Problems of institutional design, redesign, structuring and restructuring acquired particular poignancy through recent developments in Russia, Eastern Europe and Southern Africa. At the same time, scholars in each of the several disciplines – political science, economics, sociology, history and philosophy have increasingly come to appreciate the important and independent role that is played by institutional factors in a body politic.

Political institutions are extraordinarily important in post-Soviet Russia, Central and Eastern Europe, more so than it is in west since with few exceptions these countries have no practical experience in democracy, no tradition of a civic culture. Under such circumstances, institutions need to be put on a firm footing for these new upcoming and fledgling democracies. Constitutions play a large role in providing this, i.e. in providing the limits of rational action, in defining what is proper behaviour and in endowing legitimacy to the system.

Russia underwent a phase of bewildering transformation in 1991-93. Politics in Russia remained fluid for nearly three years. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Russia the largest republic, did not feel the need of addressing itself a new constitution and continued to retain the constitution of 1977. It’s political institutions continued to work under provisions of the 1977 constitution with few aberrations here and there. As a result, a bitter struggle for power ensued between various institutions,
more importantly between the executive presidency and the legislative parliament. In many ways the instability of the political system during 1991-93 can be traced to the year 1985 when Gorbachev took hold of the reins of the Soviet society and dispassionately dismantled the existing political institutions while replacing some with new institutions. Reform or what has been better expressed, as restructuring of the institutions of Soviet political system was part of a broader programme of democratisation of the society. However, the ‘undefined’ and ‘vague’ nature of these reforms led too many political actors to interpret these suiting to their political needs. Lack of a defined constitution led to further exacerbation of the problems and a constant struggle for power persisted between various branches of government in the backdrop of an outdated constitution and also the preference for economic reform. Finally, the adoption of a new constitution in 1993 led to an end of this instability and a consequential emergence of a new set of institutions with newly defined roles. Political system in post-Soviet Russia still faces challenges, long since overcome by their western counterpart and the constitutional institutions are not yet in place and firm footing. State and institution building in Russia is an ongoing process. Yet one can see a set pattern is emerging in institutional front and institution - building is taking strong hold in post-Soviet Russia.

The present study comprising of six chapters is a modest attempt in studying the evolution of political institutions in the post-Soviet Russia in its entirety, to outline the overall picture and the political changes that are occurring, to grasp the major trends, actions of the actors and leaders and
understand the logic behind them. The aim here is to offer a variety of perspectives on the emergence of post-Soviet institutions, but as a group each of the chapters converge on four common themes: the institutional legacy of the Soviet system; the social processes unleashed by the collapse of the system; patterns of bargaining within and between states to resolve conflicts arising in the day-to-day functioning of the political system and the importance of leadership factor.

To this end, this is a work of synthesis bringing together the best of existing literature on the subject while supplementing it with our own understanding based upon reinterpretation. While dealing with an area like that of Russia, one faces a phenomenon of enormous complexity and suffers from an endemic predicament of the information age, the volume of information far exceeds the capacity to process it. Yet literature exactly relevant to the study is limited leading to problems of analysis and interpretation. Here, in particular, some of the recently available materials have been made use of with the objective of updating the subject.

During the course of study, an attempt has been made to trace the evolution of political institutions in post-Soviet Russia with a note on the role of state organs in the Soviet period. Having noted the meaning and crucial role of institution in way of a conceptual framework, chapter one outlines the role that state organs played in the Soviet period.

When Gorbachev took the reins in 1985, he soon tried to rewrite the language of politics. His restructuring programme 'Perestroika and
Glasnost' aimed at political reform of the system where reform of political institutions was given top priority. The parameters of subsequent struggle for power between the institutions of presidency and parliament reflecting in a constitutional crisis can be traced to this period. Chapter two explores the limits of the restructuring programme undertaken by Gorbachev and their effects on the institutional development. Section two of this chapter tries to relate it to the post-Soviet period which witnessed a prolonged debate around the truncated and problem ridden constitution, and the subsequent adoption of a presidential constitution in 1993.

Russian Federation through the Constitution of 1993 created a presidential form of government in Russia where Article 80 makes the President, the head of the state and the guarantor of the constitution of Russian Federation. Yet presidential form of government is of very recent origin. Though the institution of presidency was there during Gorbachev’s period also, it is the creation of presidential office after the referendum of 1993 and the conception of that office by Boris Yeltsin which had decisive implications for institutional development of Russia. Chapter three outlines in greater detail the way this institution evolved and gained significance as it appears at the present phase of political development.

Between its inception in spring 1990 to its catastrophic demise in the fall of 1993, the Russian legislature (parliament) underwent an extraordinary transformation. Further, the form and the powers of this institution reflected the particular circumstances under which it emerged in the post-Soviet milieu. Chapter four extensively discusses the reasons for the
emergence of a weak legislature in the backdrop of the political events around 1991-93.

Judiciary and legal institutions have also undergone a total transformation. The constitution of 1993 has changed the structure of the judiciary and also a new institution of Constitutional Court came to front stage due to the peculiar circumstance in which constitution was adopted. Chapter five provides an analysis of the way these two institutions evolved in the post-Soviet Russia.

The institutional rearrangement in Russia under the constitution of 1993 has changed the status of the Federation, the division of powers between various branches of government, the scope of economic union, regional realignment and the relationship of the federation to the rest of the system of government. The practical operation of federal constitutional arrangement was significantly affected by a change in other related institutions. In the last chapter, i.e. chapter six, an attempt has been made to analyse at length, the new alignments at federal front, the bargaining between centre and the regions, and finally the overall balance of power and stability of the system.

The concluding part of the thesis gives an overall assessment of the findings of the work. The exhaustive bibliography attached at the end is for further study and references.