

The Dynamics of Presidential Popularity in Post-Communist Russia:

How Exceptional are Russian Politics?

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Introduction:

Boris Yeltsin sprang one last surprise on the political world on December 31, 1999, resigning as President of the Russian Federation six months in advance of the end of his term. Reactions in Moscow and throughout Russia about the timing and terms of the resignation were mixed, but few regretted Yeltsin's ultimate departure from the political stage. "Yeltsin fatigue" was palpable and widespread both inside Russia and beyond.

President Yeltsin dominated Russian politics for almost a decade. A symbol of the overthrow of the old order, he was twice elected President of the Russian Federation and used his influence to rewrite the Russian constitution, creating a system with extraordinary executive powers. Yeltsin campaigned successfully for the approval of the constitution in a nationwide referendum that became a referendum on his leadership. He then made extensive use of the executive powers provided by the constitution, only slightly impeded by a fragmented and

generally ineffectual, albeit hostile, Duma. While Yeltsin presided over the dismantling of the Soviet command economy and the establishment of a more market-oriented economy, his tenure was marked by unprecedented economic hardship and depression. Having come to power on a wave of public enthusiasm, Yeltsin's popularity fluctuated widely while declining substantially across the decade. By the time he announced his resignation, his popular support had evaporated along with his political prestige among Russian lawmakers, regional officials and other political elites.

While the details of Yeltsin's rise and decline are well known and widely documented (e.g., Aron, 2000), there are competing explanations of the dynamics that underlie these dramatic fluctuations in Russian public opinion. From a Russian exceptionalist perspective, Yeltsin's rise and decline must be understood in the context of Russia's unique history and culture – a history of strong leaders and authoritarian rule and a culture inhospitable to Western democratic forms and practices. From the exceptionalist perspective, Yeltsin's initial popularity can be understood as an expression of the public's nationalist pride and its preference for a strong leader in an environment of national decline and democratic disorder. His rise to power can be understood as having been grounded in his identification with and championing of Russian national interests and sovereignty. Conversely, his subsequent loss of popular support can be understood as the inevitable manifestation of Russia's hostility to alien democratic forms, of Yeltsin's perceived weakness, and of his failure to address nationalist longings in the midst of a profound contraction of Russian power and international prestige.

From a democratic theory perspective, in contrast, the dynamics of the Russian presidency can be understood as the manifestation of ordinary democratic politics – the predictable results of a series of social, economic, and political conditions and events whose effects on public opinion would have been much the same regardless of Russian political culture. From this perspective, it is unnecessary to look beyond Yeltsin's failure to provide peace and prosperity, protect Russian power interests, or otherwise to deliver policies that the public desired. Deteriorating domestic conditions, an economy in crisis, declining international power and prestige and a series of seemingly ineffectual policy responses all combined to undermine Yeltsin's political standing. Under the circumstances, his loss of popularity was inevitable. Indeed, his popularity might have fallen faster and further had rival leaders and institutions not

been perceived as equally ineffectual.

This paper assesses how exceptional recent Russian politics have been by developing a political support model of democratic presidential popularity and testing it against the Russian experience. We do so by drawing upon an extensive literature on political support models in established democracies. Existing research on Western democracies identifies a relatively small number of common factors that underlie and determine fluctuations in public support for both political parties and leaders (president or prime minister). These include long-term factors such as party identification and the inertia of public attitudes as well as shorter-term influences such as fluctuations in political and economic performance, the popularity of rival leaders, and various economic and political events such as wars, economic crises, and political scandals.

To test the model we use time-series methods and monthly, aggregate data on presidential popularity in Russia across the whole of Yeltsin's presidency from mid-1991 through the end of 1999. We find that Western models of executive popularity perform very well in explaining fluctuations in Yeltsin's popularity across his tenure. Much like Margaret Thatcher, one of the most unpopular but longest serving Prime Ministers in recent British history (Mishler, Hoskin and Campbell, 1989, Norpoth, 1992), Yeltsin was, for most of his tenure, a highly unpopular political leader who was able to rally public support at critical junctures, for instance, to secure approval of the December 1993 Constitution and to gain reelection in 1996. While Yeltsin's increasing unpopularity was partly a function of a string of policy failures, including especially the collapse of the economy and the stalemate in Chechnya, it also was substantially a product of growing public weariness with rule by executive decree and with Yeltsin's erratic behavior as reflected both in the increasing instability in the executive branch and in his continuing health problems. Although Yeltsin was able to use his powers effectively at critical junctures, not least because of the incompetence of his rivals, his popularity suffered over the long run because of his inability to respond adequately to Russia's fundamental domestic and foreign policy challenges. Thus, while the details of the Russian case are unique, the political dynamics of political support in Russia conform to general democratic patterns.

Russian Public Opinion in Russia:

Public opinion traditionally has been of little concern to students of Soviet government

and politics.¹ Not only was the public excluded from any meaningful role in the selection of political leaders, but public sentiment was largely irrelevant to the power, prestige and political agendas of political leaders as well. The selection and survival of Soviet leaders depended substantially on the leaders' support among relatively small group of political elites and was almost wholly divorced from public acceptance or approval (e.g., White, 1990, Willerton, 1992).

Among Western democracies, by contrast, scholarly concern with popular support for political leaders has reflected not only an appreciation of the importance of elections for selecting leaders but also of the impact of public popularity on leaders' effectiveness in office. Regarding the latter, for example, Neustadt (1976) demonstrates in the American setting how the President's public prestige is converted into political influence pressuring the legislative and even the judicial branches to support the President and his agenda. While Edwards (1980: 86) cautions that Presidential influence occurs mostly at the margins, he nevertheless concludes that, in the American case, "...widespread popularity gives the president leeway and decreases resistance to his policies."

Beginning with the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev a series of important changes in Soviet/Russian politics has transformed the role of public opinion. Recognizing the importance of public opinion as a potential ally in his efforts to reform the Soviet system, Gorbachev introduced a series of measures to open at least some aspects of the political system to public involvement. The logic of perestroika was grounded in glasnost and dependent upon the manipulation of these bottom-up pressures. While Gorbachev initiated these changes, Yeltsin proved himself especially adept at exploiting them, using public opinion, first, to transform and, ultimately, to end the Soviet system. As President of Russia, Yeltsin continued to use his public standing and prestige variously to pressure the opposition controlled Duma or to bypass it and appeal directly to the public, as in the referendum on the 1993 constitution.

While public opinion, arguably, is still not as important in Russia as in many Western democracies, there is no denying its increasing salience for Russian politics. Competitive

¹ Jerry Hough (1979) was one of the few to give any serious attention to public opinion in Soviet Russia; even the more sophisticated Soviet politics texts essentially ignored the matter of any role for bottom-up public pressures in the Soviet system (e.g., Barry and Barner-Barry, 1987).

elections are now an accepted feature of the political landscape in Russia, having both removed a number of once well-ensconced incumbents and brought into the public limelight unknown and even fringe elements. Bottom-up pressures are increasingly felt by Russian policy makers as well, including the country's chief executive. Recognizing this, Russian politicians have quickly adapted, learning to use public opinion to their advantage. It is against this background, then, that we seek to understand the dynamics of popular support for the Russian president.

How exceptional is Russia?

A venerable though much debated thesis in the literature on Russian politics and society holds that Russia is unique. The argument, as Gennady Zyuganov has expressed it, is that "Russia is a special world ... a special type of civilization," and one "hostile in its soul to the ... extreme individualism, militant soullessness, religious indifference and adherence to mass culture" of the West (*The Economist*, 15 June 1996). In political terms, the Russian exceptionalist hypothesis holds that liberal democracy is incompatible with Russia's historically authoritarian culture (Keenan, 1986; see the summary comments in Dallin, 1995: 257-60). Russia never was part of the Roman empire, never experienced the Renaissance and never participated in the Enlightenment. Thus, many of the historical experiences that gave rise to the liberal political cultures of Western democracies were either absent or arrived late in the Russian setting. Compared to Western societies, Russia's culture is said to be naturally collectivist, inherently autocratic, passionately nationalistic, and rabidly anti-Western (Joyce, 1984). As such the exceptionalist contention is that Western philosophies and institutions, including democracy and markets, cannot take root in Russian soil. Moreover, Russian authoritarian proclivities are seen as severely shaping any putatively democratic constructs introduced to the country (Levada, 1995; Kutkovets and Klyamkin, 1997).

The rapid rise and lingering decline of Boris Yeltsin are interpreted by Russian exceptionalists as evidence of the validity of this thesis. To exceptionalists, Yeltsin's initial popularity and rise to power were consequences of his mastery of traditional Russian power politics and his effective use of nationalist appeals. More generally, Yeltsin's early popularity was at least partly a reflection of Russians' traditional reverence for strong leaders. Similarly, exceptionalists attribute Yeltsin's popularity decline to a combination of factors including Russia's predictable rejection of the Western institutions and economic reforms with which

Yeltsin came to be associated, the increasingly nationalist appeals of both left and right opposition leaders such as Aleksandr Lebed, Vladimir Zhirinovsky and Gennady Zyuganov, and the public's increasing contempt for Yeltsin as a weak and erratic leader who not only contributed to the dismantling of the Soviet Empire but who also appeared to permit the break-up of the Russian Federation. More generally, Yeltsin's rise and decline are viewed as evidence of Russian instability and the willingness of the Russian masses to swing from one populist leader to another. From this perspective, Yeltsin was embraced initially by Russians as a nationalist antidote to Gorbachev, but his support rapidly evaporated as Yeltsin appeared increasingly weak and unable or unwilling to protect Russian national interests. Thus, Yeltsin was compelled to coopt a strong nationalist, Aleksandr Lebed, to ensure his 1996 reelection, and Yeltsin sought to bolster his position by including increasingly hardline elements in his administration tied to both the nationalist right and left.²

While not denying that Russia history and culture are distinctive -- and what country's are not³ -- an alternative perspective argues that Russia's distinctive character is manifested in conventional ways that are entirely consistent with democratic theory. Many political cultures have a nationalistic streak, including such capitalist democracies as Germany, Japan, and the United States. Germany and Japan also have strong authoritarian and collectivist traditions, yet both successfully negotiated relatively rapid transitions to democracy. It is true, of course, that Yeltsin was an unpopular leader whose public standing vacillated sharply across his tenure. The same could be said, however, of Margaret Thatcher, Jimmy Carter or Francois Mitterrand (Norpoth, 1992, Clarke and Elliott, 1990, Hanley, 1996)

From a democratic theory perspective, there is no need to invoke Russia's unique history or culture to account for Yeltsin's fluctuating popularity. The ebb and flow of public support for

² Predictions about the Russian future posited by Yergin and Gustafson appear to be significantly influenced a Russian exceptionalist thinking. See Daniel Yergin and Thane Gustafson, *Russia 2010 and What It Means for the World*, N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1995.

³ The exceptionalist hypothesis is far from being exceptional or limited to Russia. Lipset (1990) among others has written widely on the idea of American exceptionalism, and, in one guise or another, exceptionalist hypotheses have been used to distinguish parts or all of Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin American.

Yeltsin can be explained, quite conventionally in line with existing theory as predictable consequences of citizens' rational evaluations of Yeltsin's actions and behavior as conditioned by the circumstances and events surrounding his presidency. According to this perspective, no Western democratic president or prime minister could reasonably have survived ten years in office with their popularity in tact if confronted with Russia's severe economic contraction, triple digit inflation, double digit unemployment, currency devaluation, and the humiliating stalemate in a civil war against a tiny region. Indeed, the remarkable aspect of Yeltsin's tenure, is not that it ended with his popularity exhausted, but that he survived for nearly a decade, despite formidable obstacles, and managed in the process to win two high stakes national elections while guiding the Russian Federation through the dismantling of a seventy-four year old political and economic system.

Trends in Russian Presidential Support

To understand public support for the Russian presidency, we use aggregate, public opinion data collected by VCIOM, the Russian Center for Public Opinion Research. VCIOM conducts regular public opinion surveys with a national probability sample of voting-age citizens across the Russian Federation. To measure popular support for Yeltsin, VCIOM regularly includes a question, *What mark on a scale from 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest) would you give the performance of President of Russia, _____?* The question was asked every month in surveys during the first two years of Yeltsin's tenure and every other month for most of the period after 1993.

Figure 1 displays the trends in public support for Soviet/Russian political leaders from 1991 through early 2000. As is evident, the long-term pattern of Yeltsin's popularity is substantially an unhappy one. Yeltsin came to power in Russia in June 1991 on a wave of considerable public enthusiasm. While his initial support as President of the Russian Republic was nearly half again as high as that of USSR President, Mikhail Gorbachev, Yeltsin's popularity began dropping almost immediately after he entered office. Across his first eight months Yeltsin had lost nearly a third of his support, and his popularity stood at about the same level as Gorbachev's popularity at the time of the Soviet Union's demise. Yeltsin's popularity stabilized in 1992 and remained relatively constant into 1994 before dropping again soon after the onset of the Chechen conflict. Yeltsin's popularity surged briefly in 1996 in the run-up to

the June-July presidential elections, but quickly fell back to pre-election levels following his re-election, before further plummeting in 1998 following the devaluation of the ruble. Finally, Yeltsin's popularity bottomed out in 1998 and remained at rock bottom levels throughout the remainder of his presidency before rising slightly the month after he resigned his office.

Meanwhile, Vladimir Putin, widely credited for his populist touch, began his tenure as Prime Minister with a level of popular support about on a par with Yeltsin's long-term average support. Putin's support, however, was propelled to a level rivaling Yeltsin's highest level in the aftermath of the December 1999 parliamentary elections and the decision earlier that fall to recommit troops to Chechnya.

For Russian exceptionalists, the pattern in Figure 1 demonstrates simultaneously the Russian public's enthusiasm for strong leaders, the unpredictable almost fickle quality of public opinion, and the hostility of Russian culture to democratic leaders and reforms. These are reflected variously in the very high initial support enjoyed by Gorbachev, Yeltsin and Putin, the sharp and substantial variations in popular support for each of these leaders over time, and the continuing declining and ultimate low level of support experienced by Yeltsin across his tenure. The clear implication of the exceptionalists' interpretation is that this volatility and the overall (low) level of support for Russian leaders are fundamentally different than what would obtain for elected leaders in a stable Western democracy.

To determine how exceptional the pattern of Yeltsin's support was across the decade, Figure 2 compares public support for Yeltsin across his tenure with the public support enjoyed by American President Ronald Reagan and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher during their respective terms in office.⁴ There are many differences in these three series, of course, reflecting not only the unique circumstances and events within each of these countries during the three periods, but also reflecting the fact that the three time-series cover very different historical epochs. Nevertheless, the overall patterns and dynamics of the three series are remarkably

⁴ Data for Reagan and Thatcher are derived from monthly Gallup polls in their respective countries. The Gallup Surveys measure the percent "approving" the job being done by the President or the percent "satisfied" with Mrs Thatcher as Prime Minister. Since these are measured on a 100 point scale while support for Yeltsin is measured on a ten point scale, we have simply divided British and American support by 10 to create a common 10-point metric.

alike. Indeed, if labels were not provided, and in the absence of a detailed knowledge of the histories of these three administrations, it would be difficult to differentiate the Russian data from the two Western series.

Over the first two and a half years of these administrations, popular support for the three leaders is almost identical. At the start of these administrations, Reagan enjoyed the highest approval levels. Yeltsin was close behind with Thatcher a distant third. During their first 30 months in office, all three leaders suffered a significant loss of public support. On average, Reagan had the highest overall popularity levels during this period while Thatcher was least popular. Yeltsin's popularity briefly slipped into last place early in his second year then rebounded into first place just as briefly near the end of his second year. In the middle of their third year in office, Margaret Thatcher went to war with Argentina, Reagan invaded Grenada, Yeltsin sent troops into Chechnya, and the popularity of the three leaders sharply diverged thereafter. Buoyed by their swift and certain victories over tiny nations, Thatcher and Reagan experienced a strong resurgence of popular support following these conflicts. Yeltsin's popularity, however, continued to fall as the Chechen conflict dragged on with little prospect of an early or easy victory. As a consequence, a large gap opened up between Thatcher's and Reagan's popularity on the one hand and Yeltsin's on the other. Another similarity in these series is that all three leaders demonstrated a knack for raising their public approval in the run-up to elections. For Reagan and Thatcher this occurs at the end of the first four years and for Thatcher again in her ninth year. For Yeltsin it occurs in the middle of his second year and again at the end of his fifth year.

Across his entire term of office, Yeltsin's support ranged between 1.8 and 6.0, averaging 3.3 on the 10-point scale. Reagan clearly enjoyed much greater support across his tenure; his support averaged 5.3 and ranged between 3.3 and 6.8. Thatcher's support, was more similar to Yeltsin's than to Reagan's, averaging only 3.9 across her tenure and ranging between 2.3 and 5.3. While the volatility of Yeltsin's support was the highest of the three as measured by the standard deviation of the series ($sd = .88$), it is only modestly higher than the standard deviation for Thatcher's and Reagan's popularity ($sd = .71$ and $.75$ respectively). While there are clear differences in Yeltsin's popularity as compared to Margaret Thatcher or Ronald Reagan, the differences between Yeltsin and the two prototypical democratic leaders are no greater than the

differences between Reagan and Thatcher. In any case, these differences appear to be differences of modest degree and not of kind.

Modeling Political Support

By definition exceptionalist arguments are impossible to test empirically since there is no way to demonstrate systematically that a pattern is unique or derived from unique historical/cultural roots. Thus, to determine how exceptional the dynamics of Russian politics have been we test the “null hypothesis” of Russian ‘conventionalism,’ the idea that Russia manifests its unique characteristics in predictable ways consistent with established theory. To do so we construct and test a model of popular support for President Yeltsin drawing upon existing research on the dynamics of political support for parties and leaders in Western democracies.

Research on the dynamics of political support has made enormous progress over the past two decades both theoretically and methodologically. Vote and popularity (VP) functions, as they frequently are called, are a growth stock; in a recent review of this literature, Lewis-Beck and Paldam (2000) count more than 200 published books and articles on the topic.⁵ This literature is not only extensive, but it also is among the most systematically comparative in the discipline. VP-functions have been produced for a very large percentage of the countries that have sustained electoral democracy over at least the past two decades.

Although the specific form of VP-functions varies modestly from study to study, there is remarkable consensus on the basic structure of the model across both countries and time. At a minimum, a properly specified VP-function includes four broad categories of variables. The first entails the long-term political predispositions or loyalties of citizens. In the Michigan model of electoral behavior these are reflected in party identification. In VP models, however, these may be reflected more broadly in the simple inertia of public opinion over long time periods or in the near universal tendency of incumbent leaders over time to confront a growing “coalition of minorities” opposed to the specific decisions that the leaders must make (Muller, 1973).

A second set of influences on popular support involves issues. Most commonly these are

⁵ Further indicative of the volume of research in the area is the number of review essays, previous reviews include Paldam (1981), Lewis-Beck (1988), Clarke et al. (1992), Norpoth et al. (1996), and Nannestad and Paldam (1997).

economic issues, including especially inflation, unemployment, the ‘misery’ index, interest rates and growth (see, for example, Hibbs, 1987, Kieweit, 1983, Mackuen, Erickson and Stimson, 1992). Non-economic issues also frequently have important effects, including both social and, occasionally, foreign policy issues, the later, especially during periods of war (Clarke et. al, 1990).

A third component of standard VP-functions is leadership images which include the images/popularity of rival parties and leaders (Clarke, Stewart and Zuk, 1986. Finally, VP-functions often include a variety of both systematic and random “shocks” – which can rally or depress popular support for leaders or parties over varying lengths of time. Systematic shocks include relatively predictable or controllable events such as elections or periodic changes in leadership, whereas random shocks include more unpredictable or uncontrollable events such as wars, economic or political crises, scandals or the death or incapacitation of a leader.

The empirical specification of a theoretical model inevitably requires compromises owing both to contextual considerations and, especially, to data limitations. For example, in estimating a VP-function for the Russian presidency, we are limited by the fact that stable, mass-based, political parties have yet to emerge in post-Soviet Russia beyond the Communist Party. Consequently, there is little in the way of enduring party loyalties to shape citizen attitudes (White, Rose and McAllister, 1997).

The absence of strong parties and party loyalties, however, does not mean that Russian politics lack a long-term political dynamic. To the contrary, the central feature of Russian politics throughout the period of Yeltsin’s presidency was Yeltsin himself. Love or hate him, few citizens felt neutral about him, and their evaluations of Yeltsin at any moment inevitably shaped and colored their evaluations of other aspects of Russian political life, thereby reinforcing subsequent evaluations of Yeltsin. This dynamic can be modeled very easily in a VP-function simply by including a one month lagged measure of public evaluations of Yeltsin (t-1) on the ‘right hand’ side of the VP equation.. In addition to capturing the long-term dynamic or inertia of Yeltsin’s popularity,⁶ the inclusion of the popularity variable has nice econometric

⁶ This specification conforms as well to Fiorina’s (1981) conception of party support as a running tally of retrospective evaluations in which $PID_t = PID_{t-1} + RE_t$; where PID is party identification and RE refers to citizens’ retrospective economic and political evaluations.

properties that aid in estimating the function.

Another long-term dynamic of presidential popularity is the tendency of presidential support to dissipate over time. Newly elected political leaders typically come to office on a high tide of public support as a consequence of their election victory. Over time, however, initial support begins to wane as the president begins to make decisions on controversial issues. Even if the president acts in support of the majority position on issues, she risks alienating the minority of voters on the losing side of that issue. As the number of decisions grows, so does the number of minorities on the losing side of issues, thus increasing inexorably the “coalition” of those disaffected with the president’s role. Although in most VP models the coalition of minorities is measured with a simple “time” variable that serves as a proxy for the number of decisions a leader makes, we measure the Russian presidential decisions more directly. Specifically, we focus on the number of normative executive decrees promulgated by the Russian President each month. As noted previously, Yeltsin made widespread use of his extraordinary executive decree authority, issuing well in excess of two thousand decrees across his tenure (Mishler, Willerton and Smith, 2000). Of these approximately 25 percent were what we categorize as pork barrel decrees in that they provided particularized benefits to categorical groups such as increased pensions for the elderly or tax breaks for a specific industry. To assess the impact of executive decrees on his public standing we use two variables. The first is the number of pork barrel decrees issued by the President each month, and the second is the number of all other “policy decrees.” Although the coalition of minorities hypothesis suggests both variables should have negative effects on the president’s popularity over time, our expectation is that pork barrel decrees should have a larger negative effect in that they tend to benefit the few at the expense of the many.

At the heart of most political support models is an implicit assumption of voter rationality and the idea that citizen evaluations hinge substantially upon individual assessments of government performance. The underlying assumption, typically, is that voters are utility maximizing materialists, which is reflected in VP models by an emphasis on economic outcomes, typically inflation and unemployment (Downs, 1957). While objective economic conditions are important, subjective evaluations of the economy have been found in Western democracies to have even greater impact on leadership evaluations (Sanders 1991, 2000). A

continuing controversy in the literature, however, concerns the nature of the economy's effects on VP-functions, specifically, whether voters are more concerned with their personal economic situations or with the performance of the economy more broadly. A related controversy concerns whether citizens are more likely to evaluate the economy retrospectively or to discount past performance emphasizing prospective economic conditions. While the preponderance of evidence with regard to Russia seems to support the primacy of retrospective sociotropic evaluations, all forms of economic evaluation are potentially salient (Duch, 1995, Miller et al, 1996; Hesli and Bashkirova 2000). Unfortunately, VCIOM did not include a measure of retrospective sociotropic evaluations in its monthly surveys until 1993. It did include, however, a prospective sociotropic measure. Thus, we measure economic influences on Russian presidential popularity with two variables: the natural log of the consumer price index,⁷ and a measure of citizens' evaluations of the economy as they expect it to perform over the next few months.

Although economic variables typically occupy pride of place in VP-functions, political performance has been shown to be important as well (Clarke, Kornberg and Dutt, 1993; Evans and Whitefield, 1995; Rose, Mishler and Haerpher, 1998). To measure political performance, we include four variables. The first is a subjective measure based on a VCIOM question asking respondents, "What do you think Russia should expect in political life in the forthcoming months?" Our hypothesis is that higher levels of public optimism about the political future should produce higher levels of public support for the president.

A second measure of political performance involves the level of turnover among high level officials in the Russian federal executive. Political leaders frequently make subordinates scapegoats for policies or decisions that go awry. Yeltsin appointed and dismissed top-level officials repeatedly, with personnel rotation a hallmark of his leadership style. Indeed, as his term advanced, Yeltsin increased the turnover of personnel, with the high-profile rotation of prime ministers especially noteworthy. This tactic, while potentially useful in the short-run, can

⁷ There is a high degree of multi-collinearity among objective indicators of Russia's economy over this period which dictates the inclusion of a single representative indicator. CPI is a standard index. The decision to use natural log transformation in keeping with econometric conventions and is designed to limit the impact of cases which are extreme outliers.

have serious, adverse long-term consequences. If used repeatedly, however, the tactic can be viewed as a sign of weakness or as evidence of erratic behavior. To test this, we calculate the cumulative number of changes, month to month, among high ranking government officials. Our hypothesis is that increasing turnover in the Russian executive will have a negative effect on presidential support.

Even in an executive dominated system such as that of the Russian Federation, the president and presidency are but two among a series of political actors competing for public support. The level of public support for other actors is important in at least two respects. First, levels of public support for other actors can have direct effects on the support enjoyed by the president. For example, as public support for an opposition leader increases, the president may appear dull and lackluster in comparison, and his popular support can suffer as a result. Conversely, as support increases for an ally of the president such as his prime minister, the president may benefit from the reflected glow.⁸ In PV-functions, leadership effects typically are modeled with public opinion data on the popularity of other actors. In this regard, the VCIOM surveys routinely include two questions soliciting the public support for the Russian prime minister and for the Duma. The data unfortunately are not available systematically until 1994, three years into Yeltsin's term.

While VP-functions assume that political support for leaders and parties is driven substantially by public assessments of the leaders' policies and actions, they also recognize that popular support for leaders can be affected by a variety of short to medium term political shocks such as the outbreak of war, a stock market crash, or a political coup or assassination. While some of these shocks are unpredictable and largely uncontrollable by a political leader, others are more predictable and subject to political influence if not control. Among the later are election campaigns which have been shown in other settings to have important effects on leader popularity (usually positively) in large part because incumbent leaders typically enjoys substantial advantages in gaining media attention and controlling the political agenda during election campaigns. This has been particularly true in Russia, where the president's use of the

⁸ In Britain, for example, research demonstrates that support for Margaret Thatcher early in her term was substantially buoyed by the public's low regard for Labour leader, Michael Foot (Mishler, Hoskin and Fitzgerald, 1989).

state controlled media during election campaigns has been widely cited as a principal factor in both post-Soviet presidential elections. Since the Russian president is not formally affiliated with a political party, he arguably has less of a stake in parliamentary elections and presumably would invest less heavily in trying to influence its outcomes.. Nevertheless, Yeltsin and his political team have played prominent roles in each of the parliamentary elections as well. To measure the effect election campaigns and of the associated media attention on the president's popularity we construct separate dummy variables for presidential and parliamentary elections. The parliamentary variables are coded '1' in the two months preceding parliamentary elections and "0" otherwise. Reflecting the somewhat longer presidential campaigns which typically include a run-off election, the presidential election variable is coded "1" in the three months preceding presidential elections and "0" otherwise.

Whereas successful wars can quickly boost a president's popularity, at least in the short run,⁹ unsuccessful wars can cause political support to hemorrhage just as quickly. As observed in Figure 2, unlike -the Falklands war and invasion of Grenada which were quickly followed by sharp increases in leadership popularity, in Russia, the first of the two incursions into Chechnya appeared to exert a serious drag on Yeltsin's popularity almost from its start. To measure this effect we include a dummy variable coded 1 from the outset of the Chechen conflict in December 1994 through the signing of a cease fire and the beginning of the Russian troop withdrawal in August 1996. Putin's decisions to bomb Chechnya in August 1999 and to recommit ground forces at the end of September initially were greeted with public approval. Unfortunately, since these events occur at the end of Yeltsin's presidency they cannot be effectively captured in our model.¹⁰

⁹ There is considerable debate about the size and duration a wars effects on leadership popularity. For a discuss of the effects of war on presidential popularity in the United States, see Muller (1973). For a discussion of the impact of the Falkland's war in Britain see the extended debate between Norpoth (1987), Sanders, Ward and Marsh (1987) and Clarke, Mishler and Whitely (1990).

¹⁰ Interesting, while Putin's decision to send troops back into Chechnya is widely cited as an important factor in his landslide election in March 2000, there is substantial evidence in subsequent VCIOM surveys that the continuing Chechen conflict already is beginning to take a toll on Putin's popularity, For example when asked in November 1999 "How do you assess the

Among the other crises confronting Yeltsin during his tenure, two were especially notable: the attempted coup in August 1991 and the showdown with the Duma which resulted in Yeltsin's order to open fire on the White House in October 1993. Among the many crises confronting Russia during the past decade these merit special attention because they entailed the very survival of the existent political system. They are measured in the model with dummy variables coded 1 for the six months following each event and 0 otherwise. Also included in a model is a variable measuring the effects of dramatic economic crises during the Yeltsin years, including in particular, the market collapse on "Black Tuesday" in October 1994, and the devaluation of the ruble in August 1998. These are measured simply as temporary shocks whose effects last from the date of the event for three or four months through the end of the calendar year.

Finally, Yeltsin's frequent health problems and his extended absence from public life provided a continuing challenge to his public support. Although the conventional wisdom is that a threat to an elected leader's health causes public opinion to rally in support of the leader at the moment, much as the American public rallied to Ronald Reagan after he was shot, our hypothesis is that over time, continuing problems with a leader's health are likely to raise public

actions of Russian Forces in Chechnya ... Completely Successful somewhat successful, somewhat unsuccessful or completely unsuccessful?" Fifty six percent said completely or somewhat successful compared to only 23 percent who said completely or somewhat unsuccessful, a positive margin of 33 percentage points. This margin increased to +53 percent in December 1999, remained at + 50 percent in February 2000, the month before the Presidential election but fell nearly sixty points to -8 percent by June 2000. Similarly, when asked in November, 1999 if the actions of Russian forces in Chechnya were or were not "severe and decisive enough," Russians thought that they were severe enough by a margin of 19 percent (48% yes vs 29% no). This margin increased to 25 percentage points in December fell to +9 percent in February 2000, but collapsed to -30 percentage points (22% yes vs 52% no) by June 2000. Finally, when asked in November 1999, *How do you think the conflict will end?* 32 percent of Russians said that "Chechnya will return to the Russian Federation" compared to 28 percent who said that the war would be "protracted and will spread to other parts of the North Caucasus." The margin thinking the war would end with the return of Chechnya to the Russian federation increased to 20 percentage points in December 1999, but fell to 18 percentage points in January, 13 in February and 9 points in June, 2000. Importantly, public support for Putin has fallen from a high of 79 % in January 2000 to a low of 61 % in June. For recent data on these trends see the "Russia Votes" link on the Centre for the Study of Public Policy web page at the University of Strathclyde (<http://www.russiavotes.org/>).

concerns about the leader's ability to perform effectively. Yeltsin's heart problems, bouts with drinking and other health dilemmas raised increasing questions about his lucidness and ability to govern as his presidency progressed. To test the impact of his health we used news reports to create a dummy variable coded 1 in months when the President was incapacitated and out of public sight for a significant time. We then created a cumulative variable by counting the total number of months at any point that the president had been ill. Our hypothesis is that as Yeltsin's absences from office accumulate, his public support will fall.

Model Estimation:

Because of data limitations, we estimate the model of Yeltsin's political support in several stages, adding variables but losing cases and thus restricting the time horizon of the analysis in successive analyses. The first model reported in Table 1 covers the entire length of Yeltsin's tenure from July 1991 through December 1999. While comprehensive in length, this model excludes the measures of executive decrees and of public approval of the Prime Minister and Duma since data on these measures are not available for the entire time-series. The model also excludes the measure of executive turnover, since this cumulative measure is highly collinear with the measure of Yeltsin's illness and needs to be estimated in a separate model. Model 2 includes the measures of executive decrees and substitutes the executive turnover measure for the measure of Yeltsin's illness. This model, however, also excludes the approval measures for the Prime Minister and Duma, unavailable before 1994, and encompasses the whole of Yeltsin's tenure except for the last twelve months (January through December 1999) for which data on executive decrees are unavailable. Finally Model 3 includes the variables measuring public approval of the Prime Minister and Duma, but covers a much shorter time frame (April 1994 through December 1998) which means that all of the political event variables are lost or truncated.

Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) procedures are used to estimate the models which perform well in all cases. The variance explained in the models is high, and a series of diagnostics indicate that model residuals are white noise.

The level of the variance explained by the models combined with the consistency of the results obtained and their conformity to established theory argues strongly against the Russian exceptionalist hypothesis. Consistent with theory and previous research on political support for

Western democratic leaders, political support for President Yeltsin varied systematically in response to a variety of both long and short-term forces. As expected, there is a high degree of stability or inertia in public attitudes toward Yeltsin over time. This is indicated in all three models by the strong autoregressive effects of Yeltsin's popularity lagged one month. At the same time, the lagged effect of Yeltsin's popularity is far from dominating these models. Public attitudes toward Yeltsin can and do change over time, but citizens are not fickle or capricious; they change their opinions deliberately and in predictable ways based on changing circumstances and events. This in itself is strong evidence against the exceptionalist argument of cultural determinism.

As expected, one important basis by which citizens appear to have judged Yeltsin is according to the country's economic and political performance. Western scholarship demonstrates the critical importance of macroeconomic performance to a chief executive's popular standing, with longer-term economic performance (i.e., 2 or more years) entailing sizeable political penalties or rewards (Hibbs, 1982). Consistent with V.O. Key's (1968) assessment of the American public as a "rational god of punishment and reward," Russian citizens have consistently punished Yeltsin over the years for the abysmal performance of the Russian economy. For example, the effects of inflation on Yeltsin's popularity are significantly negative in all three models. The size of the effect, while modest (-.04), is consistent over time (i.e. across the three models). Moreover, their overall impact must be interpreted in light of the extraordinary levels of inflation experienced by Russians especially early in Yeltsin's tenure. When Yeltsin came to office in 1991, inflation was running at an annual rate of approximately 100 percent. Although already high by Western standards, inflation soared under Yeltsin to more than 1000 percent in 1992, before ramping downward to 800 percent in 1993 and 500 percent in 1994 before bottoming out at 15 percent in 1997. Between 1992 and 1997, the cumulative effect of inflation diminished Yeltsin's approval rating by more a half-point on the ten-point scale, all other considerations held constant. Compounding these effects, the public's subjective assessments of the economy have weak but positive effects on support for Yeltsin. Although these effects are not statistically significant, they are consistent across the three models and consistently in the predicted direction. Given that public assessments of the economy were overwhelmingly negative for most of Yeltsin's presidency, the size of the effects are larger than

the regression coefficient suggests. Moreover, as noted previously, other research on Russia suggests that citizens are much more likely to rely upon retrospective economic evaluations when judging the president's performance (Hesli and Bashkirova 2000). Thus, although retrospective data are unavailable for this time-series, we suspect that if more appropriate economic measures were available the effect of subjective economic assessments would be appreciably stronger.

Public assessments of political performance also have significant effects on support for the Russian President. Over most of the nine year period, public perceptions of the political direction of the country were negative, albeit substantially less negative than their evaluations of the economy. Nevertheless, the public's evaluations of the political situation have significant effects in two of the three models. Between December 1991 and March 1999, the more than 30 point decline in public confidence in the political situation was responsible for a decline of more than a third of a point in Yeltsin's approval rating, all other factors held constant. The public standing of the incumbent President was clearly tied by many to the deteriorated state of the Russian polity. Combined with the effects of the economy this means the economic and political issues were responsible for nearly a quarter of the entire decline in Yeltsin's popularity over the decade. Moreover, this is a conservative estimate, since the impact of the several influences on Yeltsin's popularity is magnified in these models by the autoregressive effect of the lagged popularity variable.

Consistent with the "coalition of minorities" hypothesis, President Yeltsin paid a significant price in public approval for his use of his executive decree authority to promulgate pork barrel policies rewarding identifiable groups, industries or regions (Model 2). For every 10 pork barrel decrees he issued, Yeltsin's popularity fell by about one tenth of a point. Although tiny at the moment, the cumulative effect was considerable given that Yeltsin issued more than 500 pork barrel decrees between 1991 and the end of 1998. Offsetting this effect, however, is the evidence that, while the issuance of pork barrel decrees undermined Yeltsin's standing with the public, the issuance of more substantive, policy decrees had an opposite and nearly equal effect. Apparently, the public is willing to reward the president for policies addressing broad national concerns but not for policies with more parochial foci. On balance, this means that his issuance of executive decrees enhanced Yeltsin's popularity since broad policy decrees

outnumbered pork barrel decrees by approximately 3 to 1 across Yeltsin's tenure.¹¹

Political leaders frequently seek scapegoats to blame for policy failures or simple bad luck, and Yeltsin embraced the strategy with gusto, frequently churning the membership of his leadership team in response to political exigencies. Far from benefitting his popularity, however, the evidence in models 2 and 3 suggests that the instability of the President's leadership team contributed substantially and increasingly to his loss of public support over time. Again, the coefficients are small but statistically significant and in the predicted direction. Moreover, since the variable is cumulative, the total effect of leadership instability is substantial in the aggregate. Across the whole of his tenure, the instability of Yeltsin's leadership team resulted in a loss of support of nearly one and one half points on the ten-point scale.

The available evidence on the effects of rival leaders and institutions on Yeltsin's popularity is much more limited since data are available only since mid-1994. As indicated in model 3, however, the data seem to suggest that effects of public support for the prime minister and opposition controlled Duma have only modest effects on Yeltsin's popularity. The popularity of the prime minister, who is appointed by the President, is positive as theory suggests, but the coefficient falls just short of statistical significance. Conversely, the impact of public support for the Duma is statistically significant, but the sign is positive and thus contrary to theory. This suggests that the public does not clearly distinguish among competing institutions and personalities in day to day politics, but tends to evaluate all leaders and institutions against a common standard, arguably the effectiveness of national economic and political performance. The evidence in Figure 2, which charts the trends in support for the President, prime minister and Duma since 1994, lends credence to this interpretation. For most of the period between 1994 and 1998, the popularity of the three leaders and institutions track quite closely. Interestingly, the prime minister consistently enjoys the highest support across the period, closely followed by the President, with support for the Duma being considerably lower. The gap between the President and Duma narrows during Yeltsin's second term, and the

¹¹ Ironically, Yeltsin increased the number and proportion of pork barrel decrees issued in the months immediately before both presidential and parliamentary elections, thus undermining his popularity at precisely those times his popularity was most important to him (Mishler, Willerton and Smith, 2000).

President's popularity finally falls below that of the Duma by the middle of 1998. Also toward the end of the series, Yeltsin's appointments of Kiriyenko and Putin as Prime Minister are broadly embraced by the public, but the interim appointment of Stepashin proved much less popular. Nevertheless, despite the serious political divide between President and Duma for most of this period, the public evaluates them in very similar terms, apparently rewarding or punishing the President and Duma relatively equally for the collective failures or successes in Russian policy.

While public approval is a valuable resource for a president at any time, it obviously plays its most crucial role at the time of a presidential election. Many of the longest serving and most successful political leaders, including Presidents Reagan and Clinton, Prime Minister Thatcher, and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, experienced substantial periods of depressed popularity, but were successful in the longer term because they were able to rally public opinion when it mattered most during re-election campaigns. American presidents and British prime ministers have found it more difficult to influence public opinion during legislative election campaigns (i.e., off year elections in the US and by-elections in Britain), but their limited success has not dampened their enthusiasm for trying. In Russia, President Yeltsin proved himself to be a vigorous campaigner not only in his presidential elections but during the referendum on the 1993 constitution. He was aided in his efforts by American style campaign consultants (some of whom were, in fact, American) and, notably, by his willingness to make extensive use of state media both to advance his candidacies and to discredit opponents. Yeltsin's success in rallying public opinion during elections campaigns is illustrated in Table 1, where presidential election campaigns have strong positive effects on Yeltsin's popularity in all three models. During the three months leading up to a presidential election, Yeltsin's popularity increased by an average of one-quarter to one-third of a point, all other factors held constant. Of course other factors were not constant. Yeltsin benefitted indirectly as well by the greatly increased number of executive decrees issued in the run up to both presidential elections covered during this period (although he suffered from the increased use of pork). He also benefitted because one of the consequences of the pre-election media blitz was that public evaluations of both economic conditions and the political situation in Russia improved substantially during the months immediately preceding the presidential elections (not shown). Overall, we estimate that

the combined direct and indirect effects of presidential campaigns increased Yeltsin's popularity during these critical periods by somewhere between one-half and one full point on the ten-point scale.

Just as the leaders of Western democracies have found it hard to influence legislative elections, Yeltsin appears to have had little success in shaping public opinion in elections for the Duma. Indeed, as indicated in Model 1, Yeltsin's popularity fell significantly during parliamentary campaigns, although it appears that much of this effect is the result of Yeltsin's unpopularity at the end of his term during the 1999 parliamentary campaign.¹² More generally, based on the evidence in Models 2 and 3, it appears that Yeltsin's popularity has largely been unaffected by parliamentary campaigns, whether because he has not campaigned as hard or as effectively or because his efforts have been effectively neutralized by opposition campaigns.

Finally, Yeltsin's public approval has been significantly affected at several points during his tenure by circumstances and events largely beyond his control. In some cases, such as the attempted coup in 1991, these events have redounded significantly to his benefit. In other cases, such as the conflict in Chechnya, these events have significantly undermined his public standing. In most cases, however, these "one-off" events had relatively little impact on Yeltsin's popularity. This certainly was the case for the October 1993 attack on the Russian White House. Similarly, although the effect of Black Tuesday and the devaluation of the ruble had predictably negative effects on Yeltsin, the size of the effects is small and both were short lived. Indeed, there is a temptation to dismiss all of these events as short term shocks whose longer term effects were minimal, but this is not entirely the case. For example, the Chechen War is modeled as an enduring shock to the system beginning in 1994 and continuing through August 1996. The negative coefficient for this variable means that the conflict depressed Yeltsin's popularity by an average of about one-quarter point across the whole of this period. Since the 1996 elections took place toward the end of this period, Yeltsin had to contend with the full negative effects of

¹² The difference in the size of the effect across the three models reflects not only the different length of the three series but also the fact that the series encompass different numbers of elections. Specifically Model 1 includes not only the 1993 and 1995 parliamentary campaign but also the election campaign in the fall of 1999. Model 2 by contrast only includes the 1993 and 1995 campaigns whereas Model 3 includes only the 1995 campaign.

Chechnya during his 1996 reelection campaign. Moreover, the long term dynamic of presidential approval, captured in the model by the lagged presidential approval variable, means that even short-term shocks to Yeltsin's popularity, whether positive or negative, continue to reverberate through the model and influence his popularity on a diminishing basis for several months thereafter.

Among the more serious challenges to Yeltsin throughout his tenure as President was the continuing crisis of his health. Few elected leaders in recent memory have suffered from so many and extended health related absences from the political scene. Moreover, public compassion for Yeltsin was strained by the widely publicized suspicion that his frequent incapacitation owed as much to alcohol as to disease. As illustrated in Model 1, concerns about Yeltsin's continuing health problems significantly detracted from his public approval across the whole of his tenure. While the coefficient is modest ($b = -.06$), this is a cumulative variable which means that support for Yeltsin fell a little bit further each month that his health prevented him from attending to his public duties. Over the whole of Yeltsin's tenure, health related absences from office diminished his public support by fully one and one-quarter points, all other influences held constant.

Discussion:

Boris Yeltsin served as President of the Russian Federation during extraordinary times, but the politics of his Presidency – with increased attention to public opinion and a heightened emphasis on bottom-up pressures – were hardly exceptional or unique. Many predictable hallmarks of a democracy – even a nascent democracy – were apparent during Russia's first post-Soviet decade. Executive-legislative branch struggles, political conflicts grounded in conservative-reformist debates, and ongoing battles between national and local interests all consumed the Russian polity. Meanwhile, as befits an emergent democracy, public opinion began to matter, elections turned out incumbents, and new public voices arose as societal debates progressed. Twists and turns in public opinion overwhelmed politicians' ambitions and policy efforts, affecting the actions of all leaders from the powerful federal-level president down to local officials. Contrary to the expectations of cultural determinists who predicted Russian political deference, passivity, and authoritarian inclinations, citizens gave voice to their political frustrations and challenged well-entrenched establishment interests, consistently turning out to

vote in numbers high by contemporary Western standards.

If anything proved exceptional in post-Soviet Russian politics, it was the longevity of the Yeltsin Presidency struggling to formulate and apply a system-transforming political and economic agenda. As we have seen, the shifts in Yeltsin's public standing over his nine year tenure were not unlike those of other recent, long-serving democratic leaders. The interplay of the domestic factors affecting the Russian Chief Executive's public standing bore reasonable comparison with that of other long-ruling Western politicians. A strong case could be made that it was the problematic disequilibrium of system transformation that helped distinguish Yeltsin's especially notable long-term public opinion decline from the less dramatic (and less negative) public opinion fate of other recent long-serving Western leaders. In the end, the "logic" of the interplay of factors structuring public opinion in post-Soviet Russia has proven remarkably similar to those observed in older, established democracies: popular standing is very much derived from the ability to deliver policies the public wants.

Initial developments of the post-Yeltsin period suggest a similar interplay of factors underlies the public standing of President Vladimir Putin. Almost unknown only a year before assuming Russia's highest office, Putin has risen to public prominence as a figure said to be seriously committed to the country's economic revival, restored national pride, and bolstered international standing. Remarkably high public approval numbers, subsequently reflected in Putin's easy election as President in March 2000, raise important questions as to what is driving a seeming change in Russian popular attitudes in the direction of more positive political and economic assessments. Not surprising, initial assessments by commentators and scholars reveal yet again a debate between Russian exceptionalists and democratic regarding the interplay of factors driving Russian politics and public attitudes.

An examination of the experience of the Yeltsin period suggests to us that Russian public evaluations of President Putin will be grounded not only in the macro-political and economic condition of the country, but in his choice of policy measures and their outcomes. The "ordinary democratic politics" of controlling inflation, limiting unemployment, bolstering governmental stability, and maintaining order are likely to be key to Putin's evolving public standing. A decade after the traumas of perestroika and glasnost, the role of the extraordinary now gives way to the salience of more ordinary policy outcomes in shaping a leader's standing and eventual

legacy.

Some may be inclined to emphasize Putin's re-concentration of power at the federal level and in the executive branch as a new sign of that old Russian bent toward authoritarianism. They may view Putin's early flag-waving and more assertive foreign policy posturing as new manifestations of traditional Russian nationalism bordering on chauvinism. Yet early Putin period public survey results reveal these actions and posturing found immediate resonance with many Russians. The new President appears to be addressing some of the country's biggest policy dilemmas, at least as identified in public surveys. The long-term political significance of these policy actions is open to debate, and only time will tell. Their consequences, however, will be at the heart of the new President's longer-term public standing. The complexity of the issues still facing the Russian polity signify a serious constraint on Putin's ability to retain the high public regard that welcomes in his Presidency. Moreover, uncertain events outside of his control will also influence the long-term pattern of public support that eventually emerges.

Like leaders in all democracies, Putin is now engaged in a struggle to muster and hold public support through his tenure. His efforts to rein in opponents, quell the restive regions, and build support within the massive federal bureaucracy, are all tied to the acquisition of significant public support. The Yeltsin legacy reveals the task will be difficult, but our analysis suggests that relative policy success – and not a 21st Century Russian neo-authoritarianism – will be at the heart of the eventual outcome.

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Table 1: OLS Estimates of Popular Support for Russian President, Boris Yeltsin: 1991-1999

	Model 1: July 1991-Dec 1999	Model 2: July 1991-Dec 1998	Model 3: April 1994-Dec 1998
Variables	b (se)	b (se)	b (se)
Presidential Approval t_{-1}	.49 (.08)a	.28 (.08)a	.37 (.09)a
Pork Barrel Decrees	na	-.008 (.004)b	-.007 (.004)
Non-Pork Decrees	na	.005 (.003)b	.006 (.002)a
Consumer Price Index (log)	-.04 (.02)b	-.04 (.02)b	-.04 (.02)b
Prospective Economic Evaluations	.004 (.004)	.01 (.004)	.003 (.006)a
Prospective Political Evaluations	.006 (.004)	.01 (.003)a	.01 (.005)
Executive Turnover	na	-.01 (.002)a	-.009 (.002)a
Prime Minister Approval	na	na	.12 (.08)
Duma Approval	na	na	.22 (.12)b
Presidential Election Campaigns	.20 (.11)b	.32 (.12)a	.34 (.15)a
Parliamentary Election Campaign	-.34 (.10)b	-.09 (.11)	.02 (.11)a
Attempted Coup	.41 (.12)a	.38 (.11)a	na
White House	-.04 (.08)	-.01 (.08)	na
Chechnya	-.22 (.09)a	-.22 (.08)a	na
Economic Crises	-.14 (.08)	-.002 (.11)	na
Cumulative Illness	-.06 (.01)a	na	na
Soviet Era	.29 (.14)a	.19 (.15)	na
R ² =	95.5%	94.7%	94.5%
DW =	2.13 (ns)	2.04 (ns)	1.92 (ns)
LBQ (6) =	5.99 (ns)	6.48 (ns)	2.91 (ns)
LM =	df 6/77 = 0.97 (ns)	df 6/63 = 1.04 (ns)	df 6/34 = .64 (ns)
N =	100	88	55

Notes:

- a. $p \leq .05$
- b. $p \leq .10$

Appendix: Variable Definitions (Sources), Means, and Standard Deviations

Variable	Definition	<i>x</i>	<i>sd</i>
Presidential Approval	Mean aggregate score of public responses on a 10 point scale to the question, <i>What mark on a scale from 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest) would you give the performance of President of Russia, _____? (VCIOM)</i>	3.25	.89
Pork Barrel Decrees	Total number of normative presidential decrees issued monthly providing particularized benefits to identifiable regions, industries or groups (INFOBASE)	5.76	6.49
Non-Pork Decrees	Total number of normative presidential decrees issued monthly providing generalized benefits (INFOBASE)	16.0	8.89
Consumer Price Index (log)	Natural log of the annual percentage change in the Consumer Price Index (Economist)	4.42	1.77
Prospective Economic Evaluations	Difference in the percentage of citizens responding “some/much improvement” vs the percentage responding “some/much deterioration” to the question, <i>What do you think the Russian Economy can expect in the forthcoming months? (VCIOM)</i>	-39.8	11.0
Prospective Political Evaluations	Difference in the percentage of citizens responding “some/much improvement” vs the percentage responding “some/much deterioration” to the question, <i>What do you think Russian Economy can expect in the political life in the forthcoming months? (VCIOM)</i>	-31.3	11.4
Executive Turnover	Cumulative monthly turnover in the Russian executive (Lysenko, 1997, and “Archive of Resignations and Appointments,” National Electronic Library, Moscow)	94.4	43.8
Prime Minister Approval	Mean aggregate score of public responses on a 10 point scale to the question, <i>What mark on a scale from 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest) would you give the performance of Prime Minister _____? (VCIOM)</i>	3.57	.28
Duma Approval	Mean aggregate score of public responses on a 10 point scale to the question, <i>What mark on a scale from 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest) would you give the performance of the state Duma? (VCIOM)</i>	2.30	.42

Variable	Definition	<i>x</i>	<i>sd</i>
Presidential Election Campaigns	Dummy variable coded 1 in the three months leading up to the 1993 referendum and 1996 presidential elections and coded 0 in all other months.	.04	.20
Parliamentary Election Campaign	Dummy variable coded 1 in the two months leading up to the 1993, 1995 and 1999 parliamentary elections and coded 0 in all other months	.06	.24
Attempted Coup	Dummy variable coded 1 in the 6 months following the attempted coups in 1991 and 0 in all other months.	.07	.26
White House	Dummy variable coded 1 in the 6 months following the firing on the Russian White House in 1993 and 0 in all other months.	.12	.34
Chechnya	Dummy Variable coded 1 in all month between December 1994 and August 1996 and 0 in all other months.	.16	.38
Economic Crises	Dummy variable coded 1 between October and December 1994 following "Back Tuesday" and between September and December 1998 following the devaluation of the ruble but coded 0 in all other months.	.07	.26
Cumulative Illness	Cumulative number of months in which President Yeltsin was reported in the press as being severely ill or incapacitated and out of the public arena.	8.67	6.51
Soviet Era	Dummy variable coded 1 for all months through December 1991 before the Soviet Union collapsed and 0 in all other months.	.05	.22

Sources: INFOBASE: INFORIS Internet Center. [Http://www.inforis.ru/infobase](http://www.inforis.ru/infobase).
VCIOM: The Russian Center for Public Opinion Research, *Economic and Social Change*, various issues.
Economist: The Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Profile: Russia*, 4th quarter, 1993 and various, subsequent issues.

Figure 1: Trends in Popular Support for Leaders in Russia and the USSR

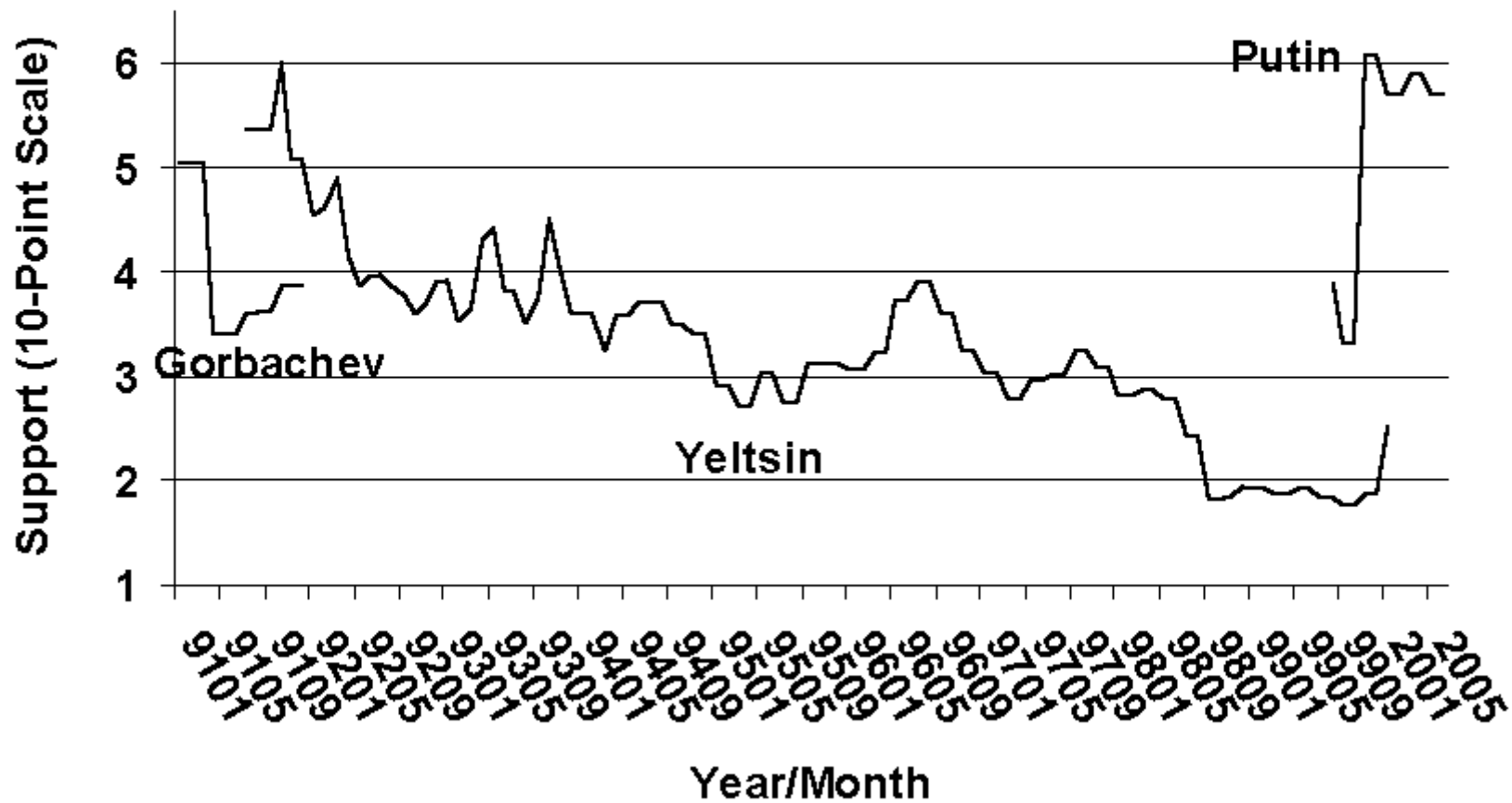


Figure 2: Trends in Popular Support for Yeltsin, Thatcher and Reagan

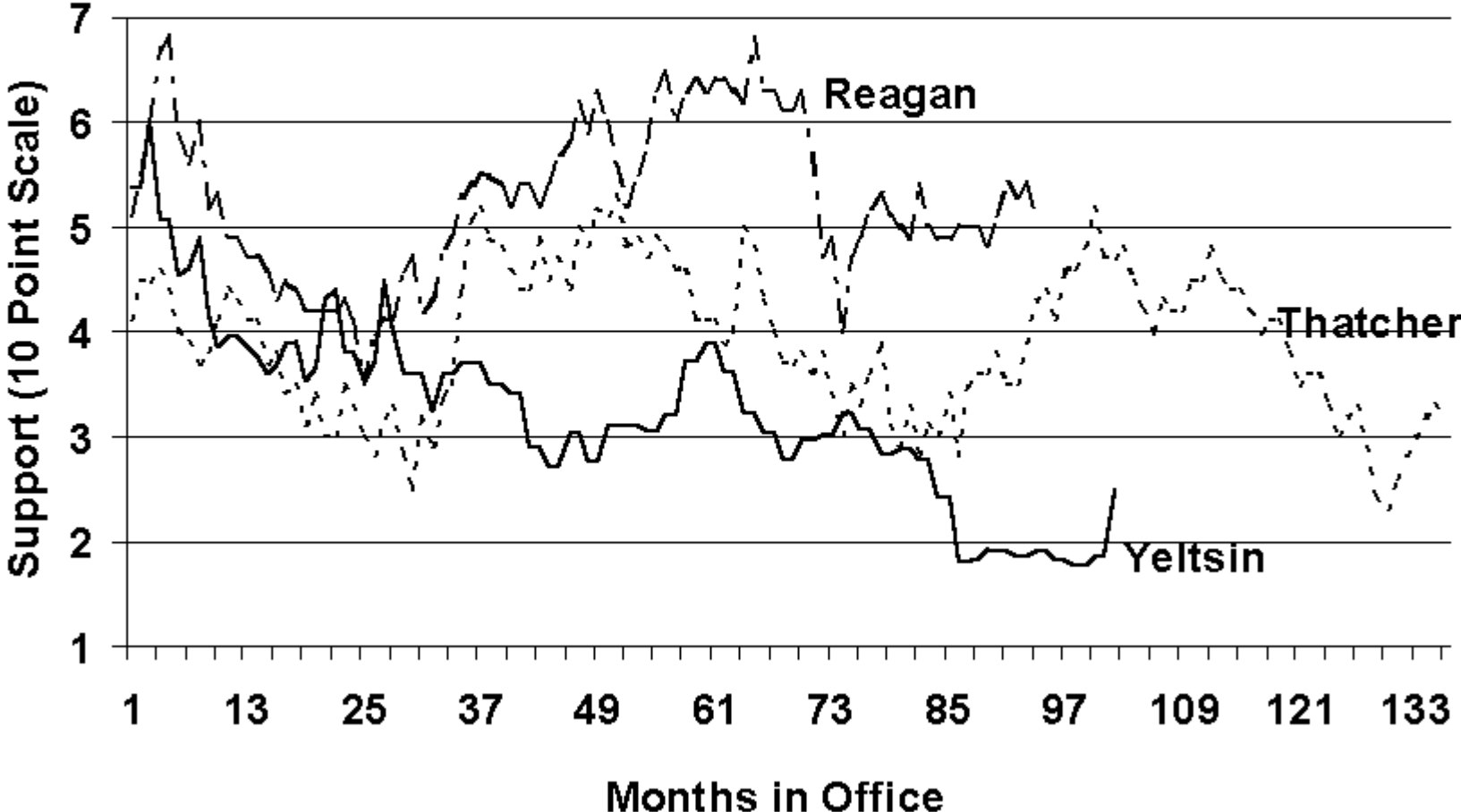


Figure 3: Trends in the Popular Support for the Russian President, Duma and Prime Minister

