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# Envisioning the Russian Welfare State Model: The New Political Economy of Gender and the Labour Market

*Rosa Mulé and Olga Dubrovina*

Global economic integration remodels patterns of political and economic development in both democratic and authoritarian countries, creating new opportunities but also new social risks. Russia is a big and complex country with a history of command political economy, where the state was responsible for social and care services. While the communist welfare state was inspired by Marxist ideology and underpinned by the command economy (Inglot 2008), in the past twenty–six years Russia has been charting new paths towards democracy as well as towards a market-oriented economy.

This pathbreaking shift has made Russia representative of a new economic model based on the reconfiguration of business-state-society relations, most notably through the privatisation of state-owned firms and the dismantling of public social services. Privatisation brought an end to the era of lifetime employment and egalitarian labour compensation in Russia. Under the command economy, lifetime employment, centrally controlled wage structures and comprehensive social services meant that women could bear the double burden of work and family duties without suffering substantial wage losses as a result of their care-giving role.

In an increasingly globalised and interdependent world, the new opportunities offered by Putin's Russia, involved in the process of reintegration since 2000, have challenged the status of women in the labour market. Putin's idea of a "strong state" as expressed in 1999 has had an impact on social politics in terms of enhancing the state's role in social and care services for women and families. The views regarding welfare policies have changed compared to the El'tsin years, giving way to new interactions between women's needs and state necessities. Putin has made attempts to resolve the "women's issue" by increasing social benefits. However, financial assistance to women has been more likely to meet the requirements of the demographic situation, rather than a real desire to improve women's position in the labour market.

Our research question is whether international economic integration, the transition to a new economic growth model and the remoulding of state-society

relationships in Russia have positively or adversely affected women's opportunities in the labour market. The chapter charts the trajectories of some key institutional changes which have occurred in the Russian welfare state in the face of global challenges and the shaping of a new economic model, focusing on gender and the labour market. It maps out the transformation of the welfare state in terms of laws, social services and benefits as well as exploring women's participation in the labour market. Labour markets are systematically and directly influenced by welfare states because working life and social policy are mutually interdependent institutions.

Despite the dramatic changes in Russia and other hybrid political systems such as China, these political-economic systems have systematically been marginalised in mainstream welfare state theories. Reasons for exclusion are manifold. In general, social scientists focusing on the welfare state chiefly work in European or Anglo-American universities. Language difficulties are a further obstacle for assembling primary and secondary sources to carry out empirical research. But perhaps the main reason is that the literature has been too exclusively focused on those democratic mechanisms that explain the origins, development and consolidation of welfare states in European and Anglo-American countries (Marshall 1950; Esping-Andersen 1990; Gunther et al. 2006).

The point to note is that focusing on democratic mechanisms can account for only part of the story pertaining to authoritarian hybrid political economy regimes. Hybrid systems of political economy face different challenges and constraints to welfare state development. Moreover, historians stress that the democratic process has not always been a precondition for welfare state development (Briggs 1961). Rimlinger (1971) argues that the functions of social security serve different goals under a liberal market economy or under a centrally planned economy. In the latter, the provision of welfare benefits may be in the interest of political elites if it positively impacts productivity, economic growth and development (Wintrobe 1998). Authoritarian welfare states are characterised by paternalism (the elites know better than the masses); state interests take precedence over group interests; and welfare state benefits aim at securing loyalty to the political elites.

In addition, welfare state developments in authoritarian and emerging countries encounter different pressures than those experienced during the 20th century by European countries. European welfare states emerged under relatively closed national boundaries, whereas today the internationalisation economic integration erodes the protective barriers that shield domestic political economies. Emerging countries have generally reduced public expenditures in social services and provisions and adopted neo-liberal, market-conforming

welfare models. Consequently, the enormous transformation in the political economy sphere of these countries has altered the relationship between state, market and society.

Like in other industrialised countries, these changes shape “new risks” in people’s lives (Bonoli 2006). One prominent sector where new social risks are pervasive is the labour market. Technological progress in production reduces the share of unskilled labour, while stricter competition promoted by international economic integration and globalisation has advanced labour market flexibility. These trends contribute to radically altering labour markets in transition economies, with far-reaching implications for gender equality.

In Russia the transition process has progressively eroded the institutional mechanisms that protected women’s reproductive role under central planning. Most notably, the dismantling of the socialist welfare system has led to a substantial decline in care provision in the form of subsidised childcare, shifting care responsibilities predominantly to the family. The literature suggests that in Russia firms are increasingly reluctant to accommodate employees’ care-giving needs (Carpinelli 2004).

How does gender map onto contemporary Russia’s post-communist welfare regime? Our argument is that the gender transformation of the welfare state in Russia is moulding a hybrid neofamilist model with neoliberal and paternalistic elements and the gradual erosion of state support for social services, childcare and elderly care. On the one hand, Russia’s authoritarian modernisation in welfare policies (Cook 2015) appears to be converging towards neofamilist patterns shaped by the male/breadwinner-female/carer model and by demographic pressures. On the other hand, economic constraints, historical legacies and family values have shifted towards individualism, materialism and consumerism, thus limiting the implementation of neofamilist policies.

The chapter is structured as follows. Section two briefly illustrates the welfare state transition from Soviet Russia to the Russian Federation. Section three sets out the theoretical approach adopted in this work. Section four elaborates on the application of the neo-familistic model to the Russian case study. Section five centres on social policy. Section six elaborates on the implications of the new authoritarian welfare state and offers some concluding remarks.

### **Welfare State Transition from Soviet Russia to the Russian Federation**

It is worth stressing that Bolshevik legislation made Soviet Russia one of the most progressive nations in the world on issues of gender. The right to divorce,

legalisation of abortion, access to higher education, political participation through the Women's Section of the Communist Party (Zhenotdel) and socialisation of housework made the image of the Soviet woman very attractive for western feminists. Even if the number of day-care centres and the quality of canteens could not address the needs of Soviet families, it still allowed women to enter the professional sphere. But real gender equality was not created since the Soviet state drew women into active public and political life but did not really liberate them from domestic burdens. The liberalisation of family and gender policy ceased in the Stalinist period under the demographic pressure that led to the strengthening of the state's role in the private lives of Soviet citizens. Motherhood was no longer a personal choice but was transformed into a woman's duty to the state. The institutionalisation of the "working mother" gender contract led to the phenomenon of the "double burden"; parallel to this process was the marginalisation of males from childcare, household and state family policy that led to the establishment of gender asymmetry.

The last Soviet period continued to be characterised by this pronatalist policy but in a more liberal legal context. During "perestroika" the traditional family model was strengthened: every policy initiative aimed to encourage women to bear and raise children, rather than to help them to advance in their career or combat discrimination in the workplace. Moreover, financial allowances, services and facilities were designed for mothers and children, thus making women "social disables". As long as the command economy involved centralised job allocation and a system of social protection, female oriented social policy was not an obstacle in women's professional achievement. As a result, three generations of Soviet people became used to the state being "obliged" to solve many problems such as job hunting, recruitment, social entitlements, welfare benefits, etc. They have been schooled in a regime of social protection that allows people not to be too concerned about earning a living. These women had no previous experience of the economic and psychological pressure of unemployment (Mezentseva 1994: 78). The situation changed dramatically in the early post-communist period. According to some scholars, because of the paternalistic state policy, Soviet women were no longer used to competing in the labour market with men. Hence feminist oriented social researchers argued for the renunciation of the state's protectionist policy with regard to women in the new free market conditions (Khotkina 1996). Nonetheless, for some of the most vulnerable social categories state support was crucial. For example, single mothers who felt unprotected as mothers and workers lacking both male support and, especially, the support of the state (Utrata 2015).

The communist welfare state was deeply entrenched in the economic model of state planning of human and material resources. This model was based on

a political economy system that mobilised high levels of female labour force participation. Family policies encouraged female participation in the labour force, especially maternity leave and state-sponsored childcare. This meant that women's participation rate was similar to men's. Under the command economy jobs were allocated almost exclusively by the state and the communist party/state made considerable efforts to support female labour force participation. Furthermore, in the communist political economy welfare services and the firm were highly integrated. Firms provided kindergartens for children as well as housing for families.

Since the 1990s one consequence of globalisation and the transition process has been the retreat of the state, decreasing state responsibility in the social sphere. Hefty cuts in social services mean that women have less public and institutional support for family and childcare. In addition to this, privatisation of state-owned firms implied that private employers were expected to take up, at least in part, financial responsibility for maternity benefits and childcare facilities. Consequently, it is more difficult today for women of reproductive age to find jobs because employers are reluctant to pay such benefits and women are becoming less desirable employees.

### **The Collapse of the Soviet Union as a Critical Juncture in the Russian Development of the Welfare State**

The major reconfiguration of the Russian political economy offers a unique opportunity to scrutinise if and how the new restructuring of the labour market has influenced gendered patterns. New patterns raise two crucial questions regarding the conditions of the female labour supply: (1) what determines whether women stay or exit from the labour market? (part-time work, sheltered employment, retraining, unemployment benefits); (2) under what conditions can women exercise their own choices under the contract, in particular do they benefit from paid absence from work? (sickness, maternity leave etc.).

Theoretically, this paper contributes to the literature by applying the recent theories of the political economy of institutional change to explain key transformations of the Russian welfare state. This research programme asks questions about what kinds of institutional changes take place, propelled by what kinds of political and economic processes (Mahoney & Thelen 2015; North 1990). In this chapter we build on recent scholarship to specify the analytical benefits of applying institutional theory to understanding welfare state change and continuity in Russia.

We will employ the insights of this new wave of research to highlight the peculiarities of welfare state transformation in Russia. We argue that the source of welfare state change is explicable in terms of punctuated equilibrium analysis (Mahoney & Thelen 2015). Like in other command political economies such as China after the 1989 Tiananmen uprising, in Russia institutional welfare change is the result of abrupt events, which are concentrated in short periods of time.

Emerging new patterns of state-market-family relations reveal considerable strains and tensions. In particular, the boundaries between public and private responsibility for family members are undergoing significant rethinking and reshaping, with some social services shifting from public control to private contracts in crucial fields, including care, education, and health. Several public policies can potentially influence the labour supply of women. However, family policies and especially care, aimed at providing financial support or social services are of primary significance (Daly 2002). For this reason, the empirical part of this work focuses on the provision of care services.

Punctuated equilibrium analysis helps understand welfare state change in Russia. The punctuated equilibrium conception of institutional change is a discontinuous process, in which long periods of stability are interrupted by abrupt events. There is no doubt that the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 represents an episode of abrupt and rapid transformation, a critical juncture that radically altered the status quo of the Russian political economy. Critical junctures are defined as “moments in which uncertainty as to the future of an institutional arrangement allows for political agency and choice to play a decisive causal role in setting an institution on a certain path of development” (Capoccia 2015:148). Critical junctures induce discontinuous and radical reorganisation because of an in-built capacity to overcome institutional stasis. In this view, change in the political economy results from a breakdown of continuous dynamics in the organisation, bringing about new patterns and configurations. Critical junctures generate uncertainty by disrupting the institutional status quo. In times of uncertainty, when multiple options are available to key actors, the expectation is that the organisational scenario of politics creates space for political and economic innovation (Capoccia 2015).

One important defining feature of a critical juncture is relevant in the Russian political economy of the early 1990s: inducing discontinuous and radical reorganisation. As the Russian Federation moved into market transition during the early 1990s, its inherited systems of broad social provision increasingly came under attack. The periodisation in the development of the post-Soviet welfare state in Russia has been divided in three different phases of liberalisation (Cook 2015). The first phase between 1991 and 1993 liberalisation was

non-negotiated; the second phase between 1994 and 1999 was marked by contested liberalisation; and the third phase between 2000 and 2004 liberalisation was negotiated within the elite. Reformers demanded a liberal paradigm of reduced subsidies and entitlements and social sector privatisation. Social services and provisions were to move away from the state and towards the market.

However, some aspects of the Soviet welfare system are still in place. Russian labour laws are similar to previous Soviet laws in both the gender and family spheres. Russian labour Law (Federal Law N. 197-30 December 2001) replaced the USSR labour Law of 1971 (KZoT RSFSR). Russian law rather strongly protects working women when they have a child: they are entitled to paid maternity leave, partially paid childcare leave, allowance for registering with an obstetrician during the first twelve weeks of pregnancy, etc. Some articles of the labour law are addressed directly at protecting motherhood and regulating the relationship between mother and employer. It should be noted that such strong and severe legislation can have a negative impact on returning to work after maternity leave: it makes female hiring and earning the subject of discrimination. Taking into account very weak law enforcement and the poor culture of defending rights in Russia, it is possible to conclude that employers have often broken the law with regards to working mothers (Karabchuk & Nagerniak 2013: 29). Labour market practices included “informal contracts” and can be seen as the most common unofficial response of the Russian labour market to rigid labour regulations as well as a sign of adaptation to new market conditions, through non-punishable violations of institutional norms and rules (Teplova 2007: 313).

During the transition period difficulties in the job market drastically increased, especially for women. For the majority of Russian women, the end of the Soviet system brought about a dramatic decline in living standards and millions lost their jobs. However, in the scholarly work concerning female unemployment there is disagreement about the precise figures. Some Russian scholars estimate that women constituted around 70–80% of the unemployed in the mid-90s (Khotkina 1994: 98). However, figures from 1998 show roughly equal proportions of male and female unemployed (13.7 % and 13.3 % respectively) (Alpen Engel 2004: 258). In fact, the Russian scholar Khotkina even used the expression “the female face of unemployment” arguing that some 70 to 80% of registered unemployed were women as well as professionals with higher and secondary education. On the other hand, the Russian sociologist Zubarevich claimed that gender differences compared with the Soviet period increased slightly: the proportion of women *out of the employed population* dropped from 50% to 48–49%. At the very beginning of the transition period



the female employment rate dropped faster than the male one. But as the labour market deteriorated further, the employment of both males and females fell at approximately the *same rate* (Zubarevich 2008). Despite similar gender employment rates, in practice women had to face more hardship than men due to their gender, such as unfair dismissals, preference for hiring males, sexual harassment and the gender salary gap.

One reason for the gender wage gap is that the management of factories and firms tried to keep qualified male workers while reducing the number of working days for women and therefore their wages. It also led to female loss of work skills and to their lower level of competitiveness compared to men. Women featured more on dismissal lists, issued by the administration, in an attempt to get rid of young women with children and women of retirement age (Khotkina 1994: 100).

The research carried out by the American scholar Jennifer Utrata on single mothers shows that nearly every mother with young children described widespread discrimination in the job market. Repeatedly the scholar heard from Russian women: “no one wants to hire a woman with a small child” (Utrata 2015: 62). Men and women faced the process of recruitment differently: it was rather longer for women than for men for a number of reasons. First of all, the majority of unemployed women were professionals with higher education (engineers, office-workers, accountants and book-keeping staff, scientists, lecturers, managers and secretaries). They all became “unwanted” in the job market (Khotkina 1994: 102). According to the statistics there were more women with higher or secondary education than men (40% against 25%). In the 1990s the labour market favoured “blue-collars” and the demand for highly educated women dropped. Even in cases of suitable vacancies a lot of businesses that contacted an employment service specified a preference for male workers even if it was not justified by the specific characteristics of the workplace (Khotkina 1996). Secondly, the high level of formal education was not maintained through women’s working lives, since there was no system in Russia for continuing education. And thirdly, many women’s social entitlements and preferential terms made them an unattractive proposition for employers (Khotkina 1994: 102).

In view of the above, we can distinguish at least two specific features of female behaviour in the labour market: fear to face dismissal even if their wage is very low or not regular, and readiness to accept any position they find with a low salary. A former woodworker, who was working in the 1990s as a hospital worker after the closure of her furniture factory, captured a common view of the differences between men and women in the labour market: “All the women who were sacked from the factory are working as a rule, even if not in their

profession. But lots of the men have taken to the bottle, and are simply waiting around for the sun to come out, 'enduring'. Husbands are enduring in the sense of suffering, and their wives are enduring in the literal sense of getting through life and feeding their families" (Ashwin 2006: 87–133). In part men's behaviour can be explained in terms of a dual pressure that they had to face: a personal need to maintain their professionalism, and a strong social obligation to perform as breadwinners. Women are expected only to be "second order" breadwinners, and in this sense can "afford" to work in poorly paid professions without any threat to their status in the household (Ashwin 2006: 215–217). According to the English researcher Sarah Ashwin women's readiness to accept unfavourable working terms led to reinforcing women's second-class status in the labour force and increased the risk of discrimination by employers (Ashwin 2000: 63–72).

Recent social and economic data indicate gender asymmetry in the professional sphere. According to the Federal statistical service (Rosstat) in 2016 out of 72 m active workers 35m were women and 37m—men (48.5% of women) (Rosstat 2016). The average age of female workers is 39.5 (one year older than male workers). Females' educational level is higher than the male one (62% of female workers have a university degree or have vocational training compared to 50% of men). There is more male unemployment than female (the total unemployment rate in 2015 was 5.6%, 5.8% of men and 5.3% of women) (Rosstat 2016). Nonetheless, women represented more than half of state employees (56.2%). In state institutions strong segregation is very evident: women occupy the lower positions of the administrative hierarchy. Only 4.7% of top-level officials are women, while at the "junior" level they make up 80.6%. In the penultimate convocation of the Duma there were 13.6% women (61 women out of 450 seats) and 15.8% in the last Seventh Duma (71 women) that placed Russia in 129th place in the world just before Jordan and Egypt (United Nations Women 2017).

Employers' stereotypes regarding women are still very strong and include ideas about the inferior value of women as a working resource; hence a phenomenon of "glass ceiling" persists: female wages are almost 1/3 less than male ones and the higher the work position (role, wage, etc.) the more likely the job will be occupied by a man. According to the Global Gender Gap Index Report in 2017 the Russian Federation occupies 71st place (compared to 75th place the previous year) in the world ranking that evaluates the gender gap in social, economic and political sectors (Global Gender Gap Report 2017:10). However, when comparing Russia to China it appears that the Russian Federation performs much better in terms of both global gender gap index (71st place

against 100th)<sup>1</sup> and the sub index of economic participation and opportunity (41st against 86th).

Still, both Russia and China are a long way from gender equality. The McKinsey Global Institute Report of September 2015 entitled “The power of parity: How advancing women’s equality can add \$12 trillion to global economy”, suggests that gender inequality is not only a pressing moral and social issue, but also a critical economic challenge. The report estimates that fully closing the global gap between men and women on labour-force participation, hours worked, and the sector mix of employment could boost annual gdp by 26 percent over business-as-usual forecasts for 2025. This maximum potential is equivalent to 2.2 percentage points of incremental global gdp growth per year. It is worth noting that this chapter cannot do justice to the complexities of the political-economy transition process in Russia. One important omission is the discussion of the urban-rural divide. Like in China, it is well known and documented that there are stark differences of employment rates, gender pay gaps and income inequality between rural and urban areas in Russia. This is an important and interesting research agenda that, however, lies outside the scope of our work; it is hoped that the topic will be addressed in future.

### **Social Family and Gender Policy**

In the post-communist period motherhood has become a private choice and responsibility rather than a public duty and a social interest. In the transition process, hefty cuts in social services meant that women had less public and institutional support for family and childcare. In the 1990s financial allowances were strictly addressed only to very poor families with the lowest incomes (Chernova 2013: 143). The childcare support system that during the Soviet period was highly integrated with firms, was overhauled. From 87,900 preschool institutions in 2000 only 51,300 remained (Rosstat 2016: 186). In the conditions of a liberal market economy firms were no longer willing to provide social services, while the state endured drastic cuts in the public sphere. Privatisation of childcare services has pushed women to leave the labour market and return to more traditional roles as housewives. Therefore, as consumers of welfare services, women have been penalised with less public service support.

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1 The gender gap index measures the gap between women and men in several variables such as health outcomes, the gap in educational attainment, the gap in economic participation and political empowerment.

From the beginning of 21st century the demographic problem was raised by Putin's government and a set of measures were undertaken in order to allow women to have more children. In 2006 during his annual discourse Putin proposed to resolve the birth rate decline through a programme aimed at increasing the number of births with financial support for young families, childbearing and childcare. The government increased maternity and childcare allowances established educational compensation for preschool age-children and, most significantly, introduced the programme "maternity capital" (Elizarov 2012). Politicians and the media called these measures aimed at improving the demographic situation a "new national project" (Zorina 2007: 180).

According to the programme "Maternity capital",<sup>2</sup> which the Duma passed as a law in December 2006, women who gave birth to (or adopted) a second or more children from 1 January acquired the right to an economic allowance from the federal budget. A mother receives this amount in the form of a certificate after the child is three years old. The fact that the use of the certificate is strictly limited represents one of the critical points of this social support. The most relevant criticism levelled at the Maternity Capital programme concerns the population's general mistrust in state initiatives, insufficient funding to resolve the housing problem, unnecessary bureaucratic procedures and excessively "female oriented" measures (Borozdina et al. 2014). The "Maternity capital" programme was extended to 2021 but without annual index-linking to inflation. Petrova (2017) shows that the gender wage gap per female age group increases by 4 percentage points from 21% to 25% between 25 and 29 years and peaks at 33% between 35 and 39 years during the most intense period of motherhood, indicating that employers consider a woman as a potential mother and treat her as such on a professional level.

To sum up, it appears that the abrupt institutional change and transition process to a market-oriented economy in the Russian Federation has increased the burden of care on women and consequently reduced their career opportunities. On the bright side, thanks to education and high-level work skills women have become an important resource for small and medium sized businesses in Russia. Moreover, the introduction of international companies characterised by the diversification of human resource policies has contributed to promoting females' working status in Russia (Khotkina 2014). High education skills and economic internationalisation have meant that after the end of the transformation period between 1998 and 2012 the number of female top managers has fluctuated between 35.2 and 39.6%. This increase is due to

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<sup>2</sup> In 2017 is 453,026 rub., or about 7,000 euros.

the development of the tertiary sector where a majority of small and medium sized firms are managed by women. In 2017 female senior managers were 47% of the total, which places Russia in the first position in the world according to the Grant Thornton International Rating (Women in Business 2017), while in China female senior managers are 31%. According to the Grant Thornton Report these figures place both Russia and China in the top ten economies worldwide.

### **The Advent of a Neofamilist Welfare State Model in Russia?**

As the previous sections indicate, the transition to a new growth model has two important implications for female labour force participation in Russia. Women are more economically dependent on families' and men's incomes, undermining the communist era "dual breadwinner" model throughout Russia (Pascall & Lewis 2004). Despite a high percentage of women holding managerial positions, most positions are in less paid jobs such as services; in addition, the gender pay gap is higher than the European average and the difficulties in reconciling work-family duties and responsibilities, the three year maternity leave and the paucity of kindergartens mean that men are often the breadwinners. Russia has witnessed an erosion of the social support system, especially in childcare and elderly care, offloading care responsibilities on women. These policies mark a sharp return to traditional gender roles in Russia (Chandler 2008).

It is important to note that the introduction of "maternity capital" was in line with conservative paternalistic policies. One additional factor that exacerbated the less favourable position of women with respect to men in the labour market was the increasingly patriarchal attitude. This patriarchal attitude was expressed in direct appeals to reduce female employment and convince women to return home. Supporters of such views base their arguments on their desire to reduce working women's overall burden, to enable mothers to give more time and attention to bringing up their children – which, they say, would strengthen family relationships and contribute to reducing the number of divorces (Mezentseva 1994: 76). Yet according to some scholars, the real reason for this patriarchal policy towards women was to hide female unemployment and to increase the birth rate. Still, the problem persisted because the "double burden" didn't disappear but instead intensified: the number of day care centres dropped, laundries closed and the majority of previous services and facilities was curtailed. Confronted with the economic crisis on the one side and political instability on the other side, women became increasingly reluctant to

engage in childbearing. The abortion rate was very high in the 1990s, though it has steadily declined from 100 per 1,000 women of reproductive age in 1991, to 55 in 2000 (Rivkin-Fish 2013: 573). What is more, not all women wanted or were able to stay at home. A high percentage of women wanted or had to work (Zdravomyslova 2003), so the patriarchal policy was carried out against women's willingness to work.

In recent years the problem of work-family balance has persisted and the state has not contributed to resolving it at the institutional level. Conservative neofamilist policy runs up against young generations' representation of the balance between family and career and women's role in the labour market. The first generation born in the context of a liberal economy lives in conditions of professional freedom, flexible work schedules, high wages, individual economic and housing independence (in some geographical and professional spheres) (Ahernova 2013: 175). Their life strategies are radically different from those of their parents. The life strategies of this first generation are based on self-sufficiency and weak reliance on public social services, pushing young individuals to postpone marriage and childbirth and focus instead on career opportunities and professional success (Semeinye strategii 2009). Social values towards the family changed in the period from 1994 to 2014: preferences for career-building and job ambitions delay childbearing and contribute to declining numbers of children in the family (Zhuravleva & Gavrilova 2017: 145). The same trend is indirectly confirmed by the increasing number of women in the last two decades who refuse to have children (Grigor'eva et al. 2014: 30). Arguably, Russian state policy is inadequate: pronatalism does not resonate with the target audience (Ahernova 2013: 175). This is akin to the development of the dink family in China, "double income with no kids" family structure.

The majority of women in Russia remains excluded from the labour market during the childbearing and childcare period despite their desire to continue to work (Karabchuk & Nagerniak 2013: 41). The lack of preschool institutions, low wages, allowances that do not cover all needs and often the absence of family support force women to stay at home for three years and even more in case of a second child. Public perceptions about female roles as mother first of all and worker then, also influence women's choices.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the exclusion of men from domestic chores and childcare duties in Russian families is still

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3 See for example the survey results of "30-year milestone: gender roles and stereotypes" conducted in August 2015 by Levada center. <https://www.levada.ru/2015/08/26/30-letnij-rubezh-gendernye-roli-i-stereotipy/>.

significant and there is no tendency towards the gender neutralisation of household work (Kravchenko & Moteiunaite 2008: 197).

The problem of work-life balance for women surfaced in the Russian government's policy agenda in 2012. One of the measures aimed at stimulating employers to organise family-friendly work places. But such measures seem to have merely symbolic relevance and do not include economic incentives (Chernova 2017: 99).

In comparative terms, the shift from the dual breadwinner model to a neo-familist model of care in Russia draws on the male/breadwinner-female/carer model typical of southern European welfare states (Ferrera 1996). Generally speaking, it is not possible to find a unified criterion which defines and specifies what is meant by "familialism" as a feature of a given welfare state model (Leon & Migliavacca 2013). The term has been applied to south European welfare states to account for the key role that the family plays in developing strategies to protect and increase the welfare of its members, acting as the main provider of care and welfare for children and dependent individuals (Mulé 2016). These strategies include pooling incomes from different sources and providing income as well as protection to dependent family members. The male/breadwinner-female/carer model is characterised by low female participation in the labour market and provision of care to dependent family members, including children, elderly and members with disabilities, by female family members. In this model the welfare of individuals relies on family arrangements and networks rather than on state or private provisions.

The process of welfare state recalibration in terms of distributive and institutional features has been characterised by a return to traditional female/male roles in Russia (Teplova 2007). An incomplete revolution took place that has provoked unwelcome disequilibria. Gender discrimination, the dilemma of reconciling work and family responsibilities and the feminisation of poverty are among the most pressing new social risks facing the political economy transition. The economic reforms in Russia appear to have been the harbinger of new inequalities, with a return to a more traditional male/breadwinner-female/care model. This neo-familistic trend suggests a convergence among countries as different as the Russian Federation and southern Europe concerning the diffusion of new social risks in modern societies.

Welfare state institutions in contemporary Russia manifestly neglect relevant provisions of family policy. Like some countries in southern Europe such as Italy, maternity leave is quite generous, however public policies and programmes aimed at economic and service support for child care and gender equity are few and far between.

## Conclusion

As representative of a new economic model under the label of authoritarian modernisation, the reconfiguration of the Russian welfare state is underpinned by rapid urbanisation and industrialisation that is creating new social risks. These new social risks stem from the massive transformation of the political economy landscape over the past twenty years. This transformation has altered the relationship between the state-market-society, deeply affecting labour market opportunities for women.

In Russia, the complex interaction of international economic integration and the return to traditional patterns of social care is moulding a neo-familistic welfare state. In the transition to a market economy, the former communist welfare state has been retrenched and liberalised, with an erosion of the social support system.

In such circumstances, policy makers should engage in formulating and implementing family-work reconciliation policies with the aim of moving beyond gender roles (Mulé 2016). Men and women should be considered “working citizens”, within the “adult worker family model”. One way forward is to implement policies for the “de-familialisation” of care or supported familialism. Defamilialisation concerns the satisfaction of one’s own needs independently from family support. It implies that the services women provide within the family and for family members are partly outsourced to the market or to the state or to a mix of private/public services. The debate revolves around which policies are more apt to advance de-familialisation. Policies should acknowledge the work needed for caring for family members, children, dependent adults, and elderly parents, as an activity that gives entitlement to financial support, such as allowances and care leaves. Finally, policies could support and favour men’s family care responsibility via parental leave.

Another question is which public policies support gender equity in paid work and care. The issue is not merely about gender inequality and the way it affects job market opportunities or the gender division of paid and unpaid work in the family. As Saraceno and Keck (2011) argue, the problem in many ways is deeper. Relevant policies include social services, parental leave, income support and fiscal instruments, de-familialisation and supported familialism. Social policies that relieve families from responsibilities in the care of dependent family members are central to the decline of familialism.

Finally, our findings regarding the impact of the political economy transformation in Russia during the past twenty-six years suggest that if the transition from a command economy to a market economy involves cuts in public service



jobs and public care services, this may have detrimental effects on women's employment opportunities as well as on their ability and willingness to raise children. The reconfiguration of the political economy in Russia has entailed the restructuring of the labour market which has in turn significantly influenced gendered patterns, unfortunately deepening the gender divide. With the privatisation of welfare services, the gender divide is becoming more obvious. To help change public perceptions of both genders, government should provide more welfare services that would help modify public perceptions very gradually, working through education and on the identity of female-male workers. In rekindling the "strong state" in Russia, policymakers may improve the identity reconstruction of Russia by promoting welfare policies that could rebalance the deep gender divide in the long run.

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