



**Australian Institute
of International Affairs**
Victoria

Why the Russian Constitution Matters

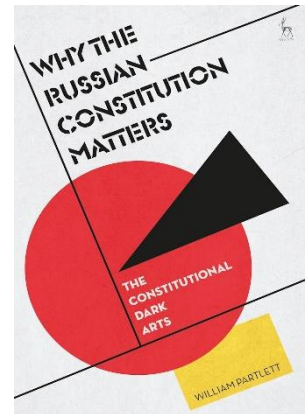
Book Launch

A/Prof. William Partlett, University of Melbourne Law School

Thursday 14 November 2024: 5:30pm for 6 – 7pm AEDT at Level 13, 356 Collins Street, Melbourne VIC 3000

It is well known that former US President Donald Trump admires the power strongman leaders wield. What is less well known are the problematic long-term constitutional consequences of this kind of strongman governance.

William Partlett's new book [*Why the Russian Constitution Matters*](#) (2024, Bloomsbury Publishing), explores these consequences. It argues that today's strongmen rely on what he calls the "constitutional dark arts". This is the argument the constitutional centralisation of power in a leader is a better way to secure democracy, sovereignty and economic development.



This centralisation of power has allowed strongmen like Vladimir Putin in Russia, Viktor Orban in Hungary and Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Turkey to co-opt democratic institutions such as courts, political parties, legislatures and elections and use them to legitimise their own leadership. But, over time, the constitutional dark arts does not achieve its stated goals. It instead leads to increasingly dysfunctional despotism, poor economic growth, and national security.

In examining the constitutional dark arts, the talk will examine: how has Putin weaponised the centralisation of constitutional power to build his own personal power? What are the implications for a post-Putin Russia? What role do constitutions play in shaping authoritarian strongman government elsewhere? And what lessons are there for American voters as they consider their choice in the upcoming election?

AIIA Victoria invites you to join A/Prof. William Partlett in conversation with Dr. Robert Horvath (La Trobe University) and Petr Kuzmin. Copies of the book will be available for sale at 20% discount. Or to order online, please go to: <https://www.bloomsbury.com/au/why-the-russian-constitution-matters-9781509972197/>.



William Partlett is an Associate Professor at Melbourne Law School. He has travelled extensively in Russia and the former Soviet Union. His written work on the region includes publications in both academic journals as well as *The Conversation* and *The National Interest*. His insights draw on both his training in Russian politics, language, and history at Oxford University and Princeton University as well as his legal training at Stanford Law School. He is the author of *The Post-Soviet as Post-Colonial* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2022), which explores the post-colonial status of Russia and the former Soviet Union.

[BOOK ONLINE HERE](#)

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Dr Robert Horvath is a specialist in Russian Politics. His most recent book, *Putin's Fascists: Russkii Obraz and the Politics of Managed Nationalism in Russia*, focuses on the link between the Putin regime and radical nationalism in Russia. Robert Horvath is currently pursuing research into the Putin regime's manipulation of Russian nationalism, its assault on international human rights institutions, and its intervention in Africa. His commentary has been published in *The Age*, *The Australian*, *The Conversation*, *The Lowy Interpreter*, and *The Canberra Times*. He has appeared on ABC's *Four Corners*, the BBC *World News*, Channel 9's *Under Investigation* and *A Current Affair*.



Petr Kuzmin is the official representative of the *Anti-Corruption Foundation* established by the late Alexey Navalny to investigate corruption within the Russian state in 2011. The ACF has become the biggest pro-democracy political organisation in Russia. Its staff was forced into exile in 2021 when it was designated an "extremist organisation" by Vladimir Putin. Petr Kuzmin is a Russian-Australian anti-war activist holding a weekly perpetual anti-war picket action in Melbourne since the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. He became a coordinator of the #FreeNavalny campaign in Australia in May 2023 and remains the official representative of Navalny's team.