

## **Introduction: Transition to Where? Developing Post-Soviet Space**

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With the demise of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, international donors rushed to proffer advice. Their development teleology was one of “transition” from a centralized command economy to a liberal, democratic, market-driven economy. Popular ideologies of the period—neoliberalism, governance, and civil society—converged as policymakers designed development programs in line with the principles of what came to be known as the Washington Consensus. The dissolution of the USSR provided ideal laboratory conditions to test these ideologically driven policies. Today, two decades on, this model for transitioning to liberal democracy has crashed on the shoals of crony capitalism, authoritarianism, runaway corruption, population decline, and social dislocation.

This introduction to the following cluster of articles offers a number of the guiding tenets of development aid in the former Soviet Union over the past two decades and attempts to show the connections between the categories of aid (for example, civil society, market reform) and the larger policy issues and ideologies that nurtured them. The articles in this cluster examine the political and scholarly tensions suggested when relations of power and difference are inextricably linked to international aid efforts. International aid flowing to this region has been especially sensitive and marked in that it is directed at a former superpower—itself a long-term donor of aid and technical assistance to the Third World. The aid efforts

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are themselves premised on democratic participation, economic reform, and social inclusion. Beliefs about democratic participation and good governance derive from deeply entrenched ideologies in North America and western Europe. A neo-Tocquevillian ideology of civil society and grassroots democracy has become pervasive in development-speak. Most often, donors rely on the formula that democratization implies stronger civil society, realized through the proliferation and participation in non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The overly invested category of NGO, exposing the fallacy of the NGO = democracy equation, perpetuates a conceit disseminated by international development organizations.

Thus the development aid and technical assistance offered to the postsocialist world arrived ideologically packaged: the ideology of the Washington Consensus made itself felt as programs devoted to tax reform, democracy promotion, private property, and privatization became standard features. Aid funding provided technical assistance to build stock markets just as it decollectivized and privatized collective and state farms. Additionally, new forms of faith-based aid emerged and became institutionalized.

Yet something has gone remarkably, profoundly wrong in the past two decades of international aid. This period witnessed the highest per capita amount of international development assistance ever invested in a region, yet despite this deluge, many of the countries appear not to be better off: the standard of living for the majority of the population has arguably declined, the once high level of literacy and education has spiraled downward, and the demographic crisis continues—a plummeting birthrate complemented by a decline in life expectancy (an increase in mortality) is historically unprecedented. Moreover, despite the millions spent on countless programs promoting democratization, we can see rising authoritarianism and regimes buttressed by entrenched networks and webs of corruption. In short, none of the Soviet successor states have fared well, with the possible exception of the Baltic states, never as fully Sovietized as the rest. It is as astonishing as it is uncanny that these new states are doing so poorly given the amount of money invested in them. Or is it? Certainly, there has been an embarrassingly wasteful, even inexcusable lack of donor coordination. But that does not tell the entire story. To understand, analyses must excavate the terrain of international development aid in the post-Soviet world, asking hard questions about corruption and how to relativize it culturally, about contested meanings and practices of “democracy” and “civil society.” Missionaries—of the traditional, religious variety as well as those preaching the glories of marketization—have been ubiquitous in the region. Bewilderingly, despite the availability of a deep reservoir of U.S.-based expertise on the Soviet state, politics, culture, society, economics, and foreign relations, the neoliberal development designers neglected to draw on it. Instead, they operated, as one development professional remarked, “like ideology-informed zealots, bringing their mission of neoliberal enlightenment.”<sup>1</sup>

1. Chief of Party of a USAID program, interviews, 2003–2008.

### The Path from Washington: Consensus to Confusion and the Stops In-Between

Today the once taken-for-granted “Washington Consensus” is anything but.<sup>2</sup> Instead, there is wide agreement, according to economist Dani Rodrik, that “while the lessons drawn by proponents and skeptics differ, it is fair to say that nobody really believes in the Washington Consensus anymore. The question now is not whether the Washington Consensus is dead or alive; it is what will replace it.”<sup>3</sup> Taking a step back, what was the consensus, and how did—and does—it inform the world of development aid to the countries of the former Soviet Union? John Williamson, a Washington think-tank economist, coined the term in 1989 as a way to codify a set of policy guidelines to serve in the reform of the most crisis-ridden underdeveloped countries. Its ten commandments comprised what have become widely understood as the neoliberal, free-market approach to development.<sup>4</sup> Privatization of national industries, market deregulation, fiscal and trade liberalization were all part of the package. The “consensus” part of it referred to broad agreement on this agenda by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the U.S. Treasury Department, and the World Bank. Its impetus arose from these institutions’ experience with the unstable economies of Latin America, and the same thinking was liberally applied to the former socialist countries.

At the same time that the Washington Consensus captured the imagination of development planners, theories of governance were in their ascendance. This critical conjuncture helps to explain some of the policy agendas of the early 1990s that, trying to account for gross disparities in development performance in industrialized countries, sought to introduce the market, shifting from a state-focused to a market-focused orientation. The simultaneous rise of neoliberalism reinforced this worldview; ironically, where the state had been planned to wither away with communism, it was left to the neoliberals to theorize and implement its retreat. Instead of a state-driven economy, they envisioned a system of private ordering and greater individualism that allowed the markets, not the state, to do the heavy lifting. The neoliberal shift from Keynesian planning and centralized models meant getting the state out of the business of business. The state would divest itself of nationalized industry and utilities, for example, and it would simultaneously deregulate. Thus, the state relinquishes the Janus-faced roles of player in and referee of the game.

2. The title of this section is inspired by Dani Rodrik’s superb article, “Goodbye Washington Consensus, Hello Washington Confusion? A Review of the World Bank’s *Economic Growth in the 1990s: Learning from a Decade of Reform*,” *Journal of Economic Literature* 44, no. 4 (December 2006): 973–87.

3. *Ibid.*, 974.

4. John Williamson, “What Washington Means by Policy Reform,” in John Williamson, ed., *Latin American Adjustment: How Much Has Happened* (Washington, D.C., 1990). These ten commandments are: 1. Fiscal discipline; 2. Reorientation of public expenditures; 3. Tax reform; 4. Financial liberalization; 5. Unified and competitive exchange rates; 6. Trade liberalization; 7. Openness to direct foreign investment; 8. Privatization; 9. Deregulation; and 10. Secure property rights.

Key observers have called this the “orthodox paradox,” whereby the state participates in its own destatization and oversees the marketization of the economy, as it cedes power to the market.<sup>5</sup> The new role for the state was to row less and steer more, as the popular phrase has it.

Armed with these reform agendas, the new guard viewed the previous era of developmentalism as “tropical Keynesianism” with its massive state investment and state-mediated interventions. Dominating the Bretton Woods group (that is, World Bank and IMF), they assumed authoritative roles as the new development guides, promulgating neoliberalism as the new paradigm. This inaugurated a shift in the discourse, as “governance” became the dominant trope: market governance and resource management were no longer the exclusive domain of the state. Furthermore, building “capacity” became integral to development.

Civil society was seen as integrally linked to this nexus as well. Many of the new development designers believed that civil society in the USSR had been nonexistent or, at best, counterfeit. Its presumed absence, a primary putative deficit of the Soviet system, called for a project of de novo construction; the barren postsocialist landscape was to be reforested with fertile civil society. Thus has civil society represented a growth industry in the development business of shaping the “transition” from a discredited, dysfunctional socialist command economy to the neoliberal governance-driven society.

And where are we two decades hence? Part of Rodrik’s critique of the Washington Consensus rests on the benefit of hindsight. We can now point to important examples where the principles of the Washington Consensus were not followed yet high economic performance was achieved, such as China and India. A 2005 World Bank publication, *Economic Growth in the 1990s: Learning from a Decade of Reform*, exhibited a surprising level of self-criticism, admitting openly that the founding principles were insufficient for the development that was sought.<sup>6</sup> Ten new “augmented” goals were proposed including social safety nets and poverty reduction.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the advisors belatedly recognized that a generic cookie-cutter approach was inappropriate for these societies; each needed to be assessed on its own merits and within a unique contextual framework. This document was implicitly at odds with the approach advocated and frequently implemented by Jeffrey Sachs and his followers in the early days of postsocialism, commonly known as “shock therapy.”<sup>8</sup>

5. Jon Elster, Claus Offe, and Ulrich K. Preuss, *Institutional Design in Post-Communist Societies: Rebuilding the Ship at Sea* (Cambridge, Eng., 1998).

6. See Rodrik, “Goodbye Washington Consensus, Hello Washington Confusion?” for extensive analysis of this document. For the original report, see World Bank, *Economic Growth in the 1990s: Learning from a Decade of Reform* (Washington, D.C., 2005).

7. World Bank, *Economic Growth in the 1990s*, 978. The ten augmentations were: 1. Corporate governance; 2. Anti-corruption; 3. Flexible labor markets; 4. World Trade Organization agreements; 5. Financial codes and standards; 6. “Prudent” capital-account opening; 7. Nonintermediate exchange rate regimes; 8. Independent central banks/inflation targeting; 9. Social safety nets; 10. Targeted poverty reduction.

8. What was popularly coined “shock therapy” was first theorized by economist Milton Friedman and applied to Chile in the 1970s with neoliberal market reforms. Later

Thus, when assessing the past two decades of international development aid to the former Soviet Union, the critical convergence of the tripartite set of factors leading to the Washington Consensus needs to be taken fully on board in order to understand the policy trajectories. Ideas about governance, neoliberalism, and civil society all crystallized at a key moment in history: the dissolution of an adversarial superpower. The more recent self-reflexive and critical analyses need to be seen in light of this particular dynamic.

### **Soviet Union: Developer to Developee**

The Soviet Union prided itself on its role of “big-brother” donor to its Third World client states as part of its mission to spread socialism. As an international superpower, it sponsored student exchanges from the less developed “south” to Soviet educational institutions of the socialist “north.” Its sponsored clients abroad received medical and technical assistance and were recipients of favorable economic trade terms. From Alma Ata to Leningrad, from Moscow to Tashkent, many Soviet citizens took pride in being part of a major empire, and an international one at that. Cuban students in Kazakhstan, Angolans in Kiev, Indians in Moscow mingled with the native Soviets; together they were part of a common internationalist project. And as members of a superpower-anchored team, with a shared history and future, many shared a degree of Soviet chauvinism.

This sense of generalized chauvinism made the subsequent collapse of the USSR that much more traumatic and painful. A variety of reactions ensued, including desperation and depression, generalized shame, and a kind of national collective cognitive dissonance on an unprecedented scale. Formerly privileged elites became destitute. Savvy new entrepreneurs made killings, taking full advantage of small- and large-scale privatization measures. The relationships between the former Soviet Union and its former client states were disrupted or severed. New relations emerged with former rivals, and as unequal partners. The Soviet Union had been the prime developer of its internal underdeveloped regions, for instance, the Central Asian republics. The Central Asian experience with international development teams has led to a different constellation of relations than what Russia has experienced. Central Asians had already learned to deal with seven decades of Soviet development policy and assistance dispatched from Moscow. When USAID and European Union (EU) developers arrived in Tashkent and Almaty, they did not appreciate that they were stepping into well-trodden paths already occupied by Soviet developers. The local population had ample experience accommodating and resisting outside developers and were already skilled in receiving and manipulating aid. After 1991, however, the currency and vernacular of development changed, from international brotherhood, socialism, and solidarity, to civil society, democracy, privatization, and the market.

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Jeffrey Sachs adapted the theory and process, applying it first to Bolivia in 1985 and then to recently socialist states. Sachs’s understanding of the process assumes liberalization is a critical step on the road to developing a stable economy.

## Markets and Rule-of-Law: Reform Agendas

Market reform has been central to the development agenda in the former Soviet Union. It has made itself felt in a wide set of spheres, from a whole range of financial instruments and the supporting legislation, to didactic radio and television soap operas instructing listeners about small businesses, bank accounts, and mortgages.<sup>9</sup> A pervasive stumbling block for many market reformers has been corruption. This issue has been dealt with elsewhere by Blake Puckett, particularly the implications of the U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act in Central Asia.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the postsocialist system is marked by what many perceive to be corruption, bribery, extortion, and rent-seeking. It is crucial to place this in a larger historical and cultural context, and Alena Ledeneva's influential research on *blat*, the informal exchange system she calls an "economy of favours," does precisely that.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, Janine Wedel's work deconstructs the genealogy of aid and its underlying web of questionable relations.<sup>12</sup> Still, questions linger about which way forward U.S. and other development agencies are choosing and what sorts of legal links are being forged with local law enforcement agencies, legislators, and other actors. The legal mechanisms governing not only markets but a whole host of other spheres have also been central to the development mission.

USAID for many years and, more recently, the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) have sponsored judicial reform programs within an encompassing rule of law (ROL) agenda. That an independent, non-corrupt judiciary is a *sine qua non* of economic growth and a healthy market is the starting point, as many observers have noted.<sup>13</sup> Part of the larger democratization agenda, many ROL programs have run aground, a consequence of the developers' ahistorical approach. For example, U.S. technical assistance in ROL programs has consistently depoliticized the judiciary (in a way that is not the case in the United States), understanding legal reform as a technical, rather than as a political project. Hence the focus on technical goals sidelines the more fundamental issues such as re-socialization, reprofessionalization, and reincentivization of the judiciary. In a suggestive turn of phrase, Scott Newton insists that the "judiciary in

9. Ruth Mandel, "A Marshall Plan of the Mind: The Political Economy of a Kazakh Soap Opera," in Faye D. Ginsburg, Lila Abu-Lughod, and Brian Larkin, eds., *Media Worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain* (Berkeley, 2002), 201–28.

10. Blake Puckett, "The Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, OPIC, and the Retreat from Transparency," *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies* 15, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 149–76.

11. Alena Ledeneva, *Russia's Economy of Favours: Blat, Networking and Informal Exchange* (Cambridge, Eng., 1998).

12. Janine R. Wedel, "How the Chubais Clan, Harvard Fed Corruption," *Los Angeles Times*, 12 September 1999; Wedel, *Collision and Collusion: The Strange Case of Western Aid to Eastern Europe* (New York, 2001); Wedel, *Shadow Elite: How the World's New Power Brokers Undermine Democracy, Government, and the Free Market* (New York, 2009); Janine R. Wedel, Lloyd J. Dumas, and Greg Callman, *Confronting Corruption, Building Accountability: Lessons from the World of International Development Advising* (New York, 2010).

13. See Scott Newton, "Judicial Reform as Ideology: MCC and Déjà vu in Kyrgyzstan" (unpublished manuscript, 2008).

Kyrgyzstan is a palimpsest, not a tabula rasa,” as is too often presumed.<sup>14</sup> Instead, it has been conditioned by both long and complicated Soviet and Central Asian path dependencies, unfortunately too often ignored by the western reformers.

It remains to be seen whether future judicial and legal reform projects will be flexible enough to take on board two premises: first, that perhaps the system has not adapted to judicial corruption but instead is based on it; and second, that the historical-political context, here, the resilience of Soviet administrative culture, has endured despite the absence of an associated Soviet ideology.<sup>15</sup>

### Civil Society: Evidence of Democracy?

Much of the discourse about development aid takes for granted notions about “civil society.” Given its inconsistent and ubiquitous deployment, the term arguably obscures as much as it reveals. Robert Dahl’s seminal works from the mid-twentieth century onward opened the debate about how the critically important web of socially cross-cutting networks and alliances that provide the society’s fundamental glue apart from the state is essential to a strong democracy.<sup>16</sup> Dahl’s work, implicitly drawing from Tocquevillian observations, posited a multiplicity of power centers; if not populist, they were what he called a “polyarchy” operating in dynamic relationships: the space of a healthy civil society.<sup>17</sup> Robert Putnam’s hugely influential *Bowling Alone*, a direct descendant of Dahl’s polyarchic theories of civil society, has captured not only the popular imagination but the policy imagination as well.<sup>18</sup> Meanwhile, a prolific debate in the academic literature about the relationship between civil society and the state has continued unabated concerning the ways neo-Tocquevillian assumptions dominating foreign donor agencies directly shaped the social and political landscape of the NGO world that emerged.<sup>19</sup>

Katherine Verdery has argued that we might be better off thinking of civil society as a contested political symbol than as an objective descrip-

14. *Ibid.*, 15.

15. *Ibid.* Newton’s article brilliantly expounds on these ideas.

16. See, in particular, Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven, 1971), and Dahl, *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City* (New Haven, 1961).

17. Dahl’s theory was notably criticized by C. Wright Mills, who countered the polyarchic theory of democracy and civil society by claiming that the United States was instead ruled by a demographically consolidated power elite; notions of the “military-industrial complex” arose from this idea. See C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (Oxford, 1956).

18. Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York, 2000).

19. See Armine Ishkanian for an elaboration of this idea. Her discussion of the role of the culture concept in the aid landscape is a slice of the civil society debate in the former Soviet Union that has hitherto not been examined, and one that reveals fascinating insights into how these problems are worked out on the ground. Ishkanian, “From the Embryos of Civil Society to the NGOs: Managing Culture in the Context of Democracy Building in Post-Soviet Armenia” (unpublished manuscript, 2010).

tor.<sup>20</sup> This is nowhere truer than in Russia, where it has been a ball in play for two decades, even though the game keeps changing. For some, civil society has been the requisite basis of a democratic and market-friendly society. Julie Hemment, in her article in this issue, notes that while formerly a “sign of the free market, and liberalism’s triumph, civil society became militarized in the post-9/11 era when it was linked to regime change by the Bush administration.”<sup>21</sup> Moreover, Vladimir Putin’s appropriation of civil society added a further inflection: “sovereign democracy,” a concept linking selected western democratic attributes with a nativist Russia-centric vision. In the context of sovereign democracy, where do indigenous NGOs fit into the aid architecture? Are they a low-cost extension or a stable foundation for the future? Hemment’s consideration of the experience of Nashi, the youth organization initiated by Putin and his followers, helps us understand the roles of local NGOs.

Civil society programs generally fall under the “democratization” rubric in development aid. The emphasis on democratization programs in the early years of post-Soviet aid was a direct inheritance from Ronald Reagan’s heavily ideological and moral battles in the waning days of the Cold War. It reemerged in the policy agendas of both the Bush and the Clinton administrations and eventually became linked to economic reform, as well. Thus have the ideologies and practices of marketization and privatization, mentioned above, become amalgamated with democratization and come to be seen by many developers and aid recipients as part and parcel of one integrated package.<sup>22</sup>

Today’s development field owes much to its antecedent, modernization theory, as Sean Roberts’s article in this issue explains: following a similar social evolutionary trajectory, the underdeveloped need to be developed. And, implicit in such a project are inbuilt hierarchies of power. Focusing on both the producers and consumers of development, Roberts’s work offers numerous examples of the nature of the interaction between USAID democracy programs and the host government of Kazakhstan. Wearing the two hats of an anthropologist and a USAID democracy development worker, Roberts has straddled the worlds of critic and practitioner, affording him a privileged insight. His many years of experience as ethnographer/practitioner have led him to describe the democratization process as occasionally an adversarial, agonistic dance, and one where the resistant host countries of Central Asia emerge as the leading partners. Still, Roberts persuasively demonstrates how the contested space of democracy development may be an ideal venue for the negotiation of what “democracy” might mean in the cross-cultural context of globalization. This is

20. Katherine Verdery, *What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?* (Princeton, 1996).

21. See also Julie Hemment’s discussion of Thomas Carothers, “The Backlash against Democracy Promotion,” *Foreign Affairs* 85, no. 2 (March/April 2006): 55–68.

22. For an insightful analysis of this history of U.S. aid to Russia and Kyrgyzstan, see Sada Aksartova, “Promoting Civil Society or Diffusing NGOs? U.S. Donors in the Former Soviet Union,” in David C. Hammack and Steven Heydemann, eds., *Globalization, Philanthropy, and Civil Society: Projecting Institutional Logics Abroad* (Bloomington, 2009), 160–91.



particularly salient in light of new geopolitical dynamics moving in a less American-centric and increasingly multipolar trajectory.

### **Missions and Missionaries: Secular and Profane**

Reform does not only impose itself from bilateral and multilateral organizations. A long tradition of faith-based development and aid needs to be accounted for as well. The term *missionary* often raises the hackles of anthropologists and other social scientists. The implicit assumptions of religio-cultural imperialism, the explicit or implicit (read devious) agenda of imposing a foreign (often western) worldview of Mormonism, Evangelical Christianity, or, increasingly, one of various Islamic expressions, on peoples for whom such ideas are alien, is seen as beyond the pale of political incorrectness. It implies a lack of respect for indigenous cultures, belief systems, and practices; in short, it reveals an inexcusable and generalized absence of cultural relativity.

But what happens when representatives of faith-based organizations enter the development fray? This raises numerous uncomfortable questions that expose a new spectrum of shades of grey connecting and separating conventional development work from faith-based. Arguments can be made from different stances, demonstrating that what is involved is anything but a clear-cut black-and-white set of issues and is instead far more nuanced. Melissa Caldwell's strongly argued contribution confronts these issues head on, questioning many long-held assumptions. Both Caldwell's and Noor O'Neill Borbieva's work in this issue explore different sorts of explicitly religious, faith-based missionizing, highlighting these complexities. An important issue that arises is the similarity and lack of a hard-and-fast line between faith-based and public development; rather, there are overlapping areas that can be fruitfully examined, both in practice and in approach.

Caldwell challenges the resistance of many in the non-faith-based development world to treating FBOs (faith-based organizations) on a par with conventional governmental development agencies. She points out that whereas this tension is not particularly pressing in, for example, Africa, it has not been resolved in the context of development in the post-Soviet context. Though one reason may be the simple fact that development in the former Soviet Union is only two decades old, in its infancy compared to centuries of contact and aid to parts of Africa, another reason is surely ideological. The western triumphalism that marked the end of the Cold War certainly fed the ideological agenda of aid as "an updated version of Cold War competitions. 'Western' practices of democracy and neoliberal capitalism were heralded as the antidotes to the 'failures' of communism."<sup>23</sup>

Deploying and transposing the language of the church, Roderick L.

23. Melissa Caldwell, "Placing Faith in Development: FBOs and Russia's Development Narrative" (unpublished paper, 2006), 3.

Stirrat writes of “NGO missionaries” who differentiate themselves from “development mercenaries.” The former claim the moral high ground, stressing their loftier goals and methods, disavowing the personal material gain to which the mercenaries aspire. In practice, however, unavoidable convergences emerge, as both groups, whether facilitated by highly paid employees in Land Cruisers or volunteers on bicycles, “share a common commitment and a common goal: to produce the modern person in their own image. Changing hearts and minds is at the core of development practice.”<sup>24</sup> We might find it useful to conceive of a continuum of missionary activity and development through the lens of a Foucauldian regime of discipline. Where religious missionaries once demanded compulsory submission to a set of practices and beliefs through conversion, today “progressive” development projects, such as those described by Hemment and others entailing high degrees of active participation within the local communities, require ideological conversions. They may entail participants’ “conversion statements, accounts of how the individual has been transformed, in a sense ‘reborn,’ with a commitment to participation and empowerment rather than to a pre-conversion faith in the virtues of top-down approaches to development.”<sup>25</sup>

Similar to the diversity of secular aid donors, an equally diverse range of entities fall under the FBO rubric. The different FBOs practice a wide range of assistance, from highly localized to transnational, informed by an equally wide range of missions. Their notions of filling in gaps in an amorphous field of civil society, where individuals have been abandoned by the state (possibly in part due to the efforts of developers) take a tack sharply at odds with more conventional western notions of civil society. Nonetheless, by exposing the parallel structures and functions, for example of FBOs and NGOs, we can illuminate blind spots throughout the development aid architecture.

Few question the need for a robust civil society. The way civil society is propped up by foreign aid can be a delicate issue, however, particularly in the post-Soviet context if it is at the expense of state building. As O’Neill Borbieva notes in her discussion of Islamic development assistance in Kyrgyzstan, civil society is not exclusively a secular domain.

### **Erase and Replace: Institutional Change**

Ultimately persistent questions remain. One of the enduring problems with the aid story has been the approach toward institutions. The development community arrived in the early 1990s to confront a shattered social and economic environment, but one undergirded by decades of strong, functional institutions of all sorts. As many theorists of development have pointed out, substantial institutional reform only seldom occurs, as, by

24. Roderick L. Stirrat, “Mercenaries, Missionaries and Misfits: Representations of Development Personnel,” *Critique of Anthropology* 28, no. 4 (December 2008): 416.

25. *Ibid.*, 417; cf. Ruth Mandel, “Seeding Civil Society,” in Chris M. Hann, ed., *Post-Socialism: Ideals, Ideologies and Practices* (London, 2001).

their very nature, institutions are “deeply embedded in society.”<sup>26</sup> A further persistent obstacle to institutional transformation stems from the tendency within development strategies to reify institutions while simultaneously diminishing the role of human agency.<sup>27</sup>

The expectations of developers have not taken this as a starting point; rather, they have often deployed a cavalier *modus operandi* of “slash and burn, then build from scratch.” One development worker commented, “Basically, developers went into the fSU with a scorched earth policy about any pre-existing institutions; anything they found was automatically discredited.”<sup>28</sup> Cold War triumphalism surely was part of the engine guiding this policy, legitimized by the Freedom Support Act.

Thus, rather than dismantling the existing structures, might it not have been more effective and less socially devastating had extant associations, social structures, organizations, and traditions been bolstered, received support and investment, rather than adopting a “demolish and build *de novo*” strategy?<sup>29</sup> Rather than presuming a *tabula rasa* on which boilerplate technological solutions informed by poorly formulated and ill-fitting ideologies could be imposed, the assumption of a palimpsest to be worked with, not on, might have produced a very different post-Soviet world two decades after the limited, narrowly envisioned “transition” began. This is the context for the research presented in this issue, demonstrating how a set of cases can raise fundamental questions and even challenge conventional notions of development aid. Together, these articles offer a reconsideration of the power dynamics in aid relationships as they query the nature and ideologies of donors and aid agendas.

26. Rodrik, “Goodbye Washington Consensus, Hello Washington Confusion?” 979.

27. Maia Green, “Globalizing Development in Tanzania: Policy Franchising through Participatory Project Management,” *Critique of Anthropology* 23, no. 2 (June 2003): 123–43; Thomas Yarrow, “Paired Opposites: Dualism in Development and Anthropology,” *Critique of Anthropology* 28, no. 4 (December 2008): 426–45.

28. Chief of Party of a USAID program, interviews, 2003–2008.

29. For trenchant political-economic analyses of this period in Central Asia, as well as critical examples of development and restructuring, see Deniz Kandiyoti’s work “Modernization without the Market? The Case of the Soviet East,” *Economy and Society*, 25, no. 4 (1996): 529–42; Kandiyoti, “Pathways of Farm Restructuring in Uzbekistan: Pressures and Outcomes,” in M. Spoor, ed., *Transition, Institutions and the Rural Sector* (Lanham, Md., 2003), 143–62; Kandiyoti, “How Far Do Analyses of Postsocialism Travel? The Case of Central Asia,” in C. M. Hann, ed., *Postsocialism: Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia* (London, 2002), 238–57; Kandiyoti, “The Cry for Land: Agrarian Reform, Gender and Land Rights in Uzbekistan,” *Journal of Agrarian Change* 3, nos. 1–2 (2003): 225–56; Kandiyoti, “Postcolonialism Compared: Potentials and Limitations in the Middle East and Central Asia,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 34 (2002): 279–97.