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Abstract

What did Russians expect and want during the 2007–08 election cycle that produced the current "tandemocracy", joint rule by Dmitry Medvedev (as president) and Vladimir Putin (as prime minister)? The 2008 wave of the long-running Russian Election Studies (RES) series of surveys sheds light on this question. Russians supported the United Russia Party and subsequently Medvedev in significant part because they pledged to persevere with the course set by Putin, and there is compelling evidence that citizens did not do so blindly and that Medvedev's and United Russia's policy stands are meaningful parts of the story. In fact, more Russians than not hoped that sooner or later it would be Medvedev rather than Putin at the helm of Russia's ship of state, though they did not generally expect this to occur. Because the Russian leadership has not yet dared to run roughshod over public opinion, close monitoring of the public mood may provide important clues as to how Russia will behave—and how far it will go to challenge Western ideals and norms—at home and abroad.