Sex Trafficking of Women in Post-Soviet Russia:
The Role of Organized Crime and Patriarchy

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Angela Eyraud

The unmitigated proliferation of sex trafficking of women in Russia since the dissolution of the USSR is astounding. The trafficking of women for sexual exploitation has a strong history in many areas of the world and has most recently infiltrated Russia with fervor. Since the early 1990s Slavic women from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and former Soviet states have constituted what is known as the fourth wave of sex trafficking of women. The first wave consisted of Thai and Filipino women, the second Dominicans and Colombians, and the third Ghanaians and Nigerians.[1] Following the end of the Soviet Union, Russian women have been trafficked to over 50 countries.[2] No region in the world remains untouched by sex trafficking, though the degree of involvement varies based on the region and the time period.

The increased globalization and technology that coincided with the beginning of the trafficking of Russian and Slavic women has meant the fourth wave is unprecedented in its scope and size, and all the more difficult to combat. In Turkey and Israel, the number of Russian women working in the sex industry is in fact so high that "Natashas" is used as slang for prostitutes.[3] Accurate data on the problem of sex trafficking is hard to collect and verify, resulting in varying numbers. From Newly Independent States (NIS) and CEE the number of women trafficked annually ranges anywhere from 200,000 – 500,000.[4] Of that number estimates suggest around 50,000 of those women come from Russia.[5] While not all trafficked women are forced into prostitution, the majority are. The number of women subjected to the extremely brutal, violent and coercive world of forced prostitution is staggering and unacceptable.

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[1] Sally Stoecker, "The Rise in Human Trafficking and the Role of Organized Crime," *Demokratizatsiya* 8 (January 2000): 2.
[2] Caitlin Deighan, "A Business of Supply and Demand: The Trafficking of Women and Girls from Russia and Ukraine," in *Human Trafficking in Europe: Character, Causes and Consequences,* eds. Penelope McRedmond and Gillian Wylie (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 82.
[3] Donna M. Hughes, "The 'Natasha' Trade: The Transnational Shadow Market of Trafficking in Women," in "In the Shadows: Promoting Prosperity or Undermining Stability?" special issue, *Journal of International Affairs* 52, no. 2 (Spring 2000): 3.
[4] Lea Biason and Marie Vlachova, eds., *Women in an Insecure World: Violence Against Women: Facts, Figures and Analysis* (Geneva: Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, 2005), 81; Rita J. Simon, "Sexual Trafficking of Women and Children," in *Women's Issues of the Decade: 1993-2003* (Washington D.C.: Women's Freedom Network, 2004), 125.
[5] Deighan, "A Business of Supply and Demand," in *Human Trafficking in Europe,* eds. McRedmond and Wylie, 82.

Despite the enormously high numbers of Russian women trafficked for sex in the past two decades, the problem has been marginalized by Russian authorities. Some of the reasons why it took years for the problem to be recognized and progress to combat it is slow are related to the factors which caused the problem in the first place. It is easy to attribute sex trafficking primarily to economic reasons, but the causes are complex and multidimensional. Sex trafficking in Russia emerged in the unique post-Soviet transitional context, but the factors that caused it already existed in the Soviet era. Russian organized crime and deeply entrenched patriarchal attitudes have roots in Soviet times; both survived the transition to market-democracy and helped shape the dire economic circumstances and strongly patriarchal society of post-Soviet Russia. Combined with the abrupt and unprecedented new order imposed on society, the intensification and entrenchment of the Soviet legacies of ROC and patriarchal attitudes in post-Soviet Russia resulted in the extensive sex trafficking of women.

INTRODUCTION

As this paper addresses why sex trafficking of women in Russia is so prolific, it is essential to properly define and understand trafficking. The most recent and internationally recognized definition is provided by the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. The Palermo Protocol, as it is commonly referred to, went into effect in 2003. It defined the trafficking of persons in Article 3, subparagraph (a) as follows:

> "Trafficking in persons" shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.

The Protocol also includes the following:

> The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used.

There are currently 117 signatories and 124 parties to the Palermo Protocol, including the Russian Federation as party. For the purpose of this essay the Palermo Protocol definition of trafficking in persons will be used, with a specific focus on the trafficking of women for the purpose of sexual exploitation.[6]

A multitude of organizations and studies have compiled data on the severity of trafficking in persons. These data vary greatly in both international and regional numbers. One estimate states that roughly one million women and children are sold into slavery worldwide each year.[7] Another study claims that number is 800,000-900,000.[8] The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has reported 4 million people are smuggled across borders each year.[9] Just this year, the UN said there are 2.4 million people trafficked worldwide at any one time, with 80% being exploited for sex. Figures on the scope of trafficking specifically in CEE are just as varied as global estimates. Interpol and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) report that each year 4-7 million Commonwealth Independent States (CIS) citizens are trafficked, most of whom are women and children.[10] The U.S. State Department reported more than 100,000 women were trafficked from the

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[6] Anna Repetskaia, "Classifying the Elements of Human Trafficking Crimes," in *Human Traffic and Transnational Crime: Eurasian and American Perspectives,* eds. Louise Shelley and Sally Stoecker (United States: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010), 51; Elena Tiuriukanova, "Female Labor Migration Trends and Human Trafficking: Policy Recommendations," in *Human Traffic and Transnational Crime,* Shelly and Stoecker, 108. It is important to note men and children are also victims of sex trafficking in Russia and worldwide but women overwhelmingly constitute the majority of trafficking victims. One estimate from the CIA states that in OSCE countries only 2% of the victims are male. Additionally, sex trafficking of children in Russia has causes and circumstances that differ from the sex trafficking of women. Quite often, though, the line between children and adults is blurred.

[7] Stoecker, "The Rise in Human Trafficking," 1.

[8] Sally Stoecker, "Human Trafficking: A New Challenge for Russia and the United States," in *Human Traffic and Transnational Crime,* eds. Shelley and Stoecker, 13.

[9] Johanna Granville, "From Russia Without Love: The 'Fourth Wave' of Global Human Trafficking," *Demokratizatsiya* 12, no. 1 (Winter 2004): 148. UN and IOM definitions do make a distinction between trafficking and smuggling.

[10] Deighan, "A Business of Supply and Demand," in *Human Trafficking in Europe,* eds. McRedmond and Wylie, 84.

former Soviet Union (FSU) in 1997 alone.[11] OSCE in June 2000 declared 200,000 women and children from CEE, Russia and CIS are trafficked each year, primarily to other OSCE countries.[12] Yet another study states 500,000 women are trafficked from Russia and NIS per year.[13] Russia will be the focus of this paper but let it be noted other NIS also have significant problems with sex trafficking, particularly Ukraine and Moldova, as well as Albania and Romania. Little data exists regarding the number of trafficked Russian women specifically but one study from the IOM and Angel Coalition in 2003 stated 50,000 Russian women are trafficked per year.[14]

Unreliable and inconsistent data on the number of individuals trafficked is attributable to multiple factors. The illegal and clandestine nature of the industry makes obtaining reliable data nearly impossible. Most victims choose to remain silent instead of reporting the crime. Some governments are reluctant to cooperate. Finally, different definitions of trafficking (including who should be identified as a victim) are used and there is a lack of a unified methodological approach to generating data. It is likely that most of these estimates are also well below the real numbers. For all of these reasons then, it follows that data should be used as an indicator of the problem instead of viewed as reliable measurements.[15] When used as an indicator, all data points to the extensiveness of trafficking worldwide and in Russia. Even though the actual number may never be known, the problem is still very real. Additionally, it is important to remember trafficking in persons consists of both a demand side and a supply side. Simply put, there would be absolutely no sex trafficking of women from Russia (or any other country) if there was no demand for women in sex industries (legal or illegal). There are numerous studies and works that focus on the demand side of sex trafficking, but this paper will not do so.

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[11] Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), *Russian Organized Crime and Corruption: Putin's Challenge* (Washington, D.C.: CSIS Press, 2000), 42.
[12] Biason and Vlachova, eds., *Women in an Insecure World,* 81.
[13] Simon, "Sexual Trafficking of Women and Children," in *Women's Issues of the Decade,* ed. Simon, 125.
[14] Deighan, "A Business of Supply and Demand," in *Human Trafficking in Europe,* eds. McRedmond and Wylie, 82.
[15] Ibid., 84.

Furthermore, it should be noted that such blunt and cold language is not intended to trivialize the reality of sex trafficking and the experiences of its victims. Though somewhat tangential to the focus of this essay, the specifics of how a woman is trafficked and subsequently controlled will be briefly discussed.

The common reaction of Russian women in response to dire economic circumstances and a deeply patriarchal society is to look to emigrate in hopes of finding a better life.[16] Due to restrictive and stringent immigration policies in Western countries which make legally immigrating extremely difficult, Russian women are often forced to rely on intermediaries to migrate. The role of intermediaries in Russia is almost always filled by organized crime, which exploits the vulnerabilities of women to lure them into forced prostitution.

There are multiple methods used to recruit women into sex trafficking. All of them entice women by offering exactly what they are looking for, namely a good job and escape. Newspaper and magazine ads offering well-paid jobs abroad are rampant, promising employment primarily in service and entertainment sectors as waitresses, nannies, cooks, dancers, etc. Women who respond are frequently overqualified but eager to find work abroad.[17] A second method of recruitment is through various front companies which masquerade as employment, modeling and mail-order-bride agencies. Though they have a different façade and offers, all exist to supply women to the trafficking industry. Lastly, women are recruited by a friend, relative or acquaintance with ties to sex trafficking. A specific form of this method is known as second wave recruitment in which a woman who was a victim of sex trafficking returns to Russia to recruit more women in an attempt to escape her life of forced

[16] This paper generally focuses on Russian women who are trafficked out of the country and forced into prostitution abroad but it should be understood that trafficking can be domestic as well. In accordance with the Palermo Protocol, a person does not have to be transported across national borders to be a victim of trafficking. Thousands of Russian women have been trafficked domestically for sexual exploitation

[17] Stoecker, "Human Trafficking," in *Human Traffic and Transnational Crime*, eds. Shelley and Stoecker, 15.

prostitution; the victim becomes the perpetrator.[18] All of these methods are either controlled or connected to ROC.

Once recruited a woman is forced to sign a contract, and then begins the process of trafficking and her subsequent enslavement for sexual exploitation. According to the Global Survival Network (GSN), traffickers charge anywhere from $1,500-$30,000 for their services of providing travel documents, finding jobs and facilitating transport.[19] Upon arrival the woman is placed in a dependent, isolated and vulnerable position. She likely does not know the language, is unfamiliar with the city and is constantly fearful of arrest. Emotional and physical manipulation is then used to control her. Her travel documents are confiscated and she is most likely forced into debt bondage. Debt bondage occurs when a woman is forced to work until she can repay her "debt" to the traffickers. Since a woman can be repeatedly sold to different "owners" the cycle of debt bondage can be never-ending. The conditions of her work and "home," which are often one in the same, are very poor. Women are locked in basements, provided little food and clothing, and prohibited from accessing medical care. Traffickers also forbid outside contact. Friends and family of the woman are additionally threatened if she resists or attempts to escape. Forced drug and alcohol dependency is yet another means of control.

Additionally, extreme violence is used to condition the woman and break her until she submits to prostitution. The level of violence in sex trafficking is horrendous, appalling and inescapable. This includes but is not limited to gang rape, mutilation, torture, frequent beatings and even murder. A woman is sure to either encounter violence herself or witness it as a warning. This violence has even resulted in infamous cases of public beheadings and women being thrown off balconies to their deaths. Violence is a constant and unrelenting feature of sex trafficking.

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[18] Liudmila Erokhina, "Trafficking in Women in the Russian Far East: A Real or Imaginary Phenomenon?" in *Human Traffic and Transnational Crime,* eds. Shelley and Stoecker, 83.

[19] Gillian Caldwell, Steve Galster, Jyothi Kanics, and Nadia Steinzor, "Capitalizing on Transition Economics: The Role of the Russian Mafiya in Trafficking Women for Forced Prostitution," in *Illegal Immigration and Commercial Sex: The New Slave Trade,* ed. Phil Williams (Portland: Frank Cass Publishers, 1999), 61.

A final crucial component of control is the withholding of pay. A woman receives little to none of the money she makes. An expert from the German Organized Crime Bureau estimated that on average, women are only allowed to keep less than 5% of their earnings.[20] This means a woman cannot pay off her "debt" and is not making money as she hoped she would in immigrating. The combination of these methods of control means the possibility of escape from forced prostitution is nearly impossible. Often a woman's best hope of escape is a police raid which usually results in deportation. If a woman is freed, she leaves with a slew of physical and psychological problems. Sex trafficking is an extremely coercive, manipulative, brutal and violent world with little possibility of escape.

Finally, the varying levels of complicity of victims need to be highlighted. Essentially, victims of trafficking can be separated into three groups based on their level of consent and prior knowledge. The first group consists of women who are legitimately and wholly duped into sex trafficking. They truly believe the lies of the traffickers and expect legitimate jobs and opportunities abroad. The second group is composed of women who are aware of the possibility they may end up working as prostitutes, but are willing to take the risk.[21] The possibility of a legitimate job justifies this gamble because they have no better alternatives in Russia. The final group consists of women who know they are going to be prostitutes. They too feel this is better than any alternatives at home.[22] In the context of the Palermo Protocol, all three groups are equally understood to be victims because regardless of any initial complicity, absolutely none of these women consent to the final end conditions of forced prostitution. No woman willingly agrees to be enslaved. If a woman was trafficked according to the Palermo Protocol

[20] Caldwell et al., "Capitalizing on Transition Economics," in *Illegal Immigration,* ed. Williams, 66.
[21] Legitimate work opportunities really do exist abroad. Many Russians know someone who successfully immigrated and secured a good job. The fact Russian women know legitimate opportunities exist makes them more willing to take the risk.
[22] Women who do consent to be prostitutes usually have a very distorted image of the reality of prostitution. The inundation of images of the glamorous, idealized Western lifestyle is pervasive in Russia. This holds true for images of prostitution. Many women essentially expect they will be more like high-end escorts. They believe prostitution in Western countries consists of a young, well-dressed, handsome businessman buying them fancy drinks in a swanky hotel. In reality, this image could not be further from the truth. Russian women expect *Pretty Woman*, not gang rape and enslavement.

parameters, she is a victim regardless of any initial level of consent. The number of Russian women who are victims of sex trafficking is unacceptably high.

In attempting to explain why this problem is so extensive, it is helpful to look at Russia in a global context. For example, post-Soviet Russia has experienced deep poverty, but so have countless other nations. So the question arises why has Russia developed a sex trafficking problem while other countries with similar circumstances have not? The deeper structural causes go well beyond economic factors. The most influential and far-reaching factors are legacies from the Soviet period: Russian organized crime (ROC) and patriarchal attitudes. There was not a clear demarcation between Soviet Russia and the Russian Federation. Many legacies carried over to post-Soviet Russia. The continuance of ROC and patriarchal attitudes from communism to market-democracy ensured that these legacies were highly influential in shaping the reformed Russian society, and subsequently this society ensured the legacies gained strength and normalcy. The manifestations of ROC and patriarchy in post-Soviet Russia are overt and unbounded. Combined with the abrupt and unfamiliar new order and poor economic circumstances, these legacies helped create a Russian political-economy and culture that is very harsh on women. As a result, women are extremely vulnerable and increasingly desperate to escape this oppressive context. After exhausting all domestic possibilities, women began to look abroad to find legitimate work opportunities and a better life.

ORGANIZED CRIME

The Soviet legacy of organized crime is one of the main causes of trafficking in persons in post-Soviet Russia. It is well established that worldwide organized crime is one of the primary contributory factors behind the growth of human trafficking.[23] This is especially true in Russia. Without Russian

[23] Penelope McRedmond, "Defining Organized Crime in the Context of Human Trafficking," in *Human Trafficking in Europe,* eds. McRedmond and Wylie, 182.

organized crime, many of the economic conditions which prompt women to migrate would not exist. Critically, ROC is also the perpetrator of sex trafficking. The way marketization was conducted enabled ROC to have a direct role in the privatization process, thereby heavily influencing the resulting economic conditions. In turn, the chaotic and unstable transition allowed for ROC to become stronger, more powerful, and deeply entrenched in Russian society.

To begin with, a quick definition of organized crime needs to be established. Generally speaking, organized crime is an organized and often hierarchical network whose focus is profit-oriented criminal activity. These groups systematically commit crimes through the use of violence and the corruption of individuals and government. Organized crime and its activities adversely affect the society in which it operates, with the capability of destabilizing society.[24] Overall, Russian organized crime fits this definition quite well.

Russian organized crime is a legacy of the Soviet period because its emergence occurred during the later years of the USSR. Simply put, ROC developed in the Soviet Union to meet the needs of the people when the government was unable to sufficiently do so. The Soviet Union guaranteed a standard of living for all its citizens but that standard was one of minimal subsistence. A shadow economy controlled by organized crime emerged to supply goods and services not provided by the state.[25] During its infancy ROC was by no means the powerful and inescapable entity it would become in post-Soviet Russia. Part of the reason for this is the powerful, omnipotent nature of the Soviet state and its security forces. The police state of the USSR could not prevent the emergence of organized crime but it did hinder its unbounded growth. Despite the criminality associated with the shadow economy (also known

[24] Gerben J.N. Bruinsma and Guus Meershoek, "Organized Crime and Trafficking in Women from Eastern Europe in the Netherlands," in *Illegal Immigration,* ed. Williams, 114; Penelope McRedmond and Gillian Wylie, "Conclusion," in *Human Trafficking in Europe,* eds. McRedmond and Wylie, 220.

[25] The USSR was notorious for coming up short in terms of providing for its citizens. There were massive shortages for everything from food to housing, and extremely long queues just to obtain the bare minimum provided by the state. As a result, many people hoarded what they did have, further exacerbating the shortages. Financial problems eliminated personal savings and effectively returned society to a barter economy. A grey market emerged which illegally provided many goods and services to citizens. ROC and the grey market existed in a mutually reinforcing relationship.

as the grey market), it was still integral and relied upon by many. With the transition from communism and loss of the all-pervasive police state, ROC was able to flourish. It was not until the fetters of the Soviet period were gone that ROC began to exponentially grow and entrench itself in Russian society during the chaos of transition.

The Russian transition from communism to market-democracy was extremely chaotic and unregulated. Western neoliberal reforms dictated primarily by the IMF and the United States provided a transitional model the primary goal of which was simply the impossibility of a return to communism. Chaos ensued largely because of the way the economic transition was conducted – that is, without regulations or oversight. Instead of an equitable distribution of wealth, property and resources among Russian citizens, the privatization process led to a select group of insiders and ROC controlling the Russian economy. ROC's raider mentality[26] was compatible with the marketization process in which state-owned enterprises (SOEs) were up for grabs. Chaos and political instability allowed for the already present organized crime network to strengthen due to its ability to gain large shares of the Russian economy.

The process of privatization in Russia is one of the most critical components which facilitated ROC's rise to a position of power and influence. The majority of the process in which previously state-owned businesses were transferred to private owners was conducted without regulations or oversight. Former first deputy prime minister and interior minister Anatoly Kulikov estimated that 80% of privatization occurred with no regulatory laws in place.[27] This seems somewhat unbelievable considering the strong influence and control by Western reformers. Without diminishing the culpability and naivety of outside advisers, the real fault for lack of regulation ultimately lies with Russia. Western reformers left control of privatization in the hands of key Russian officials, most notably Anatoly

[26] Louise Shelley, "The Changing Position of Women: Trafficking, Crime, and Corruption," in *The Legacy of State Socialism and the Future of Transformation,* ed. David Lane (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 215.
[27] CSIS*,* 45.

Chubais, who bypassed legitimate Russian governmental bodies and democratic processes.[28] The process was controlled by oligarchs and insiders. Russian leaders could have chosen to conduct privatization differently or at least instituted more oversight, but that would have threatened their vested interests and power. Elite control was not a new phenomenon in Russia, but its presence in privatization would prove extremely harmful for the mass populace in post-Soviet Russia.

The lack of regulation in privatization permitted ROC to be directly involved, which compounded the gendered effects of the transition. The historic sale of SOEs was crucial for the success of market-democracy in Russia. The sale would ultimately prove most beneficial to oligarchs, insiders with vested interests, and ROC. Those most disaffected by privatization were the average Russian citizens and workers, most notably women. Women were deprived of employment, property and access to capital. The plan for privatization had been formulated quickly and lacked any attention to ensuring equitable distribution of property or how various socio-occupational groups would be affected. For Russian elite, the focus was simply privatization; it did not matter who ended up with controlling shares as long as the process occurred. This simplistic and one-sided approach would prove extremely disadvantageous for most Russians.

The Soviet legacy of male-dominated power structures became institutionalized because of privatization, and then synthesized with ROC. Russian and Western reformers had stipulated the majority of privatization to be done through a voucher program. The specifics of that program will not be discussed here but privatization in general will. In the Soviet era, managers of state enterprises were exclusively male. These male elites went into privatization with vested interests of maintaining their control and had the advantageous position to do so. Insiders in combination with ROC would ultimately gain control of more than three-quarters of all large enterprises.[29] Control was gained through elite

[28] Ibid., 44.
[29] Ibid., 32.

collaboration, corruption and violence. The mass transfer of wealth and Soviet enterprises went to those who had enjoyed power preceding the transition. Women specifically were crowded out of privatization. Whether acting independently or at the behest of oligarchs, ROC even used force to physically bar women from the auctions of state property.[30] Women were fundamentally excluded from participating in privatization. Ownership and control of businesses went almost exclusively into the hands of men. ROC compounded the gendered effects of the post-Soviet transition.

It is widely accepted the transition in Russia had many gendered effects, particularly in the economic sphere. Women were more disproportionately affected by the negative economic conditions. Russia experienced steep unemployment after the abandonment of the constitutional obligation to work. Economic restructuring led to downsizing and layoffs. It is estimated that in 1980 Russia's labor force was 73 million strong. At the end of the Soviet period (c. 1990) that number had risen to more than 75 million, resulting in full employment. By 1998, only 63 million Russians were employed.[31] Industries particularly fraught with economic woes and downsizing were those that had predominately employed women, like textiles and other light industries. As a result, women lost drastically more jobs than men during the transition. From 1990-1995, women lost 7 million jobs while men lost 2 million.[32] Female unemployment has only increased since the end of the Soviet Union. Women overwhelmingly constitute the majority of registered unemployed. Reports commonly cite that 60-80% of registered unemployed are women.[33] In some regions that number is as high as 90%.[34] Additionally, women are more likely to be unemployed long term.

[30] Shelley, "The Changing Position of Women," in *The Legacy of State Socialism,* ed. Lane, 209
[31] Walter D. Connor, "Class, Status, Powerlessness: Workers in Postcommunist Russia," in *Legacy of State Socialism,* ed. Lane, 198.
[32] Stoecker, "Human Trafficking," in *Human Traffic and Transnational Crime*, eds. Shelley and Stoecker, 15.
[33] Hughes, "Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation," 18.
[34] Caldwell et al., "Capitalizing on Transition Economics," in *Illegal Immigration,* ed. Williams, 49.

Staggeringly high rates of unemployment are a reflection of the state of the overall Russian economy. GDP is a good indicator of an economy's strength. Statistics vary but it is undeniable Russian GDP has plummeted in the post-Soviet era. From 1990-1996 GDP declined by 50%.[35] By 1999, GDP was estimated to be 58% of the 1989 level. GDP has slowly increased since the 1998 financial crisis but cumulatively GDP has only increased 0.2% since the end of the USSR. In addition to an environment suffering extreme economic downturn, the disparity between male and female earnings has increased. In the 1980s and into the early 1990s women earned around 70% of the average male income.[36] By 2000, women only earned 50-56% of the average male wage.[37] Women also continued to be employed in low-wage sectors and positions. Wage disparities and a generally bad economy have resulted in what is known as the feminization of poverty.

Poverty in post-Soviet Russia is extreme and widespread. Multiple reports estimate that at the turn of the century roughly 60 million Russians lived below the poverty line.[38] That number translates to approximately 40% of the population in official poverty.[39] The official poverty line during that time was between $30-40 per month. Single-parent households were at high risk for poverty and 90% of these households were headed by women.[40] The gendered effects of the transition have meant poverty increasingly has a female face in Russia. This is what is meant by the term feminization of poverty. Poverty is more common amongst Russian women. Women are finding it increasingly difficult to escape poverty. The increasing inequality of wealth has also compounded the impoverishment of Russia. Extreme inequality was evident as early as 1994 when the top 10% of the population earned eleven times as much as the bottom 10%.[41] The turn of the century witnessed the top 10% of the Russian

[35] Connor, "New World of Work," in *Russia's Torn Safety Nets,* eds. Field and Twigg, 199.
[36] Shvedova, "Gender Politics," in *Gender Politics,* eds. Racioppi and O'Sullivan See, 158.
[37] Stoecker, "Human Trafficking," in *Human Traffic and Transnational Crime,* eds. Shelley and Stoecker, 16.
[38] CSIS, 39.
[39] Hughes, "Supplying Women for the Sex Industry," in *Sexuality and Gender,* eds. Sandfort and Štulhofer, 212.
[40] Linda Racioppi and Katherine O'Sullivan See, "Introduction," in *Gender Politics,* eds. Racioppi and O'Sullivan See, 18.
[41] Hughes, "Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation," 8.

population possessing half of the nation's wealth, while the bottom 40% had less than 20%.[42] The top 10% is dominated by those who reaped the benefits of privatization, particularly organized crime.

One of the critical means by which ROC increased in power was via its gains in the economic sphere and financial sector as a result of privatization. The extent of ROC control of various businesses in Russia is astounding. According to the FBI, ROC controls half of Russia's banks. In 1996, the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) estimated that mafia controls a staggering 85% of banks, 60% of SOEs and 40% of private enterprises.[43] Another estimate states 40,000 Russian businesses, including 500 joint ventures with foreign investors and 550 banks are controlled by ROC.[44] Estimates put the proportion of Russian GDP generated by organized crime or resulting from the shadow economy at 40%.[45] Even if ROC does not directly control an enterprise, the likelihood it is are extorting "protection" fees is high. An estimated 80% of local and foreign companies have received extortion demands.[46] Seventy to eighty percent of all businesses in Russia are believed to be paying some "protection" to ROC.[47] Extortion fees can range anywhere from 20-50% of a company's budget and/or profits.[48] It is clear that in the economic and financial sectors, ROC has a strong and unavoidable presence.

In addition to organized crime's infiltration of the economic sphere, the political sphere has also been penetrated. The extent and overt existence of official collusion, corruption and criminality have intensified in Russia as a result of the transition. High and low forms of criminality converged. Similar to its origins in Soviet times, ROC has replaced the state in providing things like employment, protection and security. During democratization, power vacuums emerged as a result of the decentralization of state

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[42] Mark G. Field and Judyth L. Twigg, "Introduction," in *Russia's Torn Safety Nets,* eds. Field and Twigg, 3.
[43] CSIS, 37.
[44] Caldwell et al., "Capitalizing on Transition Economics," in *Illegal Immigration,* ed. Williams, 51.
[45] Janet Elise Johnson, *Gender Violence in Russia: The Politics of Feminist Intervention* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), 33; CSIS, 13.
[46] Donna M. Hughes, *Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation: The Case of the Russian Federation* (Geneva: International Organization for Migration, 2002), 61.
[47] Caldwell et al., "Capitalizing on Transition Economics," in *Illegal Immigration,* ed. Williams, 51.
[48] Alexandra Orlova, "From Social Dislocation to Human Trafficking: the Russian Case," *Problems of Post-Communism* 51, no. 4 (1998): 19.

power. Moscow's influence was waning and especially diminished in rural areas and the Far East. ROC stepped into these power vacuums and provided services previously unavailable or unattainable. A barter economy emerged after the effective disintegration of a currency-based economy[49] and ROC has played an important role in facilitating exchanges and arrangements. Weak federal and state institutions gave regional governors more power, and they in turn bonded with criminal networks. ROC was often welcomed by regional authorities because organized crime alleviated many of their shortcomings, particularly monetary ones. The arrangement became mutually reinforcing once authorities began to directly profit from mafia activities. Those who crossed ROC were swiftly punished. Organized crime became entrenched in most of Russia due to its control of the economy and infiltration of power structures.

Corruption and collusion has not been limited to regional levels but is also present at federal and state levels. There is pervasive government corruption and criminality, or a criminalization of the state. A two year investigation by GSN found government collaboration with the mafia in MVD, FSB and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[50] All levels of government and officialdom have been penetrated, including law enforcement. As corruption further invades law enforcement and politics, organized crime only gains more influence and the line between the state and criminal sphere blurs. Russia has witnessed a merging of criminal networks and government. This has resulted in what many refer to as a criminal-syndicalist state, defined as, "A state controlled by a tightly interlinked cadre of corrupt officials, crooked businesspeople, and criminals."[51] Additionally, regional governors, Duma members, and

[49] The 1998 financial crisis further exacerbated the reliance on a barter economy. The Central Bank of Russia (CBR) defaulted on more than $40 billion. The banking sector collapsed and depositors' accounts were frozen. The CBR was effectively broke, resulting in the total loss of people's savings (for the second time in six years – the first being 1991-92 as a result of the transition). With a worthless currency, skyrocketing inflation and lack of alternatives a return to a barter style economy was unavoidable.

[50] Donna M. Hughes, "Supplying Women for the Sex Industry: Trafficking from the Russian Federation," in *Sexuality and Gender in Postcommunist Eastern Europe and Russia,* eds. Theo Sandfort and Aleksander Štulhofer (New York: Haworth Press, 2005), 211.

[51] Ibid.

Federation Council members enjoy total immunity from criminal prosecution.[52] As a result of pervasive corruption, the development of a true civil society in Russia has been stalled. It is essential to understand that corruption is absolutely central to the proper functioning of trafficking in persons. While the level of this corruption varies – from simply ignoring illegal activities to exacting bribes to actively blocking legislation – its existence is mandatory for the success of sex trafficking of women in Russia.

Also critical to the success of trafficking is the composition of ROC and its organizational structure. It is well known that the Russian mafia has direct links with Russia's security services (MVD, KGB, FSB and SVR) and has many former members amongst its ranks.[53] Former security service members, known as *nomenklatura*, are viewed as a valuable asset by ROC. The ability to monitor phones, email and internet traffic; experience and ties in the international arena; political connections; access to weapons; experience in money laundering; and knowledge of banking and business are valuable skills current and former security service members possess.[54] Many mob members are *nomenklatura* and often highly educated.[55] Therefore, ROC has the necessary skills, resources, and personnel to succeed in human trafficking. Additionally, ROC has a flexible enough of an organizational structure that it can withstand the rare occurrence of arrest or prosecution. The success of organized crime is also attributable to the criminal code in Russia, or lack thereof. For example, there is no legal definition of corruption in Russia and no laws prohibiting money laundering.[56] There is no effective oversight body in place to curb the growth of ROC, nor the appropriate legal code to punish many of its crimes. All of these factors have enabled criminal networks to become more powerful and further

[52] Hughes, *Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation,* 14.
[53] CSIS, 16.
[54] Louise Shelley, "Russian and Chinese Trafficking: A Comparative Perspective," in *Human Traffic and Transnational Crime,* eds. Shelley and Stoecker, 71.
[55] Louise Shelley and Sally Stoecker, "Introduction," in *Human Traffic and Transnational Crime,* eds. Shelley and Stoecker, 6.
[56] CSIS, 3; Hughes, "Supplying Women for the Sex Industry," in *Sexuality and Gender,* eds. Sandfort and Štulhofer, 211.

entrenched in all areas of Russian society. Its solid domestic base and need to look abroad for more markets has led to the international growth of ROC.

Certain other notable countries involved in sex trafficking have lacked the extreme and pervasive organized crime network of Russia. ROC's domestic growth and international expansion have further enabled its involvement in trafficking in persons. The problem of sex trafficking would not be as bad if organized crime was not so extensive. Data on organized criminal operations is difficult to ascertain and therefore highly variable. Various studies also use different definitions of organized crime and criminal gangs. However, these numbers still give insight into the extent and scope of ROC. In 1996, MVD estimated there were 100 ROC groups operating in 44 countries. By 2000, the number had grown to 200 groups in 58 countries.[57] Another estimate states there are 200 large ROC groups operating in 50 countries.[58] Yet another report suggests there are more than 300 criminal groups in Russia involved in human trafficking.[59] That estimate is corroborated by another study, which further specifies those 300 groups operate in both Russia and Eastern Europe, with a large percentage involved in human trafficking.[60] There are other reports that put these numbers in the thousands. In 2001, Interpol estimated there are 8,000-10,000 Russian gangs operating in FSU territory, with each group possessing 50-1,000 members.[61] Another study reports there are 8,000 criminal gangs in FSU, with 300 operating internationally.[62] The likely reason for the range of 200-10,000 is that the parameters used in defining "gangs" versus "organized crime" differ. Regardless, it is clear the extent of ROC is large. The transnational scope of ROC explains the wide ranging distribution of trafficked Russian women abroad. ROC has developed into an entity that operates in a virtually borderless world.

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[57] Hughes, "Supplying Women for the Sex Industry," in *Sexuality and Gender,* eds. Sandfort and Štulhofer, 211.
[58] CSIS, 7.
[59] Deighan, "A Business of Supply and Demand," in *Human Trafficking in Europe,* eds. McRedmond and Wylie, 87.
[60] McRedmond, "Defining Organized Crime," in *Human Trafficking in Europe,* eds. McRedmond and Wylie, 182.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Hughes, *Trafficking for Sexual* Exploitation, 14.

Now that the pervasiveness of ROC has been outlined, it is important to note why ROC is involved in human trafficking. Essentially, the answer lies in profit. Trafficking in persons is a multibillion dollar industry and key source of revenue for ROC.[63] It is well-established that trafficking in persons generates more money than the traditional organized criminal endeavors of drugs and arms smuggling.[64] Profits from human trafficking range from 3.5 billion [65] to 10 billion[66] dollars annually, with a general consensus of about $7 billion annually.[67] Few other criminal activities have such a high profit to cost ratio as trafficking in persons.[68]

There are additional advantages and appeals of operating in sex trafficking. Simply put, sex trafficking is low risk and high reward. The overhead is low; little financial capital is necessary to operate trafficking. There is little risk of detection or prosecution. Penalties are light or nonexistent. The fact prostitution is legal, semi-legal or widely tolerated in many countries also contributes to the low risk. On the flipside, profits are extremely high. The biggest advantage of trafficking in persons is that women can be exploited repeatedly. They can be constantly sold to different brothel owners and constantly forced to engage in prostitution, meaning women constantly generate profit. This varies from the drug trade, for instance, in which transactions can occur only once. Additionally, the mentality of ROC in operating sex trafficking contributes to its success.[69] Women are simply viewed as a commodity, like any other resource in a market economy. There is essentially an infinite and renewable supply of women. Women are thus plundered like any other natural resource, with no regard for their

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[63] CSIS, 42.
[64] Francine Pickup, "Deconstructing Trafficking in Women: the Example of Russia," *Millennium – Journal of International Studies* 27, no. 4 (1998): 996.
[65] Stoecker, "Human Trafficking," in *Human Traffic and Transnational Crime,* eds. Shelley and Stoecker, 14.
[66] Biason and Vlachova, eds., *Women in an Insecure World,* 80.
[67] Nathan Moran and Jerry Toft, "The Russian Sex Industry," *Crime & Justice International* 19, no. 72 (April 2003): 5; Sarah Shannon, "Prostitution and the Mafia: The Involvement of Organized Crime in the Global Sex Trade," in *Illegal Immigration,* ed. Phil Williams, 121.
[68] Phil Williams, "Trafficking in Women and Children: A Market Perspective," in *Illegal Immigration,* ed. Williams, 153.
[69] Russians have traditionally been sellers of natural resources, not traders. This legacy has translated into ROC conducting its trafficking in persons business almost ideologically identical to how they would engage in selling natural resources like gold and oil. ROC approaches human trafficking as a commodity market operation.

health or well-being. Brutality and violence (which are necessary measures of control) are pervasive because their use does not adversely affect financial gains or inhibit the future supply of women. The possible financial gains inherent in sex trafficking are so great that ROC actively seeks to maintain the economic and social conditions which prompt women to seek work abroad. ROC has developed strong vested interests in maintaining the economic conditions it helped shape. The Soviet legacy of organized crime is clearly a significant factor and cause of sex trafficking but it is not the only one.

PATRIARCHY

Patriarchal attitudes are one of the main contributing causes of sex trafficking in Russia. Like basically all other nations, Russia has a long history predicated upon patriarchy. In this sense, Russia is not unique. Many other states have overt and rigid patriarchal attitudes but no sex trafficking. It is not simply the possession of these attitudes that distinguishes Russia, but the evolution of these attitudes from the USSR to post-Soviet Russia. The Soviet Union's rhetoric and policies placed heavy restraints on the expression of patriarchy, guaranteeing women a certain degree of equality and rights. This assurance was lost with the transition to market-democracy. Patriarchal attitudes contributed to an overall Russian context that was terrible for women and influenced the economic conditions which compelled women to look abroad for a better life. As can be expected, patriarchal beliefs pervade all spheres of society in post-Soviet Russia. The transition permitted the intensification and increasing presence of patriarchy.

The conversion to communism in early 20th century Russia was monumental because it attempted to completely transform the order of society. Soviet Russia was to be remade in the communist image as theorized by Marx and Engels. Fundamental to this new society was the idea of equality. Even though communism focused specifically on achieving equality through the eradication of

socioeconomic classes, inherent in this quest was equality between the sexes. Marxism and Leninism truly did possess an ideological commitment to gender equality. In fact, the Bolshevik regime in 1917 became the first government in history to declare women's emancipation as one of its central goals, subsequently inscribing such in the constitution.[70] The Soviet founding fathers were revolutionary in this commitment to gender equality.

Debates on the nature of and means to achieving gender equality were reduced to the "woman question."[71] Writing in 1919, Lenin framed the woman question in the following light:

> Women...continues to be a *domestic slave*, because *petty housework* crushes, stultifies, and degrades her, chains her to the kitchen and the nursery, and she wastes her labor on barbarously unproductive, petty, nerve-racking, and crushing drudgery. The real *emancipation of women*, real communism, will begin only where and when an all-out struggle begins...against this petty housekeeping.[72]

Thus, gender equality was to be realized through liberating women from the domestic sphere. This liberation would be accomplished via participation in the labor force. Women's fulltime employment would become a central feature of Soviet policy. In the early years of Soviet rule this policy was backed by true ideological commitment to equality. While the reasons for the Soviet commitment to equal female economic participation would change during the Soviet era, the commitment always remained strong and policies were enacted to realize the goal.

The Soviet Union instituted numerous policies specifically designed to ensure women's full and equal presence in the workforce. To begin with, there was a constitutional obligation for women to work fulltime.[73] Though they would later prove ineffective, equal pay laws were implemented. Liberal laws

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[70] Francine du Plessix Gray, *Soviet Women: Walking the Tightrope* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 32.
[71] Rebecca Kay, "Gender, Equality and the State from 'Socialism' to 'Democracy?'" in *Gender, Equality and Difference During and After State Socialism,* ed. Rebecca Kay (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 3.
[72] du Plessix Gray, 31.
[73] Walter D. Connor, "New World of Work: Employment, Unemployment, and Adaptation," in *Russia's Torn Safety Nets: Health and Social Welfare during the Transition*, eds. Mark G. Field and Judyth L. Twigg (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 192.

concerning abortion and divorce were also instituted.[74] As part of the USSR's famous welfare state, policies were enacted that would ensure women could work fulltime. This assurance came from extensive services and supports that alleviated some of the responsibilities women carried as wives, mothers and homemakers. The reality was in fact not true liberation from the domestic sphere, just policies to ease the burden of combining work and home.

Soviet welfare supports were extensive so as to ensure women could work fulltime. Generous child support systems and subsidized child care was provided, which included an elaborate system of daycare, after-school enrichment, summer programs, and cultural and athletic programs. Maternity and sickness leaves were instituted. Benefits to families with children were provided by the state – the more children, the more benefits. There was a broad system of retirement and disability pensions. Critically, the Soviet state also provided free universal healthcare and nearly universal subsidies for housing. Education too was almost free and universal. Women in Soviet Russia frequently attained high levels of education. These policies guaranteed access to basic standard of living and welfare. The basic standard of living was admittedly limited and poor by Western standards, but nonetheless valued. The results of these policies actually did translate to greater equality for women in many ways, or at least produced markers many scholars say are indicators or prerequisites for a more egalitarian society. In the 1930s it was even declared that the woman question had been solved.[75]

The reasons behind the Soviet state's gender equalizing policies in reality were based around pragmatic concerns. The USSR invested tremendous resources in education for women and spent considerable funds on social welfare but after the first decade or so of Soviet rule, it was not due to a greater ideological commitment to equality. The pragmatic reasons behind these policies were based

[74] Laws legalizing abortion and divorce were implemented under Lenin, but subsequently greatly reduced during Stalin's regime. Following Stalin's death, these laws were restored.
[75] Mary Buckley, "Human Trafficking in the Twenty-first Century: Implications for Russia, Europe, and the World," in *Gender Politics in Post-Communist Eurasia,* eds. Linda Racioppi and Katherine O'Sullivan See (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2009), 125.

largely on economic needs, with industrialization first on the list. Industrialization was essential to the growth, strength and success of Soviet Russia's economy. Russia needed to mobilize vast amounts of labor to achieve industrialization. It was determined the source of this labor rested with women, a largely untapped labor market. Similar pragmatic reasons would continue to drive the Soviet commitment to gender equalizing policies. It is estimated that 40 million male lives were lost from c. 1930-1950 due to coercive collectivization, Stalin's purges and World War II.[76] Once again, women's economic participation was crucial to maintain the labor force Russia needed to sustain and grow its economy. Additionally, the expansion of post-war industries required yet more labor.[77] It was convenient for the Soviet state and its propaganda machine that pragmatic needs necessitated actions that appeared to work toward achieving ideological goals. Regardless of the motivations behind the commitment, it cannot be denied the USSR did make significant strides toward achieving greater gender equality in society. However, the strong undercurrent of patriarchy worked to undermine those achievements.

Patriarchal attitudes were present and influential during the Soviet era. It is not surprising that the transition to communism did not eradicate traditionally held views about women. The Soviet state was able to achieve some equality because there were restraints in place to prevent patriarchy from completely undermining Soviet progress. If patriarchal attitudes had been allowed to openly flourish and directly impact policy, many of the advancements made by women would have been reversed. These restraints only inhibited patriarchal attitudes in Soviet Russia. The presence of patriarchy remained visible and influential.

One of the most important patriarchal attitudes that persisted throughout the Soviet era regarded women's role in society. The prevalent notion was that women's primary role was in the domestic

[76] du Plessix Gray, 33.
[77] Kay, "Gender, Equality and the State," in *Gender, Equality and Difference,* ed. Kay, 8.

sphere. Women's most important responsibilities remained in the home, including housework, caregiving and being an exemplary wife. The dominant image portrayed women first and foremost as mothers. Russian women were viewed as maintainers of the homeland because of their reproductive capabilities and as such the burden of raising children was placed squarely on them. Increased female workforce participation, high rates of female education, and state supports guaranteeing female security all threatened patriarchy. In reaction, there was a strong pushback which asserted women needed to emphasize their more "feminine" traits and realize that their ultimate happiness and fulfillment would be found in the home, not the public sphere.[78] The presence of patriarchal attitudes resulted in contradictory beliefs and practices simultaneously working against women.

Though not institutionalized, patriarchal attitudes in direct opposition to the rhetoric of gender equality did pervade Soviet society. Women were simultaneously torn in opposite directions: they were expected to work fulltime and fulfill their role as wife and mother. The result for Russian women was what has been dubbed the double burden.[79] Women were faced with the double burdens of home and career.[80] At no point were men expected to help in the domestic sphere. By the 1980s, the notion of the double burden and the inability of women to live up to the exalted image of the superhero-esque Russian worker-mother predominated. The pervasive social supports provided by the state enabled women to work fulltime but did not do much to ease the overbearing burdens imposed on them.[81] Women struggled to find a way to achieve fulltime work while simultaneously fulfilling domestic responsibilities.

[78] Rebecca Kay, "A Liberation from Emancipation? Changing Discourses on Women's Employment in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 18 (2002): 53.
[79] Ibid., 54.
[80] du Plessix Gray, 32.
[81] The reality of Soviet day-to-day life exacerbated this struggle. Shortages, queues and inadequate daycare were some of the constant problems Russian women confronted.

Largely as a result of the patriarchal belief women's primary role was in the domestic sphere, women's economic reality was adversely affected during the Soviet era. By the 1960s, economic policies were instituted with the intention of protecting women's natural maternal function.[82] The social protectionist and pro-natalist policies hoped to ensure women's economic participation would not impair their ability to be mothers and bear children. Women were defined as a "special category" in the Soviet workforce and barred from approximately 460 occupations that were deemed detrimental to a woman's reproductive well-being.[83] Additionally, lower status and badly paid jobs were viewed as "women's work."[84] The result of these policies and beliefs was a heavily gender segregated economy and disparities between male and female wages. By the 1980s even though the average female worker was better educated than her male counterpart, she earned only two-thirds of the average male income.[85] Women rarely attained high-level or managerial positions. Collectively, women were seen as an unstable workforce because of their perceived rate of high absenteeism resulting from maternal functions. The impact on women of protectionist policies, occupational differentiation, wage disparities, and occupational hierarchy was their effective status as second-class workers in Soviet society. Unfortunately, patriarchy's impact was not contained solely in the economic sphere.

The Soviet Union's response to gendered violence was rooted in patriarchal beliefs. The common response of the Soviet state was to ignore many social problems and deny their existence. After early efforts to stamp it out, it was declared that prostitution no longer existed in the Soviet Union. Prostitution was not recognized in the criminal or administrative code; it was neither legal nor

[82] Johnson, 26.
[83] Kay, "A Liberation from Emancipation," 53; Valerie Sperling, "The 'New' Sexism: Images of Russian Women during the Transition," in *Russia's Torn Safety Nets,* eds. Field and Twigg, 180; Nadezda Shvedova, "Gender Politics in Russia," in *Gender Politics,* eds. Racioppi and O'Sullivan See, 52.
[84] Larisa Kosygina, "Doubly Disadvantaged? Gender, Forced Migration and the Russia Labour Market," in *Gender, Equality and Difference,* ed. Kay, 192.
[85] du Plessix Gray, 34.

criminalized.[86] Soviet ideology proclaimed the end of prostitution as it was seen as a fact of bourgeois capitalist society. While prostitution was heavily suppressed, it was not eliminated. During most of the Soviet period little overt prostitution existed but by the late 1980s thousands of women were openly prostitutes in Russia.[87] Prostitution was not officially recognized until Gorbachev. This trend of denial was also visible in the Soviet approach to other forms of violence and discrimination against women.

Gendered violence and discrimination were widely ignored or denied by the Soviet state. Domestic violence, sexual assault, sex trafficking and sexual harassment all fit this pattern. To begin with, domestic violence was not recognized as a distinct and structural problem that collectively impacted women.[88] Soviet ideology once again proclaimed that domestic violence was a problem of bourgeoisie families and therefore did not exist in communist Russia. The lack of recognition led to no statistics being collected on the extent of domestic violence. Soviet police ignored the problem, claiming it was outside of their jurisdiction.[89] By the 1980s, women were three times more likely to be murdered by a current or former intimate partner than women in the United States, where rates were comparably high.[90] Sexual violence, discrimination and harassment were not discussed during Soviet times; their existence was ignored. These problems were viewed as women's issues and as such were systematically ignored by the state. Gendered violence was considered a normal part of life and something which did not warrant the attention of the state. The USSR took this trend of denial to the extreme when it signed the 1949 UN Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others with the following reservation: "In the Soviet Union the social conditions which give rise to the offences covered by the Convention have been eliminated." The denial and ignoring of

[86] Louise Shelley, "Organized Crime and Trafficking in Eastern Europe and Russia," in *Women's Issues,* ed. Simon, 180; Johnson, 33.
[87] Shelley, "The Changing Position of Women," in *Legacy of State Socialism,* ed. Lane, 210.
[88] Johnson, 25.
[89] Ibid., 24.
[90] Ibid.

social problems like prostitution, sex trafficking, and domestic violence were shrouded in Soviet ideology but actually resulted from deeply embedded patriarchal attitudes. The rhetoric of gender equality in the Soviet Union was constantly tempered by patriarchal beliefs that worked to undermine women's equality.

The transition from communism to market-democracy in Russia allowed for the institutionalization and intensification of the Soviet legacy of patriarchal attitudes. The ways in which patriarchal attitudes affected women in post-Soviet Russia were the same as during the Soviet era, but more severe. Patriarchy was no longer hindered by Soviet restraints. The abandonment of Soviet ideology was accompanied by a rejection of the more feminist aspects of communism. Without a need to conform to rhetorical equality, patriarchal beliefs were able to fully manifest. Contrary to the belief of reformers, the transition was far from gender-neutral because patriarchal attitudes and the roots of gender inequality remained in society. There were no effective measures to ensure a gender-neutral transition.[91] Like the USSR, the Russian Federation nominally claimed a commitment to an equal society. The 1993 Constitution enshrined the following, "Men and women shall enjoy equal rights and freedoms and equal opportunities to exercise them." Patriarchal attitudes were still at work that undermined gender equality. The patriarchal context of post-Soviet Russia was just as harsh on women as the economic circumstances and just as contributory in causing sex trafficking.

Women were extremely hard hit by the transition in post-Soviet Russia. For the sake of efficiency the majority of social welfare protections provided under the Soviet state were eliminated or greatly reduced. This loss was very shocking and abrupt. Women were disproportionately affected, as they were the ones who had benefited the most from these guarantees. The institutionalization of patriarchal attitudes during the transition compounded the gendered effects of privatization and marketization. The resulting economic circumstances women faced were unforgiving and devaluing.

[91] Johnson, 35.

The greater value placed on men's work and the belief women's labor comes with too many adverse costs resulted in employers' preference to hire men instead of women. Employers are also more likely to lay off women instead of men during economic restructuring or downturn. Women are still concentrated in fields that are less prestigious and underpaid. The wage earnings gap has increased since the end of the Soviet Union. Women predominate in positions of lower status, not upper management levels. All of these circumstances have been exacerbated by the patriarchal belief women's primary role should be in the home. Without the Soviet obligation to work fulltime many Russians believe women should withdraw from the workforce and remain in the domestic sphere. Any gendered economic effects then are just a reflection of the natural order. Additionally, jobs in Russia are frequently obtained through personal connections to high-level managers, directors and ROC. Very few women have these contacts primarily because the aforementioned are predominately male, and women are concentrated in low-level, non-managerial positions.[92] Patriarchal attitudes have had a significant effect on the gendered economic conditions.

Patriarchal attitudes affecting women in the workplace are also seen in the rampant sexual discrimination and sexual harassment in Russia. Discrimination is widespread in hiring practices. Employers discriminate based on sex, appearance, age, and "inhibitions." It is common to see job advertisements stipulating an applicant needs to be a young, attractive female "without inhibitions."[93] Women can do little to resist this pervasive discrimination. Additionally, sexual harassment, or sexual terror as it is called in Russia, is just as widespread both on the street and in the workplace. Often women are expected to tolerate sexual terror as part of their job and in some cases provide sexual favors to their male coworkers and superiors.[94] Once again, women have limited means to stop these practices.

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[92] Caldwell et al., "Capitalizing on Transition Economics," in *Illegal Immigration,* ed. Williams, 14; Orlova, "From Social Dislocation," 15.
[93] Sperling, "The 'New' Sexism," in *Russia's Torn Safety* Nets, eds. Field and Twigg, 180; Johnson, 30.
[94] Hughes, *Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation*, 12.

Discrimination and sexual terror have become normalized in Russia. Furthermore, an American Bar Association report found that the concept of discrimination against women is generally just not well understood.[95] These discriminatory practices are extremely disheartening, disadvantageous and demoralizing for women. Unfortunately, similar patterns of discrimination, sexual terror and patriarchal attitudes are also pervasive in the political sphere.

Since the end of the Soviet Union, there has been a dearth of women in Russian politics. While women in the Soviet era were by no means equal to men in the political sphere, there were quotas that guaranteed a minimum level of female participation. The transition allowed for the male-dominated, exclusive political atmosphere to intensify, leading to the further exclusion of women and increase in discriminatory practices. The proportion of women in the Duma steadily declined, reaching a low of 7.7% in 1995-1999. Thankfully that number has slowly increased, recently reaching 14% in the 2007-2011 cycle.[96] Elsewhere in politics women continue to be underrepresented. Women constitute no more than 10% of deputies in regional legislative bodies.[97] Women were not appointed as ministers at the federal level until 2007.[98] All in all, women's integration in politics is quite poor and therefore government is unresponsive to "women's problems" like sex trafficking. The lack of female integration is coupled with continually increasing chauvinistic and patriarchal practices in the political sphere. Women politicians in practically all levels and branches of government have complained of disdainful and sexist attitudes from their male peers.[99] There is a general underestimation of women as politicians and party practices often place women lower on electoral lists, further hindering female political

[95] Turbine, "Russian Women's Perceptions," in *Gender, Equality and Difference,* ed. Kay, 172. The report includes the following, "The concept of discrimination against women is not well understood in Russia…women generally maintain that their rights are realized equally to those of men. Yet, they also agree that discrimination against women exists in a number of social spheres." While women acknowledge their rights are being violated, they accept it as an "inevitable" part of dominant social norms.
[96] Johnson, 38.
[97] Shvedova, "Gender Politics," in *Gender Politics,* eds. Racioppi and O'Sullivan See, 155.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Sperling, "The 'New' Sexism", in *Russia's Torn Safety Nets,* eds. Field and Twigg, 176.

representation.[100] A gendered vertical disparity in political power is evident in all branches of government. Women have received the clear message they are not welcome in politics or the public sphere; instead women are told they should remain in the domestic sphere and focus on being a good wife and mother. The low proportion of women in decision making is one of the many indicators of the increasing lack of gender equality in Russia, and one of the main reasons for the government resistance to address sex trafficking.

One of the most startling manifestations of increased patriarchal attitudes in post-Soviet Russia can be found in the state response to gendered violence such as domestic abuse, sexual assault and sex trafficking. Violence against women has always been a significant problem in Russia. Despite the USSR's official lack of recognition of gendered violence, both domestic violence and sexual assault were very real problems that affected countless Russian women daily. It is difficult to know the extent of gendered violence during Soviet times due to lack of statistics but it is clear the problem has worsened in post-Soviet Russia. A few of the reasons for the worsening of violence against women are the increased rates of alcoholism and drug use among men, and the stress of financial crises.[101] The transition should have established official recognition and criminalization of violence against women and subsequent mechanisms to help victims. The opposite has been the reality.

The extent of domestic violence and sexual assault in Russia is shocking, even when compared to other countries with similarly high levels like the United States. One in four Russian families live in a cycle of domestic violence, with an estimated 36,000 women suffering beatings from intimate partners daily.[102] An MVD report states there are roughly 4 million domestic disturbances per year.[103] Every

[100] Shvedova, "Gender Politics," in *Gender Politics,* eds. Racioppi and O'Sullivan See, 156.
[101] Vikki Turbine, "Russian Women's Perceptions of Human Rights and Rights-based Approaches in Everyday Life," in *Gender, Equality and Difference,* ed. Kay, 167; Hughes, "Supplying Women," in *Sexuality and Gender,* eds. Sandfort and Štulhofer, 221.
[102] Biason and Vlachova, eds., *Women in an Insecure World,* 57.
[103] Hughes, "Supplying Women," in *Sexuality and Gender,* eds. Sandfort and Štulhofer, 220.

forty minutes a Russian woman loses her life to domestic violence.[104] One report estimates there are 12,000-16,000 domestic homicides each year, with 60% of the women murdered by their husbands.[105] Sexual assault and rape is just as pervasive. A 1993 study in St. Petersburg found that one in four women admitted to being raped.[106] A 1994 survey reported only 5% of Muscovite women did not fear rape.[107] Just as startling is the number of women who report sexual violence. Experts estimate only 3% of victims report rape.[108] Furthermore, only one in five reports made to police are accepted and investigated.[109] Cumulatively, only 5-10% of victims report domestic violence or sexual assault to police.[110] The reason for lack of reporting is justified based on victims' awareness of law enforcement's deeply embedded patriarchal beliefs.

The view of law enforcement regarding violence against women is a well-known fact of life in Russia. The most common response in Russia regarding incidents of gendered violence is to blame the victim. It is purported that a woman must have done something to provoke the violence and therefore is the guilty party. Women are blamed for making too much money, wearing provocative clothes, being unfaithful, taunting the abuser, nagging, etc. Police, judges, prosecutors, and government officials constantly treat women as perpetrators instead of victims. One investigation reported police detectives believe 70% of convicted rapists in Russia are "essentially not guilty."[111] Often women are flat out turned away if they do attempt to report incidents and there are cases of police taking bribes to drop charges. Police also claim the 1993 Constitution established a right to privacy that precludes their involvement in domestic violence.[112] Police are more reluctant than in the Soviet era to respond to calls

[104] Biason and Vlachova, eds., *Women in an Insecure World,* 57.
[105] Hughes, *Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation,* 11.
[106] Johnson, 29.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Johnson, 29.
[109] Caldwell et al., "Capitalizing on Transition Economics," in *Illegal Immigration,* ed. Williams, 50.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Johnson, 28.
[112] Ibid., 30.

of gendered violence or initiate a criminal inquiry. The number of men penalized for gendered violence is staggeringly low. Women are well-aware of this reality and therefore rarely attempt to report any incidents of domestic violence or sexual assault. This context is clearly dehumanizing, physically harmful and detrimental to all Russian women. Some women report a desire to escape extreme gendered violence as their primary motivation for emigrating.

Similar patriarchal beliefs are also seen in Russian attitudes toward sex trafficking and its victims. Most Russians blame the woman seeking work abroad for her own exploitation. Once again, the victims (prostitutes) are blamed, not the perpetrators (traffickers). It is commonly believed women knew what they were getting into and wanted to be sex workers. Those working in government agencies responsible for combating human trafficking hold the view the culpability lies with the woman who was forced into prostitution. Many police officers deny trafficking is a real problem. More so than victims of domestic abuse or sexual assault, victims of sex trafficking are shunned, ostracized and stigmatized by society. It is not surprising sex trafficking is largely unmitigated and growing in Russia since patriarchal attitudes pervade society at all levels.

A final major area in which patriarchy has an extremely detrimental impact is the criminal code. There is a lack of effective laws criminalizing gendered violence. There are no civil or labor laws against discrimination or sexual terror in the workplace.[113] There are laws criminalizing domestic abuse and sexual assault, but clearly they are ineffective if police are not willing to act. Even if laws are in place there is a lack of mechanisms to enforce them. The first and only major legislative reform in post-Soviet Russia on gendered violence did not come until 2003.[114] After years of international pressure and a threat of suspension of funds by the United States, a federal law which criminalized trafficking in

[113] Moran and Toft, 11; Johnson, 50.
[114] Mary Buckley, "Press Images of Human Trafficking from Russia: Myths and Interpretations," in *Gender, Equality and Difference,* ed. Kay, 211; Johnson, 19; Deighan, "A Business of Supply and Demand," in *Human Trafficking in Europe,* eds. McRedmond and Wylie, 92.

persons was finally implemented in late 2003. Seemingly out of the blue, Putin proposed and signed the federal law entitled 'On Introducing Changes to the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation.' Human trafficking was identified as a crime for the first time in Russia. Even after the introduction of this law, follow through has been less than stellar. A limited number of cases have been opened and there have been an even a smaller number of convictions.[115] Though Russia is moving in the right direction, it needs to take more effective steps to reduce trafficking and help the victims. There is still no legislation designed to protect and rehabilitate victims of trafficking, including shelters specifically for trafficking victims.[116] These protections are crucial not just for the well-being of women but also to prosecute traffickers. Victims of trafficking are scared to come forward because of a justified fear the police will not help or protect them from the violent, vengeful traffickers. Corruption of law enforcement by ROC also contributes to the police's reluctance to act on trafficking. The embedded patriarchal attitudes in Russia have a very real and harmful impact on women, especially victims of gendered violence.

Patriarchal attitudes in post-Soviet Russia have contributed to an overall atmosphere in which women are devalued. Women are unofficially excluded from the political sphere and their contributions systematically undervalued. They have limited legitimate economic opportunities and encounter discrimination and harassment in the workplace. Women face disparities in wages, hiring and layoff preferences, and vertical representation. They are repeatedly inundated with the notion women's primary role should be in the home. Gendered violence has worsened with no mitigating efforts on the part of the state. Officials and law enforcement continue to exercise victim blaming. Additionally, increased sexualization of society and the introduction of a market economy contributed to the commodification of

[115] Johnson, 142; Deighan, "A Business of Supply and Demand," in *Human Trafficking in Europe,* eds. McRedmond and Wylie, 92.
[116] Stoecker, "The Rise in Human Trafficking," 14; Buckley, "Human Trafficking," in *Gender Politics,* eds. Racioppi and O'Sullivan See, 131; Johnson, 143; Deighan, "A Business of Supply and Demand," in *Human Trafficking in Europe,* eds. McRedmond and Wylie, 93.

persons, leading to the belief women can be used and abused.[117] This society is even harsher in light of the transition from communism. A majority of Russian women had previously enjoyed state protection and a rhetorical commitment to equality. Suddenly those guarantees were lost and in their place emerged a harsh patriarchal world and a public sphere generally unsympathetic to women's problems.

The strong patriarchal context of post-Soviet Russia affects all Russian women, as does sex trafficking. Russian women of all backgrounds face the same oppressive conditions, thereby equalizing them in terms of vulnerability to traffickers. This is why it is impossible to profile trafficking victims in Russia. The demographics of victims do not differ from those of greater society.[118] Women of all races, ages, education levels, socioeconomic classes, geographic regions, types of family life, political affiliations, religions, and personal beliefs are vulnerable to trafficking. Additionally, one of the hallmark features of sex trafficking in Russia is the high level of education many victims possess, which differs drastically from previous waves of sex trafficking.[119] It is widely accepted that education should increase women's status in society.[120] This evidence to the contrary in Russia further demonstrates how detrimental Russia's strongly patriarchal society is to all women. Patriarchy constantly works to undermine female equality. The institutionalization and privatization of patriarchal beliefs has resulted in an extremely hostile environment that continually degrades women. Women have little prospect of changing these oppressive circumstances. It is not surprising women are desperately seeking to escape post-Soviet Russia and becoming victims of sex trafficking in the process. Patriarchal attitudes are a significant cause of sex trafficking of women in post-Soviet Russia.

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[117] For many women the only "thing" of value they possess is their bodies. Women's financial needs necessitate they participate in the market, forcing them to use their body as an entry requirement. Rarely is a distinction made between a woman's body as a commodity and a woman as a human being.
[118] Shelley, "Russian and Chinese Trafficking," in *Human Traffic and Transnational Crime,* eds. Shelley and Stoecker, 69.
[119] Hughes, "Supply Women for the Sex Industry," in *Sexuality and Gender,* eds. Sandfort and Štulhofer, 214.
[120] Stoecker, "The Rise in Human Trafficking," 3.

CONCLUSION

Sex trafficking of women in post-Soviet Russia is a complex and multidimensional issue. Simplistic explanations attributing the problem to poverty are insufficient. If poverty was the sole or primary cause, then it would stand to reason all other impoverished nations would have extensive trafficking. Clearly Russia possesses unique characteristics which contribute to sex trafficking. It is essential to look at the evolution of Russian society from the Soviet Union to the Russian Federation in order to understand the growth of trafficking. In doing so, the Soviet legacies of organized crime and deeply embedded patriarchal beliefs emerge as the primary causes of human trafficking. The continuance and subsequent intensification of these legacies helped shape economic and social conditions that were and continue to be degrading and harmful to women.

The processes of marketization and democratization were conducted in ways that enabled ROC and patriarchal beliefs to be directly involved, thereby shaping the emerging society. Organized crime and patriarchy became more powerful, institutionalized, and influential as a result of the transition. The Soviet era restrained the unbounded growth and manifestations of organized crime and patriarchy. Social welfare protections also ensured a basic standard of living for all citizens. Soviet ideology and policy was abandoned during the transition to market-democracy. The loss of Soviet guarantees made the population vulnerable to market forces and the "free" expression of ideas. ROC along with insiders and oligarchs gained controlling shares of the economic and financial sectors, fundamentally crowding out women from obtaining equitable property and wealth in the process. ROC further compounded the gendered effects of the transition by establishing an inherently unfree economy. Women faced a lack of legitimate economic opportunities which exacerbated their already dire economic reality. Women were vulnerable because of economic circumstances and this vulnerability was reinforced by an extremely pervasive patriarchal society. Russian society was dictated by patriarchal beliefs which detrimentally

impacted women's economic opportunities, political representation, and physical safety. They were subjected to pervasive discrimination, increased gendered violence and a criminal code which lacked effective measures to prevent further institutionalization of patriarchy. All of these circumstances combined to create an overwhelmingly oppressive and unfriendly atmosphere toward women.

Women are vulnerable to becoming victims of trafficking because of their desire to emigrate from the harmful post-Soviet context. The callous, brutal, and violent sexual exploitation of women became rampant due to ROC's infiltration of society and the devaluation of women. The criminalized and corrupted state did nothing to stop trafficking. Organized crime developed vested interests to maintain this context which was disadvantageous toward women. Patriarchal attitudes did not care about women's problems and placed the blame for trafficking on women. The intertwinement of factors is crucial to understanding sex trafficking. One factor is just as significant as another in causing sex trafficking, but none would suffice on their own to cause trafficking. ROC and patriarchal attitudes are extensive and multidimensional. Identifying these Soviet legacies as the primary causes of sex trafficking implies something greater than the individual factors. Organized crime and patriarchy have become more powerful and institutionalized in post-Soviet Russian society and shaped a context which is so disadvantageous to women that in the desperate attempt to escape this oppressive society, women become victims of sex trafficking.

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