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978-0-521-69241-0 - *Russia Transformed: Developing Popular Support for a New Regime*  
Richard Rose, William Mishler, and Neil Munro

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## Russia transformed

Since the fall of communism, Russia has undergone a treble transformation of its political, social, and economic system. The government is an autocracy in which the Kremlin manages elections and administers the law to suit its own ends. It does not provide the democracy that most citizens desire. Given a contradiction between what Russians want and what they get, do they support their government and, if so, why? Using the New Russia Barometer – a unique set of public opinion surveys from 1992 to 2005 – this book shows that it is the passage of time that has been most important in developing support for the new regime. Although there remains great dissatisfaction with the regime's corruption, it has become accepted as a lesser evil to alternatives. The government appears stable today, but will be challenged by constitutional term limits forcing President Putin to leave office in 2008.

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Russia has reached its limit for political and socioeconomic upheavals, cataclysms, and radical reforms.

Vladimir Putin, millennium address, 2000

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*Developing popular support for a new regime*

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*Centre for the Study of Public Policy, University of Aberdeen*



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DEDICATED TO

The 28,155 people who took the time  
to tell us what they made of Russia's transformation

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## Acknowledgments

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A lot has happened since Mikhail Gorbachev started what was intended to be a renewal of the Soviet system and Boris Yeltsin led a campaign to disrupt it. The launch of the Russian Federation at the beginning of 1992 was a journey into the unknown. Experience since has made the consequences of this transformation clear to ordinary Russians as well as to political elites.

A lot was written about the Russian regime while it was new, not least by the present authors. However, the regime is no longer new. The time that has passed since its launch is now longer than the time required for post-Franco Spain to qualify as a democratic member of the European Union. It is also longer than the time between the Weimar Republic introducing democratic elections to Germany and its replacement by Hitler's Third Reich. The Russian Federation has not gone to either of these extremes, yet it has been transformed.

While the launch of a regime is an event, the development of popular support is a process that takes time to unfold. The purpose of this book is to chart the extent to which a no-longer-new regime can claim the positive support of its citizens or at least the resigned acceptance of those who regard it as a fact of political life that will not go away. The book asks: how has support developed? Is it due to economic success, which can be fickle; to political values, which need not be democratic; or to the passage of time, which is irreversible? The evidence used to answer these questions comes from a unique database, fourteen New Russia Barometer surveys that began in January 1992, the first month of the new regime; the most recent was conducted in January 2005.

In conducting the New Russia Barometer surveys, the authors have accumulated many debts. Tens of thousands of Russians have answered questions about how they have coped with transformation and what they think of the regime that has resulted from it. A special debt is owed to the staff of the Levada Center (formerly VCIOM, the All-Russian Center for Public Opinion), which has conducted the fieldwork for New Russia Barometer surveys with great professionalism, despite the difficulties

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created by the collapse of the Soviet Union and later by pressure from officials who tried unsuccessfully to undermine their independence. In an era of academic specialization, senior Russian scholars have been open to new approaches from the field of comparative politics.

The preparation of this book has been funded by a grant from the British Economic and Social Research Council (RES-000-23-0193) to study diverging paths of post-Communist regimes. The New Russia Barometer has also benefited from being part of the New Europe Barometer program of research, which since 1991 has conducted more than 100 surveys of mass response to transformation in sixteen post-Communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union (see [www.abdn.ac.uk/cspp](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/cspp)). The Paul Lazarsfeld Society, Vienna, under the leadership of Dr. Heinz Kienzl, was the leading partner in the development of this program. Comparative data have been especially valuable in identifying under what circumstances and to what extent Russians have differed from people challenged by transformation from the Baltic to the Black Sea and west as well as east of Vienna.

Earlier New Russia and New Europe Barometer surveys have been supported by grants from scientific, governmental, and private foundations in Austria, Germany, Hungary, Sweden, and the United States as well as Britain; from the epidemiological research program of Sir Michael Marmot at the University College London Medical School; and from intergovernmental agencies including the World Bank, the European Commission, and UN agencies. At no point has any intergovernmental organization had any claim to influence the design or content of Barometer questionnaires and reports. That has remained the responsibility of the senior author of this book.

Portions of this book have been presented in academic seminars and public policy gatherings in Britain, the United States, Austria, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, and Taiwan, and published as “Resigned Acceptance of an Incomplete Democracy: Russia’s Political Equilibrium,” in *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 20, 3, 2004, 195–218. Anton Oleinik of Memorial University of Newfoundland made particularly cogent and useful remarks on an early draft of this manuscript, as did two anonymous reviewers of Cambridge University Press. The copyeditor, Karen Anderson Howes, did a splendid job of checking English-language expressions as well as Russian, and did so with great speed and clarity.