

In the late 1930s, public opinion came to be studied quantitatively in countries of Western Europe and North America. By the 1990s such studies had spread throughout North and South America, many countries in Asia, and some nations in Africa. This issue of the *ISSJ* discusses current research relating to tracking public opinion and forecasting and analysing election results. Substantive issues concerning countries in various regions — Western Europe, North America, Latin America, Australia, and also various countries in the process of democratization such as South Africa and Russia — are reviewed by the authors. In some cases these give rise to general methodological questions, such as the interpretation of electoral polls in authoritarian countries and margins of error in forecasting election results on the basis of opinion polls.

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Mattei Dogan

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Russian public opinion between elections

Attitudes and behaviour of the 'new' South African electorate: an empirical assessment

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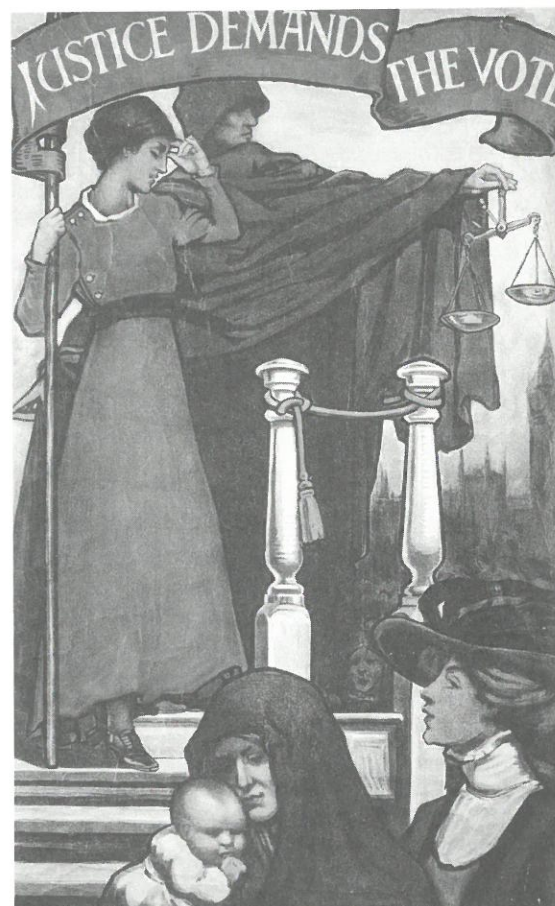
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Cover: Nelson Mandela campaigning in the Presidential election, at the Ndzelele Stadium in Northern Transvaal, South Africa, March 8 1994. Brooks Kraft/Sigma
Right: Poster: 'Justice demands the vote'. Erl/Sipa Icono/Sipa Press.

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Abstracts

Introduction: Public opinion and electoral behaviour

Frederick C. Turner As competitive elections have become more and more common around the world since the early 1980s, there has been a corresponding increase in public opinion research done for candidates and for political parties in those elections. When the results of this survey research are made available to scholars through national and international data banks, social scientists can analyse the data in far more detail, illuminating patterns of politics in their nations. Broadly, this enhances the democratic process and demonstrates once again the importance of social science research. As the essays in this volume make clear, accurate and useful opinion research can be done in countries which were until recently dictatorial, such as South Africa, while even in the oldest democracies, such as Great Britain, pollsters still have a good deal to learn in order to perfect their craft.

Erosion of class voting and of the religious vote in Western Europe

Mattei Dogan This comparative and longitudinal analysis covers fifteen countries and five decades. The radical changes that have taken place in society have brought about a decline in three phenomena: the class vote, the religious vote and the role of the political parties. At the same time, social class and religion, which once accounted for a significant percentage of electoral variation, no longer have that explanatory capacity. Contrary to a widely held belief,

it was religion, not social class, that played the predominant role in political behaviour in most European countries. Nowadays the voter is more independent, more individualistic.

Lessons from the electorate: What the 1992 British General Election taught British pollsters about the conduct of opinion polls

Robert M. Worcester Great Britain has one of the oldest and best developed traditions of political opinion polling in the world. The combination of a long history of polling, a multiplicity of nationally distributed newspapers and broadcast media, near automatic coverage of poll results on prime-time television and an alert group of academic psephologists always ready to put pen to paper to comment on poll results, has meant that for over 50 years political polls have played an important role in the process of politics in Great Britain. Their road however has not been always smooth, and there have been several elections among the fourteen since the war in which their performance has not been satisfactory. The British General Election of 1992 was such an event. Much time and effort have gone into developing an understanding of 'what went wrong', and its lessons and much in addition that has been learned about election polling during the course of the enquiry are included in this article.

Russian public opinion between elections

Elena Bashkirova and Andrei Melville Analysis of public attitudes in Russia today reveals substantial political fatigue and mistrust

of political leaders and institutions. Distrust of the 'democrats' does not translate into support for authoritarianism, however, or into an anti-reform, anti-democratic backlash. Economically, Russians support a mixed economy with market incentives and social guarantees, while politically they are essentially centrist. With a multi-party system still only embryonic, party identifications are weak, and no party as yet effectively represents the centrist views of most Russian voters.

Attitudes and behaviour of the 'new' South African electorate: An empirical assessment

Mari Harris The peaceful democratization in South Africa was widely seen as somewhat of a miracle. Academics and politicians marvelled at the process while the electorate enjoyed for the first time the experience of being able to vote. This new experience, together with the change in voting systems and structures, moulded the 'new' electorate of South Africa. This paper will provide the reader with insight into the attitudes and behaviour of the electorate in South Africa by giving attention to the trends that have emerged over the past five years. Empirical data from Markinor's Socio-political Trends, the World Social Values Study and the International Optimism Index are used to highlight the perceptions that prevailed before and after South Africa's first democratic election. Attention will be given to perceptions on pertinent issues such as economic well-being, social harmony and trust. The successful application of survey research in the political field has been questioned in the past, especially in South Africa where there were no opportunities to compare survey results with election results. This paper highlights the procedures that were followed in the research design and compares the survey results with the actual election results. Differences in these results are investigated.

Electoral discontinuity: The 1993 Canadian federal election

Neil Nevitte, Richard Johnston, André Blais, Henry Brady, Elisabeth Gidengil The 1993 Canadian General Election was an extraordinary

one. The election featured the collapse of a once stable two-party-plus party system and the emergence of a less stable one-party dominant system. The governing Progressive Conservative party went down to the most crushing defeat of any governing party in Canadian electoral history, and two new parties displaced two old ones. This article places this dramatic fracturing in the context of Canadian post-war electoral history. It draws upon well-known perspectives on spatial theory to illustrate how one new party, the Reform Party, captured the political right. It then demonstrates how the strategic interests of both of the two new parties, Reform and the independent Bloc Québécois, combined to undermine the integrative role that Canadian political parties have traditionally served. We argue that the present one-party dominant system is unstable and, after speculating about how the Canadian party system may return to a stable alignment, we consider the broader implications of the election outcome.

Public images of foreign and domestic political leaders: Australian evidence

Jonathan Kelley How do citizens feel about political leaders in their own nation, or foreign leaders like Thatcher, Reagan, Gorbachev, or Deng? And what consequences do these views have for how citizens vote? Analysing data from a large, representative national sample, I show that Australian citizens view domestic leaders mainly as figureheads for political parties and, to a much lesser extent, as national figureheads, exemplars of ideology, and exemplars of personal virtues. As exemplar leaders have a modest but significant effect on how Australians vote. Foreign leaders are also figureheads for political parties in their own nations and, in nations similar to Australia, that slightly influences Australians' feelings about them. But foreign leaders are mainly figureheads for their nation: Australians project their feelings about the nation onto the leader. This is less so for nations similar to Australia and more so for nations remote from Australia. Foreign leaders are also ideological exemplars, more so for leaders of nations similar to Australia and less so for leaders of more remote nations. Foreign leaders are generally irrelevant to domestic voting, although there is just the slightest possibility

that Thatcher's demonstration of strong Conservative leadership had a tiny effect in Australia.

Democratic deconsolidation in Venezuela? Performance and normative legitimacy

Friedrich Welsch and José Vicente Carrasquero Venezuela's image as a haven of democracy in Latin America was seriously damaged in 1992 when two military coup d'état attempts were frustrated, but they shook the very foundations of its polity as their leaders were able to mobilize considerable public support. The people's trust in their democratic institutions had dwindled away, causing concern about regime deconsolidation even though democracy as a system of government continued to be preferred by overwhelming majorities. The study of evaluative and value orientations of Venezuelan citizens casts some light on the relationship of both with their political behaviour. First, there is a significant association between the respondents' perception of system performance and democratic values on the one hand, and their political involvement on the other, while the explanatory strength of ideology and partisanship for political involvement is much weaker. Second, the association is complex, being stronger in conventional and unconventional forms of participation than in protest expressions, both for performance and normative legitimacy; ideology is a relatively strong element of such protest expressions. Third, normative legitimization tends to explain more democratic behaviour than does performance legitimization. Finally the aspects of normative legitimacy we analysed proved to be insulated from ideology, but influenced by partisanship. Although Venezuela's democratic regime faces severe pressures, the strategic quality of the country's democratic value reserves should help to fend off immediate systemic threats.

Electoral behaviour in Brazil: The 1994 presidential elections

Rachel Meneguello The 1994 presidential elections in Brazil made clear the weaknesses of

party organization and party identifications in the country. Personalism, volatility, and low levels of party loyalties characterized the electoral behaviour of Brazilian voters. The strongest influence on voting decisions came from the economic strategy of the government, the Real Plan, which defined economic voting as the most important dimension of the electoral process and led to a victory on the first ballot for Fernando Henrique Cardoso, the candidate of the incumbent government.

Problems in interpreting electoral polls in authoritarian countries: Lessons from the 1994 Mexican election

Miguel Basáñez In authoritarian countries as opposed to democratic ones, true political competition between political parties does not exist, and there is no real freedom of access for all political forces to the media. Can the economical, social and political behaviour of Mexicans be analysed in terms more or less similar to those of Americans? Can elections and surveys be interpreted in the same way? Surveys in authoritarian systems document and measure the degree of government efficiency in the construction of images in the public mind for electoral purposes, i.e. propaganda. In that sense, surveys support and legitimate the authoritarian system. In 1994 in Mexico, pollsters did not help democracy. On the contrary, they supported the *caudillist* system. This article attempts to clarify why, and to extract some lessons from the presidential election surveys of 1994. The degree of accuracy of all surveys in the 1994 election enables us to say that conducting reasonably acceptable polls on electoral behaviour is no longer a problem in Mexico. On the other hand, the treatment of the undeclared, as well as of the level of turnout (i.e. the number of voters in an election), still poses problems for a correct interpretation of pre-electoral polls.

Introduction: Public opinion and electoral behaviour

Frederick C. Turner

Both conceptually and practically, an intimate relationship exists between the breadth of public opinion research and the realization within nation-states of more widely and more effectively participant patterns of politics.¹ In the late 1930s, public opinion came to be studied extensively in countries of Europe and North America, and by the 1990s this research had spread throughout the Americas, to many countries in Asia, and to some nations of Africa.

Under authoritarian political systems, dictators have long measured public opinion, keeping the results secret and using them as one technique of control (see Smith and Turner, 1984). But, as public opinion research comes to be financed from many quarters and is published competitively in the press, it moves from being the tool of dictatorships to becoming a technique through which members of all political parties and competing interest groups can better understand public sentiments and thus participate more effectively in broadly polyarchic systems of politics. When leaders of the government and the opposition know, in detail, what different segments of the public actually want, the leaders can tailor programmes to meet these demands in more rational and consistent ways.

In at least two senses, the opinion polling that has grown up to measure demands within

the public sector parallels market research in the private sector. On one level, virtually all survey research firms draw a considerable part of their revenues from 'market research', from investigating consumer demands for private companies, so that the executives of the companies can understand the market for their products and ultimately serve that market better. Market research in effect provides 'consumer ballots'. The investment in research allows the

company executives to see how their product compares with those of their competitors in the minds of those who buy the product, as well as to look more fundamentally at what consumers really want, so that these desires may shape future production decisions. At the same time, many firms that conduct market research in the private sector also work extensively for governments, both central and local, and social

research paid for by governments forms another important part of the research business. This work is regularly done for civil servants rather than for cabinet ministers or elected officials, and it shows the civil servants how better to understand the perceived needs of the public and how to design policies more effectively to meet those needs.

A more specialized form of survey research is electoral polling, testing voter sympathies and allowing the candidates to bring their proposals

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and programmes more in line with public demands. Of course, in various sorts of polling, selfish interests can contaminate the potential benefits of opinion research, as 'telemarketers' use the telephone to sell products under the false guise of a 'survey',² or as interest groups consciously warp question wordings so as to obtain the 'results' that they desire.³ But, overall, professional polling has become highly effective in Europe, North America and Australia, and its practitioners have been encouraged to collaborate with social scientists in the universities and to follow the code of professional ethics and practice formulated by leaders of the World Association for Public Opinion Research (see Worcester, 1983, pp. 229–35). Moreover, the rapid growth during the late 1980s and the 1990s of privatization in the economic sphere in Latin America, Russia, parts of China and elsewhere has been matched in the public sphere by an expansion of opinion research, allowing at least the possibility of more responsive leadership in both areas for these nations as well.

The wider relevance today of public opinion polling under democratic governments in no way removes the need for statesmanship by those in public office. Indeed, one of the worst approaches to government is to 'govern by the polls', for presidents or prime ministers to make fundamental decisions in government on the basis of short-term expediency, following directly what people say that they want now. Elected leaders must think in terms of the long-term interests of their constituents, sometimes demanding sacrifices now that will benefit voters (or their descendants) in the future. The art of politics comes in part from anticipating public needs and, at times, convincing recalcitrant publics of the benefits of sacrifice. But here too opinion research can suggest to the leader, not only how publics prioritize their needs in the long run and the short run, but also how she or he can manoeuvre among short-term public demands in order to achieve the greatest public welfare over time. Furthermore, as Jonathan Kelley has pointed out, a fair bit of research suggests that voters will take a long-range view, if leaders ask them to do so, while also supporting the general or 'public' interest over their private self-interest.⁴

As one part of this calculus, the field of electoral behaviour research has grown up, using

public opinion studies along with the analysis of voting in order to understand the bases upon which citizens vote. Candidates and political parties pay for many polls to help them in their campaigns, and the public has a strong interest in the results during the campaign as well, so that, increasingly around the world, newspapers, magazines and television networks also finance extensive polling. Once the campaign is over, the data often find their way into data banks, where social scientists can investigate them in detail, using methods of analysis more sophisticated, more comparative, and more time-consuming than those needed in the campaign and, hopefully, drawing conclusions that ultimately increase public understanding of both popular demands and the fundamental nature of political systems.

In the essays that follow in this special issue of the *International Social Science Journal*, the authors make contributions that are both substantive and methodological. Both regionally and for individual countries, some of the most important substantive findings are reported in the area of public opinion and electoral behaviour. Also evident in all essays, and treated directly in some, are issues of methodology, of how opinion pollsters and other social scientists can most accurately gather their data and interpret the results. Far from being merely an esoteric field for specialists only, issues of methodology are also ones that attentive publics around the world need to understand in far more detail, so that they can become more effectively critical 'consumers' of the survey research results that are increasingly brought to their attention. In regard either to public policy choices or to purchases in the private sector, an informed consumer can make the best decisions, both for himself or herself and also for the political or economic system. Therefore, an understanding of how the research is carried out and interpreted is too important to be left to those who claim special expertise.

Substantive findings

What one can discover from electoral analysis depends on the context of the elections and the political systems under investigation. Among the case studies that follow in this volume, some

nations – Russia, South Africa, Venezuela, or Mexico, for example – appear to be in considerably more turmoil politically than do others, such as Australia, Brazil, Canada, or Great Britain. Elections determine who the governors will be in nations with greater or lesser degrees of political stability and systemic consolidation, but the issues that it is especially worthwhile studying along with electoral analysis in each nation depend on the political context of that nation, and here questions of political stability may make a great deal of difference.

Before moving on to look at elections in individual nations, it is useful to focus on broader dimensions of electoral analysis for different regions of the world. In one of the articles in this volume, Mattei Dogan does this for elections in Europe between 1945 and 1995. An older model of elections – one elaborated and justified in countless books and articles – considered social class to be the most important element in the electoral decisions of most Europeans, but Dogan's conclusions differ significantly from this earlier interpretation. For the 1945 to 1970 period, in reality the most significant determinant of electoral behaviour turns out to be religion for eight political units: France, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Northern Ireland and Switzerland. In the 1970s, Spain and Portugal joined this group. Social class had greater importance than religion in only five nations: Great Britain, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland (see also Kelley and Evans, 1995).

In the 1980s, Dogan points to changes in European societies that altered electoral patterns, including structural unemployment, the immigration of Africans and Asians, and an increasing stress on the individual. New cleavages arose between 1965 and 1995, as horizontal cleavages became blurred, and voting patterns of European electorates demonstrated reduced class polarization, weaker religious ties, and higher volatility. In coming to these conclusions for Europe, Dogan lays out a series of issues that need to be studied in other parts of the world as well.

Moving from Western Europe to the case of Russia, Elena Bashkirova and Andrei Melville look at dimensions of Russian public opinion in a period between national elections. Given Russian power internationally, and the newness

of democracy in the country, the level of support for democratic institutions among Russian voters is an issue of vital concern. Here, Bashkirova and Melville strike a chord that resonates strongly in other country studies in this volume. On the one hand, Russians do not widely trust 'the democrats', the particular political leaders associated with the rise of democracy in their country, and their level of confidence in the major institutions of their political system remains strikingly low as well. But voters do *not* translate this mistrust of particular leaders and the ways in which institutions are now functioning into a rejection of democracy *per se* or into support for a return to authoritarian rule. Far from being supporters of extremist leaders of either the left or the right, as television broadcasters outside Russia frequently depict them, they turn out to be centrist in their orientations, looking for leadership to a centrist political party that does not as yet exist.

Russians have not yet achieved a pluralist democracy, where parties and other institutions effectively aggregate interests, but Bashkirova and Melville imply that they may do so in the future. The struggles of today are not so much over ideology or programmes as over the immediate issue of who will continue to distribute the properties of the former Soviet state and in whose interests they will be distributed. Russians do not want change imposed from the top so much as they desire reforms that emerge from an articulation of local needs, and this too may presage a more participant pattern of politics in the future. Bashkirova and Melville find that, under polyarchy, public opinion has come to influence politics very directly, and this too augurs well for Russian democracy in the long run.

As in other case studies, the situation of Russian voters thus raises the intriguing issue of what the future holds. In the short run, the data question the assumption of some (such as those who lead the government of the United States) who see an inviolate connection between President Boris Yeltsin and the process of reform. Concerning the war in Chechnia, Bashkirova and Melville suggest that it may have permanently lowered Yeltsin's prestige and support, as the Vietnam War did in the United States for Lyndon Johnson. But, on the economic front, Russians uphold the most general



'An electoral visit', painting by A. Michelena, presented at the Paris Salon of 1887 ND-Viollet

outlines of their mixed economy, with its increasing role for the market, individual incentives, and social guarantees. That most are not nostalgic for the command economy of the old Soviet Union is in itself an important finding. Overall, if Russians are far from pleased with the problems that their mixed economy and their new polyarchy have faced or generated in their initial years, the voters still far prefer these institutions over those that preceded them.

If the article on Russia documents an anguishing process of transition toward a mixed economy and a more effective democratic system, the transition to democracy that Mari Harris articulates in her article on South Africa appears even more striking. For decades, many informed observers looked on South Africa as a revolutionary context, and the nation came very close to civil war, especially after the assassination of Chris Hani in 1993 (Johnson, 1993, pp. 344-45). Yet, with the elections of 1994 and the leader-

ship of Nelson Mandela, the nation has avoided a violent revolution. As Harris demonstrates in detail, the 'new' South African electorate, which includes blacks for the first time, overwhelmingly supports this non-violent alternative. Even though the euphoria of the 1994 elections has abated somewhat, and although whites fear a decline in their economic well-being, most South Africans still see their country as going in the right direction.

The data on trust in the South African article are especially tantalizing. For black respondents, the data emphasize that, in interpreting the responses of particular groups to questions in an international questionnaire like that of the World Values Survey, one needs to appreciate the special context in which members of the group lived. Harris shows, for example, that it was not rational for blacks to trust their neighbours in the townships of South Africa in 1990, when the last wave of the World Values

Survey was done, because of the numbers of government informers in the townships. On another level, coloured South Africans are less suspicious of the other ethnic groups than are whites, blacks or Indians, while black South Africans trust coloureds significantly more than they do either whites or Indians. Could it be that these attitudes prefigure, with a lead time that will stretch over generations, the rise of more generalized trust in South Africa, as miscegenation increases and as more and more South Africans, like the coloureds of today, see their own roots coming from more than one racial community?

The case of Venezuela at first appears very different from those of Russia or South Africa, because Venezuelans have lived under a democratic system with regular elections since 1958. But, as Friedrich Welsch and José Vicente Carrasquero demonstrate in their article, a high level of mistrust in the functioning of fundamental institutions has also risen there. The penultimate president, Carlos Andrés Pérez, set about stringent economic reforms in 1989 that contradicted his campaign promises of a return to the 'golden seventies', the period of his first presidency when rising oil revenues had made vast new programmes of government investment possible. Two attempted military coups proved unsuccessful, but President Pérez was impeached on corruption charges, only to be followed by another former president, Rafael Caldera, who ran successfully with support from an *ad hoc* coalition after the party that he had founded denied him its nomination. Moreover, participation in general elections fell from 97 per cent in 1973 to 60 per cent in 1993, and party loyalties have become so low that, as Welsch and Carrasquero write, mayors and governors are now elected 'by their names'. More broadly, the middle and upper classes have benefited more than the poor from state welfare policies, such as free education at all public universities, and this too seems to betray some of the ideals of those who created the democratic system at the end of the 1950s.

In the context of these events, Welsch and Carrasquero concentrate on one of the most pressing issues in their country: do Venezuelans continue to support the democratic system, or, in their behaviour and attitudes, is there evidence of democratic deconsolidation? The

authors develop an index of political legitimacy, which contains both attitudinal and behavioural measures, and with it they can be far more precise about legitimacy in terms of such dimensions as partisanship, ideology, expressions of protest, and democratic values *per se*. Overall, they conclude that Venezuelans remain committed to the value of democracy, in part because of the decades of civic education under which most of them have been socialized. Specifically, support for coups d'état fell significantly for all age groups between 1973 and 1993, and trust in at least some institutions, such as the Catholic Church and the military, remains relatively strong. Furthermore, the sense of civic confidence is quite high, as is the tendency to discuss politics among the most highly educated Venezuelans, and, among all groups, unconventional forms of political participation make up in part for disillusionment with the national electoral process. While there remain reasons for concern about the deconsolidation of Venezuelan democracy, therefore, the use of extensive survey data also demonstrates that the underlying value that Venezuelans attribute to their democracy continues to undergird both it and the search for new ways in which to make the system more effectively participant.

As in the case of Venezuela, Rachel Meneguello finds in her article on Brazil that party loyalties are weak. She also traces in public opinion data the fragility of support for democratic institutions and a high level of political distrust that permeated the electorate in 1994. Rather than consider the issue of possible 'deconsolidation' that concerns Venezuelans, Brazilians look at ways initially to consolidate support for political parties and for the institutions of the system that has evolved since the end of military rule in 1985.

Tracing out the causes of Fernando Henrique Cardoso's victory in the presidential elections of 3 October 1994, Meneguello points to the crucial roles of economic policy and of the mass media in deciding the elections. As Treasury Minister in the government of President Itamar Franco before becoming a presidential candidate, Cardoso established the Real Plan, a programme of economic stabilization that won widespread public support even before it succeeded in bringing down the rampant rate of inflation in Brazil. Cardoso's rise in the polls

paralleled the popularity of the Real Plan, and he also gained support from praise heaped upon the plan in the mass media, particularly on Brazilian television. Given the role in the elections of personalism, the mass media, and economic policies engineered by the incumbent government on one hand, and low party loyalties and low trust in institutions on the other, Meneguello understandably raises questions at the end of her article on the governability of Brazil.

Just as Meneguello characterized the election of 1994 as in some ways the most significant Brazilian election since 1945, so Neil Nevitte and his co-authors describe the Canadian election of 1993 as one that is distinctive in Canadian history. The Progressive Conservatives, one of the two major parties in Canada since the middle of the nineteenth century, came out of the election with only two seats, with its leader defeated, and without a regional base from which to regroup. On the left, the New Democrats were also soundly defeated, and two parties new to the federal electoral scene – the Bloc Québécois and the Reform Party of Canada – showed decisive strength. The Bloc Québécois, whose platform featured the objective of independence for Quebec, became the official opposition to the victorious Liberal Party, and, with a regional base in Western Canada, the Reform Party raised its total of seats in the Canadian House of Commons from one to 52. Strikingly, the authors conclude that the electoral campaign proved crucial to the lessening of support for the Progressive Conservatives and that, in the space of 35 days before the elections, the configuration of the Canadian parties shifted from a 'two party plus' system to a system of 'one party plus plus'.

The dimension of the Canadian article that deals with the cultural divide in Canada will strongly interest especially those who similarly come from countries where regional, linguistic, and cultural loyalties are strong. On one side, supporters of the Bloc Québécois felt that much more should be done for Quebec, while less than 7 per cent of likely voters for the Reform Party shared this perspective. With Canadians more divided upon lines of geography and culture, less issue space was left for the two historical parties of the centre left and the centre right, and the traditional winning formula – victory in Quebec and a good showing in the

rest of Canada – could no longer prevail at the polls. The rise of the two new parties offered Canadian voters an opportunity to express more polarized views in their electoral decisions, and the voters did so decisively, to the detriment of the system of brokerage politics that the two traditional parties had long represented.

Also intriguing from the standpoint of the issue of political trust that figures so prominently in this volume as a whole, Nevitte and his co-authors found that the supporters of the Reform Party were the most likely to voice traditional values, to reject tolerance for abortion and gay rights, and to approach politicians with considerable cynicism. Those who expressed the greatest trust in the Canadian federal government were the supporters of the two traditional parties. While Canadian social scientists do not interpret the voicing of mistrust in politicians in the same terms as their Venezuelan or Brazilian colleagues, the Canadian case in 1993 nevertheless demonstrates how quickly a once stable party system can come apart.

On the basis of extensive survey data from Australia, a nation where the stability of the political system has been taken for granted as it has in Canada, Jonathan Kelley focuses on another aspect of electoral politics: support for political leaders. In contrast to Venezuela and Brazil, but like the experience of Great Britain, the United States, and a number of other nations, party loyalty figures decisively in Australian electoral behaviour. Leaders matter somewhat, although far less than party loyalties. As measured for the election of 1987, views of the opposition leaders mattered about half as much as the views of the incumbent prime minister. Overall, however, these influences are so slight as to make Kelley write, 'certainly there are no "great men" in contemporary Australian politics.'

If Australians see their own political leaders initially as figureheads for political parties, they see foreign leaders as figureheads for their nations, especially for countries that are remote from Australia. Perceptions of foreign leaders generally have no influence on the vote in Australia, even though Kelley finds that Margaret Thatcher's example of strong Conservative leadership in Britain may have influenced Australian voting to a minor degree. Whereas Australians' views of their own leaders tend to remain stable

or to decline slowly over time, their perspective on foreign leaders is susceptible to more dramatic changes, as in the sharp rise in Mikhail Gorbachev's popularity after the fall of communism in the Soviet Union, or the sharp decline in the popularity of Deng Xiaoping after the events of Tianamen Square. In domestic voting, however, images of foreign leaders generally have no influence, while party loyalties exhibit great influence, demonstrating once again the essential stability of the Australian political system.

Asking and interpreting questions correctly

In order to unearth reliable findings for any society, using survey data effectively to understand electoral behaviour also entails careful attention to methodology, especially to the ways in which questions are asked and the ways in which the answers are interpreted. Here, as an empirical check, elections are very useful. Although surveys present a picture of electoral attitudes only at selected points in time, and although voting intentions may change between the last pre-electoral surveys and the elections themselves, comparing the vote with pre-election and post-election survey data helps survey researchers to understand the electoral process and also to evaluate the accuracy of their measurement instruments. The first multi-racial elections in South African history in 1994, for example, helped Mari Harris and her colleagues to gauge the accuracy of surveys that they had conducted for many years, until then without the benefit of full electoral feedback. National surveys are conducted in South Africa in eight major languages, raising important issues of comparability of the questionnaires, and the survey process in other nations often presents similarly difficult problems, such as judging the likely intentions of those who say that they are undecided or obtaining a truly representative national sample. Here, elections provide not only the *raison d'être* for the survey enterprise, but also a useful check on the results for the researchers themselves.

Among the essays that follow, the study of the failure of British pollsters in the General Election of 1992 stands out as a major contri-

bution. As Robert Worcester explains in detail, none of the British survey firms correctly predicted the Conservative victory, despite very considerable expertise and expenditure in the survey process. In a country with such high quality research, and with comparatively stable political norms and procedures, the uniform failure of the pollsters in 1992 is rather surprising, and a great deal of time and expense has gone into finding out why. Discarding a number of other interpretations as unsubstantiated by the evidence, Worcester finds that the major reasons for the failure were a late swing, incorrect gauging of the importance of the image of party leaders, insufficient attention to the 'floating voters', the Conservatives' ability to call the election when economic circumstances favoured them, and the rejection of a hung parliament, among both voters in general and the business elite in particular. Also, the quota samples used and weighted in the British surveys did not fully reflect the nature of the electorate in 1992, and, as would be expected from the 'spiral of silence' theory of Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, Conservative voters were somewhat less likely to express their true feelings to the pollsters. As Worcester has made clear, however, British pollsters have never claimed that they 'predict' electoral results; they always anticipate a late swing in the voting; and they have long accepted the validity of the cliché that 'the poll that polls last polls best'.⁵

Importantly, therefore, for those who care about how accurately polls can measure voters' sentiments, Worcester finds that (contrary to the critics) respondents did not lie to the pollsters. Instead, the pollsters did not listen to their respondents as carefully as they should have done.

Finally, in his article on the use of polls in the 1994 Mexican presidential election, Miguel Basáñez raises a series of important issues as to the effectiveness of polls under essentially authoritarian political systems. In Mexico, where polls have been widely published and debated only during the last two presidential elections, they have taken on wide significance, but polls in themselves cannot ensure accurate electoral results. Basáñez notes the difference in the urban vote between the official Party of the Institutional Revolution (PRI) and the National Action Party (PAN) of 11 per cent,

as compared to a difference of 45 per cent in rural areas. PRI activists claim that rural voters simply side with them more, whereas their opponents contend that intimidation by the ruling party is vastly greater in rural areas, where no outside observers come to monitor the balloting. Nevertheless, after going in detail into issues of how the undecideds should be assigned and what difference higher levels of voter turnout actually make, Basáñez concludes that accurate polling can in fact be done under political systems that remain authoritarian, and this should be welcome news to would-be pollsters in many parts of the world.

Before closing, a word on collaborative research is very much in order. The essays in this volume all come from the research of members of the Research Committee on Comparative Public Opinion (RC 30) of the International Political Science Association (IPSA). Like two earlier publications of the committee (*Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism*,

1986,⁶ and Turner, 1992⁷), several of the papers came from a conference of the committee in Porlamar, Venezuela in January 1995. The strategy of common research on unified themes has proved to be useful, as, for instance, when Welsch and Carrasquero substantially overhauled their index of legitimacy as a result of discussions with their colleagues in Porlamar, coming up with a more behaviourally oriented index and somewhat different findings in the published version of their paper as compared to the initial version presented at the conference. Feedback from colleagues with similar research interests remains highly useful for social scientists, and it is this sort of collaboration that IPSA research committees can foster very well. While neither IPSA nor the Research Committee can be responsible for any errors that the following articles may contain, therefore, these organizations should certainly take some of the credit for encouraging the research and for improving at least some of its quality.

Notes

1. For comments on an earlier version of this introductory article, thanks are due to Mattei Dogan, Carlos Elordi, Mari Harris, Thomas Hartley, Jonathan Kelley, Neil Nevitte, and Robert Worcester.

2. Nefariously, especially in the United States, telemarketers who actually want to sell their products now call potential consumers on the telephone and say that 'a survey' is being conducted. After a few questions on consumer interests, the sales pitch begins, and those being 'interviewed' naturally become offended at the deception and at the invasion of their privacy. The proliferation of marketing lists of likely customers for particular products has become widespread in the United States, so that telemarketers are increasingly intrusive, calling at times when the head of the

household is likely to be home, trying to relax with his or her family. As telephone networks and marketing strategies expand in the years ahead in Eastern Europe, Asia, Latin America, and Africa, these marketing ploys will also expand, and they will come to threaten the acceptance and potentially important contributions of survey research in these parts of the world, just as they do in North America today.

3. The ways in which survey questions are worded are so sensitive that survey results are easy to manipulate. In investigating opinion on the inflammatory issue of abortion, and when working with survey researchers who do not exercise the proper restraints on question wording, for example, 'pro-choice' advocates use questions about a woman's right to control her own

reproduction, whereas 'pro-life' militants invoke questions on 'killing the unborn'. Naturally, the results of such 'surveys' differ substantially, and each group is able to take from their 'surveys' results that appear to demonstrate public approval for their initial positions. In such circumstances, what those interested in public opinion must do is to look at the actual wording of the questions, comparing the results of one survey with those of another and making an informed judgment of the quality of the research involved. When reputable and professional survey firms conduct research on abortion, the questions are phrased carefully, and views on abortion turn out to be stable across years (as measured in panel studies), stable across different items (as measured in multiple item scales), and stably connected to other concepts.

4. Letter from Jonathan Kelley to Frederick C. Turner, 28 April 1995.

5. Letter from Robert M. Worcester to Frederick C. Turner, 20 April 1995.

6. This issue of the journal dealt exclusively with nationalism and public opinion, containing papers

presented at an RC 30 conference in Maracaibo, Venezuela, including a paper on German nationalism by Klaus von Beyme, then the IPSA President.

7. The book reports the findings of papers from six continents, where several of the same questions were used in different

nations and where the results were initially presented at a conference at the University of Connecticut.

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7. Ivor Crewe, 'One poll victory does not make Kinnock's summer', *Times*, 18 March 1992.

8. *The Opinion Polls and the 1992 General Election: A Report to the Market Research Society*. London: Market Research Society, 1994.

9. Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, *The Spiral of Silence*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.

10. For a detailed analysis of the regulations for the publication of

opinion poll results across the globe, see Nils Rohme, 'The state of the art of public opinion polling worldwide: An international study based on information collected from national market and opinion research institutes in April 1992', *Marketing and Research Today*, November 1992.

11. Pierre Huet, testimony to the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly hearings, Strasbourg, 8 October 1984.

12. Official Report, 37th Ordinary Session, Parliamentary Assembly,

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13. Dick Leonard, 'Belgian Leaders Should Read "Areopagitica"', *Wall Street Journal*, 18 October 1985.

14. Robert M. Worcester (ed.), *Political Opinion Polling: An International Review*. London: Macmillan, 1983.

15. Robert M. Worcester, *British Public Opinion: a Guide to the History and Methodology of Political Opinion Polling*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991.

Russian public opinion between elections

Elena Bashkirova and Andrei Melville

In his 1995 presidential address Boris Yeltsin reminded the Russian people that three years before they had made a choice in favour of democracy and market reforms. He also confirmed that the country and its leadership would keep moving along this track. Nevertheless, these reassuring statements confronted some unpleasant realities: skidding economic reforms, assaults from various quarters on fragile democratic institutions, widespread corruption among elites, and a state of social anomie. In fact, the general euphoria after the failure of the Communist coup in August 1991 and the illusions of a quick and unilinear transition to market reforms and democracy were, soon after they had arisen, being undermined by the devastating results of the economic shock-therapy experiments of 1992 and the stunning failure of the democrats during the elections of December 1993.

The results of these first post-Soviet, post-Communist parliamentary elections in the Russian Federation shocked Russian citizens, politicians, and political analysts. The results were even more important, because, in contrast to the decades of the Soviet past, public opinion now plays a new role in the country and actually influences Russian politics. The outcome of these elections clearly indicates profound public disillusionment with the way in which the coun-

try is governed and with the manner in which reforms have been implemented.

Considering the results of the elections of December 1993, a number of analysts in both Russia and the West have argued that their outcome reveals (or confirms) the existence of solid support in Russia for anti-reform policies and even for conservative, authoritarian and nationalist biases within the Russian public. While some commentators have found pro-

reform, pro-market, and pro-democracy attitudes within the Russian public (Hahn, 1991; Duch, 1993; Gibson and Duch, 1993), others have looked to contrasting data that demonstrate views in Russian opinion that are anti-market, anti-liberal and anti-Western (Whitefield and Evans, 1994).

Given these conflicting interpretations, it is important to analyse Russian public opinion during the

current period between elections in order to understand more fundamentally the nature of the political changes that are occurring in Russia today. There are useful data here to be consulted from Russian Public Opinion and Market Research, Ltd (ROMIR), an independent public opinion research institute based in Moscow, from the joint research projects of the Central and Eastern Eurobarometer omnibus surveys, and from those of the University of Iowa done between 1992 and 1995.

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The Russian political landscape

The deep political crisis of September and October 1993, which culminated in the destruction of the Supreme Soviet and was followed by the December 1993 elections, marks the beginning of a new stage in the current political history of post-Soviet post-Communist Russia. Some refer to this new stage as the period of the 'second stagnation', an interlude when the same political actors are still on the historical stage but when the original problems are gone and the audience is waiting for a new act of the historical play to begin (Sheinis, 1994). The new act may begin with the next elections of parliament and the president. Winning seats in parliament and securing the post-Yeltsin presidency are the prizes that motivate the actions of the major political forces in Russia today, and even the bloody war in Chechnia has come to be perceived largely through the prism of the forthcoming elections.

In order to understand this new situation, one needs to appreciate the specific character of the 1993 Russian elections, which revealed significant differences between the logic of political development in post-Soviet Russia and that in other parts of the world, not only that in say, Southern Europe or in Latin America (Terry, 1993) but also in the post-Communist nations of Eastern Europe as well. In the democratic transitions of Latin America and Southern Europe (O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986) and in Eastern Europe (McFaul, 1994), the final act of the fall of the authoritarian system usually culminated almost immediately in so-called 'founding elections', free and democratic elections that brought to power liberal reformers and provided them with parliamentary majorities. However, in most cases the initial triumph of the liberal reformers has been only temporary, since the very nature of the painful economic reforms that they instituted has generated profound public dissatisfaction and opposition. As a result, the 'second' round of elections has usually been unfavourable to those who initiated the reforms, bringing to power more conservative political forces.

In Russia, the stages in the transition to democracy were quite different, since Yeltsin made a deliberate decision not to conduct the

first ('founding') elections immediately after the fall of the Soviet system in August 1991, preferring to continue to rely on his personal charisma rather than on a parliamentary majority of democrats and liberal reformers. Instead, the government imposed liberal reforms in the economic sphere on the population without adequate parliamentary support. The result was not only growing public opposition (as was the case in other transitions) but also a sharp confrontation with the old parliament inherited from the Soviet past. That is why the elections of December 1993 were only formally and chronologically the 'first' and the 'founding' elections, while, under the logic of the transition, they were actually the 'second', that is, those where reforms and reformers were already in an unfavourable situation and facing growing public opposition.

From this perspective, the results of the December 1993 elections are less surprising. Moreover, the traditional division between the democrats and the anti-democrats (the 'red-brown' opposition), which until recently provided a reliable compass with which to read the map of Russian politics, now appears to clarify a map of the past rather than one of the present. Today, the political landscape of Russia is, at one and the same time, more eroded and more multicoloured.

The context of these events suggests that what has happened in Russia since August 1991 should be seen not so much as a radical break with the Soviet and Communist past but rather as a complex process of the metamorphosis of the old system (Shevtsova, 1995). Elements of the old and the new orders coexist today side by side in the Russian economy and the Russian political system, often producing peculiar amalgams and hybrids. In practical terms, this means, politically, the preservation of the old ruling oligarchy with a sprinkling of new 'democrats' and, economically, the continuation of the monopolistic structure of the old Soviet economy with some fragmentation in the centres of power and influence. With only rudimentary private property holdings and an only partially competitive economic environment, and without adequately structured social and economic interests and political parties to represent them, the result has been the emergence of what many Russians call 'nomenclatura democracy' and

'nomenclatura capitalism' (Bourtin, 1994). The new Russian ruling class – an amalgam of the old and the new elites – remains the main beneficiary of the redistribution of state properties. This new oligarchy includes new 'democratic' elites in the centre, new and powerful regional elites, and new financial specialists and traders, as well as important segments of the old party, state and administrative elites.

The new social order in Russia can be best understood in terms of a pluralism of corporate interest groups and bureaucratic capitalism with very significant criminal elements. Politically, this is not pluralist democracy, since stable democratic institutions are still missing, while basic social interests and social groups are not yet aggregated and are not yet adequately represented by political parties and other political institutions. Economically, this is not free-market capitalism, since the aim of major corporate interest groups today is not the achievement of real private property and competition, but rather mixed semi-state and semi-corporate ownership with state budget guarantees.

While no consensus exists within the new ruling class, there has until now emerged no dominant force that can prevail and bring about another redistribution of power and property. The pluralism of emerging elites and interests also serves as a strong antidote to various authoritarian tendencies and temptations already exhibited both by Yeltsin and his inner circle and by some opposition forces as well. Rather paradoxically in the final analysis, Russia today may not be well prepared either for democracy or for dictatorship.

Even though personalities rather than programmes and ideas may continue to motivate the electorate during the period of the upcoming elections, the most fundamental problem facing Russia is only partly a problem of personalities. The peculiar aspect of political realities in Russia is the fact that the tensions between those in power and the multifaceted opposition are not so much ideological or programmatic as pragmatic. The stakes are clear: it is a contest to decide who is going to continue to redistribute state property and in whose interests this will be done. Consequently, the power struggle in Russia today is not so much a contest over ideas and principles as it is over power *per se* and over the dividends that power bestows.

Increasingly, the power struggle at the top has become self-sufficient and detached from popular interests.

Other elements have further undermined stability. Various political forces and contenders challenged the Civil Accord Agreement of May 1994, so that it barely survived through the autumn of 1994. Labour disputes (miners' strikes being the best example) have increased since that time. And, of course, the war in Chechnia has also tended strongly to polarize both political elites and the population in general.

Fatigue and mistrust

The Russian public today seems to be almost as passive, indifferent, uninterested and/or disillusioned in all things political as it was during the period that Russians call the 'first' stagnation of the Brezhnev era. Nevertheless, there are significant differences in the origins of public apathy in the 1970s and the 1990s. While in some long established democracies the political indifference of the public may underscore general satisfaction with the status quo, today in Russia it instead reflects popular disbelief and public distrust.

One of the most striking and persistent aspects of contemporary public attitudes in Russia is their critical and negative emotional bias. A great majority of Russian respondents reveal fears for their personal and family security (89 per cent), fatigue and indifference (84 per cent), humiliating poverty (79 per cent), aggressiveness (77 per cent), a sense of resentment and social deprivation (71 per cent), disappointment (70 per cent), and confusion (69 per cent). While these negative feelings have increased recently among the Russian public, more positive sentiments have declined, with lower levels of citizens expressing hope (58 per cent), pride in the nation (49 per cent), and a sense of responsibility for what is happening in the country (38 per cent). This essentially negative and critical prism through which many Russians view their society and their political system has become a constant of Russian public opinion during the first post-Soviet years.

At the end of 1994, the majority of Russians believed that the country was moving in the

TABLE 1. Basic attitudes in Russia, 1993 and 1994

Issue area	Response categories	Responses (%)	
		November 1993	November 1994
(1) The country is moving in	right direction	31	16
	wrong direction	46	68
(2) Satisfaction with development of democracy	satisfied	15	8
	not satisfied	71	83
(3) Respect for individual human rights	respect	22	14
	no respect	75	83
(4) Next year will be	better	29	20
	worse	37	47
(5) Personal financial situation has become	better	21	13
	worse	53	56
(6) Personal financial situation will become	better	21	16
	worse	28	37

Source: ROMIR, Ltd. N = 1600 and 1000.

Questions:

- (1) In general, do you feel things in Russia are going in the right or wrong direction?
- (2) On the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy is developing in Russia?
- (3) How much respect is there for individual human rights nowadays in Russia?
- (4) Do you think that 1994 (1995) will be better or worse than 1993 (1994)?
- (5) Compared with twelve months ago, do you think that the situation of your household has got a lot better, a little better, stayed the same, got a little worse, or got a lot worse?
- (6) Over the next twelve months, do you expect the situation of your household will be a lot better, a little better, will stay the same, will be a little worse, or a lot worse?

wrong direction, and they were clearly not satisfied with the development of democracy in the country or with the degree to which individual human rights were respected. As compared with the end of 1993, negative feelings have grown in both areas. Russians have also become more pessimistic in their assessment of the future, both for their society and for themselves.¹

Especially in a society, like Russia, that has been subject to many decades of Marxist-Leninist education, it is tempting to try to explain levels of social and personal pessimism through purely 'material' elements of the situation, such as decreases in the standard of living and rising rates of unemployment. But, in fact, there appears to be no direct correlation between material well-being on the one hand, and life satisfaction, optimism, and pessimism on the other. Some Russians feel miserable because they can no longer afford basic necessities, while others feel much better, either because they belong to the small groups of those who have successfully adapted to the new economy, or because they value most highly their new rights and freedoms. Many Russians now view these rights and freedoms as a given,

as something of which they are no longer willing to be deprived.

From another perspective, one can argue that what some see as political fatigue and mistrust may in fact reflect a profound cultural shift in Russia, a positive change from the traditional Russian-Soviet statism that saw individual citizens merely as dependable parts of a social or governmental whole, to a sort of 'human privatization' in which private interests and individual orientations take precedence (Levada, 1995). This interpretation has considerable validity, and it would have been seen as quite normal if it had not been accompanied by perceptions of a deep, if not insuperable, gap between the state and the individual, between the realms of the public and the private.

In the context of this perceived gap, Russians demonstrate little respect and trust either in most political leaders or in the major institutions of the new Russian political system. Public opinion data from 1995 confirm these attitudes. Until recently, Russians saw the presidency as a symbol of the new Russian democracy, but their increasing distrust of it and of other basic political institutions could certainly



Demonstration by supporters of the dissolved Parliament, Moscow, 3 October 1993 Monika Abraityte/Sygma

lead many Russians to gravitate towards anti-democratic alternatives, working to destabilize democratic elements of their political system. Even more worrying is the significant level of public distrust, not only of the institutions of the state, but also of Russian society itself.

This critical bias of public perceptions on the one hand, and political fatigue and mistrust on the other, may be intertwined. Russian respondents to public opinion surveys seem to perceive the systemic crisis in their country as determined not so much by objective as by subjective forces – that is, not by the unprecedented complexity of the social, political, economic and cultural transformations after the end of the Soviet era, but rather by individual bad will, strategic and tactical mistakes, general incompetence and overall lawlessness and corruption. Thus, the origins of the problems that bedevil Russia today are attributed to Gorbachev (45 per cent), Yeltsin (43 per cent), the Russian mafia (25 per cent), the government

(18 per cent), black marketeers (12 per cent), Communists (11 per cent), democrats and reformers (10 per cent), or Khasbulatov, Rutskoy and the old parliament (8 per cent).

Another important aspect of the general political disillusionment and the loss of trust is the profound public discreditation of those who have a reputation as reform-oriented democrats. At the end of 1994, only 14 per cent of Russians rated democratic reformers positively, while 40 per cent rated them negatively. In the public perception, 'democrats' and 'reformers' are associated today with instability, corruption, and unprofessional behaviour.

While such perceptions could in time discredit the very idea of democracy and economic reforms, it would be premature at this time to equate the public criticisms of 'democrats' and 'reformers' with attitudes that are fundamentally anti-democratic or anti-reform. Russians are not unhappy with reforms *per se* but rather with the specific reforms that have been introduced

TABLE 2. Levels of Russian trust and mistrust in the basic institutions of the State and society, January 1995

	Trust %	Mistrust %
Institutions of the State	75	19
(1) Army*	36	57
(2) Local government	34	53
(3) Legal system	31	67
(4) Police	28	61
(5) National government	28	65
(6) Presidency	22	62
(7) Parliament		
Institutions of society	50	23
(8) Church	48	47
(9) Press	33	49
(10) Trade unions		

Source: ROMIR, Ltd. N = 1600

* There are various indications that the war in Chechnia and especially the poor performance of the Russian military there have significantly decreased the number of those who trust the army, but survey data that would prove this remain unavailable.

Questions: How much trust do you have in:

- (1) Army
- (2) Local government
- (3) Legal system
- (4) Police
- (5) National government
- (6) Presidency
- (7) Parliament
- (8) Church
- (9) Press
- (10) Trade unions?

since January 1992; in fact, many members of the Russian public would press for reforms of a different type. Very few want to return to Communism, with its command economy and bureaucratic system, and the mood is one that Sestanovich (1994, p. 94) has characterized as 'one of worry, not of fanaticism'. What the Russian public seems to want most is a mixed economy and radical reforms in the regional context, reforms that are not imposed from the top but rather emerge at the bottom, as a response to local needs.

Furthermore, public opinion data do not support the one-dimensional image, which is sometimes presented in accounts of the current political transformations in Russia, that equates support for President Yeltsin with pro-democratic and pro-market attitudes. At least in certain cases, the motives behind support for the President and support for reforms may differ. Thus, while Yeltsin wins backing not only

TABLE 3. Images of national and regional leaders in Russia, 1992 and 1995

	Who represents your interests better? July, 1992 %	Which political leaders do a better job? January, 1995 %
(1) Leaders of the Russian Federation	23	12
(2) Regional leaders	19	46
(3) No difference	38	32

Source: ROMIR, Ltd. N = 1300 and 1600

Questions:

- (1) Who represents your interests better: leaders of the Russian Federation, regional leaders, or is there no difference?
- (2) On the whole, which political leaders do a better job: leaders of the Russian Federation, regional leaders, or is there no difference?

from democrats and market-oriented reformers, the opposite may also be true: those who criticize the President and his team are not necessarily anti-democrats or anti-reformers.

Finally, it remains clear that the political mistrust of the Russian public today is directed primarily at politicians and political institutions in Moscow, and only secondarily at politicians and institutions in the various regions of the country. In contrast to the leaders and institutions based in Moscow, those based locally are perceived to be 'closer' to the people and better able to express their needs.

The causes and effects of this regionalist undercurrent and the regionalist bias in Russian public attitudes are still unclear. For example, one cannot say as yet whether the regionalism reflects genuine public perceptions and attitudes or specific policies of regional elites *vis-à-vis* the centre. In the future, this regionalism may certainly threaten the political (as well as the social and economic) stability of Russia as a centralized 'whole'. But, at least in principle, it may also work to create another sort of dynamic stability, one based not on a traditional, vertical hierarchy of power and authority, but rather one grounded in a more decentralized and 'loose' horizontal stability, something previously unknown in Russian/Soviet history.

Market attitudes

Considering the extent of the economic crisis in Russia today, it is not surprising that Russians perceive economic problems as the most pressing. At first glance, the public appears split between those who favour market-oriented solutions and those with anti-market attitudes. Several public opinion surveys in recent years have registered rather substantial support for the market, while other researchers have voiced caution about the actual level of this support (Denisovsky, Kozyreva and Matskovsky, 1993).

Public opinion data suggest that support for the market may be lower and more conditional than is often reported. First, normative support for the market is clearly declining, moving from 32 per cent (as against 53 per cent) in 1993 to 22 per cent (as against 63 per cent) in 1995. Secondly, and even more basically, one needs to consider what specific connotations 'the market' has come to have for Russian citizens and how references to 'the market' in Russian surveys actually relate to the true economic preferences of the public. During earlier stages of the transition, 'the market' became a sort of cliché that referred positively to 'democratic' and 'reformist' orientations, and in this context the voicing of pro-market sentiments may have reflected more political than economic sentiments. During the course of the shock-therapy reforms of early 1992 and the economic burdens that followed for most Russians, the term 'market' has remained a cliché, but now its connotations have become negative, as citizens blamed 'the market' for all their economic misfortunes, even those not created by the market reforms themselves.

The actual economic attitudes of Russians today do not reflect ideological rivalries among opposing doctrines, such as monetarism versus interventionism. Very few are in favour of the extremes of either the 'wild free market' or 'rigid central planning'. Instead, as confirmed by Terry (1993), the majority favour some form of a mixed economy that Russians associate with the New Economic Policy (NEP) of the Soviet Union during the early 1920s. While citizens are highly critical of 'the market', they believe that it is impossible and undesirable to return to central planning and a command economy. The majority support some combi-

nation of the market (which should create economic innovation) with interventionism (which should provide traditional social guarantees).

Since 80 per cent of Russian respondents believe that the government should continue to provide these social guarantees, political leaders must take this attitude into account in designing the course and the pace of reform. Moreover, Russians continue to manifest their traditional egalitarianism and to oppose social polarization resulting from sharp income differentiation and the rise of the 'new rich' and the 'new poor'. The public is almost evenly split between those who agree (42 per cent) and those who disagree (45 per cent) that the government should regulate the profits of large businesses so that nobody makes 'too much' money. Another response that taps specific economic preferences as opposed to purely normative statements measures citizens' views of ownership. Here, the majority of Russians continue to believe that the government should own large industry and that it is proper for private citizens to own mainly small local businesses, such as shops and restaurants.

In evaluating actual economic reforms and the ways in which they should be changed, the majority of Russians are similarly ambivalent. Not only do they flatly reject the 'shock' side of the 'therapy' reforms as leading to unacceptable misery and despair; they also accuse the 'reformers' themselves of abuses, corruption, and pursuing policies of 'grabization' in the name of 'privatization'. At the same time, about 30 per cent of Russian respondents believe that economic reform should be pursued more radically and more rapidly, a view that certainly contradicts the image circulating in some quarters of solid popular resistance to the reforms.

Despite these contrary preferences as to the pace of reform, it remains clear that the Russian public holds a number of beliefs in common: that stability is desirable, that the suffering and corruption associated so far with economic reforms should be reduced, and that there can be no return to the status quo ante. On the contrary, substantial numbers of Russians are looking forward to market reforms that are in a sense more radical, reforms that come from the bottom to the top and that are more socially oriented. Among these respondents are those who believe that there have as yet been no real economic reforms in Russia (29 per cent), that

TABLE 4. Support for ownership by government, by employees, and by private individuals in Russia, January, 1995

Type of property	Ownership by government %	Ownership by employees %	Ownership by private individuals %
Large industry	63	24	8
Local businesses (shops and restaurants)	23	13	57
Former kolhoz and sovhoz property	25	47	23

Source: ROMIR, Ltd.

Questions:

Economic organizations can be owned by the government, employees of the organization, or private individuals. For each type of organization, please tell me whether, in your opinion, the government, the employees or private individuals should own such organizations.

there has been no movement towards a true market economy as opposed to 'nomenklatura capitalism'.

Towards new elections

The members of nearly all political forces in Russia today consider the upcoming parliamentary and presidential elections as a major motivation and goal. Since at least the beginning of 1994, attempts to revise the schedule of elections have been voiced. Since the beginning of the Chechen war, various leaders – including the nationalist Zhirinovskiy, the Communist Zyuganov, and democratic opposition leader Gaidar – have demanded a pre-term presidential re-election, and the chairman of the upper parliamentary chamber, Vladimir Shumeiko, has proposed prolonging the plenary powers of both the president and the parliament.

This proposal received support neither from the population as a whole nor from most political parties. Moreover, opinion polls unambiguously demonstrate that the public is not prepared to accept prolonged terms for already discredited officials. Only 17 per cent of Russian respondents agree that it would be better not to have elections in the coming years, while 28 per cent believe that elections should take place in accordance with the Constitution, and 43 per cent say that those in power should be re-elected as soon as possible. Public opposition has been so strong that Yeltsin in his 1995 presidential address was forced to confirm that the constitutional schedule of elections will be observed.

What will actually happen remains to be seen, however, since a variety of forces push

in a different direction. In the first place, early in 1995, Yeltsin's popularity stood at its lowest level during his presidency, and its decline may well be irreversible. Thus, whether or not to hold free and democratic presidential elections in the summer of 1996 may become a painful personal decision for him. Furthermore, Yeltsin's powerful inner circle and his clientele may fear the outcome of these elections even more than he does, because his fall would be disastrous for their stakes in the current, dramatic round of redistributions of state property. In this context, some political activists have already circulated the rumour that the war in Chechnia was actually motivated in an attempt to create an atmosphere conducive to the introduction of personal or corporate dictatorship.

The impact of this war on Russian politics and on the forthcoming elections may not as yet be fully appreciated. The war may, in fact, prove devastating to Yeltsin's popularity and his chances for re-election.

At the same time, it is certainly too early to make any electoral predictions, especially because of the special, virtually unique position of Yeltsin among Russian leaders. Notwithstanding his dramatic slide in popularity, Yeltsin still heads the list of possible presidential candidates. He remains a special point of reference in Russian politics, and even his political opponents are judged through the prism of his charismatic personality. In other words, Russians see them not so much as alternative candidates but merely as his opponents. ROMIR data demonstrate that, under the assumption that Yeltsin will not run for the presidency, public support for all the other candidates falls dramatically. This may be one



Referendum in Russia, 1993 *Frédérique Lengaigne/Gamma*

TABLE 5. Russian levels of confidence in President Boris Yeltsin, February 1995

Issue area	Response categories	Responses %
(1) Confidence in Yeltsin	a great deal	1
	a fair amount	17
	a little	37
	none at all	42
(2) Confidence in Yeltsin as a result of what is going on in Chechnia	increased	2
	decreased	52
	remained unchanged	43
(3) Agree with a call for Yeltsin to resign	yes	56
	no	30

Source: ROMIR, Ltd.

Questions:

- (1) How much confidence do you have in President Yeltsin: a great deal, a fair amount, a little, none at all?
- (2) Has your confidence in him increased, decreased, or remained unchanged as a result of what is going on in Chechnya?
- (3) Some Russian parliamentarians have called for President Yeltsin to resign. Do you favour or oppose him doing so?

TABLE 6. Presidential voting intentions in Russia, 1994 and 1995

Candidates	Would vote for (October 1994) %	If Yeltsin does not run, would vote for (February 1995) %
Yeltsin	14	—
Rutskoy	7	2
Yavlinsky	5	2
Zhirinovskiy	4	2
Zyuganov	4	2
Gaidar	2	1
Chernomyrdin	2	0.3
None, would not vote, don't know, no answer	45	72

Source: ROMIR, Ltd. N = 1600

Questions:

- (1) If presidential elections took place next month, for whom would you vote?
- (2) For whom would you vote if Yeltsin does not run in the next presidential elections?
- (3) If an extraordinary presidential election were to be held today, for which political leader would you vote?

more indication of public mistrust of politicians and the gap between them and the Russian public, and it may also support one reason for Yeltsin's popularity. With his crusade against the Soviet system at the end of the 1980s, Yeltsin acquired the unmistakable image of a 'radical'. After becoming president, he has lost some of his 'radical' image, but the Russian public continues to see him as more radical than the majority of ordinary Russians.

In the face of this image of Yeltsin, the ideological and personal self-identification of Russians has remained remarkably stable and clearly centrist. Most people continue to think of themselves as centrists and fail to identify themselves with ideological or political extremes.

This inclination toward centrism has important implications. While the political centre stands practically vacant in 1995, one might expect that, especially in the climate of political fatigue that survey data show so many Russians to feel, the centre may provide rewarding orientations for candidates and parties as the elections approach. A specific confirmation of this centrist appeal appears in the various attempts to revitalize social-democratic ideas and movements, even though these attempts have not been successful so far.

In the same context one should read Yeltsin's recent initiative to create two centrist electoral blocks (centre right and centre left) headed by Victor Chernomyrdin and Ivan Rybkin and

both representing two wings of the 'party of power'. If this initiative proves successful it may create additional obstacles for the emergence of the real multi-party system in Russia.

As the next elections approach, there will be continuing shortcomings in the still embryonic democratic system. The post-totalitarian society of Russia remains unstructured, without a crystallization of effective political parties and social and economic interest groups. In fact, there is still no developed multi-party system. The electoral results of December 1993 made the effects of these shortcomings painfully evident, and the results of the forthcoming elections are likely to do so as well.

Today, public disillusionment with the party system helps to explain the significant decrease (from 48 per cent in 1992 to 34 per cent in 1994) in the numbers of those who believe that party competition will make the Russian political system stronger. Russians do not demonstrate stable party identifications. More than 40 per cent of the respondents in ROMIR surveys express no support for political parties, while the major parties represented in parliament can muster only very limited support: 13 per cent for the Democratic Choice of Russia (Russia's Choice), 12 per cent for the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, 10 per cent for YABLOKO, 7 per cent for the Liberal-Democratic Party of Russia, 6 per cent for Women of Russia, and 2 per cent for the Party of Russian Unity and Accord.

TABLE 7. Russian views of radicalism and conservatism, for themselves and for Boris Yeltsin, 1992 and 1995

Scales of Radicalism and Conservatism	Responses July 1992 %	Responses January 1995 %
Place yourself on a scale from:		
1 (extremely radical)	3	3
2	8	5
3	18	10
4	33	33
5	9	10
6	4	5
7 (extremely conservative)	2	6
Place Boris Yeltsin on a scale from:		
1 (extremely radical)	11	8
2	21	10
3	20	10
4	10	14
5	5	4
6	2	6
7 (extremely conservative)	2	6

Source: ROMIR, Ltd. N = 1300 and 1600.

Questions:

- (1) How would you place yourself on the scale from 1 (extremely radical) to 7 (extremely conservative)?
- (2) How would you place Boris Yeltsin on the scale from 1 (extremely radical) to 7 (extremely conservative)?

Cross-tabulating some of the data provides additional insight into the demographics of party identification. Education and age are, as always, robust factors that work to determine the pro-reform vote (that for the Democratic Choice of Russia and for YABLOKO). Communists are stronger among pensioners and people with lower educational backgrounds. Another opposition party – the Agrarian Party – remains corporatist, with strong support from people in agriculture. Zhirinovskiy's party has also garnered more support in rural areas than one would have expected from surveys done immediately after the elections of December 1993. Finally, analysing the data by social group suggests that electoral absenteeism may be especially high among some groups: people in private business, the unemployed, and those in agriculture.

When the parliamentary elections come, the weak level of party identification may lead to unstructured and spontaneous forms of political participation, as well as to unpredictable electoral results. At the same time, the even weaker levels of identification with those parties that are not represented in parliament makes unex-

pected breakthroughs of marginal political forces even less likely.

Survey data also speak to the issue of authoritarianism in Russia. Actually, appeals for authoritarianism mean different things to different people. For some, the appeals reflect either nostalgia for the past or conservative or nationalist reactions against change. Some respondents regard political authoritarianism (of the type represented by Augusto Pinochet Ugarte in Chile, for example) as the condition for Russia's transition to a market economy. Some (Migranian, 1994) even argue that some sort of 'enlightened authoritarianism' is a necessary intermediary step in the movement from totalitarianism to democracy.

Where does the Russian public stand on this issue? On one hand, Russians definitely want to stop chaos and anarchy, corruption and lawlessness, and this may be interpreted as a bias toward authoritarianism. Some data are striking in this regard: 80 per cent agree that Russia needs strong leadership more than democracy, and 87 per cent believe that it is better to live in an orderly society than to allow people so much freedom that they become

disruptive. Such data easily lead to the conclusion that there remains at least some support for authoritarianism in Russia today.

At the same time, however, there is also reason to believe that the 'strong hand' that Russians advocate differs substantially from an advocacy of authoritarianism and dictatorship. To many, the image of the 'strong hand' evokes a good manager with enough authority to put the house in order (Kliamkin, 1993). In terms of Russian attitudes, this does not mean accepting political authoritarianism to advance market reforms. In fact, exactly the opposite is true; the public would rather call for at least some authoritarian regulation of the economy in order to protect social guarantees and individual rights against lawlessness and anarchy. Calls for law and order may also reflect public rejection of the corruption of the new nomenclatura system and its merging with elements of organized crime. If so, these calls do not contain an anti-democratic message, as is usually supposed; instead, they reveal quite the opposite meaning.

Conclusion

Recent data, therefore, do not confirm arguments for an anti-reform, anti-democratic, authoritarian or nationalist backlash among Russian citizens, one that all too many commentators have described as being rooted in the allegedly conservative or egalitarian instincts of the Russian people. Economically, the public does not favour the extremes of either monetarism

or interventionism; rather, it supports the ideal of a mixed economy, which includes market incentives and the preservation of social guarantees. Politically, widespread distrust of the 'democrats' does not translate into support for dictatorship of any kind. Russians look towards the restoration of law and order in their country, but they still want to preserve 'the best of two worlds', gaining individual freedoms but not sacrificing social guarantees.

Overall, Russians thus remain centrist in their orientations. But the political centre in the country stands vacant, occupied as yet by no significant political parties or forces. Political identifications are weak, and a multi-party system is yet to be created.

While it is still early to make predictions about the next round of parliamentary and presidential elections, there is reason to expect a low level of electoral activity with considerable absenteeism. Russians feel alienated from the 'old' (Communist) and the 'new' (democratic) establishments, so that candidates with anti-establishment platforms and those who are not yet 'tarnished' by holding power may have better chances of election than do those from the new nomenclatura. Yeltsin's popularity is remarkably low, but he continues to play the special role of a peculiar reference figure in Russian politics. In the elections that are to come, successful candidates will have to take into account these various dimensions of the electoral scene, and, in understanding that scene, they will take the findings of public opinion research more and more into account.

Note

1. All data in tables are from ROMIR polls based on a representative sample for the Russian Federation.

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