

Power and Society in Post-Coup Russia: Attempts at Coexistence

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Alienation from Power

The situation that formed in Russia by the autumn of 1992 is characterized by the fact that practically all political forces which existed prior to this period demonstrated their inability to lead the process of ending the country's crisis, thereby discrediting themselves in public opinion. According to the survey, more than half of the Russian people do not trust democrats, Communists or patriots.

Table 1. Confidence in political groups, 1992 (%).

	Moscow		Large Cities		Towns & Villages		Total	
	May	Aug	May	Aug	May	Aug	May	Aug
radical democrats	11	8	10	2	4	1	8	5
moderate democrats	15	13	9	4	8	4	11	7
Communists	3	1	4	6	5	7	4	3
"patriots"	9	4	12	9	18	10	13	8

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The remaining 64% in May and 77% in August 1992 do not support anyone from the above-mentioned political movements.

The negative support for Russian political leaders has been traced throughout the whole year. Only the popularity of Vice President Alexander Rutskoi has increased a bit since March 1992.

Table 2. Correlation of those "fully supporting" and "not supporting" the political leaders of Russia.

	Spt.	Nov.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	May	Jul.
	1991	1991	1992	1992	1992	1992	1992
Yeltsin	87:4	69:5	43:19	42:18	28:24	26:22	24:31
Rutskoi	68:4	39:12	35:16	36:16	24:23	26:22	28:19
Khasbu-							
latov	70:5	48:10	36:19	33:20	16:27	12:33	9:40
Gaidar	7:4	20:28	19:32	13:34	11:40	8:46	

During recent months, the government's rating has gone down again. Only 13% of Russians trust it completely, 38% do not trust it at all. Here we have a great difference between Moscow and other large cities on the one hand, and Russian provinces on the other, where the vote of no confidence in the government surpassed the critical mark of 50% long ago. Those that show confidence in the Supreme Soviet of Russia have been decreasing during the recent period, though not at the pronounced rate seen for those demonstrating confidence in the government. In July, 6% gave full credence to the Supreme Soviet and 41% gave no credence at all. A new (at least for our society) Constitutional Court—the symbol of the third power—enjoyed more popularity with those polled than the first and the second powers, though there are different estimates in this regard as well.

According to the data on table 3, all the present institutions of power are regarded by the population almost in the same manner, as parts of the

same democratic regime. People oriented towards other values equally reject all power branches without making particular difference between them.

It is interesting to note that there are two rather oddly compatible groups standing out among the population which render their support to both the government and the president. The first is the group of true democrats. They are mainly citizens of large cities for which the government is the symbol of reforms and social changes. The second group consists mainly of elder people for whom the government is a power which they, in accordance with their life experiences, are accustomed to supporting and receiving benefits in return (and for whom there are no alternatives).

Table 3. The vote of confidence to the different branches of power in Russia [y=yes, p=partly, n=no].

	Russian	Russian	Constitutional
	Government	Supreme	Court
	Soviet		
	Y	P	N
	Y	P	N
youths	8	45	37
adults	31	34	22
workers	6	34	48
intelligentsia	14	46	30
democratic types	42	42	10
Communist types	4	11	79

In this respect, the figures reflect the beginning of charismatic power—Yeltsin and Rutskoi continue to command certain credence though the economic policy of the government is regarded by society as something alien and, besides, something which does not meet their expectations anyway.

Expectations `91

The figure approaching 100% that marked Yeltsin's popularity in the post-coup weeks seemed to be at that time the most important factor consolidating society. However, as the most attentive observers noted at that time, this would last until the first decisive actions in the economy began. The very cautious policy of the previous Russian government of Prime Minister Ivan Silaev allowed this one (and its chief Boris Yeltsin) to remain either active supporters of democratic changes and a speedy shift to a market economy, or conservatives, not tolerating their differences on economic policy and having their opposition to Gorbachev as their only base. And when the "rush hour" to choose a new strategy came, there is little wonder as to why there was no social agreement on it. Here are the results of the all-Russia referendum of September 1991.

Table 4. What is to be the base of the Russian economic reforms?

Encourage free enterprise and free markets?	48.0	41.6	18.8	
Provide fair food and consumer goods distribution between members of society?	37.5	44.7	60.0	

parties. Throughout last year, parties were created and destroyed, they formed alliances and counter-alliances. At present, the population is ready to accept centrist (or rather, right-of-centrist) values, but Civic Union, which would be their most adequate representation, is little known among non-elite sections of the population. Moreover, its leaders, except for Rutskoi, do not enjoy popularity and confidence.

According to the survey's data for January-February 1992, in the case that parliamentary elections were to be held only three movements (or parties) would get 10% of the vote: Democratic Russia, Democratic Reform, and Rutskoi's Party (the People's Party of Free Russia—NPSR).

Table 6. If the election for Parliament were to be held today, whom would you vote for?

	Moscow	Big Cities	Small Cities & Villages	
Democratic Russia movement	20	15	3	
Democratic Reform movement	18	11	6	
NPSR	8	14	21	
Communists	2	5	16	
Social Democrats	5	3	2	
DPR	3	7	2	
Rssn. Public Union	0	2	8	
Republicans	1	0	0	

artificial suppression of national productive forces, and hurts the chances for a much needed social consensus.

Table 7. The survey data of parties' and movements' activists (winter 91/92). The scale is from -100 to +100.

	level of	attitude trds.	
Parties & Movements	radicalism	a strong state	
VPK (b)	-54	+55	
RKRP (Labor Russia)	-45	+46	
Communists Union	-43	+44	
The party "Renewal"	-37	+39	
"Memory" (D.Vasilev)	-29	+33	
LDP (V.Zhirinovskiy)	-27	+29	
ROS (S.Baburin)	-25	+22	
SPT (R.Medvedev)	-17	+17	
Russian People's Front	-7	+8	
RHDD	+8	+99	
The party of Greens	+10	-12	
KDP (PHS, M.Astafiev)	+18	+8	
NPSR (A.Rutskoi)	+20	-26	
Democratic Union	+29	-40	

□NPR (T.Gdlyan)	□	+29	□	-31	□
□DDR	□	+34	□	-35	□
□SDPR	□	+39	□	-39	□
□DPR (N.Travkin)	□	+40	□	-19	□
□PST	□	+42	□	-39	□
□Liberal Democratic Party	□	+44	□	-42	□
□RPR	□	+47	□	-50	□
□"Democratic Russia"	□	+49	□	-50	□
□PKD (V.Zolotarev)	□	+59	□	-58	□

Why Did the Patriots Falter?

The pure "patriots" or the "new right" is the only major political force which has not yet enjoyed power. During the winter of 1991-92, however, they attracted attention as the elusive "third force." It is still obvious that the patriots are not in their best political shape now, and consequently do not completely meet the expectations of the existing political vacuum. The reason lies in the deep crisis being experienced by the Great Russian ethos, in which the process of self-identification has been weakened to the very limit. In this regard, only the development of local and regional patriotism seems to be realistic. Perhaps later, the development of "sub-ethnic" regional patriotism and sub-ethnic communities like the southern Cossacks, the Siberian or Ural folk associations, etc., will also develop. National patriotism in Russia is neglected by the public because the nation is still recovering from the division of a multi-national Eurasian state where the Russians were the main ethos. But the championing of nationalism at this point can destroy the stability of Russia's state system. Fortunately, moderate nationalist and patriotic ideas are being promoted by centrist groups, depriving the right from ammunition.

The Consolidation of the Parliament

Taking into consideration the present character of the electoral system in Russia (political forces fall short of victory since a majority of voters must participate in the election for the results to be valid), it is possible to suppose that practically all "unsuccessful" political leaders, especially the ones that have connected themselves with the political forces at the extremes (the ultra-conservatives or the ultra-democrats), will not be able to become deputies if new elections were to be held. As a result, the deputy corps will be transformed, and would be structurally different from the present one—but certainly not more hard working.

President Yeltsin had a wonderful opportunity to decisively transform representative power in Russia after the August coup. This chance was missed because the president himself did not want it. He did not need a new set of radical deputies, but a weak, divided parliament, to which he could lay blame for the difficulties in carrying on his economic reforms. A parliament like this could also serve him to play different factions against one another, even against the radicals from his own circles if that became necessary. But practice did show that both the Congress and the Supreme Soviet, even in their present state, are necessary instruments to carry out governmental decisions in the Russian Federation, despite the constant barrage of criticism thrown against them every day. Let us consider the reasons for this:

1) The representative organs of power at present carry out a compensating function for the executive power's non-legitimacy in many regions (recall that at present, the heads of local administrations, the governors, are not elected but appointed by Yeltsin). If Yeltsin or his circle decide to dissolve the present Parliament and Congress, the executive power would be sharply weakened as the unsteady balance of political forces, representing different levels of political elites, would be upset.

2) The impression is being formed that the present legislative activity of the Congress and the Supreme Soviet is less important for Russia now than the furnishing by these organs of a certain social agreement that would build the opponents of the president and Gaidar (these are mainly the leaders of the autonomous republics and regions, as well as the representatives of the industrial director corps and managers orientated towards moderate conservative values), into the representative power.

This way, the most important function for the Supreme Soviet would be to adopt the formation of the reserve governing elite in the case that the political game were to change.

The present parliamentary model enables the country to react to changing social conditions while isolating the extremes, thereby preserving the stability of state power in general. The weak moment for this ideal model lies in the complex formative stage, when the opposition (even a centrist one) has a too-great temptation to accumulate to its advantage the extreme sentiments brewing in the society. Let us now see the role of political alliances. The following big political blocks formed in the present Parliament by the middle of 1992:

- 1) The irreconcilable opposition to the Yeltsin regime, represented mainly by the Russian Unity block, which includes a patriotic element as well as orthodox Communists of the Yuri Slobodkin type. Its recognized leaders are Sergei Baburin, Vladimir Isakov, Viktor Aksyuchits and others. By itself, this group has no representatives in the leadership of the Supreme Soviet, but readily uses this rostrum for laying pressure on the left wing.
- 2) The center-right, representing the moderately conservative core of Industrial Union, and the Communists of Russia factions. This is a systematic (in contrast to the first group) opposition to the Yeltsin regime, but more exactly, not to the regime itself but to its radical wing in the persons of Gennady Burbulis and Yegor Gaidar. In the leadership of the Supreme Soviet, this group is represented by Ruslan Khasbulatov, his vice-chairmen Yuri Voronin and Yuri Yarov, the chairman of Publishing Committee of the Supreme Soviet Nikolai Ryabov, and the chairman of the Soviet of Nationalities Ramadan Abdulatipov.
- 3) The left-of-center groups around the faction "Reform," which include the first vice-chairman of the Supreme Soviet Sergei Filatov, well-known deputies such as Vladimir Lysenko, Viktor Sheinis and others. This group tries to preserve loyalty to the presidential circle and the leadership of the Supreme Soviet while supporting the president in everything but his plans to dissolve the Supreme Soviet and the Congress.
- 4) The demo-radicals or "Burbulists," who stand for the absolute support for Yeltsin and the absolute opposition to the Supreme Soviet. This grouping, in essence, is the "fifth column" of the governmental radicals located amid the "hostile surroundings of the representative power."
- 5) A special and recently formed group of anti-system democrats, who, as a rule, do not support neither the presidential circle, nor the government,

	Moscow	Big Cities	Small Cities & Villages	
Should administration heads be:				
1) appointed	29	24	21	
2) elected	61	53	41	
Who will have more power & authority:				
1) appointed administrators	39	43	68	
2) elected administrators	42	34	13	

Expectations '92

Society appears to be split because of the fact that most political activity has gone to the groups which have already lost their past mass electoral support. But in fact, society seems to be close to consensus on very many key points. These include the following statements, with which more than 80% of Russia's population agreed to by the summer of 1992:

- 1) Complete orientation to Western ("world") values.
- 2) The necessity to continue market reforms in the economy.
- 3) The recognition of the necessity of a strong Russian state system, and the revival of national state dignity. In comparison to the given autumn data of 1991, the numbers of state supporters among the population increased 2.8 times during the winter of 1991-92.
- 4) The priority of such problems as security in the streets, order and stability. Thus, in the spring of 1992, more than 78% of surveyed Russians put down personal security first when answering the following question: "Which one of your views should be reflected in the text of the

new constitution first and foremost?" The correlation of views in favor of the establishment of urgent order, and the views in favor for continuation of democracy and glasnost at any expense, changed from 31:56 in spring to 73:21 during the winter.

5) The adherence to the development and preservation of native cultural and industrial potential.

6) The adherence to civil peace, and a sober attitude towards the Soviet period of Russian history. It has gradually become clear that anticommunism, thought of as an indispensable component of radical Western ideology, cannot strike root in Russia (as it did in east-central Europe and the Baltic states, where it is associated with the national humiliation of occupation). Despite the fact that only 4 to 5% of the Russian population is ready today to support Communists, the number of people in favor of the trial of the CPSU has diminished from 58% in September 1991 to 27% in March 1992.

Because of the many unsuccessful political actions by the democrats, the period of stagnation (Brezhnev) and even earlier times have gained a certain attraction among a large part of society. The new *demonomenklatura* arouses even greater aversion and irritation than Communists do. By autumn 1992, the failure of Gaidar's program, under which he squandered the credit given to him by the people, became evident. Together with this, the groups which staked their fortunes on this program (the radical democratic types like Lev Ponomarev and Gleb Yakunin), are becoming a political thing of the past once and for all. Most probably, the program of "voucherization" will come to grief as well.

Despite the setbacks, we do not see a new internal dynamic in the Russian political situation. The present ossification of state power, coming after the epoch of revolutionary disorder, promises a new stagnation.

The process of democracy has become associated with the failures of the market reforms. A real basis has now appeared for the "third force." A transition to a right-of-center course is still possible today, without a cardinal change in the ruling political team but rather with a small correction of it. If this transition were to occur, how long would it be possible to achieve public consensus in this new course? A powerful anti-Western and isolationist ideology in Russia, even for the remote future, should not be excluded. But the measure of its influence will depend not only on the internal Russian situation, but in the state of Russian politics. A chance has emerged to stop the ongoing, and already irksome, Second Russian Revolution. We now have a chance to finally get down to

creating.