

WORKING P A P E R S

**Are Russians
Undemocratic?**

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CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT
for International Peace

**Russian Domestic
Politics Project**

**RUSSIAN AND
EURASIAN
PROGRAM**

**Number 20
June 2001**

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A NEW NARRATIVE ABOUT POST-SOVIET RUSSIA is taking hold in policy, media, and academic circles and shows signs of entrenching as a new conventional wisdom. By this reading, Russia's experiment with democracy has flat-out failed. So misconceived and mismanaged were the political and economic reforms of the 1990s that they have fueled mass disenchantment with democratic norms and brought authoritarianism back into repute. Russians, in short, are said to be giving up on democracy.

Westerners who subscribe to this point of view can readily back it up with Russian sources. A poll of adult Russians conducted nationwide by the Center for the Study of Public Opinion (VTsIOM) in Moscow, in January 2000, found that 75 percent were in accord with a statement that order is more important than democracy and should be pursued even if it entails violations of democratic procedures and abridgements of personal freedom.¹ Commenting on Vladimir Putin's election as president in March 2000, the esteemed head of VTsIOM, Professor Yuri Levada, concluded, "Putin can do what he wants... Russians value might more than principles now."²

Some observers go a step further in that they anchor present-day antidemocratic sentiment in an unbroken continuum of Russian values and traditions. Russians, they said, are culturally predisposed—by Orthodox Christianity, by the paternalistic mores of village life, by centuries of tsarist rule, and most recently by Marxism-Leninism and cradle-to-grave socialism—to desire an overweening state and a dominant leader. Nikolai Biryukov and Victor Sergeyev write that the problems of the past decade are but the latest in a long line of mishaps:

So far there have been six failures [of democracy] during the last ninety years. These take into account the First, Second, and Fourth State Duma in 1906, 1907, and 1917; the Constituent Assembly in 1918; the Congress of Peoples' Deputies and the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and the Russian Federation in 1991 and 1993. Given this, it is more than appropriate to ask why all attempts to institute representative authority in Russia seem to come to an apparently inevitable dramatic, not to say, tragic end? Since these events occurred under different historic circumstances and different regimes, it is also appropriate—in our inquiry concerning factors that prevent development of representative democracy in Russia—to turn to those features in Russian society that undergo slow changes and remain relatively invariable under all political regimes. Political culture is, presumably, the first to be considered.³

Biryukov and Sergeyev are in select company. Distinguished scholars of comparative politics—Seymour Martin Lipset, Samuel Huntington, and Russell Bova, among them—hold that societal acceptance of Western democratic values is an indispensable prop of democratic institutions.⁴ In the Russian case, the exact influences identified as having molded the popular mindset vary from account to account, but the gloomy conclusion about Russians' ingrained and immutable hostility to democracy is a common thread.⁵ This being so, Russia's inability to consolidate democracy in the past

decade does not come as a shock: it essentially betrays continuity with Russia's communist *and* pre-communist legacies and a lack of receptivity to values imported artificially from the remote West. In a sense, this emphasis on Russian culture and values casts the people as “co-conspirators” in bringing about democratic failure.⁶ Some experts make an analogous argument about Russian attitudes toward private property and markets, as in Stephen Cohen's statement that “a fully capitalist system is in conflict with Russia's tradition.”⁷

Putin's rise to power and stellar approval ratings seem at first blush to confirm this take on Russian culture and history. After a decade of chaos, Russians, it may be reasoned, yearned for a Kremlin strongman who would deliver order and stability. Putin's ruthless use of force against the Chechens made him a national hero and the easy winner of the 2000 presidential election, and he followed up his electoral victory with curbs on press freedoms and other democratic rights. In the culturalist mirror, the neo-authoritarian drift may be exactly what the Russians want and deserve. This argument is rather convenient for President Putin and is propagated subtly by analysts and politicians in his camp.⁸

This paper challenges key elements of the emerging master narrative of Russian politics. Without questioning the many illiberal features of Russia's current political system, we use data on Russian public opinion collected during the 1999–2000 electoral cycle to offer a more nuanced and complex picture of grassroots attitudes.⁹ We agree that Russian democratic institutions are performing miserably and that leaders, especially since Putin's ascent to power, have done much to compromise and erode democratic practices.¹⁰ The political system in Russia today is at best an illiberal democracy (see box p. 3). However, our data also suggest that its many and obvious limitations are not caused by, or for that matter consistently reinforced by, popular attitudes toward democracy. Although Russian citizens in many ways share our negative assessment of the way their national institutions work, it would be wrong to jump to the conclusion that they single-mindedly spurn democratic values and ideas per se. Even Putin's own electorate is more pro-democratic than the talk of Russia's authoritarian trend would have it.

The paper explores this ground in seven parts. Section I maps voter attitudes about the way Russian “democracy” works. It documents that people in Russia are anything but satisfied with their government. Section II reviews popular attitudes toward the general idea or concept of democracy as a system, showing, contrary to some assertions, that democracy is not a dirty word among Russian voters. In section III we turn to attitudes toward specific components of a democratic system, revealing that support for these concrete aspects of democracy is stronger than for the concept of democracy in the abstract. Section IV takes up the thorny issue of trade-offs between order and democracy. Our results offer a somewhat different picture than previous analyses and imply that Russians are not as eager to give up their individual liberties as has long since been suspected. Section V briefly profiles the supporters of democracy in sociodemographic terms. Section VI looks specifically at Putin's supporters in the 2000 presidential election, revealing that they are not markedly less attached to democratic practices than the country as a whole. Section VII concludes by placing Russia in a comparative context and teasing out some recommendations for Western policy.

ILLIBERAL FEATURES OF RUSSIAN DEMOCRACY

An illustrative checklist of illiberal features of the post-Soviet political order would include the following points. On most scores, they apply as much to the eighty-odd units of Russia's federal system as to the central government in Moscow.

- Governmental decision making is often closed to the public and wrapped in layers of confidentiality and secrecy. If anything, policy making in many issue areas is more closed than it was in the late Soviet period.
- Representative institutions in Russia, especially legislatures, exert much less influence over government policies and budgets than executive and administrative bodies do.
- Ordinary Russians have scant contact with government officials and often assume, rightly or wrongly, that officials are out to protect their own selfish interests and not the welfare of citizens.
- In daily life, individuals continue to be subject to a host of petty restrictions on their personal decisions and mobility. The most onerous of these is the *propiska* system for residential registration—a police-state invention from the Stalin era that perseveres despite repeated commitments to eliminate it. *Propiska* is an invitation to corruption and interferes with the development of a normal market in urban housing.
- The Russian courts remain backward and cannot offer individuals reliable protection against the arbitrary acts of governments. The rights of procurators to detain and interrogate suspects are still shockingly wide by Anglo-American standards.
- The political parties, voluntary associations, and intermediate structures that constitute “civil society” are woefully weak. Political activities that would otherwise rely on their input are commensurately impoverished, as the campaign for the 2000 presidential election demonstrates.
- Corruption is widespread within governmental agencies. It takes a bewildering variety of forms. In regards to corruption in Russia, there are wheels within wheels. Private and public structures interpenetrate almost everywhere you look.
- Evasion of taxes, military service, and other civic responsibilities is rampant, and the volunteer and philanthropic spirit is feeble.
- Whereas prior censorship of the mass media and publishing industry was abolished in Gorbachev's day, Russian governments and the private and quasi-private interests intertwined with them exercise massive pressure on the media to conform to officially approved viewpoints. The pressure is most oppressive on the electronic medium that for about 90 percent of citizens is their main source of political news—television. Coverage of the second war in Chechnya overwhelmingly demonstrates this and can instructively be compared with the first war (1994–1996), when the media were much more freewheeling.

- Russian governments have on notable occasions used disproportionate force to suppress opposition—for example, during the 1993 constitutional crisis and in the two grisly wars in Chechnya. Some radical dissidents—for example, the Chechen rebels—in turn have resorted to violent and unscrupulous means. The gun-toting gangs that controlled Chechnya from 1996 until the Russian invasion in 1999 took hundreds of innocent people as hostages, ransoming them off at will, and trafficking some of them as slaves.
- The Soviet-era apparatus for policing and intimidating the population was not dismantled after 1991, despite Boris Yeltsin’s fervent promise to do so, and has been considerably revived in the past few years. Yeltsin’s successor, Vladimir Putin, is a former director of the FSB, the descendant of the Soviet KGB, and has spoken glowingly of the KGB’s services to the state. Since he came to office, FSB officials have occupied numerous posts within the government apparatus.

I. POPULAR ASSESSMENTS OF THE PRACTICE OF DEMOCRACY IN RUSSIA

For the last decade, Russia’s leaders, now chosen in contested elections, have repeatedly assured the citizenry that their country’s new system of government is a democracy. Our polling data testify categorically that Russians on the whole do *not* believe what they have repeatedly been told. When asked in 1999 whether their political system could be considered a democracy at all (see second column of table 1), slightly more than half of all our survey respondents told interviewers that it could not; only about 20 percent agreed that Russia is a democratic country. To make matters worse, the proportion of the population that considers Russia to be democratically governed has been on the *decrease* in recent years, not on the increase. In the wake of the election of Boris Yeltsin to a second term in 1996, 34 percent of Russian voters thought their homeland was a democracy and 29 percent thought it was not, or a little more than half as many naysayers as there were to be in 1999 (see the first column of table 1).¹¹

Table 1. Agreement with Statement, “The Political System That Exists in Russia Today Is a Democracy,” 1996 and 1999 (percentages)

POSITION	1996 ^a	1999 ^b
Fully agree	3	4
Agree	31	15
Indifferent	20	19
Disagree	23	39
Completely disagree	6	13
Don't know	17	11

^a Interviews after 1996 presidential election (N = 2,472 weighted cases).

^b Interviews before 1999 parliamentary election (N = 1,919 weighted cases).

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Responses to a question about “how democracy is developing” manifest a similarly bleak trend (see table 2). One-quarter of Russians felt satisfaction in 1996 with the course of democratization, while more than half were dissatisfied. In 1999 the proportion of satisfied individuals had shrunk to 10 percent and 80 percent proclaimed themselves dissatisfied with the trend.

Table 2. Satisfaction with How Democracy Is Developing in Russia, 1996 and 1999 (percentages)

POSITION	1996 ^a	1999 ^b
Fully satisfied	1	1
Satisfied	25	11
Dissatisfied	42	56
Completely dissatisfied	15	24
Don't know	17	9

^a Interviews after 1996 presidential election (N = 2,472 weighted cases).

^b Interviews before 1999 parliamentary election (N = 1,919 weighted cases).

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

By any gauge one cares to employ, frustration with the operations of contemporary Russian government is rampant. The vast majority of citizens believe that their governmental authorities do their job inadequately, as the top panel of table 3 shows conclusively. On a five-point scale for ranking government performance, almost two-thirds of Russians take one of the two pronouncedly negative positions; a mere 5 percent adopt one of the two positive positions. When individuals are asked about governmental responsiveness and accountability, the picture they paint is no more flattering. Twenty-five percent of our respondents in 1999–2000 fully agreed and 60 percent agreed with the assertion that government officials “do not especially care what people like me think,” leaving only 2 percent to dissent. In reaction to the statement, “people like me have no say in what the government does,” 14 percent fully agreed and 42 percent agreed, with 29 percent disagreeing.¹²

Given the magnitude of the discontent with the current order, it is perhaps to be expected that many in Russia will be nostalgic for the alternative most familiar to them from life experience—the Soviet one-party system. The vast majority of Russians at the present time are convinced that the dismantling of the Soviet Union was a mistake (see table 4). Fewer than 15 percent of our polling respondents in 1999 disagreed in whole or in part with the statement that the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) “should never under any circumstances have been dissolved.” Those who agreed with the statement outnumbered them about five-to-one. A cornerstone of Russia’s vaunted democratic revolution is looked upon with almost universal disdain one decade after it came about.¹³

The sources of warm memories of the Soviet period are many, and no doubt include feelings of a private and nonpolitical nature. Given the turbulent last decade in Russia, nostalgia for a more stable predictable era should not be surprising. In the political realm, many Russians have fond memories of the Soviet Union’s authoritarian regime, as can be seen in table 5. Presented with a four-way choice among an unreformed Soviet system, a reformed Soviet system, the current political system, and “democracy of the Western type,” a clear preponderance of our respondents in 1999 fancied some

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Table 3. Satisfaction with the Russian Political System, 1999–2000^a

QUESTION/ANSWER	PERCENTAGE
Rate the Russian political scale on a 5-point scale, "where 1 means that things are working very poorly and 5 means things are working very well"	
1 (very poorly)	37
2	27
3	27
4	3
5 (very well)	2
Don't know	4
Position on statement, "It seems to me government officials do not especially care what people like me think"	
Fully agree	25
Agree	59
Indifferent	9
Disagree	6
Completely disagree	0
Don't know	2
Position on statement, "People like me have no say in what the government does"	
Fully agree	14
Agree	42
Indifferent	11
Disagree	25
Completely disagree	4
Don't know	4

^a Interviews after 1999 parliamentary election (N = 1,846 weighted cases).

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Table 4. Agreement with Statement, "The Soviet Union Should Never under Any Circumstances Have Been Dissolved," 1999^a

POSITION	PERCENTAGE
Fully agree	38
Agree	35
Indifferent	11
Disagree	12
Completely disagree	1
Don't know	3

^a Interviews before 1999 parliamentary election (N = 1,919 weighted cases).

Table 5. Preferred Political System for Russia, 1999–2000^a

PREFERENCE	PERCENTAGE
The Soviet system we had in our country before <i>perestroika</i>	25
The Soviet system, but in a different, more democratic form	41
The political system that exists today	12
Democracy of the Western type	9
Other response or Don't know	2

^a Interviews after 1999 parliamentary election (N = 1,846 weighted cases).

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

version of the Soviet model, and only about one in five preferred the current political order or a Western democracy. Notice, however, that the most widely desired outcome is a *democratized* version of the Soviet system, not the dictatorship that Mikhail Gorbachev inherited in 1985 and subsequently demolished. Note also the intriguing discrepancy between Tables 5 and 4. About three-quarters of Russians in 1999 beheld the passing of the Soviet Union with regret; but only about one-quarter wished for a return to the unmodified Soviet political system. Even among respondents (73% as shown in table 4) who strongly believed the dissolution of the USSR to have been a mistake, fewer than 40 percent of these people favored reinstatement of an unreformed Soviet-type polity.¹⁴

II. POPULAR ATTITUDES TOWARD THE IDEA OF DEMOCRACY

In all democracies, especially new ones, dissatisfaction with the practice of democracy has the potential to erode the normative preference for democracy.¹⁵ This is most certainly the case in the Russian Federation. For example, mass support for democracy writ large dropped in the aftermath of the confrontation between the parliament and President Yeltsin in September–October 1993.¹⁶ Ordinary people did not like the practice of politics they were witnessing. Since it was called democracy, their support for democracy and the “democrats” declined. As of today, though, many Russian citizens seem to recognize the difference between the democracy practiced in Russia and the ideal or norm of democracy that Russia has failed to achieve. As already noted, voters expressed anger at the condition of their political system in our 1999–2000 polls. And yet, when they were interrogated about the idea of democracy, the gestalt was very different.

Answers to the most straightforward of the questions we posed—“Do you in general support the idea of democracy?”—are contained in the top section of table 6. About two respondents in three endorsed the concept of democracy, while fewer than one in five were against it. As a general proposition, then, Russians overwhelmingly embrace democracy. Contrary to many journalistic reports, “democracy” has not degenerated into a dirty word for most Russian voters.

In response to a crude binary choice—democracy or not—an affirmative answer to this question may not tell us much about either the understanding of or deep commitment to the concept. We thus inserted several variations on the same overall theme into our survey questionnaire. For one

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Table 6. Attitudes Toward the Idea of Democracy, 1999–2000

QUESTION/ANSWER	PERCENTAGE
"Do you in general support the idea of democracy or do you come out against the idea of democracy?" ^a	
Support it	64
Against it	18
Don't know	18
How good would democracy be for governing Russia? ^b	
Very good way	8
Fairly good way	52
Fairly bad way	18
Very bad way	6
Don't know	16
Agreement with statement, "Democracy may have many problems, but it is better than any other form of government." ^b	
Fully agree	6
Agree	41
Indifferent	20
Disagree	15
Completely disagree	2
Don't know	17
Agreement with statement, "In a democracy, citizens have more control over their leaders than in nondemocratic systems." ^b	
Fully agree	9
Agree	43
Indifferent	16
Disagree	13
Completely disagree	2
Don't know	17

^a Interviews before 1999 parliamentary election (N = 1,919 weighted cases).

^b Interviews after 1999 parliamentary election (N = 1,846 weighted cases).

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

thing, we had our interviewers ask if democracy is an appropriate way for Russia to be governed. Russian voters, after all, may suppose that democracy is fine in theory or an appropriate way for governing in rich Western countries but still unsuitable for their homeland. Domestic commentators often dismiss democracy as a luxury Russia cannot afford right now. However, the typical Russian voter, as the second panel of table 6 indicates, is of a different opinion. Sixty percent of our respondents in 1999–2000 felt that democracy was a very good or a fairly good model for Russia, with far fewer, 24 percent, portraying it as fairly bad or very bad.

Equally noteworthy, Russians also seem to realize that no political system is perfect. In reply to the Churchillian question about democracy in relation to the alternatives, a plurality of voters goes along with democracy as the best form of government when compared to other systems (see table 6).

When asked about government accountability, most Russian citizens, as we reported above, do not think that their own government is responsive to their needs. In principle, however, they believe that democracies in general give citizens more control over their leaders than dictatorships. The answers to this item are revealing since most Russians of voting age, except for the very youngest, have direct personal experience with dictatorial rule.

It is tempting to speculate that the general notion of democracy for Russians is a proxy for the affluent way of life associated with the Western nations. Our data do not allow us to sound out this possibility in depth, but we do find evidence that envy of the West is not the all-consuming force it once might have been and that not all Russians perceive democracy as a monopoly of the Western community.

The best clue comes from a polling question about the extent of emulation of Western experience. We asked survey respondents to choose among three formulations of Russia's optimal strategy. Almost none of our informants selected the option that connoted slavish imitation of the West. Opinion divided nearly evenly between those looking to the West as a partial if not exclusive model and those wanting Russia to shun the West and hew to its own exclusive path.¹⁷ Table 7 juxtaposes those responses with the distribution of opinion on our questions concerning the idea of democracy and the best political system for Russia. Among those who took a position on Westernization, support for the idea of democracy was highest among persons who favored at least some learning from the West. But even among defenders of a separate national path for Russia, a majority (52 percent) said they favored democracy in principle, whereas a minority (28 percent) came out against it. The pattern is similar for preference for a political system. An unreformed Soviet political system comes out slightly ahead of the most widely preferred option, a reformed Soviet system, only among the respondents who do not voice a position on Westernization. Proponents of a separate national

Table 7. Attitudes Toward the Idea of Democracy and Preferred Political System for Russia, by Attitude Toward Westernization of Russia, 1999–2000 (percentages)

POSITION ON THE IDEA OF DEMOCRACY AND PREFERRED POLITICAL SYSTEM FOR RUSSIA	POSITION ON WESTERNIZATION OF RUSSIA			
	IMITATE THE WEST	SELECTIVELY BORROW FROM THE WEST	FOLLOW A UNIQUE PATH	DON'T KNOW
The idea of democracy ^a				
Support it	69	76	52	35
Against it	6	10	28	4
Don't know	25	13	20	60
Preferred political system ^b				
Unreformed Soviet system	15	15	36	39
Reformed Soviet system	39	43	38	32
Current political system	8	16	9	5
Western democracy	15	13	5	5
Other response or don't know	23	13	11	20

^a N = 1,919 weighted cases.

^b N = 1,846 weighted cases.

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

path are considerably more likely than individuals who favor wholesale or selective borrowing from the West to prefer an unreformed Soviet system, but even in that category a slight plurality prefers a reformed Soviet system.

It is clear, in other words, that a significant portion of the Russian population acquiesces to the abstract idea of democracy without necessarily looking to the West for guidance. Democracy as an idea somehow possesses a measure of autonomy in the popular mind from attitudes toward Western civilization. This discovery casts cold water on the claims by some analysts in the West that democratic ideas are indivisible and must always be juxtaposed against the values of non-Western cultures. As the history of Japanese, Chilean, or Botswanan democracy demonstrates, countries can build democratic institutions without turning into facsimiles of the United States. Our data hint that a similar process of nativization of the idea of democracy may be starting in Russia.

III. POPULAR ATTITUDES TOWARD THE COMPONENTS OF DEMOCRACY

Substantively, the word *democracy* means different things to different people.¹⁸ It has been used to describe everything from the city-states of Greek antiquity to the pre-1990 German “Democratic” Republic. Soviet ideology was never rhetorically anti-democratic. In the new Russia, Boris Yeltsin’s appropriation of the term to describe his reforms and his allies—the “democrats” versus the “communists”—served to muddy and distort, if not to discredit, the term. Support of democratic ideas correlates in many modern countries with support for liberal and democratic procedures, but not always and not neatly.¹⁹ To fully appreciate people’s attitudes about democracy, therefore, requires us to deal with some specific institutions and folkways of democracy.

When disaggregated into specific components (see table 8), endorsement of democratic institutions and practices is higher in Russia than the already considerable support for democracy as a global concept. Regarding what is by most definitions the *sine qua non* of democracy, competitive elections, Russians by a lopsided majority believe in them. Eighty-seven percent of survey respondents in 1999 answered that it was important to them that the country’s leaders be popularly elected; a paltry 9 percent said it was not important.

Relatedly, when asked about citizen responsibilities, 86 percent fully agreed or agreed that it is the responsibility of each citizen to vote in elections; 6 percent disagreed or completely disagreed. These figures help explain why voter turnout in Russian national elections has hovered around two-thirds, except for the dip in the parliamentary elections and referendum of December 1993.

Elections, of course, are not the only ingredient of a consolidated democracy, and citizen approval of them in Russia could possibly be a legacy of the Soviet era, because leaders back then were “elected” as well (albeit in elections with a single name on the ballot slip).²⁰ Russian voters, it so happens, espouse many other attributes of the democratic polity that did not exist in Soviet times. By expansive margins, they concur in a number of the classic freedoms enshrined in a liberal democracy (table 8). And, unlike some of the other responses to questions about democracy in the abstract, 5 percent and fewer of survey respondents in 1999 found it impossible to answer these survey items. More than 85 percent of those polled responded that the freedom of one’s convictions, free expression, and freedom to elect the country’s leaders were important to them. Seventy, 75, and 81 percent found religious freedom, free choice of place of residence, and freedom of mass media,

respectively, to be important. In only one domain—freedom to travel abroad, which most Russians cannot act on for financial reasons—did less than a majority (40 percent) agree with the importance of the freedom.

Table 8. Importance of Rights and Freedoms to Russians, 1999 (percentages ^a)

RIGHT OR FREEDOM	IMPORTANCE TO THE RESPONDENT		
	IMPORTANT	NOT IMPORTANT	DON'T KNOW
Freedom to elect the country's leaders	87	9	4
Freedom to have one's own convictions	87	9	4
Freedom of expression	87	10	3
Freedom of the press, radio, and television	81	14	5
Free choice of place of residence within the country	75	22	3
Religious freedom	70	26	4
Freedom to travel abroad	40	56	4

^a Interviews before 1999 parliamentary election (N = 1,919 weighted cases).

For this bundle of civic and personal freedoms, the incidence of support is so high in Russia that it runs through all groupings within the population and cuts across expressions of support for particular regimes. So, for example, 94 percent of the advocates of a Western democracy, 91 percent of the supporters of the current political system, and 90 percent of the supporters of a reformed Soviet system agree with the importance of elections—but so do 78 percent of those who say they prefer Russia to have a Soviet-type regime, as it existed before *perestroika*.

Regarding more complex liberal and democratic precepts, support among Russians does not come so close to unanimity, but the levels are often, nonetheless, impressive. Regarding checks and balances and the constitutional separation of powers—rather demanding concepts—a majority of Russians favor a divided and federalized government. Cultural theorists and Kremlin propagandists often assert that the Russian people want a strong president to head their government, unconstrained by other political actors. In fact, Russians seem more comfortable with a division of power between the president and parliament (see table 9). In response to the question, “Should the president or parliament be stronger?” the largest number of respondents take a middling position, recommending that the executive and legislative branches have equal power. This result is somewhat unexpected, what with the low reputation Russia’s parliament enjoys. In our questions about trust in institutions, the parliament ranked near the bottom, well below the most trusted (the army and the Russian Orthodox Church). In favoring the norm of separation of powers while ranking the actual parliament so low, Russian citizens evince a sophisticated grasp of some facets of democratic government. Nor do they want to assign the federal government in Moscow unbridled power over regional governments (table 9). Again, when asked if the center or the regions should have more power, the lion’s share of respondents gravitated to the neutral answer of some power to the center, some power to the regions.

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Table 9. Opinions on the Balance Among Russian Political Institutions, 1999^a

QUESTION/ANSWER	PERCENTAGE
Who should have more power in the central government, on a five-point scale "where 1 denotes that the President should have much more power than Parliament and 5 denotes that Parliament should have much more power than the President"?	
1 (President much stronger)	17
2	8
3 (President and Parliament equal in power)	45
4	7
5 (Parliament much stronger)	16
Don't know	8
Distribution of decision-making power between Moscow and the regions	
Everything should be decided in Moscow	5
Most questions should be decided in Moscow	10
Some questions should be decided in Moscow and some in the regions	53
Most questions should be decided in the regions	23
Everything should be decided in the regions	6
Don't know	2

^a Interviews before 1999 parliamentary election (N = 1,919 weighted cases).

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Table 10. Attitudes Toward Political Parties, 1999–2000^a

QUESTION/ANSWER	PERCENTAGE
Necessity of political parties in Russia, on a five-point scale "where 1 means that political parties are necessary to make our political system work and 5 means that political parties are not needed in Russia"	
1 (Parties are necessary to make our political system work)	32
2	21
3	20
4	8
5 (Parties are not needed in Russia)	10
Don't know	10
Agreement with statement, "Competition among various political parties makes our system stronger"	
Fully agree	4
Agree	35
Indifferent	17
Disagree	24
Completely disagree	6
Hard to say	13

^a Interviews after 1999 parliamentary election (N = 1,846 weighted cases).

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Even highly unpopular actors and organizations are recognized as necessary units in a fully functional democratic system. Political parties enjoy the lowest level of trust among all of Russia's institutions and organizations. Yet, when asked how necessary are political parties in making the Russian political system work, many more respondents answered that they were necessary than asserted that they were unnecessary (see table 10). By a smaller margin, more people agreed than disagreed with the statement that competition among political parties makes the polity stronger. If Russians are willing to accept political parties—entities deemed to be inept, marginal, and ineffective in other polls—as a necessary component of democracy, then intuitive knowledge of democratic theory and practice among Russians may be deeper than we tend to assume.

Another question on which Russians face vexing choices is that of law and order. The Soviet heritage, combined with the blossoming of crime and corruption in the 1990s, might well bias them against the rights of the accused and in favor of an ironhanded approach to crime. As table 11 illustrates, however, Russian views on this fraught issue are mixed, with liberal views having the edge over illiberal views but with the latter far from unrepresented in the population. As the top panel of the table tells us, more Russian citizens are willing to let some criminals go free in the name of preserving individual rights than are unwilling to support such a principle. The margin is 45 percent favoring safeguards for the rights of the accused to 29 percent opposed, with the rest neutral or undecided. In the bottom panel, we see a liberal majority on the allied question of the need to defend society's rights even if some innocent people need to be imprisoned. Almost 60 percent contest this assertion, and fewer than 20 percent uphold it. Support for this idea requires a subtle understanding of the rule of law that one might suspect not to be present in current-day Russia.²¹ We should expect the poor performance of the legal system to undermine support for the idea of the rule of law. A

Table 11. Attitudes Toward Law and Order, 1999–2000^a

QUESTION/ANSWER	PERCENTAGE
Agreement with statement, "The rights of the individual must be defended even if guilty people sometimes go free"	
Fully agree	9
Agree	36
Indifferent	17
Disagree	25
Completely disagree	4
Don't know	9
Agreement with statement, "The rights of society must be defended even if innocent people sometimes are imprisoned"	
Fully agree	3
Agree	15
Indifferent	15
Disagree	47
Completely disagree	12
Don't know	8

^a Interviews after 1999 parliamentary election (N = 1,846 weighted cases).

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

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sizable minority manifests highly illiberal attitudes, but the overall distribution is not consistent with the thesis that Russians in general yearn for law and order no matter the consequences.

Arguably, the grossest violations of human rights in Russia are now taking place in Chechnya, where federal troops were reintroduced and heavy fighting resumed several months before the first and second waves of our election survey. We know from other research that mass support for Putin's handling of the war was high—nearly 60 percent—from the incursion in September 1999 to the election campaign a half-year later, and that many voters were attracted to Putin because of his vigorous persecution of the military effort.²² But support for the war against the Chechen guerrillas is a different issue than identification with Putin's final objective in the war, which is to keep Chechnya within part of Russia regardless of the cost. Our survey work found public opinion on Chechnya polarized, with a substantial group favoring an all-out effort to keep Chechnya within the federation, another willing to let it separate, and the remainder unsure what the solution might be. On a five-point scale where value 1 denotes keeping Chechnya "at all costs" and 5 allowing it to leave Russia, 45 percent of our survey respondents in the winter of 1999–2000 were strongly or moderately in favor of keeping Chechnya in and 33 percent in favor of ceding it independence (see table 12). Although nationalist and racist motivations are not absent in the Russian electorate, especially among ethnic Great Russians, such views fail to predict the attitudes of many citizens even on this highly emotive question.²³

Table 12. Attitudes Toward the Chechnya Problem, 1999^a

POSITION ON FIVE-POINT SCALE	PERCENTAGE
1 (Keep Chechnya at all costs)	33
2	12
3	14
4	6
5 (Let Chechnya leave Russia)	27
Don't know	8

^a Interviews before 1999 parliamentary election (N = 1,919 weighted cases).

IV. DEMOCRACY VERSUS ORDER

Many theorists of democracy address the potential trade-off between democracy and social order. Russians often relate one to the other, and surveys done in Russia sometimes probe the tensions between the two values, finding that large majorities, if forced to choose, will opt for order over democracy.²⁴ Based on such results, not a few analysts assert that there is a widespread thirst for dictatorship and a rejection of democracy within Russian society today. In internal Russian debates, proponents of autocracy, be they businessmen who want more decisive economic reform or generals who want a more muscular foreign policy, cite polling data to bolster their claims that authoritarian rule is popular with rank-and-file citizens. If the majority crave order and are willing to surrender democracy to achieve this end, then autocratic policies would be legitimate.²⁵

The philosophical logic behind such arguments is, in our view, flawed. Order and democracy should not be thought of as two poles on a continuum. To imply in a survey question that there is a natural trade-off between them, and that more of one necessitates less of the other, presents the respondent with a false dichotomy.

As a practical matter, the Russian respondents in our surveys have some conception of the logical trap, as the information laid out in Table 13 indicates. When asked to react to the bald statement that democracies “are not any good at maintaining order,” our informants were divided (see table 13). Slightly more disagreed or completely disagreed with this statement than fully agreed or agreed. Nor are Russian citizens unanimous in adopting the clichés often heard about the ineptitude of democracies in coming to decisions and executing economic reform. When asked if democracies “are indecisive and have too much squabbling”—a standard question wording that invites the respondent to agree—more disagree with this statement (41 percent) than agree (34 percent). Russians may very well believe that their own government is indecisive and squabbles too much, but they do not automatically make this assumption about democracy in the abstract. On the more specific relationship between democracy and economic progress, Russians are skeptical of the idea that democracies are bad for the economy. Forty-nine percent of our respondents disagreed with the proposition that in a democracy “the economic system runs badly,” as against 18 percent in agreement. Again, because we know that Russians have ample reason to be disgruntled with their economy and the state of their democracy, this outcome points to a rather refined awareness of how democracy and the economy should interact and might interact under conditions more benign than those in Russia. Knowledge of the successful record of the Western market democracies probably informs this attitude. In any case, table 13 intimates that a Pinochet-style dictatorship in the name of market reform would not be wildly popular.

Table 13. Attitudes Toward Possible Trade-offs Between Democracy and Order, 1999–2000 (percentages)^a

STATEMENT	POSITION					
	FULLY AGREE	AGREE	INDIFFERENT	DISAGREE	COMPLETELY DISAGREE	DON'T KNOW
Democracies are not any good at maintaining order	4	28	19	31	4	15
Democracies are indecisive and have too much squabbling	6	28	12	36	5	13
In a democracy, the economic system runs badly	3	15	17	44	5	15

^a Interviews after 1999 parliamentary election (N = 1,846 weighted cases).

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Our survey work also indicates that, whatever their outlook on the general and abstract notion of democracy, Russians’ willingness to forgo concrete rights and protections for more order is lower than much previous discussion has indicated. When asked what they are actually prepared to relinquish, Russians volunteer a variety of reactions, frequently telegraphing that they want order to be

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buttressed but are reluctant to give up much to accomplish it.

Table 14 sets forth responses to a multi-item question put to survey respondents in the run-up to the State Duma election of December 1999. The preamble to the survey question read, “Today in Russia there is a lot of talk about the need to bring about order in the country. Are you prepared or not prepared to support the following measures to that end?” The one underpinning of a democratic system that a majority would compromise to achieve more order was the political party system. Almost 70 percent were prepared to ban certain parties, while fewer than 20 percent opposed this egregiously anti-democratic act. These numbers are cause for concern about democratic liberties, although one would have to qualify it by being aware that there are undemocratic parties and movements in Russia that, were they to exist in the United States, most Americans would probably want to proscribe. On no measure other than the banning of some parties is there a majority of Russians on the side of the restriction. A plurality would support elimination of free trading in U.S. dollars. On the three remaining issues—limitations on foreign travel, the introduction of censorship, and the declaration of a state of emergency—a majority of our respondents came out against the possibility. The largest majority is that opposed to a state of emergency in which individual rights would be suspended wholesale. In similar fashion, our interview subjects staunchly opposed military rule in Russia, despite the fact that the army is the state institution in which by far the largest number of them have confidence.²⁶

Table 14. Attitude Toward Measures “To Bring About Order in the Country,” 1999 (percentages)^a

MEASURE	SUPPORT	OPPOSE	DON'T KNOW
Ban certain political parties	69	18	13
Do away with free exchange of the dollar	44	39	16
Limit the freedom to enter and exit the country	35	50	15
Introduce censorship of the press and television	32	53	16
Declare a state of emergency	10	76	14

^a Interviews before 1999 parliamentary election (N = 1,919 weighted cases).

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

V. WHO ARE THE FRIENDS OF DEMOCRACY IN RUSSIA?

Democracy is not yet a consensus value in Russia. As the raw proportions go to show, Russians are anything but unanimous in their political preferences. A spectrum of practical options running from constitutional democracy to Stalinism is, to say the least, broad—beyond the comprehension of the median citizen of any Western nation. Political values, in all their variation and quirkiness, are not randomly distributed across the face of the Russian population. As in most other developing countries, attachment to democratic values generally rises with indices of social modernization, so that persons who are better educated, have higher incomes, work in higher-status occupations, and

live in more urbanized environments are appreciably more likely to favor a democratic regime than those who are poorly educated, lower-paid, work in blue-collar occupations, and live in villages and small towns.

But the strongest correlation revealed by our data is with a demographic characteristic that is not, strictly speaking, part and parcel of modernization, namely, with the *age* and associated generational experience of the citizen.

A perfect illustration is furnished by preferences with regard to regime type (see table 15). To be sure, the data testify to the enormous staying power of aspects of the Soviet worldview. In all age groups, the most appealing political system for Russians is either a reformed Soviet system or, for those seventy and older, an unreconstructed Soviet-style regime. Over and above that conservative center of gravity, there are significant gradations by generation. Nearly half of men and women over the age of sixty-nine in 1999 preferred an unreformed Soviet political system; among those younger than thirty, that proportion was 10 percent. Almost 40 percent of survey respondents between eighteen and twenty-nine favored either a Western democracy or the current political system; this fraction declined to 12 percent among individuals in their seventies and eighties. To put it simply, the longer a Russian lived with the Soviet dictatorship, the more likely he or she is to have clung to Soviet political values. A seventy-year-old was born before the Great Patriotic War (World War II), came of age under Stalin, and never saw more liberal politics in action until the verge of retirement. A twenty-five-year-old was born in the 1970s, encountered the Gorbachev opening in his grade school years, and was an adolescent when Yeltsin swept away the rule of the Communist Party at the beginning of the 1990s. The differing beliefs of those prototypical individuals reflect differing biographical experiences.

Table 15. Preference for Political System, by Age Group, 1999–2000 (percentages)^a

PREFERRED POLITICAL SYSTEM	AGE GROUP					
	18–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60–69	Over 69
Unreformed Soviet system	10	20	21	29	36	45
Reformed Soviet system	36	40	46	46	41	29
Current political system	23	17	10	8	9	8
Western democracy	15	13	8	8	5	4
Other response or Don't know	15	11	14	10	9	14

^a Interviews after 1999 parliamentary election (N = 1,846 weighted cases).

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

The generational factor also shines through with respect to opinions concerning individual liberties, although less starkly than for regime type. Older Russians are less likely on every measure of liberties to adopt a permissive attitude (see table 16).²⁷ The steepest gradient is on foreign travel, something few older Russians ever had the chance to do: 62 percent of persons aged eighteen to

Table 16. Opposition to Repressive Measures to Bring About Order, by Age Group, 1999 (percentages)^a

MEASURE	AGE GROUP					
	18–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60–69	Over 69
Ban certain political parties	21	17	21	19	15	12
Do away with free exchange of the dollar	53	49	41	36	30	19
Limit the freedom to enter and exit the country	62	60	53	51	41	29
Introduce censorship of the press and television	64	57	58	54	42	36
Declare a state of emergency	81	82	78	78	71	63

^a Interviews before 1999 parliamentary election (N = 1,919 weighted cases).

twenty-nine would object to curtailment of that right, as opposed to 29 percent of those in their seventies and eighties. On one political question (censorship), the divergence between the oldest and the youngest voters is quite large (28 percentage points); but on banning suspect parties and invoking a state of emergency it is less pronounced (9 percentage points and 18 percentage points between the extremes, respectively).

Another vital source of attitudinal variation on democracy has to do with economic fulfillment and personal well-being and their inverse, economic frustration and personal malaise. In 1999 our interviewers asked a straightforward retrospective question about experience in the decade of change Russians had just undergone: “In general, did you win or lose as a result of the reforms carried out in the country in the 1990s?” The self-perceived losers far outnumbered the winners. Some 70 percent of our respondents said they had lost out to some degree; a trifling 6 percent said they had won to some degree; and a substantial minority, 17 percent, said they had won some and lost some; the rest were undecided. One could hardly think of a sharper gauge of the failure of economic and socioeconomic reforms to improve the lot of ordinary Russians.

What is most pertinent to this paper is the consonance between individual contentment and attitudes toward democratization and regime type. Table 17 portrays but one of the many interconnections that can be traced. It shows in no uncertain terms that interest in more democratic and liberal political arrangements is strongly associated with personal experience with the results of (mainly economic) reform. Among Russians who feel they have won or mostly won because of reforms, about 60 percent empathize with either the current political system or with Western democracy; only 6 percent of them want a return to Soviet rule and about one-third would prefer a humanized Soviet system. When we look at Russians at the bottom end of the welfare yardstick (those who lost or mostly lost as a result of reforms), the relationships are reversed: about 70 percent prefer either an unreformed Soviet regime or a reformed Soviet regime, and support for the current system or Western democracy slides to 15 or 20 percent.

Table 17. Preferred Political Regime by Personal Experience with Reforms of 1990s, 1999 (percentages)^a

PREFERRED POLITICAL SYSTEM	WON	MOSTLY WON	WON SOME AND LOST SOME	MOSTLY LOST	LOST
Unreformed Soviet system	6	4	19	25	30
Reformed Soviet system	32	28	36	43	45
Current political system	38	33	19	10	9
Western democracy	18	26	14	11	5
Other response or Don't know	6	9	12	12	12

^a Question about personal experience in interviews before 1999 parliamentary election; question about preferred political system in interviews after election (N = 1,846 weighted cases).

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

VI. THE PUTIN ELECTORATE: DEMOCRATS OR AUTOCRATS?

The second Chechen war has been popular with Russian citizens. Public backing for the war has remained steady at roughly 60 percent even as casualties have mounted. Undoubtedly, this popular groundswell translated into positive ratings for Vladimir Putin as a political leader. Opinion soundings conducted in the fall of 1999, after his appointment as prime minister, underlined that voters were most obliged to Putin for accepting responsibility for the security of the Russian people. He looked like a leader who was taking charge during an uncertain time and making good on his pledge to provide stability and safety. By the end of 1999, Yeltsin made Putin acting president and heir presumptive, and he enjoyed an extraordinary 72 percent approval rating. The glow remained untarnished until the presidential election of March 26, 2000, which Putin won in one round.²⁸

Many analysts have cited this correlation between support for the war and support for Putin as a sign that his supporters yearn for nothing but order, a mighty state, and a strong-armed leader. Some posit that his election as president proves that Russians place no value on democracy. How, after all, could advocates of democracy cast their ballots for a man who made his career in the KGB, one of the most repressive organizations of the Soviet era? In comparative context, Putin's conquest of power bears some resemblance to the dictatorial Thermidor that has ensued from other revolutions in the modern era.²⁹

Putin may indeed evolve into the Napoleon or Stalin of the Second Russian Revolution, but he will not take that path because his followers are pressing him to do so. His supporters in the presidential election possessed political views in the mainstream of Russian society, which means that they support some core principles of democratic governance.

Table 18 crosses selected issue positions with the votes cast in March 2000 for the winner, Putin; for the runner up, Gennadii Zyuganov, the nominee of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation; and for the third-finishing Grigorii Yavlinskii, the leader of the liberal Yabloko party. On support for the idea of democracy, 68 percent of those who reported in the third wave of our survey that they had voted for Putin gave a positive answer to the question, or several percentage points above the national average. On this score, Putin supporters were noticeably more pro-democratic than Zyuganov supporters though less pro-democratic than those who voted for Yavlinskii. On the most appropriate regime for governing Russia, Putin voters—like the majority of Russians—were

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nostalgic for the defunct Soviet system, but not nearly as much as Zyuganov voters. For Putin voters, the modal response was to favor a reformed Soviet system; for Zyuganov voters, an unreformed Soviet system; and for Yavlinskii voters, the current political system. Putin voters were about one-fourth as likely as Zyuganov voters, although about twice as likely as Yavlinskii voters, to approve of an unreformed Soviet system.³⁰ On Putin's signature issue, Chechnya (table 18), Russians who voted for him were more inclined than Zyuganov or Yavlinskii voters to take an unyielding line on retention of the republic within Russia (positions 1 and 2 on the five-point scale), but the difference was not pronounced, and one Putin voter in four took a neutral stance or could not answer. Putin voters were 9 percentage points more likely than Zyuganov voters, and 12 percentage points more likely than Yavlinskii voters, to oppose Chechen independence.

Table 18. Composition of the Presidential Vote, March 2000, by Position on Selected Political Issues (percentages)

ISSUE POSITION	PUTIN VOTERS	ZYUGANOV VOTERS	YAVLINSKII VOTERS
The idea of democracy ^a			
Support	68	50	80
Oppose	15	31	12
Don't know	17	19	9
Preferred political regime ^b			
Unreformed Soviet system	12	50	7
Reformed Soviet system	38	41	28
Current political system	31	3	30
Western democracy	9	2	22
Other response or Don't know	11	4	13
The problem of Chechnya ^c			
1 (Keep Chechnya at all costs)	42	38	29
2	13	8	14
3	15	15	22
4	5	6	8
5 (Let Chechnya leave Russia)	17	20	17
Don't know	9	13	10

^a Interviews after 2000 presidential election (N = 1,506 weighted cases).

^b Interviews before 1999 parliamentary election (N = 1,506 weighted cases).

^c Interviews after 2000 presidential election (N = 1,506 weighted cases).

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

Assuming that for centuries on end Russian culture was in the main antidemocratic and antiliberal, the 1990s may represent a significant mutation of that culture in only ten short years.³¹ The rapidity of this shift in attitudes makes a striking contrast to the slowness with which the parallel change in political institutions has proceeded. Comparative scholars throughout the 1970s and 1980s portrayed the process of democratization as a top-level affair, a bargain between elites that produced new democratic institutions.³² These democratic institutions then helped to change society in a more democratic and liberal direction. The Russian case brings to mind a quite different dynamic: the people have assimilated democratic values faster than the elite has negotiated democratic institutions.

In cross-national perspective, the distribution of attitudes toward democracy within the Russian population is not so very different from many other countries in transition. Although aggregate satisfaction with democracy in Russia is in fact lower than in most transitional countries, it is comparable to mass opinion in countries such as Zimbabwe that experienced democratic erosion after initial successes in replacing dictatorship with democracy.³³ As in Zimbabwe, bitter disappointment with the practice of democracy has not yet produced a rejection of the ideals of democracy.

This is not to deny that the gap between dissatisfaction with the reality of Russia's government and receptivity to democratic principles is unhealthy for the long-term development of liberal democracy there. Experiences elsewhere suggest that this kind of disparity is fertile soil for the growth of antidemocratic alternatives.

Nor can one have much faith that Russian democrats would rally to defend the ineffective institutions already in place. Scholars have insightfully argued that citizens must venerate and be willing to fight for democracy if it is to be sustained.³⁴ Veneration of democracy and the resolve to defend it are in short supply in Russia. Should Putin eventually attempt to reinstall an overt dictatorship, he may meet with little open resistance, at least initially. Although Russians mobilized on the streets and at the workplace to challenge the authority of the Soviet state a decade ago, there is scant willingness to make sacrifices for democracy in post-Soviet Russia, a decade after the high-water mark of democratization.³⁵ Pro-democratic interest groups and mass movements are weak and disorganized, institutional checks are fragile, and Western leverage is marginal. Surveys conducted by other scholars show that popular resistance is unlikely should an authoritarian coalition reemerge within Russia.³⁶ Of course, we will only know whether society is prepared to defend democratic practices after the fact—once those holding state power have already transgressed the rules of the game. If the state moves to impose authoritarian rule, the current balance of forces favors it, not society.

At the same time, our data suggest that the infliction of a full-blown dictatorship would not be an easy task. Would-be destroyers of democracy in Russia would first have to articulate an alternative model for organizing the polity. Adam Przeworski calls this condition the “organization of counterhegemony: collective projects for an alternative future.”³⁷ Any attempt to put forward such a project would have to reckon with the fact that a majority of Russians continue to agree with Winston Churchill: flawed though it may be, democracy is a superior system to the alternatives.

There still exists the possibility for improvement in the practice of democracy and growth of those that resonate with the ideas of democracy. To the extent that mass support for democratic governance

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jars with the actuality of political life since 1991, the best remedy for the populace's disillusionment with Russian democracy is for the leaders of the country to start behaving more like democrats and less like elected tsars. To the extent that support for democracy varies by age, some improvement can be expected to occur naturally with the biological succession of generations, absent a catastrophe. And to the extent that support for democracy increases with an individual's sense of well-being and personal welfare, well-conceived economic reforms that actually make Russian life better, not worse, can also be expected to nudge along democratization.

The chasm between democratic attitudes and inadequately democratized institutions may also offer a lesson for policy makers in Russia and the West committed to promoting democracy. The old formula for democracy was, "Get the institutions right, and the people will follow." The new formula should be, "Represent the will of the people within the state, and the institutions will follow." For years, democracy assistance programs have provided technical assistance for the crafting of democratic institutions, be it democratic electoral laws, constitutions, courts, or political parties. The approach was top down. If the rules, laws, and procedures were democratic, then society eventually would be remade by these "right" rules into the "right" kind of citizens—democrats. The burden thus was on newly designed institutions to change society. A decade after this strategy was put into effect, it may no longer be applicable. Russian society seems more transformed—more democratic, in its own way—than the political structures governing it. The problem of undemocratic institutions remains. In thinking of new ways to promote humane governance, therefore, program managers would be well advised to consider projects that empower society. The more influence pro-democratic elements in Russia's society have over the development of political institutions, the better the chances that these institutions will become genuinely democratic.

NOTES

1. VTsIOM (All-Russian Center for the Study of Public Opinion), "Ot mnenii—k ponimaniyu," *Obshchestvennoe Mnenie* 2000 (December 2000) p. 68; available at <www.vciom.ru>.
2. Quoted in Robert Daniels, "Russia's Democratic Dictatorship," *Dissent* (Summer 2000), p. 10.
3. Nikolai Biryukov and Victor Sergeev, *Russian Politics in Transition: Institutional Conflict in a Nascent Democracy* (Brookfield, Vt.: Ashgate Publishing, 1997), p. 3.
4. See Seymour Martin Lipset, "The Social Requisites of Democracy Revisited," *American Sociological Review*, vol. 59 (February 1994) pp. 1–22; Samuel Huntington, "After Twenty Years: The Future of the Third Wave," *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 8, no. 4 (October 1997), pp. 3–12; and Russell Bova, "Democracy and Liberty: The Cultural Connection," *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 8, no. 1 (January 1997) pp. 112–26.
5. Strong statements of this general point of view include Robert Tucker, "Sovietology and Russian History," *Post-Soviet Affairs*, vol. 8, no. 3 (1992), pp. 175–96; Nikolai Biryukov and Victor Sergeev, *Russia's Road to Democracy: Parliament, Communism and Traditional Culture* (London: Edward Elgar, 1993); Robert Daniels, "The Revenge of Russian Political Culture," *Dissent*, (Winter 1994) pp. 32–4; Jonathan Steele, *Eternal Russia: Yeltsin, Gorbachev, and the Mirage of Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994); Don Murray, *A Democracy of Despots* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1996); and Tim McDaniel, *The Agony of the Russian Idea* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996). For recent restatements, see Gregory Feifer, "Utopian Nostalgia: Russia's 'New Idea,'" *World Policy Journal*, vol. 16, no. 3 (Fall 1999) pp. 111–18, and Boris Kagarlitskii, "The Traps of 'Westernism' and the Blind Alleys of 'Nativism': The Political Culture of Post-Soviet Pseudodemocracy," *Russian Politics and Law*, vol. 38, no. 3 (May/June 2000) pp. 5–23. Cultural arguments are widespread in the U.S. policy-making community. See, for instance, Chuck Hagel and Jack Reed, "Russia at a Crossroad," *Journal of Commerce*, February 2, 1999; and George F. Will, "The Primacy of Culture," *Newsweek*, January 18, 1999.
6. Quotation from *The Economist*, July 3, 1999, p. 43.
7. Stephen Cohen, *Failed Crusade: America and the Tragedy of Post-Communist Russia* (New York: Norton, 2000), p. 48.
8. The pages of the web site <<http://www.strana.ru>> are filled with essays in this genre.

9. The information reported in this paper come from a three-wave panel survey conducted during the 1999–2000 electoral cycle. A total of 1,919 voters were interviewed between November 13 and December 13, and 1,842 of them were reinterviewed after the Duma election, between December 25 and January 31. A third wave, reinterviewing 1,748 first- and second-wave respondents, was completed in April–May 2000, soon after the March 2000 presidential election. Respondents were selected in a multistage area-probability sample of the voting-age population, with sampling units in thirty-three regions of the Russian Federation. The work was carried out by the Demoscope group at the Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, headed by Polina Kozyreva and Mikhail Kosolapov and funded by the National Science Foundation and the National Council for Eurasian and East European Research. All statistics in the paper are weighted by household size, to correct for the under-representation of persons in small households yielded by the sampling method.
10. On the weakness of Russian liberal institutions, see Michael McFaul, “What Went Wrong in Russia? The Perils of a Protracted Transition,” *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 10, no. 2 (April 1999) pp. 4–18. On Putin’s corrosive role in terms of democratic consolidation, see Michael McFaul, “Russia Under Putin: One Step Forward, Two Steps Backward,” *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 11, no. 3 (July 2000), pp. 19–33; and Michael McFaul and Sarah Mendelson, “Russian Democracy—A U.S. National Security Interest,” *Demokratizatsiya*, vol. 8, no. 3 (Summer 2000), pp. 330–53.
11. The 1996 data are drawn from the study reported in Timothy J. Colton, *Transitional Citizens: Voters and What Influences Them in the New Russia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000).
12. The second and third questions reported here were asked in comparable research in the mid-1990s, and on both criteria the 1999–2000 scores represent greater pessimism about the Russian political system. Russians are much more negative about their political system than the citizens of established Western democracies are. See Colton, *Transitional Citizens*, pp. 46–7.
13. Even in the more successful transitions in East Central Europe, nostalgia runs high. See David Mason, Antal Orkeny, and Svetlana Sidorenko-Stephenson, “Increasingly Fond Memories of a Grim Past,” *Transition*, vol. 21 (March 1997), pp. 15–9.
14. Thirty-eight percent of these respondents favored an unreformed Soviet regime and 41 percent a reformed Soviet regime. Among respondents who moderately agreed that the dissolution of the USSR was a mistake, 27 percent favored an unreformed Soviet system and 46 percent a reformed Soviet system.
15. Larry Diamond, *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).
16. Michael McFaul, *Russia’s Unfinished Revolution: Political Change from Gorbachev to Putin* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2001), ch. 4.
17. Under the first option, Russia would “entirely follow the path of the West;” under the second it would “borrow from the West” but “only that which suits it;” and under the third Russia “should have its own unique path of development and has no need for the experience of the West.” Support for these possibilities was one percent, 50 percent, and 47 percent, respectively, with three percent unable to answer.
18. This is a problem that both citizens and the scholars who analyze them face. Throughout the 1990s, there has been serious debate about whether Russia was a democracy or not. And if it was not a liberal democracy, was/is it an electoral democracy, a semi-democracy, a democratic monarchy, or just your generic autocracy? For widely varying opinions, see, McFaul, *Russia’s Unfinished Revolution*; Peter Reddaway and Dmitri Glinski, *Market Bolshevism: The Tragedy of Russia’s Reforms* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace, 2000); Lilia Shevtsova, *Yeltsin’s Russia: Myths and Realities* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999); and Stephen Cohen, “Russian Studies without Russia,” *Post-Soviet Affairs*, vol. 15, no. 1 (1999), pp. 37–55. On the broader debates about the concept of democracy measures of its practice, see Philippe Schmitter and Terry Karl, “What Democracy Is . . . and Is Not,” *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 2, no. 3 (Summer 1991), pp. 75–88; David Collier and Steve Levitsky, “Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research,” *World Politics*, vol. 49, no. 3 (April 1997), pp. 430–51. Some research projects have attempted to quantify the degree of democracy. See, for instance, the rating system in Adrian Karatnycky, Alexander Motyl, and Charles Graybow, eds., *Nations in Transit, 1998: Civil Society, Democracy, and Markets in East Central Europe and the Newly Independent States* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1999).
19. On these distinctions, see Diamond, *Developing Democracy*.
20. See Stephen White, Richard Rose, and Ian McAllister, *How Russia Votes* (Chatham, N.J.: Chatham House Publishers, 1997), ch. 1.
21. See the reports of dissatisfaction with courts system as tallied in Ronald Pope, “The Rule of Law and Russian Culture—Are They Compatible?” *Demokratizatsiya*, vol. 7, no. 2 (Spring 1999) pp. 204–13.
22. On the relationship between the war and Putin’s rise, see Peter Rutland, “Putin’s Path to Power,” *Post-Soviet Affairs*, vol. 16, no. 4 (October–December 2000), pp. 322–24.
23. In the first wave of our survey, we asked respondents if they agreed that ethnic Russians in the Russian Federation “should have certain advantages over all other nationalities.” Twenty-five percent agreed to some extent while 62 percent disagreed. Support for the proposition was about twice as high among ethnic Russians (27 percent) than among citizens of non-Russian ethnic background (14 percent).
24. See, for example, the VTsIOM poll cited in Rutland, “Putin’s Path to Power,” p. 345. For a fuller discussion of this trade-off mining survey data from earlier periods, see James Gibson, “The Struggle between Order and Liberty in Contemporary Russian Political Culture,” *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 32, no. 2 (July 1997), pp. 271–90.

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25. On this discussion, see T. I. Kutkovets and I. M. Klyamkin, *Russkie Idei* (Moscow: Institut Sotsiologichogo Analiza, 1997).
26. Three percent of respondents in the second wave of our survey thought military rule was a very good idea for Russia, and 13 percent thought it a fairly good idea.; 37 percent said it was a very bad way and 33 percent said it would be a fairly bad way to govern Russia. At the same time, 77 percent expressed full or qualified trust in the army. Most admirers of the Russian military, obviously, want it to stick to its prescribed national-security role.
27. Older respondents were less likely to take a liberal position on these questions in 1999 but were also much more likely to be undecided, a point that is hidden in table 16.
28. Agenstvo Regional'nykh Politcheskikh Issledovani (ARPI), *Regional'nyi Sotsiologicheskii Monitoring*, no. 49 (December 10–12, 1999), p. 39. The survey tapped 3,000 respondents in fifty-two units of the Russian Federation.
29. See Vladimir Mau and Irina Starodubovskaya, *The Challenge of Revolution: Contemporary Russia in Historical Perspective* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 338.
30. On specific democratic practices and liberal norms, such as support for competitive elections and freedom of religion, travel, and expression, Putin voters were consistently at or above the national average in support of these measures, while Zyuganov voters were consistently below average and Yavlinskii voters above average.
31. Of course, we do not really know if Russian attitudes were antidemocratic and antiliberal before, because we do not have comparable survey data from these earlier periods.
32. Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).
33. Michael Bratton and Robert Mattes, "African's Surprising Universalism," *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 12, no. 1 (January 2001), p. 109.
34. Adam Przeworski, "Democracy as an Equilibrium," unpublished manuscript, 1995; and Barry Weingast, "The Political Foundations of Democracy and the Rule of Law," *American Political Science Review*, vol. 91, no. 2 (1997), pp. 251, 261.
35. A corollary to the new conventional wisdom on Russian democracy is that Russians have never organized or mobilized to produce any political outcome. Instead, so the story goes, change has always come from above because Russians are a passive people. For instance, Michael Wines writes, "The Soviet Union collapsed in 1991 mostly of its own weight, not out of any collective national action. Mr. Yeltsin enjoyed popular support at the time, but he was a catalyst of change, not the agent." See "In the Cradle of Revolution, You Hear Mostly Snore," *New York Times*, October 11, 1998, section four, p. 5. For a different interpretation of mass mobilization in the late 1980s and early 1990s, see Yitzhak Brudny, "The Dynamics of 'Democratic Russia,' 1990–1993," *Post-Soviet Affairs*, vol. 9, no. 2 (April–June, 1993), p. 143; M. Steven Fish, *Democracy from Scratch* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993); Geoffrey Hosking, *The Awakening of the Soviet Union* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991); Steven Crowley, *Hot Coal, Cold Steel*, (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1997); Peter Rutland, "Labor Unrest and Movements in 1989 and 1990," *Soviet Economy*, vol. 6, no. 3 (1990), pp. 345–84; McFaul, *Russia's Unfinished Revolution*; and Michael McFaul and Sergei Markov, *The Troubled Birth of Russian Democracy: Political Parties, Programs, and Profiles* (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1993). Further, the photograph in the *Troubled Birth of Russian Democracy* of Manezh Square occupied by hundreds of thousands of Democratic Russia supporters speaks louder about this period of mobilization than the words in these books.
36. James Gibson, "A Mile Wide but an Inch Deep? The Structure of Democratic Commitments in the Former USSR," *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 40, no. 2 (May 1996), pp. 396–420. The Polish experience in 1981 is instructive. Although Solidarity claimed ten million members—one-quarter of the population at the time—the Polish military quelled all rebellion in a matter of weeks after declaring martial law. It did so while enjoying little popular legitimacy.
37. Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1991) pp. 54–5.

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