Introduction. The reality of Russia

Elections are about what people want; government is what people get. In the Soviet era, there were elections without choice. The Communist Party told people who to vote for and election results were literally too good to be true. In the past decade Russians have voted in five free elections, and in the year 2000 Vladimir Putin won a much bigger and much less controversial election victory than did George W. Bush. Elections to the Duma, the chief house of Parliament, return more than half a dozen different parties and Duma members are more effective in obstructing executive initiatives than are MPs in the British House of Commons.

Yet something is missing in how Russia is ruled. From the prescriptive view of democratic theory, what is needed is more democracy. But from the point of view of Russians, what the country lacks is order. The order taken for granted in a democratic modern state cannot be taken for granted in Russia, because it is not a modern state. The legacy of Russia's past is that of despotism and totalitarianism. The Federation established by Boris Yeltsin has rejected that tradition and institutionalized free elections, but the means used have not established a Western system of government.

What is normal in the West is not *normalno* in Russian politics. The great challenge facing Vladimir Putin is not how to win re-election; it is how to bring order to Russia. Ordinary people experience disorder when their savings suddenly become worthless because of inflation, or when they receive excuses rather than wages after a month's work. The disorder of everyday life is implicit in mortality statistics that show a big rise in death from avoidable causes, such as drunkenness, accidents and murder. Disorder is evident in the violence that erupts when the *mafiya* enforces its code, and in the corruption producing enormous wealth for 'kleptocrats' who have used political connections to secure privileges worth billions of dollars.

The goal that Vladimir Putin has repeatedly proclaimed is profoundly ambiguous: to achieve 'the dictatorship of law'. Emphasis can be given to the term dictatorship, for which there is ample precedent in Russian

history, or to government according to the law, for which Russian precedents are few and discouraging. The challenge to Vladimir Putin is whether he will be able to get Russia out of the trap of disorder without springing the trap of dictatorship, or whether life will continue much as before, with government on the basis of elections without order.

The meaning of order

Order is about things being in their expected place, so that people can go about their daily lives without unexpected or unpleasant surprises. In classical times Greeks categorized architectural columns into different orders, and set out rules for their use and harmonious relations. The medieval Catholic Church had many different orders, each distinctive yet integrated in a hierarchy leading up to the pope. In the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, philosophers believed in a natural order of things, a term broad enough to embrace the movement of the solar system and political order. Today, traffic rules about driving on the right or the left are examples of the state imposing order. The rules differ from country to country, but each is accepted without thinking by residents as part of the necessary order of everyday life.

Ordinary people value order because it provides a secure framework for everyday life. Personal property is safe, or if it is stolen the police will pursue the thieves rather than be in league with them. Profitmaking firms and people in work will pay taxes, and taxpayers will receive the benefits to which they are entitled. Public order does not make everyone rich or happy or equal. It provides a framework within which individuals and organizations can conduct their daily lives, rectify what is wrong and invest efforts in hopes of a better future.

Order is the prime responsibility of the state. Government contributes to order by the predictable provision of routine services. Electricity is continuously available rather than shutting off for hours at a time, and sewers dispose of waste rather than overflowing. The state lets people get on with their lives free of the interference that characterizes a totalitarian regime. In the marketplace, the economic dictum – you get what you pay for – is respected, as the goods one buys are weighed accurately. Wage-earners are paid on time rather than told to wait and see if they will be paid later. The German term *Ordnungspolitik* emphasizes the need for the state to guarantee the legal framework of the economy – for example, property rights, the enforcement of contracts and stable currency values – and to police economic activity to avoid anti-social outcomes. However, the state is a source of disorder if governors act arbitrarily or corruptly rather than according to the rule of law. If government is so weak that people do not pay taxes and organizations appropriate public property for

Table Int.1 *What Russians mean by order*

Q. What in your opinion does the word 'order' mean? (More than one reply accepted.)

	%
Predictability (mean mentions per person: 1.84)	
Political and economic stability of the country	45
Strict observance of the laws	35
Stopping the plundering and looting of the country	33
An end to power struggles, collapse of the country	32
Strict discipline	22
Possibility for all to get their rights	17
Socio-economic conditions (mean mentions: 0.26)	
Social protection of the poor	26
Tough enforcement (mean mentions: 0.17)	
Bringing in the army, security services to fight crime	13
Limiting democratic rights and freedoms	3
Slogan used on the path to dictatorship	1
Other	1
Don't know	3

Source: VTsIOM. Nationwide survey, 30 December 1999–4 January 2000. Number of respondents, 1,600.

private use, then there is no state, at least no state in the modern sense of that word.

There is a great demand for order in Russia. The meaning that ordinary Russians give to the word order (*poryadok*) emphasizes the predictability that citizens of modern states take for granted. Predictability requires that governors as well as the governed obey the rule of law, that governors do not bend or break rules in order to benefit their friends, steal state assets for private benefit or undermine the institutions of the state. In the week in which Vladimir Putin replaced Boris Yeltsin in the Kremlin, a VTsIOM (the Russian Centre for Public Opinion Research) survey of public opinion asked Russians what order meant to them. The replies were numerous and almost always positive (tab. Int.1). The most frequent definitions of order refer to political stability – strict observance of the laws; an end to plundering and looting of the country by governors; and an end to personal power struggles threatening the regime's collapse. A minority give order a social definition, such as the state protecting the poor from destitution.

The order that Russians want is not the repression associated with cries for law and order in Anglo-American societies. Russians have experienced that authority and they know it involves disorder. Only one in six associates

order with actions contrary to democratic governance, such as using the army to fight crime or having a dictator limit rights and freedoms. However, Russians lack the confidence of Western liberals in the law as principally concerned with guaranteeing individual rights. When the third New Russia Barometer survey asked in 1994 whether Russians value order or democracy more, the replies showed that a big majority gave priority to order. The collapse of the Communist party-state has given Russians far more freedom from the state than ever before, but it has not brought about order. Order is the Russian priority because it is today in short supply.

Order does not require a democratic state, and starting with the Greeks many political theorists have portrayed democracy as encouraging disorder or even anarchy. Order requires a government that itself obeys the rule of law. Government contributes to disorder when it engages in arbitrary and lawless actions. In Russia the state has been doing this since tsarist times – and in response ordinary Russians have sought to avoid the state. The so-called order of Soviet times was not based on the rule of law, but on the unconstrained and overwhelming power of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. As a critical citizen recalled, 'People now say that in the past we had order. Because we were afraid ... That's not order' (quoted in Carnaghan, 2001a: 17–18).

The disorderly transformation of the Soviet Union into the Russian Federation has maintained many disorderly practices that were part of the Soviet legacy – and added new ones. As the chief economist of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development notes about doing business in Russia, 'The rule of law is the exception rather than the rule. Real negotiations start after a contract is signed' (Buiter, 2000: 25). One strategy for making authority effective is to mobilize institutions of law enforcement. In Russia today there are at least fourteen different agencies concerned with law enforcement, armed with extraordinary legal powers, guns and discretion in the way they go about their activities. However, the order of the modern state is not based on force or the threat of force, but on voluntary compliance with laws by both governors and governed.

A partly transformed society

In a society in transformation, the first few years are the most uncertain, for everything – the system of government, the value of money and even the boundaries of the state – is up for grabs. It is now commonplace to say that it will take a generation to transform Russia from what it was in the Soviet era to something new, whether the ideal is drawn from Russian or European traditions or a mixture of elements from both and novel features too. In the half-generation since the inauguration of the

Russian Federation, society has been partly transformed. For some years optimists have been proclaiming that Russia is almost there, whatever that destination is. Pessimists proclaim that Russia is going backwards. A third alternative is that governmental and popular responses to shocks are producing a society different from what went before and also different from what is recognizable in Western societies.

Whereas the challenges that politicians voice are usually rhetorical, the challenge of completing the transformation of Russia is palpable in every Russian household. That is why this book's subtitle emphasizes Russia's challenge *to* Vladimir Putin. We set out challenges as they appear to the less visible half of the Russian political system, the 140 million Russians living outside the Moscow Ring Roads, within which political elites debate what is to be done. While elites propose how Russia is governed, ordinary citizens can now dispose of governors they dislike.

Plan of the book

The tradition of Russian government is both undemocratic and disorderly. The power of the Kremlin appeared, in the ambiguous Russian word used to describe Tsar Ivan IV (*grozny*), as both awesome and terrible, because it was exercised arbitrarily. Under Joseph Stalin the Communist Party of the Soviet Union created a radically different yet equally lawless regime, a totalitarian state using whatever means necessary to assert its domination. After Stalin's death and the partial repudiation of his errors at the 20th Communist Party Congress in 1956, the grip of the party-state became less tight. While post-totalitarian liberalization was welcome, the subsequent stagnation of the regime did not promote the rule of law. The political forces that Boris Yeltsin mobilized to bring down the Soviet state created a vacuum. The Constitution of the Russian Federation was adopted in December 1993 while political smoke was clearing from a shoot-out between presidential and parliamentary forces.

Chapter 1 is an exercise in history backwards. It does not try to summarize Russian history. Its aim is to chart the process that created a disorderly regime of politicians, Soviet-style bureaucrats and plutocrats that is the legacy challenging Vladimir Putin. The presentation is succinct in order to highlight what is relevant to Russian government today. While this inevitably leaves out much that was important in the past, it does not ignore what happened before Vladimir Putin assumed office at the beginning of the year 2000.

Contemporary political science assumes that the worldwide transformation of political regimes is about creating a third wave of democracies

(Huntington, 1991). But to describe the Russian state as a new democracy is to prejudge three critical questions: what is a modern state? What is democracy? Can the one exist without the other? Chapter 2 answers these questions. A modern state is above all a *Rechtsstaat*, that is, a state governed by the rule of law. A modern state need not be a democratic state, as the history of Prussia demonstrates. Even today many states are not modern, as is illustrated by regimes from Albania to Zimbabwe. In a democratic state the government of the day is accountable to its citizens through free elections. While a modern state and free elections are often found together, it is a mistake to assume that the one necessarily guarantees the other.

In many Western countries the modernization of the state and the introduction of democratic elections occurred so long ago that the distinctive contribution that each makes to political rule is today forgotten. In countries such as Britain and Sweden, the establishment of the basic institutions of the modern state – the rule of law, civil society and the accountability of government to parliament – came a century before free elections with universal suffrage. Chapter 2 explains why theories based on the history of the first modern and democratic states are inappropriate to describe the problems confronting Russia. Lenin and Stalin rejected the modern state as a bourgeois institution and created instead an anti-modern state. In the absence of anything like a modern state, the Russian Federation was condemned to begin democratization backwards. Since then, elections confirm that in one respect Russia is democratic, but the lawless practices of the state's leaders show that it is not yet a modern state.

In the Soviet era public opinion was whatever party officials allowed to be said in public. The dissociation between the party-state's view of what people ought to think and what people actually thought led to the development of a split political personality, what Soviet novelist Vladimir Dudintsev described as living like two persons in one body (quoted in White, 1979: 111), the public person saying and doing what the state commanded, while the hidden person had different thoughts in the privacy of the home and among a very small circle of trusted friends. After becoming general secretary of the Communist Party in 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev promoted glasnost, open public debate, an innovation inconsistent with totalitarian and post-totalitarian Soviet practices.

Competitive elections now give Russians the chance to express themselves in ways that influence who governs. However, a ballot is a blunt instrument; it does not show whether a vote is cast because of agreement with a candidate or party's policies or because it is seen as the lesser evil. The claims of politicians to know what all Russians think should not be taken at their face value. Yet this sometimes happens. For example,

after the 1993 Russian Duma election, Michel Camdessus, managing director of the International Monetary Fund, reported that President Yeltsin's reforms were widely supported in Russia. The evidence the IMF director cited consisted of assurances from the president himself; from selected members of the Duma; and from the patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Today, if you want to know what Russians think it is not necessary to rely on the words of commissars or of Kremlinologists who treat ordinary Russians as if they were putty in the hands of their leaders. We can rely on familiar social science methods, interviewing a representative nationwide sample of Russians. Ordinary Russians are able and willing to express opinions on all matter of things, especially if one asks questions that they relate to their own experiences. A unique feature of this book is that it draws on a decade of New Russia Barometer (NRB) surveys of the Centre for the Study of Public Policy at the University of Strathclyde. From its inception, the New Russia Barometer has sought to examine government from the 'underall' perspective of the Russian people through representative sample surveys in cities from Murmansk to Vladivostok, and in villages that collectively have more than four times the population of Moscow. Field work has been conducted by VTsIOM, founded by Tatyana Zaslavskaya and Yury Levada when glasnost made it both possible and necessary to take the views of ordinary Russians into account. Chapter 3 reports how Russians evaluated the old Soviet regime; how people coped with the challenges of transformation; and how they evaluated the new regime and undemocratic alternatives prior to Vladimir Putin becoming president.

Founding elections are certain to be different from the tenth or twentieth election held in an established democratic modern state. In the Communist party-state there were no independent institutions of civil society nor was there much organized dissent, as there had been in Poland or Czechoslovakia. When the first elections were held in the Russian Federation, political elites were challenged to supply parties from which voters could choose. An earlier book analysed the first free elections (White, Rose and McAllister, 1997). Chapter 4 examines the problems facing President Yeltsin and his entourage when Yeltsin's period of office approached its end and there was no party on which they could rely to nominate a successor to protect their fruits of office. The emergence of Vladimir Putin from political obscurity was the outcome of an increasingly desperate search for a friendly successor.

Political parties are necessary if voters are to hold their elected representatives accountable. Russian elections offer voters a much greater scope for choice than elections in the Anglo-American world. In December 1999, the proportional representation ballot offered 26 different parties,

and in the 225 single-member districts the average voter had a choice of ten candidates. Both ballots explicitly offered electors the opportunity to vote against all candidates. Representatives elected to the Duma under one party label or as independents often join another party as soon as they take the oath of office. The eleven presidential candidates in 2000 were nominated by a variety of parties or none. Like Boris Yeltsin, Vladimir Putin was elected as an independent.

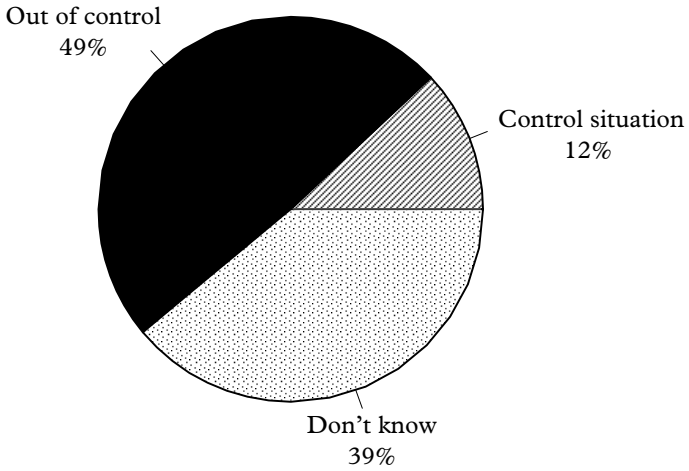
The outcome of an election depends on the choices that political elites supply as well as on how people vote. Each type of ballot offers incentives for political elites to offer voters different sets of choices. The result is that, instead of having a party system, Russia has four systems of parties. This makes it very difficult for voters to know which party or parties, if any, to hold accountable for the way Russia is governed. In addition, the appearance and disappearance of parties from one election to the next has created a floating system of parties. Citizens cannot vote to turn the rascals out when it is unclear which rascals are governing, and when some rascals refuse to face judgment at the ballot box. Chapters 5 and 6 show how Russia's political elites behaved in the competition for seats at the 1999 Duma election. Chapter 7 analyses how voters responded to the choices offered them. Two parties won votes with clear-cut appeals for and against transformation, the Communist Party and the Union of Right Forces. However, the majority of votes were cast for parties with a fuzzy-focus appeal to voters with contrasting political views or none.

Whereas Boris Yeltsin gained power by offering a radical alternative to a Communist regime, Vladimir Putin gained the presidency in much more ambiguous circumstances. Initially, he was the candidate supplied by the Yeltsin Family to protect its interests. However, his election as president owed much to being free of the unpopularity of President Yeltsin, because he was a new arrival on the political scene. The outbreak of the second Chechen War immediately after his appointment as prime minister in August 1999 propelled Putin into the public eye. The resignation of Boris Yeltsin at the end of the year gave a big boost to Putin's campaign for the presidency, since it made him the acting president. As chapter 8 shows, he ran an election campaign in which there was more emphasis on looking presidential than on policies. Observers likened the campaign to a coronation rather than a contest. Putin won the first-round presidential ballot with an absolute majority of the popular vote; the result appeared to be a landslide because his many opponents divided 47 per cent of the vote.

If Russia is to become a complete democracy, it must have order as well as elected officeholders – and that requires a different state from the one that Boris Yeltsin was able to establish. The legacy left to Vladimir Putin was a state that did not adhere to the rule of law. At times it can exercise arbitrary power with a great show of force, as the use of force to

Figure Int.1 COUNTRY OUT OF CONTROL.

Q. Do you think that Russia's leaders control the situation in the country or that the situation is out of control?



Source: New Russia Barometer VII. Nationwide survey, 6 March–13 April 1998. Number of respondents, 1,904.

suppress dissent in Chechnya shows. But the intermittent use of heavy force is not proof of effectiveness in all its activities. Only one in eight Russians thinks that Russia's leaders have the political situation under control (fig. Int.1). People divide into two large groups: those who think the situation is out of control, and those who do not know whether the government has things under control.

Order is best produced by a state that is both lawful and effective. By experience and temperament, Vladimir Putin is more of a bureaucrat than a personalistic leader in the manner of Boris Yeltsin. He is seeking to institutionalize a pyramid of power leading up to the Kremlin. Yet how much can one person do to change the legacy of generations of rule by a Communist party-state and a decade of Boris Yeltsin's efforts to repudiate it? Chapter 9 shows that Vladimir Putin has been outstandingly successful in his first two years in office in maintaining the popularity necessary to win re-election. It also shows he has used his position to strengthen the Kremlin's control of central agencies of government and regain influence on often wayward regional governments and the Duma. Events abroad have been favourable too, for high oil prices in world markets have benefited government tax revenues and produced hard currency earnings. Putin's cooperation with the United States following the terrorist attack of 11 September 2001 has improved Russia's standing abroad.

A decade after the foundation of the Russian Federation the probability that next year will be similar to this year is greater than that next year will see a return to the upheavals of the beginning of the 1990s. In his millennium address to the Russian people, Vladimir Putin (2000: 212) endorsed consolidation rather than radical change:

> Russia has reached its limit for political and socio-economic upheavals, cataclysms, and radical reforms. Only fanatics or political forces which are absolutely apathetic and indifferent to Russia and its people can make calls for a new revolution. Be it under communist, national-patriotic or radical-liberal slogans, our country and our people will not withstand a new radical break-up. The nation's patience and its ability to survive as well as its capacity to work constructively have reached the limit.

The prospect of consolidation raises the question: what sort of government is being consolidated? In chapter 10 we report what Russians think about the system of government over which Vladimir Putin now presides. The answers show Russia does not have a modern state, but an untrustworthy and unaccountable regime in which corruption is taken for granted. Free, competitive elections have been institutionalized, but in the absence of a modern state Russia remains a long way from the ideal of a regime that is both orderly and democratic.

Approaches to Russia

The conventional approach to Russia has been through the study of language, literature and history. Studies of Muscovite folkways emphasized continuity between the times of the tsars and the present (e.g. Keenan, 1986). The logic of historical determinism has been given new life by political science studies of democratization and political culture. Robert Dahl (1971: 47) has argued that evolution is the surest route to establishing democracy and that any attempt to move from a regime suppressing competition, as the Soviet Union did, to a democratic system will be 'a slow process, measured in generations'. Robert Putnam (1993: 183ff.) has theorized that the attitudes and behaviour that make democracy work take centuries to develop – and this implies that the obstacles to democratization may take a century or more to overcome.

The collapse of the Communist party-state and of the Soviet Union shows that great changes can occur with great speed. The fact that changes occurred almost simultaneously in many Communist states places into doubt whether the context of Russian history is as distinctive as Russian specialists often assume. Two Latin American scholars have sought to apply to Russia conclusions from their studies, arguing that