

# Russians Less Keen for Democratic Transfer of Power

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The number of Russians supporting regular democratic changeovers of political power is at its lowest point in recent history, a poll published Thursday showed, reflecting the popularity of President Vladimir Putin amid the patriotic fervor and increasingly strong rhetoric against foreign enemies surrounding Russian military actions in Ukraine and Syria.

Forty-five percent of respondents to the survey by the independent Levada Center pollster said they supported regular rotation of leaders through elections, down from a steady 60 percent recorded a year ago and in every poll since 2007, when the survey began.

Meanwhile, the number of respondents saying that political leaders should appoint their successors — as Putin himself was appointed by Boris Yeltsin in 1999 — rose to 22 percent from the mid-teens in previous surveys.

The shift in public attitudes comes amid a crackdown on domestic opposition in politics and

the media and the steady beating of war drums on state television against Islamic terrorists and Ukrainian “fascists” — who are often said to have the backing of the United States. Moscow has supported separatists in eastern Ukraine, where around 8,000 people have died since mid-2014, and began bombing targets in Syria in September.

Putin has meanwhile seen his approval ratings rise to record highs of almost 90 percent, even as the economy has fallen into recession. According to the Levada poll, 57 percent of respondents wanted to see Putin as president following scheduled elections in 2018, and a further 11 percent wanted to see a candidate nominated by Putin in power. Fewer than 20 percent wanted to see a new president with different policies.

The survey polled 1,600 people across Russia in November. It's margin of error did not exceed 3.4 percent.

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