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**Examining the concept of state capacity in the context of electoral authoritarianism,  
regime formation and consolidation in Russia and Turkey**

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## **Abstract**

This paper compares the electoral authoritarian regimes of Turkey and Russia and how state capacity has facilitated authoritarian regime building at the expense of democratic consolidation. It begins by considering how best to conceptualise the Putin and Erdoğan regimes. Whilst recognising significant differences between the two cases we argue that the concepts of electoral authoritarianism and neo-patrimonialism are particularly helpful in better understanding how both systems operate. The paper then discusses the concept of state capacity, arguing that for conceptual clarity a parsimonious understanding of the concept based on the state's extractive, administrative and coercive capacities, provides the most useful framework for the comparative analysis. Ultimately, the paper concludes that of the two cases in Turkey, for a variety of reasons, the shift towards a form of electoral authoritarianism since 2010/2011 has been much shorter, more conflictual and characterized by more elite and social contention than in Russia under Putin. The Putinist regime was much more capable of harnessing the infrastructural and coercive capacity of the Russian state to institute a stable neo-patrimonial and authoritarian regime that could function in a setting of electoral authoritarianism. In both cases, these projects of authoritarian regime building came at the expense of or supplanted efforts to improve and expand state capacity for effective democratic governance.

Turkey; Russia; electoral authoritarianism; neo-patrimonialism; state capacity

## **Introduction**

Until Turkey's downing of a Russian Sukhoi Su-24M on the Turkish-Syrian border in November 2015 relations between Vladimir Putin and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan had become increasingly cordial, the two presidents drawn together perhaps by the commonalities between their regimes. Nevertheless, despite policy differences over Syria, both leaders recognized the importance of a strategic alliance and by July 2016, bilateral rapprochement efforts were under way to repair this serious rift in relations. The popularity of both presidents has largely been fuelled by nationalism: support for Putin increasing significantly after the annexation of Crimea in 2014; Erdoğan's electoral victory in November 2015 in no small part the result of nationalist rhetoric and a hard line against Kurdish insurgents. Both presidencies have been built on 'great nation' rhetoric and a vilification of the West and both regimes have been ruthless in suppressing internal dissent. While in Turkey this was evidenced by the authorities' brutal response to the 2013 Gezi Park protests and during the renewed Kurdish insurgency in the south-east, in Russia it was the regime's crackdown on civil society and political opposition following large-scale protests in Moscow during the winter of 2011-12. Both presidents have emphasized the importance of national sovereignty, often accusing foreign countries of domestic interference. However, despite the many points of similarity between the Turkish and Russian political systems which have become increasingly evident over the last decade, comparative work on Turkey and Russia is still

relatively scarce. Analysis has tended to focus on either their bilateral relations, often through the lens of energy geo-politics or wider international politics, or on similarities relating to political administration, governance and leadership styles of Presidents Putin and Erdoğan (Hill and Taşpınar 2006; Warhola and Mitchell 2006; Yilmaz 2012).

Although contextual differences abound across the two cases, there are several particular dimensions and factors that open up multiple spaces for comparison between the Russian and Turkish state- and nation-building experiences. Both countries are successors to large multi-ethnic empires whose collapse at the end of World War One paved the way to the establishment of semi-revolutionary, modernist and top-down regimes. In Turkey, the Kemalist one-party state was in power for around 20 years. Multi-party elections were gradually introduced in 1946. In Russia, the totalitarian Soviet regime was in power from 1918 until its collapse in 1991 (although the regime might better be conceptualized as 'post-totalitarian' during the Gorbachev era). In both countries, the imperial legacy entailed a historical continuity with practices and norms of state-building and governance prescribing a strongly statist, centrist and monist political culture. In this sense, the state is protected and isolated from its subjects' demands, forms the core of all social and political interaction, and led to the existence of a weak and fragmented civil associational sphere with little input into political transformations and changes (Bacık 2001, 55).

In both cases, the post-authoritarian political trajectories have been characterized by: weak institutionalization of democratic governance and representation; significant abuse of power and political instability; significant non-democratic veto players and authoritarian enclaves that distorted and impeded democratic consolidation; and a heightened risk of direct authoritarian interventions. In terms of their international ties with the transatlantic West, both countries have tended to be historically placed in an ambiguous, semi-peripheral relationship with it, seeing it as both a source of inspiration for their statist and social modernization efforts as well as an existential threat. The Soviet period saw Russia attempting to redevelop itself as an alternative centre in global politics. Both have struggled to be accepted within the circle of the transatlantic West as strategic and cultural equals and their historical experiences of adopting modernity has engendered crises of self-placement and self-identification (Zarakol 2011).

Our focus is on the relationship between state capacity and regime resilience and how this dynamic led, in both cases, to the establishment and consolidation of electoral authoritarian regimes at the expense of democratic consolidation. We begin by considering how best to conceptualize the contemporary regimes under Putin and Erdoğan. Whilst recognizing significant differences between the two cases, we argue that the concepts of electoral authoritarianism (and variants thereof) and neo-patrimonialism are particularly helpful in better understanding how both systems operate. We then discuss the concept of state capacity, arguing that for the purposes of conceptual clarity, a parsimonious understanding of the concept based on the state's extractive, administrative and coercive capacities, provides the most useful framework for comparative analysis.

Ultimately we conclude that for various reasons in Turkey, the shift towards an emerging regime based on electoral authoritarianism took place in a much shorter period, seriously commencing around 2010/11 and characterized by significantly more elite and social contention and crisis than in Russia under Putin. The Putin regime has been much more capable of harnessing the infrastructural and coercive capacities of the Russian state to institute a stable neo-patrimonial regime. As a result, electoral authoritarianism is more firmly entrenched in Russia than in Turkey, where elections are still much more important comparatively, although the latter's political system in the last years has been increasingly resembling Russia more and more in that sense.

In both cases, however, these projects of authoritarian regime building have clearly come at the expense of improving and expanding state capacity for effective democratic governance. It should be noted that the political situation in both countries remains fluid and difficult to assess at the time of writing, especially in Turkey which suffered a violent coup attempt in July 2016 and is currently governed under a nationwide state of emergency.

### *1. Conceptualising the Putin and Erdoğan regimes*

Since the mid-1990s, the literature on regime analysis and democratization developed a plethora of concepts and typologies analyzing the nature and behaviour of semi-authoritarian regimes, neither fully democratic nor fully authoritarian, or as Freedom House puts it, 'partly free'. Seeking to draw a clear distinction between the electoral and liberal components of democracy, Zakaria suggested that whilst democracy was flourishing as the end of the century drew close, the electoral rather than the liberal variant had become dominant. Zakaria argued illiberal democracies were not only relatively stable but were also settling on systems that mixed democracy and illiberalism in equal measures (Zakaria 1997, 24). Larry Diamond (1996) drew similar conclusions, identifying two seemingly contradictory trends: the continued growth in electoral democracy and a stagnation in liberal democracy. Democracy was not expiring altogether, suggested Diamond, but in many cases was being 'hollowed out'. Electoral democracies in which opposition parties were subject to harassment and marginalization, constitutions might be temporarily suspended and ruling elites paid lip service to internationally accepted standards whilst continuing to act repressively, were becoming the norm. The growth was in hybrid systems, essentially diminished forms of authoritarianism in which elections were simply window dressing, providing a sheen of democratic legitimacy for the non-democratic regime.

For Zakaria, Russia in the 1990s was an example of an illiberal democracy and indeed, elections during the Yeltsin presidency elections may have been flawed but were still relatively free and fair. Zakaria did, however, express his concern at the creation of a super-presidency in Russia in which Yeltsin had shown a disregard for constitutional checks and balances and, with some prescience hoped that 'his successor will not abuse it' (1997, 34). Similarly, although Zakaria (2007, 107) saw Turkey in the 2000s as 'a flawed but functioning liberal democracy' he has since described it as a 'textbook illiberal democracy' (Zakaria

2015). If Russia had been an illiberal democracy in the 1990s, even in the early stages of the first Putin presidency few scholars were prepared to use any form of adjectival democracy to conceptualize the political system. In his seminal critique of the transition paradigm, Carothers (2002, 9) classified Russia under Putin as a hybrid regime, situated in the ‘political gray zone . . . between full-fledged democracy and outright dictatorship’. Levitsky and Way’s (2002) model of competitive authoritarianism, in which the regime falls short of meeting democratic criteria but cannot be described as wholly authoritarian, provided a useful framework for conceptualizing the Russian polity during Putin’s first term. Whilst democratic norms were routinely violated the regime was unable to eliminate democratic rules entirely. Since the 2003-4 parliamentary and presidential elections, however, the competitive component has all but disappeared, federal and regional elections having increasingly predictable outcomes.

The ‘electoral authoritarian’ model may provide a more accurate conceptualization of the Russian and Turkish systems than simply labelling them as democratic variants. Multi-party elections may take place in an electoral authoritarian system but liberal-democratic principles of freedom and fairness are violated to such a degree as to neutralize the democratic nature of such elections, effectively making them instruments of authoritarian rule. Such a regime aims to ‘reap the fruits of electoral legitimacy without running the risks of democratic uncertainty’ (Schedler 2002, 37). Nevertheless, Schedler (2013, 6) emphasizes that despite the incumbent’s systematic manipulation, ‘elections matter’ even in electoral-authoritarian settings as their outcome is ‘contingent’ as they still grant extensive political space for political opposition, mobilization and interest aggregation. This was seen in Turkey’s June 2015 national elections which deprived the ruling AKP of an overall majority for the first time since coming to power in 2002. It has been commonplace for scholars to conceptualize the Putin regime (Ross, 2005, 2011; Golosov, 2011; Brown, 2009; White 2013) and increasingly after 2010-11, the Turkish regime as ‘electoral authoritarian’ (Tillman 2015, Konak and Özgür Dönmez 2015, Arbatlı 2014). However, whilst electoral authoritarianism may provide a useful shorthand description of both systems it does not explain how those systems work in practice or fully consider the complexities of factors that underpin the regimes. Electoral authoritarianism may exist in both countries but, as this paper will explore, the regimes are established on and sustained by wider foundations than simply the management of elections.

Thus we also use the lens of neo-patrimonialism to conceptualize the Russian and Turkish political systems. Scholars using electoral authoritarianism as a conceptual framework tend to focus solely on the tensions between gaining power through elections and ruling through authoritarian practices and are, at least implicitly, concerned with regime change and the possibility of such systems being replaced by electoral or liberal democracy. Electoral authoritarianism is a regime-centric concept and fails to take into account the existence of multiple tensions within a polity at both regime and state levels. A neo-patrimonial state cannot sustain itself simply by satisfying the needs of the ruling group and insulating itself by suppressing political opposition; it also has to satisfy the wider population through the provision of welfare through redistributive methods or by securing reasonable levels of

economic growth (Robinson 2014, 9). This is borne out by the Russian and, increasingly, the Turkish case in which the suppression of civil society and political opposition has served to insulate the regime. Moreover, the consistently high levels of support enjoyed by the Putin regime are in no small measure the result of an effective level of resource redistribution. A neo-patrimonial regime with the capacity to produce an effective relationship between regime and state is likely to be sustainable. Its long-term stability is largely governed by its ability to consolidate the regime through elite agreement and to develop sufficient capacity to act as a substitute for the state in order to be able to deliver on security and welfare (Robinson 2014, 11). As will be discussed below, Russian state capacity has been developed under Putin but it has essentially been used to consolidate the regime through highly personalized presidential rule, rather than aid state development. The provision of social welfare has been the result of the benefits of oil-fuelled economic development rather than being attributable to state policy and better management of the economy (Robinson 2014, 17-20). Despite Vladimir Putin's expressed commitment to strengthening the Russian state, it can be argued that the regime has been primarily motivated by the desire to extract rents from the oil and gas industry. Regime resilience is largely the result of its unity and as many scholars have noted, elite unity is crucial in the consolidation of authoritarian rule (Way 2005; Higley and Gunther 1992; Geddes 1999). The personalized nature of the regime, in which the President is essentially the guarantor of regime legitimacy and social peace, has therefore provided a powerful incentive for elites to stay on board rather than risk challenging the leader (Smyth 2014, 574). As Gel'man (2015, 146) notes, Russia's post-Soviet experience provides us with a text-book example of a power-grab by politicians facing little in the way of constraints.

Neopatrimonialism was first used to describe Turkey's political governance in the 1980s after civilian electoral politics were reintroduced. Although Kalaycıoğlu (2005, 128-129) and Sözen (2013, 227) argue that it has been constantly present in state-society relations, neo-patrimonialist practices of governance merged with the strong state tradition and became 'party-centred' and after the introduction of electoral democracy. They became especially prominent during Turgut Özal's premiership (1983-1991) and were passed onto succeeding governments. However, Turkey's messy political scene in the 1990s, marked by economic turmoil, the sharp reflexes of military tutelage and the Kurdish conflict, prevented a stable regime of neo-patrimonial governance until midway through the AKP's rule in the 2000s. Originating in the traditionally marginalized political Islamist movement, the AKP established sufficient institutional dominance during its second term in office to cement neo-patrimonial rule.

In contrast to carbon-rich Russia, Turkey's political economy lacks any highly prized energy resources as a base for patrimonial rentierism. However, after the severe economic crash in 2001, an IMF reform program brought about strong economic growth and stability during a period of high global liquidity compared to the unstable and recessionary 1990s. This economic stability and the unprecedented inflow of foreign direct investment contributed strongly to the AKP's consecutive electoral victories since 2002. Its strong expansion of the public welfare system, bolstered by its nation-wide system of charitable patronage (Öniş 2012, 140), significant infrastructural investment targeted at the growing middle classes, and

its conservative-traditional outlook and image, allowed the AKP to fashion together strong, broad-based electoral support. Simultaneously, it gained the support of a strong and diverse coalition of economic interest-groups benefitting from the economic stability. Establishing electoral hegemony through consecutive electoral victories, the ruling party horizontally and vertically institutionalized its dominance across government, state and society, neutralising the Turkish armed forces politically. Its electoral hegemony and state capture paved the way for marked abuse of power, corruption and the increased blurring of state-government boundaries, abuse of power and corruption (Çarkoğlu 2011, 43). This dynamic began to accelerate sharply following the AKP's third electoral victory in 2011.

However, whilst both cases provide examples of the mobilization of regime support through the redistribution of rents, in contrast to the Russian case, the AKP's combination of increasing electoral authoritarianism and neo-patrimonial governance only began to be seriously institutionalized after 2010-2011, proving too fragile to eliminate elite conflicts. This was especially seen in the growing rift between groups around Erdoğan and the Gülen movement which erupted in late 2013, causing considerable domestic turmoil and paralysis (Savran 2015, 83). The July 2016 coup attempt can be partially seen as a further mutation deriving from this confrontation. In contrast, Russia's neo-patrimonial system helped to avoid elite conflict by binding political elites together and mobilising wider popular support through the dispersal of rents.

## ***2. State capacity – a framework for discussion***

Academic literature on state capacity has tended to focus primarily on the state's role in consolidating democratization. In an ideal democracy, unthinkable in the absence of an established state (Linz and Stepan 1996, 17), we would expect the private interests of the ruler and officials to be largely institutionalized, an independent judiciary would enjoy the confidence of the citizens and the state would be served by disciplined and honest police forces. Moreover, in a democratic state, taxes would be collected 'according to laws that treated categories of citizens more or less equally and for public purposes' (Linz 1997, 118). The Russian and Turkish regimes' lack of democratic credentials should not, however, preclude us from analysing the relationship between state capacity and regime resilience. Whilst the state-democracy link is certainly prevalent in scholarly research, some have sought to identify ways in which state capacity stabilizes authoritarian systems both in the former Soviet Union (Way 2005) and the Middle East (Bellin 2004). As Andersen et al note, although the mechanisms may differ (administrative capacity being more significant for democratic stability and coercive capacity more important in the case of autocratic systems) state capacity has the potential to sustain authoritarian systems just as much as it stabilizes democracies (2014, 1305).

State capacity, however, remains a slippery concept to define. Whilst it is not within the scope of this paper to provide a detailed overview of the myriad of contrasting definitions, a brief analysis of scholarly works on the topic (Andersen *et al* 2014; Darden 2008; Fortin



2010; Hanson and Sigman 2011; Melville and Stukal 2012; Migdal 1998) reveals only one commonly agreed indicator of state capacity: that of the state's ability to raise taxes. Indeed, one of the main impediments to the effective comparative analysis of state capacity in any given country or countries is the expansiveness of the concept to include elements such as social stability, the existence of secessionist tendencies and incidences of conflict and legitimacy (Fortin 2010, 656). For the sake of comparative clarity therefore we utilize a parsimonious definition based on three dimensions of state capacity: extractive (and, by extension, redistributive) capacity, coercive capacity and administrative capacity. These three dimensions provide the basis of a functioning modern state and, as Hanson and Sigman (2013, 3) note, accord with what Skocpol argues are the components of state capacity: plentiful resources, administrative-military control of a territory and loyal and skilled officials (1985, 16).

As noted above, *extractive* capacity, and particularly the capacity of the state to collect tax revenue, is most frequently identified by scholars as the key component underpinning state capacity. Those states in which governments are unable to finance their activities are unlikely to exhibit strong state capacity. As Easter contends, revenue, 'enhances state strength, and strong states claim more revenue' (2002, 603). Analysing the link between state capacity and regime resilience, Andersen *et al's* findings point to a clear and positive correlation between levels of extractive capacity and the stability of authoritarian regimes (2014, 1315-6).

*Coercive* capacity can be seen as having two distinct dimensions: the repressive or coercive capacities of a state and the level of autonomy of the state from social pressures (Fortin-Rittberger 2014, 1245). The first dimension is measured not just by the size of coercive forces but by the amount of control the state is able to exercise over them. The second dimension focuses on the operational independence of the regime from other institutions. Regimes relatively free of constitutional constraints are likely to exhibit higher levels of coercive power (2014, 1251). In the context of authoritarian settings, as state agencies are made to serve 'partisan political ends' (Way 2006, 167), coercive power is maintained and marshalled not simply to police wider society to prevent the emergence of horizontal threats but also lateral threats in the form of intra-regime challenges or palace coups.

*Administrative* capacity, although a broader concept than the previous two elements, might be best seen as 'the ability to develop policy, the ability to produce and deliver public goods and services, and the ability to regulate commercial activity' (Hanson and Sigman 2013, 4). An effectively administered state requires certain levels of technical competence, trusted and professional state officials, transparent monitoring and coordination mechanisms, and effective reach across the state's territory and its citizens (ibid.). As noted above, we might expect administrative effectiveness to be a more significant factor in the stabilization of democratic rather than authoritarian systems. However, as Andersen et al (2014, 1308) note the greatest source of legitimacy in democratic systems is performance, if a state is unable to deliver effective economic growth and redistribution it runs the risk of democratic breakdown. Whilst authoritarian systems are able to rely on coercion and repression to counteract less effective performance, in the long term they too are likely to be more stable if they are administered effectively. However, the 'dual' nature of administrative institutions in

authoritarian or semi-authoritarian settings in which these are subjected to neo-patrimonial partisan politicization (Way 2006, 170), may put more pressure on administrative efficiency than in democratic contexts.

### ***3. Comparing the cases***

#### *3.1. Coercive capacity*

Michael Mann conceptualized coercive, or ‘despotic’ power as the ‘range of actions which the elite is empowered to undertake without routine, institutionalized negotiation with civil society groups’. In contrast infrastructural power reflected the state’s capacity to ‘penetrate civil society and to implement logistically political decisions throughout the realm’ (1984, 188). Mann expected the typical capitalist democracy to be ‘despotically weak’ but infrastructurally strong (1984, 189). In the Russian and Turkish case, however, Mann’s notion is clearly reversed. Both states appear to exhibit relatively strong despotic or coercive capacity but are much weaker in terms of their infrastructural and administrative capacity.

The size and influence of Russia’s coercive institutions is self-evident. The Russian state has allocated vast resources to support its military, shown by its capacity to intervene militarily in neighbouring sovereign states (Georgia in 1998, Ukraine in 2014-5). Moreover, under Putin we have witnessed an increasing concentration of power and resources in the *siloviki*, those in the ‘power ministries’, notably representing the armed and security forces, the Federal Security Service (FSB), the Interior Ministry and the police. Coercive power therefore not only provides the Russian state with the capacity for military intervention in what it regards as its ‘near abroad’ but is also used to insulate the regime from potential social pressures particularly through the routine harassment of civil society activists, political opposition activists and the breaking up of peaceful protests and demonstrations. There is a danger, however, in over-estimating Russian coercive capacity. As Sinovets and Renz (2015, 5-6) highlight, although Russia’s military capabilities have undoubtedly improved under Putin, such developments must be seen in the context of years of neglect in the 1990s. What we have seen under Putin are essentially ‘salvaging measures’ rather than a significant increase in Russian military capacity, the Russian defence budget still remains significantly lower than that of the United States or China. The limits of Russian coercive capacity can also be seen in the case of the restive Chechen republic where a failing military strategy was replaced by a policy of ‘normalization’ which effectively outsourced governance to the ruling warlord in the region, Ramzan Kadyrov.

On the domestic front the Russian regime has had sufficient coercive capacity to convince citizens not to take to the streets in protest. Just occasionally, however, the regime miscalculates. Tens of thousands demonstrated during the winter of 2011-12 following the flawed parliamentary elections and a sense of growing disillusionment with the announcement that Putin would be returning to stand in the 2012 presidential election. The costs of suppressing such large-scale protests, both in terms of domestic and international reaction, were simply too high for the authorities. As Stepan (1990, 46) notes, when facing a

potential challenge to its legitimacy, a regime previously content to use coercive measures against small-scale protest may instead opt for tolerance. The regime's pragmatic recognition of this dynamic serves to highlight the limits of Russian coercive capacity.

In Turkey, the trajectory of state development during the Ottoman and republican periods privileged a top-down, centralist logic of rule with a strong coercive capacity broadly preserved in the republican polity. Turkey's armed forces currently constitute NATO's second-biggest military force. Mirroring the debate on the relationship between coercive and infrastructural power, Kalaycıoğlu (2012, 173) argues that the state's strongly developed coercive focus actually hides its weak distributive capacity in the provision of public goods. The 2000s did see civil-military relations in Turkey transformed to an extent that weakened the tutelary hold of the armed forces over civilian politics although the July 2016 coup attempt showed that they were not as defanged as previously presumed. However, the police, the intelligence apparatuses and the judiciary simultaneously became overtly politicized by the government to pursue a variety of groups deemed as hostile and treasonous. As these arms of the state received increasing, often discretionary, powers, public dissidence and contention became increasingly policed, securitized and penalized. The wide range of repressive measures the government applied to discipline parliamentary and extra-parliamentary forms of opposition and criticism drew increasing comparisons with Putin's Russia (Göcer Akder and Herzog 2014, 510). Arguably in contrast to Russia, the shift of the Erdoğan-led AKP government, from a democratizing regime (2002-2010/11) to an increasingly authoritarian one after 2010-2011 was so rapid and fraught with tensions and contradictions that the emerging regime felt driven and empowered to harshly quash any challenges within the state or in public in accordance with Turkey's tradition of state repression. The immediate and harsh repression of the Gezi protests in the summer of 2013, in which 8,000 people were estimated to have been injured and eight people killed, can be seen as a key critical juncture that marked the sharpening of the regime's evolving authoritarianism.

Clearly, in both cases, what coercive state capacity exists has been drawn on to bolster the regimes. A key difference is in the use of *external* coercive capacity. Although the extent of Russian military capacity may be questioned, it has been used by the Putin regime as a foreign policy tool to exert Russian influence in the former Soviet space which, in turn, has fed into a developing national-patriotic narrative which has further served to entrench the regime. Commonalities between the two cases are more obvious in the use of coercive capacity to combat domestic dissent. The only difference here is that Russia has yet to face a domestic challenge on the scale of the Gezi Park protests. Indeed the regime's response to the 2011-12 protests suggests the regime is more likely to adopt a pragmatic approach in order to maintain its stability. In Turkey, the regime's increasingly hard edge following the 2013 Gezi protests, the government's rift with the Gülen movement and the Kurdish conflict's full re-emergence in the 2015 summer, makes it probable that a more repressive stance will remain the norm. The violent coup attempt in July 2016, partially orchestrated by Gülenist circles within the military apparently, is likely to reinforce this development.

### 3.2. *Extractive capacity*

As noted above, a state's ability to extract sufficient resources to fund its activities forms the basis of strong state capacity. Russia's economic crisis of 1998 culminating in the devaluation of the rouble and the default on foreign loans was partly the result of the decline in world oil prices but, more importantly, it was also the outcome of a hugely inefficient tax system and an ingrained resistance to paying taxes on the part of powerful regions and corporations (Taylor 2011, 100). Russia's weakened fiscal capacity by the end of the 1990s was primarily the outcome of its choice of revenue extraction. The redistribution of resources after the collapse of communism was very much an elite phenomenon, a strategy of elite bargaining at the centre of the state's revenue extraction. This was essentially a system which drew on the practices of the old command economy combined with the new conditions of the transition economy and was based on a set of informal elite relations between regional governors, corporate directors and private financiers (Easter 2002). Brinkmanship typified the 1990s with powerful Russian regions negotiating preferable tax deals with an increasingly weakened centre. Neither could the state rely on tax revenues from the corporate sector which was busy cutting deals with central government to reduce their tax burdens in return for significantly decreasing the cost of supplying goods and services to the public sector. By 1997, this arrangement alone was costing the Russian state 30 billion dollars a year (Easter 2002, 617).

The capacity of the Russian state to collect taxes has improved under Putin following the reining in of regional power and the 'taming of the oligarchs'. The administration should also be credited for increasing revenue extraction through a series of tax reforms early in Putin's first term (Jones Luong and Weinthal, 2004). However, the problem remains for Russia in that, like many Middle Eastern states, state revenue is derived almost entirely from natural resources. Not only does this have serious implications for Russia's continued economic development it also undermines its state capacity. States that are able to develop a more inclusive, wider, dispersed model of tax collection are likely to exhibit greater state capacity. The taxing of hydrocarbons where the state is in control of the sector is relatively easy. A much greater degree of administrative capacity is required to tax millions of citizens than a few oil giants. Extraction of rents, however, is only half the picture. More importantly, the way in which rent is redistributed is a key factor which, to date, has served to consolidate the Putin regime.

Russian oil and gas rents serve two main purposes. Firstly, they have been used to subsidize Russia's unprofitable dependent sector and maintain acceptable levels of employment. Secondly they have been used to secure support for the regime from the wider population, particularly pensioners, and those whose salaries are paid by the state such as doctors, nurses and teachers, civil servants and the security services. All of these groups have enjoyed increases in salaries, pensions and benefits during the Putin years as a direct result of the redistribution of rents (Kastueva-Jean 2015, 11). However, the long-term sustainability of this model is questionable. As Connolly notes, enterprises in the over taxed rent-producing sector have little incentive in investing in developing infrastructure leading inevitably to declining production (exacerbated currently by depressed oil prices) and a concomitant decline in the amount of rent available to prop up the dependent sector (2015, 15).

Whilst Russia's extractive capacity has stabilized and consolidated the Putin regime by utilizing rent from the gas and oil sector to keep political elites on board and to protect the dependent sector, a state with such a narrow model of tax collection cannot be said to have strong and sustainable extractive capacity. Moreover, the declining price of oil not only undermines the Russian state's extractive capacity, but also threatens the regime's hitherto successful strategy of rent distribution. Efforts to move away from the rentier model have, indeed, been made through a series of anti-crisis measures in 2015. The risks, in terms of undermining popular and economic elite support for the regime have been recognized (Mau, 2016). It was clear that, with the slowdown of the Russian economy since 2009 and the strain on the regime's capacity to use rents to maintain support, an alternative means of mobilization was required. The nationalist turn in Russian politics during Putin's third term following the annexation of Crimea and support for Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine appears, in the short term, to have successfully replaced the benefits of economic growth in providing effective means of mobilizing regime support.

In the Turkish case, state capacity has traditionally suffered from significant weaknesses in collecting tax revenue, highly uneven rates of economic development and the persistent presence of a large grey sector, estimated to constitute a third of economic activity. Adaman and Çarkoğlu (2013, 250) show that widespread tax evasion in society is conditioned by low trust in political institutions and the state. Unlike Russia, Turkey never had recourse to any valuable energy resources with which to offset this. Nevertheless, following a severe economic crash in 2002, the imposition of a very effective IMF reform programme and the emergence of a EU membership prospect, the economy went through a period of robust economic growth in the following decade. The country became regarded as a BRICS-style economic powerhouse with exports standing at \$115bn in 2011 (Herzog 2014, 11). However, due to the chronic condition of low tax receipts and private savings this economic growth was highly dependent on foreign capital, much of it speculative, and a favourable climate of global liquidity to finance state investments and balance the current account deficit. Persistent crises in the global economy in recent years, the unstable aftermath of the 2011 Arab uprisings as well as domestic political turmoil in Turkey however have clipped economic growth in the last years and held off badly-needed foreign direct investment.

This overall dynamic became combined with a reinforced tendency in recent years of the AKP government to instrumentalize its central control over investments, privatization and tenders as a neo-patrimonial basis to consolidate its position by binding friendly economic interests to it. Simultaneously, oppositional business groups were sometimes punished either through large tax fines, as with the Dogan media group in 2009, or the direct take-over of companies in recent years, as with the Gülenist Asya Bank and the Zaman newspaper group. In the second half of the AKP's rule, economic and financial policy- and decision-making has been re-centralized with formal and bureaucratic processes and rules increasingly 'side-stepped' in favour of informal networks and relations (Bekmen 2014, 72). Real-estate, property and the construction sector have become key sectors of rent distribution to which economic activity has increasingly gravitated (Pérouse 2015, 172).

Like Turkey, it was seen that Russia experienced a decade of economic growth benefitting from the favourable global economic climate and high oil and gas prices which strengthened the Putin regime. The petrol-dependency of the economy and the government's control over it provide a powerful source of rent income and political tool for domestic domination that the Turkish regime lacks. However, when it comes to the subordination of economic interest groups in Russia and their institutionalization within the Putin regime as evidenced by the Khodorkovsky case, one has seen a similar dynamic becoming increasingly visible in Turkey in recent years accompanying the overall authoritarian shift.

### *3.3. Administrative capacity*

Administrative capacity is inherently more challenging to measure than both coercive and extractive capacity. One might consider institutional quality or the capacity to deliver public services and maintain a country's infrastructure, for instance. Here we focus on two central features of governance: the enforcement of property rights and the state's capacity to effectively tackle corruption.

The recognition and defence of property rights might be seen as a cornerstone of state capacity. However, we should recognize that a state that is sufficiently capable of enforcing property rights may also be strong enough to confiscate wealth and property (Fortin 2010, 662). Whilst there have been some improvements in Russian state capacity in the realm of property rights during the Putin era, there are important caveats. The state's role in regulating the economic sphere was indeed minimal during the 'bandit capitalism' years of the early 1990s when Russia's private economy was effectively ruled over by organized criminal groups, private security agencies and 'moonlighting' state police and security officers. Extortion rackets and contract killings were commonplace (Gans-Morse 2013, 262; Volkov 2002, 1). On coming to power, Vladimir Putin emphasized that the protection of property rights was to be a key task of Russian law enforcement (Taylor 2011, 102).

However, since 2000, the bandit has effectively been replaced by corrupt state officials who have been able to use judicial and coercive powers to aid aggressive enterprise takeovers (Volkov 2002, 1). The state's sequestration of Mikhail Khodorkovsky's Yukos oil corporation (whose assets were secretly transferred to the state-owned Rosneft oil company while the former Yukos chief languished in a Siberian jail) may be a high profile example but Gans-Morse highlights the routinized harassment of businesses by low-paid, low-level state officials often acting on behalf of competitors in disputes (2012, 279-80). Putin's reassertion of state power in the sphere of property rights, therefore, has provided greater opportunities for state officials to use arbitrary coercion and has not enhanced either the rule of law or greater regulative capacity (Tompson 2005).

Corruption is a key indicator of the state's capability to regulate transactions and is at the heart of any definition of state capacity (Fortin 2010, 664). The degree to which corruption is controlled, coupled with the maintenance of high levels of transparency and accountability in governmental institutions further contributes to the strength of the state (Fukuyama 2004, 22). Corruption weakens state capacity through the siphoning of state resources and its very

existence weakens the state by undermining public support in state institutions. Any investigation into a state's capacity cannot, therefore, ignore the issue of corruption and the steps taken by the state to counter it. Both Presidents Putin and Medvedev have acknowledged the threat posed by the pervasive nature of corruption in Russia. In 2006 Putin contrasted his administration with the lawlessness of the Yeltsin era but admitted that corruption remained a serious problem (Putin, 2006). During his four years in office (2008-12) Dmitry Medvedev made fighting corruption one of the cornerstones of his presidency, unveiling a National Anti-Corruption plan in 2010 aimed at mobilising the state and civil society in the war on corruption. On his return to the presidency, Putin revisited the topic, highlighting poor governmental efficiency and corruption as factors that were not compatible with the type of 'modern public administration' he wished to see develop in Russia (Putin, 2012). Despite the concerns consistently expressed by both presidents it is clear that, faced with the enormity of the task, there has been a lack of political will to tackle corruption.

However, whilst the persistence and pervasiveness of corruption in post-Soviet Russia clearly undermines infrastructural state capacity it also plays an important role in sustaining regime capacity. As Darden argues, graft (or political corruption) can serve as a form of 'unofficial compensation that reinforces rather than undermines the formal institutions of the state' (2008, 36). Practices seen as being corrupt in Western democracies are embedded in the Russian system and indeed necessary for that system to function (Tsygankov 2014, 180).

In Turkey, although legal frameworks on property rights have existed since the late Ottoman period and were further strengthened following the 1946 introduction of multi-party elections, recurring periods of political and macro-economic instability kept them relatively weak (Pamuk 2008, 299). The emergence of EU membership prospects in 1999 led to an improvement of property rights frameworks and in 2003 legislation was drafted to solidify them (Gürleyen 2014, 122). A 2006 EU accession progress report stated that property rights enforcement was sufficiently established in legal frameworks although their implementation was patchy (Faucompret and Konings 2006, 69). However, the state can easily confiscate and expropriate land property under 'public good' provisions and, as previously stated, has also increasingly resorted to placing economic holdings under direct administration or put pressure to have them sold off.

Although corruption is a widespread phenomenon in Turkey, the shift from import substitution industrialization in the 1980s towards a free market economy integrated into global markets led to a marked increase in corrupt government practices (Kayaalp 2015, 25). By the early 2000s a strong push was made towards formulating anti-corruption policies based on good governance and signing up to major international and EU treaties like the Council of Europe Civil Law Convention on Corruption (2003), the Criminal Law Convention on Corruption (2003), and the UN Convention against Corruption (2006). Initially the AKP initially actively campaigned against corrupt governance practices and in its early period several legislative packages focusing partly on anti-corruption measures were pushed through. These efforts had a positive effect in the mid-2000s as international indices such as Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI) showed although it also captured how the situation again deteriorated in recent years (Ulusoy 2014, 4-5). The

2015 CPI notes a 'marked deterioration' in Turkey (Transparency International 2016, 13). In a 2015 TI survey half the respondents stated that corruption had increased in recent years with a culture of impunity existing within public institutions, municipal administrations and political parties (Uluslararası Şeffaflık Derneği 2015, 8-9).

The AKP's electoral dominance since 2002 led to the establishment of a hegemonic party system that weakened the political opposition's ability to play an effective role and enabled increasing power fusion and state capture. This dynamic has encouraged increasing non-transparency, abuse of power and the onset of pervasive corruption within the ruling circle. According to Bedirhanoğlu (2015), corruption became unprecedentedly 'systematic and institutionalized', particularly in the latter half of the AKP's period in office. In this context, in December 2013 a large judiciary corruption investigation was pointing to involvement at the highest levels of government (Savran 2015, 82-83). Although this investigation was sparked by the intra-regime rivalry between the Erdoğan and Gülenist camps, it spotlighted deep governmental interlinkages with systematic, pervasive corruption. These dealings particularly regarding wide-scale urban redevelopment, the construction industry and privatization efforts allowed the creation of informal and discretionary funds (Bedirhanoğlu 2015). Through these neo-patrimonial linkages and networks, it benefited from being a central player in corrupt governance practices by strengthening its own regime at the expense of state capacity.

In both cases, the development of administrative state capacity has been ignored whilst the precariousness of property rights and the lack of political will to seriously tackle corrupt practices have reinforced neo-patrimonialism. The interesting difference and one which again points to the greater stability of the Russian regime is the issue of elite cohesion. In Russia, the redistribution of rents, in part the result of weak property rights and endemic corruption, has worked to keep elites on board. As Taylor succinctly puts it, the Russian ruling elite have been 'more interested in looting the state than building it' (2011, 310-11). The reassertion of state power in Russia has not been reflected in a greater regulative capacity but the increased provision of informal rent redistribution. Similarly, authoritarian transformations in Turkey reversed a trend towards more effective and transparent regulatory governance and facilitated the pervasion of informal clientelism as a crucial plank of regime building and consolidation but they also unleashed severe internal conflicts at elite level over control of the party, the government and the state.

## **Conclusion**

Despite its state-building rhetoric, the Putin administration has always been far more concerned with strengthening the regime. Central to this project has been the extraction and redistribution of rents from the oil and gas sector, the tolerance of high levels of corruption, the use of coercive tactics to marginalize political and civil opposition and the mobilising of regime support through economic and nationalist appeals. Any incentive to increase state capacity is outweighed by a desire to maintain regime stability. The preservation of the



regime has become the key goal for the Russian ruling elite. During the Medvedev 'interregnum' (2008-12) period the narrative of modernization suggested this model could be challenged but it has become increasingly evident that even if a constituency within the elite were to seek changes aimed at increasing state capacity by improving the quality of governance, such 'good intentions' would make little headway. Political actors lack incentives to carry out reforms and in any event would swiftly realize the impossibility of implementing changes without also risking their own positions (Gel'man 2011, 225-226). As Robinson notes, the rejection of Medvedev's modernization project effectively meant that the only option for the regime was to restore Putin's dominance of the political system and develop a 'cultural turn' in which conservative Russian traditionalism would be promoted in order to stabilize the neo-patrimonial system (2014, 26-7). Bolstered by events in Ukraine and the promotion of anti-Western sentiment in response to sanctions, this cultural turn has indeed stabilized Russia but at a cost. Russian governance seems destined to stagnate, evoking notions of the phenomenon of *zastoi* (stagnation) associated with the late Brezhnev period. As Robinson concludes, the Ukrainian crisis will not last for ever and in time the regime will be confronted again with the need to address its weak state capacity or to find another means of mobilising sufficient support to sustain the regime (2014, 36-7).

In the Turkish case, the AKP's origins in the traditionally marginalized political Islamist movement in a more polarized and fractured socio-political environment with considerably more resilient democratic institutions meant that it took longer to undertake a gradual authoritarian turn. The AKP first had to establish its political dominance through repeated electoral victories, partially based on presiding over a period of economic growth and stability and a reasonably inclusive catch-all electoral strategy. Furthermore, the party's links to a wider political Islamist movement hampered the process of establishing sufficient elite cohesion around Erdoğan's exclusive leadership of the AKP. Indeed, the 'civil-war' (Savran 2015, 82) inside the party and state with the religious Gülen movement since winter 2013 which extended into the July 2016 coup attempt exemplifies this very well. The Turkish state's coercive, extractive and administrative capacities were not instrumentalized as capably as in Russia for the sake of regime building as the authoritarian shift only began to take off in earnest in 2010-2011 allowing for far less time. The unavailability of stable sources of rentier income meant it was more difficult to maintain the loyalty of political and business elites as well as wider society through sufficient and pervasive rent distribution. Moreover, Turkey's economic troubles in recent years, based on its reliance on external investment and low tax receipts as well as private savings, damaged the government's narrative of competent economic governance.

The increasing resort to repressive authoritarianism in recent years in Turkey's electoral democratic polity seemed to have sufficiently deterred any further lateral and horizontal challenges, facilitating regime consolidation. However, the July 2016 coup attempt highlighted the extent to which elite conflicts and lateral challenges, the latest from within the armed forces, persist. This came at the expense of exacerbating an overarching sense of institutional and societal uncertainty and polarization, compounded by the regional turmoil following the Arab Uprisings and the renewed Kurdish conflict. This political atmosphere

and the steady authoritarian regime building since 2010-11 re-activated identitarian cleavage structures in Turkish politics that made the AKP's consensualist, catch-all image unsustainable and made it adopt an increasingly religio-conservative, nationalist discourse. The AKP's November 2015 re-election with a renewed single-party mandate and a clear parliamentary majority seemingly reflected popular preferences for stable if authoritarian governance and regime building during a period of domestic instability and unrest. This however also came at the expense of diminishing the state and government's capacity to address major problems and issues such as the Kurdish conflict through democratic politics and governance.

From a comparative perspective the Russian and Turkish cases have much to contribute, providing fertile soil for the study of state capacity and illiberal or non-democratic regimes. One valuable lesson might be to focus less on simply labelling such systems as competitive or electoral authoritarian and to concern ourselves rather more with the degree of government and the state's capacity to govern (Stoner-Weiss 2011, 11-12). Both cases but perhaps the Russian case in particular, alert us to the dangers of viewing the building of state capacity as crucial in determining the long-term survival of the state, be it democratic or authoritarian. As Andersen et al note for an autocratic ruler with sufficient support and resources to resist external challenges, the building of conventional state capacity may be unnecessary (2014, 1317).

Both the Putin and Erdoğan regimes have rejected the challenge of tackling the long-term development of state capacity in favour of the short-term utilization of what state capacity exists to bolster and consolidate the regime itself. While both regimes may appear impregnable as a result of this strategy, the long-term durability of neo-patrimonialism can be questioned. Continued economic decline, exacerbated in the Russian case by Western sanctions, may put intolerable strains on the rentier model. The Putin regime has already responded to the undermining of its rent redistribution model by adopting an overtly national-patriotic appeal in the wake of the Ukraine crisis which has successfully served to mobilize regime support. Russia's 'national turn' can only ever be a short-term measure and the Kremlin's apparent impregnability began to be questioned in 2016 in view of its lack of capacity to reform, its inability to address its worsening economic plight and its increasingly dysfunctional infrastructure (Petrov 2016; Motyl 2016). To ensure long-term survival both regimes will need to identify other means of mobilising sufficient support or increase levels of coercion to counter increasing social unrest. A further option for both Russia and Turkey would be to turn their attention to the development of state capacity through the implementation of thorough-going political and economic reforms. Such a change in strategy would inevitably lead to regime change and so, as long as regime survival remains the key objective for political elites in both countries, regime strengthening is likely to remain a far more attractive proposition than the building of state capacity.

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