute this assertion. I do not intend, however, to spend time debating definitions—particularly the always problematic definition of civil society—here; I will address definitional issues in full detail in Chapter 2. It will suffice for now to note that most prominent definitions of civil society include at least some reference to the political (see, for example, Gellner 1994; Ehrenberg 1999; Kaldor 2003). Indeed, this tradition has strong historical roots. Locke, Rousseau, and the philosophers of the Scottish Enlightenment all emphasized the role played by civil society in maintaining the subjugation of the power of the state to the democratic sovereignty of the public (Locke [1681] 1993; Rousseau [1762] 1968; Ferguson [1767] 1966; Hume [1772] 1994b).

Further developments in political philosophy would more clearly elucidate the location and role of civil society. Hegel famously defined civil society as "the realm of difference, intermediate between the family and the state" (Hegel [1820] 1896: 185). In this view, civil society consists primarily of the organization of individual wants and their satisfaction into a corporatized economy, the "protection of property by the administration of justice," and "provision against possible mischances, and care for the particular interest as a common interest" (Hegel [1820] 1896: 192). De Tocqueville ([1835] 1994) and Mill ([1848]

1970), meanwhile, both wrote that civil society is strongest when the public is included in the political process through open institutions.

The development of Marxist thought (Fromm 1963; Bobbio 1988; Marx [1844] 1970) and the rise of political sociology (Moore 1967; Duverger 1972; Giddens 1984; Polanyi [1944] 2001) together reinforced the notion that civil society reflects the surrounding institutions in a given state—both the deep, historically informed institutions of social relations and the surface institutions of political and economic life. Indeed, if civil society's role is to serve as an intermediary between the state and society, it seems only logical that it would take on the contours of its two interlocutors, much like molten metal poured into a mold.

The implication that civil society is contingent at least in part on political institutions, although unpopular with some normative theorists, is not overly controversial. However, the question remains as to how that contingency operates. The immediate suggestion from historical political philosophy is that political openness is key; indeed, civil society is clearly stronger in democratic states than in totalitarian ones. This, too, seems logical: For civil society to mediate a conversation between two parties, both parties have to be interested in talking; if the state balks, civil society is left with not much to do (except start a revolution, which calls into question the designation "civil") and could be expected to wither away.

Democracy and Authoritarianism

The necessity of studying authoritarianism alongside democracy came into sharp focus as what Michael McFaul called the "fourth wave" of transition wore on: If the "third wave" had been a story of democratization, then the fourth was more ambiguous, as former members of the Soviet bloc embarked on processes of political, economic, and social transformation with highly uncertain outcomes. This was a disheartening prospect, both for those who believe in democracy and for those who study it. It was the third wave, after all, that had yielded modernization theory, as well as ideas on elite pacts, constitutionalism, and other institutional aspects that seemed to play predictable and reliable roles in the development of democracy. But unlike in the "third wave" of democratization, in which precarious balances of power encouraged democratic competition, democracy in post-Communism emerged only in those cases when ideologically committed democrats enjoyed sufficient political hegemony to

impose their favored system of governance (McFaul 2002). Where dominant elites had other ideas, obviously, they took their countries in other directions.

At the same time this was happening, the geopolitical recognition that democracy had become "the only game in town" meant that even dictators began holding elections, revising constitutions, and ridding themselves of the formal institutions of autocracy that could make them seem less than honorable on the international scene. In theorizing semiauthoritarianism, Marina Ottaway (2003) describes regimes that combine formal democratic institutions—many of which to a great degree outwardly resemble those described by Linz and Stepan—but that nonetheless remain essentially authoritarian. To do this, she writes, they "rely" on four key deficiencies: (1) "mechanisms that effectively prevent the transfer of power through elections"; (2) noninstitutional power structures; (3) "the lack of positive synergy between political and economic reform"; and (4) repression of politically oriented civil society.

Similarly, in theorizing "defective democracies," Wolfgang Merkel begins with the concept of embedded democracies, which he sees as grounded in five "interdependent partial regimes" that in some aspects resemble Linz and Stepan's "five arenas": "[the] electoral regime, political rights, civil rights, horizontal accountability, [and] effective power to govern" (Merkel 2004: 36). He writes: "Defective democracies are by no means necessarily transitional regimes. They are able to form stable links to their environment and are seen by considerable parts of the elites and the population as adequate solutions to the extreme accumulation of problems in post-autocratic democracies" (Merkel 2004: 55).

These outwardly stable, seemingly sustainable regimes—whether referred to as semiauthoritarian, as defectively democratic, or by any number of other "adjectival democracies"—have been able to develop systems that allow them to govern with little or no regard for the consent of the governed; this is the outcome of the configurations that Ottaway and Merkel described. These are most often painted as the choices of elites, who are assumed to desire maximum autonomy and to have a penchant for rent seeking, unless, perhaps, they are ideologically committed to more open rule or bound by conditionality such as that imposed by the European Union. Often, but not always, this system is supported by the presence of abundant natural resources, as the so-called resource curse discourages elites from allowing competition and allows them to buy their way out of accountability (Ross 1999; Herb 2005).