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The Pillars of Power and Policy of Social Policymaking in Authoritarian Regimes

Comparing Housing Policies in China and Russia

ABSTRACT This article addresses the puzzle of the politics of social policy formation by two post-communist authoritarian regimes in China and Russia. It argues that two interrelated dimensions—which we term the pillars of power and policy—shape social policymaking and change in authoritarian regimes and support authoritarian regime stability. The pillar of power involves autocrats' bargains with the public and elites, while the policy pillar includes bureaucratic and ideational processes. The latter are understood as the way policy actors perceive problems, choose solutions, and frame their policy choices. To demonstrate this empirically, the article analyzes and compares Chinese and Russian housing policies between 1990 and 2020. We find that despite bureaucratic competition within the policy pillar, neoliberal policy beliefs have guided policy while statist measures served to support—in China—and deepen—in Russia—the neoliberal approach focused on private homeownership. Yet, neoliberal measures have been channeled in ways that underpinned and adjusted the authoritarian regime bargains with different segments of the public and the elite within the pillar of power. Policy framing to match social cultural ideas was used in both countries to support public acceptance of the neoliberal measures while underlining the state's care for people's housing needs.

KEYWORDS China, Russia, social policy, housing policy, authoritarianism, policy ideas

INTRODUCTION

In authoritarian regimes much depends on the choices made by the leader or the ruling group (Svolik 2012; Wintrobe 1998). Although the tools of coercion are always available, loyalty and authoritarian legitimacy, earned through the supply of public goods, are as important for regime stability (Gerschewski 2013; Wintrobe 1998). Therefore, many authoritarian regimes provide social welfare to their citizens (Cook and Dimitrov 2017; Diaz-Cayeros, Estevez, and Magaloni 2016; Logvinenko 2020; Magaloni 2006). Social provision is central in the bargain between authoritarian leaders and the citizens; the other side of the bargain involves the distribution of rents to the elite (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003; Gandhi 2008; Svolik 2012). Yet, beyond the rational behavior of autocrats, linking the supply of welfare and stability of their rule, autocrats can act apparently against their rational interests, reforming and otherwise reducing social provision so fundamental for their popularity (Duckett and Wang 2017; Logvinenko

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2020). Moreover, authoritarian leaders themselves often promote social policy reforms (Tillin and Duckett 2017). Authoritarian governments are another set of influential actors in authoritarian social policymaking and, in countries like China and Russia, are usually divided by interfactional bargaining (Kivinen and Li 2012; Lieberthal and Oksenberg 1988; Remington 2019; Zhi and Pearson 2017) over departmental interests and different policy approaches and joined by civil society actors as part of competing bureaucratic coalitions (Bindman, Kulmala, and Bogdanova 2019; Duckett and Wang 2017; Hildebrandt 2013; Mertha 2008).

The results of this policymaking process, while not rooted in the demands of social classes and groups translated into policy through representative institutions, are, nonetheless, more than clientelistic exchanges of welfare for public support, and include elements of competing economic and social policy models (Esping-Andersen 1990) including statism and neoliberalism and the participation of diverse societal actors (Cook et al. 2019; Kivinen and Li 2012). How, then, does this policy process produce what the scholars of social policy in authoritarian China and Russia describe as "contradictory" and even "paradoxical" results (Kainu et al. 2019, 434)?

In this article we examine the political process that shapes social policy in authoritarian regimes and argue that their social policy rests upon two pillars, which we term the pillars of authoritarian "power" and authoritarian "policy." The pillar of power comprises authoritarian leaders' considerations for the maintenance of the stability of their rule via the distribution of rents to the public and to the elites. The pillar of policy involves bureaucratic politics dominated by government-expert blocs. An important part of this pillar is ideational influences—conceptualized here as beliefs, values, and cultures (Berman 2013). Research often focuses on specific elements of these pillars—for instance, the bargain between the authorities and the public and competition within the central executive (Holm-Hansen et al. 2019) giving less attention to the bargain with the wider state and economic elites. Other research focuses primarily on the pillar of power, for example, clientelistic exchanges of welfare for political support during elections (Logvinenko 2020; Magaloni 2006), or on the policy pillar, for example, the adoption of neoliberal policy recipes in authoritarian settings (Ulybina 2022). Yet, such approaches either omit questions why authoritarian leaders act against their interests when introducing welfare reforms or disregard how the authoritarian context further shapes the implementation of neoliberal policy instruments. We argue that it is essential to examine both the pillar of power and the pillar of policy alongside each other and in their interaction to account for the politics of social policy formation in autocracies.

To demonstrate this, we choose a comparative method and focus on two authoritarian regimes, China and Russia. We follow the historical institutionalist approach to construct two country cases of social policy formation in one specific field of social policy, namely housing, from the early 1990s to 2020. Scholars studying social policy in China and Russia (Béland and Yu 2004; Cook 2007; Duckett and Wang 2017; Kivinen and Li 2012) have applied the historical institutionalist lens to the analysis of the politics of social policymaking over time. Our dependent variable is housing policy in the two countries; their "pillars of power and policy," structural factors, and regime-specific

characteristics—which China and Russia share and those aspects in which they diverge—are treated as independent variables. There is sufficient variation in our independent variables to demonstrate their impact on the dependent variable, that is, housing policy in the two countries over the three decades.

We chose the cases of China and Russia because many similarities and differences between these two post-communist autocracies provide an illuminating comparison (Koezel and Bunce 2013; Owen 2020; Pursiainen 2012; Remington 2019). China and Russia share a recent history of Leninist party systems. Both have—albeit differently—transformed their hegemonic party-state regimes: in China, since the initiation of market reforms in the late 1970s; and in Russia, since the collapse of communism in 1991 and the subsequent consolidation of authoritarianism in the 2000s (Guo 2019; Svolik 2012). Despite market reforms and global economic integration, both countries display heavy state involvement in the economy (Aalto and Lowry 2021; Vogel 2011). Over the past decade, China and Russia have faced similar challenges of maintaining their citizens' support in conditions of slowing or stagnant growth, increasing demands for political freedoms, and rising tensions with the West (Petrov and Rochlitz 2019).

Nonetheless, autocracies vary significantly (Geddes, Wright, and Frantz 2014). The main difference between contemporary China and Russia is that electoral authoritarianism in Russia and the non-competitive Chinese authoritarianism (Levitsky and Way 2010) endow the two autocracies with different kinds of vulnerabilities. In comparative terms, elections held in Russia open at least the possibility of opposition victory and need to be won by large margins to avoid excessively obvious fraud and to demonstrate the regime's invincibility important for elite support (Gel'man 2015; Greene and Robertson 2019). Thus, comparative scholars show that authoritarian elections are accompanied by the expansion of social programs to prevent opposition and gain votes (Magaloni 2006; Miller 2015). However, despite the competitive nature of Russian authoritarianism, just like China's party-state, Russia lacks accurate information about its population's needs in social policy. Thus, both systems use surveys and digital voting portals, monitor protests and complaints (Chen 2011; Cook and Dimitrov 2017), and promote "self-limiting" civil society (Hildebrandt 2013) and participatory governance (Mertha 2008; Owen 2020) to make policy adjustments.

Housing policy offers an excellent domain for our analysis. Historically, in China and Russia the provision of urban housing by state-owned enterprises (SOEs) or local authorities represented an important part of the old communist welfare state (Cook 2007; Kivinen and Li 2012). Even though most of this housing has since been privatized, subsidization for the sphere persisted, encouraging social policy scholars to consider housing in their studies (Cook 2007; Holm-Hansen et al. 2019; Kainu et al. 2019). Furthermore, housing is uniquely suited for the analysis of both the power and policy dimensions of authoritarian social policy. This economically large area, on the one hand, has a vast potential for citizens' political activism (Khmelnitskaya and Ihalainen 2021; Zavisca and Gerber 2016)—leading stability-conscious autocrats to introduce redistributive housing programs or encourage the development of market housing and a growth in house prices, to maintain the support of property owners (see Adler and Ansell 2020).

TABLE 1. Comparing Chinese and Russian Urban Housing Spheres

	Russia		China	
Indicators/Country/Year	1998[a]	2017	1998[a]	2017
Population (billion)	0.148	0.145	1.28	1.39
Urban population (billion)	0.108	0.107	0.420	0.810
Urbanization rate (%)	73.3	74.2	33.35	58.52
GDP (USD trillion)	0.271	1.579	1.029	12.14
GDP per capita	1,834.8	10,750.59	828.58	8,759.04
GDP growth rate	-5.3%	1.63%	7.84%	6.76%
Homeownership (%)	58.2 (in 2000)	89.0	17.0	83.7
Floor space under construction (million m^2)	30.7	79.2	476.17	6,915.70
Living space per capita (m^2)	18.0	25.2	18.7	36.6
New-built housing prices (USD/m^2)	80.09	902.16	299.82	1,146.95
Balance of Mortgage Loans (USD trillion)	n/a	0.087	0.0071	3.75
Ratio of mortgage loans to GDP	n/a	5.667%	0.69%	30.89%

Sources: Bureau of National Statistics, 2018, *China Statistic Yearbook*, Beijing: China Statistic Press; People's Bank of China, 2017, *Performance Report of Chinese Monetary Policy: Fourth Quarter 2018*, http://www.pbc.gov.cn/zhengcehuobisi/125207/125227/125957/index.html, accessed December 23, 2023; Rosstat 2019; AHML 2019a; World Bank Indicators, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator, accessed December 23, 2023; Central Bank of Russia, *Housing Loan Market in Russia: Statistical Year Book 2014–2018*, https://www.cbr.ru/Collection/Collection/File/32252/Stat_digest_mortgage_06_e.pdf, accessed January 3, 2024.

[a] While in Russia and China housing reforms began in the early 1990s, initially they progressed slowly. Here, 1998 is taken as the year of the first observation because radical liberalization of housing in China started that year.

On the other hand, the lucrative housing and urban development industries involve elite interests, placing the pressure on the regime for maintaining elite bargains within the power dimension.

Finally, while Chinese and Russian urbanization rates varied (Pursiainen 2012, 42), since the early 1990s, both countries have attached importance to housing reforms. Table 1 shows that, despite a different pace of housing development, by the late 2010s homeownership rates were high and the housing market expanded rapidly in both countries.

We consider housing policy as a multifaceted structure, including different tenure types of market and social housing, land supply, housing finance, maintenance, and repairs. Housing also involves different administrative levels and public participation. To analyze housing policymaking over time, we use "contextualized comparison" (George and Bennett 2005, 19; Tsenkova and Polanska 2014), which makes us attentive to the issue of equivalence between observed phenomena within the cases. Our comparative method analyzes key policy measures specific to Chinese and Russian housing policy between 1990 and 2020, their results—often unintended—and their further

transformation under the influence of the pillars of power and policy, structural variables, including economic crises and differences between Chinese and Russian regime types.

Our qualitative research strategy aimed at inductive theory development is supported by quantitative data to illustrate policy trends. Our case study methodology involves within-case analysis of housing policy in China and Russia over time and cross-case comparison of both cases (George and Bennett 2005, 18). The research is based on the authors' years of observation of Chinese and Russian housing domains and several fieldwork trips to China and Russia during the 2010s. The data sources for China include data from the National Bureau of Statistics, government documents from the State Council and the Central Bank, and media reports by Chinese and international outlets. For Russia we examined government programs, legislation, media reporting and data from the Russian statistical agency (Rosstat), the mortgage industry regulator (Dom.RF), and the Finnish Institute for Transition Economies (BOFIT). Finally, for both cases we studied speeches of the leaders and other officials.

Our analysis of the politics of Chinese and Russian social policymaking in the housing sphere over the three decades demonstrates that despite bureaucratic competition within the policy pillar, neoliberal policy beliefs have guided policy while statist measures served to support in China (with public housing programs) and deepen in Russia the neoliberal approach focused on private homeownership. However, neoliberal measures—taken here as promoting private homeownership, financialization of housing properties and land, and civil society involvement in policymaking and implementation—have been channeled in ways that supported and adjusted, when necessary, the authoritarian regime bargains with different segments of the public and the elite within the pillar of power. Policy framing to match cultural attitudes was used in both countries: in China, where private housing aligned better with the attitudes of self-reliance and family welfare, but especially in Russia, since the mid-2000s, where citizens favor government involvement in housing, to support public acceptance of the neoliberal measures. Due to Russia's electoral authoritarianism, policy changes and the use of public purse correlated with elections. In China changes followed structural—political and economic—crises, whereas in Russia crises were important but their impact on policy and timing were mediated by the country's electoral institutions.

Our article contributes to the literature demonstrating how authoritarian regimes develop their social policies to underpin their stability (Cook and Dimitrov 2017; Diaz-Cayeros, Estevez, and Magaloni 2016; Dimitrov 2013; Holm-Hansen et al. 2019; Kainu et al. 2019; Logvinenko 2020) and to the scholarship on how ideas influence social policy in authoritarian settings (Duckett and Wang 2017; Khmelnitskaya, Satre, and Pape 2023).

THE POLICYMAKING PROCESS IN AN AUTOCRACY

How can we conceptualize and analyze social policymaking in authoritarian regimes such as China and Russia? The endeavor involves considering both the role of social policy for the maintenance of regime stability with regard to elites and citizens and the

policymaking and implementation process also shaped by regime-specific factors. In terms of the analytical lens, over the past three decades the combination of the institutionalist approach with historical case study has been used for explaining social policy formation (Béland 2005; Béland and Yu 2004; Cook 2007; Kainu et al. 2019; Remington 2019; Tillin and Duckett 2017). According to it, structural factors—economic development, class structure, urbanization levels, demographic trends, value changes, and crisis events—influence policy by changing the conditions in which policymakers work, but do not dictate their decisions. Instead, political institutions and established policy arrangements constrain policymakers' actions: for example, groups of beneficiaries of the earlier policies defend their privileges from reform attempts. Yet, change is possible and often emanates from the interaction of national and subnational governments (Pierson 1995).

The central institutional feature of an authoritarian regime is their *power* structure centered on the leader or the ruling group, whose authority does not depend on winning in free and fair elections. This key characteristic (Gandhi 2008) shapes actors' institutionally determined motivations in the policy process. Existing research has addressed the provision of public goods and the distribution of rents by authoritarian leaders to secure elite loyalty and to avert public rebellion and—in electoral autocracies—ensure votes (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003; Gerschewski 2013; Magaloni 2006; Miller 2015). With relevance to urban housing policy, Wallace (2013) demonstrates distributional bias toward large cities and their prosperous populations to the detriment of the rural dwellers and periphery, as autocrats need to prevent rebellion from groups with greater capacity for disruptive protests (see also Chen 2011).

Meanwhile, as Beatriz Magaloni (2006) put it, ambition represents a key motivation of authoritarian elites, involving the pursuit of rents, privileges, and career progression by economic and bureaucratic elites (Svolik 2012). This *dimension of authoritarian power* or pillar provides our first set of causal factors to examine the politics of social policymaking in an autocracy. This dimension highlights that authoritarian policymaking is hardly free of constraints, compelling autocracies to adapt and morph over time. The Chinese party-state preserved its rule while managing significant socioeconomic evolution (Dimitrov 2013) by balancing demands from the public, economic elites, and ambitious provincial and local cadres (Lieberthal and Oksenberg 1988; Malinowski 2020; Mertha 2008). In Russia, an autocratic regime overshadowed the constitutional state during the 1990s, while keeping elections as the formal means for appointing political leaders (Sakwa 2021), and continued accretion of authoritarian characteristics since Putin's arrival in power in 2000 demonstrating remarkable capacity for institutional and policy innovation (Hale, Lipman, and Petrov 2019).

Yet, the account of the politics of authoritarian social policy would be incomplete without the *pillar of policy*. Scholars highlighted the bureaucratic nature of Chinese and Russian regimes and of their social policy reforms (Cook 2007; Kivinen and Li 2012). The factionalism and bargaining of their policymaking within the central bureaucracy—what Lieberthal and Oksenberg (1988) described in relation to China as "fragmented authoritarianism" (also Zhi and Pierson 2017)—is paired in China and Russia with

different decentralization levels and incentive structures for local officials, which affect the character of policy implementation and national dissemination of successful local practices (Mertha 2008; Remington 2019; Rochlitz et al. 2015; Rothstein 2015). Competing bureaucracies promote the interests of different segments of the economy and the public sector, on behalf of whom they bargain for policies and budget funds as proxies in absence of representative politics.

However, the institutionally determined interests of authoritarian leaders to preserve their power or of government officials to advance departmental interests do not fully explain the substantive content of policy important for unpacking the policy dimension of social policymaking. Policy *ideas* are helpful here. Ideas offer another source of actors' preferences in policymaking (Berman 2013). Authoritarian leaders often support policy goals, such as poverty and inequality reduction (Tillin and Duckett 2017). Similarly, policy ideas can motivate state officials to achieve progress in specific domains (Fortescue 2020; Rothstein 2015). Authoritarian leaders need to legitimize their rule by developing policies addressing complex concerns of modern societies; this accentuates policy-specific knowledge. To increase the circulation of ideas and information, Russia and China adopted contemporary public administration trends that, in addition to liberalization, include decentralization and civil society participation in governance. Although the state controls policy participation channels, civil society contributes to policymaking in many areas (Bindman, Kulmala, and Bogdanova 2019; Hildebrandt 2013; Mertha 2008).

The role of expert ideas in the social policymaking of Russia and China has been highlighted (Béland and Yu 2004; Duckett and Wang 2017; Logvinenko 2020). However, a usable categorization and model of ideational influence in autocracies are needed to demonstrate their causal weight. Berman (2013) distinguished between policy beliefs, norms, ideologies, and cultures. *Beliefs* are held by policy actors and relate to technical policy choices. Research shows that particularly neoliberal beliefs—that the economy should be left to private initiative to achieve progress and that market rules should be brought into the public policy domain to enhance efficiency (see Child Hill, Park, and Saito 2012)—have significant influence over social policy in nondemocratic settings (Béland and Yu 2004; Duckett and Wang 2017; Khmelnitskaya 2015). At the same time, many actors in China and Russia support the developmental state views (Aalto and Lowry 2021; Child Hill, Park, and Saito 2012). Actors' beliefs can be stable for a long time but can change abruptly in crises and learning processes (Kainu et al. 2019; Remington 2019, 310).

Norms and values—such as human rights, liberalism, traditionalism, and paternalism—are a more stable type of ideas. They are shared by larger communities of actors, who may differ in their policy beliefs. In Russia several competing value-based coalitions, including liberal and conservative nationalist positions (Melville 2017), influence policy in different spheres. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leadership, especially since the beginning of Xi Jinping's presidency in 2012, has converted to nationalism and conservatism in all but name (Guo 2019; Malinowski 2020; Mertha 2008, 107).

In terms of *ideologies*, in China, rather than the communist ideology, guidance for policy is provided by broad "policy doctrines" developed by the central government for

individual fields (Rothstein 2015, 540). While bureaucratic blocs within Chinese and Russian national executives align along "liberal" (pro-market) and "social" (pro-redistributive) positions (Remington 2019, 304), their bargaining is guided by beliefs and values, rather than ideologies. We, therefore, concentrate on beliefs and values as critical types of Chinese and Russian policymakers' ideas.

Specifying the causal mechanism of how ideas influence policy, Béland (2005) argues that (1) actors define what constitutes a policy problem based on their beliefs and values; they then (2) choose between policy alternatives, or policy paradigms, to solve the problem. Finally, *cultures*, held by large groups of people or a nation, affect policymaking when actors (3) frame their policies in ways that reference cultural attitudes (see also Mertha 2008, 14). In Russia, expectations of state welfare and paternalism (Cook 2007; Holm-Hansen et al. 2019, 356; Pop-Eleches and Tucker 2017) join with growing enthusiasm for community engagement but skepticism toward political participation (Polishchuk, Rubin, and Shagalov 2021). In China, expectations of state welfare are low among the majority of the population who at the time of Deng's "reform and opening up" in 1978 were peasants or among their descendants (Pursiainen 2012, 42). These citizens were covered by the more-modest-than-in-the-cities communist welfare state centered on rural communes that were dismantled in the 1980s, with primarily families assuming the burden of care (Duckett and Carrillo 2011). Moreover, collectivist values in China are underpinned by "the patriarchal and hierarchical spirit of Confucianism" (Malinowski 2020, 283) currently promoted by the CCP (Guo 2019). In democracies, policymakers frame policies to avoid blame for reforms imposing costs on the population. Contemporary autocracies control and manipulate information and the media (Greene and Robertson 2019) and appeal to their citizens' emotions (Ekiert, Perry, and Yan 2020). In such regimes, successful framing is significant in the pursuit of public support.

In sum, authoritarian social policy rests on two pillars, described as authoritarian power and authoritarian policy. The former includes the bargains between the autocrat and elite and public groups; the latter involves bureaucratic and ideational factors. In the next section we examine their influence over the politics of housing policymaking in China and in Russia.

HOUSING POLICIES IN CHINA AND RUSSIA

China

The political power considerations led the Chinese party-state to introduce housing reform in the early 1990s (Yip and Chen 2021). After the economic reform initiated by Deng Xiaoping in 1978 to address economic stagnation and social fragmentation resulting from the years of the Cultural Revolution (Pursiainen 2012, 37) led to the migration of around 115 million rural dwellers to cities—bringing the urbanization rate from 17.9% in 1978 to 26.4% in 1990 (Bureau of National Statistics 2018)—further accumulation of social problems and the perception of regime corruption (Chen 2020) culminated in the 1989 Tiananmen democracy movement (Perry and Yan 2020) and revealed demand for deeper socioeconomic changes. Responding to a national crisis

precipitated by the 1989 protests, the CCP needed to improve living standards to support their legitimacy among the public—particularly the urban educated stratum and workers—and achieve "social stability" (Petrov and Rochlitz 2019).

As an instrument to underpin their power, housing came up high on the post-Tiananmen leadership's agenda. An essential element in citizens' well-being, a capital- and labor-intensive sector with links to many industries housing development could provide a source of rents to economic and state elites and many benefits to the citizens. From the policy perspective, Chinese policymakers recognized the potential of private urban homeownership to reduce state expenditure on public housing for the expanding urban population and for creating family wealth (Doling and Ronald 2014). Housing can be a double-edged sword for political leadership, on the one hand, anchoring stability, conservatism, and preference for low social spending among homeowners, particularly when house prices rise (Ansell 2014). On the other hand, it can plant seeds of protest and opposition when house values stagnate or property rights become insecure (Adler and Ansell 2020; Zavisca and Gerber 2016). The Chinese party-state gambled on housing to anchor dual social stability, setting the rebellious urbanites against social upheavals that could damage their properties, while the economic multiplication effects of housing could promote growth, jobs in construction and other industries, and higher incomes and fostering political support (Zhu 2000).

Along the policy dimension, the values of Chinese policymakers including conservatism, gradualism, and an experimental approach—encapsulated in Deng's reform slogan, "crossing the river by touching the stones underneath" (Naughton 2006)—characterized Chinese housing reform in the early and mid-1990s. At the time, policymakers adopted a mild version of the neoliberal housing paradigm. As urban population grew and the privatization of SOEs and formation of new private firms was underway (Béland and Yu 2004, 276), the housing reform compendium published in 1994 adopted the "Economically Affordable Housing" model. It involved government subsidization of house purchases, the formation of the Housing Provident Fund following Singapore (State Council 1994), and subsidized gradual privatization of existing enterprise housing (*danwei fang*,[1] Naughton 2006).

The 1998 Asian financial crisis delivered another structural challenge to the CCP's power requiring a renewed effort to promote growth and legitimacy, this time fully embracing the neoliberal paradigm. The affordable housing strategy was abandoned for a full-scale liberalization when the State Council (1998) explicitly urged rapid privatization of *danwei fang* to boost the housing market and stimulate economic recovery. Subsequent legislative changes by the State Council made market housing development a new source of national economic growth (Yip and Chen 2021).

Within the policy pillar with important implications for the pillar of political power, two types of reforms were pivotal for creating a mechanism for administrative and economic elites to benefit in terms of patronage and ambition from rapid housing

1. Most *danwei fang* were built in the 1980s. Based on the urbanization rate of 25% in the early 1990s, around 20% of the population were residing in them.

development. Meanwhile, the system of managerial incentives thereby created would propel the sector to become "an economic growth engine." These reforms were local government reform and the adoption of Hong Kong's separation of land ownership from land use rights. Harnessing China's "fragmented authoritarianism" in provincial and local governance (Lieberthal and Oksenberg 1988), decentralization in the 1980s made local governments responsible for local economic development and welfare. Local officials' career progression became dependent upon set performance criteria, including regional GDP growth, improvement of city landscape, employment, and social stability (Cook and Dimitrov 2017; Rothstein 2015, 537). This reform unleashed entrepreneurial potential among local cadres by offering them career progression and the spoils of office (Petrov and Rochlitz 2019; Sun 2019).

Initially, in the 1990s and the early 2000s, many local authorities struggled with the heavy burdens of welfare expenditure for healthcare, education, and pensions (Wu 2015). The introduction of the land bidding system in 2004 institutionalized local governments as the sole actor to expropriate land from its use rights holders. They then could allocate the land for public use free of charge or bid the use rights on the market if designated for commercial, residential, and industrial uses. Local governments could retain all the land lease fees as fiscal revenues to finance their regional development and social expenditures (State Council PRC 1994). Sun (2019) argues that access to land development rights became key to the Chinese party-state power- and patronage-sharing with the local state and economic elites.

Local governments actively turned to land-related practices including property and infrastructure construction. Official data show that urban land supplies increased from 267,800 hectares in 2004 to 518,000 hectares in 2016 (Ministry of Natural Resources 2018). To ensure low prices of land for industrial use and sufficient fiscal incomes, officials set high prices for commercial and residential plots. In a sample of 105 major cities compiled by the Ministry of Natural Resources (2018) while land prices for industrial use remained almost constant, land prices for residential and commercial development significantly increased (Figure 1). Meanwhile, authority of local officials over land resources provided them with a reward mechanism to ensure their loyalty to the regime by allowing them access to hefty rent opportunities, later revealed by China's anti-corruption campaign (Chen 2020). For the business elite, housing development throughout China allowed access to tremendous profits and allowed them to amass some of China's greatest fortunes (Riordan and Hale 2021).

With an eye on higher positions within the Party hierarchy, some provincial leaders introduced original policy experiments. Two examples of Chongqing and Guangdong provinces demonstrate this trend while also highlighting a growing challenge that housing posed to the CCP's power position: a conflict between the coalition of the winners of the housing growth—state and economic elites and property-owning urbanites—and the losers—the urban poor and recent migrants. Chongqing CCP secretary Bo Xilai initiated a massive increase in public rental housing (PRH) construction in 2011–13 (Zhou and Ronald 2017) as part of the neo-leftist political campaign for a place on the Politburo's Standing Committee (*The Economist* 2011a). Meanwhile, 600 miles away, in

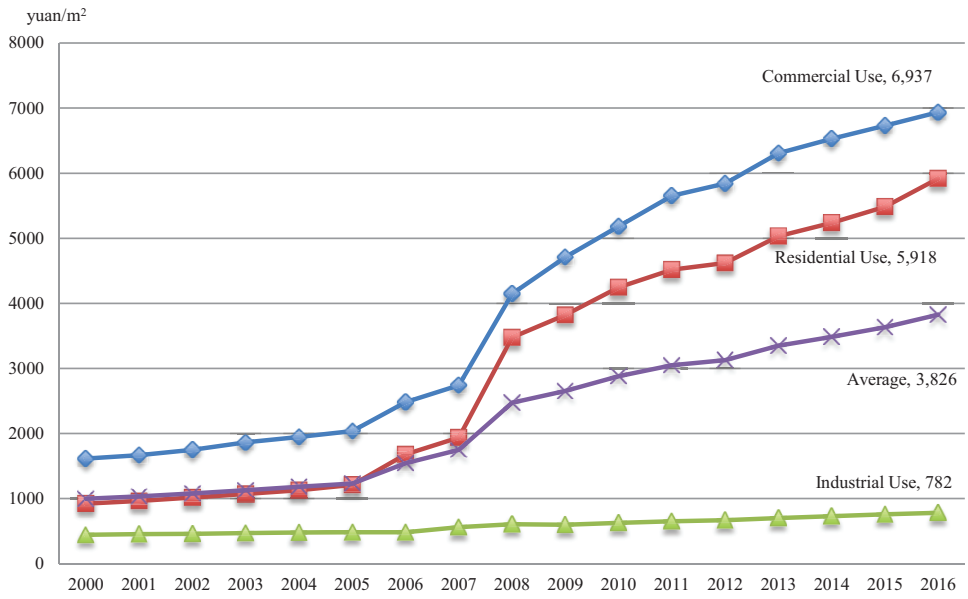

FIGURE 1. Prices of ground space land in major Chinese 105 cities, 2005–2016 (yuan/m²). Source: Ministry of Natural Resources PRC 2018, *Report on Land Prices in Chinese Major 105 Cities, the 4th Quarter 2016*, http://www.mnr.gov.cn/sj/tjgb/, accessed December 23, 2023.

Guangdong province, Party Chief Wang Yang was also fighting for a ticket to the Standing Committee but encouraging market housing development and promoting public participation in urban affairs. Instead of suppressing the protests by peasants and the urban communities whose land and livable housing were taken over for city development needs as threatening to social stability—as did other provincial leaders—Wang encouraged a dialogue with the protesters and increased compensations for expropriated property (*The Economist* 2011b). During Wang's service in Guangdong, rapid investment in urban regeneration improved living conditions, boosted regional growth, and allowed the province to conduct the successful Asian Games in 2010 (Zhou 2017).

Policy ideas for turning housing development into an engine for the national economy paired with local elites' incentives paid off in supporting the Chinese leadership power position through meteoric economic growth. Local governments' zeal for land-related activities, with strong housing demand due to rapid urbanization, led to a property boom across urban China. The floor areas of residential buildings under construction between 1998 and 2017 increased 13.5 times, and mortgage lending surged by 528 times during 1998 and 2017 (Table 1). This generated significant fiscal incomes for local governments through land lease fees and property taxes: around half of their total fiscal income during the 2010s (Ministry of Finance PRC 2019). Local officials were thus able to fulfill the expectations of their superiors for local growth, invest in infrastructure, offer incentives to investors such as cheap land and tax exemptions, and achieve career progression for the best-performing cadres. These incentives were so strong that some localities saw an

overinvestment in housing, producing new residential districts with extremely low tenancy, nicknamed "ghost cities" (Kynge and Yu 2021).

As expected at the outset of reforms, housing development also strengthened the CCP's power position among the urban middle-class. Urban homeownership due to the privatization of *danwei fang* and new construction increased from 17% in 1985 to 87% in 2018 (Clark, Huang, and Yi 2021). The rapid increase in land (Figure 1) and house prices—from 2,063 yuan/m² in 1998 to 8,737 yuan/m² in 2018 (Table 1)—benefited those urban dwellers who privatized or bought their housing in the 1990s and early 2000s. This stratum was able to have access to assets that would appreciate in value, became confident in their self-reliance, and had less need for state welfare (Doling and Ronald 2014). This allowed Chinese policymakers to keep social security spending low—at just 3.00% of the GDP in 2019 (Ministry of Finance 2020)—while also tapping into cultural expectations associated with the Chinese traditional family- and kinship-centered welfare model (Kivinen and Li 2012, 67). This housing model, with its effects for regime support among the elite and urban property-owners, became part of General Secretary Hu Jintao's vision of a "Socialist Harmonious Society" advocated during the 2005 National People's Congress (Geis and Holt 2009).

Yet, by the time of such pronouncements in the mid-2000s and particularly since Xi's arrival in office in 2012 and the CCP's increasing focus on social control and measures to insulate the regime from popular mobilizations—color revolutions and the Arab Spring—taking place elsewhere—for example, further restrictions on the Internet, as well as on the media and NGOs that received international funding, detentions of pro-democracy activists and journalists, and the emasculation of security services (Koezel and Bunce 2013; Petrov and Rochlitz 2019)—against the background of the 2008 Global Financial Crisis (GFC), housing development revealed several tension points. The conflict between the interests of several groups disgruntled by housing development, on the one hand, and the elite reward mechanism and expectations of continued price growth among the property owners, on the other hand, presented a new challenge to the Chinese party-state.

One disadvantaged group was, as noted, urban households and farmers protesting demolitions and displacement due to rapid housing development (Liu and Xu 2018). At the same time, channels for public participation in housing development remained formalistic, despite the introduction of such initiatives as online comment portals in the 2000s–2010s (Wang et al. 2021). Guangzhou was a rare instance when the local government promoted community participation in urban redevelopment.

Housing unaffordability in metropolitan cities became an acute problem for young people and the urban poor, especially recent migrants (Yip and Chen 2021). For example, in 2019 four out of ten cities with the highest house prices worldwide were located in China, including Hong Kong, Shanghai, Beijing, and Shenzhen. Yet, average incomes in the latter three were significantly lower than in the remaining six most expensive cities, including Munich, Singapore, Vancouver, Los Angeles, Paris, and New York (CBRE 2020). The CCP realized the danger to their legitimacy among low-income groups, particularly recent rural migrants—"peasant workers" (*nongmingong*)—who were the

participants of the original coalition behind Deng's reforms that promised this group higher incomes and better welfare (Pursiainen 2012, 40). The central government introduced administrative measures to improve housing affordability, including purchase restrictions and credit limitations in some 46 cities in 2010, 2013, and 2016. However, such measures crossed the interests of businesses, state officials, and existing homeowners, who favored continued price increases. Not surprisingly, restrictions were promptly lifted each time and the price surges that followed (Bureau of National Statistics 2017) indicated their limited impact and the preservation of the original housing growth coalition's support for the party-state.

Nonetheless, power considerations in the wake of the 2008 GFC led Chinese policymakers to take redistributive measures to address the housing needs of the coalition's outsiders. For the urban poor (Wallace 2013), following the 2008 GFC, the Hu-Wen administration initiated large-scale shantytown redevelopment and public rental housing (PRH) programs, pledging to build 36 million PRH units (Chen, Yao, and Wang 2017). This was based on the beliefs of Chinese experts in the early 2000s that the growth-oriented housing model should include social housing programs (Wei et al. 2015). As before, external pressures—the economic crisis and revolutions against authoritarian rule in Eurasia and the Middle East—played an important role for the amendment of China's neoliberal housing paradigm.

In practical terms, the balance of development loans for PRH increased from 0.28 trillion yuan in 2011 to 4.25 trillion yuan in 2018, equivalent to 2.67% and 10.36% of the balance of total real estate loans, respectively (People's Bank of China 2019). Yet, with power considerations in mind the central government kept the incentive structure for local officials intact. Having discretion over PRH allocation, local governments prioritized young professionals (*rencai*) whom they saw as essential for regional competitiveness (Chen, Yao, and Wang 2017; Yip and Chen 2021). Consequently, PRH tended to be misallocated in favor of young professionals who joined the alliance of beneficiaries of China's housing development, while the rest of the urban poor remained a housing precariat. Low-skilled jobs in housing construction—22% of recent migrants were among the 59.7 million in the housing construction industry (Chen, Yao, and Wang 2017, 65)—offered this group a conciliatory reward.

Overall, by the late 2000s, the CCP found itself in a tight spot between the expectations of the earlier winners of its housing polices and the increasing demands of those bypassed by the housing growth. The Chinese leadership wishing to avert threat to their power and to preserve the support of both groups, searched for new, more socially inclusive ideas toward housing development (State Council 2007). They involved a shift from an economic to a needs-based understanding of housing, encapsulated in Xi Jinping's famous phrase that "houses are for living in, not for speculation" (Kynge and Yu 2021). The new approach formed part of Xi's "Chinese Dream" of common prosperity, collective effort, socialism, and national glory (Shi 2013; *The Economist* 2013). For instance, in 2013 a slogan of "people-oriented urbanization" emerged (Chen, Yao, and Wang 2017, 68). Likewise, the Central Economic Working Conference in December 2016 (State Council 2016) and annual government reports (State Council 2018)

explained that future housing development would aim to balance social equity and economic growth. Yet, despite the new emphasis, the central government preserved the reward structure for the state and business elites. As a result, local officials continued to treat housing development as an economic growth engine and a source of patronage and career advancement during the late 2010s and the COVID-19 crisis of 2020–21.

Russia

Russian housing reform began under quite a different power-policy constellation. In the early 1990s, Russia was seen as a democratizing country, albeit in a deep economic crisis caused by the collapse of the command economy (Gel'man 2015). In this context, the policy pillar guided by neoliberal ideas for economic and social policy reform dominated at first (McFaul 2019). In 1991, the Russian government initiated liberalization and decentralization of the state housing sector and announced free-of-charge privatization to solve what was widely perceived as a "housing crisis." This perception was both policymakers' technical belief—used to define the policy problem and initiate the reform—and a cultural attitude held by the society. The housing crisis included problems of poor quality and overcrowding of urban state-owned accommodation (Khmelnitskaya 2015); this was much more widespread than in China, with an urban population of around 70% (Becker, Mendelsohn, and Benderskaya 2012; Table 1).

While the influence of crises in the early 1990s created a policy context similar to China's at the start of its housing reform, Russia's formally democratic institutions mediated its impact on policy. The drop in the population's incomes led the left and nationalist parties in the first two Dumas[2] to block full liberalization of housing utility and maintenance tariffs (Cook 2007; McFaul 2019). Housing privatization, meanwhile, progressed steadily during the 1990s and into the 2000s (see Table 1). A political bargain with the public emerged in which housing became a "shock absorber": subsidized tariffs sustained households in conditions of wage arrears, while privatized apartments became the only tangible value most citizens received during the economic reforms.

In parallel, an elite power bargain developed during Boris Yeltsin's presidency, in which federal economic elites established informal connections with the political leadership culminating in the emergence of the oligarchs (Gel'man 2015). The sphere of housing and urban development became important for power- and patronage-sharing with regional and local business and state elites, particularly the latter who, unlike their Chinese counterparts, lacked managerial incentives allowing career progression beyond their regions (Rochlitz et al. 2015). The sphere provided these elite actors with locally generated rent opportunities derived from the allocation of urban land and housing construction, especially profitable in large cities (Butler and O'Leary 1995, 29), and the administration and provision of housing utilities and maintenance services. This, however, reduced competition and undermined the public supervision over the sector

2. For the party composition of the Russian parliament since 1993, see http://duma.gov.ru/duma/about/history/information/, accessed December 23, 2023.

(Bocharov 2013; Holm-Hansen et al. 2019; *Kommersant* 2019; Polishchuk, Rubin, and Shagalov 2021).

A change in Russian electoral politics affected the development of the housing policy pillar in the early 2000s. Following the December 2003 elections, the newly elected Duma dominated by the pro-presidential United Russia adopted a new Housing Code. The Code was developed by committed government reformers and based on the same neoliberal beliefs as reform measures in the early 1990s (Cook 2007; Khmelnitskaya 2015). The Code dramatically reduced the entitlement to "social" housing, and homeowners became responsible for the major repairs of residential buildings where their apartments were located, the so-called *kapremont* problem. Most homeowners could not afford these costly repairs. The contrast between low affordability and the liberal policy approach presaged a challenge in policy implementation, and also challenged the power bargain between the citizens and the regime in the political sphere.

The Housing Code fundamentally altered the relationship between the state and the public: housing spending halved as a share of all social spending (Table 2). For instance, only a small proportion—5% (122,000 families)—of those registered for social housing (2.4 million households) received such housing in 2017 (Rosstat 2019). The 1990s'

TABLE 2. Housing in Russia: Construction, House Prices, and Budget Spending

Year	Construction (million m^2)	Average Prices: Primary/Secondary Market (RUB per 1 m^2)	Consolidated Government Budget Expenditure – Share of Housing Expenditure (%)
1990	61.7	n/a	n/a
1998	30.7	5,050 / 4,941	n/a
2000	30.3	8,678 / 6,590	n/a
2002	33.8	12,939 / 11,557	n/a
2004	41.0	20,810 / 17,931	n/a
2006	50.6	36,221 / 36,615	7.5
2008	64.1	52,504 / 56,495	8.1
2010	58.4	48,144 / 59,998	6.1
2012	65.7	48,163 / 56,370	4.6
2013	70.5	50,208 / 56,478	4.2
2014	84.2	51,714 / 58,085	3.6
2015	85.3	51,530 / 56,283	3.3
2016	80.2	53,287 / 53,983	3.2
2017	79.2	56,882 / 52,350	3.7
2018	75.7	61,832 / 54,924	3.9

Sources: Rosstat (2019), Russian Ministry of Finance, and BOFIT.

bargain could only be temporary, easing the pain of transition while failing to address the original housing crisis. As the latter was both a cognitive expert belief and a cultural perception, a new bargain had to join technical and cultural elements.

The approach of liberal reformers was informed by technical beliefs. They hoped that the majority would turn to the market to improve their living conditions. However, like in China, unaffordability of market housing became the major issue. In the 1990s and early 2000s, mortgages were beyond the reach of an average household (Dom.RF 2019a). In the 2000s, incomes started to grow but so did house prices. During the 2000s–2010s, they increased more than tenfold (Table 2) while average incomes grew only half as much (Rosstat 2019). Regional governments could provide some assistance, depending on their resources. Even though since the early 2000s, President Putin had attempted to regularize Yeltsin-era asymmetric federalism into the "power vertical" with fiscal centralization and universalism in social provision (Sakwa 2021, 382), regional disparities persisted. While wealthy Moscow during the 2000s introduced a program of "Social Mortgages with City Support," most regions lacked resources and had many unfunded mandates particularly in social services (Polishchuk, Rubin, and Shagalov 2021). They offered modest or no help-to-buy schemes and tended to postpone the allocation of social housing.

Meanwhile, public cultural expectations hardly matched the liberal reformers' beliefs. Most Russians continued to expect state involvement in housing provision (Aleksanteri Institute 1998, 2007, 2015). For the vast majority, as the allocation of social housing declined, changes in family structure were the only way to meet individual housing needs (Bogomolova and Cherkashina 2018). Throughout post-socialist Eastern Europe, state withdrawal replaced housing shortage with a shortage of affordable housing (Tsenkova and Polanska 2014). In Russia this led to public frustration and by the mid-2000s became a political issue (Puzanov 2013). By this time, structural shifts in the global markets allowed the Russian economy to receive high oil revenues, while the political regime turned to full-scale authoritarianism (Gel'man 2015). Within the pillar of power, this placed greater emphasis on regime stability and legitimation via the supply of public goods.

Within the policy pillar, under pressure from the power domain, beginning in the mid-2000s the main change was the new emphasis on "housing development" and "affordability" as expressed by influential policy experts—for instance, the Institut Sovremennogo Razvitiia (Institute for Contemporary Development; INSOR) associated with President Medvedev (INSOR 2008). Such advocacy offered a new needs-oriented framing of housing policy. Government initiatives based on this thinking included the 2006 National Affordable and Comfortable Housing Project, with its 2018–24 version, Housing and Urban Environment; the 2012 and 2018 presidential "May" decrees; and associated programs (Ministry of Construction of Russia 2021).

The search for affordable housing was affected by the belief that gripped Russian politicians and experts in the early 2000s that the country was facing an unprecedented demographic crisis (Maleva 2007). Since "hypothesized effects" of housing can vary (Zavisca and Gerber 2016, 348), in Russia, the public and policymakers perceived that

overcrowding prevented families from having more children. The INSOR experts argued that housing conditions, along with healthcare and education, determined "the country's demographic well-being." Similarly, a 2002 government program (Pravitel'stvo Rossii 2002) asserted that limited housing access made it hard for young couples to nurture their own families.

The search for political stability within the pillar of power, and the need for policy framing resonating with public expectations and policymakers' beliefs along the pillar of policy, led to the introduction of the Maternity Capital Program (MCP) in 2007 (Meleshkina 2020). Channeling the latest instruments for social assistance (Béland et al. 2018), the MCP distributed "conditional cash transfers" to every mother who had or adopted a second child. Seven million families, out of 11.1 million who received the benefit by April 2021, spent it to build or buy housing and take out a mortgage (Prezident Rossii 2021). The universal coverage of the MCP spread a message of the state's return to the housing sphere with help to the neediest and most deserving members of society, families with children. The MCP targeted households at the greatest risk of poverty, as in the 1990s poverty was concentrated among families with children, particularly single-parent households primarily led by women (Cook 2007, 63, 138). Also, the MCP was rooted in the increasingly dominant conservative agenda and the patriotic ideal of motherhood (Melville 2017, 320–321). Based on such beliefs and values, since its introduction, the MCP evolved under the influence of the competition between pro-redistributive and fiscally conservative bureaucratic-expert coalitions within the central government (Khmelnitskaya, Satre, and Pape 2023). In terms of political support, the MCP most benefited citizens living in Russia's poorer regions, which had lower incomes and house prices (Burdyak 2017, 78–79)[3] and where the grant was worth significantly more.

Making mortgages more affordable was another policy direction. From the mid-2000s to 2020, mortgage interest rates decreased—from near 15% in the mid-2000s to 7.5% in 2020—and the volume of mortgages expanded—from a negligible amount in the mid-2000s to nearly 1.3 million mortgages for RUB 3,522 billion in 2019 (Dom.RF 2019a). Several agencies assisted the development of the mortgage and housing market in Russia. They were also indispensable conduits for the power bargains with the public and the elite. For instance, the Agency for Home Mortgage Lending (AHML, renamed as Dom.RF in 2016) was set up in the 1990s to regulate the nascent housing finance industry (Khmelnitskaya 2015). During the 2000s–2010s, true to neoliberal ideals, the AHML/Dom.RF provided little direct funding for the mortgage market—around 4% in 2018 (Dom.RF 2019a). During crises associated with falling oil prices and international sanctions in 2015–16 and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020–21, the AHML administered two mortgage subsidization programs[4] that, following the neoliberal approach, aimed at leveraging private investment. For example, the 2015–16 program cost the state budget RUB 11.9 billion. Yet, it supported mortgage loans of RUB 927

3. It takes around five years of saving to buy a one-bedroom apartment across Russia, versus nine years in Moscow.

4. For the 2015–16 program, see Dom.RF (2016, 3–4); for the 2020–21 program, see Dom.RF (2020, 1).

billion, 40% of the market during that period (Dom.RF 2016). However, this funding was channeled in a way that strengthened the pillar of power. For instance, amid the regime's deepening stability concerns following the 2011–12 "For Fair Elections" movement and the 2014 annexation of Crimea, the mortgage market rescue packages—unlike the universally spirited MCP—targeted the "new urban elite" (Greene and Robertson 2019), that is, better-off citizens residing in large cities. According to household surveys, Russians who use mortgage credit comprise a thin urban stratum of just 10% of the population (Rosstat 2020). They tend to live in more-prosperous regions where most housing is constructed. In 2019, 80% of housing was built in only 20 regions (Dom RF 2019b, 59, 61). Because such locations have the highest house prices and low affordability, government subsidization buys support of the elite and the affluent protest-prone urbanites, along the power bargain dimension.

Finally, the *kapremont* issue was about housing affordability for the middle- and low-income group. Several alternative solutions were proposed and implemented nationally and locally offering different elite reward mechanisms. The first one adopted by the 2012 Law on Housing Repairs was inspired by ideas of participatory governance—to be fulfilled by homeowners associations, formed in some multi-apartment buildings—but also included an administrative route for housing repairs. The latter scenario preserved the reward mechanism for the local elites working in housing maintenance and infuriated the public, who saw it as a new channel for elite corruption (Holm-Hansen et al. 2019).

An alternative to the *kapremont* policy idea was "renovation," which involved demolishing entire districts containing old housing (*khrushchevki*) and replacing it with new high-rises. The first experiment of this kind, the Renovation Program, was introduced in Moscow in 2017. It offered an alternative reward mechanism for state and business elites while also aiding the less affluent residents of Russia's large cities. The Moscow administration's plan appeared ingenious, and Putin demonstrating paternalism toward the latter group supported it (Khamraev 2017). The program was expensive[5] and, notably, it opened the public purse ahead of gubernatorial (September 2017) and presidential (March 2018) elections. However, initially it envisaged elite rewards so large and, yet, so little in terms of helping low-income Muscovites that it provoked the largest protests seen in Moscow since 2011–12. The skillful use of citizens' consultations at the Duma in June 2017 turned the Muscovites' protest activism to collaboration. Along with concessions to public demands, this allowed the implementation of the program to begin in August 2017 (Khmelnitskaya and Ihalainen 2021).

The Moscow demolition-based renovation idea had its alternatives as well, for instance, "reconstruction" or comprehensive upgrading of *khrushchevki*, implemented in Kaliningrad (Guseva 2018). Nonetheless, the national Program of Housing Renovation adopted in December 2020[6] followed the Moscow experiment which, unlike

5. The program was so significant that it is reflected in the increased housing spending of the consolidated budgets for 2017 and 2018 (Table 2).

6. Federal law N. 494-FZ, December 30, 2020, http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202012300039, accessed December 23, 2023.

alternatives, created the basis for massive housing construction throughout Russia and offered greater elite rewards (Shchukin 2020). The 2020 program aligned with a shift in the understanding of housing as a new source of economic growth to underpin the pillar of power, similarly to China. The new policy belief arose in the context of budgetary pressures in the mid-2010s but consolidated during the COVID-19 pandemic. Housing development was to be financed through households' earnings and mortgage borrowing (Prezident Rossii 2021). Policymakers even called mortgages "new oil" to replace the pivotal role of high oil prices for creating growth and political support during the 2000s (Gurova 2020; Shchukin 2020). Thus, the July 2020 Presidential Decree set a target for housing construction to reach 120 million square meters annually by 2030 (Prezident Rossii 2020), a drastic increase on the 2020 level of 82 million (Prezident Rossii 2021). In alignment with the promotion of conservative values and suppression of domestic opposition characteristic of Putin's presidency since 2012, housing development became regarded as an instrument of social control. It targeted the higher earners in large cities whose energies, fearing their protest potential, the regime sought to redirect elsewhere. As one official asserted, "new homeowners would rather go to IKEA than to protest" (Shchukin 2020, 24).

CONCLUSION: HOW THE PILLARS OF POWER AND POLICY SHAPE THE POLITICS OF AUTHORITARIAN SOCIAL POLICYMAKING IN CHINA AND RUSSIA

We set out to explain the policy process that produces a contradictory, even paradoxical, authoritarian social policy, by examining housing policy in China and Russia. We argued that the answer lies in the realm of authoritarian politics and that two pillars of authoritarian power and authoritarian policy shape the politics of social policymaking.

Structural factors—particularly crisis events: economic crises and international pressures—precipitated policy changes in China and Russia. In Russia, these were mediated by the Russian electoral system, which affected the timing of new policy measures and budget outlays.

The pillar of power included bargains between the authoritarian leadership and the elite, on the one hand, and the public on the other hand. Elite interests were always accommodated as both authoritarian regimes prefer the use of carrots, rewarding greed and ambition, rather than the use of repression as the mechanism of elite cooptation. If certain policy initiatives endangered the elite rent distributing arrangements—for example, housing price caps in China, the reform of *kapremont* administration in Russia—these were reverted or compensation arrangements provided. Regarding the public, in both countries people value the results of economic growth, and improvements in housing conditions are noted in our analysis. However, these were foremost directed according to the requirements of the pillar of power toward the groups with the greatest potential for opposition, that is, wealthier residents in large cities. Young, educated urbanites led the 1968 and 1989 protests in China and 2011–12 electoral fraud protests in Russia. Yet, electoral autocracies fear even small losses in their popularity while in China workers' protests affect policy (Truex 2020). Therefore, housing programs for

low-income groups—housing renovation and subsidies in Russia and public housing and shantytown clearance programs in China—are introduced. Yet, the public protested when housing property rights or prices became insecure. The area of housing can be toxic for authoritarian politics.

The policy pillar served to fill in the pillar of power with substantive policy content, in terms of instruments, paradigms, and action. Bureaucratic structures were important. Yet, despite stronger performance incentives for Chinese provincial and local cadres, regional innovation occurred in Russia too—for example, the extension of the Moscow renovation experiment to the rest of Russia—which supports caution against exaggerating differences in policymaking between China and Russia (Remington 2019, 311).

Ideas were the second factor of the policy pillar. Neoliberal beliefs for market housing provided the policy basis in both countries despite mixed results and public criticism. The state has been active in setting housing development priorities in China since the 1990s and increasingly since the mid-2000s in Russia. Yet, Chinese and Russian leaders learned from the failures of central planning and, during the observed period, used neoliberal policy recipes for delivering economic growth and political support. Policy framing was active in both countries. In China, a thin layer of socialist pronouncements paid tribute to the CCP's still-Marxist veneer (Guo 2019), while the policy action was predominantly market-driven. The latter is assisted by its alignment with China's traditional welfare model. In Russia, framing to match cultural ideas was important for the start of housing reform to resolve the housing crisis. New framing to public expectations was introduced in the mid-2000s following a lack of support for neoliberal ideas. The policy instruments nonetheless remained neoliberal: for example, the MCP advanced homeownership rather than public provision while assisting the state's demographic goals (Kainu et al. 2019). Our findings about the use of policy framing resonate with the research demonstrating how flexible and innovative contemporary autocracies engage citizens' emotions to stymie regime stability threats (Ekiert, Perry, and Yan 2020).

Our argument about the pillars of power and policy shaping the politics of authoritarian social policymaking add a special meaning to Igor Logvinenko's words (2020, 102) that "the authoritarian welfare state is about much more than welfare." It is about power maintenance by the leaders, the ambition of the elites, ideas of experts, and the cultural attitudes and aspirations of the broader public. ■

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