

and methodological approach. It will be relevant not only to students of the welfare state but to all those with an interest in policy-making and in the difficult choices governments have to make. There is no doubt the book will serve as source of inspiration for future scholarship.

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Richard Rose, William Mishler and Neil Munro: *Popular Support for an Undemocratic Regime: The Changing Views of Russians*
Cambridge 2011: Cambridge University Press, 206 pp.

When authoritarian communist regimes collapsed in the late 1980s, social scientists broadly assumed that they would 'transition' to democracy. With the passing of more than two decades, we know that most post-Soviet regimes transitioned instead to some form of electoral-authoritarianism.

Richard Rose and his co-authors begin their study with the insistence that we should not judge this transition—at least in Russia—as stalled or failing, because that is not how most Russians see it. Indeed, the main goal of their book is to explain why popular support for Russia's regime grew as democracy declined. Relying on National Russian Barometer (NRB) surveys, they show that a popular consensus in support of the regime had developed by 2003 and peaked in 2008, coincident with the rise and consolidation of power or Putin and United Russia, the hegemonic 'party of power.' In sum, there was an 'upward trend in popular support for the regime /as it became/ more undemocratic' (p. 77).

In seeking to explain this pattern of support, the authors turn to classic social science theory that identifies four categories of determinants: sociological, defined as socialisation or learning; political, defined as individuals' evaluation of the performance of political institutions; economic conditions, both household and national; and time, or how long the regime has persisted. These explanations are tested with a rich source of survey evidence: eighteen years of reports from the NRB, from 1992 to 2009, each surveying more than 34 000 Russian respondents with a similar set of questions. The surveys follow systematically the evolving political attitudes of Russians, from the inception of the post-communist regime almost to the present. They constitute an exceptionally consistent and rich source of evidence for each of the four explanations, allowing for rigorous statistical testing and comparison.

The book's findings are always interesting and sometimes surprising. The evidence shows, for example, that a majority of Russians ideally favoured a democratic regime throughout these years, i.e. popular support for democratic ideals in principle does not decline even as support for Russia's increasingly authoritarian regime grows. The authors find little role for so-

cialisation in explaining growing support; they do not endorse the common claim that an 'authoritarian culture' or preference for a 'strong leader' explains these political trends. The performance of political institutions matters in explaining support. The economy matters more—Russians' evaluation of the national economic system (rather than household or 'pocketbook' variables) has a very strong effect on support for the regime.

Perhaps most interestingly, the authors find that the passage of time, the simple survival or persistence of a set of political institutions, is a key factor explaining support. With time, people gradually adapt to new institutions. According to the authors, 'The passage of time has cumulatively trumped the impact of the economy.' (p. 119) People become accustomed, inert, resigned to the political regime their elites supply; most cease to imagine realistic alternatives. Meanwhile, positive economic trends compensate for the disillusionment of the more idealistic. The authors' analysis is sophisticated both methodologically and conceptually. They conceptualise support as the outcome of a set of countervailing trends, some favourable, others unfavourable, and pay systematic attention to how each of the dimensions changes across different demographic groups. By 2008, support for Russia's electoral-authoritarian regime has shown such a consistent popular majority that the authors see it as consolidated.

Of course, they recognise that any regime is open to challenge by various events, in particular leadership transition and economic crisis. Fortuitously for their analysis, the year 2008 brought both to Russia, and the study devotes a chapter to the effects of each. The data show that the 2008 economic crisis did lower support for the regime, but not dramatically. Most households were insulated from the shock, some of the blame was shifted abroad by the regime, and the base of support already es-

tablished by time and performance largely held. (The more complicated effects of the political transition are discussed below.)

At least for a political scientist, the most intriguing aspect of this study involves Russians' political values and attitudes towards governing institutions and elections. Here there seems to be a number of contradictions. As noted, the study finds that most Russians continue to value democracy as an ideal. Most also continue to judge themselves as relatively free, yet they give increasing support to a leadership that progressively hollows out democratic elements of the regime. Why? The authors' answer, explicated above, points to economic performance and time or regime persistence as the major explanations. Russians are apparently subordinating their value preferences because the current regime is performing well and they see no alternative. There are other paradoxes. Surveyed Russians deeply and increasingly distrust both political parties and the Duma, but three-fifths disapprove of either suspending parliament or getting rid of parties. Further, while most Western observers find Russian elections to fail the standard 'free and fair' criteria, a majority of Russians find recent elections to be fair. Here the authors argue that Russians overall judge elections' fairness more on the basis of substance or outcome than of process, and most support the substantive outcomes. The majority has favoured some checks and balances between the President and the Duma. At the same time, they have provided growing support for a super-president. Of course, the Russian public holds no monopoly on normatively inconsistent political attitudes, which are commonly found in public opinion surveys.

The Soviet past often looms in the background of the book's analysis. For example, we are told that Russians judge their freedom, the fairness of elections, etc., against the experience of a nearly-totalitarian Soviet past. This explanation makes a

great deal of sense. Still, it is also arguable that Russians' experience with Western-promoted democracy during the 1990s—including the scores of ephemeral and ineffective political parties, a President and Duma that bickered constantly as the economy collapsed and the Russian Federation fragmented, corrupt privatisation and oligarchic penetration of the state—in fact discredited democracy as a feasible system of government for Russia. It may be the experience of more open politics in the early-mid 1990s, at least as much as the communist past, that informs Russians' later judgments about their political institutions.

The book also has some limitations. This reader wishes that the authors had engaged more directly and substantively with related literature on Russian politics and electoral-authoritarian regimes. This literature is not ignored, much of it is cited, and some is integrated into the analysis. However, there is unaddressed scholarship that speaks directly to the question of support for increasing authoritarianism in Russia. Stephen Fish's argument, in *Democracy Derailed in Russia*, points to the extreme corruption of 1990s Russia as a major factor that undermined support for democracy, at both societal and elite levels. Rose et al. do not grapple with this argument. They pay relatively little attention to corruption, pointing out that Transparency International's ratings of Russia have remained largely stable, and abysmally low, throughout the period of their study, so presumably cannot explain variations in popular support for the regime. Like Fish's, studies on electoral support for authoritarian elites in Latin America also point to political disorder and corruption as major explanatory factors, and it seems likely that these factors have played a large role in Russia as well.

It would be entirely unfair to expect any book to anticipate future events, but it is interesting to consider the protests fol-

lowing the December 2011 Duma elections and recent Presidential elections in light of the authors' analysis. The events generally fit the book's arguments. First, Rose et al. anticipate the prospect of some destabilisation resulting from leadership transition and economic pressures. Second, the demonstrations show that, while there is dissatisfaction with electoral manipulation and political corruption in Russian society, active protest remains limited. Most important, the argument that the majority of Russians support the regime is borne out by the legitimate electoral victory of Putin in December 2011 and the quiescence in most of Russian society as demonstrators and civil society have been further restricted. At the same time, Russia's government is clearly ready to raise the costs of protest by threatening repressive measures even in face of modest challenges. It does not seem to trust the solidity of its popular support.

The greatest strength of this book is that the authors mine such a large and strong set of empirical data. There is no speculation here; every claim is grounded in the best, most comprehensive and politically independent set of survey data we have about the attitudes of ordinary Russians, and what factors influence and explain these attitudes. It requires the reader to recognise that many Russians' criteria for governance differ from those of Freedom House and the OECD. This is so not because Russians are backward authoritarians, but because they are judging what works and what is possible politically on the basis of their experiences. This is empirical social science at its best.

In conclusion, this book speaks to at least two major scholarly audiences. For Russia specialists, it presents an authoritative exposition and explanation of the political views of ordinary Russians, which differ from those of the vocal urban elite to which Westerners are overexposed. For a broad audience of social scientists, this

book matters because partially authoritarian regimes are more common in the contemporary world than liberal democracies. According to the multi-continental World Values Survey, while there is 'overwhelming support for democracy as a good way of governing', in fact both democratic and undemocratic regimes secure similar levels of support (pp. 22, 26). Better understanding the sources of popular support and durability of undemocratic regimes is, therefore, critically important.

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Leonardo Morlino: *Changes for Democracy: Actors, Structures, Processes*
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As James Mahoney has argued, although huge and diverse, the comparative literature on democratisation is one of few bodies of research that can claim to have made sustained, cumulative advances in knowledge. Nevertheless, Leonardo Morlino argues that despite such progress, democratisation studies have been undermined by a growing disjuncture between high-level theories of institutional change and empirical research. Moreover, quantitative research preoccupied with operationalisation tends to produce simplistic variable-driven theories, while regionally oriented approaches to democratisation—beginning with the 'transition' approach developed by O'Donnell—offers 'questions but not theoretical results' (p. 11).

To address this 'retreat from theory or a fear of developing a theory' (p. 17), in *Changes for Democracy* Morlino undertakes the tasks of 'integrating, correcting and developing the results of previous analysis' (p. 109). The book, which combines literature review, empirical analysis and the ar-

guments about conceptualisation and research directions, is divided into three parts, which deal with: (1) the definition of democracy as a regime; (2) phases and processes of democratisation and their domestic and external anchors; and (3) the question of deepening democracy and promoting 'democratic quality'.

Although long-discarded functionalist theories of democracy merit revisiting, researchers should, Morlino argues, avoid re-launching the quest for the 'philosopher's stone' of simple, universal theory. Rather, he suggests, there should be a step-by-step strategy of identifying distinct mechanisms and processes—'key salient and recurring sub-processes, simpler theoretical frameworks' (p. 21)—across different phases and historical episodes of democratisation. Morlino argues, quite conventionally, that an essentially procedural minimum definition of democracy is needed to allow empirical judgements to be made and the classic Dahlian procedural conceptualisation of this democratic minimum is still most coherent. He notes, however, that even with such a minimum, the boundary between the procedural and the substantive is not clear cut: meaningful civic and political pluralism requires a minimum of social equality and no democracy can endure even ephemerally without some substantive compromise between key social forces. For similar reasons, he suggests, the uncertainty of outcomes that democracy is conventionally said to institutionalise should be regarded as bounded: democratic regimes should be better viewed as producing 'most indeterminacy' of outcome. Democratic minima also logically imply democratic maxima. While 'maximum democracy' may not be empirically discoverable even in Scandinavia or Northern Europe, there is, nevertheless, a direct conceptual continuum between identifying minimum democracy and research on the quality of long-established well-functioning democracies.