

Shaping Civic Advocacy: International and Domestic Policies towards Russia's NGO  
Sector

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In the past few decades, civil society organizations have grown in number and variety in virtually every region of the world, creating what some have termed a “global associational revolution.” Whether referred to as civil society, the “nonprofit”, “voluntary,” “nongovernmental,” or “third” sector, the expansion of this social space in the late twentieth and early twenty first century, some argue, may match the significance of the rise of the nation state in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>1</sup>

This expansion has been mirrored by an increased scholarly interest in understanding more clearly what has contributed to the emergence, structure, and impact of this sector. Domestic factors, such as the legal environment, levels of organizational capacity, financial viability, and infrastructural support, as well as larger socioeconomic and political environments all facilitate nongovernmental organizations’ abilities to provide social services for their clients and to function as advocates for their constituents’ needs. In addition, the international context has also become an important variable; since the 1980s, bilateral and multilateral development agencies, as well as various private foundations have become actively involved in providing technical and financial assistance to civil society organizations in primarily developing and democratizing regions of the world, in the hopes of strengthening the nonprofit sector, and by extension, civil society, and often, ultimately, democracy.

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<sup>1</sup> Lester M. Salamon, S. Wojciech Sokolowski, and Regina List, *Global Civil Society: An Overview* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Center for Civil Society Studies, 2003) 1-2.

Nonprofit sectors arising out of the ashes of communist systems in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union are faced with particular challenges. In the 1990s, many governments, in addition to addressing daunting economic and political transitions, faced a significant social transition as well – creating a culture and institutional infrastructure to facilitate civic voluntarism – often in an unfriendly and hostile socioeconomic environment. Often, nonprofit sectors were starting from scratch, in that independent organizations were previously illegal; yet, social norms and patterns of association were still heavily influenced by the communist past. And governments were often overwhelmed by the task of drafting and bolstering the regulatory framework to support, not only a nonprofit sector (which was often not a top priority), but an institutional democracy and market economy as well. Further, the international community, inspired by the romantic image of “people power” in Eastern Europe, dramatically stepped up levels of funding and support for technical assistance for fledgling nonprofit organizations, often focusing on providing support to NGOs that mimicked Western style advocacy organizations that worked on democracy related issues, such as human rights, women’s rights, etc.

Of all postcommunist cases, perhaps the challenge to the Russian nonprofit sector has been one of the most daunting. As one analysis claimed, after a decade of independent organization, by the turn of the century, Russian “civil society is not well, but it is alive.”<sup>2</sup> This pessimistic prognosis about civil society, and indirectly democracy has intensified since the ascension in 2000 of Vladimir Putin to the Presidency. While President Yeltsin was relatively indifferent to the emerging sphere of independent social

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<sup>2</sup> Michael A. McFaul, “Introduction,” in *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Affairs* 10:2 (Spring 2002): 116.

organization, President Putin has implemented a variety of policies that has the potential to dramatically reshape the nonprofit sector. Stating a desire to directly involve Russia's citizens in Russia's regeneration, the Putin administration has among other things, created a federal level Civic Chamber to advise the Duma on social issues, increased funding for nongovernmental organizations, and urged businesses to give to "appropriate" charitable causes. This has been combined with a hostility towards Western donors and their efforts to promote the development of a nonprofit sector (and indirectly, democracy) in Russia. This, in part, analysts argue, prompted the passage of new legislation in 2006 governing NGO registration and state oversight. All of these developments have generated controversy over the level of influence the Kremlin wants to have regarding how individuals define, articulate and pursue their interests. For the most part, Western interpretations of Kremlin policies vis a vis NGOs has been largely negative; as one critic has argued, these policies are "virtually strangling" NGOs.<sup>3</sup>

This paper asks how the political environment created by President Putin impacts the emergence of advocacy NGOs, and how this differs from the Yeltsin era, when the domestic government did relatively little to either facilitate or impede NGO development, and when foreign donors were the key financial, and, at times, moral supporters of civic initiatives. Does the new regulatory framework, creation of the Public Chamber and federal funding sources in fact influence the emergence of NGOs? And, more broadly, how do states, particularly in newly democratizing countries, encourage or retard the development of a nonprofit sector? Drawing from interviews and survey data collected from NGOs in eight cities in five regions from 2002 – 2004 as well as primary documents

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<sup>3</sup> Liliana K. Proskuryakova, "Russian Civil Society Will Find it Harder to Breathe." YaleGlobal 8 December 2005. Available at [yaleglobal.yale.edu/display.article?id=6607](http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/display.article?id=6607).

from Russian NGOs and government bodies, this paper argues that the Putin policies have had a significant impact on NGOs, but often in unexpected and unusual ways.<sup>4</sup>

### **NGO emergence**

What factors facilitate the emergence of NGO sectors, and advocacy NGOs? And what is the role of the state in facilitating, impeding, or shaping the incentives and costs of organizing? The answers to these questions are complicated by the fact that two threads of scholarship tend to give competing, and sometimes contradictory answers. While civil society literature tends to focus on organizations' abilities to counter state power, the NGO literature tends to be much more pragmatic, focusing on NGO's legal autonomy but simultaneously recognizing the significance of their partnership activities with the state. These two views create particular problems for interpreting the development of the nonprofit sector in Russia.

On the one hand, civil society refers to the space of "uncoerced human association and also the set of relational networks...that fill this space."<sup>5</sup> This focus on the autonomous nature of civil society emphasizes the space's separation from the state. And in practice, the collapse of Communism revived the interest in civil society as an anti-statist project, in that it served as a critical bulwark against overencroaching state power. At the same time, however, the state is actively involved in terms of institutionalizing the space through laws, regulatory frameworks defining the space as

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<sup>4</sup> Regions covered are Central Russia (Moscow), Southern Russia (Rostov and Krasnodar), Urals (Ekaterinburg), Siberia (Irkutsk and Novosibirsk) and the Russian Far East (Novosibirsk and Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk). In addition, the author draw from interviews with NGOs activists, local government officials, and USAID officials resulting from her participation as the civil society expert for the assessment of USAID's Democracy program (ARD, Inc., Democracy Assessment: Political Process, Local Governance, and Civil Society. Final Report. January 2005) as well as her authorship of the Russia section of *The 2004 NGO Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia*.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Walzer, "The Civil Society Argument," in Chantal Mouffe, ed. *Dimensions of Radical Democracy: Pluralism, Citizenship, Community* (New York: Verso, 1992): 89.

well as citizens' rights to maneuver within it. As Cohen and Arato argue, "both independent action and institutionalization are necessary for the reproduction of civil society."<sup>6</sup> And as Michael Walzer points out, the state "fixes the boundary conditions and the basic rules of all associational activity." He continues: "Civil society requires political agency. And the state is an indispensable agent – even if the associational networks also, always, resist the organizing principles of state bureaucrats."<sup>7</sup>

In practice, the rise of the nonprofit sector in the post World War II era has complicated the already complex theoretical relationship between the state and civil society, for governments have become critical players in influencing both the supply of and demand for advocacy NGOs. Rather than serving as neutral actors that respond to advocacy pressures, they can raise or lower the costs of organization and operation. Legislation often stipulates conditions for NGO registration, operation, and reasons for dissolution. Further, states can potentially encourage the growth of the nonprofit sector by passing laws, which, for example, grant NGOs tax exemptions, or provide tax deductions for corporate and individual giving to nonprofits. Legislation regulating NGO earned income, allowance to compete for government contracts and procurements are other ways in which states can impact the shape of the nonprofit sector.

In addition, governments (often in response to citizen mobilization) have added what is known as "policy machinery," or formal and informal systematic links between policy makers and organized segments of the public. Often, these mechanisms take the form of government bodies, such as Commissions, Panels, etc devoted to promoting particular interests, such as women's rights, human rights, environmental rights, etc. The

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<sup>6</sup> Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (Cambridge: the MIT Press, 1992): ix.

<sup>7</sup> Walzer, 104.

establishment of this machinery has often been seen as a critical development for advocacy groups seeking to gain access to and influence on the state.<sup>8</sup> Thus, NGOs “partner” with as well as advocate governments in other ways, by providing input on initiatives, commenting on legislation, drafting legislation, or providing other forms of expertise.

Further, the expansion of the welfare state, and states’ efforts to offload some of their responsibilities onto NGOs has meant that NGOs now wear many different hats in their relationship vis a vis states. With regard to social service provision, they have become critical partners, implementing programs, often with state funding. This source of income for NGOs is significant; worldwide, while fees are the largest source of support for NGO sectors (53 percent), governments provide 35 percent of NGO funding, while the private sector, in the form of philanthropy, provides a mere 12 percent of NGO budgets.<sup>9</sup> Strong state support tends to facilitate NGO emergence; a comparative study of NGO sectors found a positive relationship between the monetary level of support for nonprofit organizations and the size of the nonprofit sector. All of these trends certainly complicate the theoretical concept of civil society’s autonomous status from the state. This trend has also complicated the actual relationships between organizations and the state, both in terms of how they organize, how they are funded, and how they interact with their constituencies and the state.

For post Communist countries, this complex relationship, which evolved over decades of interaction between states and societies in Western Europe, developed differently. After the collapse of communist systems from 1989 – 1991, nonprofit sectors

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<sup>8</sup> Stetson and Mazur, 1995.

<sup>9</sup> See Lester M. Salamon, “Global Civil Society: An Overview,” the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project, 2003.

and the governments regulating them were on an enormous learning curve. At the domestic level, for many citizens, the idea, let alone the practice of independent association was relatively new. Newly elected governments established the regulatory framework to allow NGOs to operate, and potentially flourish, by guaranteeing basic freedoms such as those of assembly and association, as well as more specific regulations encouraging the emergence of a nonprofit sector. At the international level, many donors hoped to export patterns of civic associationism to areas of the world that had little domestic preconditions for independent civic activism, and funded a variety of projects that provided technical and financial assistance to thousands of newly formed NGOs.

This task was particularly difficult in Russia, where Soviet patterns of associationism were inculcated the longest, where support for the transition to democratic governance and free market economics by both the population and elites was uneven, and where the logistics of Russia's political, economic, and social transitions perhaps most severe. And, as the decade of the 1990s wore on, it seemed as if Russia was caught in a "gray zone" between democratic transition and consolidation, until under President Putin it began to move towards increasingly autocratic tendencies. In this context, how does the Russian state shape the costs of organizing, the financial structure and membership of organizations, determine access the state, and impact advocacy strategies?

### **Yeltsin's Russia: NGOs' First Decade**

In the first decade following the collapse of the USSR, Russia's continued financial crisis ensured that NGOs faced a relatively hostile socioeconomic environment; Russia's continued financial deterioration meant that NGOs struggled to find enough social and economic capital to survive. While the Yeltsin administration did not attempt

to impede the nonprofit sector, and citizen activism more generally, it also implemented relatively few policy initiatives to encourage it. Nor were there many formal mechanisms or channels of communication between the federal government and society, and those that existed were infrequently used. The nonprofit sector that emerged in the first decade of the post Soviet era was weak, fragmented, and poorly connected with political elites and with the populations it claimed to represent. Of the organizations that did operate, many were either holdovers of the Soviet era, or were heavily dependent on Western aid and support for their survival.

In the first decade of post communist Russia, Russia's third sector grew from a rag tag collection of forty or so informal organizations to more than 450,000 formally registered organizations as of early 2001, although, as we shall see, this figure is somewhat deceptive.<sup>10</sup> Many NGOs formed in response to the economic exigencies of the 1990s, trying to fill in the gaps created by a collapsed state. In the first nine years of reform, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) declined by 45 percent. The majority of the population watched their standard of living fall precipitously, while a small, wealthy elite benefited enormously from a flawed privatization process. As a result, the economic meltdown provided an initial impetus for organization, and as many as 70 percent of NGOs were involved in some type of social service provision in an effort to cover the social responsibilities of a quickly retreating state.<sup>11</sup> Many of these organizations were originally state-supported Soviet era groups, representing strata such as the disabled, pensioners, and veterans, for example, and were continuing their work as legally

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<sup>10</sup> See USAID, *2001 NGO Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia* (5<sup>th</sup> edition, March 2002), 133. Also, Alexander Nikitin at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington DC Thursday December 13, 2001.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Olga Alexeeva, Director, Charities Aid Foundation, October 7, 2002.

independent entities. Leaders of organizations perceived themselves as concerned with preserving quantity of life, rather than furthering quality of life issues. NGO activists explicitly perceived themselves as advocates involved in “rights protection” rather than the Western style advocacy rhetoric of human rights. Western-styled advocacy NGOs, that is, organizations that attempted to shape the public agenda, public opinion and/or legislation, were virtually nonexistent. Organizations that self-identified as involved in advocacy often had learned the word (which was transliterated into Russian) as a result to exposure to Western technical or financial assistance.<sup>12</sup>

Yet, while the economic climate of the 1990s provided the impetus for organization and issue focus, it simultaneously kept groups from developing a stable presence. There was a large gap between the statistical presence of NGOs and the substantive reality of their operations; a much smaller percentage of groups carried out their activities on a regular basis. Rather, they operated sporadically when time and money permitted. Groups were often weak and fragmented, or consisted of a membership of one.<sup>13</sup> Outside of the major metropolitan areas, NGOs were thinly stretched across vast swathes of territory, and there were enormous differences in levels of NGO development between and within Russia’s regions.<sup>14</sup>

Further, there were few incentives to encourage a professionalized staff to fill the NGOs. Citizens rarely chose the nonprofit sector as a career choice; one very optimistic estimate placed the number of people involved in the nonprofit sector at about 1 percent

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<sup>12</sup> For example, the first time I heard the term in Russian was during an interview with Elena Ershova, head of the Ford Foundation supported Women’s Consortium, Moscow, summer 1998.

<sup>13</sup> For example, the civic activist Alexander Nikitin estimates that as few as 25% of groups are active. Nikitin, 2001.

<sup>14</sup> Sevortian and Barchukova 2002.

of the country's adult population.<sup>15</sup> In addition, the lack of university programs in nonprofit management made it difficult for NGOs to consistently recruit talented students to a profession in the nonprofit sector.<sup>16</sup> Further, the terminology of nonprofits was unfamiliar to many Russians, who often couldn't understand the difference between a nonprofit organization, and an organization that wasn't making a profit.

This situation was further exacerbated by the lack of legislation creating a friendlier environment for NGO emergence. The Russian Constitution of 1993 granted all of the rights that one associates with fostering a civil society – freedom of speech, assembly, press, etc. A small collection of legislation pertaining to nonprofits would soon follow in 1995 and 1996, with the passage of the law “On Public Associations” (1995), the law “On Charitable Activity and Charitable Institutions” (1995), and the law “On Noncommercial Organizations” (1996). However, the legislation was confusing, and poorly articulated. No single system for registration existed, and NGOs could register, depending on the territory and scope of their operations, at the local and/or regional departments and agencies or through the Russian Federation Ministry of Justice. As a result, the amount of required paperwork (which even then, was quite substantial) differed, as did the cost of registering. One aspect that was relatively uniform was the lack of regulation of the sector; while the federal law required public associations to submit an annual report to the Department of Justice, the Department did not have any legal basis to penalize NGOs or the staff to enforce regulations. In 1999, with no clear idea how many NGOs were operating at which level (federal, regional, or local), the Department issued a decree requiring all NGOs to reregister in the hopes of finding out

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<sup>15</sup> Oslon 2001, pp. 6-13.

<sup>16</sup> Interview, Alexander Borovikh, Moscow, fall 2002.

how many organizations had dissolved in the previous years. Thus, while there was a legal framework defining NGO rights and activities, it was complex, poorly communicated, and inconsistently implemented across the regions.<sup>17</sup>

Nor did the Duma follow up with further legislation that is commonly used in other countries to support a third sector, such as the provision of tax breaks for individuals or businesses engaged in charitable activities. Businesses could donate up to three percent of their profits, but businesspeople were often hesitant to admit to making a profit, and thus inciting state interest in their taxable revenues. Even if the citizenry had money and time to give, there were not legal incentives to stimulate activism, checkbook or otherwise.

Many NGOs also lacked a visible constituency. Organizations were small, insular, and wary of outreach to the public. In turn, citizens were ambivalent about joining organizations. While citizens deserted their former Soviet era organizations, they did not immediately run out and join new ones. Russia's rate of associationism in the 1990s, at .65 organizations per person, was low, even for post-communist countries, which, as a bloc, had the lowest rates of organization among democratizing countries.<sup>18</sup> Most citizens had neither the time, the money, nor the inclination to devote to organizations, either as workers, volunteers, or as donors. Many viewed NGOs with hostility, mistrust, and at best, indifference.<sup>19</sup> This distrust was no doubt magnified by a series of scandals involving legally registered nonprofit organizations the 1990s. For example, in 1992-

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<sup>17</sup> Sarah L. Henderson, *Building Democracy in Contemporary Russia: Western Support for Grassroots Organizations*.

<sup>18</sup> Data drawn from Marc Morje Howard, "The Weakness of Postcommunist Civil Society," *Journal of Democracy* 13.1 (2002), Figure 1, 159.

<sup>19</sup> Sarah L. Henderson, *Building Democracy in Contemporary Russia: Western Support for Grassroots Organizations* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); Marc Morje Howard, "The Weakness of Postcommunist Civil Society," in *Journal of Democracy* 13.1 (2002): 159.

1995, the National Foundation for Sports became the biggest importer of alcoholic beverages in Russia, providing for 80% of imports to Russia.<sup>20</sup> In addition, the financial pyramid “MMM,” which absconded with millions of people’s savings, called people’s investments “charitable donations.”<sup>21</sup> This was problematic; without domestic sources of support (financial as well as moral), NGOs struggled to sustain themselves, not only in terms of financial resources, but in human resources as well. In addition, however, the lack of a visible constituency made it difficult for NGOs to be taken seriously by government administrations at the local, regional, and national levels.

This was compounded by the lack of policy machinery to allow NGOs access to influencing government policy. There were a few formal mechanisms of communication between NGOs and government. NGOs could attempt to establish relations at the federal level with the administrative offices, but it often depended on NGO initiative and personal connections. The experience of establishing an administrative bureaucracy on human rights is instructive. The 1993 constitution created the office of an ombudsman, a national representative for human rights, to be elected by the legislature, although it could not come into being until the passage of federal legislation defining the parameters of the office. Russia’s accession to the Council of Europe in 1996 meant that it needed to enact legislation securing the office. Thus, in May 1996, Yeltsin issued a decree “On the Russian President’s Human Rights Commission,” establishing the makeup and mandate of the body, and in December, after three years of efforts, the legislature passed a law creating an Ombudsman’s office, although the Duma could not agree on an ombudsman

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<sup>20</sup> D. Dokuchaev. “Fond Sporta – Natsionalny, a Prinalzhit Edinitsam,” *Izvestiya*, June 5, 1997.

<sup>21</sup> [http://www.cafonline.org/cafrussia/r\\_fact.cfm](http://www.cafonline.org/cafrussia/r_fact.cfm).

by absolute majority until May of 1998.<sup>22</sup> Thus, throughout much of the Yeltsin administration, mechanisms, even if they existed on paper, often did not materialize, or materialized much later than originally planned.

There were more formal channels of communication at the regional and local levels, although the channels were rarely used. Most regional and city governments had an administrative department whose job was to communicate with social actors, often defined as media, political parties, and/or social organizations (the most commonly used Russian term to refer to NGOs). In addition, some of the developments that were to become more formalized under the Putin regime found their origination in the Yeltsin era. For example, in 1994, the Yeltsin administration had encouraged regional governors to set up Social Chambers (Obshchestvennaya Palatas), where representatives of registered social organizations could participate in the review of legislation pending before the regional Duma and offer recommendations for further revision.<sup>23</sup> Regional governors responded to these urgings differently; cities such as Novgorod the Great, for example, already had such an institution, while other regions ignored the suggestion. Overall, however, NGOs had difficulty gaining access to governments at the federal level, and gaining access at the regional or local level proved the exception rather than the rule. Finally, the lack of any kind of stable party system also made it difficult for NGOs to influence state policy. A large percentage of the representatives of the Duma in initial elections had no party affiliation. What little influence NGOs gained was through making personal connections, for there were few incentives to work with parties.

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<sup>22</sup> Sinikukka Saari, Dilemmas of European Democracy and Human Rights Promotion in Russia,” unpublished manuscript, Chapter 4.

<sup>23</sup> Nicolai N. Petro, “Creating Social Capital in Russia: The Novgorod Model,” *World Development* 29.2 (2001): 233 – 34.

As a result, bilateral and multilateral donors, as well as a host of international organizations and foundations, were often the only forces working to actively promote a nonprofit sector. While USAID was the most visible actor promoting a nonprofit sector, the agency was not alone; the European Union, Great Britain, Canada, and Scandinavian countries also sponsored civil society programs through their development agencies. They were joined by international agencies such as the United Nations and the World Bank, and by foundations, such as George Soros' Open Society Institute, the Ford Foundation, the MacArthur Foundation, and the C.S. Mott Foundation.

Donors such as USAID tended to move through phases of funding strategies designed, in part, to create a new, rather than support a preexisting nonprofit sector. In the early to mid 1990s, USAID sponsored several partnership programs, which joined Russian organizations with Western counterparts in order to transfer knowledge and skills from experienced Western NGOs to infant Russian ones. Other programs focused on providing training and technical assistance to NGOs on such topics as registration, social marketing, budgeting, etc. USAID then worked to expand beyond the major metropolitan areas, where the larger NGOs were located, by sponsoring small grants competitions to distribute money to smaller organizations scattered all around Russia. Starting in the mid 1990s, USAID began to focus more intensively on funding networking projects, and on supporting resource centers in order to spread knowledge and expertise to regional NGOs located far from Moscow.<sup>24</sup> Many of these centers evolved into civil society development organizations, and focused on facilitating

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<sup>24</sup> These efforts to strengthen regional development evolved into the Pro-NGO Program, which linked over twenty resource centers in four regions in an effort to further institutionalize NGO development in the far corners of Russia. In addition, a separate project run by ISAR in the Russian Far East also linked NGOs across a broad expanse of territory.

government interaction or community activism, rather than simply providing services to regional NGOs. At the end of the Yeltsin era, USAID, in addition to its work with NGOs, moved towards stimulating citizen activism in the hopes of fostering the emergence of a civic culture as well as building social capital.<sup>25</sup> The approach to develop grassroots activism was, in many ways, top down; build a few large NGOs from the start, then hope they spread and multiply from the center outwards.

The combination of weak domestic supports for a nonprofit sector, coupled with Western and Westernized support, created a strange mix of voluntary organization. On the one hand, international assistance was invaluable in terms of helping to create a weak, but existing non-profit sector that did not exist ten years previously. These efforts created an entirely new vocabulary for activists as well as a new way of visualizing and creating linkages with the state, political society, other actors on the civic sector, and the private citizen. However, donors' emphasis on "Western" NGOs that promoted issues such as human rights, women's equality, often meant that they were working with a relatively narrow and unrepresentative group of NGOs. Further, donors' efforts to supply funding for projects which they wanted to see, rather than responding to domestic NGO demand, often created a civic sector heavily reliant on Western funding and divorced from the Russian clientele it claimed to represent.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> The second Civic Initiatives Program, located in the Russian Far East, as well as Pro-NGO funded grant competitions, marked the shift away from a solely NGO focus to one with a broader definition of civic participation. Programs such as "You the People," as well as the Community Service School Program, further move USAID away from the narrower NGO approach.

<sup>26</sup> For example, see Sarah E. Mendelson and John K. Glenn, eds. *The Power and Limits of NGOs: A Critical Look at Building Democracy in Eastern Europe and Eurasia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Valerie Sperling, *Organizing Women in Contemporary Russia: Engendering Transition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Sarah L. Henderson, *Building Democracy in Contemporary Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).

In sum, the domestic environment for NGOs under the Yeltsin administration can best be described as one of benign neglect. While the economic conditions provided the stimulus for organization, a lack of legal regulation, policy machinery, as well as a pervasive culture of apathy meant that NGOs struggled for survival. Western aid was the predominant player in terms of encouraging Western style versions of a third sector; however, in the absence of amenable domestic conditions, the impact was limited, and at times, subversive. These conditions were to change significantly under the Putin administration.

### **The Putin Presidency**

Since Vladimir Putin's ascension to the Presidency on December 31, 1999, many have argued that although Russia still adheres to the institutional forms of democracy (elections, codification of civil rights and liberties in the constitution), nonetheless, the actual democratic content has eroded considerably, if not vanished completely.<sup>27</sup> Relatively uncompetitive presidential and legislative elections, a quiescent legislature, neutered political opposition, and a centralized federal structure reconfigured to give the President increased powers of appointment of formerly elected positions are all attempts to channel and recentralize political power to an unprecedented level since the collapse of the USSR. Other critical supports that have traditionally strengthened democratic systems, such as an independent media, have eroded substantially, and the arrest and imprisonment of Mikhail Khodorkovsky, Russia's richest oligarch and also Kremlin opponent, indicated that Russia would be governed by the selective use of rule by law, rather than rule of law.

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<sup>27</sup> For example, see Michael McFaul and Kathryn Stoner-Weiss, "The Myth of the Authoritarian Model: How Putin's Crackdowns Holds Russia Back," *Foreign Affairs* 87.1 (2008): 68-84.

Reflecting the centralizing trends in the design of institutionalized politics, President Putin has established a much more directed approach towards citizen activism. If the Yeltsin administration presided over a negligent state vis a vis civil society, President Putin has established a vigilant state. The creation of the Civic Chamber, the reconfiguration of the Presidential Council on Civil Society Institutions and Human Rights, expansion of the Human Rights ombudsman's office, increased government funds for NGOs, legislation allowing for social service subcontracting, as well as the Law on Local Self-Governance all establish or further delineate formal mechanisms of communication and financial support between the state and society. Further, the Duma passed additional legislation regulating the nonprofit sector. These changes at the federal level have led to the replication of these efforts throughout Russia's 89 territorial units at the regional level. At the federal level, these changes have been met with dismay among academics and policy practitioners interested in promoting democratic development in Russia.<sup>28</sup> Yet, these changes, rather than eradicating the space for autonomous citizen activism, reshapes that space, and often in interesting and unexpected ways. Legislation governing NGO organization and registration, state support and funding for NGOs, and the establishment of formal channels for citizen input in and of themselves are not unusual in advanced industrialized (and stable democratic) societies<sup>29</sup>; thus, the question lies in the design and implementation of these policies within a semidemocratic state rather than necessarily the presence or absence of them.

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<sup>28</sup> For example, see Kathryn Stoner-Weiss, "Russia," *Freedom in the World 2007 Annual Report*, and USAID, "Russia", *2006 NGO Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia*.

<sup>29</sup> Lester Salamon, with S. Wojciech Sokolowski & Regina List. *Global Civil Society: An Overview* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies, 2003).

Unlike Yeltsin, President Putin has talked quite extensively about NGOs and more broadly civil society in a variety of speeches. Putin's overall statements reflect, like other areas of his political vision, a different view of civil society and democracy, in which he wants to both join Europe while maintaining commitment to Russian cultural values and traditions of centralized power and paternalism. Certainly there is a tension between these two. Putin's vision of civic activism, for example, is one in which "people, participating in civil society, will regard as of primary importance not so much the idea of freedom, not so much the idea of interests, as the idea of service to a certain common cause."<sup>30</sup> In his view, civic groups can create unity and overcome distrust among social groups and serve as a force to pull together the nation in agreement on the main strategic tasks facing the country. The value of various actors within civil society are in their abilities to serve as potential helpmates and midwives to the state. Putin's vision is one that emphasized patriotism rather than political protest as a mobilizing theme. Thus, in speeches since 1999, he has simultaneously bemoaned the underdevelopment of civil society and the inability of various organs of the state to effectively communicate and collaborate with it.

This interest in harnessing Russia's social organizations that work primarily on issues to improve the direct quality of people's lives has been coupled with a suspicion of those Russian organizations that work on larger democracy themed issues that have found support from the myriad of Western organizations and foundations promoting civil society and democracy in Russia. Putin addressed this issue in his State of the Union address of May 2003; some NGOs, he maintained, were primarily concerned with obtaining financial resources from abroad, or served "dubious group and commercial

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<sup>30</sup> As quoted in Evans, 2005).

interests.” As a result, he argued, these civic groups do not serve the real interests of the people, in contrast to the thousands of organizations on the ground who continue their work unnoticed. This contrast between the “fake” nonprofit sector, which is motivated solely by money and career aspirations, and the “real” nonprofit sector, toiling away out of patriotic concern for the fate of the country, was reinforced in a meeting with the Kremlin friendly youth group “Nashi.” Putin declared that “[w]e need a civil society, but it must be permeated by patriotism, concern for one’s country, and should do things not for money but from the heart, eager to put right those problems that we indeed have and do this, I repeat, not for money but as the heart dictates.”<sup>31</sup>

This rhetorical stance has been accompanied by substantive policy changes. President Putin has steadily increased and formalized corporatist mechanisms of communication between NGOs and the state. Putin revived the Yeltsin era idea of civic chambers as a way to facilitate state society collaboration, although this time at the federal level. In 2001, the Kremlin organized the Civic Forum, a conference that brought together 5000 civic activists from across Russia and key government personnel. This was the first time that government officials and NGO representatives from throughout Russia met to discuss various pressing social issues in an effort to create more channels of communication and a potential for greater NGO-state cooperation. In November of 2004, the government unveiled legislation to create a Public Chamber at the federal level in order that “citizen’s initiatives could be presented and discussed.”<sup>32</sup> This legislation was

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<sup>31</sup> (BBC Monitoring).

<sup>32</sup> “Full Text of Putin’s State of the Nation Address to Russian Parliament.” BBC Monitoring, May 26, 2004.

subsequently passed and went into effect on July 1, 2005.<sup>33</sup> The key function of the Chamber is to submit recommendations to members of the Duma about domestic policy, proposed legislation, and request investigations into potential breaches of the law as well as request information from and monitor state agencies.<sup>34</sup> The members of the Chamber also serve on one of eighteen commissions that examine bills or provide advice and expertise to the Duma on a variety of pressing issues, such as public control over the activities of law enforcement and reforming the judicial system, communications, information policy and freedom of expression in the media, culture, health care, environmental policy, and so on.<sup>35</sup>

Reflecting the centralizing trends of Putin's other reforms, membership is driven from the top down; the president designates one third of the membership, and those appointed members will, in turn, appoint another third of the members. The two thirds then will pick the final third nominated by regional social groups. This federal level Public Chamber is to be replicated in Russia's 89 territorial units. (Check Public Chamber web page to see how many there are.)

In addition, in 2002, the president reconfigured the existing Commission on Human Rights to create the Presidential Council on Civil Society Institutions and Human Rights, with 33 members drawn from human rights, and broad based social organizations as well as individuals from other institutions of civil society.<sup>36</sup> While some feared that this was an attempt to dilute the Human Rights element of the committee, the

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<sup>33</sup> Rossiiskaya Federatsiya, "Federal'ny Zakon ob obschestvennoi palate possiiskoi federatsii, Noveober 10, 2004.

<sup>34</sup> Alfred B. Evans, Jr. "The Public Chamber in Action: Representation or Coordination?" Paper presented at the AAASS annual convention, Washington, D.C., November 16 – 19, 2006.

<sup>35</sup> "Struktura Palati: Kommissii 2008 god." <http://www.oprf.ru/ru/structure/comissions2008/>

<sup>36</sup> For example, political analysts, academics, actors, and other cultural figures. See Sostav Soveta. [Sovetpamlilova.ru/](http://Sovetpamlilova.ru/)

administration pointed out that it already had the equivalent of a Human Rights Commissioner (and resulting policy machinery) with the office of the Human Rights Ombudsman (which as of 2007, was fielding 48,235 complaints.<sup>37</sup>

Finally, in 2003, the Duma adopted legislation, which though not specifically directed at NGOs, will potentially impact their activities. The Federal Law on Local Self-Governance, which further delineates the division of legal and financial authority between federal and regional power structures and local government took effect.<sup>38</sup> Over one third of the regions began to put the legislation in practice in 2006, and full implementation is now slated for the beginning of 2009. In particular, chapters 3 – 6 of the law provide avenues for citizen participation on issues of “local significance” such as the formation and execution of municipal budgets, provision of utilities and other government services, input on housing reform and city planning. It allows for local referenda sponsored by citizens where the outcome is binding, and establishes mechanisms to recall deputies or other elected officials of local self-government. While still largely untapped, this legislation provides additional formal opportunities for not just NGOs, but citizens more broadly, to organize around and mobilize around particular interests.

The federal government has also provided financial support for NGOs, in part, to counter Western assistance. In 2006, the federal government authorized the Chamber to distribute 500 million rubles (\$15 million) to NGOs in a grant competition. The following year, the amount was more than doubled to 1.25 billion rubles (\$50 million) to fund grant

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<sup>37</sup> Annual Report of the Commissioner for Human Rights in the Russian Federation for the Year 2007 (Moscow 2008).

<sup>38</sup> Vitalii Shipov, “Perspectives in the Development of Local Self-Governance” in *Local Self-Governance and Civic Engagement in Rural Russia* (New York: World Bank, 2003).

competitions in projects related to youth; health; civil society; socially disadvantaged groups; education, culture and art; and to support social related research. In 2008, the number was raised again to 1.5 billion rubles (roughly \$70 million), and the expected sum for 2009 is 2 billion rubles.<sup>39</sup> While the first grant competition was organized by the Social Chamber and the Presidential Representatives of the Federal districts (doubled check the translation on this one), the following two competitions have been run by the Chamber, who has then contracted the work out to six NGOs.<sup>40</sup>

In addition, Putin has instructed business leaders to become more socially responsible, and declared 2006 the year of philanthropy to encourage businesses to support the government's four national projects – improving Russians healthcare, housing, agriculture, and education. This social responsibility has its limits; they have not encouraged the philanthropy of Khodorkovky's Open Russia Foundation (modeled after George Soros Open Society Institutes), which promoted the much more explicit political goal of developing civil liberties. In March of 2006, it froze the bank accounts of that Foundation. Nonetheless, the development of Russian philanthropy has also been bolstered by the passage of Federal Law No. 275 "On Endowments," which lays out the conditions under which Endowments may be established and operated.

Finally, and perhaps most controversially, in 2006, the Duma passed legislation that increased the regulatory framework within which NGOs operate. The law amends four existing laws that govern the nonprofit sector. It introduced several new

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<sup>39</sup> "Konkursi NKO 2008: Press reliz dlya SMI po konkursu "NKO 2008." Available at [www.orpf.ru/678/679/680/](http://www.orpf.ru/678/679/680/) In 2008, the most money was budgeted towards education, art, and cultural initiatives (320 million RU), followed by youth initiatives (250 million RU), health (230 million RU), protection of socially disadvantaged groups (200 million RU), and social research (100 million RU). The number of applications has increased; in 2006, the Civic Chamber awarded 1054 grants out of 3500 applications, and in 2007 1225 projects were funded out of 4,200 applications.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

requirements for public associations, noncommercial organizations, and foreign NGOs. The new requirements restrict who may form an organization in the Russian Federation, expand the reasons for which registration may be denied, and increase the supervisory powers of the state.<sup>41</sup> Of particular concern is the stipulation that foreign NGOs may be denied registration if their “goals and objectives...create a threat to the sovereignty, political independence, territorial integrity, national unity, unique character, cultural heritage and national interests of the Russian Federation.” Further, foreign NGOs can be barred from transferring funds or other resources to recipients for purposes of “protecting the basis of the Constitutional system, morality, health, rights and lawful interests of other persons, and with the aim of defending the country and the state security.” Finally, the law increases the number of documents that the government can request from organizations, and allows the government to send a representative to an organization’s meetings and other events. In sum, the law expanded the grounds upon which an organization can be denied registration and deepened government supervisory powers over both domestic and foreign NGOs. Thus, some maintain, while previous legislation, though confusing, unclear, and poorly drafted, and not particularly proactive, was guided by the principles of information, the current legislation is inspired by the principle of permission.<sup>42</sup>

What has been the impact of the Putin administration’s policies on NGO development? The external reaction has been primarily negative. As Celeste Wallander noted in her testimony before the US Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, she noted that “civil society organizations can operate only if their activities and

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<sup>41</sup> Natalia Bourjaily, “Some Issues Related to Russia’s New NGO Law,” *International Journal of Not-for-Profit Law* 8.3 (2006), 5.

<sup>42</sup> <http://www.sovetpamfilova.ru/made/press/2059/?parent=432>.

objectives are non-political. The Kremlin has created onerous requirements for NGOs seeking foreign funding, and most Russian NGOs subsist on donations from Kremlin approved businesses, or from the government's NGO monitor, the Civic Forum."<sup>43</sup> Yet, this blanket prognosis overlooks many of the complexities of NGO development in Russia; nor does it fully reflect what NGOs themselves are experiencing on the ground. While it is important not to overstate the gains of a relatively weak sector in the context of a weak, and weakly democratic state, nonetheless, at the federal level, the design and implementation of actual policy machinery has provided NGOs with increased visibility and institutionalized access to policy makers. Secondly, the impact has been particularly significant for NGOs in the regions. Further, the impact has diverged in interesting and unexpected ways; federal envoys, regional governors, and mayors have interpreted the changes at the federal level in differing ways, leading to an increased role for NGOs in policy making, advocacy, and service provision in some regions, as well as potential increased cooptation in others. Finally, the predicted annihilation of the sector has not occurred; in fact, a significant percentage of NGOs have not complied with the law, and nor has the federal registration service pursued noncompliance. Rather than confirming President Putin's legacy as the consolidator of an all powerful state, the experience of NGOs indicates that there are numerous interests at work in shaping the civic space, and the variation in advocacy paths indicates a lack of monolithic state control, rather than an excess of it. While the state plays an important role in shaping civic activism in Russia, the larger challenge facing Russian NGOs is an apathetic public and a divided civic sector, rather than an all powerful state.

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<sup>43</sup> Celeste A. Wallander, "Russian Power and Interests at the Next Stage in U.S. – Russian Relations." Testimony before the US Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, United States Congress, May 8, 2008.

One of the most significant developments that NGO leaders themselves noted about state-society relations was the importance of Civic Forum and the (at the time) proposed Civic Chamber in reestablishing languishing formal mechanisms of communication as well as creating new policy machinery.<sup>44</sup> During the Yeltsin era, NGOs had to rely on personal contacts to wrest an audience with the appropriate vested interests. Particularly for NGOs working in the regions, the organization of the Civic Forum, and the efforts to establish Civic Chambers signaled to regional governors and mayors that they were to be included in the political dialogue. Further, this machinery, whatever the intent, has also given the sector the institutional space to advocate on policies, either within the eighteen subcommittees or more general NGO legislation. Thus, when legislation was first introduced governing NGO reregistration, the first version of the law was much more punitive. Proposed draft amendments to the tax code (which eventually failed) imposed registration requirements on all types of grants, which would have further complicated the work of foreign donors and recipient NGOs.<sup>45</sup> This change from draft to final legislation was facilitated by the inclusion of NGOs in the dialogue. Nor can the Civic Chamber be categorized as the “government’s NGO monitor.” One of its first actions was to oppose the registration law.

But the biggest impact of Putin’s reforms has been in Russia’s regions, and points to not the organization of an all powerful state, but a relatively weak state, where governors still have enormous latitude to interpret Kremlin policy as they see fit. These changes at the federal level filtered down in different ways to the regions, for regional governors and mayors interpreted President Putin’s interest in civil society in remarkably

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<sup>44</sup> Workshop for NGO participants in compiling the 2004 NGO sustainability index, Moscow, November 21, 2004.

<sup>45</sup> Kornia 2005.

different ways. Politically moderate or progressive figures took this as a sign to either initiate dialogue with or deepen preexisting relationships with NGOs, develop channels for policy input, or design relatively open, government funded grant competitions. Other regions interpreted these moves as opportunities to co-opt civic actors and direct their activities. Still other regions became mired in conflict between a reformist political figure on one level (say, the governor) and a conservative intransigent on the other (i.e. the mayor). Nearly all NGOs interviewed in eight cities in five of Russia's okrugs argued that the Civic Forum and Civic Chamber signaled to local and regional leaders, many of whom had previously ignored them, that they now needed to work with them in some capacity. For many NGOs, this provided a political opening for them to develop more regular avenues of communication.

Thus, in many regions, Putin's policies vis a vis NGOs at the federal level created the stimulus for the creation of similar policy machinery at the regional level, and it revitalized previously underutilized government offices whose job was to liaise with public organizations. It also prodded regional and local governments to create mechanisms by which NGOs could compete for funding, as well as to experiment with contracting out social services.

In particular, progressive presidential envoys, governors, and/or mayors interpreted Putin's remarks as a green light to also attempt to stimulate citizen activism from above by passing regional and local legislation – in the absence of federal legislation – to allow NGOs to implement social policy. This was particularly evident in the Volga district, where, envoy Sergei Kirienko interpreted Putin's call to foster economic and social development and combat corruption as a need to establish better

connections with the citizenry and NGOs.<sup>46</sup> This has manifested itself in a variety of ways: the creation and use of mechanisms to relay citizen and NGO concerns; the effort to create grant competitions which draw on government, business, and private funds; and the effort to further regional legislation allowing for social service contracting for NGOs. Thus, for example, Tatarstan (a republic within the Volga district) established a Public Chamber to encourage public hearings and civic involvement in questions of broad concern. In addition, a public office and telephone hotline were also established so that citizens could communicate issues and concerns directly to “not only help individual citizens defend their rights...but ...to reveal and systematize common problems in the operation of the state bureaucracy.” As another Federal inspector commented, “People still don’t believe they are capable of solving their own problems. But state power and strong public organizations have to help show society that times have changed.”<sup>47</sup> Similarly, in Samara, the organization Povolzhe was able to use the impetus created by President Putin to formalize communication with the regional government by establishing formal roundtables comprised of NGO and government leaders to cooperate on social policy.<sup>48</sup> Further, Kirienko was one of the first envoys to provide government funding through grant competitions to NGOs, as well as organize a yearly Civic Forum conference for NGOs in the region.<sup>49</sup>

In other regions, governors and mayors interpreted the creation of the Civic Forum and Chamber as a potential way to co-opt NGOs. Thus, some NGOs in places such as Rostov or Krasnodar, the changes at the federal level, which indicated that they

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<sup>46</sup> Lynn D. Nelson and Irina Y. Kuzes, “Political and Economic Coordination in Russia’s Federal District Reform: A Study of Four Regions” *Europe – Asia Studies* 55.4 (2003): 507.

<sup>47</sup> As quoted in Nelson and Kuzes, 515

<sup>48</sup> Interview, Valentina Pestrikova, Povolzhe, June 18 2004; November 21 2004.

<sup>49</sup> Interview, Elena Malitskaya, Siberian Center in Support of Civic Initiatives, November 15, 2004.

might now be taken more seriously by local and regional administrations, were bitterly disappointed to see the administrations use the opportunity to allot money to NGOs, but behind closed doors.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, in Vladivostok, the Moscow Civic Forum served as a highlight for NGOs interested in breaking into working with regional governments; they were sadly disappointed to find that the regional government wanted to work only with select NGOs.

In other areas, such as Irkutsk, the city government and NGOs had tentatively started a dialogue, and had begun to hammer out relatively transparent policies to distribute funds to NGOs in a competition. This was a learning curve for both sides; the government was disappointed that NGOs had not accomplished more with the small sums they were given (grants were approximately \$1000 each), and NGOs were frustrated that the administration wanted them to accomplish miracles with small pots of money that often could not cover salary costs.<sup>51</sup> Further, NGO activists were frustrated that for the previous two years, NGOs were invited to participate in judging grant applications; however, in the recent competition, they were only invited to give feedback but were not allowed to participate in the final decision.

In sum, NGO activists, while wary of the intent and meaning of changes at the Federal level, were nonetheless cognizant that this provided a political window for many of them that had not existed previously. For many NGOs, after spending the 1990s fighting for access to government administrators, the new opportunities offered by Putin's changes meant they had to walk the fine line between cooperation and cooptation,

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<sup>50</sup> Interview, Svetlana Chernishova, Southern Russia Resource Center, Krasnodar, September 28, 2002. Interview, double check notes, Rostov Community Foundation, June 15, 2004.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with Alexander Ivanovich Vasiliev, Head of the Committee of Relations with Society, oblast' administration, June 8, 2004. Interview with Elena Tvorogova, Rebirth of the Land of Siberia, Irkutsk, June 8, 2004.

but that this was an improvement from standing on the sidelines, watching policy made without their input. In their eyes, administrations were unsure whether they wanted to build civil society versus working with the “real” one that existed; yet, they all admitted that they had had increased interaction, and thus, potential impact, on the administration and their policies.

However, one of the largest concerns has been regarding the impact of the 2006 NGO law, which was greeted with such dismay. Critics of the legislation feared it would be used selectively to close NGOs critical of the Kremlin, or that the Federal Registration Service would close a few high profile organizations to encourage remaining organizations to self-censor themselves. It is hard to measure the impact of the law, given that so many organizations are “dead souls;” they exist on paper but they have ceased to function. Thus, it is unclear how many organizations are being shut down because they simply no longer exist. However, a December 2007 survey of NGOs in 20 of Russia’s regions, designed to measure the impact of the new requirements on NGOs, found that the majority of NGOs have not complied with the new regulations. According to the Federal Registration Service, only 32 percent of NGOs had submitted the required paperwork. As of the time of the report, the FRS has yet to apply involuntary liquidation to NGOs that have failed to submit reports (and the FRS has expanded the deadline for submitting paperwork yet again). Nor did NGOs report any penalties for lack of submission. Nonetheless, as of the end of 2007, the biggest cost to them of the legislation, according to Russian NGOs themselves, was time spent in filling out the papers. Neither survey respondents nor focus group participants felt that the law had been disproportionately applied against human rights or advocacy groups. Instead, respondents

felt that all groups were suffering equally from the demands of new paperwork and confusion over ambiguity of the requirements. Perhaps because of the fears of the selective use of rule of law, human rights organizations are more likely to have filed their paperwork than other NGOs.<sup>52</sup> One interesting impact of the legislation has been the increase of foreign funds to Russian NGOs to support projects that monitor the implementation of the law; the Center in Support of Civic Initiatives in Siberia is currently managing three grants to monitor the reregistration process.

## **Conclusion**

In his own speech at the conference, Putin dismissed charges that the state wished to co-opt opposition, and noted that “civil society cannot be established at the state’s initiative, at the state’s will, much less in accordance with the state’s plans.”<sup>53</sup> Comments such as these sound reassuring, but President Putin has also demonstrated a remarkable talent at, as some have noted, of “talking like a democrat and walking like an autocrat.” Yet, whether it is correlation or causation, particularly in the regions, NGOs are slowly moving from a situation of parallel play (working in similar roles, but with little to know interaction with the government) to tentatively trying to hammer out policy regulating the provision of social services, state funded grant competitions, and regularized feedback and influence into the policy making realm.

But perhaps the largest problem facing NGOs today is not potential capture and cooptation by an all powerful state, but the inability to captivate the average Russian citizen, who still remains suspicious and leery of organizational activity. Part of this is

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<sup>52</sup> The International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, “Analysis of the Impact of Recent Regulatory Reforms on Non-commercial Organizations and Public Associations in Russia,” December 2007.

<sup>53</sup> “Vladimir Putin: States are Judged by the Level of Individual Liberty. Excerpts from President Vladimir Putin’s Speech at the Civil Forum.” Vremya Novosti, November 22, 2001.

due to the fact that after nearly two decades in independent organization, Russians still know relatively little about the sector. When asked in October 2007 if they had heard anything or knew anything about the activities of NGOs or social organizations in their region, about 55% of the population knew nothing – a figure about seven percent higher than when asked in 2001.<sup>54</sup> But ignorance about the sector is only part of the problem; a larger issue is that citizens don't like what they do know about the sector. The 2008 Edelman Trust Barometer reported that in Russia, when asked on a scale of 1 – 9, “How much do you trust each institution to do what's right?” only 29% of respondents answered 6 – 9 on a sliding scale, behind government (38%) and business (42%). This was in marked contrast to Western Europe, where NGOs came in as the most trusted institutions in all countries surveyed except Sweden and the Netherlands (where, nonetheless, 59% of respondents answered in the 6-9 range).<sup>55</sup>

Russia is in the strange position of having a nonprofit sector organizing on behalf of a society that has shown less interest in organizing itself. Few organizations have developed mass constituencies. Other issues that have mobilized the population (such as government attempts to overhaul Russia's outdated pension system) have not turned into formal organizations. Certainly, Russia does not lack for supply of potential issues and problems around which advocacy organizations could emerge. Through the 1990s and first decade of the twenty first century, foreign donors stepped in to supply financial and technical assistance, as well as funding areas that they were willing to support. In contrast, much of the Putin administration has been about countering Western supply of what they deem Russians should demand with its own supply of themes and projects. On

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<sup>54</sup> Doklad o Sostoyanii grazhdanskovo obschestva v rossiiskoi Federatsii 2007.

<sup>55</sup> The 2008 Edelman Trust Barometer.

top of this, they have supplied various mechanisms by which NGOs can choose to operate. But what is still missing is the basic demand at the citizen level for organizational representation.