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ABSTRACT: This is a summary of the book *Popular Support of an Un-Democratic Regime* by Richard Rose, William Mishler and Neil Munro using USAID guidelines.

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Popular Support for an Undemocratic Regime: The Changing Views of Russians
(2012, Cambridge)

By Richard Rose, William Mishler and Neil Munro

In Popular Support for an Undemocratic Regime: The Changing Views of Russians (2012, Cambridge), the authors examine eighteen years of New Russia Barometer survey data and declare that a state's legitimacy does not necessarily equate to its democratic performance. Russia under Vladimir Putin has, in fact, garnered more citizen support over time, even as it has restricted civic freedoms and political choice.

- A state's durability depends on its ability to earn support *or even just* compliance, or a mixture of the two since some coercion is involved in all societies. Citizen backing may depend on a number of instrumental, materialist, or clientalist explanations. Worldwide, regimes can be both democratic and undemocratic while earning citizen backing, with examples of partly free and unfree states in Tanzania, Taiwan, Vietnam and Saudi Arabia.
- Historically, Russia has (fluctuated?) in the tools of its political leadership, from the use of hard coercion under Stalin, to more soft coercion under Khrushchev, to Communist Party competition during Gorbachev and finally, to voter-driven open political support for Yeltsin, who led a peaceful and successful succession from the USSR, but eventually lost this popularity.
- In 2000, Putin consolidated the Russian State when he took over as President. He did this by strengthening the executive branch, weakening regional governments, reducing the number of political parties and creating one personalized party (United Russia), as well as prosecuting what he called corrupt "unpatriotic" billionaires which he did by heeding public opinion polls that saw contemporary Russia as weak and chaotic.
- According to the New Russia Barometer, between 1992-2009 the Russian State increased in citizen support for "governance" and "how well the political system works", perhaps reflecting a consolidation of an increasingly undemocratic regime. Russians have resocialized and adjusted after the fall of the Soviet Union, and a majority now endorse the Putin government. The Russian State's ability to maintain relative stability during this twenty-year plus period explains popular backing better than a purely economic (material well-being) or institutionalist (democracy-rule of law) explanation.
- When controlling for economic, political and institutional variables in a statistical analysis, the authors determine that Russian citizens content with

the current economy are most supportive of the Putin Regime, the most powerful predictor of all influences, along with those who favored the old economy to a much lesser extent. But a family's specific household economic situation is not significant. Those who support Putin also tend to see public officials as fair, and freedom as greater, have a higher social status, and trust current institutions more. On the other hand, those born before 1946 and have undemocratic values, like weakening the legislature, exhibit much less support for the Putin Government.

- The authors explain that the passage of time has had a critical impact on regime support. In the case of Putin's Russia, popularity increased from 1998-2009, with 64% of citizens having adapted to Russia's broader situation even after the more long-term tumultuous shift from the Soviet Union. Those who see the regime as more fair, have a higher socioeconomic status, and favor the current and future status of the economy tend to back Putin more, even if experts have labelled the regime as less democratic over time. What little discontent among those who expect or desire more change is not enough for society-wide aggressive protest.
- For the 2007 Duma and 2008 Presidential elections, Russians' political partisanship was the most important factor on how they assessed the fairness of elections, as winners generally supported the incumbent and losers did not. Regime support was most influenced by government performance, especially economic growth. Putin's United Russia Party drew votes not tied directly to ideology, but rather to support for his leadership, a leadership demonstrated even when he stepped aside to be prime minister but still held influence among foreign policy circles. Russian participants also generally held election fairness to a different standard than Western observers, worrying more about the substantive outcome than procedures resulting in the outcome.
- The 2008 Global Economic Crisis negatively affected the Russian economy; however, a majority of Russians did not hold the Putin Government responsible and still supported his economic policies. Russians who backed Putin were more optimistic about the future and also saw Russian consumers as having more economic freedom than twenty years prior.

In conclusion, the authors reiterate that today's Russians have not only been compliant but supportive of both the memory of old Soviet autocracy as well as Putin's Russian "non-democracy." Many citizens proudly identify with his regime, reinforcing not only the Russian regime's durability but encouraging other authoritarian states in the nearby Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), as well. Broad support is the reward for President Putin's actual and perceived successful domestic and foreign policies. Whether or not the state has been democratic does not matter so much as how well it has adapted to everyday reality, which reminds policymakers and others about the old adage: "Better to bend than to break."

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