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SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY AND AUTOCRACY IN RUSSIA AND THE COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES, 1992–2002

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The article deals with the results of wide range of international researches examining the "real" support for the ruling regime, democratic and autocratic forms of governing in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. The main conclusion of the paper is that democracy as "the best form of governance" is supported by an absolute majority of citizens in Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia and Belarus, as well as a relative majority of citizens in Russia. The support for democracy as an ideal form of government with a corresponding decrease in the support of autocracy is observed in all eight CIS countries studied since 1992 till 2002.

Keywords: Democracy, Autocracy, Russia, Ukraine, Central Asia.

У статті на основі низки міжнародних досліджень аналізується "реальна" підтримка правлячого режиму, демократичних і недемократичних форм правління у Росії, Україні, Білорусі, Молдові, Вірменії, Грузії, Казахстані та Киргизстані. Головний висновок статті полягає у тому, що демократія як "краща форма правління" підтримується абсолютною більшістю громадян у Росії. Констатується підтримка демократії як ідеальної форми правління при відповідному зменшенні підтримки абсолютизму у восьми країнах СНД, що вивчаються, на період з 1992 року по 2002 рік.

Ключові слова: демократія, автократія, Росія, Україна, Центральна Азія.

В статье на основании ряда международных исследований анализируются "реальная" поддержка правящего режима, демократических и недемократических форм правления в России, Украине, Беларуси, Молдове, Армении, Грузии, Казахстане и Кыргызстане. Главный вывод статьи состоит в том, что демократия как "лучшая форма правления" поддерживается абсолютным большинством граждан в Грузии, Украине, Молдове, Армении и Беларуси, а также относительным большинством граждан в России. Констатируется поддержка демократии как идеальной формы правления при соответствующем уменьшении поддержки абсолютизма в восьми изучаемых странах СНГ в период с 1992 до 2002 года.

Ключевые слова: демократия, автократия, Россия, Украина, Центральная Азия.

This article analyses three core elements of political change in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in the period after the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991. It compares the political transformations in these eight countries along the continuum between authoritarian regimes and democratic regimes during the first post-Soviet decade. The main topics of this research are the extent and structure of 'political support for the current political regime', the extent and structure of 'normative support for democracy as an ideal form of government', as a bundle of political principles and, finally, the extent and structure of 'political support for a variety of non-democratic and authoritarian political regimes' in these political systems in transformation¹.

The topic of this article is part of the current scholarly debate about the concept of 'political support for democracy'. One of the leading authors in that field is Russell J. Dalton, who focuses on political support for democracy in general and on political support for democracy in advanced industrial countries in particular [2]. This article proposes to go beyond that specific concept of 'support for democracy' and include in addition the concept of 'support for autocracy' within comparative studies of democratization with an emphasis on political regimes emerging in post-Communist and post-Soviet Eurasia. The main aim of this article is to use the concept of political support of democracy in explaining political change in post-Soviet Eurasia and to extend this approach to a broader concept of 'political support for political regimes'. This proposed new theory of political support for political regimes is then applied to democracies as well as autocracies. Such a theory of political regimes is analysing and explaining not only different types and forms of democracy and autocracy, but also 'hybrid political regimes', which are combining elements of democracy and autocracy.

The conceptual framework of this article is based on the concept of political support by David Easton [3] and its further development by Pippa Norris [4], Hans-Dieter Klingemann [8] and Russell J. Dalton [4], on the one hand, and the concept of a 'realist' form of political support, presented by Richard Rose, William T. Mishler and the

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¹ See the definitions of democracy, semi-democracy and authoritarian regime in Diamond, L., et al., Eds. (1990). *Democracy in Developing Countries. Latin America*. Boulder, CO, Lynne Rienner, pp.xvi–xvii.

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author [13], on the other². The concept in the tradition of Easton, Norris and Dalton distinguishes between 'objects of political support' on the one hand, and 'levels of support', on the other³. The objects of political support for political regimes across five levels of support are shown in Table 1.

Table 1.

Objects and levels of political support for political regimes (Support for democracy, support for autocracy, support for combined regime types)

Level 1:	Political community
Level 2:	Regime principles
Level 3:	Regime performance
Level 4:	Regime institutions
Level 5:	Political actors

This article analyses the political support for the current regime in Russia and seven other post-Soviet countries at the more specific level 3 (Regime performance) as well as the political support for democracy as an ideal form of government in the form of normative principles at the more diffuse level 2 (Regime principles) within the underlying conceptual framework of political support for democracy. This paper does *not* deal with level 1 (Political community), level 4 (Regime institutions) or level 5 (Political actors) of support for political regimes. Hence the article analyses three phenomena of political support for regimes, the 'support for the current regime' (1) and the 'support for democracy as a set of idealist principles' (2) and core topics for democratic governance as well as 'political support for non-democratic regimes' (3) as alternatives to democratic governance in the territories of the former Soviet Union.

Data

The data analysed in this study are taken from the New Democracies Barometer (NDB) as well as the World Values Study (WVS) for the time periods 1992, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000 and 2002. The author has been the principal investigator of the New Democracies Barometer since 1992, as well as one of the principal investigators of the World Values Study 2000 in Hungary and 2006 in Moldova. The database of this article is represented in Tables 1 and 2. The database thus consists of 48,069 face-to-face interviews in representative samples of the adult population in eight post-Soviet countries. The time period of the article covers the decade of post-Soviet political transformations between 1992 and 2002, which has been the first full decade of political change after the end of Communism in the former Soviet Union in 1991.

Table 2.

New Democracies Barometer						
Country	1992	1994	1996	1998	2002	Total
	NDB 2	NDB 3	NDB 4	NDB 5	NDB 6	
1. Russia	*	3,535(3)	*	*	4,006(10)	
2. Ukraine	1,000(1)	1,000(4)	1,000(6)	1,161(8)	2,400(11)	
3. Belarus	1,225(2)	2,067(5)	1,000(7)	1,000(9)	2,000(12)	
4. Moldova	*	*	*	*	2,000(13)	
5. Georgia	*	*	*	*	2,022(14)	
6. Armenia	*	*	*	*	2,000(15)	
7. Kazakhstan	*	*	*	*	2,000(16)	
8. Kyrgyzstan	*	*	*	*	2,000(17)	
Total	2,225	6,602	2,000	2,161	18,428	31,416

Notes: The numbers in cells are the number of face-to-face-interviews in a given country

Table 3.

World Values Survey			
Country	1996	2000	Total
	WVS	EVS	N
1. Russia	2,092	2,500	4,592
2. Ukraine	2,811	1,195	4,006
3. Belarus	2,092	1,000	3,092
4. Moldova	984	*	984
5. Armenia	2,000	*	2,000
6. Georgia	1,979	*	1,979
N	11,958	4,695	16,653

² For a discussion of the Rose-Mishler approach in the context of other theories of democratic support, see Samuels, R. (2003).

"Comparing theories of democratic support: Lessons from post-Communist Europe." *Democratization* 10(2): 105-120.

³ See Norris 1999, pp. 9-13, especially Fig. 1.2. on p. 10.

'Realist' support for the current political regime

We begin with an index of cross-national comparison of 'realist' support for the current regime in the eight observed post-Soviet countries (See Table 3). The first observation is that support for the diversity of post-Soviet political regimes declined in most countries between 1996 and 2002 from about one-quarter to approximately one-fifth of the national electorates. Regime support was quite high in Russia in 1994 in the aftermath of the break-up of the Soviet Union with 44 per cent of Russian citizens supporting the new regime in Russia. This high level of regime support fell dramatically to 13 per cent in 1996, even before the economic crisis of the summer and autumn of 1998. The public support for the current political regime in Russia during the first presidential term of V. Putin recovered to 26 per cent in 2002, without ever reaching the regime support rates of the first stage of political transformations in post-Soviet Russia.

The longitudinal pattern of regime support in the Ukraine is very clear and shows a downward trend since 1992. Immediately after the declaration of Ukrainian independence, in 1992, 38 per cent of Ukrainian citizens supported the new regime in Kiev. The public support for the political regime in Ukraine declined to 35 per cent in 1994 and further to 21 per cent in 1996. After a small recovery to 27 per cent in 1998, the political legitimacy of the Kuchma regime in Kiev collapsed to 11 per cent of the Ukrainian electorate in 2002. This dramatic disappearance of regime support in Ukraine at the beginning of the new century explains, at least in part, the swift breakdown of the Kuchma regime and the subsequent success of the 'Orange Revolution' in Ukraine during winter 2004/05.

A pattern similar to that in the Ukraine has been identified in Moldova, Armenia and Georgia. In those countries, public support for the first post-Soviet regime declined quite dramatically and finally collapsed at the beginning of the decade with 90 per cent or more of the respective national electorates refusing to support the current regime. The most dramatic breakdown of regime support occurred in Georgia with a decline of public support for the Shevardnadze regime from 49 per cent of the national electorate in 1996 to 4 percent in 2002. This almost complete disappearance of political legitimacy of the first political regime after the declaration of national independence in Georgia explains at least the domestic dimension of the breakdown of the regime under President Eduard Shevardnadze. In Armenia, the rapid decline of regime support could also be observed, albeit without causing a 'revolution' as it had in neighbouring Georgia or in Ukraine, at least not yet. Public support for the current political regime in Armenia declined from 36 per cent in 1996 to 11 per cent in 2002, reaching the same extremely low level as in pre-revolutionary Ukraine. The extent and longitudinal pattern of regime support in Moldova is similar to that of Armenia. The share of supporters of the current political regime in Moldova fell quite dramatically from 28 per cent in 1996 to 9 per cent in 2002, which is a level of support even lower than that in pre-revolutionary Ukraine. Nevertheless, the political regime in Chisinau has not changed in the same way as that in Ukraine or Georgia. In terms of the overwhelming disaffection of the electorates, as measured by the disappearance of regime legitimacy in Moldova and Armenia, both regimes are 'ripe' for change.

With regard to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan it was not possible to analyse longitudinal trends because of the lack of data. The level of political support for the current regime in Kazakhstan is the highest among all countries in this study with 30 per cent of the electorate expressing their support. Political support in Kyrgyzstan, with 25 per cent of the population regime supporters, is similar to the political legitimacy of the regimes in Russia and Belarus.

Table 4.

Index of political support for current regime

Country	1992	1994	1996	1998	2002
Russia	*	44	13	*	26
Ukraine	38	35	21	27	11
Belarus	41	39	22	61	27
Moldova	*	*	28	*	9
Armenia	*	*	36	*	11
Georgia	*	*	49	*	4
Kazakhstan	*	*	*	*	30
Kyrgyzstan	*	*	*	*	25
CIS	*	*	27	*	19

Notes: The questions asked are: 'People have different views about the system for governing this country. Here is a scale for rating how well things are going: 1 means very bad and 10 means very good. (1) Where on this scale would you put the political system as it is today? (2) Where on this scale would you put the political system as you expect it will be in ten years from now?' The 'index of support for the current regime' is an additive and one-dimensional scale combining both questions with high reliability.

The next part of this section presents the results of multivariate analysis regarding the main influences upon support for the current regime in eight post-Soviet societies. The research produced clear-cut empirical and comparative results as far as the territory between Brest-Litowsk and Bishkek is concerned, in terms of the countries covered. The most important predictor of political support for the current regime in the Russian Federation, as well

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as in Ukraine and the other Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries, is 'support for the current macro-economy', different forms of market economy or mixed economies, combining surviving elements of the Communist planned command economy with new elements of a market economy (see Table 4). Hence, the hypothesis that the structure and performance of the macro-economy is the most important single influence upon support for the current political regime has been confirmed for all eight analysed former Soviet Republics [6, chapter 6]. The performance of the current macro-economy, as perceived by post-Soviet citizens, is the strongest predictor of regime support (beta=0.61) in the whole region and explains almost the whole variance in the multivariate model of political support for the current post-Soviet regime (adj.R²=50%) and is consistent across all the countries⁴.

The second predictor of regime support in all countries apart from Georgia was 'trust in institutions of government' such as parliament, national and regional governments, ministries, army, police, justice, etc. This direct and significant link between trust in the multiple institutions of national and regional governments and the support of the current political regime within a given electorate points to the important process of democratic institution-building as a necessary condition for democratization in general and consolidation of a new democracy in post-communist Eastern Europe and Eurasia. This trust in governmental institutions and the related impact upon regime support was missing in the political system of Georgia before the 'revolution' against President Shevardnadze, which resulted in the rise to power of President Sakaschvili. The influence of trust in governmental institutions on regime support (beta=0.13) is direct and significant, but much weaker than the impact of the macro-economy (beta=0.61). The impact of trust in governmental institutions on support for the current regime is very similar in Russia, Belarus and Moldova (0.14<beta<0.16). In contrast to its three neighbours, the influence of trust in Ukrainian institutions of government on support for the regime of President Leonid Kuchma is lower (beta=0.09). Similar low levels of influence have been found in Armenia (beta=0.09) as well as in Kyrgyzstan (beta=0.10).

The third direct predictor of regime support is the economic situation of individual households, the perception of the micro-economy of families as improving or deteriorating household portfolios. This third factor of regime support is the weakest (beta=0.09), lagging well behind the macro-economy or trust in institutions of government. The performance of the new market economy is more important for political support for the new democracy or the current regime. The impact of the micro-economy upon support for the current regime is very similar in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus (0.06<beta<0.08). In those three countries we might hypothesize that winners of economic transition are more likely to support the current regime than losers. In Moldova and Kazakhstan, the economic situation of individual households has no significant influence upon political support of the current regime, whereas the micro-economy was found to be a predictor of regime support in Armenia as well as in Kyrgyzstan.

Table 5.

Predictors of support for current political regime

Country		b	Se	beta
CIS	Adj. R ² = 50.0 % F = 6137			
	Support for macro-economy	.43	.00	.61
	Trust in institutions of government	.03	.00	.13
	Micro-economy of household	.01	.00	.09
Russia	Adj. R ² = 39.9 % F = 887			
	2002 Support for macro-economy	.37	.00	.55
	Trust in institutions of government	.04	.00	.15
	Micro-economy of household	.01	.00	.06
Ukraine	Adj. R ² = 43.2 % F = 608			
	2002 Support for macro-economy	.44	.01	.59
	Trust in institutions of government	.02	.00	.09
	Micro-economy of household	.01	.00	.08
Belarus	Adj. R ² = 42.8 % F = 499			
	2002 Support for macro-economy	.39	.01	.56
	Trust in institutions of government	.03	.00	.16
	Micro-economy of household	.01	.00	.06
Moldova	Adj. R ² = 38.2 % F = 412			
	2002 Support for macro-economy	.45	.01	.56
	Trust in institutions of government	.03	.00	.14

⁴ See Krieckhaus, J. (2004). "The regime debate revisited: A sensitivity analysis of democracy's economic effect." *British Journal of Political Science* 34(3): 635-655.

Armenia	Adj. R ² = 51.9 % F = 718			
2002	Support for macro-economy	.47	.01	.64
	Trust in institutions of government	.03	.00	.12
	Micro-economy of household	.02	.00	.09
Georgia	Adj. R ² = 49.9 % F = 669			
2002	Support for macro-economy	.56	.01	.69
	Micro-economy of household	.01*	.00*	.04*
Kazakhstan	Adj. R ² = 48.7 % F = 634			
2002	Support for macro-economy	.42	.01	.62
	Trust in institutions of government	.03	.00	.13
	Micro-economy of household	.00*	.00*	.04*
Kyrgyzstan	Adj. R ² = 46.0 % F = 568			
2002	Support for macro-economy	.47	.01	.62
	Trust in institutions of government	.03	.00	.10
	Micro-economy of household	.01	.00	.06

(OLS-Regression. Beta coefficients given for variables significant at the <.001 level; Beta coefficients with * given for variables significant at the <.05 level)

These results indicate that there is a strong impact of economic experiences at the macro-level of the national economy, on the one hand, and at the micro-level of the individual household, on the other, upon support for the current political regime in post-Soviet political systems. The outcome of this research is compatible with the findings of Geoffrey Evans and Stephen Whitefield that there is no strong link between economic experiences and democratic values [5]. The new finding of this research – going beyond the research by Evans and Whitefield – is that there is no strong link between the economy and normative support for democracy as an ideal form of government, but a very strong link between micro-economic and macro-economic experiences and perceptions, on the one hand, and realist support for the current regime of the day in Russia and other post-Soviet political systems, on the other.

Normative political support for democracy as the best form of government

This section analyses the extent and structure of normative support for democracy in Russia and seven other post-Soviet countries. This type of support relates to level 4 of the conceptual framework of Pippa Norris, which is labelled by her as 'democratic regime principles' [11]. That object of support is trying to identify those citizens in a given political system, which think that democracy is the best, maybe ideal, form of government. Contrary to the realist form of regime support in the first part of the article, this section does not deal with the current, actual political regime, but with the principles and ideals of democratic governance and the assumption of a theoretical and normative superiority of democracy in comparison with other authoritarian forms of political regime.

The main outcome of the analysis is that the share of 'normative democrats' is currently over half the electorate in seven post-Soviet political systems and the group of 'idealist democrats' is growing during the process of political transformations, especially in the period between 1996 and 2000 (see Table 5). The highest number of normative democrats is found in Georgia with 81 per cent, followed by Armenia with 70 per cent. Within Eastern Europe, the citizens of Belarus are much more democratic than the current political regime in Minsk: an absolute majority of 68 per cent of the Belorussian electorate believe that democracy is the best form of government. The number of idealist democrats in Ukraine grew from 57 per cent in 1996 to 67 percent in 2000, reaching the level of the same group in Belarus. The share of 'normative democrats' is lowest in Russia with 43 per cent in 1996, but showed a slight increase to 47 per cent in 2000. Hence, the group of normative democrats has an absolute majority in seven countries and a relative majority in the Russian Federation.

The main explanation for differences between these eight CIS countries relates to widespread disaffection with the current political regime as the cause for an increase in the number of 'democrats' and a strong resulting pressure for structural democratic change. One of the critical reasons for the 'Rose Revolution' in Georgia is that only 4 per cent supported the old regime of President Eduard Shevardnadze while 81 per cent supported democracy as a form of government at the pre-revolutionary stage. The 'Orange Revolution' in Ukraine was preceded by there being only 11 per cent in support of President Leonid Kuchma in comparison with 67 per cent supporting a normative concept democracy. The increase of the share of democrats in Ukraine over time can be explained by the corresponding decrease of popular support for the old regime before the Orange Revolution [7]. The turbulent economic and political transition in Russia under President Boris Yeltsin including the financial crash in 1998 has been closely associated in Russian society with the notion of 'democracy'. This negative image of democracy is still prevalent in Russia and explains the comparatively slow increase of the share of democrats in comparison with the other CIS countries.

Table 6.

Index of political support for democracy (democracy as the best form of government)

Country	1996	2000	Change
Russia	43	47	+4
Ukraine	57	67	+10
Belarus	68	68	0
Moldova	67	*	*
Armenia	70	*	*
Georgia	81	*	*

Notes: The questions asked are: (1) 'I am going to describe various types of political systems and ask you what you think about each as a way of governing this country. For each one, would you say it is a very good, fairly good, fairly bad or very bad way of governing this country? Having a democratic political system'. (2) 'I am going to read out some things people sometimes say about a democratic political system. Could you please tell me if you agree strongly, agree, disagree or disagree strongly, after I read one of them? Democracy may have problems, but it is better than any other form of government.' The 'index of support for democracy as the best form of government' is an additive and one-dimensional scale combining both questions with high reliability.

The next section analyses the influences on support for democracy in the former Soviet Union during the process of political transformations after the end of Communist regimes. The support for democracy as the best form of government is influenced in a direct way by five democratic values and principles (see Table 7). This multivariate regression model of support for democracy for the pooled sample explains 25.3 per cent of the variance. The most important predictor of support for democracy is the value that the economic system in democracies is working well (beta= 0.27). The second influence for normative support for democracy is the value that democracies produce good and fast decisions (beta=0.18). Other direct predictors of support for democracy are the values of rejection of violence as political means and that private ownership of industry and business should be increased (beta for both independent variables=0.11). The link between support for democracy and support for an emerging market economy is shown by the latter as well as by the fact that the value of larger income differences as incentives for individual achievements is also a direct influence on normative support for democracy (beta=0.09). Finally, subjective social class also influences support for democracy (beta= 0.06).

The patterns of support for democracy are very similar in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Georgia. In all four post-Soviet political systems, the most important factor for normative support for democracy is the democratic value that democracy is good for a successful economy (0.21<beta<0.34) that there is a strong link between market economy and democracy. This interaction between economy and democracy ranks first among independent variables, and also explains normative support for democracy in Moldova. In Russia and Belarus, the second strongest influence is constituted by the belief that democracy is achieving good and fast decisions (0.16<beta<0.20), whereas in Georgia this democratic value is found in third place. In Russia and in Georgia, the normative democrats believe that democracies are good at maintaining public order, but this is not the case for any other CIS country. The 'capitalist' argument of larger income differentials as a precondition for a successful market economy and its link with support for democracy, have been found to have a direct impact in Russia, Ukraine and Armenia. The influence of rejection of political violence upon support for democratic governance is visible in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Armenia and Georgia. In Armenia, this democratic value even represents the most important predictor of normative support for democracy (beta=0.21). The value of increased private ownership within the economy has a direct impact upon support for democracy in Ukraine, Belarus and Georgia, where the process of privatization is, in fact, lagging behind. Finally, a direct impact of subjective social class on support for democracy has been found in Russia and Moldova (0.06<beta<0.08).

Table 7.

Predictors of normative support for democracy (democracy as the best form of government)

Country		b	Se	beta
CIS	Adj. R ² = 25.3 % F = 487			
1996	Democracy = good macro-economy	.62	.03	.27
	Democracy = good/fast decisions	.40	.03	.18
	Against violence in politics	.23	.01	.11
	Increase private ownership in economy	.07	.00	.11
	Larger income differences needed	.06	.00	.09
	Subjective social class	.14	.02	.06
Russia	Adj. R ² = 37.7 % F = 117			
1996	Democracy = good macro-economy	.85	.08	.34

	Democracy = good/fast decisions	.41	.09	.16
	Democracy = good order	.30	.09	.11
	Larger income differences needed	.06	.02	.09
	Against violence in politics	.21	.05	.08
	Subjective social class	.18	.05	.08
Ukraine	Adj. R ² = 25.0 % F = 72			
1996	Democracy = good macro-economy	.57	.07	.25
	Increase private ownership in economy	.11	.01	.18
	Against violence in politics	.28	.05	.14
	Larger income differences needed	.08	.02	.12
Belarus	Adj. R ² = 26.3 % F = 90			
1996	Democracy = good macro-economy	.62	.06	.29
	Democracy = good/fast decisions	.41	.06	.20
	Increase private ownership in economy	.08	.01	.14
	Against violence in politics	.25	.05	.12
Moldova	Adj. R ² = 11.9 % F = 16			
1996	Democracy = good macro-economy	.59	.09	.25
	Subjective social class	.19	.07	.08
Armenia	Adj. R ² = 15.2 % F = 40			
1996	Against violence in politics	.43	.05	.21
	Democracy = good order	.29	.08	.13
	Democracy = good macro-economy	.24	.07	.11
	Larger income differences needed	.06	.01	.09
Georgia	Adj. R ² = 22.7 % F = 70			
1996	Democracy = good macro-economy	.45	.07	.21
	Increase private ownership in economy	.08	.01	.15
	Democracy = good/fast decisions	.28	.07	.14
	Against violence in politics	.24	.04	.13
	Democracy = good order	.19	.07	.09

(Beta coefficients given for variables significant at the <.001 level)

Political support for authoritarian regimes

This section deals with the extent and structure of public support for alternatives to democracy, a variety of authoritarian regimes such as a military regime, an autocracy of a 'strong leader' or some form of regime of experts. Here, we leave the field of democratic governance and analyse the support for non-democratic regimes in a geographical area that experienced 70 years of an authoritarian Communist political regime. The results of the comparative study of support for authoritarian regimes in the Commonwealth of Independent States are clear and consistent across space and time. We differentiate between democratic regimes, on the one hand, and authoritarian regimes, on the other, following the typology developed by Larry Diamond and Juan Linz [2; 12].

The first main result is that the overall support for non-democratic regimes in these eight countries in the territory of the former Soviet Union decreased from 29 per cent of non-democratic supporters in 1996 to 18 per cent of supporters of authoritarian political systems in 2002 (see Table 8). The share of non-democratic Russian citizens declined from 31 per cent in 1996 to 27 per cent in 2000 and reached a low of 16 per cent in 2002 during the first term of the Putin presidency. Hence, the support for an authoritarian regime in the Russian Federation has been reduced to half its original extent in the mid-1990s. A similar trend from a slightly lower starting point has been found in Ukraine. The share of non-democratic Ukrainian citizens decreased from 26 per cent in 1996 to 16 per cent in 2002. The case of Belarus is slightly different. There was an increase of the authoritarian segment from 27 per cent in 1996 to 32 per cent in 2000, followed by a sharp decrease to 8 per cent non-democrats in 2002. Following the general trend of the decline of authoritarian tendencies in the CIS region at the level of the general public, the share of non-democrats in Moldova fell from 29 per cent in 1996 to 18 per cent in 2002 and is now at the same level in that respect as Russia and Ukraine. The most dramatic reduction in the number of non-democrats took place in Georgia, from 33 per cent in 1996 to 8 per cent in 2002. The share of authoritarian citizens in Kazakhstan is similar to Russia and Ukraine, whereas almost one-third of the electorate in Kyrgyzstan supports authoritarian regimes, which contributes to the general volatility of the political situation in Kyrgyzstan. Armenia is the only country in this study where the share of non-democrats actually increased from 31 per cent in 1996 to 35 per cent in 2002.

Table 8.

Index of political support for authoritarian regimes

Country	1996	2000	2002	Change
Russia	31	27	16	-15
Ukraine	26	26	16	-10
Belarus	27	32	8	-19
Moldova	29	*	18	-11
Armenia	31	*	35	4
Georgia	33	*	8	-25
Kazakhstan	*	*	14	*
Kyrgyzstan	*	*	28	*
CIS	29		18	-11

Notes: The questions asked are: 'I am going to describe various types of political systems and ask you what you think about each as a way of governing this country. For each one, would you say it is a very good, fairly good, fairly bad or very bad way of governing this country? (1) Having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections (2) Having experts, not government, make decisions according to what they think is best for the country (3) Having the army rule.' The 'index of political support for authoritarian regimes' is an additive and one-dimensional scale combining these three questions with high reliability.

The multivariate analysis of predictors regarding the support for authoritarian regimes showed patterns that are quite similar across all eight nations (see Table 8). The most important factor for advocating a non-democratic regime is a low level of human capital, measured by education ($\beta = -.018$, pooled sample). The second strongest influence in favour of an authoritarian regime is an existing support for the old Communist political regime ($\beta = 0.16$). The third factor explaining the tendency towards a non-democratic political system has been the phenomenon of 'transition stress'. Transition stress is related to those citizens, who have psychosocial difficulties in coping with the multiple social, economic and political transformations from Communism to democracy and market economy or other forms of political regimes. People with high levels of transition stress demonstrated a tendency to be against democracy and to favour authoritarian political systems because of their deep discontent with the current political and economic situation in their respective countries ($\beta = 0.10$). Finally, the fourth direct predictor of support for authoritarian regimes is constituted by the micro-economy of individual households. Households that are in a bad economic and financial situation as a consequence of economic transformations have the tendency to support non-democratic regimes ($\beta = -0.13$). Hence, one could argue that the economic losers of transition are more inclined to be against democracy and in favour of an authoritarian regime.

The patterns of support for non-democratic regimes are exactly the same in Russia, Belarus and Moldova. In all three countries the direct influences appear in the same order. Human capital is the most important predictor, followed by support for a Communist regime, micro-economy and transition stress. In Armenia, the multivariate pattern is almost the same as in the above-mentioned three countries; only transition stress is more important than the financial living conditions of Armenian households. Georgia represents an interesting case, because psychosocial stress is the most important influence upon support for an authoritarian regime. Ukraine also deviates from the main pattern, insofar as the micro-economy represents the strongest predictor for a preference for non-democratic regimes. The explanatory power of these four independent variables is considerably less in Central Asia. The explained variance of this multivariate model is 20 per cent in Russia, but only 4 per cent in Kyrgyzstan and 6 per cent in Kazakhstan.

Table 8.

Predictors of support for authoritarian regimes

Country		b	Se	beta
CIS	Adj. R ² = 14.2 % F = 762			
	Education	-.43	.02	-.18
	Support for Communist regime	.55	.02	.16
	Transition stress	.13	.00	.14
Russia	Adj. R ² = 19.8 % F = 247			
	2002 Education	-.49	.03	-.23
	Support for Communist regime	.70	.05	.21
	Micro-economy of household	-.07	.00	-.18
Ukraine	Adj. R ² = 16.9 % F = 121			
	Transition stress	.09	.01	.10

2002	Micro-economy of household	-.07	.00	-.20
	Support for Communist regime	.59	.06	.19
	Education	-.25	.04	-.12
	Transition stress	.11	.02	.12
Belarus	Adj. R ² = 11.0 % F = 62			
2002	Education	-.49	.05	-.24
	Support for Communist regime	.55	.07	.17
	Micro-economy of household	-.03	.01	-.07
Moldova	Adj. R ² = 11.8 % F = 67			
2002	Education	-.41	.04	-.21
	Support for Communist regime	.56	.07	.17
	Micro-economy of household	-.04	.00	-.09
	Transition stress	.06	.02	.07
Armenia	Adj. R ² = 14.1 % F = 82			
2002	Education	-.57	.06	-.19
	Support for Communist regime	.78	.10	.17
	Transition stress	.13	.02	.13
	Micro-economy of the household	-.04	.01	-.09
Georgia	Adj. R ² = 11.2 % F = 64			
2002	Transition stress	.26	.02	.25
	Education	-.36	.05	-.15
	Micro-economy of household	-.03	.01	-.07
	Support for Communist regime	-.12	.07	-.04
Kazakhstan	Adj. R ² = 5.6 % F = 30			
2002	Education	-.34	.05	-.15
	Transition stress	.11	.02	.11
	Support for Communist regime	.36	.07	.11
Kyrgyzstan	Adj. R ² = 4.3 % F = 23			
2002	Support for Communist regime	.50	.08	.13
	Education	-.32	.06	-.12
	Micro-economy of household	-.03	.01	-.07

(Beta coefficients given for variables significant at the <.001 level)

Conclusions

The main conclusion of this article is that, despite frequent pessimistic assumptions in the literature about the bleak future for democracy in Russia and many countries of the former Soviet Union, the mass public support for democracy as the best form of government at the level of regime principles encompasses an absolute majority of post-Soviet citizens in Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia and Belarus as well as a relative majority of Russian citizens. This political support for democracy has grown over time between 1996 and 2000 in Russia and Ukraine and has remained at a high level in Belarus. However, the endorsement of democracy as best form of government by a majority of the electorate in a given political regime is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for a successful process of democratisation.

The second important finding is that normative support for democracy is strongly associated with five values and attitudes, such as democracy is good for the macro-economy, democracy produces fast and good decisions, the rejection of political violence and support for a functioning market economy with higher income differentials as well as full privatization of the economy. People in the emerging middle classes tend to favour democracy as a form of government because of this close link with an emerging market economy. These findings suggest a strong link between the emergence of a democratic system and the creation of a successful market economy. Support for a new market economy in these former centrally planned command economies appears to be another strong pre-condition of becoming a democratic citizen in Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States.

The third main result of this study is that the political support for the current regimes has declined between 1992 and 2002 and, in some cases, such as Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova and Armenia is collapsing. The decline of support for the current regime in the former Soviet Union shows a divergent pattern regarding the dynamics of political support in comparison with post-Communist Central and South-East Europe, where a steady increase of support for the current regime has been found [10]. This collapse of public support for the current political regime contributed to the 'coloured revolutions' in Georgia and Ukraine. Between 25 and 30 per cent of the national

electorates supported the current regime in Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in 2002, which indicates the weakness of political legitimacy of these political systems. At the end of the first decade of political transformations and electoral revolutions [1] in the former Soviet Union, the absolute majority of citizens in all eight countries are still *not* supporting the regime of the day. This weak support for the current political post-Soviet regimes is leaving future political transformations open towards more autocratic or more democratic regime structures.

The fourth main finding is that support for the macro-economy is the most important influence with regard to support for the current regime. This is followed by trust in institutions of government – or successful institution building in a transforming society – and a successful micro-economy, that is households with good economic living conditions. This shows the crucial importance of the macro-economy as well – albeit to a lesser degree – of the micro-economy for public political support of a given political regime. This finding appears to indicate that the minority of economic ‘winners’ of the first decade of post-Soviet transformation are ready to support the regime of the day, as long as the latter is not reducing these economic benefits for ‘winners’ of political and economic transitions.

The fifth core finding is that the share of supporters for authoritarian regimes in Russia and the other post-Soviet countries decreased from about one-third of the whole post-Soviet general public in 1996 to one-fifth in 2002. This, again, is an indication of a general erosion of support for autocracy and non-democratic regimes in the territories of the former Soviet Union at the level of the electorate and the post-Soviet citizens. The main predictors of support for authoritarian regimes have been low levels of human capital, support for the Communist political regime, psychosocial transition stress as well as being a loser in micro-economic transition. Post-Soviet citizens with ideological ties with the Soviet Union and its economic and political system are –not surprisingly– strongly in favour of non-democratic regimes in general and to some extent in favour of a restoration of Communist rule in particular. Whereas winners of transformation are in support of the democracy on the one hand or the current political regime on the other, losers of transformation tend to support autocratic and non-democratic regimes as an expression of their political and economic disaffection.

From a theoretical perspective, this study constitutes a successful attempt to introduce a new concept of political support for democracy and autocracy, which goes well beyond the current scholarly debate on ‘support for democracy’. From an empirical perspective, this article provides clear and cross-national evidence that all eight analysed political regimes in Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent have not yet concluded their political transformations and electoral revolutions as far as the micro-level of their citizens and electorates is concerned. The future behaviour of political elites, political actors, political institutions, civil societies and the mass publics will determine the final political structure of these post-Soviet countries along the broad spectrum between democracy and autocracy.

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